

Open Space and Trails CDP Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide information so you can have informed input to the SLDC Public Input Process for the open space and trails CDP. This document includes the following;

1. Existing code and policies relating to open space and trails and problems identified with existing code.
2. Summary of the issues and policies identified in the Sustainable Growth Management Plan (SGMP) for this CDP
3. Considerations for open space and trails system
4. A series of possible alternatives for implementation of the SGMP policies. Other alternatives are welcome.
5. Questions and related information for the Open Space and Trails CDP

Existing Code and Policies regarding Trails and Open Space.

The current county code and regulations for trails are summarized below:

- There are no clear code requirements for open space and trails in the Code.
- Some community or district plans have clear trail and/or open space requirements.
- In addition, there are adopted policy documents that promote an integrated countywide open space and trails network.

What are some of the problems with the existing code?

Open space:

1. Current code does not implement adopted open space policy.
2. Current code does not clearly define what open space is.
3. Current code does not provide methods to create contiguous open spaces.
4. Open space corridors for wildlife aren't clearly identified.
5. Traditional access to public lands area is sometimes cut off by new development

Trails:

1. Current code does not provide clear mechanisms to create a connected inter-modal transportation system.
2. No regulations or design standards.
3. No clear mechanism for creating trailheads exists.

What do the SGMP policies state about Open Space and Trails?

1.4.3.2. Provide access to outdoor recreation areas, trails and community centers.

Policy 20.3: Preserve and protect wildlife habitat, migration corridors, riparian areas and surface water resources that support wildlife health should be preserved and protected.

Policy 20.4: New development should not cause significant degradation of wildlife or sensitive wildlife habitat, especially to any wildlife listed as threatened or endangered on a state or federal list.

Policy 22.1: New open space and park facilities should be established to match demands of population growth and expansion.

- Strategy 22.1.1: Require open space dedication standards for open space and trails in new development so that these are contiguous and connect with existing open space and trails on adjacent lands including connections/access to regional trails.
- Strategy 22.1.2: Require all subdivisions and site plans containing land lying adjacent to any tract or corridor designated on the Official Map to reserve or dedicate such land or a provide a spur connection to such designated lands.

Policy 22.2: Protect significant lands including: scenic vistas, environmentally sensitive areas (such as flood hazard areas, hillsides above 11% grade, areas accessible or adjacent to rivers, streams, creeks and springs, acequias, wildlife habitat or migration corridors, and areas of important native vegetation, archaeological, historic, agricultural areas and ranch lands.

CDP Background and Discussion: Trails and Open Space

- Strategy 22.2.1: Open Space that is preserved through clustering of development will be preferentially located on the most environmentally sensitive area of the site and should be interconnected with open space on adjacent properties when possible.

Policy 22.3: Adopt and maintain an Official Map to preserve the potential sites of an open space system of trails, parks, open spaces, scenic vistas, environmentally sensitive areas, scenic vistas, and recreation areas, in addition to other rights of way and sites for existing and future roads, schools, libraries and public facilities.

- Strategy 22.3.1: Map all existing conservation easements, wildlife corridors, conservation land, irrigated land, and rangeland, and integrate these data into the official map in order to plan for connectivity among open spaces and conservation lands.

Policy 22.7: Establish an interconnected system of trails and parks, with regional trail and park connections for pedestrians, equestrians, and cyclists.

- Strategy 22.7.1: Identify and map existing private trails and coordinate with private land owners, Pueblos, the BLM and the State Land Office to develop voluntary use agreements, easements.
- Strategy 22.7.2: Work with community planning groups to expand local trail networks near existing rural communities so that county residents have access to a trail system. Link these local trail networks to regional trails.
- Strategy 22.7.3: Continue to develop important regional trail corridors and rails to trails opportunities according to new trail design standards.

Policy 22.8: Develop trail design standards for recreational and commuter trails and implement them in the design of a trails network connecting open spaces, parks, neighborhoods, and commercial centers.

