

NATURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Union City is surrounded by a diverse and unique mix of natural resources ranging from beautiful hills to salt marshes and meandering creeks. These resources are fundamental in defining the character and future growth patterns of Union City. In addition, the city has a network of recreational and historical resources. It is critical that these resources are recognized and preserved for the purposes of educating the public and retaining the character of Union City.

The purpose of this Element is to protect and enhance the natural and historical resources that make Union City a unique place. This element includes a summary of existing conditions and a description of the goals, policies, and implementation measures designed to address the following subjects: biological resources, water resources, historic resources, and open space preservation.

Information on water supply and storm drainage is contained in the Public Facilities and Services Element.

A. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Union City has a variety of plant and wildlife that includes 12 special status plant species and 13 special status wildlife species. The species can be found along the wetland areas on the western fringe of the city, along the eastern hillsides, and among habitat interwoven through urban development.

Along Dry Creek on the Meyers property (now East Bay Regional Park land) and near Whipple Road, in the northern part of the planning area, and along the small creek that runs near Smith Street and Dyer Street, there is riparian habitat (e.g., oaks, box elder, and willows). Other areas of riparian habitat (e.g., elderberry shrubs, pepper trees, box elders, and willows) border a small drainage east of I-880. These communities are also considered sensitive natural communities by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG).



*Gates to the Meyer property on May Road,
above Mission Boulevard*

Freshwater marshes consisting of young willows and cattails occur near Alvarado-Niles Road and the Alameda Creek area. Freshwater marshes and wetlands have water at or near the surface, have soils differing from those of adjacent uplands, and vegetation adapted to wet conditions. Often, freshwater wetlands can be important waterfowl habitat. Terns are among the wildlife present at this location. On Dry Creek, wildlife such as robins can be observed. Swallows are present under bridges along this creek, where they potentially nest. Wetlands are subject to Corps jurisdiction under section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). In addition, DFG has adopted a no-net-loss policy for wetlands.

Areas of non-freshwater marsh are located in the western part of the city boundary, near salt evaporators. Swallows, terns, stilts, and red-winged blackbirds are a few of the species found in this habitat. In the northwestern part of the Planning Area, there are salt-influenced seasonal wetlands, with vegetation such as pickleweed. Pickleweed is considered potential habitat for the Federally-endangered salt marsh harvest mouse. Other salt-influenced wetlands are found in the northwestern portion of the City's Planning Area.

The eastern part of the Planning Area is characterized by non-native annual grasslands. Non-native grasslands can host threatened species and species of special concern, such as the burrowing owl, the red-legged frog and the Alameda whipsnake.

Goal	To protect, restore, and enhance important biological habitats and their associated plant, wildlife, and fish species throughout Union City and to educate people as to this need.
NHR-A.1	

Policies

NHR-A.1.1 The City shall define the following as sensitive habitat areas: riparian woodland and scrub, freshwater marsh/wetland areas, non-freshwater marsh/wetland areas, and grassland areas.

NHR-A.1.2 The City shall maintain information on biological resources in the Planning Area, including maps that identify the locations of environmentally-sensitive habitats and special status species as reported to the City or available from information published by regulatory agencies. This information shall be used by the City to inform and guide review of proposed development.



West side of Turk Island

NHR-A.1.3 On sites that have the potential to contain critical or sensitive habitats, or special-species, or are within 100 feet of such areas, the City shall require the project applicant to survey the site by a qualified biologist at the proper time of year. A report of the findings of this survey shall be submitted to the city as part of the application process. Appropriate mitigation measures will be incorporated into the project as necessary to protect the resources.

- NHR-A.1.4 On sites with the potential to contain wetland resources, the City shall require that a wetland delineation be prepared using the protocol defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The applicant shall submit a report on the findings of this survey to the City as part of the application process. Appropriate mitigation measures will be incorporated into the project as necessary to protect the resources.
- NHR-A.1.5 Any proposal that would create new parcels or lots shall demonstrate that the resulting parcels/lots provide adequate building space outside of critical biological areas and areas inhabited by special-status species.
- NHR-A.1.6 The City shall cooperate actively in regional efforts to restore wetlands ecology and stream and river resources.
- NHR-A.1.7 The City shall cooperate with other public agencies and organizations to acquire conservation easements on privately-owned lands in order to preserve important wildlife corridors and to provide protection of State or Federal special-status species and the habitats they occupy and use.
- NHR-A.1.8 The City shall work to inform and educate the public about the natural resources in the city and the steps that can be taken to help protect, enhance, restore, and enjoy these resources.
- NHR-A.1.9 The City shall help residents understand, value, preserve and restore the unique features within the city that are part of the Bay ecology.
- NHR-A.1.10 The City shall design and develop an environmental education center to serve area residents.
- NHR-A.1.11 The City shall create compatible points of access for the public to view and understand the importance of the ecosystems of the hills and wetlands.
- NHR-A.1.12 The City shall provide signage and strategically locate fences to prevent humans and dogs from adversely affecting wetlands.
- NHR-A.1.13 The City shall continue to require a burrowing owl study on all development projects that incorporate vacant, unpaved parcels, or parcels adjacent to possible owl habitat.
- NHR-A.1.14 The City shall encourage the Alameda County Flood Control District to enhance the viability of habitat areas along the city's creek system by restoring the natural vegetation and cleaning up trash and debris in coordination with.
- NHR-A.1.15 The City shall commit to preservation of significant natural resources including wetlands, bay shores, plant, animal, and fish habitats.



