

8.10 South Diamond Bar

A. INTRODUCTION

South Diamond Bar consists of 5.6 square miles of largely undisturbed natural area, with no residents, located in the southeast part of the Planning Area. It shares boundaries with cities of Diamond Bar to the north and Chino Hills to the east, Orange County to the south, and the unincorporated community of Rowland Heights to the west. The community contains the Firestone Boy Scout Reservation. In addition, SR-57 runs along the western boundary through natural areas, connecting to Orange County and SR-60.

B. COMMUNITY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following presents a summary of community challenges and opportunities learned from community feedback and an analysis of existing conditions in the community (see **Table SDB-1, South Diamond Bar Challenges and Opportunities**). These challenges and opportunities serve to inform the preparation of community-specific, land use, zoning, policies, and programs for South Diamond Bar.

TABLE SDB-1 South Diamond Bar Challenges and Opportunities

1. Wildland/Urban Interface

Limiting Wildland/Urban Interface and Habitat Fragmentation. This is a largely undisturbed natural area, with natural watercourses and a wealth of sensitive biological resources that are becoming increasingly threatened by expansion of the wildland/urban interface, with negative impacts to biological resources, wildlife, and increased wildfire hazard threats. Conflicting needs exist countywide, however, the need to preserve the continuity of the remaining habitat areas should not be compromised or negatively impacted by development needs.

Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions and Wildlife Crossings. Development encroaching into habitat areas impacts wildlife movement, increases habitat fragmentation, and results in collisions and increased dangers to wildlife. Wildlife have been documented using major arterial roads and highways to cross the hills, mostly by use of dangerous surface crossings when wildlife undercrossings and passages are not available. Studies of wildlife crossing points should be undertaken to assess needed locations of future wildlife crossings. The construction of dedicated wildlife crossings, separated from vehicular traffic, would support wildlife movement and improve safety for humans and animals.

TABLE SBD-1 South Diamond Bar Challenges and Opportunities

Wildfire and Safety Risks. South Diamond Bar falls within the VHFHSZ. In the ESGV, most structures built within the wildland/urban interface are within the VHFHSZ. Increased development at the urban periphery introduces structures, roads, vehicle traffic, and people into previously undeveloped areas, increasing the probability of wildfires, which are largely human-caused. Given the severity of the threats, development in these high-risk areas should be avoided.

2. Preservation of Biological Resources

Puente Hills SEA. South Diamond Bar is part of the Puente Hills SEA, which has been designated a State Important Bird Area by Audubon California. The South Diamond Bar portion of the SEA contains the largely undisturbed Tonner Canyon. Several plant communities within this SEA are designated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as highest priority communities, including walnut woodland, oak riparian woodland, stands of southern willow scrub along drainages, scattered freshwater marsh, and coastal sage scrub.

3. Preservation of Significant Ridgelines

Significant Ridgelines. The area contains significant ridgelines that are also used for wildlife movement and serve as firebreaks in wildfires. For wildlife, habitat, and safety issues, development along ridgelines should be avoided. As with other communities located in the foothills, significant ridgelines should be identified, and protection requirements should be developed.

4. Preservation of Wildlife Movement Corridors and Linkages

Puente Hills Wildlife Corridor. The Puente Hills are a key area for wildlife movement connecting to the Chino Hills State Park. The area contains undeveloped, privately owned properties and land that is predominantly designated as SEA. There is a strong desire by residents in the community to see the wildlife corridor protected and preserved.

Wildlife Linkages and Corridors. The Puente/Chino Hills function as both an important wildlife linkage and resident habitat area for regional wildlife populations. Tonner Canyon and other major canyons throughout the ESGV, are connected by a series of open space corridors, which allows wildlife populations to migrate. The space and linkages for wildlife movement are crucial for the maintenance of biological diversity and population viability especially with increasing threats from climate change.

5. Preservation of Riparian Woodlands, Wetlands, Streams, and Natural Drainage Channels

Channelization. It is estimated that the San Gabriel Valley has lost 86% of its historical wetlands. Agricultural, and later urban and suburban development, in the San Gabriel River watershed prompted channelizing the river and creeks. Native riparian vegetation was removed for farmland and orchards, and river waters were diverted for crop production.

TABLE SBD-1 South Diamond Bar Challenges and Opportunities

Riparian Areas, Creeks, and Natural Drainages. Riparian corridors, wetlands, streams, and natural drainages are found across South Diamond Bar. The streams collect at the base of the main canyon, Tonner Canyon, and the other minor canyons in the community. The protection of riparian areas, creeks, and natural drainages in their unaltered states provides irreplaceable ecosystem services, habitat, and water quality protections.

