

California Oak Foundation
Sample Language for

**PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN PROVISIONS
FOR THE CONSERVATION OF OAK WOODLANDS**

GOAL

Oak trees, oak woodlands, and associated habitats have intrinsic aesthetic, environmental, ecological, wildlife and economic values. Therefore, the conservation of oak dominated landscapes is important to the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of the city/county. (Woodlands are defined as lands on which there is tree cover of 10%, and oak woodlands exist where the majority of the trees are of the genus *Quercus*.) The city/county finds that it is necessary to enact general plan policies and implement ordinances to protect the oak habitats from unnecessary damage, removal or destruction. The city/county also finds that it is necessary to take actions to encourage the planting of native oak trees where appropriate to enhance or restore damaged or degraded oak woodland habitats and mitigate unavoidable losses. Additionally, the city/county must educate landowners and the general public about oak woodland ecological values.

POLICIES

1. Protect and extend the diversity of oak woodlands and associated habitats (defined as lands on which the majority of the trees are of the genus *Quercus*) through site design and land use regulations.
2. Reduce in scale, redesign, modify, or if no other alternative exists, deny any project which cannot sufficiently mitigate significant adverse impacts to oak woodlands.
3. Encourage property owners to establish Open Space Easements or deed restrictions for areas containing oak woodlands, and allow access to enable scientific study.
4. Encourage concentration of development on minimum number of acres (density exemptions) in exchange for maximizing long term open space.
5. As a mitigation option, allow as a condition of development approval, restoration of any area of oak woodland which is in a degraded condition, with the magnitude of restoration commensurate with the scope of the project which may include planting of native oak trees, removal of non-native or invasive species on appropriate sites with consideration for long term viability, management and protection, and/or modification of existing land uses. The object of habitat restoration shall be to enhance the functional capacity and biological productivity of the oak woodland and to restore it to a condition where it can be self-sustaining through natural occurrences such as fire, natural hydrological processes, etc.

ACTIONS

1. The Planning Department shall inventory the land in the city/county to determine the location of the oak woodlands. City/county actions shall be guided by a no net loss of oak woodlands. The inventory shall include the type of oak woodland habitats using the classification system of the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships system (WHR) (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988) available from the California Department of Fish and Game. The inventory shall break down the habitat types using the WHR canopy cover classes and indicate total acres of each oak woodland type by each cover class found in the city/county.
2. Any project (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21065) proposed for oak woodlands shall be specifically analyzed for ways in which the development affects oak woodlands and their attendant ecological, economic, and aesthetic values. The placement of proposed roads and structures shall avoid oak trees and their drip lines. City/county planners and the project proponent shall consider transferring density, creating parcels with unusual lot line configurations, placing roads within lot boundaries, and other creative design techniques to avoid impacts to oak woodlands.
3. After consulting with citizens, natural resource specialists or ecologists, the Planning Department shall annually report to the city/county on the status and condition of oak woodlands in the city/county. This may be accomplished through a citizen advisory board. The Department shall recommend any actions it believes are necessary to maintain and/or improve the status and condition of oak woodlands in the city/county.
4. The city/county shall develop and distribute information to residents on at least the following subjects: the appropriate native oak trees to plant for particular locations; the proper planting and care of oak trees; the identification of oak tree diseases; the barriers to oak tree regeneration; and the values of oak trees. In developing and distributing this information, the city/county arborist, forester, planner or other representative can seek assistance from the agricultural commissioner, U.C. Cooperative Extension, the county or regional parks department and local representatives of state resource management agencies.
5. The Parks Department will evaluate oak woodlands in the city/county and identify sites which should be acquired for public open space because of their recreation and natural value. A mitigation plan will be developed for each city/county to preserve current species.
6. Encourage policies to maintain privately owned oak woodlands as a cost-effective conservation strategy.

**POLICY RESOLUTION
FOR OAK WOODLANDS CONSERVATION**

WHEREAS, oak trees (genus *Quercus*) and oak woodlands have intrinsic aesthetic, environmental and ecological values, and

WHEREAS, the preservation of oak woodlands is important to the health, safety, welfare, and economic health of the community, and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to enact general plan policies and implement ordinances to protect oak trees and oak woodlands from unnecessary damage, removal or destruction, and

WHEREAS, it is also necessary to encourage planting of native oak trees as appropriate to restore oak woodlands and mitigate unavoidable loss of genus *Quercus*.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, (name of governmental jurisdiction) hereby establishes the following policies as part of its (general plan, master plan, planning, acquisition and resource management guidelines):

- Woodlands on which the majority of trees are oaks are to be protected to the maximum extent possible through site design and use regulations.
- Any project which cannot significantly mitigate adverse impacts to oak woodlands will be reduced in scale, redesigned, modified, or, if no other alternative exists, denied a permit.
- Property owners are encouraged to establish open space easements or deed restrictions for areas containing oak woodlands, and allow access for scientific study.
- Land divisions in oak woodlands are allowed only at densities compatible with protection of the resources as determined by environmental assessment.
- As a condition of development approval, restoration is required of any oak woodland which is in a degraded condition, with the magnitude of restoration to be commensurate with the scope of the project. This may include planting of native oaks, removal of non-native or invasive species, and/or modification of existing land uses. The objective of restoration shall be to enhance the functional capacity and biological productivity of the oak woodland to make it self-sustaining through natural processes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the (name of agency) (department – planning, resources, parks) shall inventory the land in the (jurisdiction) to determine location of oak woodlands, using the classification system of the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any project (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 21065) proposed for oak woodlands shall be specifically analyzed for ways in which the development affects oak woodlands and their ecological, economic and aesthetic values.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that after consulting with a citizen (advisory board, tree council or other related group), the (planning, resource management or other pertinent department assigned) shall annually report to the (jurisdiction) on the status and condition of its oak woodlands, including any recommended actions it believes are necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the (jurisdiction) arborist shall develop and distribute information to residents on appropriate planting of native oak trees, and information on compatible plants, proper maintenance methods, identification of oak tree diseases and treatments, as well as the values of oak trees to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the (department) will evaluate oak woodlands in the (jurisdiction) and identify sites which should be acquired or otherwise preserved through conservation easements, dedications, and mitigation agreements for public open space, because of their natural and recreational enhancement values.

Moved by (name and title), seconded by (name and title), and approved this (day), (month), (year) by the following vote:

FOR:

AGAINST:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT: