

**CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT**

ITEM # 1

FROM: Kim Murry, Deputy Director *KM*

MEETING DATE: May 5, 2008

Prepared By: Michael Codron, Associate Planner

FILE NUMBER: SP 209-98

PROJECT ADDRESS: Orcutt Area – 231 acres of land in the southeastern portion of San Luis Obispo, bounded by Tank Farm Road, Orcutt Road and the Union Pacific Railroad.

SUBJECT: Review of Chapter Four, Community Design, of the Orcutt Area Specific Plan (OASP), Public Hearing Draft.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Receive public comment and provide direction to staff on changes to be incorporated into Chapter Four of the draft OASP.

BACKGROUND

Situation

The Orcutt Area has been identified as one of the City's main residential expansion areas since the 1970's. In 1998, the City accepted a Planning Application from certain Orcutt Area property owners requesting approval of a draft specific plan that they had prepared. After the application was submitted, the City began working with all Orcutt Area property owners and other stakeholders to develop a consensus on the draft plan. In 2002, the City Council accepted a revised specific plan as the project description and basis for environmental review, allowing the environmental impact report process to move forward.

The City has recently published a public hearing draft of the OASP and the Draft EIR. These documents are now going through a series of public hearings with the goal of creating a Planning Commission Draft OASP that can be recommended to the City Council for approval during 2008.

A public hearing schedule has been prepared that involves review of the OASP by several advisory bodies including the Parks and Recreation Commission, Airport Land Use Commission, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Cultural Heritage Committee, Architectural Review Commission and Planning Commission. The Architectural Review Commission is being asked to focus on Chapter Four, Community Design, and to provide feedback to staff regarding changes that should be incorporated into the draft plan.

Generalized Project Description

The Orcutt Area is located in the unincorporated county, southeast of and adjacent to the City limits. The area encompasses 230.85 acres, bounded by Tank Farm Road to the south; Orcutt Road to the east and north; and the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) to the west (Attachment 1, Vicinity Map). There are currently 21 parcels, with thirteen different property owners, in the Orcutt Area.

The OASP includes policies and programs that will guide future annexation and development of the area. The OASP calls for open space, park, residential, and mixed residential and commercial uses (mixed-use development) as well as associated roads and multi-use pedestrian/bike paths. A potential site for a school is also identified. Residential development would take up approximately half of the total area, open space and recreation approximately 45%, and the remaining land would be developed with mixed-use and public facilities. At full buildout the plan provides for 979 homes. The OASP contains detailed information on the acreage and location of each use, but since the exact size of future parcels cannot be determined at the specific plan level, these numbers have been generalized (Attachment 2, Land Use Summary).

Specific Plan Features

Some of the key features of the OASP include dedication of the Righetti Hill open space, including trail access from the neighborhood park; extension of the Railroad Safety Trail between Orcutt Road and Tank Farm Road; a centralized commercial core located across the street from the park and school site; a variety of housing types with 75% of the units planned to be in the form of duplex or other multi-family configuration; policies that require about 150 deed-restricted affordable dwelling units to be constructed within the Orcutt Area; design guidelines to insure that the design of public and private improvements is consistent with other San Luis Obispo neighborhoods; a regional drainage solution; plans for transit to serve the neighborhood; and a pedestrian and bike bridge that would connect the Orcutt Area to Industrial Way and to the Broad Street corridor, including the Marigold Center.

EVALUATION

Land Use Element (LUE) Policy 2.3.1 provides direction on the contents of City specific plans. This policy says that the OASP should include information on the desired types of development, compatible with the surrounding area. Chapter Four of the Draft OASP includes goals, policies, and programs to guide community design in the Orcutt Area. Chapter sections include:

- 4.1 Design Quality and Character
- 4.2 Community Commercial Design
- 4.3 Landscaping
- 4.4 Lighting
- 4.5 Noise
- 4.6 Public Art
- 4.7 Energy Conservation

The plan encourages designers to incorporate design elements "...that harmonize with and take advantage of the Mediterranean climate of the Central Coast..." The plan promotes sustainable design and energy efficiency. For example, the Orcutt Area is expected to achieve the desired residential density by allowing flexibility in future subdivisions through smaller lot sizes than are allowed elsewhere in the City. Solar energy production is encouraged for all development, and required for a minimum of 5% of all single-family homes, per Conservation Open Space Element program 4.6.17.

The ARC should review these proposed guidelines to insure that there is enough guidance provided for future design-making on Orcutt Area development. As future subdivisions are proposed, plans for new homes and apartment buildings will be forwarded to the ARC for review. The specific plan should compliment the Community Design Guidelines and provide the ARC with clear direction regarding acceptable design choices for the Orcutt Area.

Chapter 4 Discussion

4.1 Design Quality and Character

Two key policies are discussed in this section. Policy 4.1.1 encourages a compatible mix of residence designs. The policy is implemented by programs that identify preferred architectural styles (Craftsman, California Bungalow and California Mission are strongly encouraged), design standards and design guidelines for the residential zones.

Policy 4.1.2 promotes neighborhood connectivity with programs that encourage local streets and cul-de-sacs to limit through traffic. Program 4.1.2a also requires paths to be provided when cul-de-sacs back up to parks or open space. Program 4.1.2b encourages front porches or other design features to strengthen the neighborhood atmosphere. Universal accessibility is encouraged by Program 4.1.2c. The proposed neighborhood connectivity policies are consistent with Land Use Element (LUE) Policy 2.1.4, which promotes neighborhood connections, and LUE Policy 2.2.12, which lists a series of neighborhood project objectives including design elements that facilitate neighborhood interaction.

These programs appear consistent with the City's Community Design Guidelines, which would still apply to development in the Orcutt Area. In areas where Chapter Four of the OASP is more specific than the Community Design Guidelines, then the specific plan will be adhered to. For instance, the Community Design Guidelines do not promote any particular architectural style, whereas this section of the draft OASP identifies three preferred architectural styles.

4.2 Community Commercial Design

Section 4.2 identifies two key goals for the Community-Commercial zone at the core of the Orcutt Area (Figure 3.1, Attachment 3). The goals describe a dense, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood that terminates at the public park and serves as an urban and architectural focal point. This goal is consistent with the purpose of the Community Commercial designation (LUE Policy 3.3.1), but the uses allowed at this Orcutt Area location will be limited to those that provide direct services to the neighborhood. LUE Policy 2.2.1 promotes a mix of uses to serve the daily needs of nearby residents.

Program 4.2.3a provides for traffic calming, extensive sidewalks with textured surfaces and extensive curbside landscaping. Program 4.2.3b establishes the two public plazas illustrated in Figure 3.2 (Attachment 4). The programs will further enhance the pedestrian orientation of the commercial area.

Program 4.2.4c calls for ARC review of building designs to insure compatibility between developments proposed by different developers. The two corners at the 'A' / 'B' Street intersection are owned by different owners and would presumably be developed at different times.

4.3 Landscaping

Section 4.3 establishes the goal of having an attractive and sustainable landscape pattern in the Orcutt Area. Certain invasive species are prohibited by Program 4.3.4b, and California natives are encouraged. Table 4.1 provides a list of recommended street trees for the main Orcutt Area streets. These trees are a subset of the City's master street tree list.

4.4 Lighting

The policies for lighting in the draft OASP require consistency with the Community Design Guidelines. In addition, standards are identified that are specific to the Orcutt Area location on the rural/urban edge of the City and with many creek and open space resources. Orcutt Area lighting considerations include a requirement for energy efficiency, direction to minimize illumination of the night sky, and shielding of lighting within 100 feet of open space areas.

4.5 Noise

Noise in the Orcutt Area is generated by bordering uses such as the Union Pacific Railroad (U.P.R.R.) and the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport. Orcutt Road and Tank Farm Road are also substantial sources of transportation related noise sources. The draft OASP includes a series of noise reduction techniques to insure that noise exposure in the Orcutt Area does not exceed General Plan policy limits for residential uses (Noise Element Policy 1.3). These techniques include providing distance from noise sources, such as setbacks from the U.P.R.R. right-of-way, and Orcutt and Tank Farm Roads.

4.6 Public Art

The Orcutt Area is a residential expansion area. The City's public art ordinance does not require public art in conjunction with residential projects. As such, Section 4.6 is brief and serves the purpose of indicating preferred locations for public art. These locations include the neighborhood park, the principal collector streets and the Community Commercial plazas.

4.7 Energy Conservation

LUE Policy 2.3.1 requires specific plans to address energy efficiency in building design by using passive and active solar features. The energy conservation policies included in the draft OASP reference the City's Conservation and Open Space Element, which requires 5% of all new single family homes to be built with photo-voltaic systems, with the percentage increasing by 4% per year through 2020. The draft OASP references other energy related policies, including standards for solar access and lot orientation in subdivisions.

The draft OASP also encourages use of natural daylight to illuminate interior spaces (Policy 4.7.2). The plan does not mention natural ventilation, which is also a key component of design efficiency in San Luis Obispo's climate zone. Natural ventilation is encouraged in the Community Design Guidelines and should be promoted in the OASP. The draft OASP also requires use of Energy Star compliant appliances in new development and encourages the use of compact fluorescent light bulbs where practical.

Additional Considerations

Aesthetics Discussion in Draft EIR

The two principal impacts evaluated in the aesthetics section of the Draft EIR (Attachment 5) result from the transition of the Orcutt Area from rural to urban style development. These impacts are considered Class 1, significant and unavoidable. The first impact relates to viewsheds from Orcutt and Tank Farm Roads, the second impact relates to impeded views of Righetti Hill from within the Orcutt Area, which will be obscured by future development. The Draft EIR lists several mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the Draft OASP to help reduce impacts, but even with mitigation, these impacts remain significant.

Mitigation measures that are incorporated into the Draft OASP include the following programs:

Program 2.4.1a. A minimum 20 foot wide landscape setback will be included along Orcutt Road and Tank Farm Road with a pedestrian walkway except where creeks intersect Orcutt Road (Specific Plan figure 2-8). In these locations, landscaping will be reduced to minimize creek impacts. Where existing dwellings front Orcutt Road, construction of landscaping and walkways will occur at the time of development of the property to avoid impacts to existing residence. The landscape setbacks and walkways will provide attractive views for motorists on Orcutt Road, safe pedestrian access, and noise buffering for new residence along Orcutt Road.

