Opportunities and Constraints

The Santa Ana River contains both opportunities and constraints which must be taken into consideration in order to maximize its open space potential. The Santa Ana River provides flood protection to residents of Santa Ana and the surrounding areas. Conversely, the Santa Ana River is also an underutilized resource that has the potential to increase open space, recreational and educational opportunities and programming within the City. Both issues must be taken into consideration in planning the future of the Santa Ana River.

Opportunities

- The presence of schools along the Santa Ana River offers opportunities to create and expand educational programs about the River.
- There are segments along the Santa Ana River that offer opportunities for habitat restoration.
- There are opportunities to provide concessions along the Santa Ana River to enhance recreational opportunities as well as to help fund River improvements and related maintenance costs.
Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to guide future land uses developed along the River corridor through the development of design guidelines.

- There are opportunities to expand existing parks and trail connections along the Santa Ana River to increase public access.

- The Santa Ana River is designated as a National Recreation Trail. The National Recreation Trail designation may help facilitate the procurement of grant funds for improvements to the Santa Ana River.

- There is an opportunity to elevate the image of the City of Santa Ana through the enhancement of the Santa Ana River.

Constraints

- Historically, there has been a lack of an overall vision for the Santa Ana River.

- The majority of the Santa Ana River within the City of Santa Ana is lined with concrete. Most of the year, the riverbed is dry. Vegetation along the River corridor is limited to the banks of the River, except for the River View Golf Course reach.

- The reach of the Santa Ana River between 17th Street and Warner Avenue is bounded by residential land uses that that limits public accessibility and elicits private property concerns.

- The southern reach of the Santa Ana River between Warner Avenue and MacArthur Boulevard is bounded by commercial and industrial land uses that have turned their backs to the River, causes the viewshed of the River corridor to be dominated with outdoor storage areas and parking lots.

- The ownership and management of the Santa Ana River is comprised of various governmental entities which complicates the process of implementing improvements.

- Regional transportation planning programs are considering the extension of the 57 Freeway along the alignment of the Santa Ana River.
The Santa Ana River Vision Plan is intended as a working document to guide the enhancement of the Santa Ana River as an open space resource. This Plan contains Goals, Policies and Implementation Actions which formulate the guiding principles to implement the vision for the Santa Ana River. The Goals, Policies and Implementation actions were identified through consensus building at the several Santa Ana River Task Force sessions and are intended to be used and enforced by decision makers on issues that affect the Santa Ana River.

For the purposes of this Plan, the following definitions are used: a Goal is a broad vision and a statement of a desired condition proposed for the future of the Santa Ana River. A Policy represents a direction or general course of action that is intended to achieve the overall Goal. An Implementation Action is the specific method by which a policy is implemented and a goal is achieved. An Implementation Action requires a definite commitment to a particular work effort, budget determination, or expenditure of resources.

The Goals and their corresponding Intents and Policies are numbered for reference purposes only. The Santa Ana River Task Force has not placed a priority on any of the goals above any of the others; all goals are considered to be of equal importance.

**GOAL 1**

Identify opportunity areas for land acquisition and for implementation of improvements that beautify the Riverfront, preserve natural habitat, and enhance environmental values while protecting privacy, flood control and public safety.

**GOAL 2**

Seek innovative methods to achieve the goals of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan while maintaining a balance between recreation, habitat restoration, and flood protection.

**INTENT**

*The Santa Ana River is an aesthetic, recreational and natural habitat open space resource and an important flood protection facility. The intent of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan is to identify opportunities and innovative methods to expand habitat restoration, aesthetic and recreational resources of the River, while preserving flood control protection and protecting the privacy of residents.*

**Policy 1**

The existing level of flood protection along the Santa Ana River shall be maintained.
Policy 2  Any improvements to the Santa Ana River shall be coordinated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Orange County Flood Control District to ensure that the flood control integrity of the River is maintained.

Policy 3  Coordinate with the County of Orange and other land owners on the potential acquisition and/or leasing of lands along the Santa Ana River that are identified as potential opportunity areas for the enhancement of the Santa Ana River.

