

CITY *of* CALABASAS
2030 General Plan

III – Open Space Element



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2030 General Plan

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CITY of CALABASAS

2030 General Plan

III. OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

III.A Open Space

The preservation of the remaining open space lands within Calabasas and acquisition of new lands for open space designation are consistently identified as the community's highest priority. Open space is a key component of the City's character, representing a scenic resource of great value and importance to the quality of life for Calabasas residents. Open space protection contributes to public health and safety, and creates opportunities for public recreation. It also protects significant environmental resources as many of the open space areas within and around Calabasas contain an abundance and variety of sensitive vegetative and wildlife habitats.

As of 2014, the current inventory of designated open space within City boundaries is approximately 3,805 acres. **Figure III-1** shows designated open space lands, while **Figure III-2** shows the ownership of open space lands in Calabasas. **Table III-1** shows the acreage of land within the City boundaries that is

either designated as open space under the General Plan or zoned as open space. **Table III-1** also lists the average number of acres of each type of open space per 1,000 residents based on the estimated 2013 population.¹

The National Park and Recreation Association recommends a standard of 15 acres of open space per 1,000 people. Calabasas' overall open space inventory far exceeds this national standard, while the approximately 302 acres of City-owned open space alone constitute

As used in this element, the term "open space" refers to land that is either designated or zoned "Open Space." "Vacant land," on the other hand, is land that is not developed, but has a land use designation other than "Open Space." In most cases, it is anticipated that vacant land may or will be developed at some point in the future.

¹ Note that lands designated and/or zoned OS allow for low density single family residential development, while the OS-DR and REC zoning classifications do not allow development other than the recreational facilities permitted under REC.



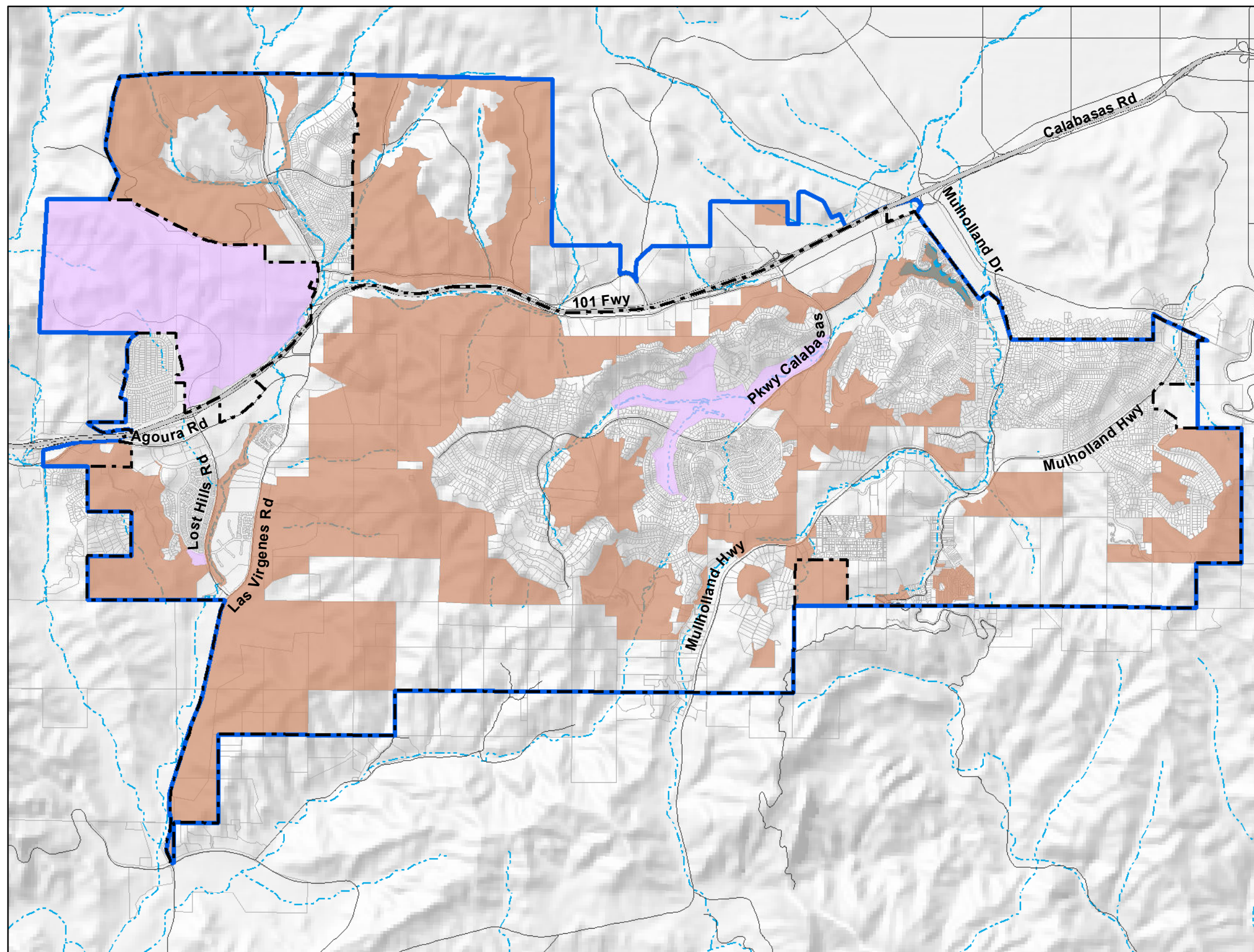
III. OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Table III- 1 Open Space Acreage and Ratios in Calabasas (2008)		
<i>General Plan Land Use Designation</i>	<i>Estimated Acres within City boundaries</i>	<i>Acres per 1,000 Residents^a</i>
<p>Open Space- Resource Protection (OS-RP): <i>Primary purpose is protection of public health and safety, preservation of sensitive environmental resources, or resource management.</i></p> <p><i>Open Space (OS) Zoning Max intensity: 1 dwelling unit/160 acres or 1 dwelling unit per legal lot</i></p> <p><i>Open Space - Development Restricted (OS-DR) Zoning Maximum Land Use Intensity: None allowed</i></p>	3,627	152.4
<p>Public Facilities- Institutional (PF-I): <i>Intended for a variety of public and quasi-public uses.^b</i></p>	11 (Bay Laurel Elementary)	0.5
<p>Open Space- Recreational (OS-R): <i>Public or private ownership, primary purpose is provision of active or passive recreation. Max intensity: 1 dwelling unit per lot of record.</i></p>	167 (Calabasas Golf Club)	7.0
TOTAL	3,805	159.9






^a Based on population estimate of 23,802 from State of California, Department of Finance, 2013.

^b Although the Bay Laurel Elementary School site has a PF-I land use designation, it is zoned Open Space (OS); therefore, it is included in the estimate of open space acreage.





LEGEND

-  Calabasas City Boundary
-  Plan Area Boundary
-  Major Roads
-  Open Space - Recreational
-  Open Space - Resource Protection