Program 2.4.1b. Consistent with the Circulation and Conservation and Open Space Elements of the City's General Plan, designates parcels adjacent to the following scenic roadways as 'sensitive' and require Architectural Review of all proposed development on 'sensitive' parcels to insure the preservation of views, consistent with the General Plan, while allowing for reasonable development of building sites.

Program 2.4.1c. During the development review process, the Architectural Review Commission (ARC) shall approve landscape plans for the City's landscaped setback areas along designated scenic corridors. Trees shall be clustered to allow some backdrop view corridors. At the time of occupancy, planted landscaping in the landscaped setback areas, screening foreground views shall screen views of new structures at 30% of their designed intent. Screening ratio and landscape vegetation health shall be achieved under the supervision of a qualified arborist or landscape architect, in consultation with the City Arborist.

Program 2.4.1d. Buildings on 'sensitive' parcels adjacent to Orcutt Road and Tank Farm Road shall not include a second story unless the building is set back from adjacent edge of the right-of-way by at least 50 feet to maintain views of Righetti Hill and other important visual resources.

Program 2.4.1e. During the Subdivision Review process, the planning Commission shall consider the overall size, width, depth, and orientation of lots within 'sensitive' parcels adjacent to Tank Farm Road east of Brookpine and Orcutt Road along the northern boundary of the plan area to insure that buildings can be adequately spaced apart and set back from the roadway to maintain views of the important visual resources.

Hillside Design Guidelines

During the Planning Commission's review of the Draft EIR and Chapters One through Three of the Draft OASP, there was discussion of how development would appear on the slopes of Righetti Hill. There was a general concern expressed that the taller buildings approved at the base of Islay Hill would not be appropriate at the western slopes of Righetti Hill.

The applicant has agreed to provide additional visual analysis of the development limit line relative to existing conditions so that the issue can be evaluated as part of the review of the specific plan. The applicants hope to have this additional information available for the ARC to review at the meeting on May 5th.

In addition to additional visual information, the ARC should consider how it would evaluate development proposed on the slopes of Righetti Hill. Do the City's hillside development guidelines (Section 7.2 of the Community Design Guidelines and Section 6.2 of the LUE, attached) provide sufficient direction to evaluate future development, or should additional considerations be incorporated into the plan?

At a minimum, staff is recommending to the Planning Commission, as part of their review of Chapter Two, that future subdivision applications proposed for land at the base of Righetti Hill include architectural plans for proposed homes. This dual-review of subdivision plans by the Planning Commission and the ARC will help insure that proposed lot designs are compatible with the style of residence proposed.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The ARC should continue consideration of Chapter Four if there is not sufficient time to cover all of the material in one meeting.
2. The ARC may direct substantial changes to Chapter Four. Staff does not recommend this option because the current plan was accepted by the City Council as the project description for environmental review. Substantial changes could result in additional environmental review requirements leading to additional cost to the City and delays in plan adoption.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Draft OASP Land Use Summary (Table 1.1)
3. Draft OASP Figure 3.1
4. Draft OASP Figure 3.2
5. Draft EIR, Chapter 4.1, Aesthetics
6. Hillside development policies from the LUE and Community Design Guidelines

Public Hearing Draft Orcutt Area Specific Plan provided for Commission, staff will ask for these documents to be returned after review to save paper and printing costs.

Additional Background Information: <http://www.slocity.org/communitydevelopment/oasp.asp>

TABLE 1.1 - LAND USE SUMMARY

Land Use	Zoning	Acres	Density	Total Units	% of Total Area
RESIDENTIAL					
Low Density Residential Detached single family, 5,000-15,000 sf. Lots	R-1-SP	53.29	Up to 7 du/acre ²	264	23.08%
Medium Density Residential Detached/attached single family w/zero lot line; duplex units ¹ Minimum lot size of 3,000 sf.	R-2-SP	31.23	Up to 12 du/acre ²	276	13.53%
Medium-High Density Residential Multi-plex units; mobile homes and multi- family apartments ¹	R-3-SP	20.88	Up to 18 du/acre ²	336	9.04%
High Density Residential Multi-family apartments ¹	R-4-SP	5.4	Up to 24 du/acre ²	103	2.34%
Subtotal		110.8		979⁵	47.99%
COMMERCIAL					
Community Commercial/ Mixed Use	CC-MU	2.75⁶			1.19%
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION					
Open Space	C/OS-SP	81.46			35.29%
Parks					
<i>Neighborhood Park (ball fields, ball courts, playgrounds)</i>	P-F-SP	<i>12.39</i>			<i>5.37%</i>
<i>Linear Park/Floodable Terrace</i>	P-F-SP	<i>6.78</i>			<i>2.94%</i>
<i>Playgrounds and greens in medium high density residential³</i>	R-3-SP/ R-4-SP	<i>1.55</i>			<i>0.67%</i>
Total Parks		20.72			8.98%
Detention Ponds		0.52			0.23%
PUBLIC FACILITIES					
Roads Arterials, Collectors and major Local		14.6			6.32%
TOTAL		239.37		979	100.00%

¹ These types of housing reflect examples of housing types within each residential category.

² This range reflects the minimum and maximum densities for residential development.

³ Playground and greens in medium-high and high density residential (R-3 and R-4) is at 0.06 acres per acre of development.

⁴ This plan provides 20.72 acres total of active park. 19.17 acres will be zoned P-F-SP and 1.55 acres will be zoned R-3-SP/R-4-SP.

⁵ This figure represents full development potential buildout of maximum allowed units on each property, actual development may be lower.

⁶ This acreage is for CCMU and is expected to support 8,000 SF of retail and 8,500 SF of office space. The balance of the area will be devoted to residential in a mixed-use configuration.

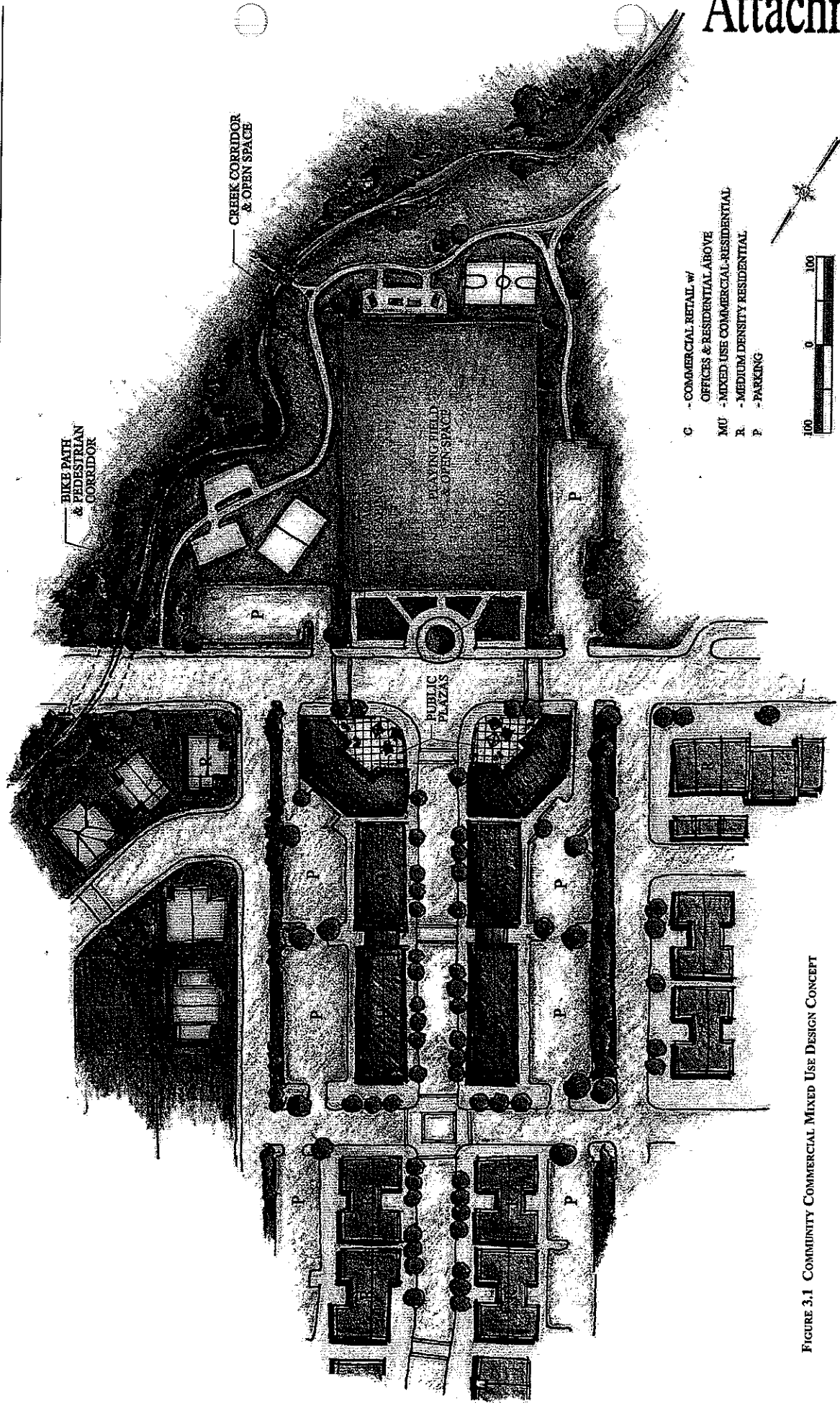


FIGURE 3.1 COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL MIXED USE DESIGN CONCEPT