Naturalized Old Alameda Creek near Almaden Boulevard

Implementation Programs

NHR- A.1 The City shall develop a creek restoration program in coordination with the Alameda County Flood Control District to enhance the viability of habitat areas along the city’s creek system by restoring the natural vegetation and cleaning up trash and debris.

Responsibility:

- 9 Public Works Department
- 9 Community Development Department

Time Frame:

- 9 FY 03-04

B. WATER RESOURCES

Within Union City, groundwater resources are used to supply 75 percent of the water used in the City. This groundwater comes from a single groundwater basin called the Niles Cone. It is critical that the City protects this vital resource from contamination and that the City protects the watershed areas that recharge this groundwater basin. In addition to groundwater resources, it is also imperative that the City protect surface water from sedimentation and other contaminants.

Goal NHR-B.1	To protect and enhance the natural qualities of Union City’s groundwater, surface water, and streams, and to ensure sufficient water supplies of good quality for all beneficial uses.
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Policies

NHR-B.1.1 The City shall work with Alameda County Flood Control in an effort to ensure protection of the natural conditions along stream and creek corridors.

- a. In areas already disturbed, efforts should be made to restore the natural character to the extent possible.
- b. The development of trails along the corridors should be encouraged, and streamside rest areas should be provided that include indigenous streamside vegetation.



Dry Creek channel with pedestrian path beyond

- c. New projects for flood and erosion control should be designed to preserve the natural creekside condition where possible. Alteration of streambeds and adjacent vegetation is to be permitted only as a means of erosion or flood control as permitted by the City and in such a manner as to enhance the area within the city.

- NHR-B.1.2 The City shall require that an erosion control plan be prepared and approved prior to the issuance of a grading permit. This plan shall be prepared in keeping with standards for non-point source pollutants applied by the Regional Water Quality Control Board.
- NHR-B.1.3 The City shall take or encourage actions to protect the Niles Cone water-bearing aquifers. Particular attention shall be paid to the use of recharge wells, salt water barriers, and importation of water necessary to maintain the water levels at surface elevations adequate to prevent salt water intrusion. Efforts should ensure maximum opportunity for surface runoff to recharge groundwater basins, including the use of checkdams, ponding, or retention basins, where compatible with policies for stream and creek protection.
- NHR-B.1.4 The City shall evaluate public and private development projects, including golf courses, to determine the effects of the projects on on-site and downstream drainage patterns and associated ecological systems. Larger projects may require on-site detention or retention facilities, or other permanent filtration systems to maintain existing storm flows and velocities in natural drainage systems and allow for enhanced infiltration.
- NHR-B.1.5 Within its authority, the City shall ensure that flood control facilities built in natural areas be designed to use "soft" channel structures (i.e., avoid lined channels and culverts) that maintain to the greatest extent possible natural vegetation and infiltration.
- NHR- B.1.6 The City shall ensure, through review and inspection, that erosion control is being handled correctly on construction sites.
- NHR-B.1.7 The City shall encourage the use of state-of-the-art treated effluent to water parks, school grounds, and golf courses.
- NHR-B.1.8 The City shall evaluate proposed projects to ensure that impermeable surfaces are minimized.
- NHR-B.1.9 The City shall encourage the use of earthen drainage swales to manage on-site drainage and permeable surfaces for walkways and private driveways and patios.

Implementation Programs

- NHR-B.1 The City shall continue to update and review the water conservation standards for landscaping activities, such as nighttime watering and acceptable irrigation systems.

Responsibility:

9 Public Works Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

NHR-B.2 The City shall explore the possibility of using reclaimed water to irrigate new commercial developments and new areas with large landscaped areas (such as parks and golf courses). In areas where reclaimed water can be provided in the future, the City shall require landscape irrigation to be installed so that the system could be used with reclaimed water (i.e., dual piping).

