SEPTEMBER 2025 – FINAL DRAFT

Existing Conditions, Issues, and Opportunities

REPORT FOR THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ELEMENT UPDATE

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GLOSSARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 1889: Also known as the "Room to Roam Act," this law amended Section 65302 of the Government Code to require all cities and counties to review and update the conservation element of their general plans to address habitat connectivity in the next adoption or revision of one or more elements on or after January 1, 2028.

Climate Resilience: The ability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate.

Coastal Ecology and Conservation Areas: Discrete geographic marine or estuarine areas, generally seaward of the mean high tide line or the mouth of a coastal river, including any area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora and fauna, that have been designated by law or administrative action to protect or conserve marine life and habitat. This includes the Swami's State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) Marine Protected Area, the Batiquitos Lagoon State Marine Conservation and Ecological Reserve and the San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area and Ecological Reserve.

Conserved Lands: Publicly- or privately-owned lands or waters designated as open space, undeveloped parcels, or sensitive lands that are primarily managed for conservation and/or restoration and have ecological or cultural value. This also includes lands used for passive recreational uses such as beach recreation, hiking, wildlife viewing, and ecological education.

Conserved lands (for this Resource Management Element) do not include developed parks with active recreation facilities such as playgrounds, community centers, sports fields and sports courts, or dog parks. These types of uses are largely covered under the Recreation Element.

Habitat Connectivity: The ability of wildlife species to move between two habitat zones through corridors or linkages.

Inland Wetland Communities: Lands which are generally east of the Mean High Tide Line that protect coastal marsh, coastal riparian habitat and shallow estuary waters. This would include the creek and watershed areas of the coastal wetland communities.

Open Space: Unimproved land or water, designated on a local, regional, or state plan for purposes like preserving natural resources, managing resources, outdoor recreation, or public health and safety.

Open Space Easement: A voluntary grant of property rights by a property owner to a city, county, or nonprofit organization to limit future uses in order to preserve for public use or enjoyment the natural or scenic character of open space land, while allowing the landowner to retain ownership and use of the property.

Rewilding: Preserving, enhancing, and expanding an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses, such as habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics (SB 1425). Rewilding is also more traditionally defined as a comprehensive, often large-scale, conservation effort focused on restoring sustainable biodiversity and ecosystem health by protecting core wild/wilderness areas, providing connectivity between such areas, and protecting or reintroducing apex predators and highly interactive species (keystone species) (Rewilding Institute 2025).

Senate Bill (SB) 1425: This law added Section 65565.5 to the Government Code to require all cities and counties to review and update the open space element of their general plans by January 1, 2026, to address equitable access to open space, climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space, and rewilding opportunities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to guide the update to the City of Encinitas (City) Resource Management Element (RME). It provides an overview of the legislative requirements that triggered the City's RME Update, Senate Bill (SB) 1425 (Government Code Section 65565.5), which requires all General Plan open space elements to be updated by January 1, 2026 to address (1) equitable access to open space, (2) rewilding, and (3) climate resilience; and Assembly Bill (AB) 1889 (Government Code Section 65302[d]), which requires all General Plan conservation elements to be updated upon the next update of one or more elements on or after January 1, 2028, to address habitat connectivity.

To inform the RME Update, this report summarizes the existing conditions related to the RME including an overview of the regulatory setting and relevant existing plans, studies, and reports. It also describes key programs and projects that address the intent of the new legislative requirements. The existing resource conditions within Encinitas are also summarized, including an overview of conserved lands, the trail and active transportation network, and biological conditions. To help identify opportunities to improve equitable access to open space for underserved groups or communities, a community profile is also provided. Figure 1-1 shows the existing designated conserved lands, parks, and neighborhoods within the City.

Following the summary of existing conditions, this report provides a description of community engagement activities related to the RME update; and identifies key takeaways provided by community members to inform the RME Update. Issues and opportunities that can be addressed through the RME Update are then described. These issues and opportunities consider the existing plans, polices, strategies, and programs that the City has committed to, and identify any gaps or remaining opportunities to address the new legislative requirements.

This photo shows an example of rewilding in Encinitas, using a native hydroseed bluff mixture to reduce surface erosion along Torrey Sandstone bluffs to help stabilize the bluff at as part of the Beacons Beach Landscape Restoration Plan.

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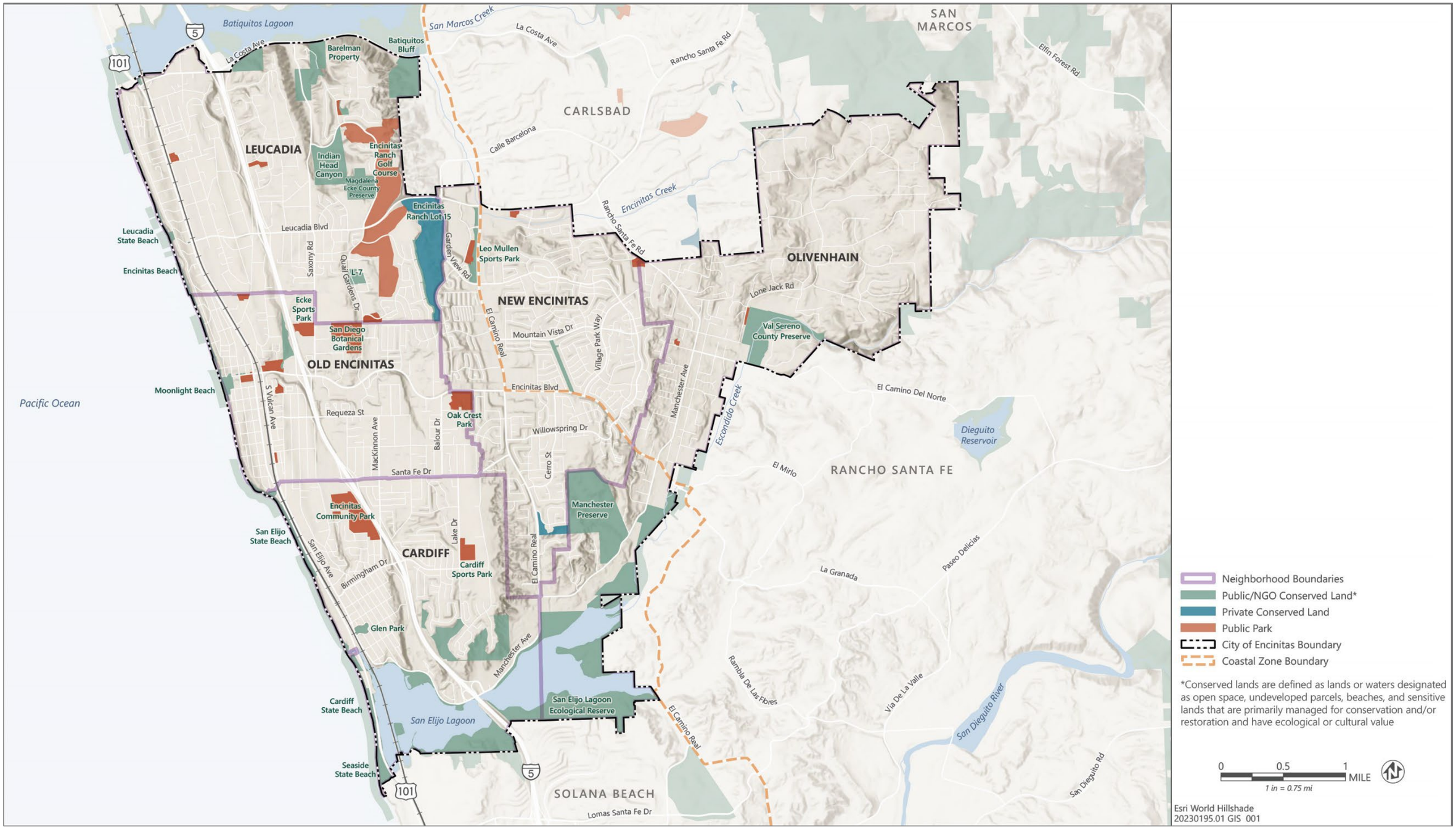
Figure 1-1 City of Encinitas Base Map



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section of the report provides an overview of the regulatory setting, existing and ongoing plans and programs, existing open space, and community profile (i.e., demographics) to ground truth and/or adjust data inputs and assumptions and inform the RME Update.

Background

The City's current Resource Management Element was established as part of the General Plan as a Primary Element during City incorporation in 1986 and formally adopted in 1989. The document itself has been amended multiple times throughout the years, including January 30, 1991, June 16, 1993, March 9, 1994, May 11, 1995, and March 3, 2011, all through City Council action. This update is being initiated to comply with new legislation as required by the state as discussed below.

2.1 REGULATORY SETTING

California Government Code 65565.5

SB 1425 (Stern, 2022) added Section 65565.5 to the Government Code on September 30, 2022. This law requires all cities and counties to review and update the open space element of their general plans by January 1, 2026, to address equitable access to open space, climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space, and rewilding opportunities. These requirements are described further below.

Equitable access to open space for all residents must be addressed in a manner that considers social, economic, and racial equity, correlated with the environmental justice (EJ) element or environmental justice policies in the general plan, as applicable. EJ elements are a required element of some general plans pursuant to California Government Code Section 65302(h), if a community contains disadvantaged communities as defined. EJ elements are required to:

- identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities by means that include, but are not limited to, the reduction of pollution exposure, including the improvement of air quality, and the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity;
- identify objectives and policies to promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process; and
- identify objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

To comply with Government Code Section 65565.5, open space elements can include policies and programs that correlate with the EJ element to apply specifically to the management and use of open space. Within the context of open space elements, equitable access can include improving opportunities for physical activity, enhancing equitable access to public lands and facilities, removing barriers to open space access for specific groups or communities, providing improved access to open space for underserved communities, and generally addressing disproportionate burdens associated with historic land use decisions.

Climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space must be considered and correlated with the safety element. Safety elements are a required element of general plans, which must address climate adaptation and resiliency pursuant to Government Code Section 65302(g)(4). In particular, a safety element must include a vulnerability assessment that identifies the risks that climate change poses to the local jurisdiction and the geographic areas at risk from climate change impacts; a set of adaptation and resilience goals, policies, and objectives; and a set of feasible implementation measures designed to carry out the goals, policies, and objectives.

To comply with Government Code Section 65565.5, open space elements can incorporate strategies from the safety element into the open space element to address the unique climate resilience opportunities within areas of open space. Climate resilience opportunities within open space can include policies or programs to adapt to climate-driven increases in wildfire risk, sea-level rise, changes in precipitation patterns including extended drought or increased flooding, and other climate-related vulnerabilities in open space areas.

Maintaining the Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline after the 2024 El Nino storms.

Rewilding opportunities must be addressed. Section 65565.5 broadly defines rewilding opportunities as including:

- preserving, enhancing, and expanding an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses, such as habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics; and/or
- establishing a natural communities conservation plan to provide for coordinated mitigation of the impacts of new development.

While Section 65565.5 broadly defines what “rewilding opportunities” can mean for the purpose of the open space element, this broad definition differs from definitions commonly used for rewilding. The Rewilding Institute defines rewilding as a “comprehensive, often large-scale, conservation effort focused on restoring sustainable biodiversity and ecosystem health by protecting core wild/wilderness areas, providing connectivity between such areas, and protecting or reintroducing apex predators and highly interactive species (keystone species)” (Rewilding Institute 2025). Based on this definition and the examples provided in Government Code, rewilding can be addressed in an open space element by including policies and implementation programs that are consistent with the general plan land use element and promote a connected network of open space and natural areas that are managed to promote ecosystem health and provide connectivity to other natural areas in the region, while also supporting other beneficial uses of open space.

Rewilding at Beacons Bluff, showing erosion control and native plants being reinstalled to help reduce surface erosion.

California Government Code 65302(d)

AB 1889 (Friedman, 2024), also known as the "Room to Roam Act" amended Section 65302(d) of the Government Code to require cities and counties to review and update the conservation element of their general plans in the next adoption or revision of one or more elements on or after January 1, 2028, to:

- identify and analyze connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas within the jurisdiction;
- identify and analyze existing or planned wildlife passage features (e.g., culverts, underpasses, directional fencing, elevated highway segments, or other approaches to improve the ability of wildlife to safely traverse transportation infrastructure; see also California Streets and Highways Code Section 158[f]), to ensure that planned development does not undermine their effectiveness;
- consider the impacts of development and the barriers caused by development to wildlife and habitat connectivity;
- avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts and barriers to wildlife movement to the extent feasible; and
- analyze and consider opportunities to remediate existing barriers to wildlife connectivity and restore degraded habitat and open space.

Government Code Section 65302(d) lists specific ways a jurisdiction can analyze connectivity areas. These approaches include consulting with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Native American tribes, and any open space districts that own lands designated for conservation within the jurisdiction; considering relevant best available science (e.g., peer-reviewed literature, available datasets, or reports from agencies, tribes, and academic institutions); or considering scientific information on landscape connectivity. The Government Code references several types of existing plans and data that address connectivity including Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs), existing general plan overlays, and data in the CDFW Habitat Connectivity Viewer. It also allows for consideration of other relevant plans, policies, and ordinances adopted by neighboring jurisdictions.

California Government Code 51178

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is required to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs) based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by OSFM as a major cause of wildfire spread.

OSFM recently published updated FHSZ maps for the entire state of California, including the State Responsibility Area (SRA) in April 2024, and recommended FHSZs in the City's Local Responsibility Area (LRA) in March 2025. On June 11, 2025, the City Council adopted the OSFM-recommended FHSZs in the City's LRA.

General plan safety elements for communities in the SRA or within the Very High FHSZ in the LRA are required to identify wildfire hazards and must include FHSZ maps, along with other relevant information regarding wildfire hazards and associated risks, as required by Government Code 65302(g).

California Government Code 51182

Property owners are required to manage vegetation and create defensible space if they are located in the SRA or in a Very High FHSZ within the LRA. Statewide defensible space regulations are codified in Public Resources Code 4291 and the forthcoming California WUI Code (see below).

California Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Code

In February 2025, the State of California adopted a new California Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Code that is based on the 2024 International WUI Code (IWUIC). The new California WUI Code, codified in Title 24, Part 7 of the California Building Code, replaces the former Title 24, Chapter 7A requirements and consolidates other fire-related code requirements for building standards, defensible space, and fire-safe development standards under one unified WUI Code. The new CA WUI Code goes into effect on January 1, 2026 as part of the 2025 triennial code update cycle.

2.2 Existing and Ongoing Plans, Studies, and Reports

City of Encinitas

Encinitas General Plan

The City's General Plan provides the framework for citywide growth and development as well as the protection of its environmental, social, cultural, and economic resources. The General Plan was adopted in 1989 and includes goals, policies, and standards that address land use, circulation, housing, noise, safety, resource management, and recreation.

The purpose of the RME is to identify goals and policies that are designed to preserve significant natural and cultural resources in the City and the surrounding area. It focuses on open space protection and ecosystem services for flood risk reduction, habitat, and natural steep slope and bluff preservations. The RME Update will provide policy direction that complies with California Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d), and complements the policies of other General Plan elements, including the following:

- The Land Use Element establishes the City's land use policies and includes a map that indicates and designates the location, density, and intensity of development for all land uses citywide. The goals and policies contained within the element provide a framework for land use patterns, zoning, and urban design while ensuring compatibility with environmental conservation, housing, transportation, and community needs. The Land Use Element and RME work together to create land use designations and overlay zones to balance development with environmental conservation, ensuring that growth aligns with the protection of natural resources, open spaces, and ecological sustainability.

- The Safety Element was updated in 2023 and adopted by the City Council, with review and approval by the Coastal Commissions still pending. It identifies and provides strategies to mitigate risks associated with seismic and geologic hazards, fire hazards, flooding, climate adaptation and resilience, and shoreline protection (including tsunamis and coastal erosion). Additionally, it covers dam failure risks, disaster and emergency preparedness (including evacuation planning), and hazardous materials and waste management. The Safety Element ensures that the City proactively plans for and enhances community safety against these potential threats. The RME Update will support these long-term hazard mitigation efforts by tailoring climate adaptation and resilience strategies from the Safety Element to address the unique climate resilience opportunities within open spaces.

- The Recreation Element focuses on preserving the City's parks and recreational facilities and is closely linked to the RME. Together, the Recreation Element and RME ensure the conservation of natural areas, habitats, and ecological functions while also expanding public access to these spaces for recreation and community use.

Tabletops reef at South Cardiff State Beach showing exposed intertidal reefs and tidepools during low tide.

Encinitas Local Coastal Program

The Encinitas Local Coastal Program (LCP), certified by the California Coastal Commission in 1995, regulates development within the City's coastal zone in compliance with the California Coastal Act (CCA). The LCP has been integrated into the City's General Plan and is implemented through portions of the Encinitas Municipal Code and the City's various Specific Plans. The Resource Management Element is intended to align with and implement the objectives and policies of the LCP, particularly in preserving sensitive coastal areas, including wetlands, which are subject to additional regulatory oversight under the CCA. The existing Resource Management Element incorporates the City's LCP and differentiates polices that overlap with the LCP through a "backshading" display (i.e., yellow highlighting of specific goals and policies). Examples of this include policies listed within the Resource Management Element "Goal 2: The City shall make every effort to improve ocean water quality" and those policies within "Goal 10: The City will preserve the integrity, function, productivity, and long term viability of environmentally sensitive habitats throughout the City, including kelp beds, ocean recreational areas, coastal water, beaches, lagoons and their up-lands, riparian areas, coastal strand areas, coastal sage scrub and coastal mixed chaparral habitats."

San Diego Multiple Habitat Conservation Program

The San Diego Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) is a long-term subregional conservation plan established to protect special-status species and habitats in northwestern San Diego County (SANDAG 2003). With San Diego County providing habitat to more listed species than any other similar region in the United States, implementation of the MHCP is intended to allow for the identification of priority areas for preservation, including a regional preserve system that is intended to protect viable populations of special-status plant and animal species and their habitats, while accommodating continued economic development and quality of life for residents of the North County region. The MHCP includes goals to conserve approximately 19,000 acres of habitat, of which roughly 8,800 acres (46 percent) are already in public ownership and contribute toward the habitat preserve system for the protection of more than 80 rare, threatened, or endangered species. The MHCP sets forth general and subarea conditions of coverage that must be met for the individual jurisdictions or permittees—the Cities of Carlsbad, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, Solana Beach, and Vista—to obtain take authorization for the covered species. Natural Community Conservation Plan permits are to be issued to participating cities upon completion and CDFW approval of their individual subarea plans.

The City's *Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan* was prepared in June 2001 (Ogden and CBI 2001) and provides guidance for activities and projects within the City, in accordance with the MHCP. However, the City of Encinitas has not yet become signatory to the MHCP, and its subarea plan is not yet approved/permitted. The North County MHCP is divided into seven subarea plans—one for each jurisdiction within the MHCP—that are permitted and implemented separately from one another.

State Wildlife Action Plan

CDFW's Draft 2025 update of the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) builds upon the 2015 SWAP, outlining an ecosystem approach for conserving California's fish and wildlife resources by identifying Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and targeted conservation efforts towards these species and the vital habitats that they depend on. The SWAP was designed to guide resource managers, conservation partners, and the public in how they can directly or indirectly participate in conservation actions in California.

Encinitas is within the Southern California Coast of the South Coast Region as defined in the SWAP. The SWAP identifies a number of conservation strategies for targeted natural communities in this ecoregion. Applicable conservation strategies include acquisition of land or easements, additional data collections and inventories to better understand the condition of natural communities, outreach and education strategies, and direct management to improve the ecological condition of natural communities. The SWAP also summarizes regional habitat connectivity efforts, which are discussed in more detail below.

Restoring California's Wildlife Connectivity

The Climate Resilient Connectivity Project was funded through a state wildlife grant and produced by San Diego State University (SDSU) in 2019 and is one of several datasets used to help guide data-driven decision making for conservation efforts. The project's GIS layers were created based on combining species habitat niche modeling, landscape modeling, and species population dynamics, with different climate scenarios.

South Coast Missing Linkages

The South Coast Missing Linkages report was produced by South Coast Wildlands (SCW). An inter-agency coalition, including federal, state, and local agencies, worked together to identify and conserve the highest priority linkages of wildlands in the South Coast ecoregion. The report identified the highest-priority linkages ("connections") south of the Transverse ranges, whose preservation would allow for the continued movement of wildlife and decrease effects of habitat fragmentation. The plan may be used by transportation agencies to design new projects and find opportunities to upgrade existing structures, and used by regulatory agencies to help inform decisions regarding impacts on streams and other habitats. The linkage opportunities identified by SCW were focused more on terrestrial wildlife suitability (e.g., mountain lion). As a result, linkage corridors were delineated in large, contiguous swaths of open space and preserve lands, such that there are no linkage corridors within or in the vicinity of the City boundary. The nearest linkage corridor is located within the Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve to the northeast of the City providing connectivity between Camp Pendleton and sections of the Cleveland National Forest and Palomar Mountains.

California Essential Habitat Connectivity

The California Essential Habitat Connectivity (CEHC) project was commissioned by the California Department of Transportation and CDFW to help increase the efficiency of and lower the cost of land-use planning while maintaining a functional network of connected wildlands to support the diverse natural communities of California. The project included the production of statewide essential habitat connectivity maps, guidance for mitigating the fragmenting effects of roads, and guidance for developing and implementing local and regional connectivity plans. While there are no essential habitat connectivity corridors within or directly abutting the City boundary, there is regional connection to identified habitat connectivity corridors to the east, the closest corridor providing connection between open space lands on the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar and the Daley Ranch Preserve in the City of Escondido (Figure 2-1). The CEHC also identified smaller areas outside of major connectivity linkages that should be considered for finer scale planning. Several of these smaller areas are within Encinitas (Figure 2-2).