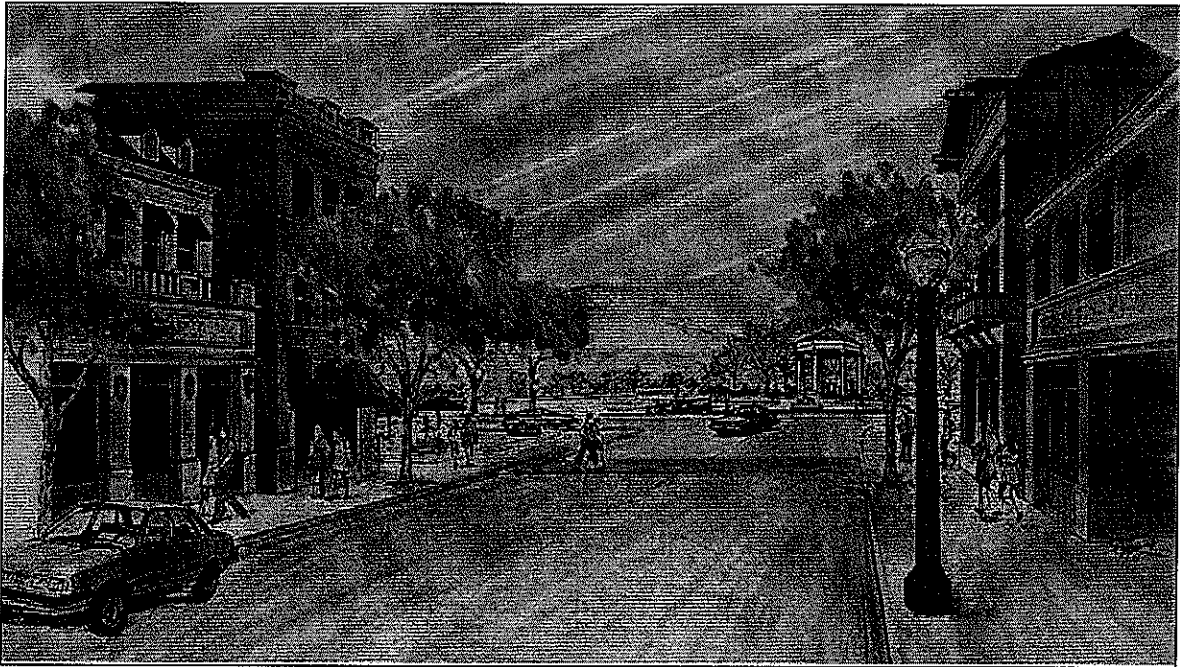


FIGURE 3.2A: View looking Southeast from "A" Street toward Righetti Hill, across the neighborhood park area.

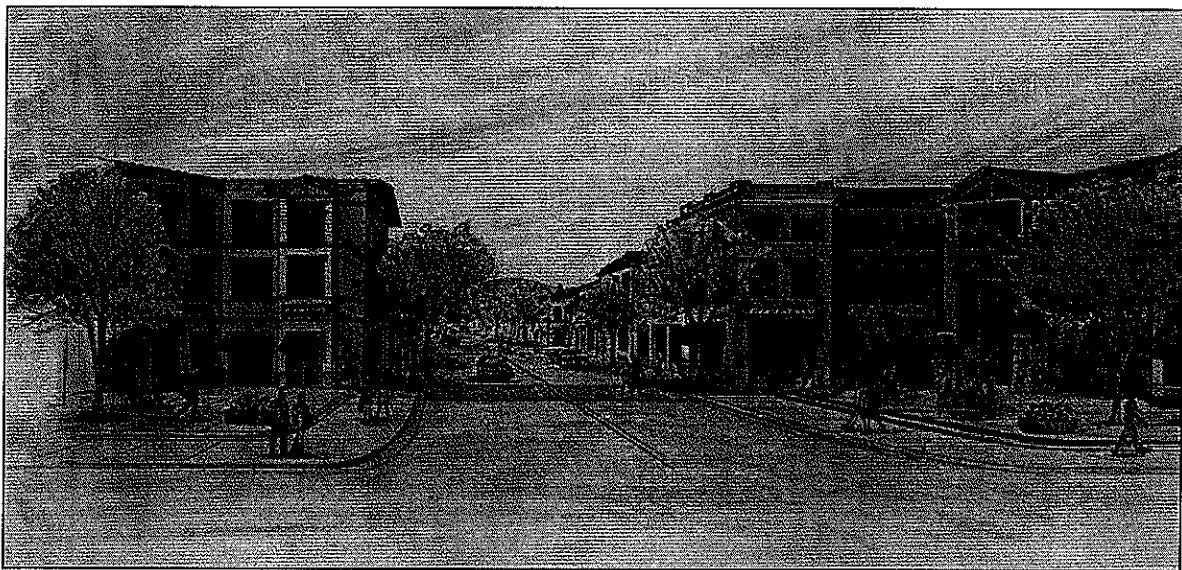


FIGURE 3.2B: View looking Northwest at the Commercial Center from the neighborhood park area.

FIGURE 3.2 COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL MIXED USE CONCEPT SKETCHES

4.1 AESTHETICS

Individual site plans, design plans, and/or landscaping plans will be prepared by lot owners at a later date. As a result, an accurate determination of impacts individual parcel development will have on aesthetics is not possible at this time. With the land use designations and design of the specific plan there is the potential for the proposed project to result in significant impacts to the aesthetic environment. Views from public roads may be significantly impacted by development that would be allowed by the proposed Specific Plan. Landscaping trees and development may impede views of Righetti Hill and surrounding hillsides within the Specific Plan area and in the immediate vicinity. However, the preservation of on-site open space would substantially maintain the natural character of Righetti Hill. Potential development effects on views from scenic roads, the loss of the rural character of the site, obstruction of views of Righetti Hill, and cumulative aesthetic impacts are considered Class I, significant and unavoidable impacts.

4.1.1 Setting

a. Visual Character of the Project Vicinity. Founded by Father Junipero Serra in 1772, San Luis Obispo is one of California's oldest communities. The City has 44,000 residents, and is located eight miles from the Pacific Ocean, midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles at the junction of U.S. Highway 101 and State Route 1. The city lies at the convergence of two main drainages: the Los Osos Valley which drains westerly into Morro Bay via Los Osos Creek, and San Luis Valley which drains to the south-southwest into the Pacific Ocean at Avila Beach via the San Luis Obispo Creek. The topography of the City and its surroundings is generally defined by several low hills and ridges formed by the more resistant volcanic and metavolcanic rocks of the area such as Bishop's Peak and Cerro San Luis. These peaks are also known as Morros and provide a scenic focal point for much of the City. The Santa Lucia Mountains and Irish Hills are the visual limits of the area and are considered the scenic backdrop for much of the City. The surrounding hills have created a hard urban edge for the city where development has remained in the lower elevations.

The project site is located at the suburban/open space interface on the edge of the City with developed neighborhoods to the north, south, and across the railroad tracks to the west. East of the site is a rural area with single family homes on large lots sloping upward in the Santa Lucia foothills. The City edge is well defined by the hills and greenbelt surrounding the City. Currently the City edge in the vicinity of the site is distinct and separates the rural setting on the site and to the east and higher density urban development to the north, south, and west. The proposed Specific Plan site is directly adjacent to the current urban edge and with implementation will effectively move the urban edge to the east from the railroad tracks to the new boundary of Orcutt Road.

b. Visual Character of the Project Site. The Specific Plan area is bounded by Tank Farm Road to the south, Orcutt Road to the east and north, and the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) to the west. The Orcutt Area is characterized by flat to rolling grasslands which rise to a steep, rocky hill at the southeastern corner, known as Righetti Hill (or Mine Hill). Nestled at the base of the Santa Lucia Mountains, the Orcutt Area provides a variety of scenic resources for residents and travelers along Orcutt Road, including views of Righetti Hill, Islay Hill, and the Santa Lucia foothills. Righetti Hill is a natural landmark, visible from most of the southern portion of the City, and is listed in the City's General Plan as one of the defining Morros.

Most of the area is open fields and grasslands. Development in the Specific Plan Area is generally rural and consists of single family homes on large lots. Several of these lots also have storage or farming buildings with corrals for farm animals. Some of the homes have lighting at entryways or on accessory buildings.

c. Scenic Corridors and City Gateways. The City of San Luis Obispo, in its Circulation Element, has designated Tank Farm Road as a Road of High Scenic Value from the railroad tracks to Brookpine Drive and as a Road of Moderate Scenic Value from Brookpine Drive to Orcutt Road. Orcutt Road is designated as a Road of Moderate Scenic Value along the northern boundary of the site and as a Road of High or Moderate Scenic Value along the eastern boundary of the site (See Figure 4.1-1). Orcutt Road where it is outside of the City URL and within the Greenbelt is designated as a City Gateway (*Open Space Element, Policy D and Definitions*).

d. Regulatory Setting. The City of San Luis Obispo regulates aesthetics of buildings and public spaces through implementation of adopted policies, principally through the Architectural Review process. The City's General Plan and the implementing statutes of the Municipal Code are the core of this mechanism. The General Plan Open Space Element contains policies that require the preservation of scenic resources and project design to minimize visual impacts.