- Strategy 22.8.1: Include trail design standards in development review standards for both county and developer projects.

Policy 22.9: Require that the construction, design or location of park and trail corridors does not negatively impact environmental features or waterways.

Policy 22.11: Create and maintain safe access, parking, and trailheads for public lands and other open spaces.

Development in primary growth areas should plan for multi-modal transportation options, including walking, biking, transit, vehicles, and horses. Ideally, community center activity should be within a ¼ miles radius of the community edges to allow these choices of transportation modes to actually occur.

Policy 34.1: Develop an efficient multi-modal transportation network in Santa Fe County such that the access, mobility, and safety needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities are safely accommodated.

- Strategy 34.1.1: Establish requirements for on-street bike lanes and off-road bike paths in areas identified for improvements.
- Strategy 34.1.2: Require development plans to show clear, convenient and safe pedestrian connections between commercial developments and surrounding neighborhoods and provide safe bicycle, pedestrian infrastructure and equine access where practical.
- Preserve the edges of traditional and contemporary communities from development.
- Create an Interconnected Trails System. New trails should be connected to other new and existing trails in the County, creating opportunities for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians to circulate among residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. New trails should be designed and built in accordance with local and national sustainable trail design standards. The County trail network should be tied to the County multi-modal transportation network.
- Establishment of an Official Map to identify existing and planned open space and trails can ensure that these areas are planned and acquired pro-actively to achieve landscape wide preservation.
- SGMP sustainable land suitability analysis includes best available data:
 - Ecological features
 - Geologic features
 - Terrain / Slope Analysis
 - Rare or endangered species and species habitat
 - Riparian areas
 - Wetlands, Waterways / Arroyos
 - Sacred Places

Considerations for Open Space and Trails

Trails

1. A connected multi-modal transportation system requires safe connections. Defining possible future connections (e.g. adjacent subdivisions) requires good planning.
2. Trails designated around the perimeter of a development or in other locations with no regard to terrain can be difficult to use or maintain and are not the best locations and standards for trails.
3. Trail easements and other easements are put in place at the time of development approval but there is no systematic monitoring in place which may result in buildings encroaching on easements.
4. Certain trails are dedicated within a development without designated trailheads.
5. Street designs need to incorporate appropriate multi-modal safety.
6. Ensure interior lot access to open space and other destinations through right of way easements.
7. Reserve space within and between developments for potential acquisition of open space (e.g. connection to regional trail corridor).

Open Space

1. The county Open Space plan envisions a network of open spaces connected by trails.
2. Areas are sometimes designated as open space including utility easements, and areas that are fenced off. What constitutes "real" open space?
3. The question of what is public / private open space.
4. Open space is designated on individual lots. This practice does not achieve overall open space goals within a subdivision and can lead to problems regulate fencing and access.
5. Open space may be left to be managed by the home owners association (HOA), but if an HOA fails in its obligations, the result could be unintended uses or neglect.
6. If arroyos and waterways are trails, they may need an easement buffer *beyond* the arroyo boundary (25'? 50'? 100'?)
7. Difficulties ensuring protection of landscapes and other environmentally sensitive areas. This might be accomplished through a TDR program or other programmatic solutions.

A definition of public Open Space for discussion purposes:

- Parcels of land, or portions of parcels of land, designated by the developer which will remain natural or with restricted development for environmental, cultural, resource, community or recreational purposes through various regulatory and voluntary means.
- Undeveloped areas located on individual parcels is not considered Open Space.
- Open Space includes: natural and agricultural areas, archaeological and other culturally significant sites, greenways and greenbelts, parks, community gardens, plazas, and playgrounds.

Alternatives (Possible alternatives for discussion. Other alternatives are welcome.)

Trails

Alternative A: Existing Land Development Code Status Quo

Trails: Summary: Require trails in subdivisions of 25 or greater and require 6' shoulders on arterials.

Art. 5 Sec 8.4: Sidewalks and Paths - Requirements

8.4.1 When appropriate for purposes of public safety, sidewalks or walking paths may be required with paved roads of arterial classification...