SANDAG Regional Open Space Plan

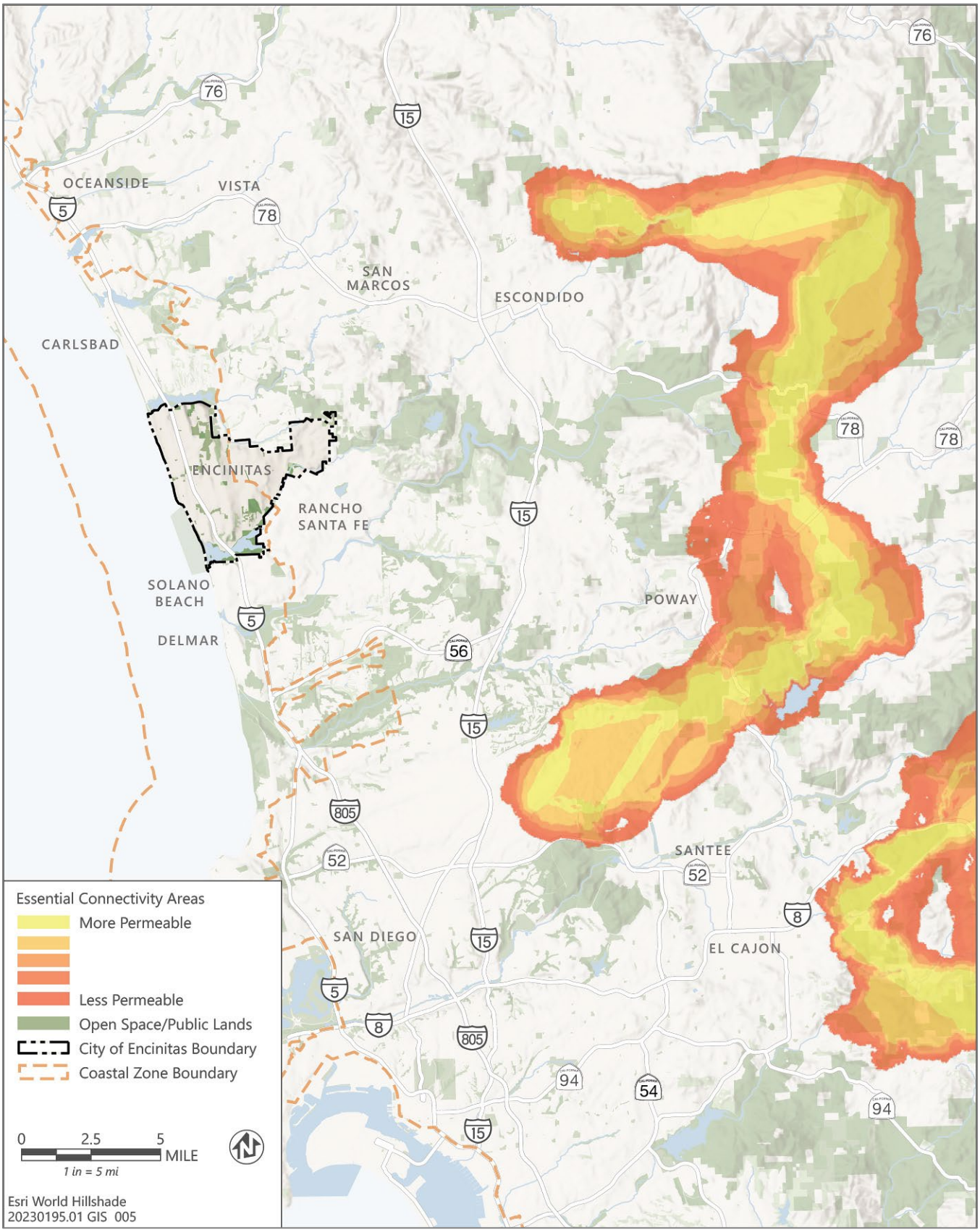
The SANDAG Regional Open Space Plan has identified steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, riparian areas, and regional open space parks and preserves as valuable resources in the San Diego region. Strategies and policies are being developed for the long-term protection of these lands. Additionally, multiple species/habitat preserves are being identified and mapped through the Multiple Species Conservation Program and MHCP, and procedures are being developed to monitor habitat quality and ecosystem health inside these habitat preserves to ensure the long-term viability of species and their habitats. SANDAG, at the request of the wildlife agencies and the local agencies in the region, has created a GIS-based habitat-tracking tool (HabiTrak). The County of San Diego uses HabiTrak to prepare their habitat tracking reports and record habitat lost and conserved over time due to public and private development projects. In conjunction with wildlife agencies, procedures for aggregating the HabiTrak data and preparing summary subregional reports have been established; however, HabiTrak data has not been historically collected for lost or conserved lands within the City boundary.

Nearshore Coastal Biological Monitoring

Several marine protected areas also occur within the Encinitas City limits and include (from north to south): Batiquitos Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and Ecological Reserve, Swami's SMCA, and San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and Ecological Reserve. A wide variety of marine ecosystems and nearshore biological habitats exist along the City's six-mile coast.

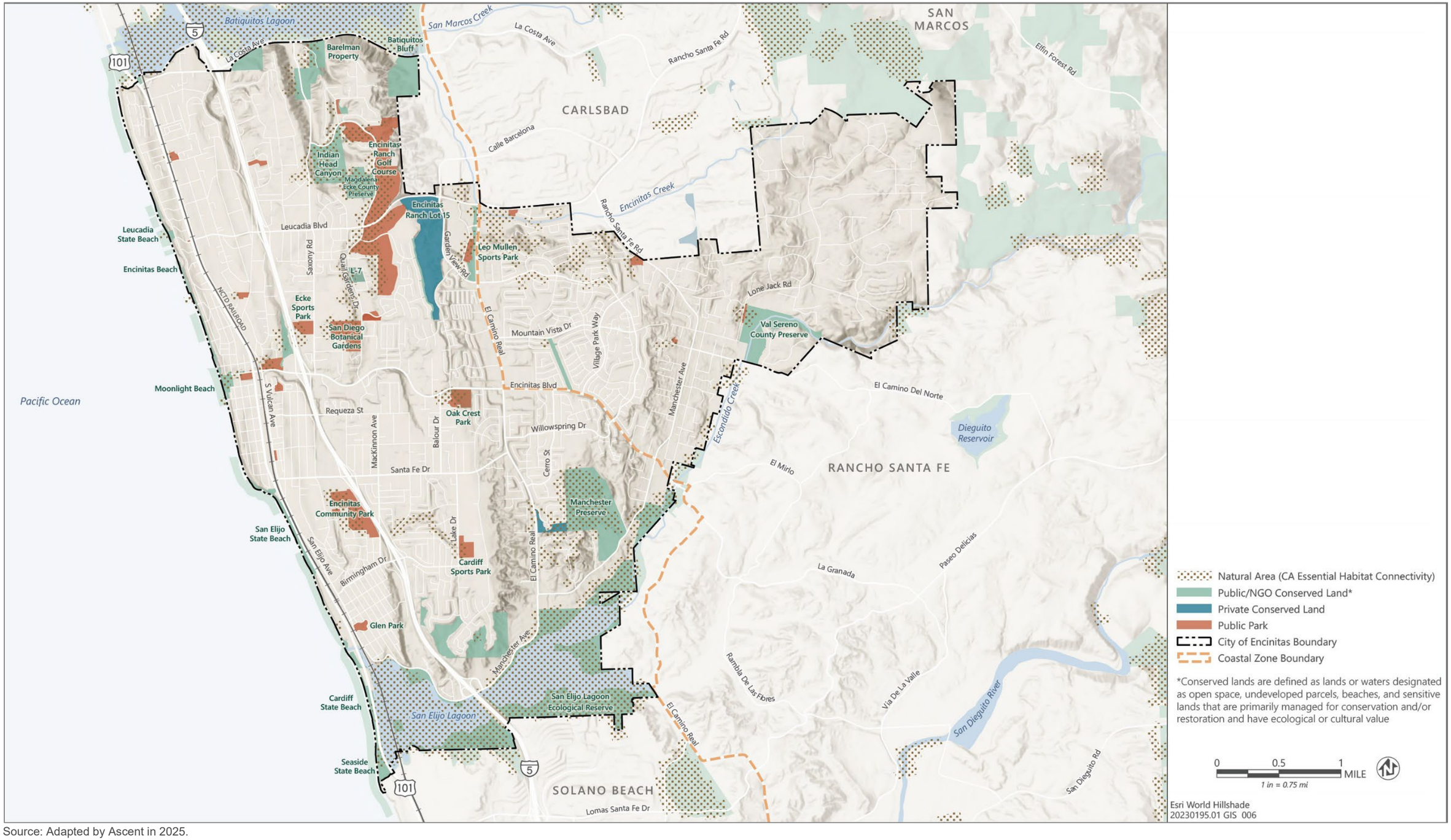
The City, through SANDAG, participates in the Shoreline Monitoring Project which includes mapping and reporting on various transects of shoreline throughout the San Diego County Region. Additionally, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been conducting nearshore coastal biological monitoring, taking both pre- and post-construction inventory well north and south of the City's coastal limits.

Figure 2-1 Essential Habitat Connectivity



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

Figure 2-2 California Department of Fish and Wildlife Natural Areas (California Essential Habitat Connectivity)



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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California Coastal Plan (Coastal Initiative Proposition of 1972)

This plan was prepared in response to a public mandate (Coastal Initiative - Proposition 20, 1972) that underscored citizen desires that the State's coastal resources be protected. A regional plan was prepared for the Encinitas Planning Area by the County of San Diego. This plan included the following policies, a number of which have been implemented or are included in the General Plan:

- Restore Batiquitos Lagoon to its natural state, to the extent that this is possible, including the restoration of tidal action, enhancement of resource value, protection of buffer areas, and the creation of a 1000+ acre park reserve;
- Acquire additional sites to provide access to the shoreline;
- Designate the Highway 101 corridor as a scenic highway; Protect coastal floriculture and agriculture within the coastal area;
- Link existing and future parks with a trails system; Retain the low density, semi- rural character of existing " San Dieguito" communities; and
- Acquire 1000+ acres within the San Elijo Lagoon as an ecological reserve and regional park.

The State Coastal Commission has prepared guidelines designed to assist local governments and the Coastal Commission staff in how to implement State relating to the Coastal Act. These guidelines have been adhered to in the preparation of the Local Coastal Program for the City of Encinitas.

Shoreline Preservation Strategy of 1993 (SANDAG)

In 1993 the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) adopted a Shoreline Preservation Strategy, aimed at protecting this region's shoreline as an environmental amenity, and to avoid hazards to public safety. The Strategy includes general objectives and policies, and suggests more detailed strategies for shoreline preservation for identified sub-regional "littoral cells." Encinitas is within the Oceanside Littoral Cell system. The Encinitas General Plan/LCP is intended to be consistent with, and to help aide implementation of, the objectives and policies of the Shoreline Preservation Strategy. Detailed actions and programs which may be pursued within Encinitas and immediately offshore to implement the Strategy must be monitored and checked for consistency with the goals and policies of this General Plan.

San Diego County Air Quality Plan

The City of Encinitas is located within a non-attainment area in that Federal clean air standards prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency have not been achieved. To comply with the provisions of the Clean Air Act, the State of California established a number of special districts charged with implementing plans and programs to achieve Federal clean air standards. The San Diego County Air Pollution District was responsible for preparing the 1982 State Implementation Plan Revision for the San Diego Air Basin which identifies strategies designed to improve air quality compliance with Federal standards. Other Federal laws that are concerned with the protection of significant cultural and natural resources include the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended in 1978) and the Antiquities Act.

Encinitas Climate Action Plan Update

The Encinitas Climate Action Plan (CAP), originally adopted in 2011 and most recently updated in 2020, provides a comprehensive roadmap to address climate change by integrating climate action and adaptation strategies into local planning efforts. The CAP is an independent document that aligns with the City's General Plan, Municipal Code, Specific Plans, and Local Coastal Program (LCP), offering strategies, measures, and actions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (climate action) and enhance the community’s resilience to climate hazards (climate adaptation). The climate adaptation and resilience section of the CAP is closely related to SB 1425 requirements and informs the RME Update. The City has taken a proactive approach to climate action and adaptation and is currently working on its draft CAP (draft CAP Update), which will serve as the first five-year update to the 2020 CAP.

The draft CAP Update will incorporate the Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Framework completed in 2023 for the City's General Plan Safety Element update, in compliance with SB 379. SB 379 requires cities and counties in California to integrate climate adaptation into their general plans. The Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Framework summarized the climate change effects and climate hazards that the City is vulnerable to, including:

- changes in temperature and the related increased frequency of extreme heat events and heat waves,
- increased drought events,
- increased wildfire risk and smoke,
- increased precipitation and the likelihood of flooding,
- sea-level rise and bluff erosion, and
- increased likelihood of landslides and liquefaction, which are associated with increased precipitation and more frequent flooding events.

The draft CAP Update highlights that wildfire risk and sea-level rise will be the most severe climate-related impacts in the City. Areas such as San Elijo Lagoon and Cardiff State Beaches are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels and coastal flooding. Neighborhoods near Encinitas Ranch Golf Course and Saxony Canyon face heightened wildfire risks. On June 11, 2025, the City Council adopted updated FHSZ maps, which will assist the City in identifying and managing fire hazard risks.

Building on the summary of the City's climate vulnerabilities, the draft CAP Update outlines adaptation efforts already underway, including those in the County of San Diego's 2023 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) – City of Encinitas Annex. As part of the MJHMP planning effort, the City has adopted several goals, policies, and objectives relevant to climate adaptation. The City is committed to incorporating climate change and climate-related risks into its current and future planning efforts to protect its residents and create a climate-resilient community.

After assessing the City's climate vulnerabilities and current adaptation efforts, the draft CAP Update further references the Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Framework, which defines adaptation actions the City should take to prepare for the effects of climate change and climate hazards. These specific adaptation actions are organized into the following seven categories:

- general climate hazard adaptation,
- prepare for changes in temperatures and increased extreme heat,
- prepare for changes in precipitation patterns and water supply,
- prepare for increased wildfire risk and smoke,
- prepare for increased flood risk,
- prepare for sea-level rise, and
- prepare for increased landslide and liquefaction risk.

Each category includes programs and policies as actions to support climate resiliency and adaptation, focusing on specific vulnerabilities and impacts that have the potential to affect the community's populations, functions, and structures. Many of these actions align with SB 1425 requirements regarding climate resilience, equitable access to open space, and rewilding initiatives. These adaptation actions are discussed below:

- **Nature-based solutions and green infrastructure:**
  - implement green infrastructure projects such as rain gardens, bioswales, and habitat corridors to improve climate resilience and biodiversity,
  - expand urban greening efforts outside of fire hazard severity zones and identified evacuation routes, including tree planting, vegetation corridors, and urban stream restoration, to adapt to extreme heat, flooding, and wildfire smoke, and
  - continue beach nourishment projects to maintain the width of City beaches, which serve as regional cool zones during extreme heat events. By maintaining beach width, the City will also be able to handle larger numbers of coastal visitors when needed, keeping the public a safe distance from the bluffs.
- **Extreme heat adaptation:**
  - install touchless water refill stations at public facilities, parks, and bus shelters,
  - work with regional transit agencies to increase shade coverage and heat-mitigating materials at pedestrian walkways and transit stops, and
  - reduce the urban heat island effect by limiting heat-absorbing paved surfaces and increasing landscaped green spaces.
- **Wildfire and smoke adaptation:**
  - coordinate with regional and local agencies and partners (e.g., California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection [CAL FIRE], Encinitas Fire and Marine Safety Department), as well as private landowners to identify the best methods of fuel modification to reduce the severity of future wildfires, such as: Fire Department controlled burns, grazing, hand clearing, education and defensible space. The Encinitas Fire Department conducts outreach via social media, and hosts wildfire preparedness workshops as well as partners with/supports the Olivenhain Fire Safe Council for public education.
- **Flood and coastal erosion adaptation:**
  - continue local and regional ecosystem restoration efforts to increase climate resiliency for flooding events,
  - continue to implement current efforts focused on beach nourishment, coastal bluff improvements and wetland restoration, prioritizing projects that will mitigate the impacts of sea-level rise, including coastal erosion and saltwater inundation, and
  - utilize nature-based infrastructure by perpetuating or restoring ecosystem services, which can also increase the long-term adaptive capacity of coastal areas.

Draft Multiple Species Conservation Plan (North County)

The Draft Multiple Species Conservation Plan (North County) would extend San Diego County's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) into the northern portion of unincorporated areas within the county. This plan is still in active development following direction from the Board of Supervisors on October 28, 2020, and will be a joint HCP/NCCP. It is intended to achieve similar species and natural resource protections and economic and permit streamlining advantages as the approved South County MSCP Subarea Plan. Finalization of the Plan will require concurrence from various key stakeholders on the list of species to be included as "Covered" under the plan as well as forecasted lands planned for development and extent of preserved conservation areas (PCA). It is anticipated that PCA within the final North County MSCP Subarea Plan will occur directly adjacent to the City boundary, particularly within and surrounding San Elijo Lagoon.

Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan

The Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan (Subarea Plan), drafted in 2001, addresses how the City will conserve natural biotic communities and special-status plant and wildlife specifies pursuant to the California NCCP Act as well as the California and Federal Endangered Species Acts as part of the Subregional MHCP. While the Subarea Plan was not finalized or officially permitted, the City continues to use it informally as a guidance document for conservation and land use planning. The Subarea Plan designates conservation areas into Hardline and Softline Focused Planning Areas (FPAs). Hardline FPAs identify lands with existing development agreements that specify both designated development areas and biological preserves. Softline FPAs include lands where conservation will be achieved through the application of development and conservation standards and criteria as outlined in the subarea plan.

Draft Open Space Management Plan

Under the MHCP, to obtain an Implementing Agreement from the resource agencies, the City, and any other signatory municipality, is required to prepare an Open Space Management Plan (OSMP), as well as a Subarea Plan that must align with Government Code Sections 51175-51189 (Defensible Space) and 65302(g) (Safety Element) and local vegetation management requirements for fire hazards/defensible space. Through a contracted consultant, a draft of this OSMP was prepared in 2009 as well as an estimate of overall start up and operating costs. These costs were determined to be infeasible by City Council. A draft of the OSMP was prepared and received an initial round of comments from agency staff, however, the document has not been finalized, similar to the City's draft Subarea Plan. As an interim and more cost-effective approach, the City has prepared the Encinitas Habitat Stewardship Program to provide direction for management activities and resources within the City. This program has not been approved by the resource agencies as a substitute to the OSMP requirement under the MHCP and, therefore, is expected to be replaced by the final version of the OSMP if/when the City becomes a signatory to the MHCP.

Draft Native Plant Ordinance

The City Council has identified the need to develop a simplified native plant ordinance (NPO) to be added to its Code of Ordinances (also referred to as the Encinitas Municipal Code) in combination with a native plant incentive program (NPIP). The NPO and NPIP will be prepared to be consistent with the policies within the City's Resource Management Element and will support local pollinator species, promote species diversity, and enhance the ecological health of native systems as well as improve the City's overall appearance and that of individual residential and commercial developments. It must also align with Government Code Sections 51175-51189 (Defensible Space) and 65302(g) (Safety Element) and local vegetation management requirements for fire hazards/defensible space. The ordinance is intended to further enhance the ecological condition and connectivity of existing natural and open space areas within the City (e.g., steep slopes, high fire risk areas, Native Plant Adjacency Areas [to be defined through development of NPO]).

Draft Mature Tree Ordinance

The City has recognized the importance of trees and other vegetation in providing aesthetic value, air cleansing, climate regulation, wildlife nesting and stop-over connectivity, and other benefits to residents, businesses, and visitors to the community as well as to plant and wildlife species that are present within the City. As a result, on December 8, 2021, the City Council directed staff to develop objective standards to preserve significant mature trees, and a draft mature tree ordinance (MTO) has been prepared. The MTO seeks to incentivize preservation of "mature trees" as defined by the ordinance, and to outline mitigation strategies and ratio requirements for the removal of any mature trees. Efforts must also align with Government Code Sections 51175-51189 (Defensible Space) and 65302(g) (Safety Element) and local vegetation management requirements for fire hazards/defensible space. It is the City's intention to further encourage and support the preservation of natural habitat and native plant communities.

2.3 Recent and Ongoing Programs and Projects

San Elijo Lagoon Dredging and Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline Project

Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline installed with cycle track, DG path, and access sand pathways through the dune system.

Native species of dune plants have reseeded themselves since installation on the Living Shoreline over the past five years.

The Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline project was the 2020 winner of the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) Best Restored Beach Award, for its innovative "green infrastructure," featuring 2,900 linear feet of reconstructed dunes. Located on the seaward side of Coast Highway 101 on Cardiff State Beach, the dune system protects a vulnerable segment of the roadway in addition to restoring natural habitat. This innovative, nature-based project addressed multiple issues along a low-lying area of the Cardiff coastline, including frequent flooding and erosion that impacted South Coast Highway 101, the prominence of cobble beaches that reduced coastal habitat and recreational beach use area, and previously poor beach access that was unsafe and not accessible for those with disabilities. The California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) met on November 21, 2024, to review the City's application and proposed grant proposal and approved it unanimously, in the amount of $1,060,000 to support the continued maintenance, monitoring and permitting effort at the Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline project for the next five years.

Dredging at Cardiff inlet at San Elijo Lagoon.

A stakeholder group, consisting of the California Coastal Commission, the City of Encinitas, California State Coastal Conservancy, California State Parks, Nature Collective, US Fish and Wildlife Service, San Diego Association of Governments, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Surfrider Foundation, concurred with the scope of work for the Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline Project as a protection measure along this section of Encinitas Coastline in this form and manner. The restored living shoreline dune system provides a critical coastal movement corridor for wildlife that may traverse, roost, or forage within the open space habitat. In addition to the maintenance activities associated with the living shoreline itself, periodic dredging of the marine channel and inlet to the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve is also required and managed by Nature Collective. While sand replenishment on the dune system provides a movement opportunity for coastal avian and wildlife species, sand accumulation within the inlet can prevent fish passage and spawning opportunities, negatively impact water quality, reduce natural recirculation of tidal waters, and artificially increase tidal inundation periods in the lagoon, which in turn can negatively affect native wetland and riparian habitats which are not adapted to the extended presence of high tidal waters. Ongoing implementation of dredging activities protect the functions of the lagoon to wildlife such as nesting, foraging, and movement through wildlife connectivity to other open space areas. It also provides additional sand for the Cardiff Living Shoreline Project and other beach replenishment needs within the City.

Storm surge onto the Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline project during the 2024 El Nino storms.

I-5 Widening Project

The Interstate 5 (I-5) Widening project is under construction as part of the larger I-5 North Coast Corridor project. In addition to transportation improvements such as road widening, installation of sound walls, and landscaping, it includes restoration activities at San Elijo Lagoon. Restoration includes removal of approximately 300,000 cubic yards of accumulated sediment. Removed sand is being used to replenish Cardiff State Beach and Moonlight State Beach. The project also includes additional wetland, riparian, saltwater marsh habitat enhancements within San Elijo Lagoon.

Encinitas Habitat Stewardship Program Implementation Projects

The Encinitas Habitat Stewardship Program (EHSP) was developed as a lower-cost alternative to implementation of the draft OSMP defined as a requirement under the MHCP along with a Subarea Plan. The EHSP provides funding for basic property management stewardship (e.g., invasive plant removal, trash and encampment removal, fencing/signage, erosion control, fire abatement, etc.) on City-owned property which contains sensitive habitat. The program also provides a 50/50 financial incentive for homeowners' associations to participate in the program. Implementation efforts fall into five categories: invasive plant control, erosion control, access control, trash and debris control, and brush management/fire abatement. Efforts to date have included the following:

Photo of Cottonwood Creek near West B Street.

- addressing trash and encampment clean-ups on both City and private properties;
- partnering with neighboring municipalities and nonprofit organizations to conduct target removal of invasive species based on qualified biologists' mapping and recommendations;
- controlling of invasive plant species and planting of native species at Cottonwood Creek Park (Unimproved);
- removing palms, treating non-natives, and planting native species at Cottonwood Creek Drainage Areas A, B, and C;
- biannual qualitative monitoring at all actively managed EHSP parcels; and
- removing non-native species and planting native species along Saxony Road.

USACE Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Project

In 2000, in response to growing concerns in the region for protecting property and reestablishing natural coastal resources, the USACE Los Angeles District undertook studies and investigations to understand the primary mechanism of bluff erosion in San Diego County. The City of Encinitas and City of Solana Beach participated as non-federal sponsors of the project. For many years, data was collected and evaluated along the Encinitas and Solana Beach coastline. After completion of the investigation, a project to protect coastal property and restore coastal resources was authorized by the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016. The project was funded by the United States Congress, California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW), via grant sponsorship, and each local jurisdiction in 2024 for the initial phase of the 50-year project.

The purpose of the project is to minimize the energy of storm surge impacting the bluff face, by creating a beach wide enough to dissipate wave energy, before causing damage to the bluff and potential catastrophic failure to life and property. Additionally, the project offers important co-benefits to public health and safety, including low-cost recreation by use of a wider, safer sandy beach area adjacent to the existing bluff condition, and environmental enhancements to beach habitat, by restoring and enhancing avian, fish, and invertebrate species habitat. With the

beach fill in place, both cities would avoid the need to construct new public infrastructure and amenities that could impact natural habitat.

In May 2024, the City completed construction of the initial phase of the USACE Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Project (also known federally as the San Diego County, CA Project). This was a joint project between USACE, the City of Solana Beach, and the City of Encinitas where sand collected through offshore dredging was utilized to replenish beaches in Encinitas and Solana Beach and to build linear storm damage protective berms adjacent to coastal bluffs in both respective jurisdictions. The project consisted of two Segments: Segment 1 in the City of Encinitas and Segment 2 in the City of Solana Beach.

The construction of Segment 1 in the City of Encinitas began in April 2024. Segment 1 included the construction of a 50-foot-wide protective beach berm with a 50-foot-wide tapered slope, extending along 7,800 feet of shoreline in Encinitas, beginning just north of Swami's Beach to a few hundred yards south of Beacons Beach, using approximately 340,000 cubic yards of compatible sediment. Renourishment will occur on average every five years, with approximately 220,000 cubic yards of compatible sediment over a 50-year period of Federal participation, for a total of nine additional nourishments.