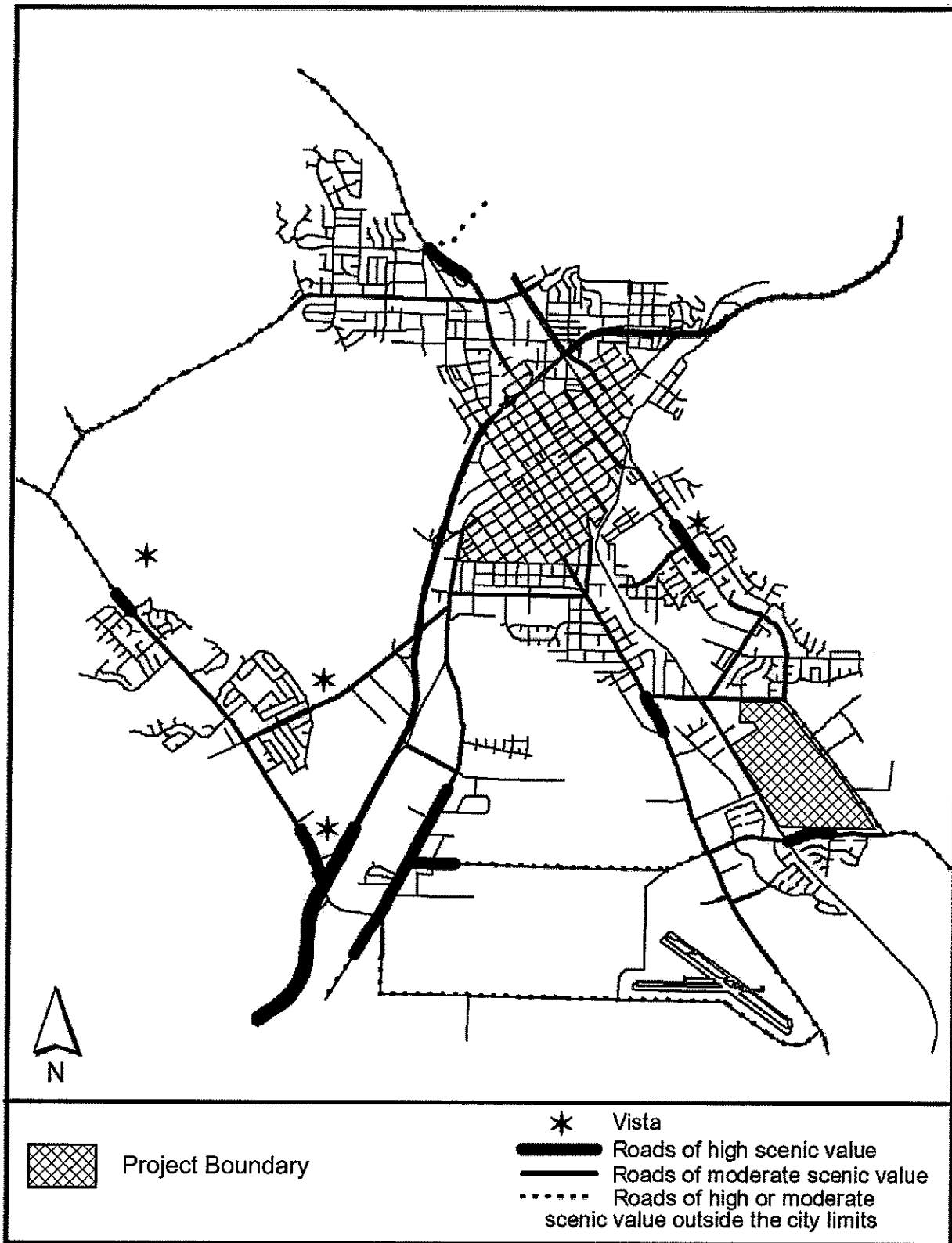
COSE Policy 9.1.5: View Protection in New Development, states, "The City will include in all environment review and carefully consider effects of new development, streets and road construction on views and visual quality by applying the Community Design Guidelines, height restrictions, hillside standards, Historical Preservation Program Guidelines and the California Environmental Quality Act and Guidelines."

COSE Goal 9.1.7: Viewing Opportunities, states, "Provide ample opportunities for viewing attractive features."

With regard to scenic roadways the Conservation and Open Space Element contains the following policies and programs:

COSE 9.2.1: Views to and from public places, including scenic roadways. The City will preserve and improve views of important scenic resources from public places, and encourage other agencies with jurisdiction to do so. Public places include parks, plazas, the grounds of civic buildings, streets and roads, and publicly accessible open space. In particular, the route segments shown in Figure 10 are designated as scenic roadways.

- A. Development projects shall not wall off scenic roadways and block views.
- B. Utilities, traffic signals, and public and private signs and lights shall not intrude on or clutter views, consistent with safety needs.
- C. Where important vistas of distant landscape features occur along streets, street trees shall be clustered to facilitate viewing of the distant features.
- D. Development projects, including signs, in the viewshed of a scenic roadway shall be considered "sensitive" and require architectural review.



Source: City of San Luis Obispo General Plan Digest

Scenic Roadways

Figure 4.1-1

COSE Program 9.3.6: View blockage along scenic highways. Determine that view blockage along scenic roadways is a significant impact.

COSE Policy 9.1.5: View protection in new development. The City will include in all environmental review and carefully consider effects of new development, streets and road construction on views and visual quality by applying the Community Design Guidelines, height restrictions, hillside standards, Historical Preservation Program Guidelines and the California Environmental Quality Act and Guidelines.

The City's Architectural Review Commission (ARC) reviews and approves the designs of proposed development projects. Architectural review is a process whereby the City's ARC examines a proposed project's layout, building design, its relationship to the neighborhood in which it would be located, landscaping, parking, signage, lighting, and other features affecting the project's appearance. The ARC is charged with administering architectural review in a way that is consistent with the General Plan and that creates a pleasant environment, maintains property values, preserves the City's natural beauty and visual character, and ensures orderly and harmonious development. Circulation Element Policy 14.3 requires that, "projects in the viewshed of a scenic roadway should be considered as 'sensitive' and require architectural review." The ARC uses the City's Community Design Guidelines (November 2002) as a basis for evaluating the suitability and appropriateness of individual project design, to help achieve attractive and environmentally sensitive development.

Although the City's Community Design Guidelines do not address views from scenic roadways in relation to residential development, in the Commercial and Industrial Design section (3.1.C.2) the following guideline is listed:

"Scenic views and natural features around the site, and a site's location on a scenic route (see the Circulation and Open Space Elements of the General Plan) should be considered early in project design. For instance, the placement of buildings against the backdrop of the hills should not obscure views by being oversized, extremely tall, or use materials or colors to draw attention away from the natural environment."

Section 5.2 of the Community Design Guidelines (Subdivision Design and General Residential Project Principles) describes guidelines that apply to new residential subdivisions, and addresses how new residential subdivisions should relate to their surroundings. Consistency with these guidelines is discussed in Section 5.0, Land Use and Planning.

4.1.2 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significant Thresholds. The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature. Different viewers react to viewsheds and aesthetic conditions differently. In an attempt to reduce the subjective nature of this analysis the project was evaluated relative to whether it complies with the City's General Plan and Community Design Guidelines. If the project design is found not to comply with the policies and guidelines established in these documents, then it is said to have a significant aesthetic impact.

This analysis incorporates an evaluation of design compatibility within the established urban context. This analysis is considered preliminary since all final consistency determinations on policy matters will be determined by the City Council, based on the recommendations of the Architectural Review Commission, the Planning Commission and City staff.

Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact is considered significant if it can be reasonably argued that:

- *the change would adversely affect a viewshed from a public viewing area (such as a park, scenic highway, roadway, or other publicly-accessible property);*
- *new light and glare sources are introduced that substantially alter the nighttime lighting character of the area; or*
- *an existing identified visual resource is adversely altered or obstructed.*

To assess the potential visual impacts that this project may produce, photographic interpretation of present view conditions was completed. In this analysis, modifications to the viewshed were considered not significant if the modification would be visually subordinate. A modification that is visually dominant or one that substantially modifies the existing view adversely is considered a significant impact.

Views may be discussed below in terms of foreground, middleground, and background views. Foreground views are those immediately presented to the viewer, and include objects at close range. Middleground views occupy the center of the viewshed, and tend to include objects that dominate the viewshed in normal circumstances. Background views include distant objects and other objects that make up the horizon.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures. The effects of the project within the context of the planned urban environment are described below.

Impact AES-1 **The proposed development would affect the aesthetic character of the site vicinity through alteration of viewsheds from Orcutt and Tank Farm Roads. This is considered a Class I, significant and unavoidable impact.**

The project site would not be substantially visible from any State-designated scenic highways or routes. As stated in the setting, there are roads adjacent to the Specific Plan Area that have been designated as roads of high and moderate scenic value. From the designated scenic roadways, grasslands and Righetti Hill can be viewed and convey the rural character of the site. Development along these roads should maintain views of these scenic resources. Orcutt Road, as a designated City Gateway, provides a scenic backdrop to those traveling into the City from the southeast. General Plan Policy OS 11.2.4 requires the protection of gateways. The most prominent feature of this gateway is Righetti Hill which will appear as it currently does from the southeast. The Righetti Ranch and grazing activities on that side of the hill will be a designated homesite where current activities will be allowed to continue and the area will have the Conservation/Open Space (C/OS) zoning designation. Urban development associated with the proposed project will not be apparent until northbound travelers on Orcutt Road get to the northeast side of Righetti Hill which is currently within the URL and not part of the Gateway designation.

Views from Orcutt Road. Views from Orcutt Road along the northern boundary of the site and east of Fernwood Drive could be affected by development in the Orcutt Area (Figure 4.1-2). Foreground, middleground, and background views of the open fields, Righetti Hill, and wooded creek areas would not be as visible from the road as they currently are, because of proposed residential development along the southerly extension of Orcutt Road. Righetti Hill will still be visible from farther away and from other parts of the City, but the immediate view of the hill from the road may be intermittently blocked by buildings and trees. The proposed 20-foot landscaped setback along the south side of Orcutt Road will provide more attractive foreground views than development immediately adjacent to the road. Even with this design the rural character of the scenic views from Orcutt Road will be degraded. The density of the development compared to the existing conditions on the site will be significant and will convert the view from that of a rural area to an urban one. Views from Orcutt Road on the eastern edge of the Specific Plan Area will also be affected by development under the Specific Plan (Figure 4.1-2).

