

Open Space Element

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Open Space element describes the city's mountain and desert preserves and trail systems within parks, along washes, canals and utility corridors and in the Rio Salado (Salt River).

Natural open spaces: protect and preserve significant open space areas for public enjoyment and provide connections among them.

Linear open space: create a continuous nonmotorized trail system using canals, washes, drainage corridors and rivers for recreation and alternative transportation purposes and as a public amenity.

Desert parks and preserve trails: create a network of shared-use trails and pathways that are safe, convenient and connected within preserves and parks.

Edge treatment: preserve natural washes coming from the preserves and promote access and views of the preserves by the public.

INTRODUCTION

The Open Space element includes a description of the areas of Phoenix that provide public open space. These areas provide space for recreation, environmental preservation and natural hydrologic systems. It also includes analysis of need; policies for management; and designated access points, protection, and acquisition strategies. This element also is consistent with the Sonoran Preserve Master Plan (1998) and the Maricopa Association of Governments Desert Spaces Plan (1996), which established preserve design principles based on ecological theory, context and regional framework for an integrated open space system. The plans promote linkages to similar spaces in adjacent cities and other jurisdictions. The element presents goals and policies that promote the preservation of natural open space adjacent to a built environment. The Open Space element is related to and supports goals and policies of these other General Plan elements: Land Use, Recreation, Circulation, Bicycling, Natural Resources Conservation, and Growth Area.

The city of Phoenix manages more than 29,000 acres of mountain preserves and desert parks. Figure 1: Existing Open Space, shows the existing open space, preserves, and desert parks in Phoenix, and existing

and planned access points. For detailed inventory data and amenities, visit or call the City of Phoenix Parks Development Division in the Parks, Recreation and Library Department. Included are landmarks such as Camelback Mountain and Squaw Peak as well as South Mountain, North Mountain, Shadow Mountain, Lookout Mountain, Papago Park, and Union Hills and Deem Hills recreation areas. Other natural areas that contribute to the open spaces in Phoenix include: the Salt River (the Rio Salado/Tres Rios projects); the various canals; and the Cave Creek, Skunk Creek, and Scatter Wash hydrologic systems. These areas accommodate various recreational and outdoor activities - hiking, mountain bicycling, horseback riding, picnicking, outdoor education, bird watching, and biological field studies.

History

As early as 1924, community leaders recognized the need to save significant mountain areas for future generations. Phoenix was only five and one-half square miles, had 38,500 residents, and was more than seven miles north of the Salt River Mountains when the city, with the assistance of citizens and U.S. Senator Hayden, convinced President Coolidge to sell 13,000 acres of federal land for a park. Today, this land is part of the 16,500-acre South Mountain Park.

In 1959, the city focused on preserving the 1,100 acres of unique landform known as Papago Park. This picturesque desert setting is now home to the Phoenix Zoo, the Desert Botanical Gardens, a sports complex, picnic area, urban fishing lakes, professional baseball spring training facilities, and the Papago golf course, one of the ten best municipal golf courses in the country.

Figures 2-5 show photos of and from the various mountain preserves. Figure 6 shows trailhead parking.