The initial phase of the project has been in place for almost a year now within both jurisdictions and has proven to be quite effective. Each protective segment has minimized storm damage to the coastal bluffs almost completely. Winter storm surges in 2024 and 2025 have had little to no effect at these project locations, keeping coastal bluffs intact and sustaining wide recreational beaches for public use. This has allowed numerous recreational benefits, including the use by recreational day camps and lifeguard safety programs, as well as offering ample space for volleyball, beach going, tide pooling, surfing, swimming, and fishing. Also, being that both improved beach segments are centrally located within San Diego County, these renourished and restored beaches support tourism, generating Transient Occupancy Tax and sales tax for the region.

Moonlight State Beach, Encinitas, before and after San Diego County, CA Project

Stonesteps Beach, Encinitas, before and after completion of San Diego County, CA Project

Before and after sand replenishment at Moonlight Beach and Stonesteps Beach.

SANDAG Regional Beach Sand Projects (RBSP)

SANDAG is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the San Diego region and plays a key role in the regional coordination of a variety of projects. The San Diego region has 18 jurisdictions, eight of which are located in the coastal zone and collectively manage approximately 70 miles of coastline which can be accessed via transit, highways, roadways, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. A number of these coastal facilities are at risk from the impacts of rising seas, high tides, and strong storms. As such, access to beaches, residences, and public facilities may be impacted.

According to the SANDAG Regional Beach Monitoring Program, the beaches of the San Diego region have been steadily eroding for several decades. The region is experiencing a net loss of sand at numerous beaches along its coastline. Beach sand is a product of the weathering of the land, and the primary natural source for the region's beaches is sediment carried from inland areas by rivers and streams. Over the past half century, human actions have been the major influence affecting the shoreline. Through urban development activities including water reservoir and dam building, flood control systems, and sand mining, as well as building and roadway construction paving over sand sources, natural sediment delivery to the coast has been hindered or eliminated in many areas.

To address this loss of sand, SANDAG has proposed to conduct a feasibility study for a regional beach sand nourishment project. The feasibility study would identify transportation facilities that will be impacted by sea-level rise and may benefit from beach nourishment. Implementation of a regional beach sand project would involve dredging beach quality sand from offshore borrow sites and placing it on highly eroded beaches in the San Diego region. Beach nourishment is being considered as a sea-level rise adaptation strategy by a number of cities in the San Diego region who have updated their Local Coastal Programs to align with the California Coastal Commission's Guidance on sea-level rise. Wide beaches can help protect coastal communities and coastal transportation facilities by acting as a buffer to alleviate some of the impacts from sea-level rise, strong storm events, and high tides. SANDAG previously completed two regional beach sand nourishment projects in 2001 and 2012 (RBSP I and RBSP II, respectively), adding approximately 3.5 million cubic yards of sand to the region's local beaches. In addition, SANDAG has an established regional forum, the Shoreline Preservation Working Group, where elected officials are engaged in regional adaptation projects, such as beach nourishment.

The draft SANDAG Economic Analysis and Regional Beach Sand Project (RBSP III) Feasibility Study will provide a comprehensive analysis of various factors affecting beaches, including sea-level rise, sediment budgets, longshore sediment transport rates, wave climate, beach profiles, sediment grain size, shoreline position, and nearshore biological inventory. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for effective coastal management and for determining the necessary steps for RBSP III. RBSP III will be a programmatic, long-term beach nourishment project spanning many years with dedicated sand nourishment intervals. Key lessons learned from previous projects are highlighted, along with recommendations for improving efficiency. These include emphasizing both economic and ecological benefits, identifying larger or new borrow sites, considering sand retention features, optimizing receiver site footprints, streamlining federal and state environmental review and permitting processes, early coordination with regulatory agencies, and determining optimal renourishment intervals and terms of overall length of programmatic project scope.

Opportunistic Beach Infill Program/Sand Compatibility and Opportunistic Use Program

On July 16, 2008, the City Council approved the implementation of the Sand Compatibility and Opportunistic Use Program (SCOUP) as part of the Opportunistic Beach Fill Program (OBFP). SCOUP was developed in consultation with State and Federal resource agencies to provide protocols and templates for a regional opportunistic sand program intended to streamline regulatory approval of small (i.e., less than 150,000 cubic yards) beach nourishment projects. The program, which includes the protocol and methodology defined by SANDAG, defines the location, timing, type, and other parameters of sand placement within which all opportunistic nourishment projects are approved. The standardized permitting process facilitates the use of available sand from construction sites and other opportunistic sources. The program includes stringent environmental-quality requirements to ensure that the sand sources are compatible with receiver sites. The timing and location of sand placement is also strictly controlled to reduce any negative effects on coastal habitats and recreation. Sand replenishment allows for the City and its partners to maintain public beach stability for recreation. As a result, agencies can conserve sand from other sources to be utilized to establish natural dune habitats (e.g., Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline Project) that

support native species, including wildlife movement, roosting, and foraging, without costly off-shore dredging or purchase of sand from outside sources. Currently, the City's program allows for the streamlined approval of beach placement at Batiquitos Lagoon, and Leucadia, Moonlight, and Cardiff beaches for appropriate sand sources.

SCOUP placement at/along Cardiff State Beach within the intertidal zone for natural, longshore transport deposit.

CoastSnap Project

The CoastSnap Project is a coastal science program that encourages beachgoers to take pictures of the coastline at the same location and orientation to capture a valuable record of beach changes over time. This allows changes to be observed and contributes to our understanding of coastal processes, such as coastal erosion, bluff movement, the beach recovery process, and sea level rise.

Stainless steel cradles have been strategically placed at key advantage points along select beach-access stairways. Each cradle has a camera access window and is positioned at a precise angle to capture consistent photos of the specific beach coastline. Once sent, markers along the beach are used to analyze the images and precisely measure the shoreline location on any given day. These photos are then put together to show the shoreline's position and beach width as it evolves over time.

Restoration and Habitat Enhancement Projects

Manchester Avenue Conservation Bank

The Manchester Avenue Conservation Bank is a 123-acre preserve owned and managed by the Center for Natural Lands Management and contains coastal sage scrub and southern maritime chaparral compensatory mitigation credits for biological impacts within Encinitas as well as San Diego MHCP and MSCP areas. It was initially established to provide approximately 100 acres of mitigation for development projects in the vicinity. The bank contains habitat with confirmed occurrence/presence of special status species.

Beacon's Beach Coastal Bluff Landscape Restoration Project

Beacon's Beach Coastal Bluff Landscape Restoration Project is a recent project completed by the City that showcases a balance of habitat protection, coastal access, and recreational use. This is an ongoing maintenance effort to remove non-natives and plant natives along the bluff. The primary objective of the project is to stabilize the bluff using native vegetation to protect the access trail for a beach destination. The restoration of native plant species has the twofold benefit of reducing bluff top erosion and increasing habitat area. The restoration plan includes a pilot project testing the use of washed-up kelp to enhance natural dune formation. Long-term monitoring plans include citizen science opportunities to increase engagement and stewardship in the community.

Manchester Outfall Project

As part of mitigation requirements associated with the replacement of the San Elijo land outfall pipeline that runs from the San Elijo Water Reclamation Facility (SEWRF) to the existing ocean outfall to the Pacific Ocean, the City has restored riparian habitat within the outfall drainage channel directly adjacent to the San Elijo Lagoon and is monitoring this area for success. This restoration consisted of determining an appropriate plant palette of riparian species suitable for the location within the lagoon and was monitored for three years to ensure native vegetation met the success criteria defined in the project permit authorizations.

Parks and Recreation Month

The month of July 2024 was proclaimed by City Council as Parks and Recreation Month. City Council provided recognition and a video presentation showcasing that parks, recreation, and arts enrich the lives of residents and visitors in the City and urged all citizens to fully utilize and enjoy City parks, beaches, trails, open space, facilities, and recreational opportunities with enhanced mobility safety education and awareness. An event was also hosted to raise awareness of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts operations.

Manchester J Channel thriving after sediment removal and native vegetation placed around the perimeter.

La Costa Basin Project

The City of Encinitas is planning and preparing permits for the maintenance of the earthen-bottom La Costa Basin in the northern portion of the City boundary to provide transportation infrastructure flood protection for La Costa Avenue to the north as well as harvest accumulated sand substrates suitable for SCOUP. Maintenance activities would consist of the mechanized removal of accumulated material consisting of sediment, sand, and vegetation along with the re-contouring of the basin to achieve its intended dimensions. The basin was originally constructed in 2005 in response to a flooding event that covered La Costa Avenue with sediment. As a result of that flood event, emergency repair and maintenance activities were implemented to protect both La Costa Avenue and Batiquitos Lagoon from downstream flows during extreme rain events. Prior to the emergency construction of the La Costa Basin, the majority of the basin consisted of disturbed land and annual grassland habitat, which was a result of historic use of the area for staging equipment and materials during construction of the residential development to the southeast. Native vegetation would be restored in certain areas around the basin as part of the planned maintenance project and SCOUP will be initiated during regular maintenance cleanouts of the basin by Public Works to utilize qualifying sand material for beach replenishment, in accordance with the standard SCOUP protocols.

La Costa Basin.

Urban Forest Management Program

The Public Works Department and Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Arts Department established the Urban Forest Management Program, which incorporates the Encinitas Urban Tree Planting Program. The City's CAP sets a tree planting goal to increase the urban tree canopy within the City. As part of the 2020 CAP, the goal is currently 100 net new trees planted annually. In 2024, the City planted more than 150 trees, exceeding the goal by more than 50 percent.

San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve Habitat Restoration Project

This project is funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board and led by the Nature Collective from the years of 2021 to 2025. The location is approximately the Escondido Creek Corridor, south of South Rancho Santa Fe Drive spanning approximately 108 acres within the San Elijo Lagoon itself. The scope of work includes riparian habitat restoration to benefit migratory birds. Approximately 1,000 container native plants were installed in areas of cleared invasive species.

Escondido Creek Riparian Restoration Project

This project is also funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board and led by the Nature Collective from the years 2022 to 2026. Known as the Val Sereno Preserve, this riparian habitat restoration project of approximately 60 acres helps to benefit migratory birds and wildlife. Large invasive species removal also occurred, including Eucalyptus, palms, myoporum, and Arundo. Approximately 1,500 container plants were installed.

Rare Dune Plant Restoration Project

This project was funded by the SANDAG Environmental Mitigation Program from the years 2023 to 2025. The project is located south of the Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline, including the Seaside Terrace Dunes (near South Cardiff State Beach) and the San Elijo Lagoon West Basin Dunes area. The project scope included restoring rare dune habitat through seed collection, disbursement, propagation, container installation, implementing conservation efforts through invasive species management and regular monitoring.

Sustainable Surf Wetland Enhancement Project

This project was funded by Sustainable Surf/Sea Trees for the years 2023-2027. This project is located in the West Basin of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. The scope of work includes restoration of native salt marsh species through community volunteer events. Approximately 500 marsh species were planted with volunteers. Native seed collection for propagation was established and trash collection occurred during time of placement.

San Elijo Lagoon Double-Track Mitigation Project

This project was funded through SANDAG through the years of 2020-2025 and is located within the LOSSAN North County Transit Corridor (NCTD) between Chesterfield Drive and the City of Solana Beach. The scope of work included maintaining hydroseed slopes along the newly constructed double-track railroad line. Routine invasive species treatments, removal and native container planting, seeding and vegetation monitoring occurred.

2.4 EXISTING CONSERVED LANDS

Local Conserved Lands

The City features more than 1,200 acres of conserved lands, which include publicly- and privately-owned lands or waters designated as open space, undeveloped parcels, beaches, and sensitive lands (Figure 2-3). These lands are primarily managed for conservation and have ecological or cultural value. This also includes lands used for passive recreational uses such as hiking, wildlife viewing, beach recreation, and ecological education. Conserved lands for the purposes of this RME update do not include developed parks with active recreation facilities such as playgrounds, community centers, sports fields and sports courts, or dog parks. Streetscapes maintained by the City are also not included as conserved lands. Select special use parks designated for passive recreational uses may be included within the RME. Conserved waters within the City boundary include both coastal ecology areas and inland wetland communities, such as San Elijo Lagoon and the mouths of coastal rivers.

A majority of the public conserved lands within the City are classified as open to public access (CPAD 2024). Select areas, including portions of the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and the Ayoub Mitigation Site along La Costa Avenue have restricted public access or are closed to public access, respectively. Major landowners and land managers of the conserved lands include the City of Encinitas, County of San Diego, Center for Natural Lands Management, California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and private landowners and homeowners' associations.

The City has numerous public beaches. Major destination beaches include Cardiff State Beach, San Elijo State Park, Moonlight State Beach, and Leucadia State Beach. Moonlight State Beach and Leucadia State Beach are owned by the State but are operated by the City. Beaches provide both active and passive recreational uses, and each beach along the City's western boundary is designated as high, medium, or low use intensity based on the desired amounts of developed recreation facilities and beach preservation. Beaches within the City are intended to be primarily natural beaches, with no commercial or recreational marinas, boat ramps, or fishing piers.

There are more than 1,720 acres of open space easements within the City, located on both public and private parcels. Most easements are granted to the City. The largest concentration of open space easements occurs within the eastern half of the Leucadia community, in the vicinity of the Encinitas Ranch Golf Course.

There are six private parcels under Williamson Act contracts, which are long-term contracts to preserve agricultural and open space lands from conversion to developed uses under the California Land Conservation Act of 1965. These parcels are located within the Leucadia community near the Encinitas Ranch Golf Course.

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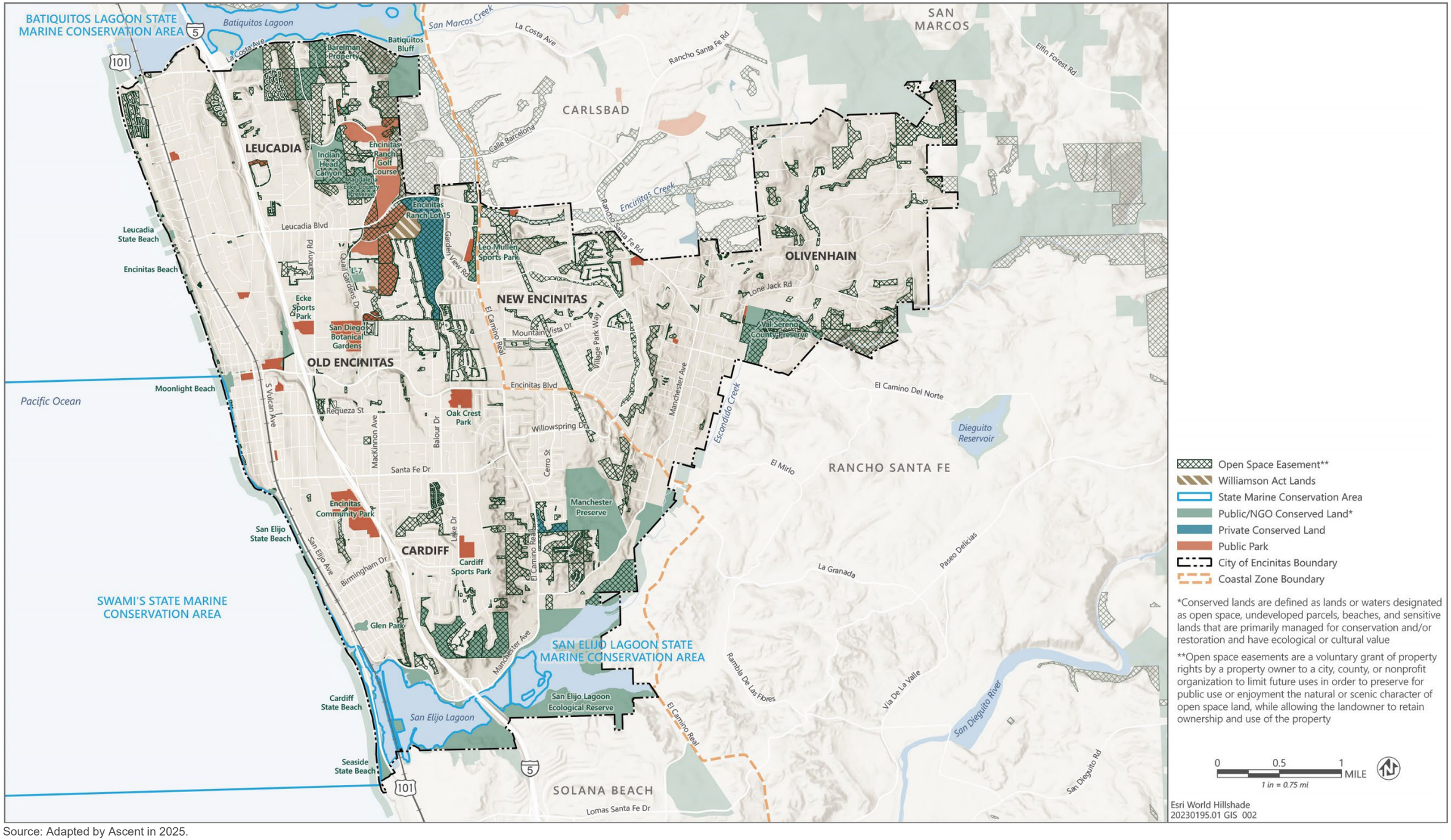
Figure 2-3 Conserved Lands Network Map



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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Notable Local Conserved Lands

The San Elijo Lagoon along the southern boundary of the City includes the 721-acre San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve as well as the 321-acre San Elijo State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) marine protected area (MPA) overlay. The SMCA is managed to protect the coastal marsh habitat and estuary waters. Public access is allowed at the LEED-platinum rated San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center and along the land-based trail system managed by the San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation and the Nature Collective.

Manchester Preserve is an existing 123-acre preserve managed by the Center for Natural Lands Management. The land was originally designated as a mitigation bank to offset habitat loss from nearby development projects. The preserve has an abundance of native vegetation types. The land is currently managed with the goal of providing public access via trails while controlling non-native invasive species and ensuring compatibility between public uses and species protection.

Other notable conserved lands within the City include the following:

Marine Protected Areas

There are three Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within and adjacent to the City of Encinitas. MPAs are marine or estuarine areas seaward of the mean high tide line or the mouth of a coastal river, including any area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora and fauna, that have been designated by law or administrative action to protect or conserve marine life and habitat. They promote the restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity, which help increase the ocean's resilience to pollution and climate change.

- **Indian Head Canyon:** Indian Head Canyon is a 55-acre open space owned by the City of Encinitas in the eastern Leucadia community. The open space area is publicly accessible via hiking and bicycling trails. The Fire Department coordinates with the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department for vegetation management and fire breaks for residences located in Indian Head Canyon.

- **Magdalena Ecke County Preserve:** Located between Indian Head Canyon and Encinitas Ranch Golf Course, the 30-acre Magdalena Ecke County Preserve provides a link in continuous open space and parklands within the Leucadia portion of the City.

- **Val Sereno County Preserve:** Val Sereno is a 55-acre county preserve along Escondido Creek in Olivenhain. A majority of the preserve is within the Escondido Creek environmentally sensitive area. The Val Sereno and La Bajada areas of the Escondido Creek are currently in year two of a four-year grant program, in which the Fire Department is partnering with Nature Collective to remove non-native plants and trees including palms.

- **Belmont Village Senior Living Open Space:** A dedicated open space area for steep slope preservation and habitat restoration located in the Cardiff community. The property is part of the SCOUP to haul approximately 10,000 cubic yards of sand to Batiquitos Beach/South Ponto State Beach to help restore coastal erosion in northern Encinitas and southern Carlsbad.

- **Surfer's Point Preserve:** The property formerly known as "Surfer's Point" is a 1.4-acre area purchased by the City for preservation and passive park use. The parcels are located at the intersection of Highway 101 and La Costa Avenue in the Leucadia community.

- **Piraeus, La Costa, and Plato Open Space:** This land was purchased by City and preserved as open space. A detailed Fire Protection Plan outlining vegetation management and preservation of protected areas is being prepared by the Fire Department.

- **Barelman Property Open Space:** The 17.6-acre Barelman Property was purchased by the City in 2003. The property is in the northern portion of the City in the Leucadia community, just south of Batiquitos Lagoon.

- **Snedeker Property Open Space:** The 7.7-acre Snedeker Property was purchased by the City in 2003. It is located southwest of the Barelman Property, within the Leucadia community.

Regional Conserved Lands

Conserved lands and waters and open space easements surround the City to the north, east, and west (Figure 2-3). Conserved lands and easements to the north and east exist primarily along Escondido and Encinitas creeks. A contiguous area of conserved lands, parks, and open space easements create a network of open space along Escondido Creek and the San Dieguito River between the Olivenhain community and Santa Ysabel approximately 30 miles east of the City. The following sections provide a summary of regionally important conserved lands adjacent to the City.

Batiquitos Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and Ecological Reserve

Batiquitos Lagoon is located along the northern boundary of the City and within the City of Carlsbad. The lagoon is managed by CDFW as the 544-acre Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve with the 324-acre Batiquitos Lagoon SMCA MPA overlay. One of the goals for the Batiquitos Lagoon SMCA is to protect the estuary's habitat. Allowed public uses include fishing underneath the Interstate-5 bridge and a land-based recreation trail. CDFW is initiating preparation of a Land Management Plan to guide the long-term management of the Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve.

Batiquitos Lagoon.

It is unlawful to injure, damage, take or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource for commercial and/or recreational purposes. Take pursuant to operation and maintenance, habitat restoration, research and education, maintenance dredging and maintenance of artificial structures inside the conservation area is allowed pursuant to any required federal, state and local permits. Boating, swimming, wading and diving are prohibited within the conservation area. Fishing is not allowed in the lagoon, except under the Interstate-5 freeway bridge, as accessed from the City of Carlsbad side and is catch and release only (no take).

Swami's State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)

Swami's SMCA offshore.

The City includes portions of the 8,134-acre Swami's SMCA, the largest MPA within San Diego County. The SMCA was established in 2012 and spans approximately 3.5 miles of shoreline from Moonlight State Beach south to South Cardiff State Beach and extends 3.5 miles offshore.

Western Snowy Plover running.

Burrowing Owl at the Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline.

Sunset at Swami's showing exposed intertidal reef.

Public access within Swami's SMCA includes surfing, tide pooling, and recreational fishing from the shore and recreational spearfishing for select species. Several surf breaks are popular for surfing, most notably Swami's Reef, Cardiff Reef, and Seaside Reef. No recreational or commercial boat fishing of any kind is allowed. Recreational fishing for finfish (or bony fish) by take with hook and line from shore is allowed. Beach nourishment and other sediment management activities and operation and maintenance of artificial structures inside the conservation area is allowed pursuant to any required federal, state, and local permits. Please see the specific California Code Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section 632 for Marine Protected Areas from California Fish and Wildlife and the applicable fish take regulations.

San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and Ecological Reserve

Located along the City of Encinitas southern boundary, south of Manchester Avenue and San Elijo Avenue and north of the City of Solana Beach, the San Elijo Lagoon has both a State Conservation Area overlay located within it (located on both sides of Interstate 5) and a State Ecological Reserve overlay within it (which is also located on both sides of Interstate 5). The San Elijo SMCA is 0.50 square miles, including 0.42 square miles of estuary and 1.59 square miles of coastal marsh. The San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve is 721 acres, reaching beyond the limits of the Ecological Reserve overlay. The property was designated as an ecological reserve by the Fish and Game Commission in 1983. There is a great diversity of plant and animal species, and a trails system in and around the lagoon that San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Nature Collective maintain for wildlife viewing and hiking.

One of the goals for San Elijo Lagoon SMCA is to protect the coastal marsh habitat and shallow estuary waters found there. The Fire Department provides guidance to San Diego County DPR staff and verifies vegetation management and fire breaks in the San Elijo Lagoon to address defensible space for nearby residences.

San Elijo Lagoon.