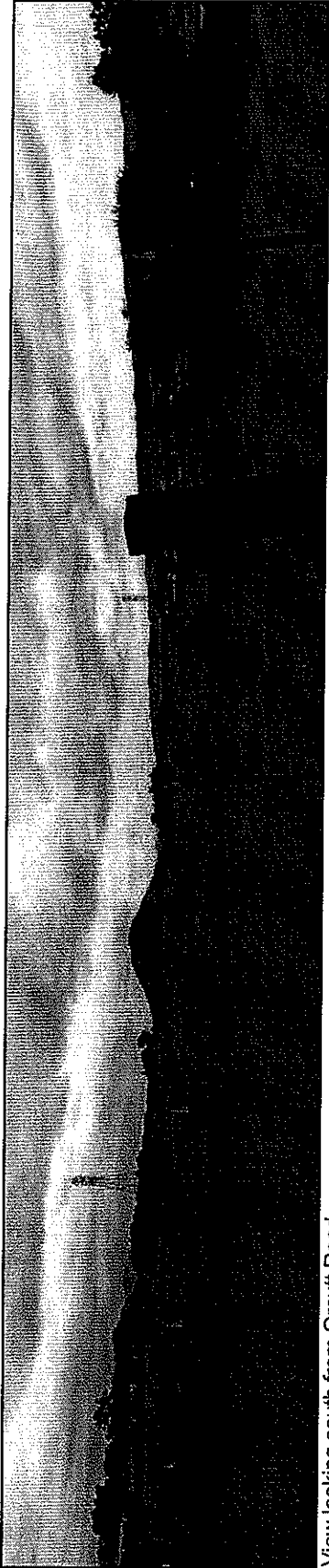
As a road of "high or moderate scenic value," development along this segment of Orcutt Road would require design that preserves vistas and views to the maximum extent possible. Views of the rural residential area to the east would still be maintained from the road, even with proposed development. However, Orcutt Road will become a hard edge boundary between urban and rural development. The City General Plan states that, "blocking of views along scenic roadways should be considered a significant environmental impact" (Open Space Element, page 37), therefore, impacts to the scenic character of the Specific Plan Area from Orcutt Road are considered significant. Clustering trees as recommended in General Plan Policy OS 14.4 will allow for preservation of some of the view corridor.

Views from Tank Farm Road. There is a brief view to the north from Tank Farm Road between the existing drainage basin and Righetti Hill which will be affected by development in the Specific Plan Area (Figure 4.1-2). The foreground, middleground, and background views of open fields on the site, Terrace Hill to the north, and the Santa Lucia foothills to the northeast, will be degraded with residential development within this view corridor. The Specific Plan calls for a 20-foot landscaped setback between Tank Farm Road and residential development. This landscaped setback will provide foreground views that are more attractive than buildings, but trees and landscaping may impede the middleground and background views if not properly clustered. Even with landscaping used to soften the foreground views of development, views of the site and scenic vistas to the north will be intermittently blocked. Clustering trees as recommended in General Plan Policy OS 14.4 will allow for preservation of some of the view corridor. The scenic views to the north from Tank Farm Road will be degraded. Impacts to the scenic and rural character of the Specific Plan Area from Tank Farm Road are considered significant and unavoidable.

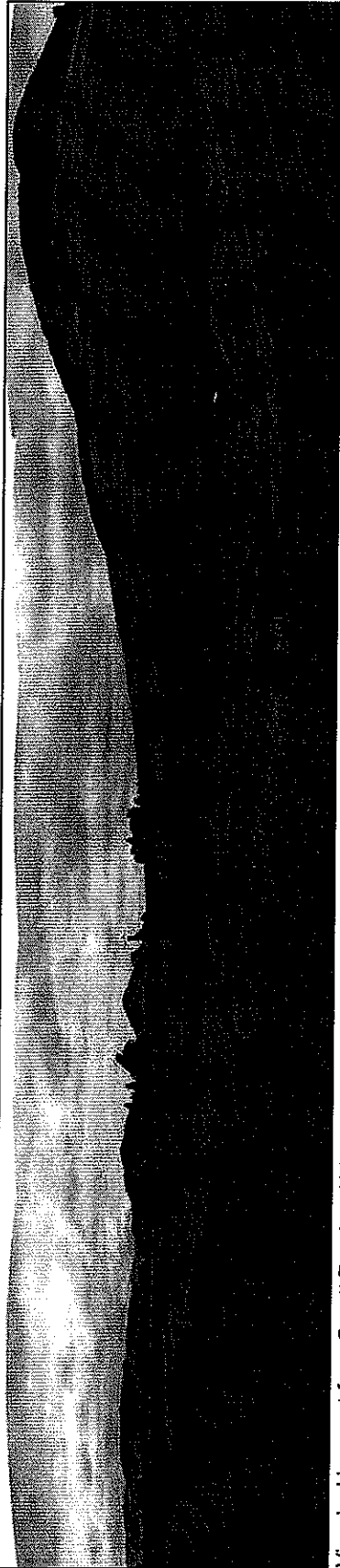
Mitigation Measures. The proposed Specific Plan includes the following goals, policies, and programs, which are intended to address potential impacts associated with this issue:

- *Goal 2.4. Maintain attractive scenic corridors and city gateway.*
- *Policy 2.4.1. Minimize impacts to public views from scenic roadways.*

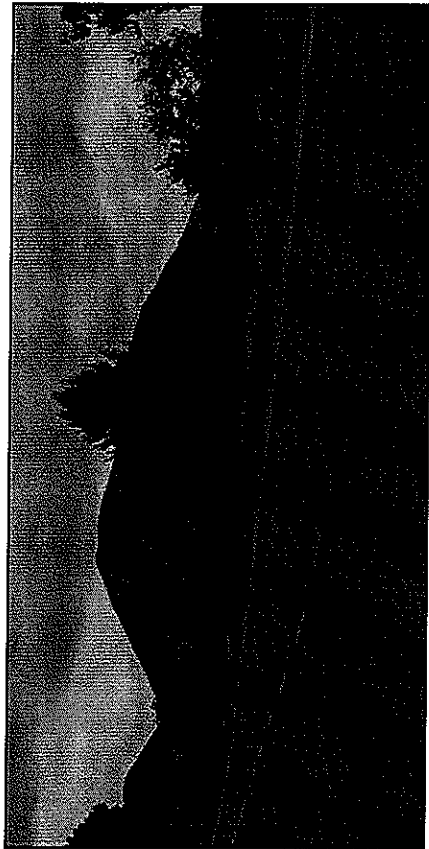




View looking south from Orcutt Road.



View looking west from Orcutt Road and Tiburon Way.



View looking north from Tank Farm Road.

View from Scenic Roadways

Figure 4.1-2
City of San Luis Obispo

- *Program 2.4.1a.* A minimum 20 foot wide landscape setback will be included along Orcutt Road and Tank Farm Road with a pedestrian walkway except where creeks intersect Orcutt Road (Specific Plan Figure 2-8). In these locations, landscaping will be reduced to minimize creek impacts. Where existing dwellings front Orcutt Road, construction of landscaping and walkways will occur at the time of development of the property to avoid impacts to existing residences. The landscape setbacks and walkways will provide attractive views for motorists on Orcutt Road, safe pedestrian access, and noise buffering for new residences along Orcutt Road.
- *Program 2.4.1b.* Consistent with the Circulation and Conservation and Open Space Elements of the City's General Plan, designates parcels adjacent to scenic roadways as 'sensitive' and requires Architectural Review of all proposed development on 'sensitive' parcels to insure the preservation of views, consistent with the General Plan, while allowing for reasonable development of building sites.
- *Program 2.4.1c.* During the development review process, the Architectural Review Commission (ARC) shall approve landscape plans for the City's landscaped setback areas along designated scenic corridors. Trees shall be clustered to allow some backdrop view corridors. At the time of occupancy, planted landscaping in the landscaped setback areas, screening foreground views, shall screen views of new structures at 30% of their designed intent. Screening ratio and landscape vegetation health shall be achieved under the supervision of a qualified arborist or landscape architect, in consultation with the City Arborist.
- *Program 2.4.1d.* Buildings on 'sensitive' parcels adjacent to Orcutt Road and Tank Farm Road shall not include a second story unless the building is set back from adjacent edge of the right-of-way by at least 50 feet to maintain views of Righetti Hill and other important visual resources.
- *Program 2.4.1e.* During the Subdivision Review process, the planning Commission shall consider the overall size, width, depth, and orientation of lots within 'sensitive' parcels adjacent to Tank Farm Road east of Brookpine and Orcutt Road along the northern boundary of the plan area to insure that buildings can be adequately spaced apart and set back from the roadway to maintain views of the important visual resources.

Implementation of these provisions of the Specific Plan would reduce impacts to some extent. However, impacts would remain significant. No further mitigation measures are feasible.

Significance After Mitigation. Impacts to the character of the site due to the change from rural to urban development will remain significant and unavoidable.

Impact AES-2 The proposed development would affect the aesthetic character of the Specific Plan Area and impede views of Righetti Hill. This is considered a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact.

Development in the Specific Plan Area will alter the rural setting of the site and impede views of Righetti Hill from within the Specific Plan area. The Specific Plan area is currently open fields, creeks, wetlands, single family residences, and some commercial storage. The rural character of the site will be lost with development under the Specific Plan. Views from areas in the vicinity of Righetti Hill may be blocked by homes or landscape trees. The size and location of the neighborhood park will provide a view corridor from the center of the Specific Plan area to Righetti Hill. Views of the hill from a distance will only be impacted on the west side where residential development is proposed on the slope of the hill up to the 280' contour line. By dedicating the majority of Righetti Hill to open space, development will not be allowed on the upper portion and it will still be a prominent natural feature in the area.

Mitigation Measures. There are no feasible mitigation measures that are consistent with the objectives of the proposed project.

Significance After Mitigation. Impacts to the character of the site due to the change from rural to urban development will remain significant and unavoidable.

Impact AES-3 Light and glare produced from the proposed project would extend the area of night light across the project site, altering the nighttime sky due to lighting and daytime glare associated with plaster-type walls and/or brightly painted surfaces. This may affect the residences in the vicinity of the site and views from local roadways. This is considered a Class II, significant but mitigable impact.

Site illumination provides safety for vehicular and pedestrian movement, and increases security. It can also serve to interpret the plan arrangement by giving emphasis to focal points, gathering places, landscaping, and building entrances. Well-conceived lighting gives clarity and unity to the overall site and to each sub-area within it. At the same time, the introduction of new lighting into an unlit area would extend the light glow of an urban area further into rural areas, proportionally affecting the urban light glow in the nighttime sky.

