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# City of El Paso de Robles General Plan 2003

## *Conservation Element*

*Prepared for:*

**City of El Paso de Robles**  
**Department of Community Development**  
1000 Spring Street  
Paso Robles, California 93446

*Contact:*

Community Development Department  
(805) 237-3970; [planning@prcity.com](mailto:planning@prcity.com)

*Prepared by:*

**Rincon Consultants, Inc.**  
1530 Monterey Street, Suite D  
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Adopted December 16, 2003;  
Amended as noted on the following pages.

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**Table of Adoption and Amendments to Conservation Element**

<b>Date</b>	<b>City Council Resolution</b>	<b>Action</b>
December 16, 2003	03-232	Adoption of a comprehensive update of the General Plan
December 18, 2012	12-185	General Plan Amendment 2012-003
November 19, 2014	14-150	General Plan Amendment 2014-003

**Table of Adoption and Amendments to Conservation Element**

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## **Table of Contents for Conservation Element**

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## CONSERVATION ELEMENT

### 1.0 Vision Statement

Conservation of resources within and near Paso Robles contributes to the City's quality of life and community image. Residents and visitors alike share their excitement about the many features that make Paso Robles a special place to live or visit. The "sense of place" in the community is derived, in part, from its natural resources and history. The City will rehabilitate and enhance the environmental quality of the planning area through long-term protection of the environment, resource planning management, and minimizing the degradation of nonrenewable resources. Special protection will be given to unique or endangered resources in the Paso Robles planning area without undue burden on individual rights. Preservation of public services, air quality, vegetation and wildlife, mineral resources, and visual resources, historic and archeological resources, as well as energy will ensure that the city remain an attraction for visitors, tourists, and new residents.

### 2.0 Goals, Policies, and Action Items

**GOAL C-1: Utilities and Infrastructure. Ensure that public utilities, facilities, and services are designed to meet existing and planned land uses, and ensure that provisions are made for continued operation maintenance, and updates as necessary.**

**POLICY C-1A: Water Source, Supply, and Distribution.** Develop and implement various innovative water provision and conservation programs that help to ensure an adequate supply of water for the City.

**Action Item 1.** Investigate and implement if feasible, development of supplementary water supplies to provide diversified resources and receive aquifer demand. Supplementary water supplies may include the following: State Water Project; dams and reservoirs on local creeks; Lake Nacimiento water; other water importation; regional conjunctive storage/use agreements; and/or developing water reuse.

**Action Item 2.** Investigate and implement, if feasible, basin recharge programs through non-traditional methods. Such programs may include the following: storm drainage system design integrating Low-Impact Development (LID) features to reduce hydromodification from development and other improvements to recharge the ground water aquifer; developing/improving water recharge along historic drainage patterns along/adjacent to creeks and/or rivers; and/or developing recycled wastewater programs including basin recharge.

**Action Item 3.** Maintain/update the Urban Water Management Plan and implement Best Management Practices as feasible.

**Action Item 4.** Maintain an updated Water Master Plan and develop needed water production, treatment, storage and distribution facilities as part of the Capital Improvement Plan/Budget. As part of the Water Master Plan or Engineering Standards

and Specifications, establish water service standards for new development to include, but not be limited to: minimum pressure; provision of two sources of water to subdivisions and large development projects; use of looped systems.

**Action Item 5.** Maintain potable water quality via the following measures:

- a. Continue to monitor City water supplies wells for water quality requirements of the Department of Health Services and other regulatory agencies.
- b. Encourage minimization of applications of agricultural chemical fertilizers and pesticides and enforce conservative application of agricultural waters.
- c. Provide treatment and distribution systems needed to assure conveyance of potable water that meets all water regulations.
- d. Incorporate LID features with all development in compliance with the “Joint Effort” permit requirements to filter and clean storm water through natural systems before it enters surface and groundwater supplies.

**Action Item 6.** New water service shall not be extended to areas outside the City boundaries prior to annexation. Existing commitments for water service outside the city limits shall continue to be honored.

**Action Item 7.** Maintaining private water well use shall be allowed only for existing agriculture uses and then only when approved by City Council.

**POLICY C-1B:** Sewer Service. Provide adequate wastewater conveyance and treatment facilities to serve all parcels in the City.

**Action Item 1.** Maintain an updated Sewer Master Plan and develop needed sewer conveyance and treatment facilities as part of the Capital Improvement Plan/Budget.