It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource for commercial and/or recreational purposes. Take pursuant to operation and maintenance, habitat restoration, research and education, maintenance dredging and maintenance of artificial structures inside the conservation area or ecological reserve is allowed pursuant to any required federal, state and local permits. Boating, paddleboarding, fishing, swimming, wading, and diving are prohibited within the conservation area and ecological reserve. This includes the inlet waterway near Cardiff Reef, which leads to the body of the lagoon, underneath, and on the east side of South Coast Highway 101, adjacent to the railroad corridor. Please see the CCR, Title 14, Section 630 for the San Elijo

Lagoon Ecological Reserve and Conservation Area rules and regulations and Section 632 for Marine Protected Areas from California Fish and Wildlife.

Rancho La Costa Preserve

Rancho La Costa Preserve is a 1,640-acre noncontiguous preserve managed by the Center for Natural Lands Management within Carlsbad, San Marcos, and unincorporated San Diego County. The preserve borders the northeastern City boundary in the Olivenhain community and along the north-central City boundary in the Leucadia community. The land protects open space to mitigate impacts from nearby development projects in Carlsbad and San Marcos. Rancho La Costa is part of a regional habitat corridor that connects Batiquitos Lagoon to Lake Hodges. Nonmotorized public access is allowed via a trail system. The Denk Mountain area of the preserve, north of Olivenhain, provides the largest concentration of trails within open space in the Encinitas vicinity.

LeoMar Preserve

Two properties of the noncontiguous LeoMar Preserve border the eastern edge of the City - the 81-acre Gaty Property and the 21-acre Bumann Property. The Escondido Creek Conservancy owns and manages LeoMar Preserve and the Conservancy owns over 3,000 acres within the Escondido Creek watershed between Encinitas and Lake Wohlford. These properties are closed to public access.

Focused Planning Areas

FPAs are identified in the MHCP as areas dedicated for open space and habitat conservation, with emphasis on conserving the Biological Core and Linkage Area identified in the MHCP, minimizing fragmentation, maximizing use of existing public lands and open space, and maintaining private property rights and economic viability (SANDAG 2003). Hardline planning areas are around San Elijo Lagoon, the Manchester Preserve, Agua Caliente Creek corridor, San Diego Botanic Garden, and Magdalena Ecke County Preserve. Softline planning areas exist within the eastern portion of the Cardiff community, around the northern and eastern portion of the Leucadia community, and in the eastern portion of the Olivenhain community.

Trail and Active Transportation Network

The City features an extensive network of more than 300 miles of trails and active transportation facilities open to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians (Figure 2-4).

Trail Network

The trail network includes 42 miles of unpaved trails, which include decomposed aggregate, dirt, and mulch surfacing, and nearly 12 miles of paved trails, which include asphalt, concrete, boardwalk, and stair paving types. The trail system within the City is predominantly concentrated within the Olivenhain, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, and Encinitas Ranch communities. The Olivenhain community contains an extensive network of mostly on-street unpaved trails open to hikers and equestrians. The San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve contains a network of paved and unpaved trails managed by San Diego County. The Encinitas Ranch community contains a mixture of on-street and off-street paved and unpaved trails in the vicinity of Encinitas Ranch Golf Course, Indian Head Canyon, and Magdalena Ecke Open Space. Trails are maintained by the Encinitas Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Department, City of Encinitas Street Maintenance, San Diego County, and private entities.

Notable trails within the City include Trail 95 and the paved Coastal Rail Trail. Trail 95 is a 940-foot long, 8-foot-wide decomposed granite trail which opened to the public in April 2022 and is in the Olivenhain community along El Camino Del Norte. The Coastal Rail Trail is a planned 42-mile regional trail from Oceanside to downtown San Diego. The 1.76-mile Encinitas segment of the Coastal Rail Trail opened in 2019 and runs parallel to the North County Transit District-owned railroad tracks within the Cardiff and Old Encinitas communities.

Active Transportation Network

The bicycle network includes a system of more than 65 miles of Class I shared use paths, Class II bicycle lanes, Class IIB buffered bicycle lanes, Class III on-street bicycle routes, and Class IV cycle tracks. The pedestrian network includes Class I shared use paths, paved and unpaved sidewalks and walkways, as well as paved and unpaved trails. Class I shared use paths and paved and unpaved trails are open to a combination of pedestrians, bicycles, and equestrians.

Bikeways within the City are concentrated around the Old Encinitas and New Encinitas communities in the central portion of the City. North-south bikeway connectivity is provided through the entire City along Highway 101 and El Camino Real/Manchester Avenue. East-west bikeway connectivity is provided in the western half of the City from the coast to the New Encinitas community along Leucadia Boulevard, Encinitas Boulevard, and Santa Fe Drive. The Olivenhain community features very little bicycle infrastructure, other than the previously mentioned trail network.

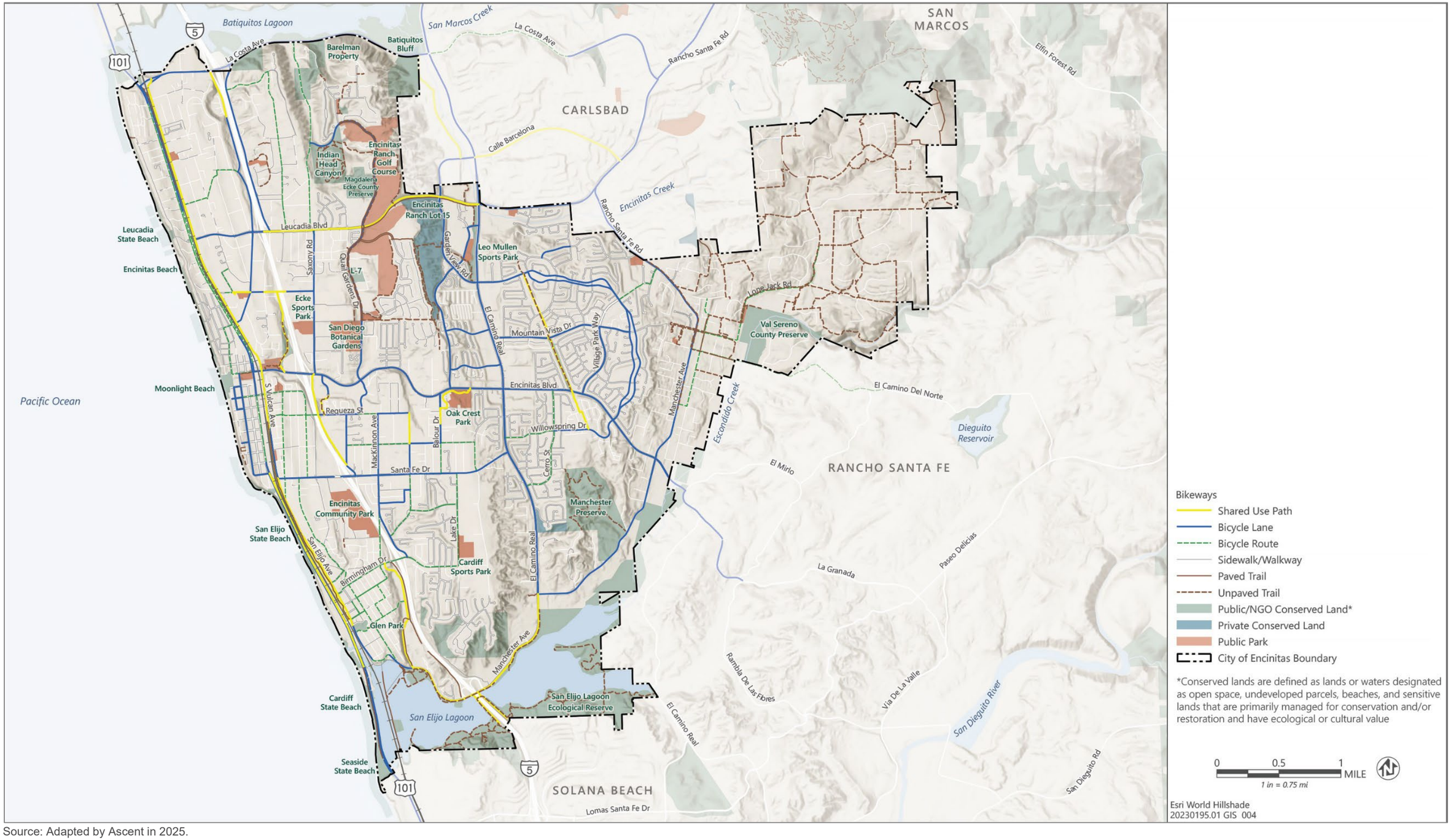
The City features more than 200 miles of sidewalks and walkways. Pedestrian infrastructure is concentrated throughout the New Encinitas community, in the western portion of the Old Encinitas community, and in the central portion of the Cardiff community. Sidewalks and walkways are notably lacking within the northwestern corner of the City in the Leucadia community, the western portion of the Cardiff community, and throughout the Olivenhain community.

Overlay Zones and Other Designations

The City of Encinitas Code of Ordinances identify special purpose overlay zones which identify additional standards for certain areas of the City relating to land use suitability based on environmental resources, environmental constraints, manmade resources, and public facility needs. Special purpose overlay zones from the Code of Ordinances are listed below. Overlay zones and other designated areas relevant to this Resource Management Element are further described in the sections below.

- **Agricultural Land Overlay Zone:** Restricts allowed development for properties under active Williamson Act contracts.
- **Coastal Bluff Overlay Zone:** Restricts development or disturbances within the vicinity of coastal bluffs.
- **Cultural/Natural Resources Overlay Zone:** Requires site-specific analysis for areas with archaeological sites and ecologically sensitive plant and animal habitats.
- **Floodplain Overlay Zone:** Restricts allowed development and disturbances for parcels with floodways, floodplains, and wetlands.
- **Hillside/Inland Bluff Overlay Zone:** Restricts development and allowed development encroachment in areas where 10 percent or more of the land has slopes greater than 25 percent.
- **Scenic/Visual Corridor Overlay Zone:** Requires visual impact assessment for proposed development within the scenic view corridor from scenic highways and adjacent to significant viewsheds and vista points.
- **Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ):** All parcels located within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs), as designated by CAL FIRE, are subject to vegetation management requirements under California Government Code Sections 51175–51189. These laws require the maintenance of defensible space around structures to reduce wildfire risk, improve emergency access, and support community-wide evacuation safety.

Figure 2-4 Trail and Active Transportation Network Map



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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Coastal Overlay Zone/Coastal Zone

All lands and waters within the Coastal Zone are regulated under the California Coastal Act and all development within the zone requires a coastal development permit. In addition, parcels within the City of Encinitas Coastal Zone Sensitive Resource Overlay Zone have more specific requirements for redevelopment. Within the City, the Coastal Zone generally extends between two and three miles inland (Figure 2-5). The western portion of the City is within the Coastal Zone, with North El Camino Real and Encinitas Boulevard forming the eastern boundary of the zone.

Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones

CAL FIRE provides fire hazard severity zones (FHSZ), or mapped areas of significant fire hazard based on fuels, terrain, weather, and modeled fire behavior and embers from adjacent lands. The City of Encinitas is part of the local responsibility area. The eastern Leucadia community, the eastern Olivenhain community, and the western Olivenhain/eastern Cardiff communities are identified with Very High, High, and Moderate FHSZs (Figure 2-5). The areas with these designations tend to correlate with areas of conserved lands and open space easements, as well as rural residential development. In total, areas with FHSZs represent approximately 50 percent of the City area.

Cottonwood Creek near Moonlight outfall.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) are areas in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and development (Public Resources Code Section 30107.5).

There are five environmentally sensitive areas within the City, with the largest around San Elijo Lagoon (Figure 2-5). Other ESAs exist around Escondido Creek, Encinitas Creek, San Luis Rey River/Oneonta Slough, and Batiquitos Lagoon. ESAs are designated based on the MSCP designations such as Hardline Preserve, Preserved Land, or Pre-approved Mitigation Area, 200-foot buffers around Clean Water Act Section 303(d) waterbodies, waters that support state and/or federal rare, threatened, or endangered species, and areas of significant biological concern.

Resource Conservation Areas

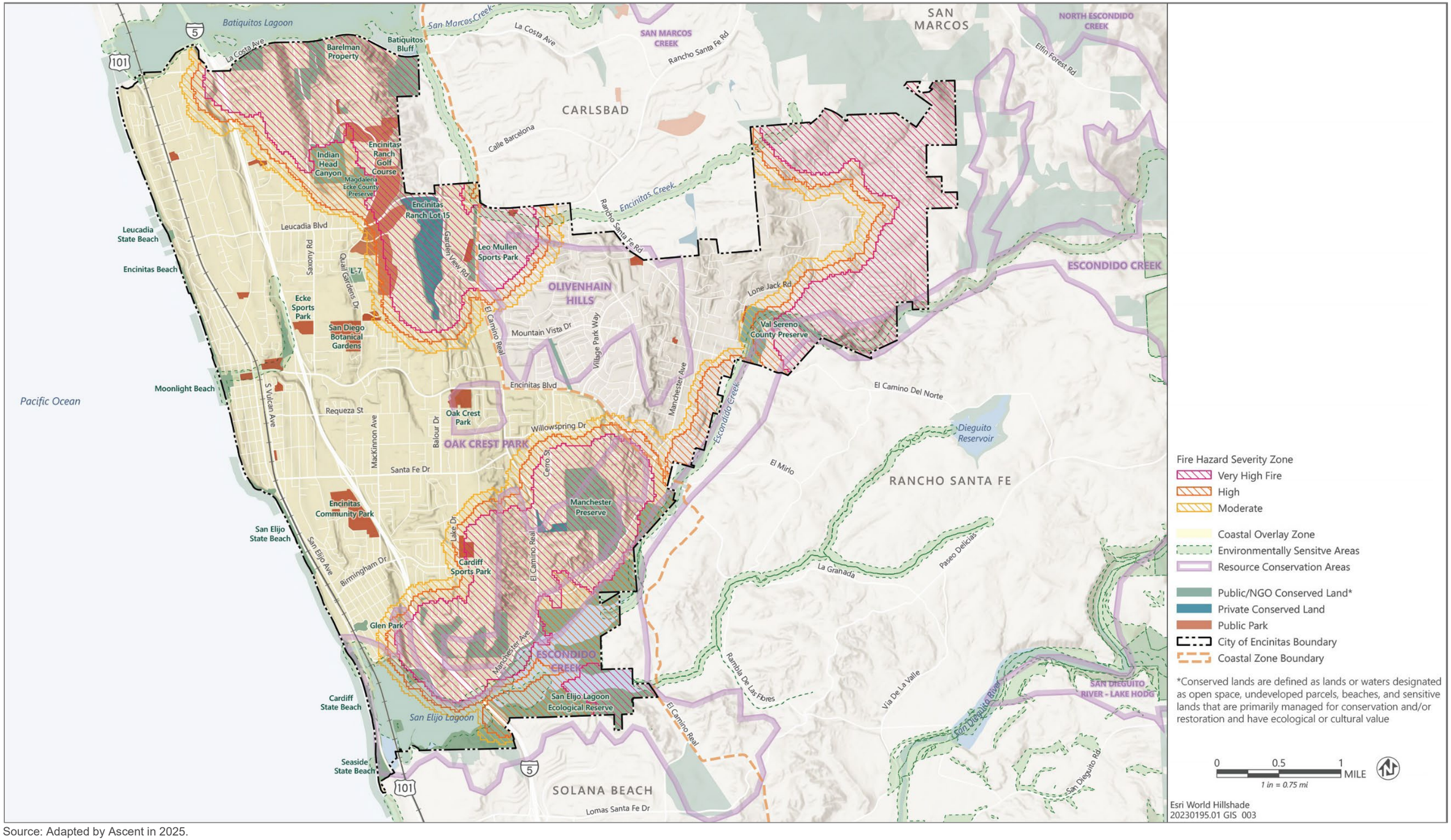
The Resource Conservation Area (RCA) designation from San Diego County identifies lands that require special attention to conserve resources, such as groundwater problem areas, coastal wetlands, native wildlife habitat, construction quality sand areas, littoral sand areas, astronomical dark sky areas, unique geological formations, and significant archaeological and historical sites. There are three RCAs within the City (Figure 2-5). The Escondido Creek RCA extends from San Elijo Lagoon within the City to Olivenhain Reservoir approximately nine miles to the northeast. The Olivenhain Hills RCA is located within the central portion of the City between El Camino Real and Rancho Santa Fe Road. Oakcrest Park RCA is located around Oakcrest Park and the surrounding residential areas to the south and east.

Oceanside Littoral Cell

The Oceanside Littoral Cell extends from Dana Point to Point La Jolla. A “Littoral Cell” is a coastal reach bounded by physical features (e.g., submarine canyons, coastal headlands, harbors) where sediment flows in and out from the ocean. It is the dynamic interface between the ocean and the land. Longshore sediment transport (aka “littoral drift”) reflects the volume and rate of sand moving through a coastal reach over time and occurs in both upcoast (north) and downcoast (south) directions. The direction of sand movement varies seasonally and depends on wave conditions. Beach sand is the primary buffer protecting coastal development from erosion and storm damage. Insufficient sediment or sand volumes along the San Diego County shoreline has led to further coastal erosion, damage to infrastructure, habitat degradation, threats to public safety, and reduced recreational and economic benefits. Sand replenishment projects help offset the gradual narrowing and disappearance of the region’s beaches, loss of environmental, recreational, economic, and aesthetic benefits, and the increasing destruction of coastal access, infrastructure, and other properties. Understanding the dynamics of sediment budgets and longshore sediment transport rates is important for effective coastal management. Ultimately, the sediment budget of a littoral cell is either in balance with stable beaches, in a surplus with growing beaches, or in a deficit with narrowing beaches.

The Oceanside Harbor North Jetty represents an effective, artificial barrier to sediment transport from the northern to southern portion of the littoral cell; therefore, this littoral cell can be sub-divided into two separate overall sub-cells. According to SANDAG’s draft Regional Beach Sand Project III Feasibility Study, approximately 226,000 cy/year of the 240,000 cy/year total is eventually lost into Scripps Submarine Canyon at the south end of the Oceanside Littoral Cell or offshore. Therefore, the net accretion in the southern Oceanside Littoral Cell may be approximately 14,000 cy/year, which is considered negligible. According to this logic, the Cell would nearly be in balance with inputs being very similar in magnitude to outputs. However, observations and monitoring data indicate otherwise, that the cell is in a deficit of increasing magnitude. Much of the sand moving alongshore may be lost offshore during storms and is stored in the lagoon shoals from Agua Hedionda to Los Peñasquitos. Thus, the implied sediment budget balance may be distorted and not reflected on the beaches due to sand being lost or confined to other areas outside of the beaches. The complexity and evolving understanding of sediment transport dynamics within the Oceanside Littoral Cell highlights the need for monitoring, ongoing research, and adaptive coastal management strategies to help maintain this sensitive resource along Encinitas shores.

Figure 2-5 Overlay Zones Map



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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2.5 BIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Data regarding biological resources present in the project area were obtained through a review of publicly available datasets and pertinent literature; both of which are described below:

Literature Review

Special-status biological resources present or potentially present in the study area were identified through a literature search, conducted in 2025 for the City boundary. The following sources were used during the literature review process.

- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory Geographic Information System (GIS) data (USFWS 2025a) was accessed and reviewed in March 2025.
- USGS National Hydrography Dataset (USGS 2025) was accessed and reviewed March 2025.
- USFWS Critical Habitat and Occurrence Data (USFWS 2025b) was consulted for data within one mile of the study area.
- California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) (CNDDB 2025) was queried to compile a list of potentially occurring special-status plants and wildlife in the Encinitas quadrangle and surrounding five quadrangles.
- Public Review Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan prepared for the City of Encinitas (Ogden and CBI 2001).
- Pre- (2022) and Post-Construction Reports (2024) from USACE, San Diego County, CA Project (Encinitas-Solana Beach Coastal Storm Damage Reduction project) for supratidal, intertidal, and subtidal coastal habitat.

Vegetation Communities

Vegetation community classifications described in this report follow the *Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California* (Holland 1986), as modified by the County and noted in *Draft Vegetation Communities of San Diego County* (Oberbauer et al. 2008). Land covers and vegetation community areas within the City were reviewed utilizing publicly available SanGIS data layers. Several vegetation communities and/or land cover types have been recorded within the City. These vegetation communities and land covers include native upland habitats such as Diegan coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and southern maritime chaparral that can provide suitable habitat for special-status plant and wildlife species. Similarly, wetland vegetation communities, including southern coastal salt marsh, southern arrow willow riparian forest, and estuarine are present within the City along natural and artificial watercourses, stormwater conveyance infrastructure, and particularly surrounding and within the Batiquitos and San Elijo lagoons. As a well-developed urban landscape, the City also contains non-native and disturbed vegetation communities and land covers as well that are expansive in some areas and intermixed or bordering native habitats in others. These include agriculture and disturbed habitat land covers as well as eucalyptus woodland and orchard/vineyard vegetation communities.

Special Status Species

The habitats within the City boundary consist primarily of coastal and riparian vegetation communities, including coastal sage scrub, southern maritime chaparral, southern willow scrub and forest, and other wetland habitats. These habitats provide foraging and nesting habitats for migratory and resident bird species. Open habitats in the City could provide movement and foraging opportunities for special status species, including raptors. Areas of dense cover within vegetated communities in the City could provide cover and foraging opportunities for small reptiles and other mammal species. Wetland habitats may be suitable for certain amphibians and aquatic invertebrates.

Plant species are considered special status if they have been listed or proposed for listing by the federal or state government as rare, endangered, or threatened (listed species), have a CRPR of 1–4, or are listed as an MHCP-covered species.

Wildlife Passage and Habitat Connectivity

Habitat linkages for wildlife movement are patches of native habitat that function to join two larger patches of habitat. These patches serve as connections between habitat patches and help reduce the adverse effects of habitat fragmentation, representing a potential route for gene flow and long-term dispersal. Habitat linkages may serve both as habitat and as avenues of gene flow for small animals such as reptiles and amphibians. Habitat linkages may be represented by continuous patches of habitat or by nearby habitat “islands” that function as stepping stones for dispersal.

The City contains both small and large extents of native habitat suitable for wildlife movement that have potential to provide refuge, cover, and foraging opportunities for mobile wildlife species that may traverse through the City. Given the relatively extensive residential development throughout the City, it is likely that most segments of native habitat would be used by avian species or other wildlife groups accustomed to urban development (e.g., coyotes). Avian species, including raptors and other special-status birds, would best be able to utilize the network of stepping-stone-type habitat linkages between various sections of open space within and beyond the City boundary. The Subarea Plan designated Hardline and Softline FPAs within the City that are considered biological core areas but are not designated as a biological linkage per the MHCP. The City is situated on the edge of a biological core area defined in the MHCP that is mostly within the City of Escondido and unincorporated areas to the east but is connected by a linkage through Batiquitos Lagoon and San Elijo Lagoon to another biological core area to the east.

Nearshore Coastal Biological Resources and Marine Ecosystem:

Encinitas spans approximately six miles from the north end near Batiquitos State Beach to the south at South Cardiff State Beach supporting habitat in the supratidal, intertidal, and shallow subtidal habitat. A wide variety of marine ecosystems and nearshore biological habitats exist along the City’s coast., including sandy beaches, sandy offshore habitat, rocky reefs, kelp forests, and seagrass beds.

Several marine protected areas also occur within the Encinitas City limits. Batiquitos Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and Ecological Reserve includes marsh, mudflat, and eelgrass habitat. San Elijo Lagoon SMCA and Ecological Reserve includes coastal marsh habitat and shallow estuary waters. Swami’s SMCA protects and sustains multiple habitats which include kelp forests, surf grass, rocky reef, and intertidal reef which support a variety of fish, invertebrates, and bird species. USACE has been conducting nearshore coastal biological monitoring, taking inventories well north and south of the City’s coastal limits.

2.6 Community Profile

Demographics

According to the US Census American Community Survey (ACS), the City had a population of 62,007 in 2020. Table 2-1 displays selected demographic characteristics of the City and San Diego County using ACS data from 2020. The median income for City households is 50 percent greater than that of the region. Consistent with this finding, a larger percentage of residents own their homes, and fewer live below the poverty level. The number of households with a person living with a disability is 19.1 percent for the City and 21.4 percent for San Diego County.