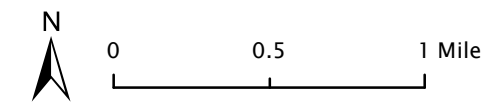
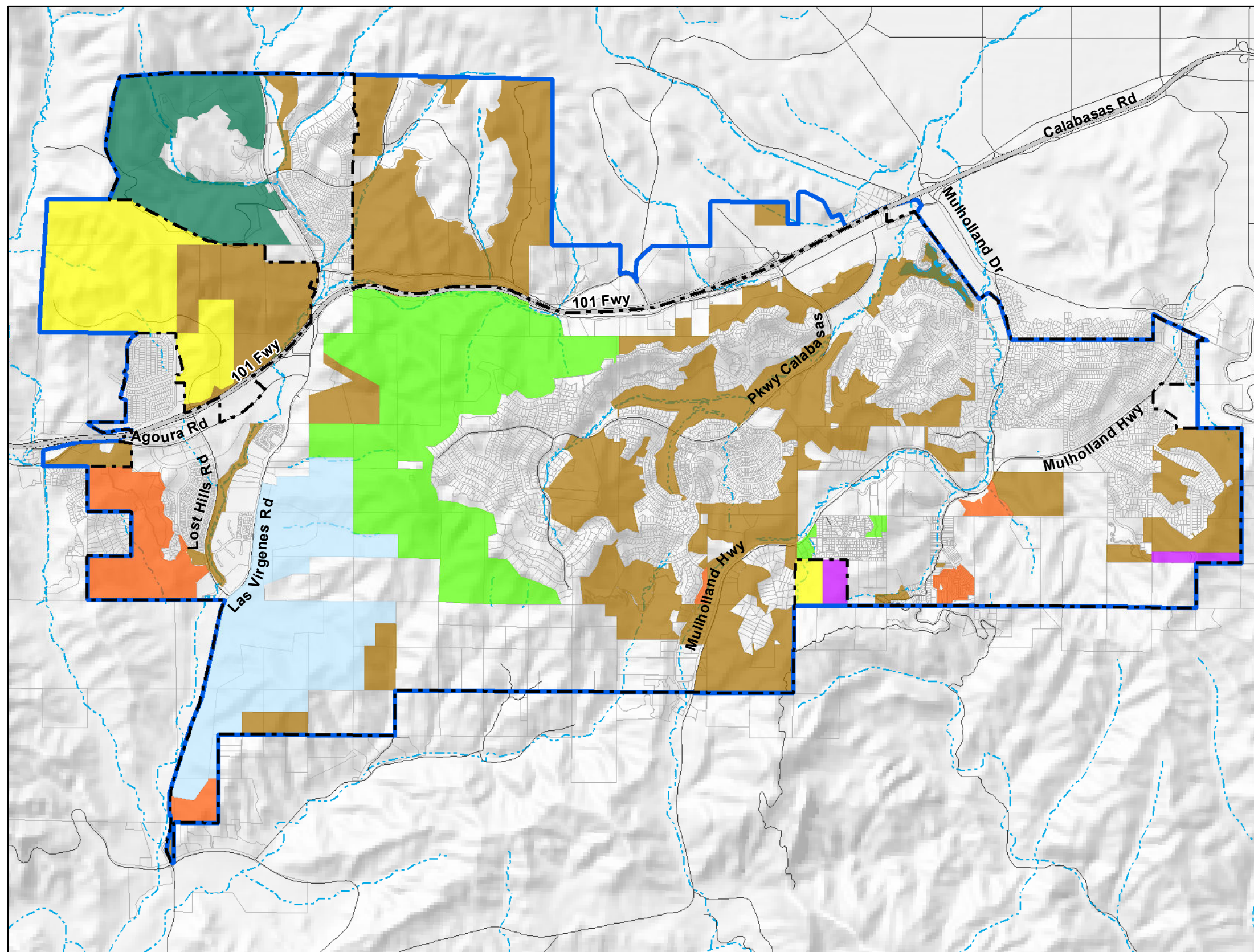


Figure III-1
Designated Open Space
in Calabasas

Basemap imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.





LEGEND

- Calabasas City Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary
- Major Roads

Open Space Ownership

- City of Calabasas
- Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
- Los Angeles County
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Land
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- Other Open Space Properties (Privately Held and Miscellaneous Public Land)
- U.S. National Park Service

N

0 0.5 1 Mile

Figure III-2
Open Space
Ownership in Calabasas

Basemap imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.



III. OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

about 12.7 acres per 1,000 residents. Other open space–designated lands in and around the City are owned by various public agencies, homeowner associations, and other private parties.

Objectives

- ❖ Maintain a citywide open space system that conserves natural resources, preserves scenic beauty, promotes a healthful atmosphere, provides space for a variety of recreational activities, and protects public safety.
- ❖ Continue to acquire additional land for open space designation with the goal of increasing the inventory of designated open space within the City to 4,000 acres.

General Plan Approach

The high quality of life for Calabasas residents is dependent upon a high quality natural environment and protection of the area's beauty. The preferred method of managing remaining open space is to set such lands aside in large natural parks or conservation areas. However, protecting such resources requires more vigorous action than simply setting them aside. Because the City's fiscal resources are not sufficient to purchase all remaining undeveloped lands, a crucial issue is how to protect environmental resources while recognizing the property rights of private landowners. Thus, the Calabasas General Plan recognizes basic property rights, and limits the intensity of area development to that which is consistent with environmental values and the carrying capacity of the land.