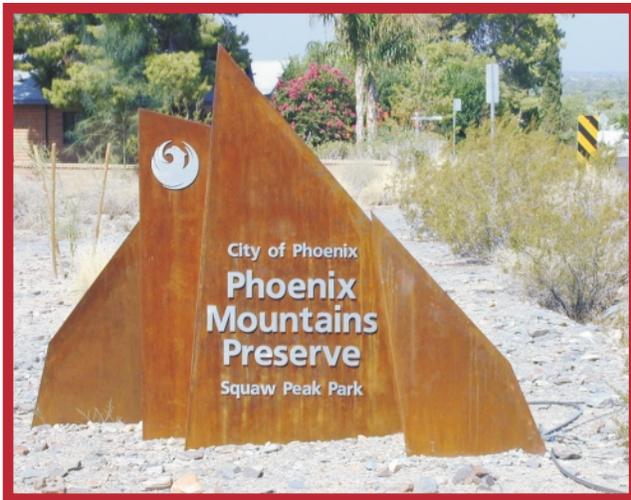


FIGURE 2 - Phoenix Mountain Preserve Signage



FIGURE 3 - Phoenix Looking Back to South Mountain

In the late 1960s, Senator Barry Goldwater, "Lady Bird" Johnson, and other civic leaders collaborated to save portions of Camelback Mountain. (See Figure 3). Today, 350 acres above the 1,800-foot elevation and 76 acres in Echo Canyon have been preserved. By the 1970s, the city had grown to 248 square miles, with a population in excess of 548,000, when Valley equestrians recognized that encroaching development was cutting off access to the south side of Squaw Peak. They took the Phoenix Mayor and City Council out for a morning breakfast ride to see first-hand the beauty and recreational potential of the Phoenix mountains. The 7,500 acres of mountain preserve set aside for all to enjoy, as a result of that initial effort, is a testament to their vision and commitment.

The Salt River runs for 24 miles through the middle of Phoenix, and the SRP canal system weaves for 79 linear miles through several sections of the city. The Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal passes through



FIGURE 4 - Camelback Mountain

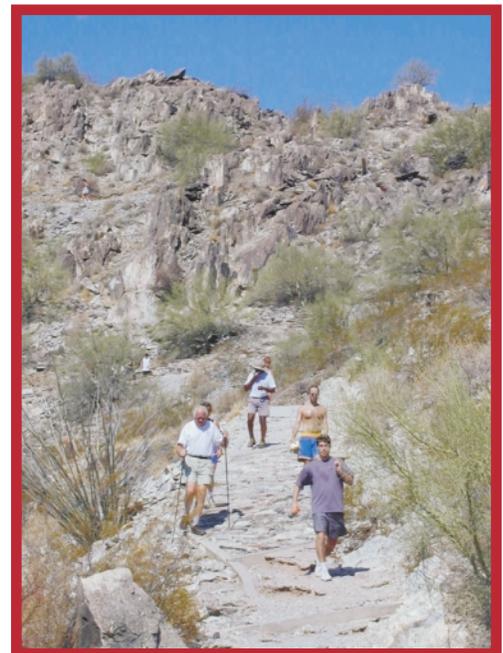


FIGURE 5 - Hikers Enjoying the Preserves

north Phoenix. The canal has a trail on its southern right-of-way boundary that connects the Colorado River to Tucson. A 14-mile-long trail exists on the north side of the Reach 11 recreation area. The Metropolitan Canal Study (1990) identified the enormous value the canal banks have to residents for walking and jogging trails and as an alternate transportation route within neighborhoods. These features are now being recognized by the public for open space value and recreation potential. The 1998 Rio Salado project on the Salt River is a demonstration of how to recreate a desert riparian habitat and restore a river environment. Trails and parks will accent this effort and provide recreational opportunities to people living and working in central Phoenix.

Three major wash systems in the city have been altered for flood control but are being adapted for open space and recreational uses - the Cave Creek

Wash, Scatter Wash, and most recently Skunk Creek along the Interstate 17 corridor. Washes should remain in their natural state and allow growth of native vegetation. This is important for erosion control and natural development of ecological systems within the wash. Federal laws prohibit removing vegetation and earth in a wash without proper permits and approvals. Washes have their own unique ecosystem, which should be promoted as a special amenity in an urban setting.

Private efforts should be made to control vegetation growth when it becomes a fire hazard, by allowing homeowners to clear annual plant material and create firebreaks up to 10 feet wide. Non-native annuals such as tumbleweeds should be removed from wash corridors. Community cleanups and collaborations should be encouraged to complete these tasks. There should be no dumping of landscaping material or debris in washes, as it creates a fire hazard, unsightly conditions, and potential blockages of water flow during storm events. Designs of wash areas should allow access into the wash for emergency vehicles and fire fighting equipment.