**Action Item 2.** Require sewer connection for all new buildings except where topography and/or other physical constraints would make sewer connection unreasonable and sufficient parcel sizes provide for adequate leach systems.

**Action Item 3.** Require the abandonment of all septic systems at such time that a sewer becomes reasonably available to a parcel.

**Action Item 4.** The City shall not provide nor permit delivery of City sewer services to areas outside the existing City limits until such areas are annexed.

**Action Item 5.** Investigate and, if feasible, develop wastewater effluent discharge alternatives including land percolation/evaporation and/or recycling.

**POLICY C-1C:** Storm Drainage. Provide storm drain systems that efficiently and safely mitigate flood risk, while effectively managing storm water through implementation of LID

features, so that downstream run-off is limited to pre-development volumes and velocity before it is conveyed to the Salinas River, Huerhuero Creek, and their tributaries.

**Action Item 1.** Maintain and update the Storm Water Master Plan. Implement, as feasible, recommended actions and Best Management Practices described in the Master Plan.

**Action Item 2.** Establish revised development standards as may be appropriate, that include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. For large developments that feature substantial amounts of impervious surfaces, detain water flows to prevent overflow of waterways and inundation of developed areas.
- b. Direct surface water runoff from developed areas to LID storm water features on the development site. The facilities should be designed to both mitigate flood flows while providing safe and efficient low-flow conveyance.
- c. Maintain natural streams to provide, at minimum, flow capacity for 100-year storm conditions.
- d. Conduct floodplain acquisition and promote groundwater recharge to preserve the floodway, protect riparian habitats and to enhance water resource, flood control projects and recharge programs to accommodate increased runoff from new development. These programs should be funded by developers, at rates proportional to the projected increase in runoff associated with their developments.

**POLICY C-1D: Solid Waste.** Ensure that the City's landfill maintains sufficient capacity to serve the needs of the City through the year 2025.

**Action Item 1.** Support and participate in an update to the County Solid Waste Management Plan (reviewed September 2002).

**Action Item 2.** Reduce the amount of solid waste to be taken to the landfill by implementing the City's Source Reduction and Recycling Element.

**Action Item 5.** Develop a City-specific solid waste master plan.

**GOAL C-2: Air Quality.** Seek to maintain air quality by taking actions to reduce traffic congestion, vehicle miles traveled, and air pollutant emissions.

**POLICY C-2A: Traffic Congestion Reduction.** Implement circulation systems improvements to reduce congestion and associated air contaminant emissions.

**POLICY C-2B: VMT Reduction.** Implement programs to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), especially by single occupant vehicles, including providing opportunities for mixed-use projects.

**Action Item 1.** Provide bikeways, pedestrian paths, and transit turn-outs/stops as requirements of development applications.

**Action Item 2.** Encourage the development of transit facilities.

**Action Item 3.** Strive to recruit new industry as part of on-going efforts to create a balanced community where the majority of residents can live, work, shop and play, thereby reducing the commute lengths for some City residents.

**Action Item 4.** Encourage infill development.

**POLICY C-2C: Emissions Reduction.** Take steps to reduce creation of air contaminant emissions.

**Action Item 1.** Continue to prohibit agricultural burning.

**Action Item 2.** Encourage private sector efforts to provide composting and creation of mulch in locations that avoid incompatibility of land uses.

**Action Item 3.** Require builders to use appropriate techniques to minimize pollution from construction activities.

**GOAL C-3: Biological Resources.** As feasible, preserve native vegetation and protected wildlife, habitat areas, and vegetation, through avoidance, impact mitigation, and habitat enhancement.

**POLICY C-3A: Oak Trees.** Preserve existing oak trees and oak woodlands. Promote the planting of new oak trees.

**Action Item 1.** Implement the Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance.

**Action Item 2.** Plant oaks in parks and on other City-owned properties. Care shall be taken to plant new and replacement oak trees in locations and settings that will be appropriate to their species (e.g., avoiding mitigation that would not be suitable).

**Action Item 3.** Encourage and/or require new development to include the planting of new oaks where feasible and appropriate.

**POLICY C-3B: Sensitive Habitat.** Incorporate habitats into project design, as feasible, including: oak woodlands, native grasslands, wetlands, and riparian areas.