One of the keys to maintaining the overall environmental health of the Calabasas area is to combine open space preservation with environmental design and site planning that works with nature to minimize the loss of such resources, reduce the offsite impacts of development, and restore, where possible, the environmental and landscape quality that may have been destroyed by past actions. To that end and because no two sites are exactly alike, development requirements in Calabasas must demand protection of the environment, but must also be realistically flexible to allow developers and builders to better match their proposals to the environmental and landscape resources of their sites.

Open space in Calabasas should represent an extensive network of protected areas with a high degree of visual and physical continuity, and a systematic order of purpose. As noted above, the preservation of remaining open space lands and acquisition of new lands for open space designation is the highest priority of the community.



III. OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

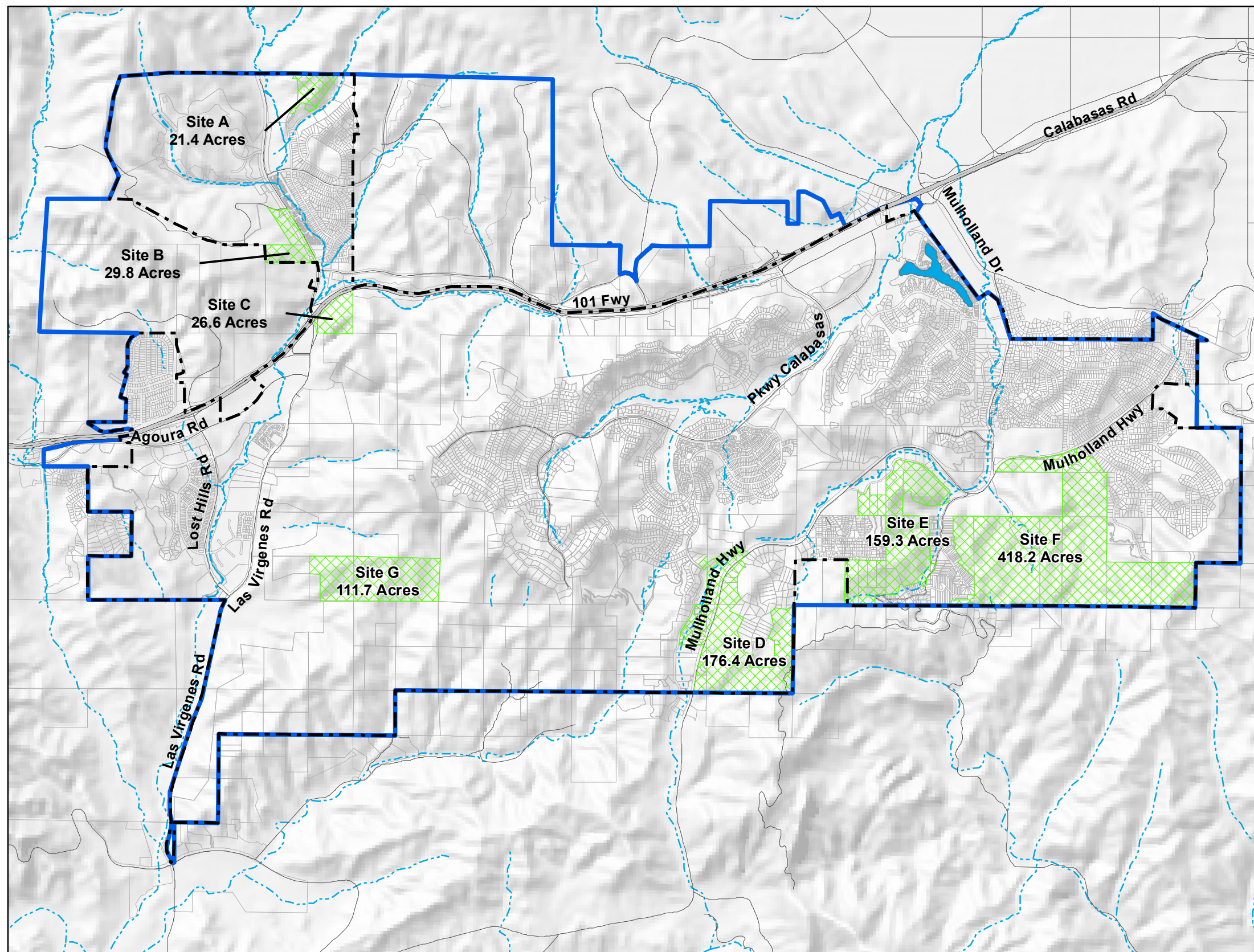
The 1995 General Plan identified a target of 3,000 total open space acres for Calabasas. This goal has been achieved and a new goal of 4,000 open space acres has been established. Therefore, in addition to continuing to seek the retirement of development rights for additional lands, improving the management of lands already designated as open space will be a priority for the City. For example, the City does not currently have a centralized mechanism for coordinating protection or management of this land use type. Many open space areas are the result of set-asides that were features of past development agreements. In some cases, management responsibility for these areas has not been made clear as part of the approval process. This situation can be avoided in the future by ensuring that when an open space dedication is associated with approval of a project, management responsibilities are made clear, and possible endowments for management funding are arranged before final approval is given for the project.