The population of the City is relatively older than the county as a whole, with a median age of 43 compared to 36 countywide, and 34.1 percent of the City population is over 65 compared to 27.7 percent countywide.

Table 2-1. Demographics, Encinitas and San Diego County, 2020

Selected Demographic Characteristics	City of Encinitas	San Diego County
Total Population	62,007	3,323,970
Percent of residents that are children (less than 10 years)	11.0%	12.0%
Percent of households that have people 65+ years	34.1%	27.7%
Percentage of households with at least one person living with a disability	19.1%	21.4%
Median age	43	36.1
Total households	23,893	1,125,277
Median household income	$120,488	$84,988
Percent owner households	63.8%	53.9%
Percent renter households	36.2%	46.1%
Percent of household income below the poverty level	7.2%	10.5%

Notes: Percentage values rounded to nearest tenth decimal.

Source: City of Encinitas 2023c; US Census Bureau 2020.

Projected Population Change

According to SANDAG regional growth projections, the population of the City is projected to decrease from 61,515 in 2022 to 59,829 in 2050, a decline of 2.7 percent (see Table 2-2). This contrasts with the overall growth trend in San Diego County, which is expected to grow by 3.4 percent during the same period. Nearby coastal communities, including Del Mar and Solana Beach, are also projected to experience population decline, while Oceanside and Carlsbad are expected to grow.

Table 2-2. Projected Population Change, Encinitas, and Surrounding Communities 2022-2050

Jurisdiction	2022	2050	Change 2022-2050	% Change 2022-2050
Carlsbad	115,585	116,788	1,203	1.0%
Del Mar	3,929	3,710	(219)	-5.6%
Encinitas	61,515	59,829	(1,686)	-2.7%
Oceanside	173,048	183,415	10,367	6.0%
Solana Beach	12,812	12,007	(805)	-6.3%
San Diego County	3,287,306	3,400,250	112,944	3.4%

Source: SANDAG 2024.

Age Distribution

Compared to the region, the City skews older, with 33.3 percent of the population aged 55 and older compared to 25 percent for San Diego County (See Table 2-3). San Diego County's age distribution showed a younger population, with the largest population below 35 years of age (49.6 percent) compared to Encinitas (39.5 percent).

Table 2-3. Age Distribution, Encinitas and San Diego County, 2020

Age	City of Encinitas	San Diego County
Under 5	5.6%	6.2%
5 - 14	11.7%	12.0%
15 - 24	9.5%	13.7%
25 - 34	11.5%	16.5%
35 - 44	14.0%	13.4%
45 - 54	14.4%	12.3%
55 - 64	14.7%	11.8%
Over 65	18.6%	14.1%

Notes: Percentage values rounded to nearest tenth decimal.

Source: City of Encinitas 2023c; US Census Bureau 2020.

Race and Ethnicity

Table 2-4 shows that, according to the 2020 American Community Survey, the ethnic distribution of the City's population was predominantly White, non-Hispanic or Latino (76.4 percent), with about four percent reporting as Asian. Approximately 16 percent of the population in the City was of Hispanic or Latino origin. San Diego County exhibited more racial and ethnic diversity, with 44.9 percent of the population being White, non-Hispanic or Latino, 12 percent Asian, and 34 percent of Hispanic or Latino origin.

Table 2-4. Race and Ethnicity, Encinitas and San Diego County, 2020

Racial/Ethnic Group	City of Encinitas	San Diego County
White Alone*	76.4%	44.9%
Black Alone*	0.3%	4.9%
American Indian Alone*	0.1%	0.7%
Asian Alone*	3.7%	12.0%
Pacific Islander Alone*	0.1%	0.4%
Some Other Race Alone*	0.1%	0.2%
Two or More Races*	3.4%	8.6%
Hispanic or Latino Origin (Any Race)	15.9%	33.9%

Notes: Racial categories marked with an asterisk (*) represent individuals who are non-Hispanic or Latino. Percentage values rounded to nearest tenth decimal.

Source: City of Encinitas 2023c; US Census Bureau 2020.

Median Income Distribution

Table 2-5 shows over 60 percent of households in the City have incomes greater than $100,000 (compared to 45 percent of households in the county), while only 19 percent of households have incomes under $50,000 (compared to 28 percent in the County). Over 30 percent of City households have incomes greater than $200,000, more than double that of the County (15 percent).

Table 2-5. Median Income Distribution, Encinitas and San Diego County, 2021

Household Income	City of Encinitas	San Diego County
Less than $10,000	3%	4%
$10,000 to $14,999	2%	3%
$15,000 to $24,999	3%	6%
$25,000 to $34,999	5%	6%
$35,000 to $49,999	6%	9%
$50,000 to $74,999	11%	15%
$75,000 to $99,999	10%	13%
$100,000 to $149,999	17%	19%
$150,000 to $199,999	14%	11%
$200,000 or more	31%	15%
Mean Income	$187,124	$118,474
Median Income	$132,276	$88,240

Notes: Percentage values rounded to nearest tenth decimal.

Source: City of Encinitas 2023a; US Census Bureau 2021.

Wealth, however, is not distributed equally in the City. Table 2-6 shows the percentage of people by race and ethnicity with income below the poverty threshold for the City and the County. White residents are the only racial group in Encinitas that have a poverty rate lower than the County average, with less than half the rate of poverty of San Diego County (4.5 percent versus 9.8 percent).

Table 2-6. Poverty by Race and Ethnicity, Encinitas, 2021

	Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)	Black (Not Hispanic or Latino)	Hispanic	White Alone (Not Hispanic or Latino)
City of Encinitas	10.4%	20.8%	17.1%	4.5%
San Diego County	9.0%	20.1%	13.8%	9.8%

Notes: Percentage values rounded to nearest tenth decimal.

Source: City of Encinitas 2023a; US Census Bureau 2021.

English Proficiency

Most City residents speak only English at home (See Table 2-7). Spanish is the most common non-English language, with 13.8 percent of Spanish speakers reporting limited English proficiency. Indo-European languages were spoken by 2,201 residents, with only 4.0 percent lacking English fluency. Asian and Pacific Island languages had 925 speakers, with 14.2 percent not fluent in English — the highest percentage among language groups.

Table 2-7. English Proficiency and Languages Spoken at Home, Encinitas, 2020

Languages Spoken at Home	Number of Speakers	Percent Not Fluent in English
English Only	49,181	-
Spanish	6,820	13.8%
Indo-European Languages	2,201	4.0%
Asian and Pacific Island Languages	925	14.2%
Other Languages	287	2.5%

Notes: Percentage values rounded to nearest tenth decimal.

Sources: City of Encinitas 2023c; US Census Bureau 2020.

Underserved Communities

In the City, certain groups, including lower-income households, older adults, children, and people with disabilities may face challenges when it comes to accessing open space. These barriers can be physical, social, or economic in nature. This section provides an overview of these communities and the factors that may contribute to their limited access to open space.

Low-Income Households

It is common for lower-income neighborhoods to experience disparities in access to open space due to general availability, safety concerns, and underinvestment. Typically, these communities have fewer parks and recreational areas and the spaces that do exist are poorly maintained or lack amenities. In the City, neighborhoods with a higher concentration of lower-income households may have reduced access to open space due to gaps in infrastructure, limited connectivity and transportation barriers, as well as the cost of entry to certain spaces which may require fees or permits. The majority of residents from lower income brackets are located west of El Camino Real (City of Encinitas 2023a). As shown in Figure 2-6, there is a higher concentration of low- and moderate- income households in western Leucadia, Old Encinitas, and in Cardiff. The highest median incomes tend to be in the eastern arm (Olivenhain community) of the City (City of Encinitas 2023b).

Youth and Elderly Populations

Youth and elderly populations also face unique challenges in accessing open space. Children, particularly in neighborhoods with limited open space or along busy roadways, may lack safe routes to parks or playgrounds, restricting their opportunities for outdoor play and physical activity. For older adults, mobility challenges can be a significant barrier, particularly when open spaces do not have accessible pathways or seating options in addition to other amenities. This is essential to Encinitas as the population in the City tends to consist of older adults. As shown in Table 2-3 above, approximately 19 percent of the population is 65 years or older. Figure 2-7 shows the percentage of the population that is 65 years or older by census tract. There is a large elderly population in the Leucadia community in the north as well as in the Cardiff and Olivenhain communities in the south and southeast of the City.

People with Disabilities

As shown in Table 2-1, 19.8 percent of households have at least one person living with a disability of any kind. Figure 2-8 shows the percentage of the population with a disability in Encinitas by census tract. Three census tracts, primarily along El Camino Real, have higher percentages of people with disabilities (10-20 percent) compared to the rest of the City. Individuals with disabilities may encounter significant obstacles when accessing open space. Physical barriers such as uneven surfaces, lack of accessible paths, and limited seating can reduce the usability of these spaces. Additionally, transportation challenges, including insufficient accessible transit options and poorly maintained sidewalks, can further limit access.

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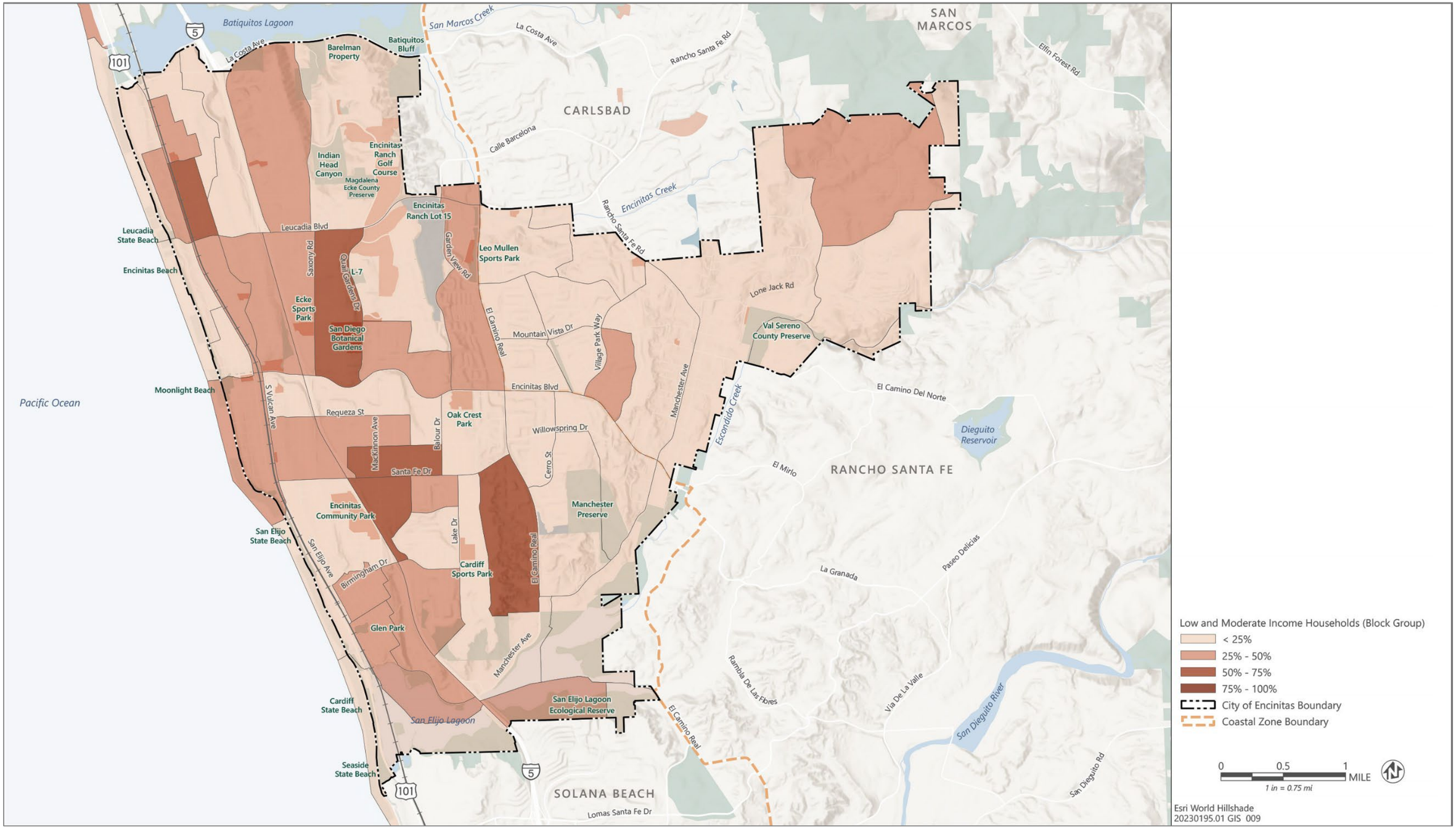
Figure 2-6 Low to Moderate Income Households by Block Group, Encinitas, 2015



Source: HCD 2025; US Census 2015; Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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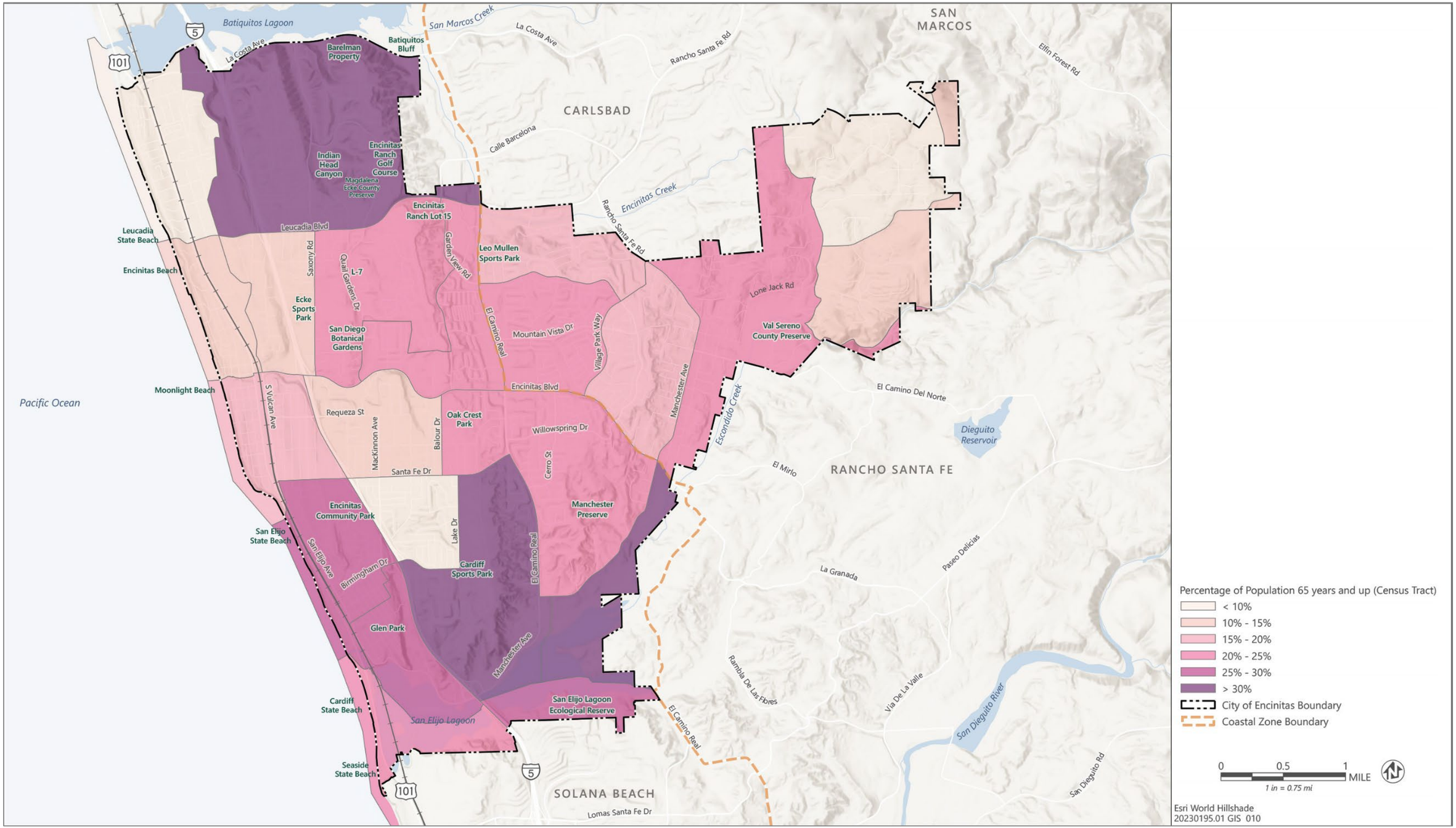
Figure 2-7 Percent of Population 65 Years and Over by Census Tract, Encinitas, 2020



Source: US Census 2020; adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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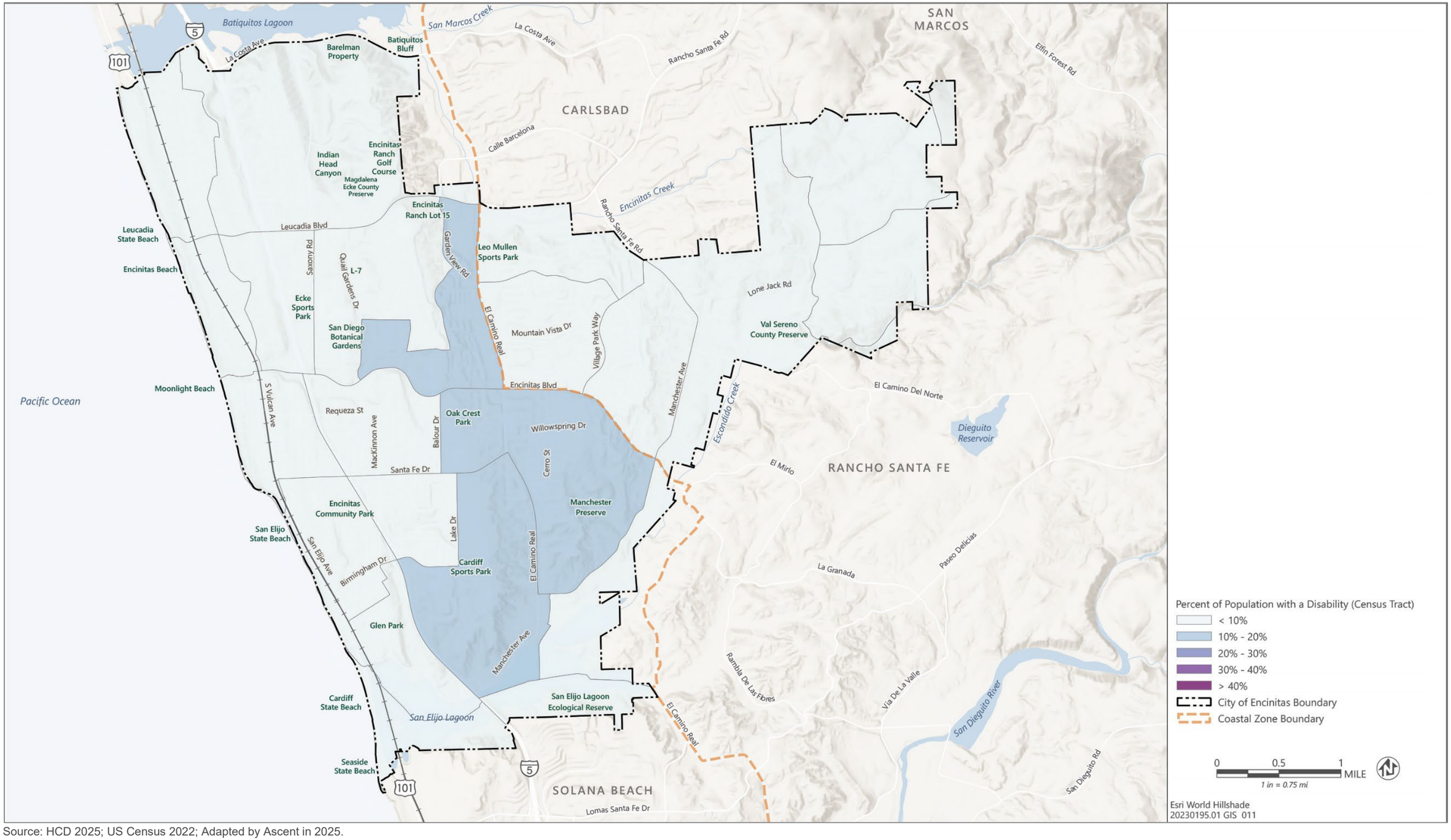
Figure 2-8 Percent of Population with a Disability by Census Tract, Encinitas, 2022



Source: HCD 2025; US Census 2022; Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This section of the report describes early community input (i.e., booths at City Events, the project website, and Community Workshop #1) on issues and opportunities that should be considered for the RME Update.

3.1 SUMMARY

The City hosted a series of community engagement activities, including information booths at City events, a questionnaire on the project website, and a community workshop to gather input from residents, organizations, and other stakeholders in Spring 2025 to inform Encinitas community members and stakeholders about the project and its objectives, learn about findings from the existing conditions, issues, and opportunities data gathering process, and provide input on the RME update. Community feedback provided during this round of engagement will inform the issues and opportunities that should be considered, along with the development of draft policies.

The City hosted information booths at two City events, created a project website, and hosted a community workshop. At the City events, Arbor Day (April 5, 2025) and Cyclovia (May 18, 2025), staff asked attendees how often they use the open space areas in Encinitas, what their favorite open space areas are, and what would make it easier for them to enjoy open space in Encinitas. The project website serves as the online portal for all project-related information including an overview of the project, schedule, calendar of in-person engagement events, access to project documents, and an email sign-up form. Community Workshop #1 (April 30, 2025), introduced the RME Update project to the community, including the topics of equitable access to open space, climate resilience, rewilding, and habitat connectivity. City staff and members of the consultant team shared preliminary findings from the existing conditions assessment and gathered input from the community on issues and opportunities that should be considered for the RME update.

3.2 OUTCOMES AND TAKEAWAYS

Feedback from community members and stakeholders align with and support the City's goal to comply with SB 1425 and AB 1889 by addressing equitable access to open space, climate resilience, rewilding, and habitat connectivity in open space through the RME update. Key themes of input received during this community engagement series include:

- Many community members use the City's open spaces on a regular basis;
- Desire for more shade structures and shade trees in open spaces;
- Interest in increasing native plants and flowers;
- Interest in increasing recreational opportunities for everyone including kids;
- Interest in conservation and increasing biodiversity; and
- Desire for more "wild spaces."

4. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section summarizes preliminary issues and opportunities to address equitable open space access, climate resilience of open spaces, rewilding, and habitat connectivity in the RME Update. It includes a summary of existing achievements and commitments that the City has made related to these topics and includes a gap analysis to identify opportunities for further action on these topics. It then provides a discussion of specific opportunities to address equitable open space access, climate resilience of open spaces, rewilding, and habitat connectivity that were identified through the review of existing conditions, gap analysis, and community input.

4.1 EXISTING CITY ACHIEVEMENTS

The City has prioritized the preservation and appropriate management of open space for many years. Many of the existing City plans, ordinances, programs, and projects seek to improve equitable access to open space, promote climate resilience in open space, and support rewilding and habitat connectivity. Section 2 of this report provides a description of relevant existing plans and ordinances. Table 4-1, below, summarizes the most relevant existing plans and ordinances and identifies which plans support equitable access to open space, promote climate resilience in open space, and support rewilding and habitat connectivity.

Table 4-1. Existing City plans and ordinances that address topics required under Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d).

Existing City of Encinitas Plans and Ordinances	Requirements Addressed			
	Equitable Access to Open Space	Climate Resilience in Open Space	Rewilding	Habitat Connectivity
Draft Native Plant Ordinance and Native Plant Incentive Program			X	X
Draft Mature Tree Ordinance			X	X
Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan (MHCP)			X	X
Encinitas Local Coastal Program	X	X	X	X
General Plan Recreation Element	X	X	X	X
General Plan Safety Element		X		
General Plan Land Use Element	X		X	
Parks, Beaches, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan	X		X	
Climate Action Plan Update		X		

Source: Data compiled by Ascent in 2025.