**Action Item 1.** As part of the environmental review of new development projects:

- Biological studies/surveys will be prepared when appropriate to assess habitat value.
- Alternatives to habitat removal will be explored; and
- Input will be sought from other public agencies with expertise in biological resources.

**Action Item 2.** As part of the environmental review of new development projects, the City will require that mitigation for potential impacts to the San Joaquin Kit Fox and its habitat be provided in consultation with the CA Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Action Item 3.** Encourage use of native plants.

**GOAL C-4: Mineral Resources. Oversee/manage mineral resources.**

**POLICY C-4A:** Manage the extraction of mineral resources in order:

- a. To protect and conserve those Portland cement concrete aggregate mineral resources classified by the State Geologist as being important mineral deposits (i.e., designated "MRZ-2");
- b. To protect other properties and natural resources from any adverse impacts associated with mining operations.

**Action Item 1.** Continue to permit surface mining of sand and gravel as a conditional use within the Salinas River and Huerhuero Creek.

**Action Item 2.** As part of the review of new development projects involving areas within or adjacent to areas designated as MRZ-2, ensure that measures are adopted to protect the capability for future extraction of sand and gravel if such extraction activities would not conflict with surrounding land uses and other applicable plans and policies.

**GOAL C-5: Visual Resources. Enhance/upgrade the City's appearance.**

**POLICY C-5A:** Visual Gateways and Landmarks. Identify important visual resources: gateways, corridors, major arterials, natural/open space areas, as shown on Table C-1 and Figure C-3.

**Action Item 1.** Investigate and implement, as feasible, a variety of alternative funding sources to enhance important visual resources, including but not limited to:

- Mello-Roos and similar infrastructure financing for improvement and potential maintenance of public landscaping, particularly along streets and other visible public travel routes;
- Bond programs such as property acquisition, improvement, and maintenance for corridor visual improvements; and/or
- Encourage Caltrans to preserve or enhance existing trees and landscaping along the Highway 101 corridor.

**Table C-1. Important Visual Resources**

<p><b>Gateways to the City</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>May be marked with entrance monument signs.</i></li> <li>• <i>Limit range of land uses to preclude those commercial and industrial uses with outside processes and storage.</i></li> <li>• <i>Development shall be designed to make a positive visual impression (in terms of design/architecture and landscaping) and incorporate/preserve natural features.</i></li> <li>• <i>Billboards shall be limited in number, shall be located to preserve views of natural features.</i></li> </ul>
Highway 46 East * (between Jardine and Airport Roads)
Highway 101 at North End * (between Mustard Creek and Spring Street)
Highway 101 at South End * (between Highway 46 West and Spring Street)
Highway 46 West * (between Arbor Road and Highway 101)
Creston Road (beginning east of Beechwood Drive to Charolais Road)
Spring Street (north of 36 <sup>th</sup> Street and south of 1 <sup>st</sup> Street)
Airport Road
Union Road
Airport
Multi-Modal Transportation Center
<p><b>Visual Corridors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development shall be designed to make a positive visual impression and incorporate/preserve natural features</i></li> <li>• <i>Billboards shall be limited in number, shall be located to preserve views of natural features</i></li> <li>• <i>Architectural design of new development on Spring Street shall be compatible with, and incorporate features identified in adopted design guidelines.</i></li> </ul>
Highway 46 East * (between Jardine and Airport Roads)
Highway 101 * (full length of the City)
Highway 46 West * (between Arbor Road and Highway 101)
Creston Road
Spring Street (full length of the City)
Airport Road
Union Road
Railroad corridor (full length of the City)
<p><b>Natural Landmarks and Open Space Viewsheds</b></p>
Salinas River
Huerhuero Creek
Field at north end of Ramada Drive (between the railroad and the Salinas River)
Oak-covered hillsides
East Side creeks/riparian corridors (unnamed creeks #1-5 plus Turtle/Oak Creek)
View from Barney Schwartz Park southwest toward and into the Chandler Ranch area

*\* indicates major gateway or visual corridor*

**Action Item 2.** Coordinated/Complementary Design Standards: Establish and implement site design, landscaping, architecture, and sign design standards in order to ensure that gateways, corridors, major arterials, and natural areas are identifiable.