At present there is minimal nighttime lighting of the project site. However, implementation of the proposed project would require additional lighting that could be visible from nearby residences. Streetlights, entry lights, and interior lights have the potential to adversely affect nearby residences because of glare, and spill light from these sources has the potential to degrade views of the night sky in the Specific Plan area and vicinity. The addition of homes and street lighting in this area would contribute to an alteration of the rural character of the site. This impact is potentially significant.

Mitigation Measures. The proposed Specific Plan includes the following goals, policies, and programs, which are intended to address potential impacts associated with this issue:

- *The Specific Plan recommends lighting fixtures that are shielded and will not "exceed the height of any building nor create glare from a reflective surface".*
- *Goal 4.4. Maintain compatible exterior lighting.*

- **Policy 4.4.1.** Exterior lighting in all portions of the Orcutt Area shall be compatible with the architectural and landscape design and not create a nuisance for adjacent and nearby neighbors.
- **Policy 4.4.2.** All lighting within the specific plan area shall comply with the lighting standards contained in the San Luis Obispo Community Design Guidelines.
- **Policy 4.4.3.** In addition to the overall community standards, the following standards shall apply to all outdoor illumination of streets, public spaces, and private grounds.
- **Program 4.4.3a. Orcutt Area Lighting Standards:**
 1. Lighting shall complement the architectural style planned for the area.
 2. Lighting fixtures shall not be mounted more than 16 feet high, except for bollards, which may remain at 3 feet.
 3. Lighting fixtures shall be energy efficient.
 4. All lighting fixtures should be properly shielded to eliminate light and glare from affecting adjacent and other properties and passing vehicles or pedestrians, as shown in the Specific Plan.
 5. Trail lighting shall be at a scale appropriate for pedestrians, utilizing bollards, although overhead lighting may be used where vandalism of bollard lights is a concern.
 6. Illumination toward the sky shall be minimized.
 7. Night lighting of public areas shall be kept to the minimum necessary for safety and security purposes.
 8. Exterior lighting within 100 feet of open space shall be shielded and aimed as needed to avoid spillover into open space areas. Decorative lighting shall be low intensity and meet City standards.

Implementation of these provisions of the Specific Plan would reduce impacts to some extent. However, impacts would remain significant. The following mitigation measures are required to fully mitigate potential light and glare impacts.

- AES-3(a) Minimize Lighting on Public Areas.** Lighting shall be shielded as shown in the Specific Plan and directed downward. Lighting shall not be mounted more than 16 feet high. Streetlights, where they are included, shall be primarily for pedestrian safety, and shall not provide widespread illumination unless necessary to comply with safety requirements, as determined by the Public Works Director. Street lighting should focus on intersections and should be placed between



intersections only when it is necessary to comply with safety requirements, as determined by the Public Works Director. Trail lighting shall be at a scale appropriate for pedestrians, utilizing bollards, although overhead lighting may be used where vandalism of bollard lights is a concern. Prior to development of individual lots, proposed lighting shall be indicated on site plans and shall demonstrate that spill-over of lighting would not affect nearby residential areas.

Significance After Mitigation. Implementation of the applicable provisions of the Specific Plan, in combination with the proposed mitigation measures, would reduce project-specific impacts to a less than significant level.

c. Cumulative Impacts. The County General Plan land use designation of the proposed project site is residential single-family and agriculture, and development of residential units is allowable pursuant to County General Plan. Under the City of San Luis Obispo jurisdiction and the development standards of the Orcutt Area Specific Plan, residential development will be allowed at higher densities in most areas. The highest density areas are concentrated on the north and west sides of the site, adjacent to existing urban development; therefore a transition from urban to rural settings will be preserved. This development pattern is consistent with the expected development of the Orcutt Area under the current City General Plan.

However, the City General Plan does not plan for the residential development outside of the Urban Reserve Line (URL), as is proposed in the Orcutt Area Specific Plan. Land Use Element Policy 1.7.1 states that, "within the City's planning area and outside the urban reserve line, undeveloped land should be kept open." The intent is that the area outside of the URL will maintain its open character and urban development will be compact. The area outside of the URL that is proposed for development includes low density residential land along Orcutt Road, south of Calle Crotala at the base of Righetti Hill. This area was not identified as an area that would eventually be converted to urban development. Expansion of the URL decreases the greenbelt area and takes away from the existing character of the City as a compact urban area surrounded by a rural development and natural open space. New development in and around the City will affect the aesthetic character of the City by adding new urban elements such as streets, buildings, signs, and landscaping, as well as light sources. This is especially true for new development in rural areas around the City edge. As the City grows at its edges, greenbelt and rural areas surrounding the City are lost. Growth inducing impacts from the proposed URL adjustment are discussed in Section 6.0

In addition, the City is currently reviewing Specific Plans for the Margarita and Airport Areas which include proposed development of currently rural areas. Cumulative development of these proposed developments would result in a significant cumulative loss of open space and would irrevocably alter the character of these areas throughout the City from rural to urban. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would incrementally contribute to this change in aesthetic character of the site and the surrounding areas. Cumulative aesthetic impacts are therefore considered *Significant and Unavoidable* (Class I).

5. ~~Proposed development should incorporate permeable surfaces in hardscape areas (for example, wood decks, sand-joined bricks, and stone walkways) where feasible, to minimize off-site flows and facilitate the absorption of water into the ground.~~
6. Development or land use changes that increase impervious surfaces or sedimentation may result in channel erosion. This may require measures to stabilize creek banks.
 - a. Creek rehabilitation is the preferred method of stabilization, with the objective of maintaining the natural character and quality of the creek and riparian area. Rehabilitation may include enlarging the channel at points of obstruction, clearing obstructions at points of constriction, limiting uses in areas of excessive erosion, and restoring riparian vegetation.
 - b. Concrete channels and other mechanical stabilization measures are not appropriate, and should be considered for use on a case-by-case basis and only unless no other alternative exists.
 - c. If bank stabilization requires other rehabilitation or vegetative methods, hand-placed stone or rock rip-rap are the preferred methods.
7. ~~Public access and visibility to creeks should be provided through the use of single-loaded frontage roads adjacent to creeks, but outside of the creek setback. Structures, or lots that back-on to creeks are discouraged. However, certain areas along the creek may not be appropriate for public access due to on-going conservation plans and programs. These areas are determined by the City's Natural Resource Manager.~~

7.2 - Hillside Development

The Open Space and Land Use Elements of the General Plan both note the importance of preserving the natural character of the hillsides surrounding the community. The guidelines in this section are intended to assist in implementing General Plan hillside policies by minimizing the visibility and other impacts of allowable hillside development.

A. Site planning and development. The following hillside development policies in Land Use Element section 6.2.2 address the placement of buildings on hillsides, roads and grading:

- D. Minimize grading of roads;*
- E. Minimize grading on individual lots; generally locate houses close to the street; minimize the grading of visible driveways;*

The following design guidelines implement the General Plan policies.

1. **Subdivision design.** A proposed subdivision of two or more parcels shall be designed to comply with the following guidelines:
 - a. **Parcel and building site slope.** No parcel shall be created:
 - (1) With an overall average slope of 30 percent or more; and

- (2) Without at least one building site of at least 5,000 square feet that has no natural slope of 10 percent or more.
 - b. **Roads.** Each new road shall follow natural terrain contours to the maximum extent feasible to minimize grading and the visibility of the road from off the subdivision site.
 2. **Site access.** Each driveway shall follow natural terrain contours to the maximum extent feasible to minimize both the extent of grading and the visibility of the driveway. Driveways also shall comply with the following standards.
 - a. Common driveways that serve more than one parcel are encouraged, and may be required, to reduce the total amount of grading and pavement.
 - b. Drainage from a driveway shall be directed in a controlled manner to the drainage facilities of the nearest road wherever feasible, subject to the approval of the Public Works Director.
 - c. A driveway shall not have a grade steeper than five percent within 10 feet of a garage or carport entry. Driveway finished grade shall not exceed an average of 15 percent.
 3. **Placement of structures.** Each structure shall be located in the most accessible, least visually prominent, most geologically stable, portion of the site, and at the lowest feasible elevation. Siting structures in the least prominent locations is especially important on open hillsides where the visibility of structures should be minimized by placement that will provide screening by existing vegetation, depressions in topography, or other natural features. Each proposed structure shall be located so that:
 - a. It is as close as possible to the street, to avoid the need for a long driveway;
 - b. The silhouetting of a structure against the sky above the nearest ridge or knoll when viewed from a public street is minimized;
 - c. Existing hillside vegetation is retained to the maximum extent feasible, so as to not destroy the natural character of the site; and
 - d. The structure and its construction do not disturb major rock formations, existing trees and native vegetation, waterways, ridgelines, and known archaeological sites.
 4. **Grading.** Hillside grading to provide a building site and driveway access should be minimized. Large, single-elevation graded pads should be avoided in favor of more careful site preparation that provides for stepped foundations and/or smaller-scale graded areas.
 5. **Retaining walls.** Large retaining walls in a uniform plane must be avoided. No visible portion of a retaining wall should be higher than six feet, and a maximum height of three feet is preferred. Where a retaining wall would otherwise exceed six feet in height, the wall shall be divided into terraces with variations in plane and include landscaping to break up the length of walls and to screen them from view. All retaining walls should also comply with the guidelines for exterior structure colors in B.4, below.
 6. **Drainage channels.** Proposed development shall maintain existing natural drainage systems, with all new drainage from the development directed away from adjoining properties.

B. Building design. The following hillside development policies in Land Use Element section 6.2.2 address the design of buildings on hillsides:

- B. Keep a low profile and conform to the natural slopes;*
- C. Avoid large, continuous walls or roof surfaces, or prominent foundation walls, poles, or columns;*
- G. Use materials, colors, and textures which blend with the natural landscape and avoid high contrasts;*

The following design guidelines implement the General Plan policies.