FIGURE 6 - Trailhead Parking



FIGURE 7 - Canal Bank Trail

SONORAN PRESERVE MASTER PLAN

By 1999, Phoenix was more than 475 square miles and home to 1.23 million residents. The City Council adopted the Phoenix Sonoran Preserve Master Plan to meet the needs of the growing community, and to maintain a standard of one square mile of city-owned preserve land per 17,000 residents. This plan recommended preserving an additional 20,000 acres of undisturbed desert within the city limits, and identified a variety of landforms including washes, bajada (slopes), and mountains for preservation. It also identified the need for additional public open space in Phoenix, established service levels, management guidelines and policies, and evaluated implementation strategies. The preserve plan builds on past work by Phoenix and incorporates the goals of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Desert Spaces Plan (1996). Ecological principles included are: (1) hydrologic processes should be maintained, (2) connectivity of desert patches and corridors should be maintained, (3) patches should be as large as possible, (4) unique and interesting mosaics of landforms and vegetation types should be included in the preserve, (5) diverse mosaics should be integrated into the developed human environment, and (6) a preserve should be considered at multiple scales. Another preserve plan recommendation is to preserve lands above the 10 percent slope, including transition lands and washes in their undisturbed state. Figure 8 shows Pyramid Peak in the Sonoran Preserve. Eight access points were identified in the plan shown on Figure 9, Proposed Open Space.

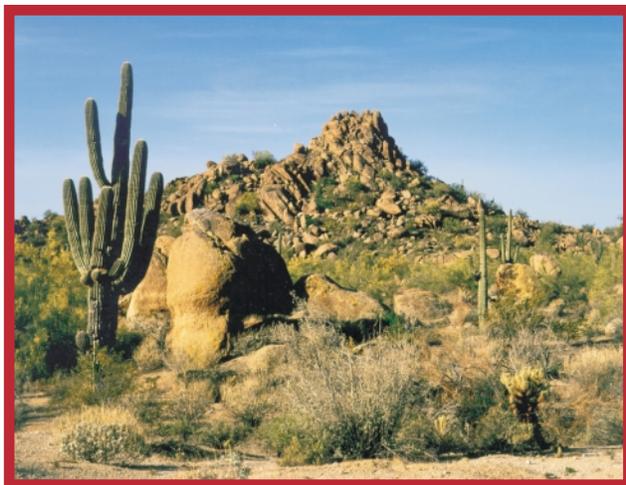


FIGURE 8 - Pyramid Peak in the Sonoran Preserve

The plan includes 15,000 acres of State Trust Lands in the north Valley. The city has applied to the State

Land Commissioner to designate these lands as appropriate for conservation under the Arizona Preserve Initiative. In September 1999, the voters of Phoenix approved, by almost 80 percent, a sales tax increase to help fund the acquisition of these lands. On January 21, 2000, the Land Commissioner and Governor Hull signed an order designating 9,963 acres as appropriate for conservation. These lands are east of I-17. On June 12, 2001, the commissioner and governor amended the order to also include 3,616 acres of land west of I-17, for a total of 13,377 acres.

The sales tax increase is intended to fund the acquisition of the 15,000 acres of State Trust Lands for the Sonoran Preserve over the next 10 years. The city has developed acquisition strategies for the balance of 5,101 acres of private land. A full report on these strategies is available in the city of Phoenix Planning Department.

GOAL 1 NATURAL OPEN SPACES: UNIQUE OR SIGNIFICANT NATURAL OPEN SPACES SHOULD BE PRESERVED AND PROTECTED.

Policies:

1. Prohibit new roadways through preserve areas, except as provided for in the City Charter.
2. Provide seamless connection between significant regional parks and public open spaces, with utility corridors, bike paths, light rail/public transit access points, canals, rights-of-way, and recreation areas managed by city, county, state, and federal agencies.