Policy 4  Work with City of Santa Ana's various departments to seek opportunities to implement the goals and policies of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan as the Santa Ana Fire Department on the potential use of a portion of the Centennial Park Fire Training Facility as part of the Santa Ana River open space corridor.

Policy 5  The City of Santa Ana will work with the Santa Ana Unified School District to enhance and incorporate a portion of the Spurgeon Park into the Santa Ana River open space corridor.

Policy 6  Pursue opportunities to implement improvements along the Santa Ana River and coordinate with adjacent landowners and neighborhoods to ensure property privacy is maintained.

Policy 7  Work with the County of Orange and other agencies with interests along the River to implement improvements and programs along the River.

Implementation Action 1
Create a Santa Ana River Team composed of various City departments to meet routinely for the on-going implementation of the Santa Ana River Task Force Vision Plan Goals.

Implementation Action 2
The City's Public Works and Planning Departments shall review proposed improvements and projects along the Santa Ana River and coordinate with appropriate agencies to ensure the flood protection along the River is not compromised.

GOAL 3
Preserve and enhance ecological values along the Santa Ana River

**INTENT**
It is the intent of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan to create a greenway along the entire Santa Ana segment of the River that provides for the enhancement and restoration of natural habitats for both wildlife and people to enjoy.
Policy 8 The City of Santa Ana shall conduct an inventory of habitats along the River that describes their type, quantity and ecological value.

Policy 9 Plantings along the River will consist of species native to Southern California that maximize habitat values, including but not limited to cottonwood and sycamore groves, except for the replacement of existing recreational turf.

Policy 10 Materials provided along the River will be historical, natural, aesthetically pleasing and innovative.

Policy 11 Create and enhance riparian habitat opportunities along the Santa Ana River to provide connectivity between the riparian forest in the Santa Ana Canyon and the forest that exists along the lower Santa Ana River.

Implementation Action 3
The City of Santa Ana will prepare a Santa Ana River Management Plan that includes a Natural Resource Element identifying natural habitats and potential restoration sites and establishing procedures for the long-term maintenance and protection of natural habitats. The Natural Resource Management Plan shall be coordinated with the appropriate County, State and Federal agencies.

GOAL 4
Protect water quality and replenish ground water.

INTENT
Santa Ana River is a major drainage facility that ultimately drains to the Pacific Ocean. The majority of the surface water runoff generated in Santa Ana drains into the Santa Ana River. It is the intent of the Santa River Task Force Vision Plan to ensure that adverse water quality impacts to the Santa Ana River are minimized.

The Orange County Water District currently operates a groundwater recharge program along segments of the Santa Ana River to help replenish Orange County’s underground water basin. It is the intent of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan to ensure that future improvements and activities along the Santa Ana River do not interfere with the groundwater recharge program and to seek opportunities to expand the recharge program within Santa Ana.

Policy 12 The City of Santa Ana will ensure that development projects that drain into the Santa Ana River include structural Best Management Practices and/or non-structural Best Management Practices to minimize adverse water quality impacts.

Policy 13 The City of Santa Ana will coordinate with the Orange County Water District on the potential to expand groundwater recharge through the impoundment of water within the Santa Ana River.
Implementation Action 4
The Public Works Department shall review proposed improvements and projects at the Santa Ana River to ensure adequate stormwater facilities are provided to minimize adverse water quality impacts.

Implementation Action 5
The City of Santa Ana shall prepare a Santa Ana River Management Plan that includes a Water Resource Element identifying potential locations, methods and maintenance needs to impound water and promote ground water recharge. The preparation of the Water Resources Element shall be coordinated with the Orange County Water District and other appropriate agencies.

GOAL 5
Educate the public to reconnect to the Santa Ana River.

GOAL 6
Use the River to unite the community, improve property values and enhance the image of Santa Ana.

INTENT
The Santa Ana River is an underutilized open space resource that bisects the City. It is the intent of the Santa Ana River Task Force Vision Plan to educate the public on the open space and recreation potential of the River and the historical significance of the River as a means to unify Santa Ana.

Policy 14
Incorporate interpretive information along the Santa Ana River that defines the historical significance of the River.

Policy 15
Sponsor citywide events along the Santa Ana River, such as bike and running races, River clean-up days and other community-wide events to help unify Santa Ana.