In addition to the plans and ordinances described above, the City has enacted a number of programs and recent projects that also address equitable access to open space, climate resilience in open space, rewilding, and habitat connectivity. Each of these programs and projects is described in Section 2 of this report. Table 4-2 summarizes which programs and projects support the four major requirements of Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d).

Table 4-2. Existing City programs and projects that address topics required under Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d).

Existing Programs and Projects	Requirements Addressed			
	Equitable Access to Open Space	Climate Resilience in Open Space	Rewilding	Habitat Connectivity
San Elijo Lagoon Dredging and Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline Project		X	X	X
Encinitas Habitat Stewardship Program Implementation Projects			X	
USACE Costal Storm Damage Reduction project	X	X		
Opportunistic Beach Fill Program	X	X		
Beacon's Beach Coastal Bluff Landscape Restoration Project	X	X	X	
Manchester Outfall Project			X	
La Costa Basin Project		X	X	
Encinitas Creek Channel Project		X		
Urban Forest Management Program		X	X	X
Val Sereno Fuel Reduction – Nature Collective		X	X	X
Escondido Creek - Fuel Reduction - Nature Collective		X	X	X

Source: Data compiled by Ascent in 2025.

Resource Management Element Policy Gaps

The goals and policies from the existing RME were developed in the late 1980s when the development pattern in the City was much different than in 2025. At the time, the City contained larger areas of agricultural and undeveloped lands, particularly in the eastern portion of the City. The RME placed emphasis on agricultural land preservation, which is defined as a category of open space in Government Code Section 65560(h)(2). Currently the development pattern in the City is much different. The City has developed a larger system of parks, open space, and other conserved lands (see Figure 2-3); and there are four remaining areas of agricultural zoning within the City, all within the Encinitas Ranch neighborhood.

Table 4-3 identifies the applicability of goals from the existing RME with new requirements from Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d). Existing goals relate to the topics of water quality, habitat preservation, view quality, air quality, water management, cultural resource preservation, coastal area preservation, landscaping, ESA preservation, agriculture preservation, land use policy, development environmental impacts, and energy conservation. As shown in Table 4-3, many of these existing goals support climate resilience, rewilding, and habitat connectivity. However, the existing RME does not contain goals or policies addressing public access to open space areas, nor does it address accessibility or other topics related to equitable access to open space.

Several existing goals and policies address the protection and enhancement of sensitive natural areas which support rewilding and habitat connectivity, but the goals and policies do not specifically promote rewilding or wildlife habitat connectivity. Similarly, the existing RME goals and policies promote strategies that would enhance climate resilience in open space, such as preserving significant areas of natural habitat, improving air quality, protecting coastal areas, and using native and drought tolerant landscaping; but the existing goals and policies do not specifically address climate resilience.

Table 4-3. Existing Resource Management Element goals that address topics required under Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d)

Existing Resource Management Element Goals	Requirements Addressed			
	Equitable Access to Open Space	Climate Resilience in Open Space	Rewilding	Habitat Connectivity
Goal 1: The City will conserve, protect, and enhance the water resources in the Planning Area.		X	X	
Goal 2: The City shall make every effort to improve ocean water quality.			X	
Goal 3: The City will make every effort possible to preserve significant mature trees, vegetation and wildlife habitat within the Planning Area.		X	X	X
Goal 4: The City, with the assistance of the State, Federal and Regional Agencies, shall provide the maximum visual access to coastal and inland views through the acquisition and development of a system of coastal and inland vista points.				
Goal 5: The City will make every effort to participate in programs to improve air and water quality in the San Diego region.		X		
Goal 6: The City will make every effort to reduce the amount of solid and liquid waste generated in the Planning Area and will identify ways to responsibly deal with these wastes.				
Goal 7: The City will make every effort to ensure significant scientific and cultural resources in the Planning Area are preserved for future generations.				
Goal 8: The City will undertake programs to ensure that the Coastal Areas are maintained and remain safe and scenic for both residents and wildlife.		X		X
Goal 9: The City will encourage the abundant use of natural and drought tolerant landscaping in new development and preserve natural vegetation, as much as possible, in undeveloped areas.		X	X	X
Goal 10: The City will preserve the integrity, function, productivity, and long-term viability of environmentally sensitive habitats throughout the City, including kelp beds, ocean recreational areas, coastal water, beaches, lagoons and their up- lands, riparian areas, coastal strand areas, coastal sage scrub and coastal mixed chaparral habitats.			X	
Goal 11: The City recognizes the important contribution of agricultural and horticultural land uses in the local economy and the emphasis of the need to maintain these activities.				
Goal 12: The City will encourage the preservation of prime agriculture lands within its sphere of influence.				
Goal 13: Create a desirable, healthful, and comfortable environment for living while preserving Encinitas' unique natural resources by encouraging land use policies that will preserve the environment.			X	X
Goal 14: The City shall stringently control erosion and sedimentation from land use and development to avoid environmental degradation of lagoons and other sensitive biological habitat, preserve public resources and avoid the costs of dealing with repair and sedimentation removal.			X	
Goal 15: The City will make every effort to conserve energy in the City thus reducing our dependence on fossil fuels.				

Source: Data compiled by Ascent in 2025.

While the existing RME includes policy gaps related to equitable access to open space, climate resilience, rewilding, and habitat connectivity, several other City plans and General Plan elements address these topics (see Table 4-1). For example, the General Plan Recreation Element; the Parks, Beaches, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan; and the Land Use Element all include strategies to promote equitable access to open space. In addition, the draft CAP update, Safety Element, and other General Plan elements promote strategies to improve the climate resilience of open space, such as using nature-based solutions for improved resilience and biodiversity; green infrastructure to mitigate the urban heat island effect; beach nourishment projects to maintain beach width and mitigate coastal flooding and erosion; and nature-based infrastructure using natural ecological systems and processes.

4.2 Key Issues and Opportunities

This section provides an analysis of a suite of issues, opportunities, and constraints to promoting equitable access to open space, climate resilience in open space, rewilding, and wildlife habitat connectivity as required by Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d). As described in Section 4.1, the existing RME contains policy gaps related to each of these requirements, although other City plans, ordinances, programs and projects already partially address these directives. In general, the RME update can fully address Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d) by amending the RME to:

- maintain existing RME policies that promote climate resilience in open space, rewilding, and habitat connectivity, with focused edits, if needed to reflect current conditions;
- incorporate existing strategies that promote equitable access to open space from the Recreation Element, Land Use Element, and the Parks, Beaches, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan;
- incorporate existing strategies that promote climate resilience in open space from the Climate Action Plan, Safety Element, and other General Plan elements;
- incorporate strategies to promote rewilding and habitat connectivity aligned with Fire Department regulations (except in FHSZs and along evacuation routes) from the following anticipated future policies that are currently under development: Native Plant Ordinance and Native Plant Incentive Program, Mature Tree Ordinance, Encinitas Subarea Plan, Climate Action Plan, and other future updated General Plan elements;
- add goals or policies that account for the existing programs and projects described in Table 4-2; and
- add new goals or policies, as necessary to address the issues described below.

Integrated Network of Connected Open Space

At the broadest level, these new requirements call for an integrated network of open space that is managed to provide multiple benefits. A connected network of open space can provide benefits that address all the requirements of Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d). For example, a network of connected high quality native habitats can provide for wildlife movement including access to higher elevations and areas of climate refugia. A connected open space network can provide a trail system that is accessible to underserved communities in the City with links to nearby regional open space. There are three primary conceptual areas of conserved land that currently include large networks of mostly connected open space. In addition, there is an existing patchwork of conserved lands that can provide a “stepping stone” of open space that provides habitat for flying species moving from between the Batiquitos and San Elijo lagoons. These areas currently provide multiple benefits including public access, habitat for native species, habitat connectivity within the City and to adjacent natural areas, as well as climate resilience benefits (Figure 4-1).

- Escondido Creek Conserved Lands: These conserved lands generally follow the southern boundary of the City along Escondido Creek. It includes the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, the Manchester Preserve, and the Val Sereno County Preserve, providing partial connectivity from the coast to regional natural areas east of the City. This open space corridor generally aligns with the Escondido Creek Resource Conservation Area overlay zone and includes Environmentally Sensitive Areas overlay zones at San Elijo lagoon and along Escondido Creek.

It also includes natural areas identified in the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project. Much of the conserved land is within the City, but it also includes open space directly adjacent to the City.

- **Encinitas Creek Conserved Lands:** These conserved lands generally follow the northern boundary of the City along Encinitas Creek. It includes the Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve directly north of the City as well as a series of adjacent open space areas and conservation easements in the Leucadia neighborhood. It also includes a series of lands protected by conservation easements in the City and within neighboring Carlsbad providing partial connectivity from the coast to regional natural areas east of the City. This area includes Environmentally Sensitive Areas overlay zones at Batiquitos Lagoon and along Encinitas Creek, as well as natural areas identified in the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project.

- **Coastal Conserved Lands:** These conserved lands stretch the length of the coast within Encinitas and includes the numerous public beaches as well as San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve in the south and Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve to the north of the City. This area includes sensitive coastal resources as well as portions of Swami's SMCA. This area is entirely within the Coastal overlay zone and includes portions of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas overlay zone near Cardiff State Beach and Moonlight Beach. It also includes a few natural areas identified in the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project at each lagoon and within some of the public beaches.

- **Batiquitos-San Elijo Stepping Stones Conserved Lands**: These conserved lands include a patchwork of open space stretching north to south between Batiquitos and San Elijo Lagoons. This area includes habitat supporting special status plant and animal species, and includes areas included in the Resource Conservation Areas overlay zone including Oak Crest Park. A primary benefit of this area is providing refugia for flying species (e.g., birds and pollinators) moving between Batiquitos and San Elijo Lagoons.

These existing open space areas present an opportunity to address equitable access to open space, rewilding, habitat connectivity, and climate resilience that is consistent with the existing development and land use patterns within the City. The RME Update could include goals and policies to maintain and expand on the values of these existing areas of conserved lands, which would also complement or reinforce existing or ongoing programs and policies already in place. Possible approaches could include:

- formally delineating and designating these areas, such as through a revised overlay zone,

- promoting increased connectivity within each area by prioritizing the acquisition of conservation easements within the corridors,

- coordinating with the City of Carlsbad, City of Solana Beach, and San Diego County to encourage complementary management of adjacent lands within their jurisdictions,

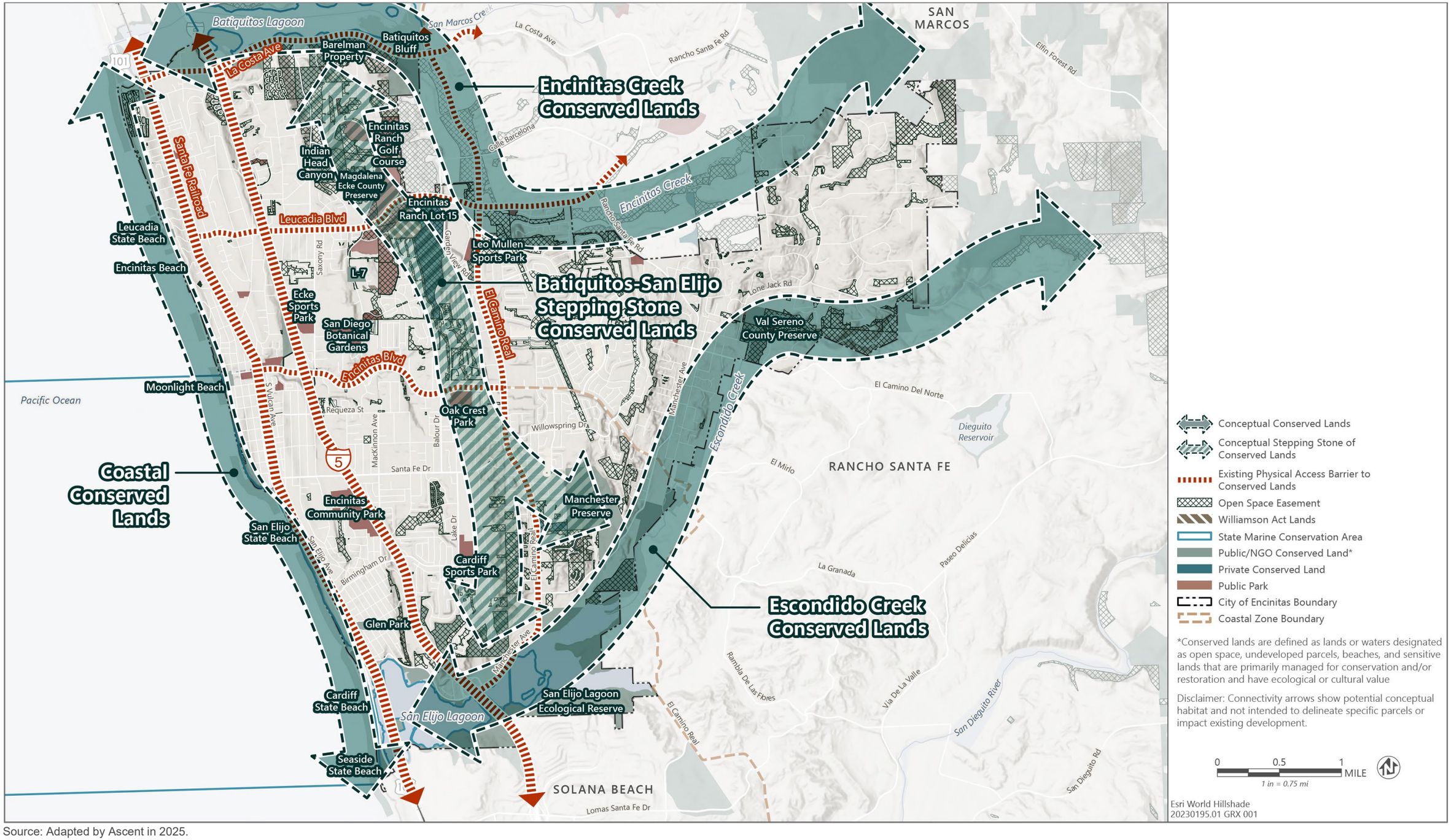
- increasing public access to and within the areas,

- enhancing native ecosystem function and habitat value with targeted ecological restoration within the areas, and/or

- promoting wildlife movement through the corridors by removing or reducing barriers.

Specific opportunities that could apply within these areas or elsewhere in the City are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 4-1 Conceptual Conserved Lands and Access Barriers



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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Equitable Access to Open Space

Local Public Access Issues and Opportunities

Barriers to public access to conserved lands within the City include physical, economic, and social constraints. Physical barriers include built infrastructure that disconnects certain areas of the City from accessing publicly accessible conserved lands (Figure 4-1). I-5 bisects the City from north to south, as does the Santa Fe Railroad corridor, while other major roadways, such as El Camino Real, create additional obstacles for bicyclists and pedestrians seeking access to open space areas. Economic barriers include parking fees at Cardiff Reef, Seaside Reef at South Cardiff State Beach, and San Elijo State Beach. The rest of the conserved land areas within the City are free to access.

Existing public transit within the City is limited to the central portion of the City within the Old Encinitas, New Encinitas, and western Olivenhain neighborhoods. Transit access is not provided to the southern portion of the City around San Elijo Lagoon, east to the Olivenhain neighborhood and Rancho La Costa Preserve, south to Solana Beach and nearby regional recreation areas, or north to the Leucadia, Encinitas Ranch, and Batiquitos Lagoon areas. Limited public transit reduces the ability for individuals without personal vehicles to access open space. Areas with older populations, such as the Leucadia and Cardiff neighborhoods, correlate with portions of the City with no public transit access.

Map showing public transit within the City of Encinitas. Image provided by North County Transit District in 2025.

The City features an older-than-average population, which may indicate a greater need for accessible trails. There are few existing accessible trails within Encinitas conserved lands. There is an existing accessible trail at San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve, which includes firm, stable trail surfaces, gentle slopes, and resting areas that align with accessible trail standards. Other paved shared-use paths and multi-use trails may also meet accessibility guidelines—for example, portions of the Encinitas Ranch Trail and the Coastal Rail Trail appear to meet standards for trail width, surface stability, and minimal slope. These types of trails may already serve users with mobility limitations, even if they are not formally designated as accessible. There are opportunities for the City to prioritize construction of new accessible trails or conversion of existing trails to meet accessibility standards to provide greater access for older adults and people with mobility impairments.

The gap analysis in Figure 4-2 shows which areas of the City are within one-half mile of existing publicly accessible conserved lands, which represents the average distance one can walk in 10-15 minutes. Areas with a gap in access include a large portion of the eastern Olivenhain neighborhood and a portion of the City roughly parallel to I-5 in the Leucadia, Old Encinitas, and western Cardiff neighborhoods. While these areas are outside of the half-mile buffer to publicly accessible conserved lands, a vast majority of the City features access within one-half mile of a paved or unpaved trail or shared use path. For example, the eastern Olivenhain neighborhood features no open access conserved lands but does have an extensive network of publicly accessible trails, which may provide similar recreational benefits as conserved lands. The neighborhood is also partially served by conserved lands outside of the City of Encinitas, including Rancho La Costa Preserve.

The gap analysis shows one-half mile distances from the boundaries of conserved lands but does not account for distances from portions of the conserved lands that are developed with publicly accessible facilities such as trails, educational facilities, or wildlife viewing areas. The analysis also does not account for physical barriers such as I-5 and the Santa Fe Railroad corridor shown in Figure 4-2; these barriers may further limit access to conserved lands, particularly coastal beaches in the western portion of the City.

The City of Encinitas Parks, Beaches, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan (PBTOMP) contains comprehensive network analyses of pedestrian and bicycling access to the City's full system of recreational lands and provides detailed recommendations relating to level of service for various recreational facilities.

Overlaying the gap analysis with demographic data indicates that some populations may be underserved. The El Camino Real corridor, for example, contains census tracts with relatively higher concentrations of lower income households and individuals with disabilities, yet a portion of this area has a gap in publicly accessible conserved lands. While this area is well served by bicycle infrastructure, further evaluation may be needed to determine whether these facilities are accessible and usable by people with mobility impairments.

Similarly, eastern Olivenhain has extensive paved and unpaved trail infrastructure but there are still access limitations for the larger senior populations, particularly near the Val Sereno County Preserve, which is not publicly accessible despite its proximity to residential areas. These findings highlight the need to consider not just proximity, but quality, accessibility, topography, and usability of open space infrastructure—particularly in areas with higher concentrations of vulnerable populations.

While expanding equitable access to open space is a core priority of the RME update, not all conserved lands are appropriate for full or unrestricted public access. Some areas are characterized by environmental sensitivity, habitat constraints, or private ownership, requiring a more managed approach to access. The gap analysis above was intentionally limited to publicly accessible conserved lands, excluding those with restricted or closed access, such as privately owned conservation easements or ecologically sensitive areas where public use is either prohibited or discouraged.

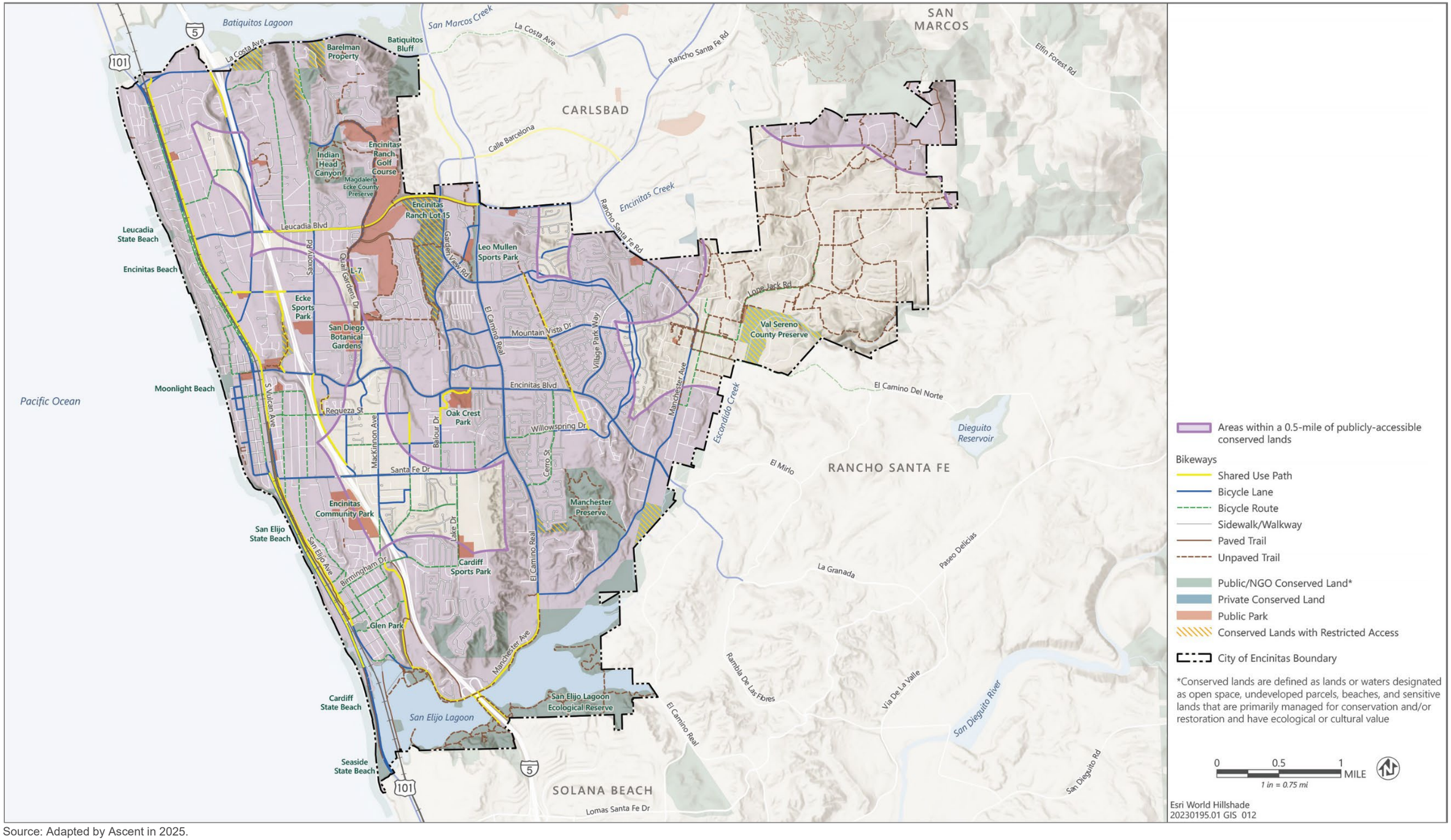
One example is the Val Sereno County Preserve in eastern Olivenhain. This area includes riparian and upland habitats that provide important ecological functions, including wildlife movement, water filtration, and flood protection. Although the corridor is adjacent to residential neighborhoods and appears accessible, much of the land is privately held, and portions contain fragile riparian habitats. Inappropriate public use—such as off-trail hiking or unauthorized biking—could degrade habitat quality and introduce invasive species. In this case, preserving ecological integrity through limited or controlled public access may be more appropriate than pursuing maximum recreational use.

The RME update will consider whether and how to open conserved lands to the public. In some cases, compatible recreational uses—such as trails, scenic overlooks, interpretive signage, educational facilities, or wildlife viewing areas—may be feasible with minimal ecological disturbance. In others, access restrictions may need to be maintained or reinforced.