Recommendations:

- A. Limit new utility easements through preserve areas except those classified as major transmission/distribution. Major utility corridors should be encouraged to route outside preserve boundaries. If required to pass through preserve lands, the preference is for undergrounding and routing to have the least amount of environmental impact on geologic features, vegetation and wildlife.

- B. Develop a seamless connection system of access between significant regional parks and open spaces, with signage, markings and maps for users of open spaces.
- 3. Preserve lands above the 10 percent slope, in accord with the Sonoran Preserve Master Plan, and preserve linkages and transition lands between mountains and washes.
- 4. Preserve wildlife corridors and significant desert ecology along drainage ways, by encouraging drainage systems that preserve the undisturbed natural desert wash characteristics such as low-velocity flows, sedimentation, and dispersed flows. Nonstructural flood control measures are preferred and, where possible, should be employed in new developments. Coordinate with developers and Maricopa County Flood Control District personnel to plan nonstructural wash corridors, and where appropriate, establish links with preserve areas.
- 5. Provide resource-based recreational opportunities such as bird watching, nature study, picnicking, interpretation, and environmental education.
- 6. Provide alternative transportation corridors for walking, commuter and recreational bicycling, horseback riding, and other nonmotorized modes of transportation (except as required by American with Disabilities Act).

Recommendation:

- A. Develop a seamless connection system of access between significant regional parks and open spaces with signage, markings and maps for users of open spaces.
- 7. Preserve significant views and defined public access to cultural and visual landmarks such as large tree bosques (groves), viewsheds, washes, rock outcroppings, historic sites, and archaeological sites through rezoning stipulations and site plan reviews in accord with adopted plans.

- 8. Encourage partnerships with other city departments, adjacent municipalities, and regional agencies which promote the open space goals and policies.
- 9. Limit commercial activity in the preserves to licensed uses authorized by the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Board.
- 10. Acquire and develop additional parks and natural open spaces prior to urbanization when possible.

Recommendations:

- A. Complete acquisition of land within the adopted Preserve Program.
- B. Continue to work toward implementation of the adopted Sonoran Preserve Master Plan.
- C. Amend the Sonoran Preserve Master Plan to include the Sonoran Wash and appropriate land in the newly annexed areas of Phoenix.
- 11. Establish management, maintenance, acquisition and funding guidelines that support open space goals.

Recommendations:

- A. Develop fire management policies that allow homeowners to clear annual plant material and create 10-foot wide firebreaks. For example, non-native species, such as tumbleweed, should be removed regularly. Allow access to wash areas for fire and emergency vehicles.
- B. Use the city's public involvement process policy for specific access locations and facility design and construction.

GOAL 2 LINEAR OPEN SPACE: LINEAR SYSTEMS OF OPEN SPACE SUCH AS CANALS, WASHES, DRAINAGE CORRIDORS, AND RIVERS SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A CONTINUOUS NONMOTORIZED TRAIL SYSTEM THAT SERVES AS AN ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, PROVIDES A POSITIVE