**POLICY C-5B:** Hillside: Protect hillsides as a visual amenity, by implementing design standards that call for:

- a. Decreasing density as slope increases;
- b. Limiting the amount of grading;
- c. Providing substantial amounts of landscaping;
- d. Incorporating architectural treatment that enhances the form of the hillside rather than conflicting with it;
- e. Limiting the number of building sites that may be placed on prominent ridgelines;
- f. Preventing development of new buildings that project above the ridgeline unless adequately mitigated with landscaping;
- g. Ensuring sensitive design of development on steep slopes, and on the crest of major ridgelines, shown on Figure C-4.

Considerations for development on steep slopes shall include the following:

- Avoid slope stability hazards by restricting development on slopes of 35 percent or greater.
- Site-specific visual assessments (with and without the project) to thoroughly evaluate the visual effects of development proposals on slopes of 30 percent or greater.
- For new development located on ridges and hills consider providing a substantial building setback from the edge of the downhill slope and/or screening landscaping, where the slope exceeds 15 percent.

**GOAL C-6: Cultural Resources. Strive to preserve/protect important historic and archeological resources.**

**POLICY C-6A:** Historic Resources: Encourage the preservation and restoration of historic buildings in the downtown and the Vine Street neighborhood.

**Action Item 1.** Continue to implement the Council adopted Downtown Design Guidelines

**Action Item 2.** Establish a Vine Street Historic and Architectural Preservation Overlay District for the historic neighborhood located between Chestnut Street, Oak Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Street and 21st Street, inclusive of both sides of these boundary streets. Prepare and implement design guidelines for future development and renovations within this District. The intent of these guidelines would be to maintain the historic character of the neighborhood.

**POLICY C-6B:** Archaeological Resources: Strive to preserve/protect “unique archaeological resources” as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**Action Item 1.** Require the preparation of archaeological studies and/or preliminary evaluation reports for new developments that are subject to CEQA and the site could potentially contain a “unique archaeological resource.” Incorporate mitigation measures identified by such studies into the development.

**GOAL C-7: Energy Conservation. Encourage the conservation of energy resources.**

**POLICY C-7A: Conservation Measures.** Investigate and implement as feasible, energy conservation measures.

### **3.0 Conservation Issues**

The Conservation Element Appendix contains discussions of public utilities and services, air quality, vegetation and wildlife, mineral resources, visual resources, and energy issues.

#### **3.1 Hydrology**

This section provides an overview of existing hydrology in Paso Robles, including ground water conditions. Consistent with State law Assembly Bill 162 (AB 162), this section identifies rivers, creeks, streams, flood corridors, riparian habitat, and other lands that may accommodate floodwater for the purposes of groundwater recharge and storm water management.

##### *Hydrological Features*

The Salinas River watershed covers approximately 4,600 square miles and crosses two counties. Also known as the “Upside Down River,” the Salinas River flows northward originating in San Luis Obispo County, through the Salinas Valley into Monterey County, and empties into Monterey Bay. The river’s flow is seasonal, dictated by local rainfall. Several significant tributaries flow into the Salinas River through or north of Paso Robles including, the Nacimiento River, Estrella River, and Huerhuero Creek (Upper Salinas River Watershed Action Plan, 2004). Several perennial creeks flow through parts of Paso Robles to converge with the Salinas River including Dry Creek, Mountain Spring Creek, Turtle Creek, Peachy Canyon Creek, and Unnamed Creek No.1 & No. 6.

##### *Water Resources*

The City of Paso Robles currently relies upon the Salinas River underflow and the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin water for much of its municipal water supply. Basin Wells tap groundwater in the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin while River Wells divert the subterranean flows of the Salinas River. The Paso Robles 2010 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) highlights two additional water sources that should be available to the City by 2015, these include; 1) 4,000 AFY of raw water from Lake Nacimiento, and 2) upgrading of the wastewater treatment plant to include recycled water irrigation, possible groundwater recharge, and discharge to the Salinas River (UWMP, 2010). The addition of these water sources will reduce the City’s dependence on ground water, protecting and stabilizing groundwater levels for future use.

##### *Floodwater Accommodation*

AB 162 requires the Conservation Element of the General Plan to identify rivers, creeks, streams, flood corridors, riparian habitat, and other land that may accommodate floodwater

for purposes of groundwater recharge and storm water management. The purpose is to conserve areas used for groundwater recharge and storm water management and to minimize urban development in these areas.

