

# Open Space

## Element 4



### INTRODUCTION

The City's definition of open space is *"a parcel of land in a predominantly open and undeveloped condition that is suitable for use as a natural area, wildlife or native plant habitat, designated floodplains, and may be used for passive, low-impact, non-motorized recreation."*



Open space areas are considered an indicator of a community's quality of life. Studies have shown that preserved open space, such as natural wash areas, contribute to the value of developable land, which in turn, contributes to the local economy. Open space also

provides direct benefits to ecosystems through such processes as ground water storage, climate moderation, flood control, storm damage prevention, and air and water pollution abatement.

Recreational areas and open space benefit economic development because they are significant area attractors to businesses and residents. In fact, the "Dream Your City" visioning process effort indicated that recreational opportunities rank highly among residents. Acquisition and development of open space is something that is largely under the control of the City.

"Visual" open space surrounding the City of Sierra Vista, such as the views of the Huachuca, Mule, Dragoon, and Whetstone Mountains, contribute to a sense of openness. Open space areas within the City generally consist of the washes and remaining undeveloped areas. These areas offer the best opportunity for the creation of permanent open space. Development codes have generally restricted structures to low profiles to maintain open space view corridors.

When the City designates open space, it retains open space options for the future. Depending on community will, options range from leaving the land in a natural state to building recreational facilities. To determine community will, the City will continue its extensive public involvement and outreach program.

## BACKGROUND

The Sierra Vista 1965 General Plan contained the following statement: “as a community grows the open fields, scattered vacant lots and lightly traveled streets which once offered release for youthful energy disappear.” Even in 1965 the need to protect portions of the City was acknowledged. The City has benefited from the vacant and slow-to-develop state trust lands that have provided de-facto open space; however, these lands are subject to sale and development at any time. When such sales occur the public is generally surprised and voices concerns.

Dedicated open space consists of washes, drainage easements, undeveloped parks, and other areas set aside from development. Open space can also include areas that benefit public health and safety, such as floodplains and areas for ground water recharge. Open space areas can preserve natural resources, such as plant and animal habitats, and provide areas for outdoor recreation such as trails that serve as links between parks and larger open space.

One of the City’s primary focuses is in preserving open space to allow connections between the Huachuca Mountains and the San Pedro River. The City will continue to focus on preserving wash areas as open space in order to preserve future connections.

The framework for open space planning has expanded with the addition of City plans and resources such as the Surface Water Plan (adopted in 1986), the Open Space and Recreation Plan (adopted in 1992), Wastewater Management and Sewerage Master Plan (adopted in 1999), and the Upper San Pedro Partnership (USPP) Open Space Report (completed in 2001).

In 2007, the City Council approved a Strategic Leadership Plan objective stating, “Adopt a master plan for future acquisition and development of open space.” This objective resulted in the 2009 adoption of the “Open Space Acquisition and Development Plan.” This plan evaluated the purpose and history of open space in the City, acquisition areas, and considerations, methods of preservation, and identified possible funding sources and development options.

Attachment 4-1 is an inventory of existing open space within the City. To find the location of the City's current open space and planned future open space, please refer to the Land Use Maps in Goal 2.

Communities across the United States are continually working to preserve and protect open space using a wide range of tools, such as the following:

- a. Regulatory tools
  - (1) zoning regulations
  - (2) overlay districts
  - (3) performance zoning
  - (4) subdivision standards
  - (5) urban growth boundaries
  
- b. Incentive tools
  - (1) density bonuses
  - (2) clustering
  - (3) transfer of development rights
  - (4) development agreements
  
- c. Acquisition options
  - (1) fee simple purchase
  - (2) options for right of first refusal
  - (3) easements and purchase of development rights
  - (4) land trusts
  - (5) developer donations either outright or as required by code

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### **Goal 4-1 Identify potential open space land**

The Surface Water Plan, Special Flood Hazard Area maps, the Open Space Acquisition and Development Plan, are all used to identify potential open space land. The Surface Water Plan is currently being revised and may identify additional open space land areas. No additional lands have been identified since adoption of the General Plan.

- Strategies**
1. Identify potential open space lands using the Surface Water Plan, Special Flood Hazard Area maps, the Open Space Acquisition and Development Plan, and other appropriate information sources.
  2. Locate areas within the city that are deficient in open space.
  3. Identify open space areas that are critical to preserve natural resources.