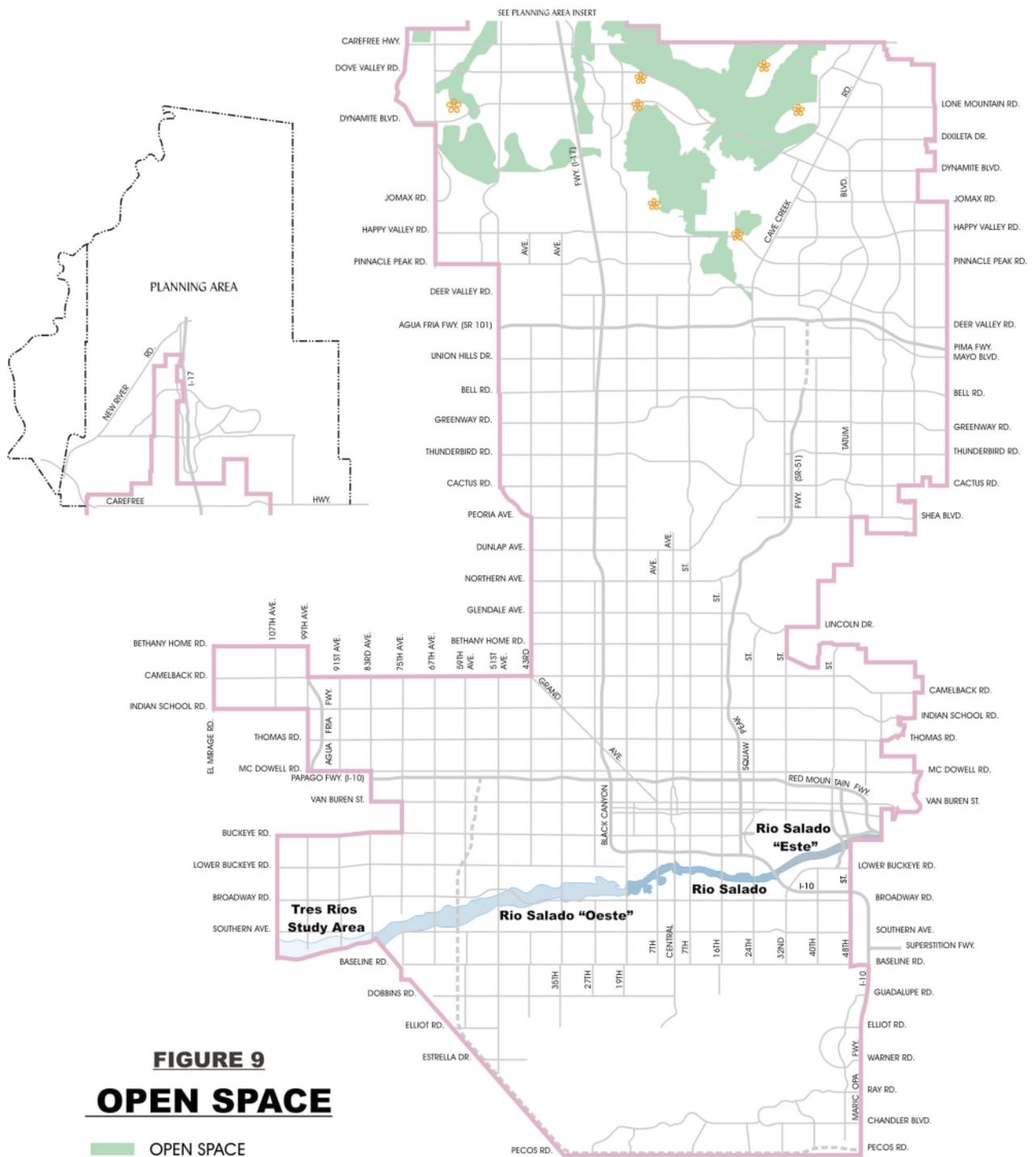


FIGURE 9
OPEN SPACE

- OPEN SPACE
- ACCESS
- TRES RIOS STUDY AREA
- RIO SALADO "OESTE"
- RIO SALADO
- RIO SALADO "ESTE"

RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCE, AND FORMS A NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITY (SEE FIGURE 10: TRAIL SYSTEM).

with private property owners, Salt River Project and Maricopa County Flood Control District.

Policies:

1. Promote the development of a continuously enhanced canal bank system linked to other trails, parks, and urban services and amenities.