Responsibility:

9 Community Development Department

9 Public Works Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

NHR-B.3 The City shall ensure, through review and inspection, that erosion control is being handled correctly on construction sites.

Responsibility:

9 Community Development Department

9 Public Works Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

C. ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Union City has a number of historic properties that provide an important link in reconstructing the City’s past. The City completed an inventory (i.e., Union City Cultural Resources Survey) of historical resources. The City has begun the process of designating certain sites as local historic properties.

Goal	To protect, to the extent possible, the City’s significant archeological and historical resources.
NHR-C.1	

Policies

NHR-C.1.1 The City should continue to encourage and provide support for the Union City Historical Museum.

NHR-C.1.2 The City shall continue to work with the Union City Historical Museum to identify historical resources in the Planning Area and incorporate these sites into the Landmark and Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.

NHR-C.1.3 The City shall encourage the preservation of public landmarks.

NHR-C.1.4 The City shall use appropriate State and Federal standards in evaluating the significance of historical resources found in the city.



Old St. Anne’s church in Old Alvarado

NHR-C.1.5 The City shall support public and private efforts to preserve, rehabilitate, and continue the use of historic structures and sites.

NHR-C.1.6 The City shall support efforts to protect and recover archeological resources.

Implementation Programs

NHR-C.1 The City shall maintain and publish a historical resource inventory.

Responsibility:

9 Community Development Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

NHR-C.2 The City shall establish construction standards for the protection of historical resources during development and allow the use of State Historic Building Code provisions for designated properties.

Responsibility:

9 Community Development Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

NHR-C.3 The City shall develop standards for monitoring of mitigation measures established for the protection of historical resources prior to development.

Responsibility:

9 Community Development Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

NHR-C.4 The City shall apply the Landmark and Historic Overlay Zone to noteworthy resources.

Responsibility:

9 Community Development Department

9 Union City Historical Museum

Time Frame:

9 On-going

NHR-C.5 Prior to issuance of any permit to modify a structure that is within the city's Landmark and Historic Overlay Zone, the applicant shall have the building and surrounding area evaluated for significance in relation to State and Federal guidelines.

Responsibility:

9 Community Development Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

NHR-C.6 When archaeological resources are uncovered during site excavation, grading, or construction, work on the site will be suspended until the significance of the features can be determined by a qualified archaeologist. If significant resources are determined to exist, the archaeologist shall make recommendations for protection or recovery of the resource.

Responsibility:

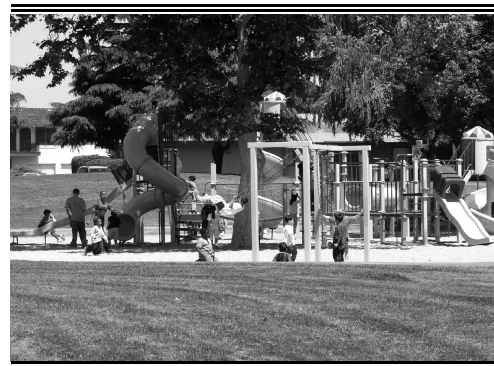
9 Community Development Department

Time Frame:

9 On-going

D. OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

For the purposes of the General Plan, open space is defined as all of the space above the surface of the earth or water which is not occupied by structures or man-made impervious surfaces. Open space, therefore, is three-dimensional. Its boundaries are defined by land forms, prominent vegetation, and buildings and other structures. The concept of three-dimensionality is important in Union City where the open space experiences vary from the eastern hillsides to the flatlands of the Bay plain. The policies in this section call for protecting and enhancing open spaces within the Planning Area and the quality of views to and from them.



Kennedy Park

Goal	To provide for a continuous system of open spaces for the preservation, enhancement and protection of open space land.
NHR-D.1	

Policies

- NHR-D.1.1 The City shall integrate, wherever possible, the local open space system with the open space systems of nearby communities and the region.
- NHR-D.1.2 The City shall maintain open space areas to guide the form of urban development and to establish open space between incompatible land uses.
- NHR-D.1.3 The City shall provide adequate open space within existing and proposed urban use areas and relate the open space to those areas so as to enhance living conditions in the entire city.
- NHR-D.1.4 The City shall establish priorities for the acquisition and protection of open space.
- NHR-D.1.5 The City shall explore various methods for protecting open space resources including, but not limited to, regulation, full acquisition, transfer of development rights, and less than fee purchase.

NHR-D.1.6 The City shall identify areas to be maintained as open space and relate such areas to the open space plans and proposals of adjacent jurisdictions.