- 1. Overall design.** Design and locate each structure so that it keeps a low profile and conforms to the natural slopes, emphasizes horizontal rather than vertical features and, overall, maintains as low a profile as feasible.
- 2. Exterior wall surfaces.**
 - a. The apparent size of exterior wall surfaces visible from off the site should be minimized through the use of single-story and small scale elements, setbacks, overhangs, roof pitches, and/or other means of horizontal and vertical articulation to create shade and shadow, and break up otherwise massive forms.
 - b. Large flat building planes should be avoided; the spatial arrangement of the building, including roof overhangs, should be used to achieve alternating light and dark building surfaces that will blend with similar contrasts found in the surrounding natural vegetation.
- 3. Roofs.** Roof design is as important to the visual impact of a hillside structure as other aspects of design, and will be considered by the ARC as carefully as all other design features.
 - a. Roof pitches should generally be oriented to follow the angle of the hillside slope; but with variations to minimize a monotonous un-natural appearance.
 - b. Flat roofs should be developed as open space or as gardens serving nearby living space.
- 4. Colors and materials.** A mixture of materials and color shall be used to blend structures with the natural appearance of the hillside.
 - a. The exterior colors of each structure shall emphasize dark earth tones on north-facing slopes, and medium earth tones on south-facing slopes.
 - b. Preference shall be given to earth tone colors such as brown, beige, ocher, sienna, grey, and grey-green.
 - c. Warm colors may be used in small areas for either accessory treatment, or as a design counterpoint.
 - d. Reflective materials should be avoided.

- e. Natural and natural-appearing materials such as stone, brick and other masonry, and wood should be emphasized, with fire retardant materials used where appropriate. Exterior finishes should be primarily of materials with uneven textures (wood, stone, etc.).
5. **Height of lowest floor level.** The vertical distance between the lowest point where the foundation meets grade and the lowest floor line of the structure should not exceed six feet.
 6. **Downhill building walls.** No single building wall on the downhill side of a house should exceed 15 feet in height above grade. Additional building height on a downhill side may be allowed in 15-foot increments, where each increment is stepped-back from the lower wall a minimum of 10 feet.
 7. **Support structures.** Support structures (for example, columns, pilings, etc.) below the lowest floor on the downhill side of a house, shall be enclosed unless visible structural members are an integral feature of the architectural design. Support structure wall surfaces shall not exceed six feet in height.
 8. **Decks.** No portion of the walking surface of a deck with visible underpinnings should exceed a height of six feet above grade. Decks shall be integrated into the architecture of the house to the maximum extent feasible, not appearing as an "add-on" to the primary building mass.
 9. **View protection.** Each proposed structure should be designed and located to avoid unnecessarily blocking views from other properties.
 - a. Where feasible, a new structure should not be placed directly in the view of the primary living areas on a neighboring parcel.
 - b. Mechanical equipment may be placed on rooftops or below a deck only if the equipment is not visible from off the site, except for unobtrusive solar collectors that are compatible with the roof line and architecturally integrated with the structure.
- C. Landscaping.** Land Use Element hillside development policy 6.2.2.F states that development on hillside parcels shall *"Include planting which is compatible with native hillside vegetation and which provides a visual transition from developed to open areas."* The following guidelines implement this policy.
1. **Plantings.**
 1. The overall objective for landscaping on hillside sites should be to create harmony with nature and the adjacent neighborhood.
 2. Selected plant materials should be:
 - a. Primarily of native, drought tolerant, and low combustion species; and
 - b. Compatible with the existing natural vegetation on the site in terms of height and color.
 3. The following are prohibited:

- a. Contrived, non-native landscaping located on visible downhill slopes; and
 - b. The planting of long tree rows or formal hedges visible from a public right-of-way.
4. Landscape shall be used to blend built elements such as structures and grading cuts and fills into the natural neighborhood setting; and when provided on downslopes should be placed as near to all structures as possible.
 5. Landscaping shall be installed prior to occupancy to ensure slope retention within disturbed areas, and where required to provide screening.
- 2. Hardscape.** The planning and design of hardscape on a hillside site should:
1. Enhance the building design;
 2. Follow all the same principles of these guidelines applicable to other aspects of project design, including minimizing grading;
 3. Provide for adequate, but controlled drainage;
 4. Keep a low profile and conform to the natural slope;
 5. Use materials and colors that blend with the building;
 6. Provide for outdoor living spaces that are designed to be sensitive to the privacy of neighbors; and
 7. Be integrated with the architecture of the building.
- D. Fencing.** Hillside area perimeter fencing that is visible from off-site vantages should be of a semi-transparent, rather than solid design.
1. Fencing should be limited to the developable portions of hillside lots, which are typically defined by the allowed building footprints through the subdivision map review process.
 2. Examples of appropriate materials for semi-transparent fencing include black or green vinyl-coated chain link, wrought iron, split rail, and 4-inch square welded wire.
 3. The use of solid, opaque fencing shall be limited to the side yards between living areas on adjacent lots. The preference is for a more naturalistic approach to screening in the side yards, with semi-transparent fencing combined with landscaping, or landscaping alone.
- E. Exterior lighting.** Land Use Element hillside development policy 6.2.2.H states that development on hillside parcels shall "*Minimize exterior lighting.*" The following guidelines implement this policy.
1. The number and intensity of exterior lighting fixtures shall be minimized.

2. Each exterior light fixture shall be directed downward, and shall incorporate shielding to prevent light spilling onto adjacent properties, and otherwise prevent any glare visible to neighbors, so that no exterior light interferes with views of the night sky and the hillside.

7.3 - Historic Resource Preservation

The City's requirements for the preservation of historic and cultural resources are administered by the Cultural Heritage Committee (CHC). The guidelines adopted by the CHC and in the San Luis Obispo Municipal Code (Section 2.48) should be reviewed for projects that may be subject to those guidelines and regulations.

7.4 - Public Facilities

- A. **Bus shelters.** Bus shelters and transit turnouts on public and private property should be designed in compliance with the following guidelines.
 1. **When required.** The City's Master Bus Stop Plan designates where bus shelters and related facilities will be required.
 2. **Site planning.** When a project is required to incorporate a bus stop, convenient access to the bus stop for resident pedestrians and bicyclists should be carefully considered in project design.
 3. **Bus shelter design.** A property owner that installs a bus shelter must either:
 - a. Select a *standard* shelter design that has already been approved by the ARC. Design specifications can be obtained from the Public Works Department; or
 - b. Develop a *custom* design that integrates more effectively with the project architecture and landscape design. An owner choosing this option will be responsible for maintaining the structure.

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~~that permanent Open Space is an appropriate classification for areas initially classified as Interim Open Space.~~

6.1.5 Interim Open Space Uses and Parcel Sizes

Uses within Interim Open Space areas should be the same as in Open Space areas (policies 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). Interim Open Space areas should not be further subdivided until a development plan or a specific plan is approved (pursuant to policy 1.12.3), except to separate land to be dedicated in fee to the City, or other responsible public or nonprofit agency, for permanent open space.

6.1.6 Eventual Uses

This element identifies intended uses for each area designated Interim Open Space. Such areas are discussed under Optional Use and Special Design Areas, and Hillside Planning.

~~One area not discussed under those headings is about 11 acres between Los Verdes Park and San Luis Obispo Creek, which may be used for residential development if the flood hazard is mitigated without significant harm to the creek.~~

6.2 Hillside Policies

6.2.1 Introduction

As noted in the open space section of this element and in the Conservation and Open Space Element, San Luis Obispo wants to keep open its steeper, higher, and most visible hillsides. Some of the lower and less steep hillside areas, however, are seen as suitable for development, particularly where development is coupled with permanent open space protection of the more sensitive areas. This section focuses on where and how some hillsides may be developed.

The City establishes comprehensive standards and policies for hillside development for the following reasons:

- A. To protect and preserve scenic hillside areas and natural features such as the volcanic Morros, ridge lines, plant communities, rock outcroppings and steep slope areas that function as landscape backdrops for the community.
- B. To set the limits of commercial and residential development in hillside areas by establishing a permanent open space green belt at the edge of the community.
- C. To protect the health, safety and welfare of community residents by directing development away from areas with hazards such as landslides, wildland fires, flooding and erosion.

6.2.2 Development Limits

Hillsides planning areas should have carefully chosen development limit lines, and special design standards for the areas which can be developed. The location of the development limit and the standards should cause development to avoid encroachment into sensitive habitats or unique resources as defined in the Conservation and Open Space Element, and public health and safety problems related to utility service, access, wildland fire hazard, erosion, flooding, and landslides and other geologic hazards. Also, the development limit line and the standards should help protect the City's scenic setting. (Locations of hillside planning areas are shown in Figure 6. More precise locations of the development limit line and the urban reserve line are shown on large-scale aerial photographs on file at the Community Development Department; these are part of the Land Use Element.)

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to meet minimum parcel-size standards), unless one of the following three exceptions applies:

1. A location outside the urban reserve line or development limit line is necessary to protect public health and safety.
2. New wireless telecommunication facilities may be appropriate on South Street Hills inside the three-acre leasehold already developed with commercial and municipal radio facilities, subject to use permit approval and architectural review and approval. Applicants shall comply with all other provisions of this section, and demonstrate that (a) new facilities will not individually or additively interfere with City radio equipment necessary for emergency response coordination, and (b) will not cause on-site radio frequency radiation levels to exceed exposure standards established for the general public by the American National Standards Institute.
3. Where a legally built dwelling exists on a parcel which is entirely outside the urban reserve line or development limit line, a replacement dwelling may be constructed subject to standards B through H below.
 - B. Keep a low profile and conform to the natural slopes;
 - C. Avoid large, continuous walls or roof surfaces, or prominent foundation walls, poles, or columns;
 - D. Minimize grading of roads;
 - E. Minimize grading on individual lots; generally, locate houses close to the street; minimize the grading of visible driveways;
 - F. Include planting which is compatible with native hillside vegetation and which provides a visual transition from developed to open areas;
 - G. Use materials, colors, and textures which blend with the natural landscape and avoid high contrasts;
 - H. Minimize exterior lighting.

6.2.4 Parcels Crossing the Limit Lines

Before development occurs on any parcel which crosses the urban reserve or development limit lines, the part outside the lines shall be protected as permanent open space.

6.2.5 Development Credit Transfer

Any residential development credit obtained from Open Space designations outside the urban reserve line or development limit line should be transferred to land inside the lines.