Recommendations:

- A. Update design guidelines for SRP canals as needed, which protect and promote the physical and visual access and attractiveness of canal banks for users and adjacent properties, and also promote user safety.
 - B. Strongly consider applying canal design guidelines to other canal drainage systems.
 - C. Require developments adjacent to canal banks, major washes, rivers, and drainage corridors to utilize current standards and guidelines.
 - D. Develop character plans for segments of the canal banks.
 - E. Prepare plans for and implement canal demonstration area projects.
2. Provide open space and recreation-oriented development in the Rio Salado, Tres Rios, and West Valley Recreation Corridors.

Recommendations:

- A. Implement the master plans for Rio Salado, Tres Rios, and West Valley Recreation Corridor as resources allow.
 - B. Expand the Rio Salado Restoration Project east and west to the city limits and seek additional funding.
3. Provide continuous trail systems and recreation amenities as part of flood control conveyance channel projects (e.g., Laveen Area Conveyance Channel), in cooperation

4. Manage washes and other flood control facilities based on demonstrable recreation value that meets the city's park standards.

GOAL 3 DESERT PARKS AND PRESERVE TRAILS: A NETWORK OF SHARED-USE TRAILS AND PATHWAYS THAT IS SAFE, CONVENIENT, AND CONNECTED WITHIN AN OPEN-SPACE SYSTEM OF DESERT PARKS AND PRESERVES SHOULD BE CREATED, MANAGED AND PRESERVED.

Policies:

1. Serve a wide range of users, allowing for diversity of non-motorized uses and changing recreation interests and technologies.
2. Integrate the trails system into the regional network.

Recommendations:

- A. Prepare and distribute maps, brochures, and other information on the trails and pathway system in order to inform the public of current and future opportunities. An interactive World Wide Web site should be the primary component of this system.
 - B. Work with Tempe to extend the trail system from Rio Salado to Papago Park to connect with the Phoenix Zoo and the Desert Botanical Gardens.
3. Encourage the widest possible range of opportunities for non-motorized recreation (except as allowed by ADA) and multi-modal transportation systems.

Recommendations:

- A. Update the city trails/pathways plan, including an inventory by location, types of surface, management responsibilities, etc.

