



## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

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8/19/92  
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RE: Draft Laguna de Santa Rosa Park Master Plan

Sir:

In reviewing the Draft Laguna de Santa Rosa Park Master Plan, the following comments are noted:

1. Approximately 50% of the land area covered by the draft master plan lies outside of existing City limits, and approximately 30% lies outside of both the City's current Sphere of Influence and its Urban Service Area (as designated on the County's General Plan Land Use map).
2. The County General Plan Open Space map designates unincorporated property adjacent to the Laguna and outside of the City's Urban Service Area, as Critical Habitat Area (subject to the attached policies). Unincorporated property adjacent to the Laguna but inside the City's Urban Service Area, has no open space or other resource protection designations. The County Trails map does not show any trail in this portion of the Laguna except for the old railroad track alignment (Joe Rodota Trail). There is a trail shown extending from the City of Rohnert Park along the north side of the Laguna channel westward to Llano Road.
3. County policy has been to avoid net fill within the 100 year flood plain of the Laguna (76' msl). However, agricultural uses and structures may be placed within the flood plain, and residential uses may be applied for with a use permit.
4. County General Plan Resource Conservation Policy RC-5d and Land Use Policy LU-9c (attached), both specifically identify the Laguna de Santa Rosa as an area for future study and development of specific protection/enhancement policies. At this time, no County studies have been initiated.

If the Laguna Park Master Plan is to be implemented as proposed, either the City would need to annex the unincorporated area to control private development on it, or the County would need to implement the plan in the unincorporated area. Coordination

could be accomplished with varying degrees of effectiveness by using one or more of the following alternatives:

A. The County could provide a courtesy referral of all building and project permits within the proposed park area to the City; and/or

B. The County could adopt minimal protection within the proposed park area by amending its General Plan Open Space Element to establish Critical Habitat and Trail designations as established in the Master Plan; and/or

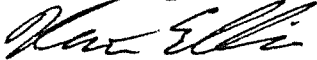
C. The County could amend its General Plan Open Space Element and Land Use Element to establish special area policies implementing most of the Master Plans goals and objectives; and/or

D. The County could jointly adopt the proposed Laguna Park Master Plan with the City, amending all necessary General Plan, Zoning, and flood ordinances to fully implement the plan.

It should be noted that in implementing any plan that includes private property, the Board of Supervisors has historically been protective of existing property rights, stressing voluntary cooperation with property owners.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me at 527-1900.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Ellison  
Planner III

cc Supervisor Carpenter



# Critical Habitat Policies

**Goal OS-4** Identify critical habitat areas and assure that the quality of these natural resources is maintained and not adversely affected by development activities.

**Objective OS-4.1:** Designate important wetlands, marshes and other critical habitats and maintain low intensity land uses in these areas.

**Objective OS-4.2:** Establish development guidelines to protect designated critical habitat areas.

The County shall use the following policies to achieve these objectives:

**OS-4a:** Add a Biotic Resources combining district to the zoning ordinance.

**OS-4b:** Rezone to the Biotic Resources combining district any lands designated as a critical habitat area.

**OS-4c:** Require the preparation of a biotic resource assessment to develop mitigation measures if the Planning Director determines that a discretionary project could adversely impact a designated critical habitat area.

**OS-4d:** Establish building envelopes to avoid designated critical habitat areas on tentative maps.

**OS-4e:** Require on building permits a minimum setback of 50 feet from the edge of any wetlands which are within a critical habitat area. Exempt existing farm buildings and allow them to be expanded or modified.

**OS-4f:** Consider waiver of the setback if, after preparation of a biotic resource assessment, it is determined that applying the setback makes the parcel unbuildable or the structure is a noncommercial agricultural building and must be located adjacent to an existing farm complex for efficient farm operation.

**OS-4g:** Consider voluntary transfer of development rights (TDR) and purchase of development rights (PDR) programs and make critical habitat areas eligible with owner consent.

## 3.2 POLICY FOR RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

Areas along streams with native vegetation are referred to as riparian corridors. Diverse vegetation and the streamside environment offer insect and plant food, shelter, and nesting sites and provide a water source for birds, fish, and mammals. The plant cover regulates water, temperature and provides a nursery habitat for trout, salmon, steelhead, and other fish.

Riparian vegetation contributes to both water quantity and quality. Plants and trees serve as filters for sediment, pesticides, and fertilizers. They stabilize banks and keep soils loose and permeable, allowing aquifers along streams to be recharged. Elimination of natural plant communities along streams can increase surface run-off and siltation, which, in turn, can create a stream environment detrimental to fisheries. Riparian corridors are therefore an important part of open space.

Riparian areas can create conflicts with agricultural and urban uses. Overgrazing can remove vegetative cover. Lands along streams often contain prime cropland soils. Riparian areas can harbor insect pests and plant diseases which may infect adjacent vineyards and orchards.

**Goal OS-5** Provide protective measures for riparian corridors along selected streams which balance the need for agricultural production, urban development, timber and mining operations, and flood control with preservation of riparian values.