Policy 16
Work in cooperation with the Santa Ana, Garden Grove, and Orange School Districts and educational organizations to develop educational programs about the Santa Ana River.

Policy 17
Promote healthy living by expanding active recreational activities and leisure programs along the Santa Ana River.
Implementation Action 6
Each year the City’s Park, Recreation and Community Services Agency shall work with various groups to plan citywide events and programs along the Santa Ana River.

Implementation Action 7
Prepare a Santa Ana River Management Plan that identifies locations along the River where interpretive information can be provided.

Implementation Action 8
Each year the City’s Park, Recreation and Community Services Agency shall coordinate with local school districts to conduct educational programs on the Santa Ana River at different schools in the City. Educational programs shall be conducted by City staff and volunteers.

GOAL 7
Create trail linkages and staging areas to increase public access and links to other City, County and State open space resources and expand concessions to increase recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

GOAL 8
Increase use of River as a non-motor transportation system promoting its status as a National Recreational Trail and enhance the multiple uses of the River Trail.

INTENT
The Santa Ana River is a regional open space corridor and is designated as a National Recreation Trail. The Santa Ana River provides linkages to regional and local open space resources. Presently, the City of Santa Ana has limited trail access to the Santa Ana River. The intent of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan is to increase local trail connections and public access to the Santa Ana River. The provision of concessions would expand recreational opportunities of existing facilities while generating a source of funding for improvements. The intent is to identify the multiple use opportunities of the River Trail to be identified and utilized, and to increase the number and types of concessions.

Policy 18
Develop a Citywide sign program that identifies the Santa Ana River as a National Recreation Trail.

Policy 19
Continue implementing the Bikeway Master Plan in the Circulation Element of the City’s General Plan.

Policy 20
Coordinate with the Orange County Flood Control District on the incorporation of bikeways, trails and facilities onto regional flood control facilities.
Policy 21  Coordinate with the Orange County Transportation Agency on providing a bikeway along the Pacific Electric Rail Road Right of Way.

Policy 22  Provide signage identifying Centennial Park as a bicycle staging area for the Santa Ana River Bike Trail and identifying the Centennial Heritage Museum.

Policy 23  Seek opportunities to create new bicycle staging areas near the Santa Ana River.

Policy 24  Ensure that there is a citywide bikeway system that provides access to the Santa Ana River.

Policy 25  Recognize and promote equestrian, mountain biking, and hiking opportunities along the Santa Ana River.

Policy 26  Promote and support the Santa Ana River Trail as a “Safe Route to School.”

Policy 27  Provide signage along the Santa Ana River Trail communicating cultural, historic, educational values, and recreational and business opportunities.

Implementation Action 9
Review, and if needed amend the City’s General Plan Circulation Element Bikeways Plan to ensure that there is a Citywide bikeway system that provides access to the Santa Ana River.

Implementation Action 10
Seek funding to promote and support the use of the Santa Ana River Trail as a “Safe Route to School.”

Implementation Action 11
Coordinate with the City’s Planning Department on current and future planning programs such as General Plan updates to identify opportunities to expand the City’s Class I Bikeway connections to the Santa Ana River. As part of the planning process, coordinate with regional agencies on the construction of new bikeway connections along flood control channels and the Pacific Electric Rail Road Right-of-Way.

Implementation Action 12
Identify the costs for the design, preparation, construction and installation for a comprehensive Santa Ana River signage program.

Implementation Action 13
Include the implementation of a comprehensive signage program for the Santa Ana River in the City’s Capital Improvement Program.

Implementation Action 14
Work with the County of Orange to implement a signage program that meets the goals of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan.
GOAL 9
Ensure that future City policies and projects incorporate the goals of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan.

INTENT
The implementation of the vision for the Santa Ana River will involve the participation of several different agencies and departments in the City. It is the intent of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan to ensure all City agencies, departments and programs are internally consistent with the vision for the Santa Ana River.

Policy 28  Ensure the Scenic Corridor designation is maintained along the Santa Ana River in the City’s General Plan Scenic Corridors Element.

Policy 29  Amend the City’s General Plan Circulation Element Regional Roadway Improvement Plan by deleting the State Route 57 Extension along the Santa Ana River.