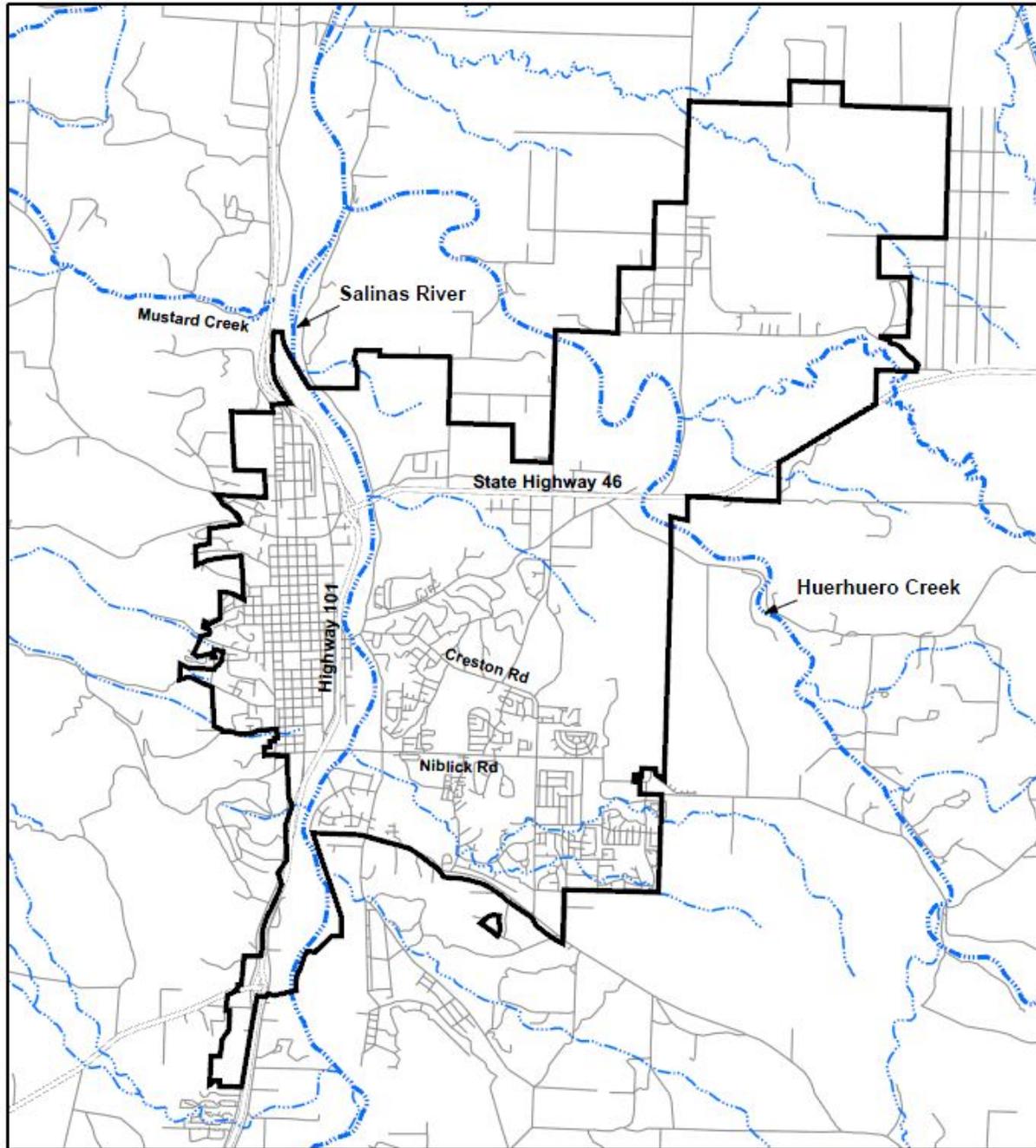
Figures C-1 and C-2 show the major rivers, creeks, streams, flood corridors, riparian habitat, and other land that may accommodate floodwater for purposes of groundwater recharge and storm water management.

#### *Groundwater Recharge*

There are a number of existing and proposed storm drain detention and retention basins located within the City. These basins are designed to reduce peak runoff from developments to pre-development rates for a 10-year storm event. Detention basins are areas where excess storm water is stored or held temporarily to slow water flow, decreasing flood damage. Retention basins store storm water on a more permanent basis, often indefinitely, with the exception of volume lost to evaporation or absorption into soils. Retention basins help to recharge underground water aquifers and reduce sedimentation. The location of existing basins can be seen in the Paso Robles Storm Drain Master Plan, Section 6, Figure 6-1. In addition, subsurface basins may be used for either retention or detention of site runoff.