**Objective OS-5.1:** Classify important streams with native vegetation as "riparian corridors". Develop guidelines to protect and manage these areas as valuable resources.

Vegetation helps reduce surface runoff, retains soils, and maintain stream banks. Plant communities also provide wildlife and fish habitat and are necessary to maintain a healthy and diverse physical environment.

Some vegetation has been heavily disturbed in the past. Forests have been logged, grasslands, brushlands and woodlands converted to urban or agricultural use, non native species introduced, and natural fires prevented. These activities have changed the landscape and forced wildlife onto marginal lands.

**Goal RC-5 Promote and maintain the County's diverse plant and animal communities and protect biotic resources from development activities.**

**Objective RC-5.1:** Identify and encourage protection of areas with important wildlife habitats and woodland resources.

**Objective RC-5.2:** Encourage the use of native plants in landscaping to reduce the risk of introducing exotic plant species into wildlife areas.

**Objective RC-5.3:** Recognize and preserve the Laguna de Santa Rosa and the San Pablo Bay area as biotic resource areas and historic water retention basins of particular significance to Sonoma County's environment.

In addition to the policies of the Land Use and Open Space Elements, the following policies shall be used to carry out these objectives:

**RC-5a:** Apply the "Resources and Rural Development" land use category where it is the County's intent to manage and conserve natural resources, including wildlife and vegetation habitats while allowing a compatible level of residential development.

**RC-5b:** On discretionary projects, use native or compatible non native species to the extent possible for landscaping. Discourage use of exotics, such as pampas grass and scotch broom.

**RC-5c:** Make the preservation of significant native oaks and other native trees a primary consideration in the review of development projects.

**RC-5d:** Develop comprehensive programs for preservation and restoration of the Laguna de Santa Rosa as shown on Figures RC-2c, 2d, 2e, and 2f on pages 233 - 239 and for the San Pablo Bay Area as shown on Figures RC-2h and RC-2i on pages 243 - 245. Include mechanisms for preservation and enhancement such as acquisition, zoning and easements. Avoid activities such as filling, grading or construction that would be detrimental to the biotic resources or historic water retention functions of these areas.

**RC-5e:** Encourage landowners to voluntarily participate in the County's Landmark Tree Program.

## 5.2 PROTECTION OF RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Small populations of plants and animals which are in danger of extinction due to the loss or alteration of habitat are protected by state and federal law. These species are highly sensitive to any change in their habitat and could be adversely impacted by development. Rare and endangered plant and animals species frequently provide essential links in the natural ecosystem.

**Goal RC-6 Identify and protect rare and endangered species and their environment.**

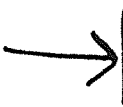
**Objective RC-6.1:** Identify the locations of rare and endangered plants and animals.

**Objective RC-6.2:** Require that any development on lands containing rare and endangered species be done in a manner which protects the resource or mitigates adverse impacts.

LU-9a: Establish maximum densities and/or siting standards for development in community separators, scenic landscape units, critical habitats, riparian corridors, and scenic corridors.

LU-9b: Use incentives to encourage voluntary easements when considering development on lands with important biotic or scenic resources.

LU-9c: Develop programs for preservation and enhancement of important biotic resource areas with emphasis on lands surrounding the Laguna de Santa Rosa and San Pablo Bay.



## 2.2 RESIDENTIAL USE POLICY

Two residential land use categories are used on the land use plan maps, urban residential and rural residential. The urban residential category may be utilized only within an urban service area. Maximum residential densities are shown on the land use plan maps. While other land use categories may permit limited or incidental residential use, only these shall be considered residential use categories. The designation criteria shall be applied when considering future plan amendments. Additional standards applicable to development on residential lands may be included in the zoning and subdivision ordinances and in specific or area plans or local area development guidelines.

### 2.2.1 Policy for Urban Residential Areas

Purpose and Definition: This category includes land planned for a full range of urban services for residential development. It accommodates a variety of housing types, such as stick-built and manufactured homes, and all tenure types, depending upon the density assigned on the land use maps.

#### Permitted Uses:

Primary land uses in high density residential areas are attached single family and multi-family dwellings and mobile home parks.

Primary land uses in medium density residential areas are single family, clustered, and multi-family dwellings and mobile home parks.

Primary land uses in low density residential areas are detached single family, clustered, and attached dwellings.

Secondary land uses in all of the above areas include "second units" ("granny units"), guest houses, home occupations, small scale home care and group care facilities, churches, and public and private schools.

#### Permitted Residential Densities and Development Criteria:

Permitted residential density ranges from one to twenty units per gross acre and is shown on the land use map. Three density ranges are included which provide for a variety of housing types as described above. Building permit approval shall require connection to public sewer and/or water. Residential densities on the land use maps are based upon availability of urban services and infrastructure, land use compatibility, environmental suitability, projected growth, neighborhood character, and other factors in previous plans.

High density residential areas range from 12-20 units per gross acre. Density bonus units and "second units" are in addition to permitted density. Design review is required for all multi-unit structures and for projects of 4 or more units.

Medium density residential areas range from 6-12 units per gross acre. Density bonus units and "second units" are in addition to permitted density.