Acquisition efforts, which could include a benefit assessment district or bond issue, should focus on high priority parcels. Lands that are potential candidates for acquisition and designation as open space, in whole or in part, include several hillside properties that are current designated Hillside Mountainous (HM) (see **Figure III-3**).

Policies

- III-1 Continue to acquire desirable lands for open space designation through dedications, purchases, and/or annexations.
- III-2 Limit the permitted intensity of development within lands designated as open space to that which is consistent with the community's environmental values and that will avoid significant impacts to sensitive environmental features, including but not limited to woodlands, riparian areas, wildlife habitats, wildlife movement corridors, and habitat linkages.
- III-3 Partner with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Restoration Trust in their development rights purchase programs to retire development rights for key properties within the City; support the efforts of the National Park Service and California Department of Parks and Recreation to expand areas devoted to regional recreational open space within and adjacent to Calabasas.





LEGEND

- Calabasas City Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary
- Major Roads
- Possible Acquisition Site

N

0 0.5 1 Mile

Figure III-3
Potential Areas for
Development Rights Retirement and
Open Space Designation

Basemap imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.



III. OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Open Space Functions

Protection of Significant Environmental Resources

Much of the designated open space within Calabasas contains an abundance and variety of sensitive vegetative and wildlife habitats and linkages. It also represents a scenic resource of great value and importance to the quality of life of area residents and enhances the visual experience of visitors to the area.

Protection of Public Health and Safety

Hillside areas within Calabasas are potentially unstable platforms for development and are also susceptible to wildfire. Thus, the General Plan includes policies and criteria to provide a margin of safety and protection against slope failure and wildfire. The application of these criteria will minimize the extent of hillside development and potentially increase the amount of land designated as open space. Also, maintaining open space lands in their natural state, and, correspondingly, restricting new development to infill areas and along only the fringes of the City's existing built-up areas, reduces exposure to wildfire.

Managed Production of Resources

Open space for the managed production of resources typically includes areas reserved for mineral extraction or agricultural production. There are no areas within Calabasas that have been determined to either contain significant mineral resources, as defined by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act, or that would be appropriate for mineral extraction if significant resources are found at some future date. In addition, although some areas within Calabasas are used for grazing, the preservation of lands for production of resources does not appear to be warranted in light of other substantial concerns such as environmental protection and public health and safety.

Public Recreation

These open space areas include public parks managed by the City of Calabasas and Los Angeles County, as well as active recreation areas owned and managed by the National Park Service as part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. It is the intent of the City to preserve existing recreational areas and expand the amount of land devoted to public recreation to meet a performance standard of 3.0 acres of active local recreational land per 1,000 residents.



III. OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

- III-4 Partner with adjacent jurisdictions to retire development rights for key properties in and around the City.
- III-5 Limit and direct landform modification within areas designated as open space areas to preserve ridgelines and other significant landforms.
- III-6 Limit road access into areas designated as open space in order to protect environmental resources and preserve the visual character of designated open space lands.
- III-7 Require that development within and adjacent to designated open space areas be screened with native or transitional landscaping in order to minimize the prominence of the development and emphasize natural features.
- III-8 Improve public access to designated open space areas in a way that protects environmental resources, but increases the ability of the public to enjoy and benefit from the open space.
- III-9 Establish coordinated management of open space functions at the City.
- III-10 Ensure that deed restrictions on, and conveyances of, designated open space are properly recorded so that ownership and land management responsibilities are clear.

III.B Hillside Management

Objective

Maintain and/or restore significant natural systems and resources associated with hillside environments, including but not limited to, primary ridgelines, sensitive vegetation and wildlife habitats, special geologic features, natural drainage swales and canyons, and steep slopes exceeding 20%.

General Plan Approach

The natural hillside areas within Calabasas are significant visual and biological resources as well as a key factor in the City's unique setting and community character. Remaining hillside and canyon areas encompass the majority of the remaining oak woodlands and riparian areas and form much of the basis of Calabasas' natural beauty.



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Hillside settings offer a variety of amenities such as reduced densities, a more rural character, significant views of valleys and hills, proximity to large natural open space areas, and privacy. If development is improperly planned, the very amenities that people seek as precious attributes of hillside living can be altered or destroyed. In addition, the cumulative effects of improper hillside development can include alteration of sensitive biological habitats and habitat linkages, erosion and degradation of water quality, increased downstream runoff and flooding problems, slope failures, fire hazards, high utility costs, and lack of safe access for emergency vehicles.

Proper planning of hillside areas is also required for safety reasons. Generally speaking, hillsides are unstable landforms. Consequently, development on hillsides increases the likelihood of soil erosion, silting of lower slopes, slope failure, and flooding. In addition, despite the best efforts of geologists and civil engineers, manmade slopes created by development within hillside areas can be subject to slope failure.

Overall, the preferred option for undeveloped hillside lands is to maintain them in their natural condition. However, as a means of balancing the desire and need for preserving hillside areas with a recognition of property rights, the General Plan defines those areas that, because of their environmental significance, require varying degrees of protection, and also provides for areas where development and varying degrees of landform modification may occur.

A key concept of the Calabasas General Plan is to define permitted land use intensities within remaining open hillside areas on the General Plan land use map in a manner that is consistent with Calabasas' vision. The basic development intensities of the land use map in the Land Use Element aim to maximize the amount of hillside area left in a natural state.