**Goal 4-2 Obtain land for open space**

The City recently purchased a 15 acre parcel owned by the Sierra Vista School District which is located adjacent to Roadrunner Park. This additional open space will be used to expand the park.

- Strategies**
1. Use a variety of funding sources available to purchase open space land.
  2. Educate developers so they understand the benefits of preserving open space.
  3. Require buffers between development and areas of wildlife habitat.
  4. Purchase land to provide connections between open space areas, where feasible, to provide ecosystem connectivity.
  5. Coordinate with other jurisdictions to establish a network of open space and trails connecting the Huachuca Mountains and San Pedro River.

**Goal 4-3 Provide stewardship programs to protect open space land**

The City has created an Adopt-A-Area program where citizens can adopt and maintain areas such as roads, parks, and washes here in the City.

- Strategies**
1. Coordinate with appropriate jurisdictions or organizations for developing and providing stewardship programs.
  2. Establish a process to use volunteer groups to assist with wash clean-up and maintenance efforts.
  3. Promote the “adopt-a-wash” program.
  4. Ensure the Wash Maintenance Plan, adopted in 2013, continues to incorporate environmental values when it is updated or modified.

5. Consider environmental impacts when improving and maintaining public and private open space, particularly in wash areas.

## STATE LAW REQUIREMENTS

Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 9-461.05-9 D 4

*“An open space element that includes:*

*(a) A comprehensive inventory of open space areas, recreational resources and designations of access points to open space areas and resources.*

*(b) An analysis of forecasted needs, policies for managing and protecting open space areas and resources and implementation strategies to acquire additional open space areas and further establish recreational resources.*

*(c) Policies and implementation strategies designed to promote a regional system of integrated open space and recreational resources and a consideration of any existing regional open space plans.”*

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 4-1, Identified Open Space within the City of Sierra Vista

## REFERENCES

The following references used in this element are City approved documents.

- Surface Water Plan, 1988, Departments of Community Development and Public Works
- Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1996, amended to add master plans for Len Roberts, Domingo Paiz and Soldier’s Creek parks, May 27, 1999, Department of Parks and Leisure Services
- Wastewater Management and Sewerage Master Plan, 1986, amended April 13, 1995, amended July 22, 1999, Department of Public Works
- Open Space Acquisition and Development Plan, September, 2009

Table 3

## IDENTIFIED OPEN SPACE WITHIN THE CITY OF SIERRA VISTA

NAME	LOCATION	TYPE	ACRES	LINEAR FEET	AMENITIES	COMMENTS
Wetlands at EOP	City Environmental Operations Park; SR 90	Developed wetland	50		Viewing platform	Provides bird habitat
Forest Doerner	Buffalo Soldier Trail, north of Fry Blvd.	Linear Park	0.7	2,000	Benches	Needs to be connected to future MUP's north and south; Landscaped
Woodcutters	Connects Fry Blvd. with Coronado Dr	Linear Park	2.8	2,500	Bridge connects to Lenzer via alleyway	Landscaped
Garden Canyon Wash Tributary	State Highway 92, south of Buffalo Soldier Trail	Wash	2.5	2,400		On private land
PDS South Drainageway	North boundary of Tribute	Drainageway	27	11,600		
PDS Golf Course Drainageway	Country Club Estates	Drainageway	11.25	278	Adjoins golf course	Private land
Garden Canyon Park	South end of City	Linear Park	140	6,196	Two parking lots, St. Andrews and Cherokee	Master Planned in June, 2008
Soldiers Creek	West End	Linear Park	8.5	1,500	Playgrounds, Fitness equipment, Picnic facilities, Parking	Includes play field on west end of park
Summit Drainageway A	Buffalo Soldier Trail to Coronado Drive	Drainageway	14.72	1,499		
Summit Drainageway B	Coronado Drive to El Camino Real	Drainageway	10.47	2,102		
Summit Drainageway C	El Camino Real to Oakmont Drive	Drainageway	.85	300		Stormwater Basin
Summit Drainageway D	Oakmont Drive to SR 92	Drainageway	9.75	3,412		Portions are in County
Kings Manor Drainageway*	SR 92 to SR 90	Drainageway	2.0	1,501		
TOTAL OPEN SPACE			380.54	35,288 (6.68 miles)		

Note: These areas have the characteristics of both parks and open space.

\*Portions of Kings Manor Drainageway may be routed underground in the future.