The Downtown Paso Robles Watershed Plan (DTWP), prepared in 2014 and awaiting formal approval from the Central Coast Water Board, identifies a variety of projects to increase bioretention and infiltration for purposes of groundwater recharge. The proposed "Green Street" solutions include; 1) bioretention swales within the parkways or medians; 2) bioretention bulb-outs; 3) and/or pervious pavement surfaces as the primary mechanism for treatment and retention of storm water. The locations of these projects can be seen in the DTWP, Appendix A, Exhibit 6.

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Source: San Luis Obispo County, October 1998.  
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic.

0 1 Miles

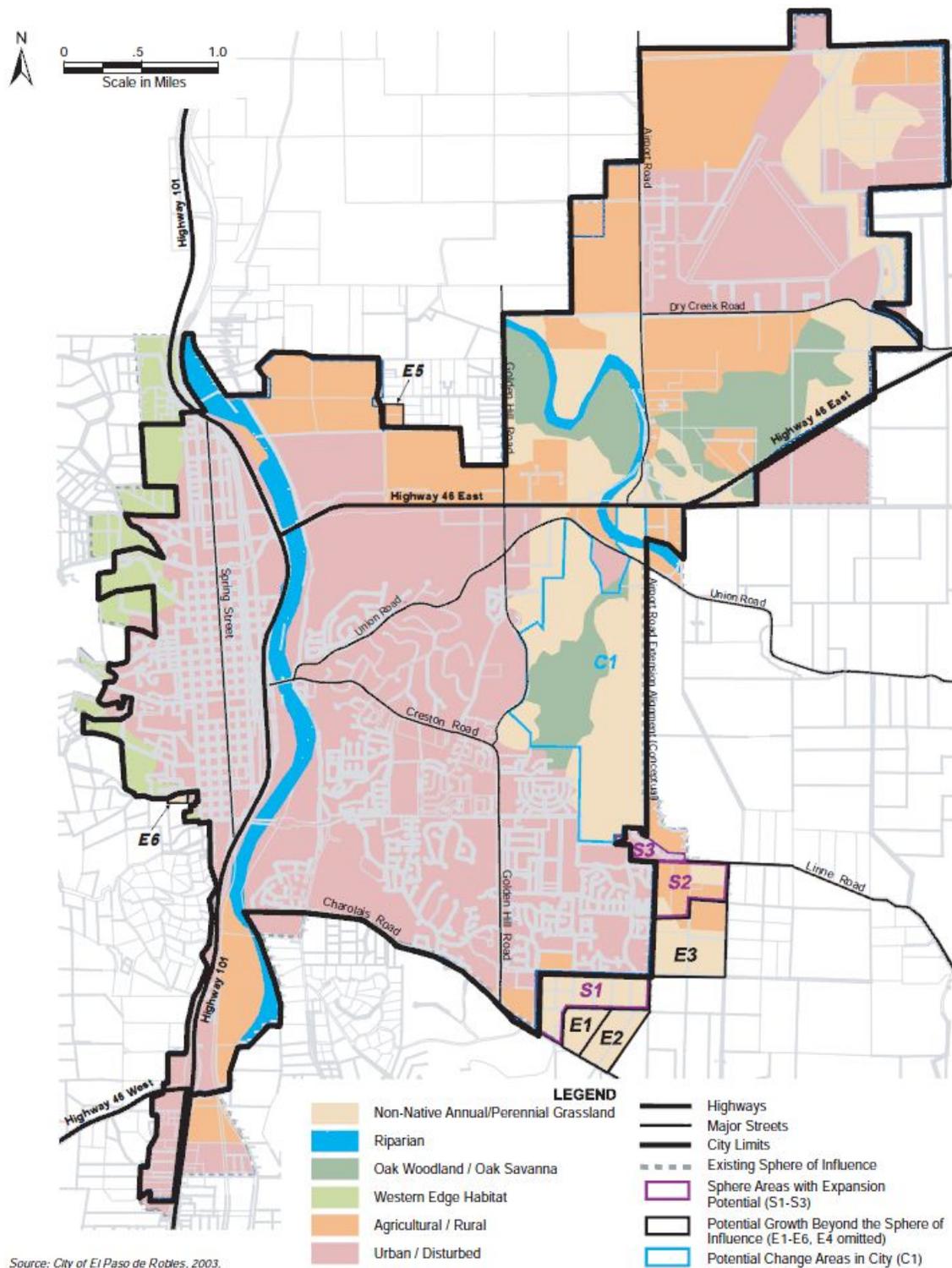
**Legend**

-  City Limits
-  Major Roads
-  Roads
-  Rivers
-  Minor Streams



Surface Water Features

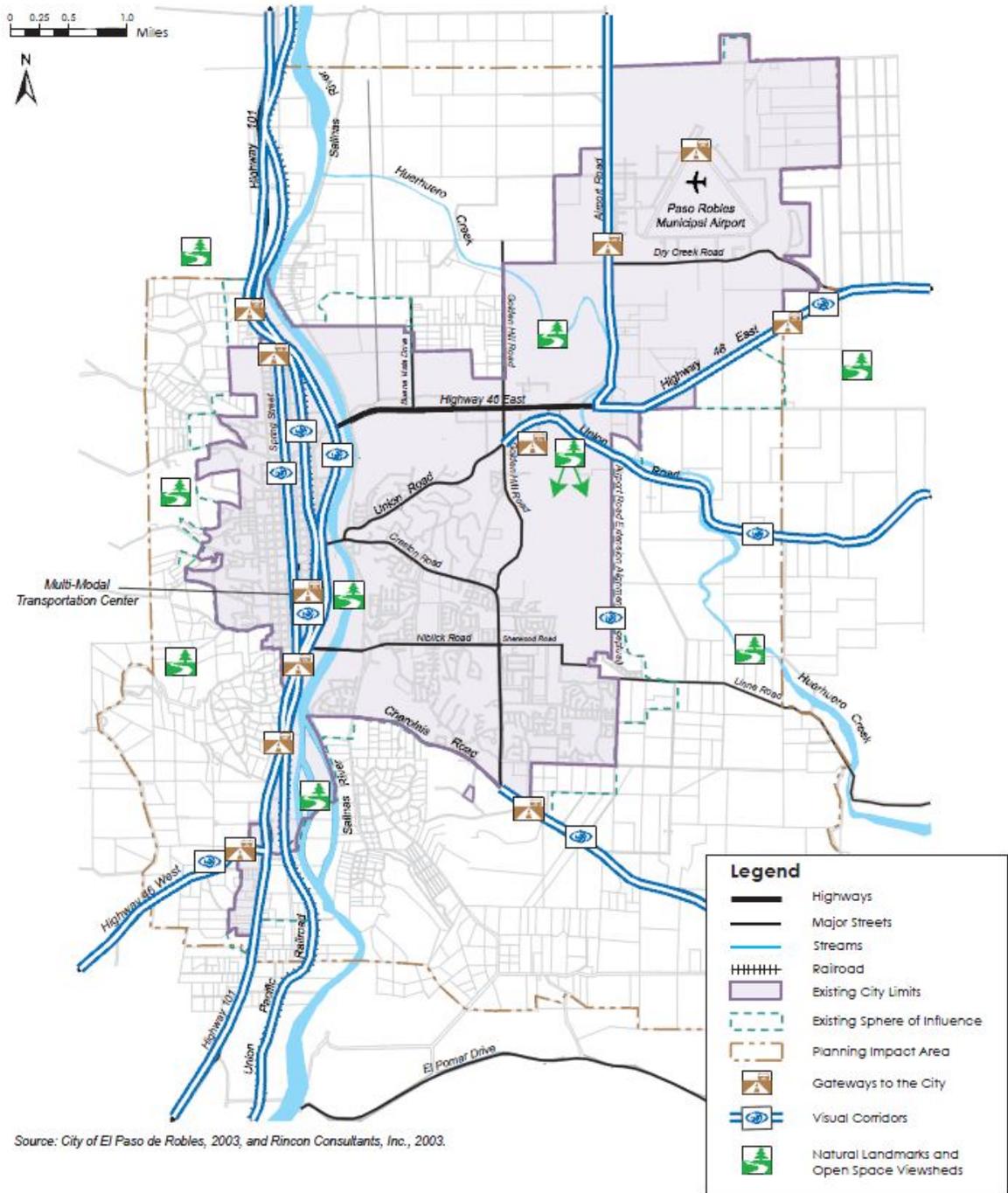
Figure C-1



Source: City of El Paso de Robles, 2003, Rincon Consultants, Inc., 2003.