6. Critical Habitat for Endangered Species

Critical Habitat. The southwest portion of South Diamond Bar, also in the Puente Hills SEA, is designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as critical habitat for the federally threatened coastal gnatcatcher, which is found in coastal sage scrubland all the way across the Puente Hills, into the southwest portions of South Diamond Bar and into Orange County. Habitat loss is the primary threat to the species, as coastal sage scrubland is eagerly sought by developers for residential development.

7. Multi-jurisdiction Collaboration on Protection of SEAs, Habitat Conservation, and Wildlife Linkages

SEA Protections Across Jurisdictions. The Puente Hills SEA continues into the unincorporated communities of Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights, as well as adjacent jurisdictions, including the cities of Diamond Bar, Industry, La Habra Heights, Montebello, Pico Rivera, South El Monte, and Whittier. In some cases, other jurisdictions may not yet have adopted a comparable program for protection of biological resources. In the past, some property owners have sought annexation to avoid the regulatory review and controls of the SEA program. There are opportunities for regional collaboration to protect natural and biological resources that exist across jurisdictional boundaries. Coordinated efforts to preserve and protect priority conservation areas is key to prevent further habitat fragmentation and loss.

8. Hazards

Flood, Landslide, and Liquefaction Hazards. The southern part of Tonner Canyon is designated as a flood hazard area for the 100-year flood. Almost all of South Diamond Bar, which consists of sloping hillsides, is designated as a landslide hazard area. In addition, the bottom of Tonner Canyon, as a riparian and wetland area, is a designated liquefaction hazard zone.

Land Use

The **South Diamond Bar Land Use Map**, found in Appendix E, *Land Use Maps*, presents land use designations and establishes the general location and diversity of each land use in South Diamond Bar.

C. COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC POLICIES

The following provides the policies for South Diamond Bar, organized to implement each of the six elements of the Area Plan and address the community-specific issues and opportunities presented above. Each policy is linked to a relevant vision statement (referenced as “VS”), as presented in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, of this Area Plan.

All policies in the ESGVAP Elements are applicable at the community-specific level. Refer to Chapter 2, *Land Use Element*, and Chapter 5, *Natural Resources, Conservation, and Open Space Element*, for policies particularly relevant to South Diamond Bar. Refer to Chapter 9, *Implementation Programs and Actions*, for actions and programs that serve to implement the plan’s policies.

VS 1 – Sustainable Growth Patterns

Policy SDB-1: Preservation Areas. Avoid development within South Diamond Bar due to hazards and environmental designations, such as SEA, VHFHSZ, landslide, and flooding designations. The SEA, HMA, VHFHSZ, and hazard designations make the community appropriate for preservation.

Policy SDB-2: Canyon Preservation. Preserve Tonner Canyon, including its riparian oak woodlands, natural drainages, streams, wetlands, and creeks.

Policy SDB-3: Tonner Canyon Road. Prohibit widening of Tonner Canyon Road and the development of any major or secondary highways for public use in South Diamond Bar.

Policy SDB-4: Wildlife Corridor Planning. Support studies, planning, and implementation for wildlife corridor projects that enhance connectivity in South Diamond Bar and throughout the Puente Hills to Chino Hills. Support works that assess the location needs and construction of safe and protected wildlife crossings, separated from vehicular traffic, especially to facilitate east-west movement of wildlife.



VS 6 – Sustainable Built and Natural Environment

Policy SDB-5: Preservation of Biological Resources. Direct development away from natural and biological resource areas, including those identified in the Puente Hills SEA and those found on lands outside of the designated SEAs. Maintain the natural environment and resources within the community, including vegetation, wildlife, habitats, waterways, and ridgelines.

Policy SDB-6: Hydrologic Resources. Preserve wetland areas, natural drainages, and riparian corridors on undeveloped lands, particularly in the Tonner Canyon area, and direct development away from these areas.

Policy SDB-7: Multi-Jurisdiction Collaboration. Collaborate with local and regional agencies, such as the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority, on the planning, acquisition, and management of lands containing biological resources in the Puente Hills SEA, from the Puente Hills through South Diamond Bar extending to Chino Hills, for their protection and preservation in perpetuity.

Policy SDB-8: Protect Migrating Wildlife. Ensure habitat protection for migrating wildlife and preserve habitat areas important for wildlife migration. The Puente Hills are a well-known migration corridor for migratory birds and are important for resident species throughout the year.

Policy SDB-9: Threatened Species. Protect and preserve habitat areas used by threatened species outside of designated SEAs. Much of southern hillside areas are designated as critical habitat by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the California coastal gnatcatcher, whose preferred natural habitat is coastal sage scrub. The coastal cactus wren also has significant populations in the Puente Hills.