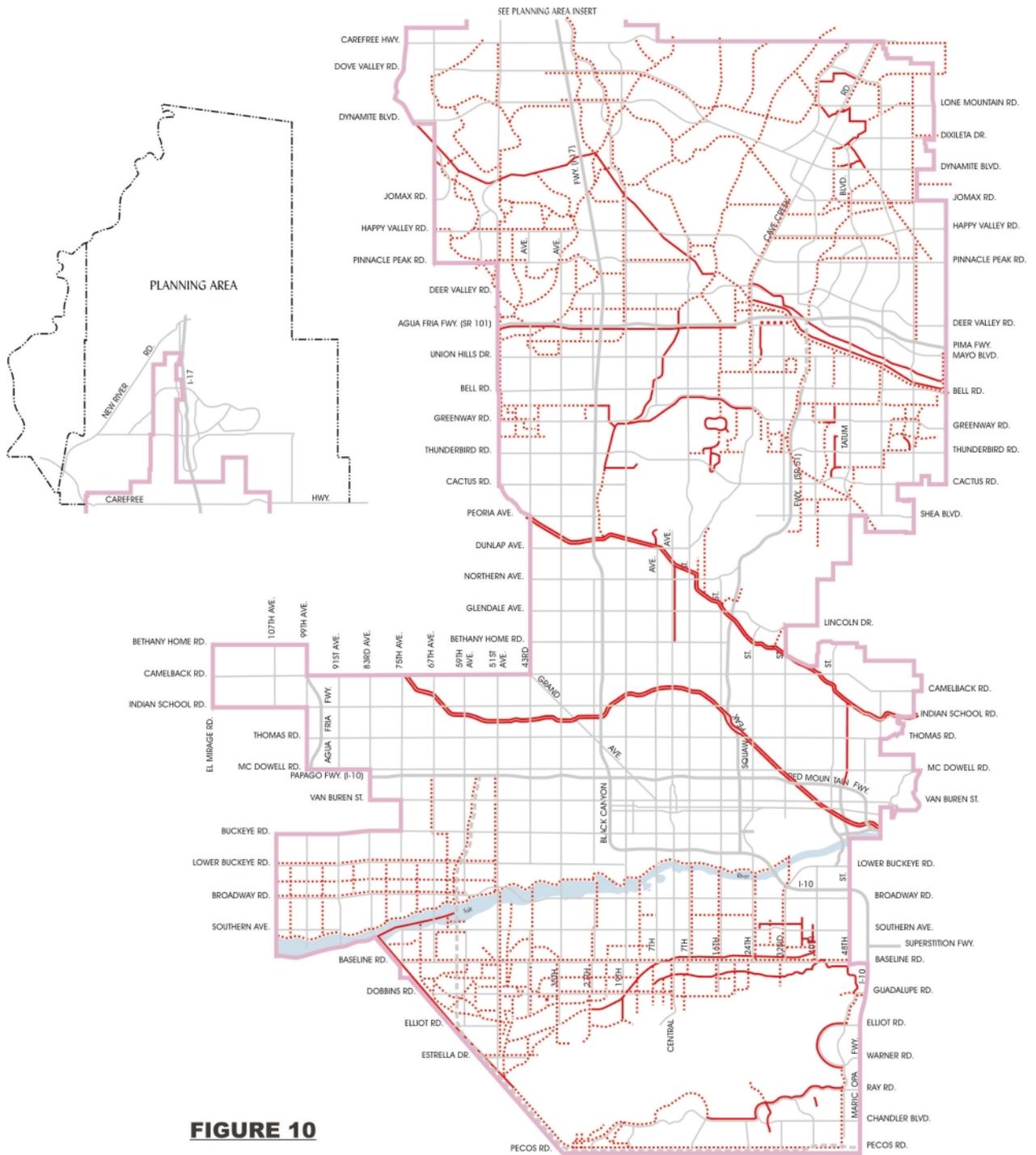


FIGURE 10
CITY TRAIL SYSTEM

- EXISTING TRAILS
- - - PROPOSED TRAILS



- B. Develop standards for planning, design, management and maintenance of trails and pathways within parks, preserves, open space, and rights-of-way.
 - C. Solicit recommendations from the public (e.g., trail user groups and village planning committees) as to where trails should go.
 - D. Encourage pedestrian access to preserves on well-marked developed and maintained trails.
4. Provide sufficient resources to maintain preserves, parks, and trail systems.

GOAL 4 EDGE TREATMENT: THE DESIGN INTERFACE (EDGE TREATMENT) OF PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT AND PARKS, PRESERVES, AND NATURAL AREAS IS CRITICAL TO THE NATURAL FUNCTIONS AND PUBLIC ENJOYMENT OF THESE AREAS, AND THE EDGE SHOULD PROVIDE VISUAL AND PHYSICAL ACCESS.



FIGURE 11 - Development Near Preserves

Policies:

- 1. Establish design and management standards for natural major washes and connected open spaces that will allow preservation of the natural ecological and hydrological systems of major washes while allowing for appropriate public use.

Recommendation:

- A. Implement any design guidelines adopted by the City Council that preserve natural washes by encouraging nonstructural flood control and include wide, natural wash corridors that are substantially undisturbed and that allow for the growth of natural vegetation for

controlling erosion and sustaining ecological systems.

- 2. Propose new design standards that address drainage, use of native plants, edge effect, and access - both visual and physical - for private and public development adjacent to public preserves, parks, washes and open spaces.

Recommendation:

- A. Implement any design guidelines adopted by the City Council that require private development adjacent to parks preserves, washes, and open spaces to provide visual and physical access to the public from a variety of land uses. The guidelines should include orienting development to open space, single-loaded streets as predominant edge, native plant policy, public access points, and transition areas.