8.4.2 For subdivisions of twenty-five (25) or more parcels, non-vehicular trails shall be required with roads of arterial, collector and subcollector classification. In lieu of this requirement, an internal, off-road trail system may be substituted, if the result connects existing trails, trail easements, or assists in the creation of an area-wide trail network on adjacent lands.

8.4.3 Where a subdivision is traversed by a trail, recognized by Santa Fe County, a trail easement shall be platted which conforms substantially with the trail. In lieu of this requirement an alternative trail connection or access may be substituted.

Alternative B:

1. Connectivity must be assured. Complete streets required so that everyone can safely reach open spaces and trails. Connection provided to adjacent open space and trails where appropriate.
2. Context sensitive design for trails designation. Consider location of neighboring open spaces and trails.
3. Provide trail connections to regional trails where appropriate.
4. Trail standards and trail head standards must be met.

Alternative C:

1. Require bike lanes combined with trails as part of the road system.
2. Require bike lanes to connect to and align with the County's bike lane plan and bike lanes on abutting property.

Alternative A: Existing Land Development Code Status Quo

Open Space: Summary Require parks for large subdivisions.

Article V 9.7. Parks and Recreation For subdivisions of twenty five (25) lots or more, open spaces shall be provided for parks and recreation on a ratio of ten (10) acres per 1,000 residents; provided however, that no such open spaces shall contain less than one (1) acre per subdivision. Said open spaces shall be of a nature and location suitable for park development.

A.1 Extraterritorial Zoning Area

a. In areas of the Extraterritorial Zoning Districtany proposed subdivision or land division will be required to preserve no less than thirty percent (30%) of the entire tract as permanent open space.

DENSITY BONUS OPTIONS	
DENSITY BONUS	OPEN SPACE RATIO
60%	45%
120%	60%
150%	80%

Alternative B:

1. 30% open space required
2. Land suitability analysis should be conducted depending on the size of the subdivision.
3. Connection provided to adjacent open space and trails where appropriate.
4. Establish context sensitive design for open space utilizing a land suitability analysis to designate high conservation value areas as open space.
5. Consider location of neighboring open spaces and trails.
6. Neighborhood parks and their maintenance are required of the developer.

Alternative C:

1. Greater than 30% open space dedication where the land suitability analysis indicates the need for greater resource conservation. Utilize density bonuses and density transfers to offset greater open space dedication. Factor in tax benefits for putting land into conservation easements with a land trust. Reserve corridors and buffers at regular intervals within and around the subdivision to accommodate contiguity for people and wildlife.
2. Intersect programmatic goals with subdivision regulations. Set aside key, strategic spaces (parcels or portions of parcels), beyond the 30% requirement, for potential future open space acquisition by county open space program. Implement a sunset clause for the developer if the parcel is not acquired within an agreed upon time frame.

Alternative D:

1. Required 10% of gross floor area as open space for commercial development
2. Required Parks and Open Space 20% of total developable area
3. Require a playground within 10,000 feet of each residence in a new subdivision.
4. Require 1 park per 1,000 residents
5. Establish design and maintenance requirements for parks and open space

Questions

Trails

1. How should the code implement trail (multi-modal) transportation connections?
 - a. On road trails
 - b. Off road trail connections to create a parallel infrastructure
2. What trail standards are appropriate and where?
3. What standards are appropriate for trail heads and parking and where?
4. How are connections made between adjacent developments?

Open Space

1. What are the basic types of open space and what are our objectives for each?
 - a. Public Facilities: Parks, recreational areas
 - b. Environmental: wildlife corridors, riparian areas
 - c. Viewscapes
 - d. Cultural / Historical Preservation
2. What is an appropriate level of parks/open space?
3. How should wildlife corridors be defined and supported?
4. How should view sheds be defined and supported?
5. Is contiguous open space always desirable?
6. What should be required and what should be incentivized?
7. Who should pay and how?