The City's General Plan Land Use Element (LUE), Recreation Element (RE), and PBTOMP all include strategies to balance equitable public access with environmental conservation. The following existing strategies can be adapted into the RME update to help improve equitable access and address the requirements of Government Code Sections 65565.5:

- preserve and maintain natural areas, floodplains, and riparian habitats and allow appropriate public use (LUE policies 2.7, 8.2, 8.5, 8.6, 8.10; RE policies 1.1, 2.1),
- preserve and acquire open spaces, beaches, and natural areas, and establish a balance of improved parks and natural open space (LUE policy 8.10; RE policies 1.4, 2.4; and PBTOMP objective 1.1),
- provide natural open space in each community to the extent possible (RE policy 1.12),
- provide a City-wide trails master plan, an open space program that links communities, and provide greenways, bike paths, and trails connectivity (RE policies 1.11, 1.16, 2.2, and PBTOMP objective 1.2),
- upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities (PBTOMP objective 1.5),
- explore options for parking at parks, beaches, and popular venues (PBTOMP objective 1.6),
- manage a system of appropriate beach access and recreation areas (RE policies 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5)

Figure 4-2 Conserved Lands Gap Analysis



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

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Building on the existing policy framework, the City may consider the following opportunities to improve equitable access while maintaining ecological balance:

- evaluate opening select conserved lands for public access and developing them with compatible outdoor recreational uses such as staging areas, trails, overlooks, interpretive facilities and amenities, and camping;
- pursue acquisition of additional publicly accessible conserved lands, while balancing resource conservation and habitat values, particularly in areas outside of current walkable access to open space such as the eastern Olivenhain neighborhood and along the I-5 corridor;
- expand the accessible trails network through new construction or developer-built trails to meet accessible trail standards, especially in areas with high concentrations of seniors or residents with mobility impairments; and
- update the 2003 Encinitas Trails Master Plan and 2016 PBTOMP to provide direction for future trail development relating to new uses and enhancing trail connectivity.

Regional Public Access Issues and Opportunities

As mentioned in Section 2.4, “Regional Conserved Lands,” the nearby regional conserved lands and waters are located to the north, east, and west. There are opportunities to provide more equitable public access to adjacent regionally important conserved lands.

Public access connections between Encinitas and Batiquitos Lagoon north of the City are currently limited due to topographic constraints, limited recreational facilities within the reserve, and limited public transit and bikeway infrastructure. Land-based recreational facilities are limited to the north side of the reserve, which creates a challenge for providing public access from the south. Public access to the Encinitas Creek corridor within Carlsbad is similarly challenging due to the presence of private conserved land and private open space easements closed to the public. Census tracts adjacent to Batiquitos Lagoon include relatively high proportions of the population aged 65 years or older. Access improvements in this area that consider the needs of an older population could benefit residents that may otherwise have less access to open space.

The Denk Mountain area of the Rancho La Costa Preserve provides the largest opportunity for public access to nearby regional conserved lands. The area features an extensive network of existing recreational trails and unpaved roads adjacent to the northeastern Olivenhain neighborhood. However, access to the Preserve from Olivenhain is currently limited due to cluster style residential development, a street network that is disconnected from the adjacent areas in the City of Carlsbad and unincorporated San Diego County, lack of recreational staging facilities, and lack of public transit to the eastern portion of the City. Public staging area facilities for the Preserve are located within the City of Carlsbad, but not from the south in the City of Encinitas.

Along the coast, there is an extensive network of public beaches between Solana Beach and Carlsbad. In addition, all land below the mean high tide line is in the public trust per the California Coastal Act. There are approximately five miles of public beaches between Stonesteps Beach in Encinitas and Fletcher Cove Beach Park in Solana Beach, and approximately four miles of public beach between Grandview Beach in Encinitas and South Carlsbad State Beach in Carlsbad. There are opportunities to provide greater access to the coast via future implementation of the Coastal Rail Trail. Per existing policy from the Recreation Element, the City could pursue future easements along the Santa Fe Railroad to implement the Coastal Rail Trail.

Opportunities to improve regional public access to conserved lands include:

- promoting public access to Denk Mountain from the Olivenhain neighborhood through the acquisition of additional City lands or easements and development of trailhead facilities and parking for the Rancho La Costa Preserve, in partnership with the Center for Natural Lands Management;
- maintaining access to the coast via existing beach access points and the Coastal Rail Trail and improving public awareness of public beach access points through signage and technology; and/or

- collaborating with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) in the preparation of a Land Management Plan for Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve.

- plan for, and secure, long-term, programmatic permitting efforts for beach nourishment programs, to maintain safe, wide, publicly accessible beach space within the City, in partnership with regional, state, and federal agencies and neighboring jurisdictions.

Climate Resilience

This section of the report provides an overview of the City's existing vulnerabilities to climate change effects and hazards by primarily referencing the City's draft CAP update. This section also summarizes the City's existing climate adaptation efforts, including the City's draft CAP update, the City's 2023 Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Framework for the City's General Plan Safety Element update, and the County of San Diego's 2023 MJHMP – City of Encinitas Annex, while highlighting ongoing programs and measures that align with SB 1425 requirements, and explores policy opportunities to enhance the City's climate resilience while advancing compliance with SB 1425.

Extreme Heat Issues and Opportunities

Under current climate data projections identified in the City's draft CAP update, the City may experience a temperature increase of 4.3 to 7.3 °F by the end of the 21st century. The City is also projected to experience an increased number of extreme heat days and heat waves. Rising temperatures and prolonged extreme heat events, worsened by the urban heat island effect, pose significant risks to public health, energy systems, and infrastructure in Encinitas. Vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and outdoor workers, face an increased risk of heat-related illnesses, leading to higher hospital visits and emergency service demands.

The County of San Diego's 2023 MJHMP – City of Encinitas Annex includes one goal, as well as four corresponding objectives and 11 hazard mitigation actions to help the City prepare for the impacts of extreme heat events. As indicated in Section 2.2 of this report – through the draft CAP Update and 2023 Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Framework, the City has multiple climate adaptation actions that mitigate the increased frequency of extreme heat events, which could be incorporated into the RME update to address the effects of extreme heat in open space:

- continue beach nourishment projects to maintain the width of Encinitas beaches, which serve as regional cool zones during extreme heat events,

- provide water refill stations and increase shading and heat-mitigating materials at public facilities within open spaces, and/or

- incorporate green infrastructure strategies into new and existing infrastructure within open space to mitigate the effects of the urban heat island effect by reducing the area of heat-absorbing paved surfaces and increasing landscaped areas, including, but not limited to planting City trees, using vegetation, restoring urban streams, and shading green open space.

The other extreme heat-related adaptation actions relevant to open space are focused on the City's public health and safety (e.g., emergency planning, cooling centers, public education), equity and vulnerable populations (e.g., cooling access for seniors, low-income residents, workers, and non-English speakers), as well as overall environmental sustainability (e.g., urban cooling strategies, solar carports, tree planting, and porous and cool pavement).

The City could consider the following policy opportunities that target extreme heat adaptation and are related to open space:

- convert any underutilized City-owned public spaces into revegetated open spaces, increasing access to cool and shaded open spaces,

- maintain existing beaches, other conserved lands along the coast, and access points to ensure all residents, including low-income groups, have access to natural cooling zones, and/or

- maintain existing restoration projects and identify any new opportunities to restore creeks, wetlands, floodplains, and riparian areas, where possible, as these natural features function as heat sinks.

Drought and Water Supply Issues and Opportunities

Warmer temperatures intensify droughts by reducing snowpack, increasing evaporation, and drying soil, leading to lower runoff and higher irrigation demands. California's dry conditions have resulted in worsened water shortages, reducing stream flow, reservoir levels, and groundwater. Droughts can also cause widespread impacts, including water supply risks, mandatory restrictions, groundwater overuse, land subsidence, and habitat degradation for fish and wildlife.

The County of San Diego's 2023 MJHMP – City of Encinitas Annex includes one goal, as well as four corresponding objectives and 11 hazard mitigation actions to help the City prepare for the impacts of drought events. The City has also developed adaptation actions through the draft CAP update and 2023 Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Framework that target drought and water supply issues and address these issues from various aspects. These adaptation actions are focused on water conservation & efficiency (education, rebates, and incentives to reduce water demand), infrastructure resilience (e.g., stormwater infrastructure upgrade), environmental sustainability (e.g., promoting xeriscaping and recycled water use), as well as emergency preparedness (e.g., strengthening water supply systems).

The City can consider the following policy opportunities that support the adaptation to drought and water supply issues and are also related to open space:

- continue using native and drought-tolerant plants to restore open spaces and consider replacing existing landscaping within developed portions of conserved lands (e.g., trailheads, nature centers) with more drought-tolerant species to reduce irrigation demand,

- expand the use of recycled water for landscape irrigation in developed portions of open space, where possible, and/or

- prioritize restoration of riparian corridors, where applicable, to improve water retention while enhancing biodiversity, which also helps species adapt to and endure extreme heat events.

Wildfire Issues and Opportunities

The City's rugged coastal terrain includes open spaces with native vegetation that are at risk of increasing wildfire risk due to increasing temperature and drought, especially during dry months and Santa Ana wind events. CAL FIRE assesses fire hazards in California based on vegetation, terrain, and climate, categorizing areas into FHSZs, which are discussed previously in this report. Approximately 50 percent of the City is within a FHSZ, with 32, 12, and six percent within Very High, High and Moderate FHSZs, respectively (see Figure 2.4). High-severity wildfires threaten lives, property, wildlife habitats, and air quality, and contribute to regional pollution. Wildfires also degrade soil stability thereby increasing erosion and landslide risks.

The County of San Diego's 2023 MJHMP – City of Encinitas Annex includes one goal, as well as four corresponding objectives and 11 hazard mitigation actions to help the City prepare for the impacts of wildfire events. The City has a climate adaptation action to support Citywide tree planting efforts, through the draft CAP update and 2023 Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Framework, that addresses the impacts of wildfire smoke, given the increasing frequency and severity of wildfire events, as trees can settle particles in the air during wildfire smoke episodes. The other wildfire-related adaptation actions are focused on public safety and emergency preparedness (e.g., fuel reduction, defensible space regulations), infrastructure resilience, air quality and health protections, resources for vulnerable populations and inclusive public outreach, as well as fuel management best practices (e.g., Fire Department controlled burns, and other approved vegetation management methods). Vegetation clearance around structures and access routes is a critical climate resilience measure under Government Code Section 65302(g).

The City can consider the following policy opportunities that support the adaptation to wildfire events and are also related to open space:

- promote restoration of open spaces with fire-resistant native plants to restore ecosystems while reducing fire risk,
- remove invasive species to support lower fuel loads, enhance natural firebreaks, and increase biodiversity,
- utilize vegetation management practices in open spaces to maintain native habitat conditions while improving wildfire resilience,
- manage targeted trails within open spaces to include buffer areas with increased vegetation management to serve as shaded fuel breaks and emergency staging areas with adequate space to respond to wildfire within open spaces; and/or
- continue to fund, promote, and seek additional grant opportunities for removal of invasive plants and restoration to provide defensible space and firebreaks, such as the fuel reduction grant programs utilized in Val Sereno and Escondido Creek.

Flooding Issues and Opportunities

Climate change is expected to intensify extreme storm events, leading to more intense but less frequent storms, and increased rainfall amounts. The City already experiences localized coastal flooding, particularly in Leucadia and Cardiff, with major storms. The winter storms in 2024 triggered FEMA disaster declarations and $20 million in regional aid throughout the San Diego region. In addition, atmospheric rivers may intensify in the future and would further exacerbate flooding.

The County of San Diego's 2023 MJHMP – City of Encinitas Annex includes one goal, as well as three corresponding objectives and eight hazard mitigation actions to help the City prepare for the impacts of flooding events. The City has climate adaptation actions through the draft CAP Update that target the increasing frequency and intensity of flood events that are relevant to open space:

- continue local and regional ecosystem restoration efforts to increase climate resiliency for flooding events within the City,
- continue to manage and implement urban greening through stormwater best management practices as part of City capital improvement projects, and
- continue requiring stormwater management systems such as stormwater biofiltration methods, underground storage and detention, as well as permeable pavement and pavers to infiltrate stormwater runoff on site in more constrained urbanized open space; and/or

The City can consider the following policy opportunities that support adaptation to flooding issues within open space:

- continue and expand the restoration of wetlands, riparian corridors and floodplains (i.e., the low-lying ground adjacent to a river, lake, or ocean that can be flooded during periods of high water) which can absorb excess stormwater, reduce flooding and improve habitat connectivity,
- design open spaces and greenways as dual-purpose flood retention areas, and/or convert underutilized flood-prone land into open spaces, providing both flood protection and community access to open spaces,
- work with interested parties and partners (e.g., land trusts) to acquire open space lands within floodplains to enhance their flood resilience,
- plan for, and secure, long-term, programmatic, permitting efforts for beach nourishment programs, to maintain safe, wide publicly accessible beach space, within the City and in partnership with regional, state and federal related agencies and neighboring jurisdictions. Sand placement should be considered to minimize storm surge and minimize bluff damage to life and property and coastal flooding.

Sea-Level Rise Issues and Opportunities

Coastal hazards, including coastal flooding and erosion are expected to be exacerbated by climate change. The soft sandstone bluffs common along the City's coastline are prone to erosion from waves and stormwater runoff. Meanwhile, sea-level rise, together with increased storm frequency, may accelerate beach and other shoreline erosion. The frequency of extreme coastal floods is expected to increase under all future projections of sea-level rise. Sea-level rise projection data shows that the southern portion of Encinitas (i.e., San Elijo Lagoon) is exposed to chronic inundation and storm surge flooding. Although not within the Encinitas City limits, the Batiquitos Lagoon area is adjacent to the City's northern boundary and is also vulnerable to chronic inundation and storm surge flooding. Moreover, king tides along the City's coast already result in flooding within low-lying stretches of the shoreline. El Niño storms have also caused extensive erosion of local beaches, narrowing beach widths with each storm.

The County of San Diego's 2023 MJHMP – City of Encinitas Annex includes one goal, as well as various corresponding objectives and hazard mitigation actions to better prepare the City for sea-level rise and its consequences, such as coastal erosion, increased storm-wave run-up, beach loss, and slope failure on coastal bluff faces. In addition, other accomplished projects related to adapting to sea-level rise and its consequences are comprehensively described in the draft CAP update, including the San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap published by the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative, as well as beach restoration projects such as the Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline Project and the US Army Corps of Engineers Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Project.

The draft CAP update includes climate adaptation actions that target sea-level rise and coastal flooding and erosion, which are relevant to open space:

- continue to implement current efforts focused on beach nourishment, coastal bluff improvements, and wetland restoration, prioritizing projects that will mitigate the impacts of sea-level rise, including coastal erosion and saltwater inundation,
- encourage natural or nature-based infrastructure using natural ecological systems or processes to reduce vulnerability to climate change-related hazards while increasing the long-term adaptive capacity of coastal areas by perpetuating or restoring ecosystem services,
- plan for, and secure, long-term, programmatic, permitting efforts for beach nourishment programs, to maintain safe, wide, publicly accessible beach space, within the City and, in partner with regional, state and federal agencies and neighboring jurisdictions, and
- implement development standards on both public and private development projects with large grading export to align with the City's Opportunistic Beach Fill Program (OBFP) and Sand Compatibility and Opportunistic Use Program (SCOUP) requirements for possible beach nourishment.

The City has been implementing beach nourishment projects to restore these open spaces so that they are more resilient against coastal flooding and erosion events. City residents and visitors benefit from these projects by gaining more equitable and safe access to these coastal areas. The City's greatest opportunity for addressing sea-level rise is to expand upon existing beach nourishment and shoreline restoration projects. Such projects enhance the climate resilience of these coastal areas and allow the areas to continue to serve as local cool zones. As part of these projects, the City should use native and salt-tolerant vegetation in rewilding efforts to stabilize coastal bluffs and dunes. Sourcing sand for beach nourishment projects can be limited and costly. Given this limitation and cost, the City should prioritize implantation of the OBFP/SCOUP program to seek sand sources from development project sites within the City that have large volumes of beach compatible material.

Rewilding

Within Government Code Sections 65565.5, rewilding is described as a strategic effort by municipalities and state agencies to preserve, enhance, or restore natural resource functions within open space lands along with providing additional beneficial uses including associated recreation, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics. Within the City, available parklands and preserve area boundaries have been relatively well established and a high percentage of parcels available for development within the City have already been developed. The application of rewilding strategies to policy and goal setting in the RME update requires a multi-faceted approach

that, in order to be successful, must consider both the developed nature of lands within the City as well as the opportunities presented by existing and potential conserved lands along with the unique coastal and recreation-focused character of the City.

In addition to opportunities to expand the amount of conserved land, discussed above, the primary opportunities for rewilding in the City involve managing open space to improve the ecological conditions of natural areas and promoting improved ecosystem conditions on private lands. Some of the primary obstacles facing rewilding efforts are associated with extensive developed lands, invasive species recruitment, off-trail public use, unhoused encampments, erosion and water quality threats, and wildfire. Therefore, some key opportunities to address these issues include:

- promote low-impact recreation by defining approved trail limits, adding signage for dog leash requirements, installing wooden fencing to discourage encroachment into ecologically sensitive areas, and placing biological education kiosks along existing recreation areas to educate the public about the importance of maintaining the functions of open space habitat within the City;

- conduct fire-resilient landscape management that includes regular removal of dead debris, establishment of appropriate spacing for plant palettes within brush management zones as well as ignition-resistant, native species lists for landscaping in these zones;

- integrate multi-benefit green infrastructure elements and nature-based solutions into City-managed open space such as native-vegetated bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable trails within open space areas in order to reduce erosion and provide secondary treatment of storm water runoff.

The City's General Plan Land Use Element (LUE), Recreation Element (RE), and Parks, Beaches, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan (PBTOMP) include strategies that promote rewilding of open space. The following existing strategies can be adapted into the RME update to help improve the ecological condition of natural areas and address the requirements of Government Code Sections 65565.5:

- preserve and maintain natural areas, floodplains, and riparian habitats to align with Fire Department regulations in FHSZs. (LUE policies 2.7, 8.2, 8.5, 8.6, 8.10 RE policies 1.1, 2.1); and

- preserve and acquire open spaces, beaches, and natural areas, and establish a balance of improved parks and natural open space (LUE policy 8.10, RE policies 1.4, 2.4, and PBTOMP objective 1.1).

Other existing plans that could be incorporated into the RME Update to address rewilding include the Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan, Native Plant Ordinance, and Encinitas Tree Tracker.

Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan (MHCP)

While the City is not yet a signatory partner to the MHCP, the Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan is intended to be generally consistent with, and aid in the implementation of, rewilding and wildlife habitat. The RME update could include policies that promote the implementation of the Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan such that, if and when the City becomes a signatory in the future, implementation of the Subarea Plan will be consistent with these policies.

Native Plant Ordinance

The City's NPO and NPIP (in process) provide a key opportunity to improve natural resource functions throughout the City's jurisdiction by ensuring new qualifying projects utilize native species suitable for the region and incentives are provided to existing property owners to upgrade their landscape plant palettes with native habitat-forming plants. Thus, the NPO and NPIP will not only improve natural resource functions through improving habitat opportunities for local wildlife, but they will also provide opportunities for native recruitment on any conserved lands adjacent to these parcels and reduce the potential for non-native ornamental species to spread into existing native habitats and/or undeveloped parcels. This will in turn improve neighborhood character and aesthetics throughout the City by providing consistent Southern California native plant presence and will reduce reliance on irrigation water through planting of drought-tolerant species. The RME update could incorporate policies that specifically address the rewilding benefits of the NPO and NPIP.

Encinitas Tree Tracker

The City's Tree Tracker program (TTP) offers the ability to maintain an inventory of trees, both ornamental and native, through the City's Urban Forest Management Program. This tracker allows City officials to set tree planting goals within the City and identify areas where tree canopy cover is below targets. As a result, the City can direct funds and private permit planting requirements to communities with the highest potential to contribute to rewilding through natural resource function and aesthetic benefits. The TTP also encourages citizen engagement and ownership of tree planting initiatives that provide added value towards achieving program success. The RME update could include a policy to account for the TPP and direct the use of the TTP to improve the ecological condition of both open spaces and private lands.

Wildlife Movement and Habitat Connectivity

Wildlife movement (i.e., movement of wildlife species between two habitat zones) and habitat connectivity are essential to maintaining regional population viability by providing functions such as maintaining genetic exchange opportunities and diversity, supporting carrying capacity for regionally endemic species, and allowing colonization and escape routes during ecosystem stress or catastrophic events. The City contains a variety of coastal, marine, and upland habitats that support a diverse range of plant and wildlife species. The City's coastal location further provides unique opportunities to connect various vegetation and land cover types that serve as key movement opportunities and represent critical wildlife use areas within the City due to existing pressures on habitat connectivity functions such as barriers from existing development and state transportation infrastructure (i.e., Interstate 5) along with changing environmental conditions.

Under Government Code Section 65302(d), cities and counties are required to update the conservation element within their respective general plans to incorporate consideration of the effect of development within their jurisdiction on the movement of wildlife and habitat connectivity. Specifically, the required updates must analyze "connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas within the jurisdiction, identify and analyze existing or planned wildlife passage features, and consider the impacts of development and the barriers caused by development to wildlife, as defined, and habitat connectivity." Cities and counties are authorized to "incorporate by reference into its general plan an existing plan, including a certified local coastal plan, which meets these requirements."

This section evaluates the current conditions and obstacles facing wildlife movement and habitat connectivity within the City and analyzes opportunities to preserve key existing movement corridors and plan to enhance wildlife passage features (e.g., "stepping stone" locations for avian species). Some of the primary obstacles facing wildlife movement in the City come from habitat fragmentation, presence and recruitment of invasive species, existing and proposed development within movement corridors, and anthropogenic movement barriers, such as I-5, NCTD Railroad, South Coast Highway 101.

Value of Existing Conserved Lands

Within the City, habitats such as coastal bluffs, marine lagoons, coastal scrub and chaparral, and even native plant-landscaped park and private lands offer diverse habitats, including micro-habitats, that can provide a range of services from foraging to movement corridors for local wildlife species, such as migratory and year-round resident birds (including shorebirds), terrestrial mammals, fish and marine mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. These services support the resilience of native wildlife species to changes in climate and provide an opportunity for wildlife to adapt to effects from human development, such as habitat fragmentation.

There are three primary and one potential wildlife movement areas present within the City: Coastal, Encinitas Creek, and Escondido Creek are primary, and the San Elijo-Batiquitos is the potential area (see Figure 4-1). The first two areas provide connectivity between the coastal areas and habitats in the eastern portion of the City and beyond. The potential San Elijo-Batiquitos conserved lands would connect the San Elijo Lagoon Reserve on the south side of the City and the Batiquitos Lagoon Reserve just north of the City's jurisdictional limit to the eastern portion of the City and to County open space beyond. The Escondido Creek conserved lands are generally covered by the Escondido Creek Resource Conservation Area overlay zone and includes Environmentally Sensitive Areas overlay zones at San Elijo Lagoon and along Escondido Creek. The Batiquitos-San Elijo Stepping Stone conserved lands are the most highly developed, which makes the existing conserved lands within its alignment highly valuable and should be a focus of policy development. In particular, the native habitats within Oak Crest Park, Cottonwood Creek, Magdalena Ecke

County Preserve, and Indian Head Canyon conserved land parcels represent the highest priority for preservation and enhancement since these areas are some of the only native habitat "stepping stone" locations along the movement corridor for avian species that rely on upland scrub and chaparral habitats.

Habitat Connectivity Opportunities

In assessing opportunities for setting and achieving habitat connectivity goals to enhance wildlife movement potential within the City, consideration must be given to several categories: conditions of existing conserved lands, feasible requirements that could be applied to future projects, and possible incentive programs offered by the City. As described at the beginning of Section 4.2, opportunities to improve habitat connectivity within these corridors include:

- delineating and designating formal areas, such as through a revised overlay zone, in order to target the highest-value areas for wildlife movement and connectivity within the City where future policies can be focused and developed to reduce effects from urban development (e.g., lighting, noise, drainage, public access, brush management and wildfire resiliency, pollinator pathways, invasive species, off-leash pets);

- promoting increased connectivity within each area by prioritizing the acquisition of parcels, establishing conservation easements, and incentivizing establishment of urban wildlife habitat nodes (e.g., invasive species management, installing bat boxes, constructing pollinator gardens, etc.);

- developing a program that can generate and utilize funds for preserving and enhancing habitat connectivity designated areas within the City through State and federal grants, developer or mitigation fees specific for habitat connectivity, and/or voter-approved parcel or local sales tax;

- coordinating with the adjacent municipalities (e.g., City of Carlsbad, San Diego County) to encourage complementary management goals for adjacent conserved lands within their jurisdictions;

- enhancing native ecosystem function and habitat value with targeted ecological restoration within the areas;

- promoting wildlife movement through the areas by removing or realigning barriers to movement and by studying and monitoring wildlife behavior within the areas and beyond the City's limits for avian, land-based, marine-based, and freshwater aquatic-based wildlife; and/or

- expanding current State Marine Conservation Areas (Swami's SMCA, Batiquitos Lagoon SMCA, and San Elijo Lagoon SMCA) and Ecological Reserves to improve habitat connectivity and wildlife movement for both land based and marine based wildlife.