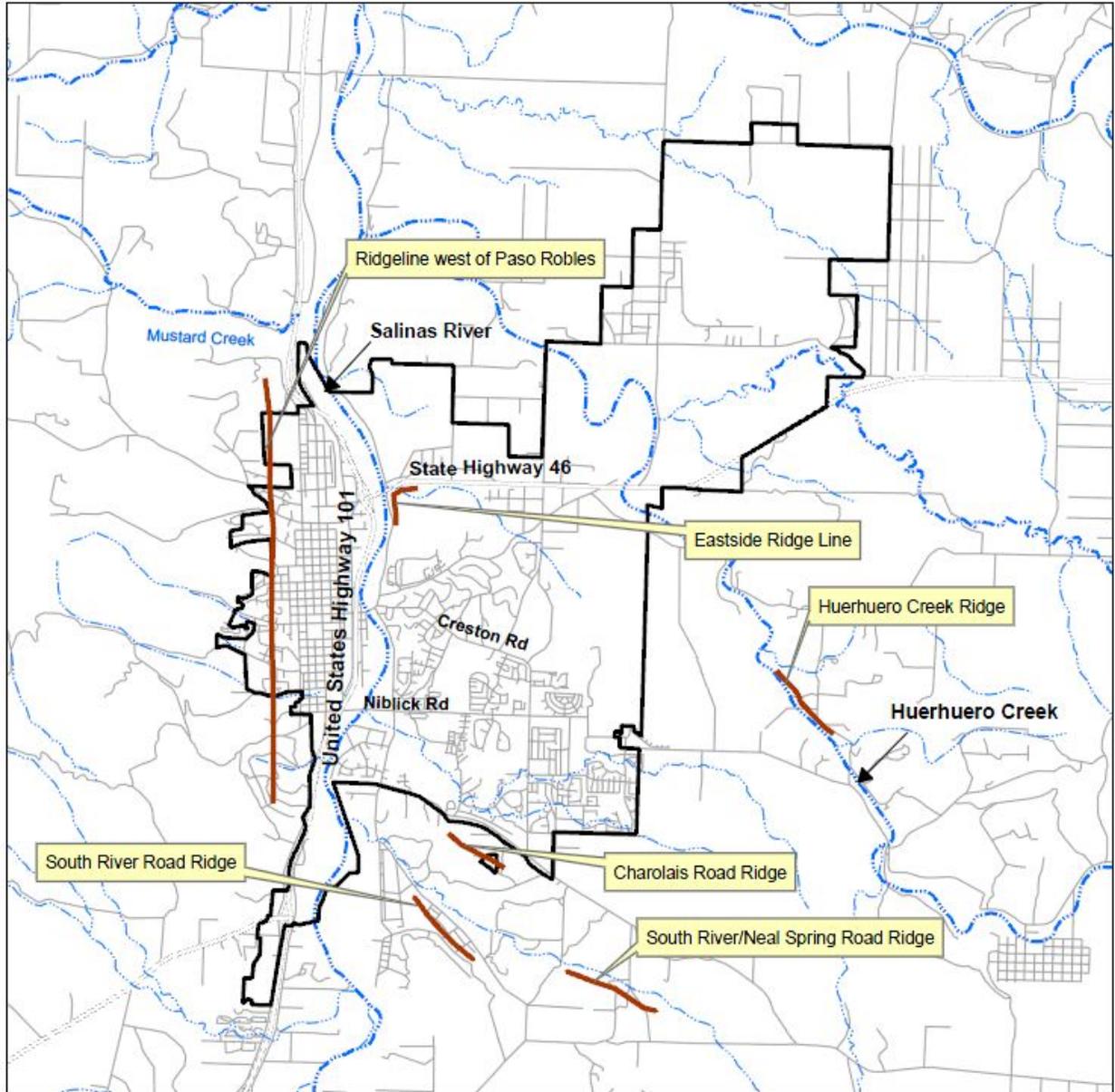
**Habitat Map**

**Figure C-2**



City Gateways, Visual Corridors, Natural Landmarks,  
 and Open Space Viewsheds

Figure C-3



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Source: Paso Robles, Templeton, Estrella and Creston, ERC Environmental and Energy Services Co.  
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic.

**Legend**

- Major Roads
- Roads
- Rivers
- Minor Streams
- ▭ City Limits
- Substantial Ridgelines



**Prominent Ridgelines**

**Figure C-4**