NHR-D.1.7 The City shall provide a legal basis for retaining open spaces through means that will be economically feasible for public and private interests.

NHR-D.1.8 The City shall evaluate all development projects in terms of open space qualities. All identified significant open space resources (i.e., habitat for wildlife and rare, threatened, or endangered plant species, etc.) will, where feasible, be protected or avoided through conditions of approval and project design. Removal of vegetation should be minimized, and replanting required to maintain soil stability, prevent erosion, and maximize regeneration.



Hillsides of east Mission Boulevard

- a. Existing wildlife habitats should be protected in a natural and undeveloped state as part of open space areas and as a means of preserving and attracting wildlife. Depleted habitats adaptable to restoration should also be included as open space.
- b. Only limited development will be allowed within designated open space areas. Development of an open space area will be permitted only in select areas and will be limited to facilities needed in conjunction with low density recreational areas or select public facilities.

NHR-D.1.9 The City shall protect major visual features, such as ridgelines and valley sides in the eastern hillsides and the critical wetland areas at the western end of the city through regulation or public acquisition of fee title or lesser interest.

NHR-D.1.10 The City shall require new development to incorporate nearby and distant open space views into the project design. Landscaped open space shall be included in new developments, including in commercial and industrial areas and along streets and trails. Use of drought-tolerant landscaping shall be encouraged in site development review. Specimen trees and significant stands of existing trees will be protected to the extent possible in the design of new development.

NHR-D.1.11 The City shall designate areas that are potentially hazardous to public health and safety, in relation to the development of occupied structures, as open space. Areas that fall into this category include:

- a. Areas of geologic instability.
- b. The 960-foot buffer area between Union Sanitary District Treatment Plant and the residential development east of the treatment plant.
- c. The Turk Island Landfill

The following uses will be allowed in such areas:

- a. Agriculture;
- b. Open space;
- c. Flood control management;
- d. Passive recreation in a natural or near-natural state;
- e. Active recreation areas where public health and safety can be adequately protected for the types of uses proposed.

NHR-D.1.12 When in the public interest, the City will seek funds for the acquisition of open space, either in fee or as an easement, from Federal, State, and other governmental sources, as well as private sources. Where appropriate, conservation or open space easements will be required of new development in order to protect unique natural features or other environmentally significant resources identified during CEQA review, such as steep hillsides, natural stream courses, or unique plant or animal community or habitats.

NHR-D.1.13 The City shall strive to separate incompatible uses in new developments with open space. Incompatible uses include residential and industrial uses. Open space may be in the form of a park, landscaped greenbelt, or natural corridor.

NHR-D.1.14 In designated open space areas, the man-made structures shall be subordinate to and not conflict with the quality of the open space. The City shall prohibit inappropriate uses of open space (i.e., off-road motorized vehicles) to prevent environmental damage and preserve the quality of the open space. Further, grading, tree removal or other disturbance within designated open space areas shall only be permitted when plans for such activities have been approved by the City and found necessary for protection or enhancement of the open space, or to provide for safe and enjoyable public use of the open space resource.



Hillsides as seen from Mission Boulevard

NHR-D.1.15 The City shall provide a variety of open spaces including open space for public use and enjoyment and for the protection of agricultural and wildlife habitats and scenic vistas. The following are aspects of this policy:

- a. Within the limits of availability of land, an equitable geographical distribution of open space throughout the city should be provided for the benefit of all residents of the city.

- b. Land areas of outstanding natural scenic qualities and outstanding views of natural or man-made significance shall be protected. The open space plan includes areas of irreplaceable natural and man-made resources, including areas of topographical, geologic, or historical significance.
- c. Relative to increasing demands per capita for park areas, recreational areas, and natural areas in or near population centers of the city, selected portions of easily accessible open space should be utilized for leisure time facilities.
- d. Observation areas with outstanding vistas are to be included as permanent elements of the open space plan and be coordinated with hiking trails.

NHR-D.1.16 The City shall protect open space from intrusion by public projects.

- a. Planned open space is to be protected from intrusion by massive public works projects such as freeways and utility systems wherever possible. When protection is not possible, such projects shall be designed to permit compatible recreational development.
- b. Public utilities should be consolidated and located to avoid scenic areas. Wherever feasible, power and pipe utility lines should be consolidated to prevent further severance of the open space. Utility lines and pipelines in open space areas should be located so as to permanently avoid marring areas of outstanding beauty.

NHR-D.1.17 The City shall permit amendments from agricultural designations especially upon demonstration that the agricultural use is no longer economically viable, and that the new uses proposed meet the overall goals and objectives of the General Plan.

Implementation Programs

None identified beyond existing programs.