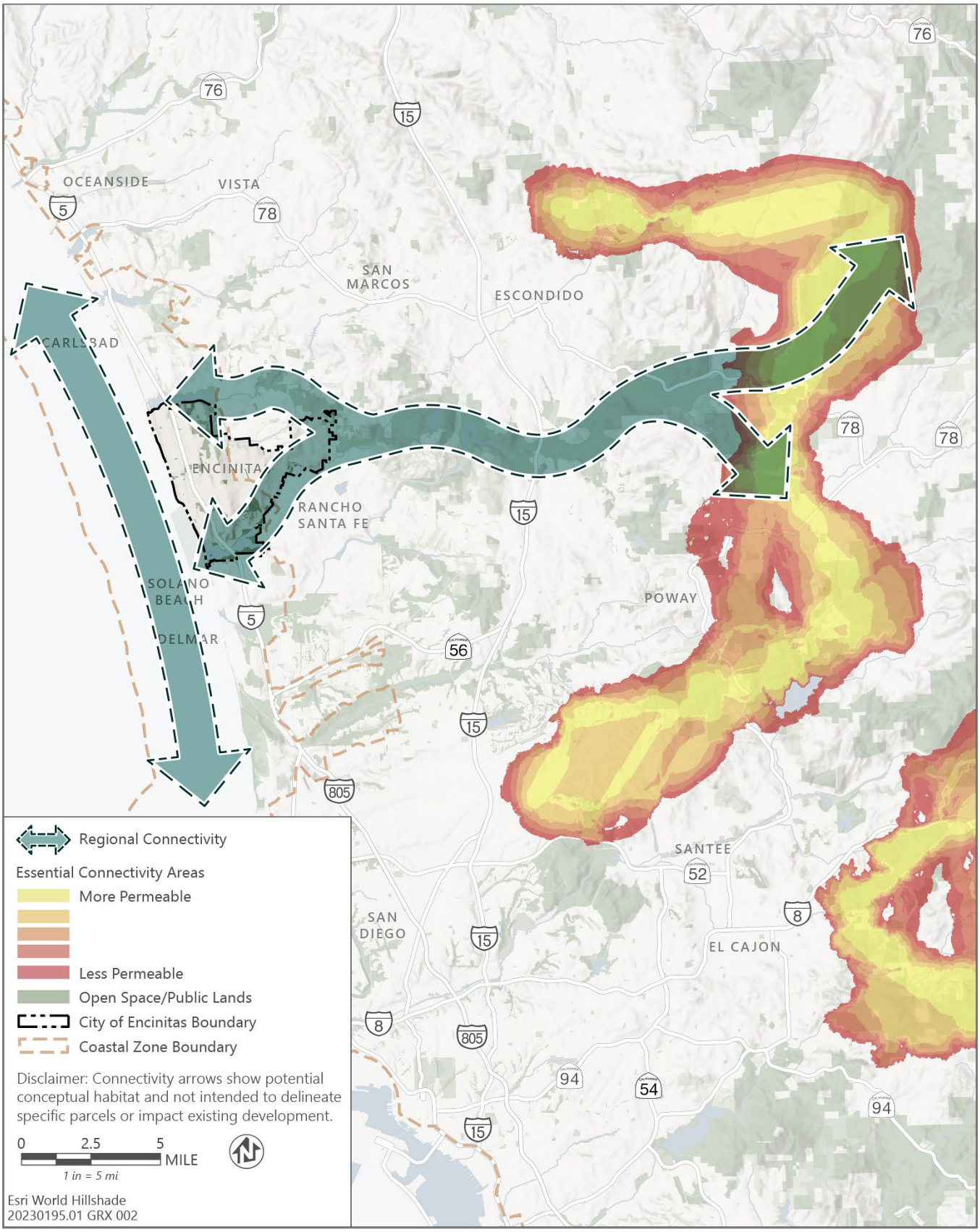
Regional Habitat Connectivity Opportunities

Enhancing habitat connectivity within the City can provide direct regional benefits to habitat connectivity. In particular, the Escondido Creek and Encinitas Creek conserved lands in the City can provide habitat connectivity from the coastal lagoons to an existing network of open space and public lands directly east of the City, which provides connectivity to an Essential Connectivity Area of statewide importance identified in the CEHC project (Figure 4-3). Furthermore, because the corridors identified within the City straddle the boundary of the City and neighboring jurisdictions, coordination with nearby jurisdictions will be important to enhance the value of these corridors. Opportunities to enhance regional habitat connectivity include:

- provide input on the PCA boundaries to ensure they are aligned with conserved lands in the City's FPA (Softline and Hardline) as well as develop policies to encourage enhancement of habitat connectivity to out-of-City open space and preserve areas through the North County MSCP and RME update. In addition, the City can ensure that habitat connectivity policies consider all species designated as "Covered" in the adjacent North County MSCP to maximize effectiveness of all habitat corridors and conserved lands within the City; and

- coordinate with bordering municipalities, including City of Carlsbad, City of San Marcos, and the City of Solana Beach to provide opportunities to implement policies that will contribute to a regional approach to enhancing wildlife movement through these urban coastal areas, and encourage information sharing between these municipal partners as each advances their planning updates to address wildlife movement in their jurisdictions.

Figure 4-3 Regional Habitat and Conserved Lands Connectivity



Source: Adapted by Ascent in 2025.

5. KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

As described in Section 4.1, the existing RME contains policy gaps related to the requirements of Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d). Several existing RME goals and policies address the protection and enhancement of sensitive natural areas, which support rewilding and habitat connectivity. Other existing RME goals and policies promote strategies that would enhance climate resilience in open space, such as preserving significant areas of natural habitat, improving air quality, protecting coastal areas, and using native and drought-tolerant landscaping. However, the existing RME goals and policies do not specifically promote rewilding, wildlife habitat connectivity, climate resilience, or equitable access.

Other existing City plans and programs include strategies that partially address the requirements of Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d). These existing strategies can be incorporated into the RME update to help address new requirements while maintaining consistency with existing City plans and programs. In addition, Section 3 of this report, "Community Engagement," summarizes key input from the public regarding these topics and Section 4.2, "Key Issues and Opportunities," describes additional opportunities to advance equitable access to open space, climate resilience in open space, rewilding, and wildlife habitat connectivity. While not all opportunities identified in Sections 3 and 4.2 may be feasible, the most appropriate opportunities described in Sections 3 and 4.2 can be incorporated into the RME update to fully address the requirements of Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d).

Based on the analysis of existing conditions and opportunities presented in this report, the RME update can fully address Government Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d) by amending the RME to:

1. Maintain existing RME policies that promote climate resilience in open space, rewilding, and habitat connectivity, with targeted edits, if needed, to reflect current conditions. Existing RME policies associated with the following goals can partially address climate resilience in open space, rewilding, and habitat connectivity: Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 9, 10, 13, and 14 (Appendix A);

2. Add additional RME goals and policies that incorporate existing strategies that promote equitable access to open space from the Recreation Element; Land Use Element; and the PBTOMP. These new RME goals and policies could align with or expand upon the following existing strategies (see Appendix A for reference):

    - preserve and maintain natural areas, floodplains, and riparian habitats and allow appropriate public use consistent with Land Use Element policies 2.7, 8.2, 8.5, 8.6, 8.10, and Recreation Element policies 1.1 and 2.1;
    - preserve and acquire open spaces, beaches, and natural areas, and establish a balance of improved parks and natural open space consistent with Land Use Element policy 8.10, Recreation Element policies 1.4 and 2.4, and PBTOMP objective 1.1;
    - provide natural open space in each community to the extent possible consistent with Recreation Element policy 1.12;
    - provide a citywide trails master plan, an open space program that links communities, and provide greenways, bike paths, and trails connectivity consistent with Recreation Element policies 1.11, 1.16, and 2.2, and PBTOMP objective 1.2;
    - enhance access opportunities by upgrading convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities consistent with PBTOMP objective 1.5; and
    - reducing parking barriers to open space access by exploring options for parking at parks, beaches, and popular venues consistent with PBTOMP objective 1.6.

3. Incorporate existing strategies and actions that promote climate resilience in open space from the Climate Action Plan, Safety Element and other General Plan elements. Strategies and actions discussed above that benefit equitable access to open space by preserving and maintaining natural areas, floodplains, and riparian habitats; and preserving and acquiring open spaces, beaches, and natural areas would also benefit climate

resilience. Additional new or revised RME goals and policies could address the following existing strategies and actions (see Appendix A for reference):

- continue beach nourishment, coastal bluff improvements, and coastal wetland restoration projects to maintain the resilience of Encinitas beaches and coastal lagoons to adapt to climate change, consistent with the Climate Adaptation Framework's climate adaptation action 6-4;
- provide water refill stations, and increase shading and heat-mitigating materials at public facilities in open spaces consistent with Climate Adaptation Framework's climate adaptation actions 2-3 and 2-4;
- incorporate green infrastructure strategies and recycled water into new and existing infrastructure and landscaping within open spaces consistent with Climate Adaptation Framework's climate adaptation actions 1-8, 2-14, and 3-4;
- continue using native and drought-tolerant plants to restore open spaces and replace existing landscaping with native and drought-tolerant plants consistent with Climate Adaptation Framework's climate adaptation action 3-6; and
- promote increased restoration and resource management in open spaces including riparian restoration, invasive species control, and vegetation management consistent with Climate Adaptation Framework's climate adaptation actions 5-4 and 6-15.

4. Incorporate strategies to promote rewilding and habitat connectivity including approaches discussed above that benefit equitable access to open space and climate resilience by preserving and maintaining natural areas, floodplains, and riparian habitats; preserving and acquiring open spaces, beaches, coastal bluffs, hillside inland bluffs, and other natural areas; and promoting increased restoration and resource management in open spaces. Additional new or revised RME goals and policies could address the following existing or draft plans and programs (see Appendix A for reference):
   - support implementation of the Draft Encinitas Subarea Plan to incorporate relevant strategies from the MHCP;
   - support implementation of the NPO and NPIP and acknowledge the rewilding benefits of the ordinance; and
   - promote the use of the TTP to provide ecological benefits to both open spaces and private lands.
5. Incorporate additional strategies into RME goals or policies that specifically address the creation of an integrated network of open space that enhances habitat connectivity and can provide benefits that address all the requirements of Code Sections 65565.5 and 65302(d). Additional RME goals and policies could address the following (see Appendix A for reference):
   - evaluate, formally delineate, and designate the Escondido Creek Conserved Lands, Encinitas Creek Conserved Lands, and Coastal Conserved Lands, such as through a revised overlay zone or new map in the RME;
   - improve the connectivity of these conserved lands by prioritizing the removal of wildlife barriers and establishing new conserved lands within these areas, including stepping stone parcels that provide avian habitat connectivity;
   - promote enhanced ecological integrity of the corridors by prioritizing compensatory mitigation, CEQA habitat mitigation, and restoration and resource management activities in the conserved lands; and
   - provide incentives to enhance the ecological condition and habitat connectivity of private lands in or adjacent to the conserved lands, such as incentives to reduce noise and outdoor lighting, or incentives to replace fencing and other barriers.
6. Where practical and feasible, incorporate additional RME goals, policies, or implementation programs that address other specific opportunities identified in Section 3 of this report.

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7. APPENDIX A: APPLICABLE EXISTING GOALS, POLICIES, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

City of Encinitas Existing General Plan Resource Management Element (Most Recently Amended on 3/9/11)

Goal 1: The City will conserve, protect, and enhance the water resources in the Planning Area.

Goal 2: The City shall make every effort to improve ocean water quality.

Goal 3: The City will make every effort possible to preserve significant mature trees, vegetation and wildlife habitat within the Planning Area.

Goal 5; The City will make every effort to participate in programs to improve air and water quality in the San Diego region.

Goal 8: The City will undertake programs to ensure that the Coastal Areas are maintained and remain safe and scenic for both residents and wildlife.

Goal 9: The City will encourage the abundant use of natural and drought tolerant landscaping in new development and preserve natural vegetation, as much as possible, in undeveloped areas.

Goal 10: The City will preserve the integrity, function, productivity, and long-term viability of environmentally sensitive habitats throughout the City, including kelp beds, ocean recreational areas, coastal water, beaches, lagoons and their up-lands, riparian areas, coastal strand areas, coastal sage scrub and coastal mixed chaparral habitats.

Goal 13: Create a desirable, healthful, and comfortable environment for living while preserving Encinitas' unique natural resources by encouraging land use policies that will preserve the environment.

Goal 14: The City shall stringently control erosion and sedimentation from land use and development to avoid environmental degradation of lagoons and other sensitive biological habitat, preserve public resources and avoid the costs of dealing with repair and sedimentation removal.

Add Existing RME Policies that are currently applicable but may need to be updated to be more current in language, permitting and implementation through this update/process. Here are a few of the existing:

POLICY 8.6: The City will encourage measures which would replenish sandy beaches in order to protect coastal bluffs from wave action and maintain beach recreational resources. The City shall consider the needs of surf-related recreational activities prior to implementation of such measures. (Coastal Act/30233/30235)

POLICY 9.4: Encourage and adopt standards for the use of drought tolerant and/or natural landscaping and efficient irrigation systems throughout the City. (Coastal Act/30231/30240)

POLICY 9.9: The City shall develop and implement a program to preserve natural drainage courses and their associated vegetation. (Coastal Act/30240)

POLICY 10.1: The City will minimize development impacts on coastal mixed chaparral and coastal sage scrub environmentally sensitive habitats by preserving within the inland bluff and hillside systems, all native vegetation on natural slopes of 25% grade and over than manufactured slopes. A deviation from this policy may be permitted only upon a finding that strict application thereof would preclude any reasonable use of the property (one dwelling unit per lot). This policy shall not apply to construction of roads of the City's circulation element, except to the extent that adverse impacts on habitat should be minimized to the degree feasible. Encroachments for any purpose, including fire break brush clearance around structures, shall be limited as specified in Public Safety Policy 1.2. Brush clearance, when allowed in an area of sensitive habitat or vegetation, shall be conducted by selective hand clearance. (Coastal Act/30240/30250/30251/30253)

POLICY 10.2: To preserve and protect sensitive offshore kelp bed areas, the City will prohibit the overcultivation, overrunning, and overcutting of kelp. (Coastal Act/30230)

POLICY 10.3: The City shall explore the prevention of beach sand erosion. Beaches shall be artificially nourished with excavated sand whenever suitable material becomes available through excavation or dredging, in conjunction with the development of a consistent and approved project. The City shall obtain necessary permits to be able to utilize available beach replenishment sands (as necessary, permits from the Army Corps of Engineers, California Coastal Commission, Department of Fish and Game, EPA, etc.). (Coastal Act/30232)

POLICY 10.6: The City shall preserve and protect wetlands within the City's planning area. "Wetlands" shall be defined and delineated consistent with the definitions of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Coastal Act and the Coastal Commission Regulations, as applicable, and shall include, but not be limited to, all lands which are transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where water table is usually at or near surface or the land is covered by shallow water.

There shall be no net loss of wetland acreage or resource value as a result of land use or development, and the City’s goal is to realize a net gain in acreage and value whenever possible.

Within the Coastal Zone, the diking, filling, or dredging of open coastal waters, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes shall be permitted where there is no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative, and where feasible mitigation measures have been provided to minimize adverse environmental effects, and shall be limited to the following newly permitted uses and activities:

a. Incidental public service projects.

b. Mineral extraction including sand for restoring beaches except in environmentally sensitive areas.

c. Restoration purposes.

d. Nature study, aquaculture, or other similar resource-dependent activities.

City of Encinitas Existing General Plan Land Use Element (Most Recently Amended on 9/25/19)

Policy 2.7: Implement mechanisms to ensure the preservation of significant environmental areas of the City. These mechanisms might include establishing development standards encouraging developers to maximize open space, transfers of development rights TDR's), land banking, purchase, etc.

Policy 8.2: Development within coastal and flood plain areas identified in the Land Use and Resource Management Elements must be limited, designed to minimize hazards associated with development in these areas, and to

preserve area resources. Within the floodway, channelizations, dams, or other substantial alterations of rivers and streams shall incorporate the best mitigation measures feasible, and be limited to necessary water supply projects, flood control projects where no other method for protecting existing public or private structures is feasible and where such protection is necessary for public safety or to protect existing development, and other development where the primary function is the improvement of fish and wildlife habitats. No development shall occur in the 100-year Floodplain that is not consistent and compatible with the associated flood hazard. Only uses which are safe and compatible with periodic flooding and inundation shall be considered, such as stables, plant nurseries, a minimum intrusion of open parking, some forms of agriculture, and open space preservation, as appropriate under zoning, and subject to applicable environmental review and consistency with other policies of this Plan. No grading or fill activity other than the minimum necessary to accommodate those uses found safe and compatible shall be allowed. Such grading shall not significantly redirect or impede flood flows or require floodway modifications.

Policy 8.5: The Special Study Overlay designation shall be applied to lands which, due to their sensitive nature, should only be developed with consideration of specific constraints and features related to drainage courses, bluffs, slopes, geology and soils, biotic habitat, viewsheds and vistas, and cultural resources. Development within the overlay area shall be reviewed and approved in accordance with criteria and standards which protect coastal and inland resources.

Policy 8.6: Significant natural features shall be preserved and incorporated into all development. Such features may include bluffs, rock outcroppings, natural drainage courses, wetland and riparian areas, steep topography, trees, and views.

Policy 8.10: Ecological Resource/Open Space/Parks is a category intended to be applied to both active and passive parklands; lagoons; wetland habitat areas and their adjacent buffers; and other areas of significant environmental quality or public resource value. Lands in the Ecological Resource/Open Space/Parks category, other than public parks, and similar areas for active recreation, will be limited to uses and activities related to habitat enhancement; educational and scientific nature study; passive recreation which will have no significant adverse impact on habitat values; and, aquaculture having no significant adverse effect or negative visual impact on natural processes or scenic quality. All areas possessing wetland resource values, including coastal salt marsh and freshwater marsh habitat types, shall be protected by appropriate buffers. Buffer zones sufficient to protect wetlands shall generally be minimum 100 feet in width, and buffer zones to protect riparian areas shall generally be minimum 50 feet in width, unless a use or development proposal demonstrates that a smaller buffer will protect the resources of the wetland/ riparian area based on site-specific information, including but not limited to, the type and size of the development and/ or proposed mitigation (such as planting of vegetation) which will also achieve the purposes of the buffer. The buffer should be measured landward from the wetland or riparian area. Maps and supplemental information submitted as part of the application should be used to specifically determine these boundaries. The California Department of Fish and Game and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall be consulted in such buffer determinations and their comments shall be accorded great weight.

City of Encinitas Existing General Plan Recreation Element (Most Recently Amended on 1/22/03)

Policy 1.1: Continue to cooperate with property owners, the County of San Diego, and others to preserve and maintain the riparian habitats within the planning area.

Policy 1.4: Establish a balance of natural open space and "improved" recreational open space and implement measures to preserve and maintain the natural environment.

Policy 1.11: Develop an open space program that will link the various communities together with parks, recreation/ pedestrian access and natural visual corridors.

Policy 1.12: Active parks, passive parks, and natural open space shall be provided in each of the communities to the extent possible.

Policy 1.16: The City has adopted a City-wide Recreational Trails Master Plan to establish a recreational trails system. The proposed trail system is shown on the Recreational Trails Master Plan Map (Figure 3). Future trails, in addition to those planned for in the Recreational Trails Master Plan, may be added to the existing systems to

enhance the recreational opportunities of the City. Within the coastal zone, all proposed trails and trail alignments shall be consistent with the requirements of Policy 10.5 of the Resource Management Element, and the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program MHCP) subarea plan for the City of Encinitas, if adopted. Any proposed modifications or additions to the Recreational Trails Master Plan or Recreational Trails Master Plan map that would directly affect coastal zone resources shall require an LCP amendment.

Policy 2.1: The City should identify and seek to acquire floodplain areas for appropriate public uses.

Policy 2.2: Provide and maintain an inter-linking network of trails for horseback riding, hiking, and bicycling; and minimize the cost of the trail system by encouraging the use of drainage channels, flood plains, existing trails, public lands, excess street rights-of-way, and major utility rights-of-way.

Policy 2.4: Leave appropriate areas of neighborhood and community parks in a natural state, retaining natural topography and vegetation where preservation is feasible.

Encinitas, California Parks, Beaches, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan (October 2016)

Objective 1.1 – Preserve and acquire open spaces, beaches, and natural areas

The top priority of the survey respondents, focus groups, and community listening sessions is the preservation and acquisition of additional open space and natural areas. To ensure that the efforts are coordinated, the Department should develop and adopt an Open Space Preservation Policy. The policy can guide the Department in identifying potential properties; avenues for the acquisition of the property through bequeath, donation, grants, or purchase; and determining what are acceptable uses of the property and methods of enforcing rules and regulations.

Objective 1.2 – Expand greenways, bike paths, and trails connectivity

Another high priority from the public engagement process was the expansion and connectivity of the existing trails and pathways. There are many planning efforts currently underway by the City, County, and State to help address this. Those include:

- Active Transportation Plan
- Rail Corridor Study
- Bikeway Master Plan
- Pedestrian Plan: Safe Routes to Schools/Parks
- Coastal Rail Trail

Objective 1.5 – Upgrade convenience and customer service amenities to existing facilities

As the Department is making upgrades to and improving existing facilities, it should explore opportunities to add shade, storage, restrooms, drinking fountains/water bottle filling stations, security lighting, public art, and other amenities as appropriate at existing facilities.

Objective 1.6 – Explore options for parking at parks, beaches, and popular venues

Parking is an issue identified at most of the focus groups and public meetings. The Department should continue to monitor parking during peak usage times and explore the need to improve or develop parking plans to accommodate peak usage and events. Another consideration would be to explore alternative transportation options to reduce parking demand.

City of Encinitas draft Climate Action Plan Update – Climate Adaptation Framework

1-8: Use nature-based solutions to improve resilience while promoting biodiversity (e.g., green infrastructure projects such as rain gardens or bioswales, habitat corridors, and land conservation).

1-11: Provide working touchless water refill stations at public facilities, parks, and bus shelters.

1-12: Collaborate with regional transit providers to increase shading and heat-mitigating materials on pedestrian walkways and transit stops.

1-22: Incorporate green infrastructure strategies into new and existing infrastructure to mitigate the effects of the UHIE by reducing the area of heat-absorbing paved surfaces and increasing landscaped areas

2-4: Invest in the use of green infrastructure (e.g., permeable pavements and landscaping) in developed areas and restrict the use of paved surfaces.

2-6 Expand upon existing water conservation education outreach programs for residents and businesses. Expand upon the City's existing Water Efficient Landscape Regulation to promote the use of climate-appropriate landscaping (e.g., xeriscaping) to reduce demand for potable water resources among City residents. Promote current funding available through the Save Our Water Turf Replacement Rebate Program sponsored by the CA Department of Water Resources.

4-4: Continue local and regional ecosystem restoration efforts to increase climate resiliency for flooding events within the City.

5-4: Continue to implement current efforts focused on beach nourishment, coastal bluff improvements and wetland restoration, prioritizing projects that will mitigate the impacts of sea-level rise, including coastal erosion and saltwater inundation.

5-15: Encourage natural or nature-based infrastructure using natural ecological systems or processes to reduce vulnerability to climate change-related hazards while increasing the long-term adaptive capacity of coastal areas by perpetuating or restoring ecosystem services.

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