Policies

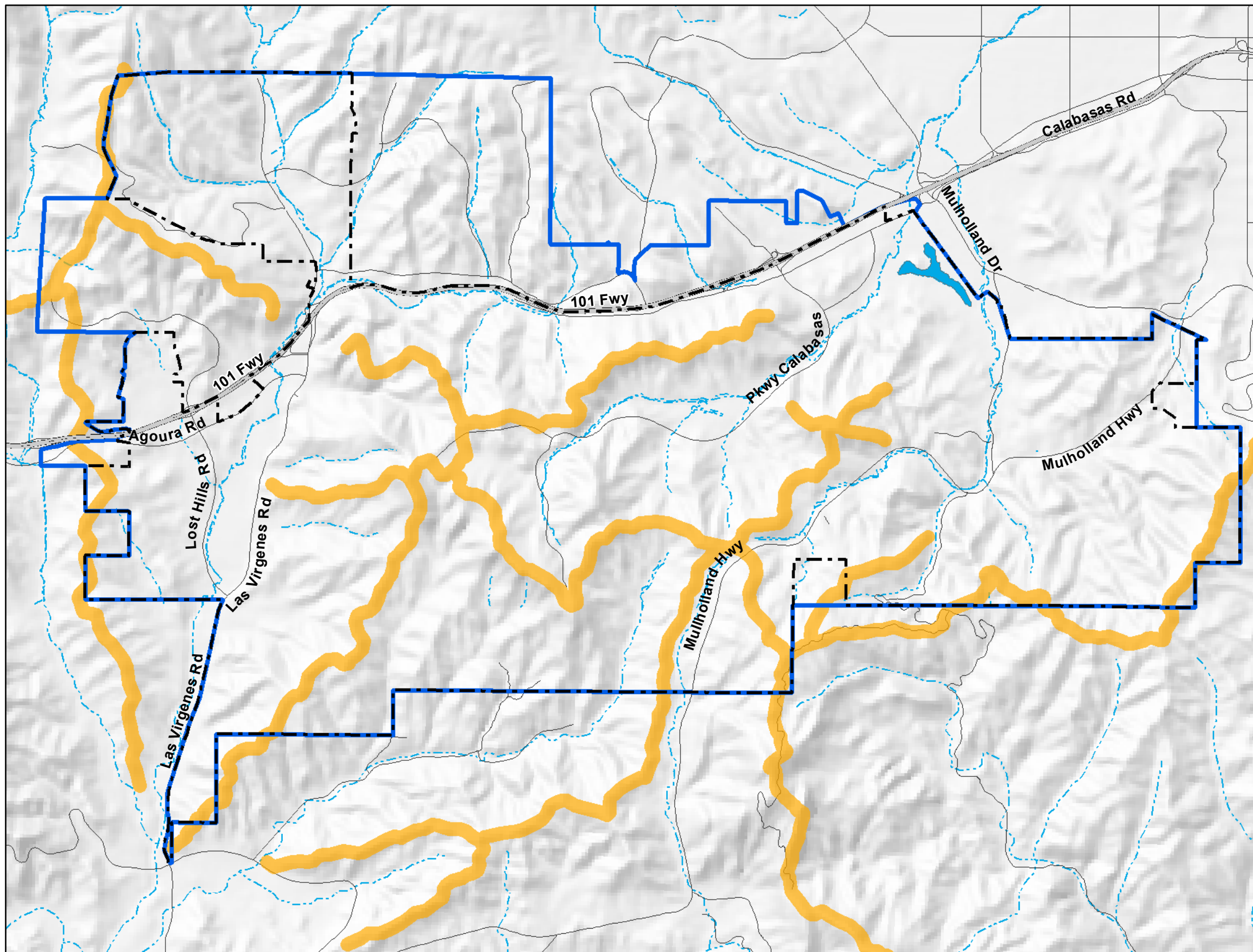
- III-11 Maintain the existing visual character of hillsides, recognizing both the visual importance of hillsides from public view areas and the importance of providing panoramic views from hillsides.
- III-12 Minimize the alteration of existing landforms and maintain the natural topographic characteristics of hillside areas, allowing only the minimal disruption required to recognize basic property rights.
- III-13 Protect the natural character of hillside areas through land sculpturing (contour grading) that blends graded slopes and terraces with the natural topography.



III. OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

- III-14 Preserve all significant ridgelines and other significant topographic features such as canyons, knolls, rock outcroppings, and riparian woodlands. Significant ridgelines are shown on **Figure III-4**. Exceptions may be granted to accommodate General Plan designated trails, viewpoints, and fuel modification measures needed for the protection of public health and safety.
- III-15 Preserve natural drainage courses and provide drainage in a more natural appearing condition rather than with standard concrete box drainage channels.
- III-16 Avoid mass graded "mega-pads" for development. Smaller steps or grade changes shall be used over single large slope banks.
- III-17 Protect graded areas from wind and water erosion through slope stabilization methods (i.e., planting, walls, or netting). Interim erosion control plans shall also be required.
- III-18 Prohibit new development, except for trails, on slopes of 50% or greater, unless either development is required for safety reasons or allowing such development would be more protective of ridgelines or other hillside resources.





- LEGEND
- Calabasas City Boundary
 - Plan Area Boundary
 - Major Roads
 - Significant Ridgelines

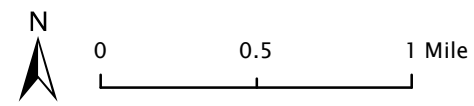


Figure III-4
Significant Ridgelines in Calabasas

Basemap imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.