Policy 30  Establish specific design standards for land uses adjacent to the Santa Ana River. Design standards shall focus on enhancing the edge condition along the Santa Ana River by increasing landscape requirements, prohibiting loading areas and expansive parking areas, and encouraging buildings to orient towards the River.

Policy 31  Develop design guidelines for the River corridor that includes natural and man-made elements that complement the River environment and include green building practices.

Policy 32  Enforce City laws and codes that prohibit outdoor storage, encroachments into the River corridor, graffiti and other nuisances along the Santa Ana River.

Policy 33  Allow both outdoor and indoor dining uses and other activity land uses to locate near the River to promote pedestrian interaction along the River.

Implementation Action 15
Coordinate with the City’s Planning and Building Agency on establishing a Santa Ana River Overlay Zone that provides specific site development standards and design standards to enhance the viewshed along the Santa Ana River.
Implementation Action 16
Coordinate with the City's Planning and Building Agency so that periodic code enforcement inspection occurs at land uses adjacent to the Santa Ana River to insure compliance with City requirements and codes.

Implementation Action 17
Coordinate with the City's Planning and Building Agency to ensure the goals, policies and implementation actions established in the Santa Ana River Vision Plan are incorporated into the City's General Plan.

GOAL 10
Ensure long-term preservation and maintenance of Santa Ana River open space improvements.

INTENT
Any improvements to the Santa Ana River will involve ongoing costs for long-term maintenance. It is the intent of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan to identify potential mechanisms to fund improvements and long-term maintenance costs.

Policy 35 Continue to identify funding mechanisms for improvements and long-term maintenance of the Santa Ana River.

Policy 36 Expand and promote the Santa Ana River Urban Wilderness and Restoration Stewardship Program.

Implementation Action 18
The City's Park, Recreation and Community Services Agency shall continue to proactively seek State, Federal and private grants, and partnerships with corporate and non-profit foundations for the enhancement of the Santa Ana River and adjacent properties.

Implementation Action 19
The City of Santa Ana shall work cooperatively with the County of Orange and the Orange County Water District in pursuit of grant funds to implement goals related to water quality and water supply issues.

Implementation Action 20
The City of Santa Ana shall work in conjunction with adjacent jurisdictions to promote improvements to the Santa Ana River that encourage positive effects on water quality and the River environment.

Implementation Action 21
The City of Santa Ana shall encourage local environmental groups, and governmental and community organizations such as the Orange County Conservation Corps to adopt projects along the Santa Ana River.
Implementation Action 22
The City of Santa Ana shall oversee the maintenance of restored areas along the Santa Ana River.

Implementation Action 23
The City of Santa Ana shall seek to partner with local environmental, community and government organizations to supplement maintenance of restored areas.

Implementation Action 24
The City's Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency shall seek grant funding to expand and promote the Urban Wilderness Restoration and Stewardship Program to include the Santa Ana River. The Urban Wilderness and Restoration Stewardship Program will generate resources for improvements and maintenance of the Santa Ana River and its facilities.

GOAL 11
Identify opportunities to restore water to the Santa Ana River and to incorporate water features into open space areas along the Santa Ana River.

INTENT
It is the intent of the Santa Ana River Vision Plan to enhance the aesthetic appearance of the Santa Ana River by restoring water in the River via various sources including Santiago Creek.

Policy 36
Coordinate with the Orange County Water District, Orange County Flood Control District, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the use of mechanisms to restore water to a segment of the River within the City of Santa Ana from possible sources such as Prado Dam and the Santiago Pits.

Policy 37
Development a series of parks along the River that contain water features tying them to the Santa Ana River.

Implementation Action 25
Coordinate with the City's Public Works Agency and the Planning and Building Agency so that future design plans for the Santa Ana River opportunity areas includes water feature elements, such as fountains, landscaping and/or interpretative information.

Implementation Action 26
Prepare a Santa Ana River Management Plan that includes a Water Resource Element that identifies potential locations, methods and maintenance needs to restore water to the Santa Ana River. The preparation of the Water Resources Element shall be coordinated with appropriate County, State and Federal Agencies.