6.2.6 Homesites Outside the Limit Lines

Where homesites are to be developed outside the urban reserve or development limit lines, and beyond the City's jurisdiction, they should:

- A. Be on land sloping less than 15 percent;
- B. Have effective emergency-vehicle access from a City street or County road;
- C. Be on a geologically stable site;
- D. Have adequate water supply for domestic service and fire suppression;
- E. Avoid areas with high wildland fire hazard;
- F. Be next to existing development;
- G. Avoid significant visual impacts.



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6.2.7 Hillside Planning Areas

Hillside policies apply to all hills in and around the City. Specific policies to address particular concerns for the areas as shown on Figure 6, listed below. For each of these areas, land above the development limit line should be secured as permanent open space.

- A. **The Cal Poly - Cuesta Park area** includes the hill east of Cal Poly and north of Highway 101 near Cuesta Park. Development should be separated or protected from highway traffic noise and should have adequate fire protection. Architectural review should be required for development of lots fronting Loomis Street.
- B. **The Woodland Drive area** includes vacant land where residential development may occur in the vicinity of the high school and residential or medical-care facilities may occur in the vicinity of the hospital. Before further subdivision or development of any of certain vacant land near Woodland Drive (Figure 7) a specific plan or development plan should be approved. This plan should address the following, in addition to relevant items as noted in policy 2.3.1.
 1. The location and design of new public streets and private drives serving several owners, and any necessary changes to existing streets in the area;
 2. Water and sewer systems, including new storage tanks, pumps, main pipes, and access roads, and changes to existing facilities necessary for adequate service to the area;
 3. New parcels and existing parcels to be changed or combined;
 4. Location of building sites on parcels next to or crossing the urban reserve line;
 5. Areas to be kept open through easements or dedication of fee ownership;
 6. A program for transferring development potential, consistent with these hillside planning policies;
 7. Location of creek easements to provide flood protection and to protect existing creekside vegetation;
 8. Phasing of development and public improvements.
- C. **The Goldtree area** extends up the hill from the Alrita Street neighborhood. This is a minor expansion area which can accommodate single-family houses.
 1. In addition to meeting the usual criteria for approving minor annexations, this area should:
 - i. Provide a gravity-flow water system giving standard levels of service to all developed parts of the expansion area and correcting water-service deficiencies in the Alrita Street neighborhood;
 - ii. Correct downslope drainage problems to which development within the expansion area would contribute.
 - iii. A development plan or specific plan for the whole expansion area should be adopted before any part of it is annexed, subdivided, or developed. (Existing houses inside the urban reserve line need not be annexed along with any new subdivision.)
 - iv. All new houses and major additions to houses should be subject to architectural review.
- D. **The Orcutt area** includes land on the western flanks of the Santa Lucia foothills east of the Southwood Drive neighborhood and Orcutt Road. Before further subdivision or development of land between the 320-foot and 460-foot elevations, land above the 460-foot elevation should be secured as permanent open space. All building sites should be below the 460-foot elevation.

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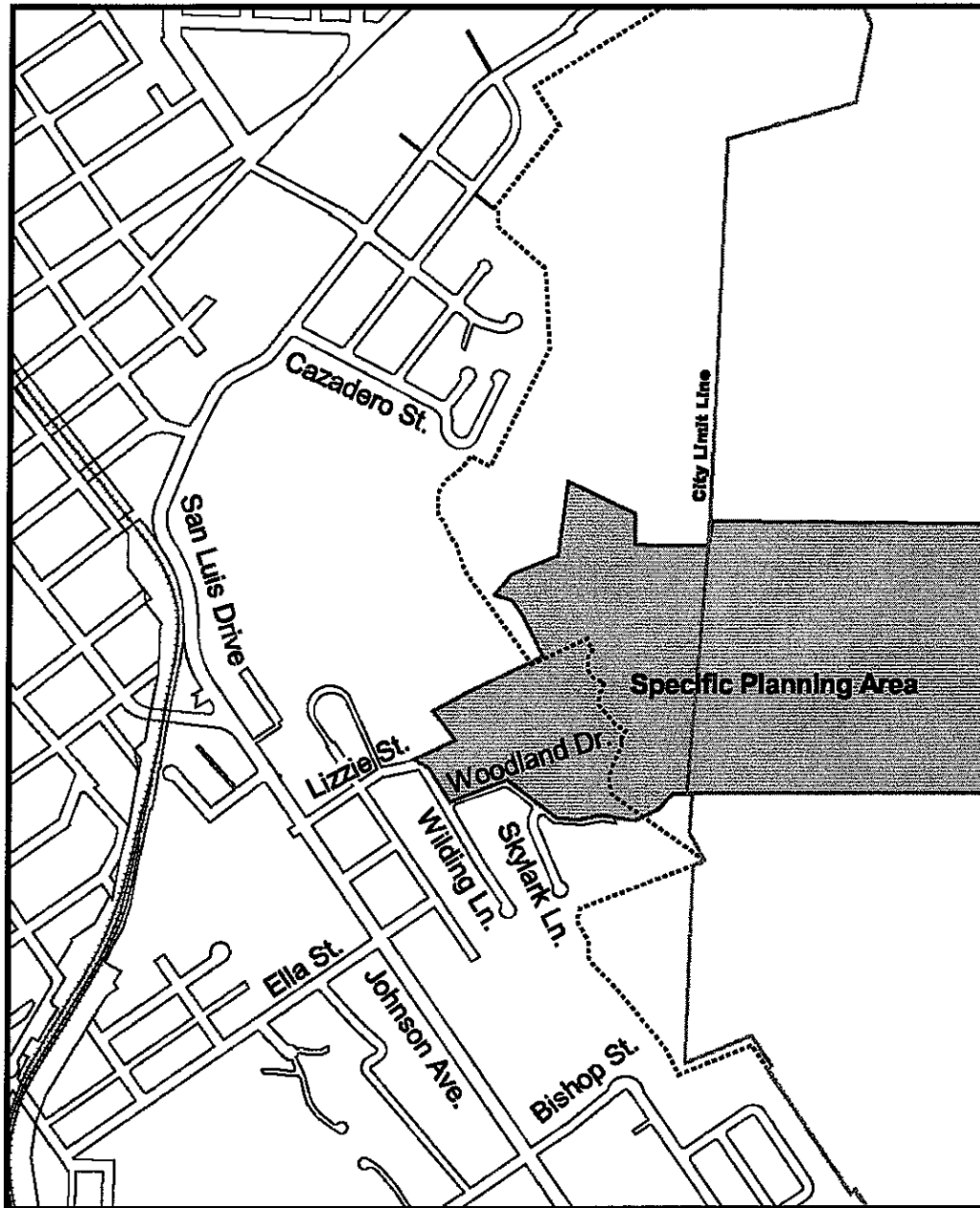


Figure 7: Woodland Drive Specific Planning Area



Figure 7: Woodland Drive Specific Planning Area



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- E. **The Margarita area** includes the southern slopes of the South Street Hills. No building sites should be located above the development limit line.
- F. **The Stoneridge area** includes land on the northern slopes of South Street Hills. Development west of the end of Lawrence Drive should be subject to architectural review and to measures assuring that building sites will be stable.
- G. **The Calle Joaquin area** should allow the continuation of a commercial use for the existing building on the hill, but no further development.
- H. **The Irish Hills area** should secure permanent open space with no building sites above the 150-foot elevation, in conjunction with any subdivision or development of the lower areas. (See also Optional Use and Special Design Areas.)
- I. **The Billygoat acres area** extends into the Irish Hills above Prefumo Creek. No further development should occur beyond the urban reserve line.
- J. **The Prefumo Creek area** extends into the Irish Hills west of Prefumo Canyon Road. Development should be limited to areas within the urban reserve line with permanent protection of the creeks and upper hillsides.
- K. **The Madonna area** includes land west of Highway 101 on the lower slopes of San Luis Mountain and the northeast slopes of the foothill bordering Laguna Lake Park.
 - 1. A specific plan or development plan for the whole area should be adopted before any part of it is annexed, subdivided, or further developed. (See also Optional Use and Special Design Areas, policy 8.9.)
 - 2. Upon amendment to an urban designation, the area designated Interim Open Space, may accommodate a generously landscaped, low-intensity extension of the existing tourist facilities. Development locations and building forms should respect the area's extraordinary visual quality and natural slopes, and should maintain views of the mountain from the highway and nearby neighborhoods.
 - 3. The area immediately west of Highway 101 should be retained as an open space buffer.
 - 4. Any plan for further development in this area must address reconfiguration of the Marsh Street interchange.
- L. **The Luneta Drive area** includes parcels which may be used for houses, so long as new construction and major additions to the houses are approved by the Architectural Review Commission.

6.3 Hillside Programs

(See also Section 10 Implementation)

6.3.1 Designating Sensitive Sites

Subdivision approval in hillside planning areas will include designation of "sensitive sites," which are subject to architectural review.

6.3.2 Transfer of Development Credits

The City will add a "development transfer" section in its Zoning Regulations, to encourage the transfer of residential development allowed on land outside the urban reserve line to suitable land within the line, regardless of land ownership.



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6.3.3 Architectural Guidelines

Through architectural review guidelines, the City will establish the presumption that all hillside development occurs on sensitive sites, where architectural review is required. The Community Development Director will screen all proposals to identify any which do not need architectural review.

6.3.4 Maximum Building Height

The City will consider means to mitigate the visual impacts of hillside houses, including revising the way maximum building height is determined.

~~6.4 Creeks, Wetlands, and Flooding Policies~~

Introduction

San Luis Obispo's aquatic ecosystems consist of creeks, Laguna Lake, floodplains, marshes, wetlands, serpentine seeps, and springs. These aquatic ecosystems provide habitat, recreation, water purification, groundwater recharge, and soil production as well as natural flood protection by reducing the force of floodwaters as they spread and decelerate over floodplains. Creeks, which are the most obvious of these systems because they flow through the City, provide wildlife habitat, backyard retreats, and viewing and hiking pleasures, in addition to carrying storm water runoff. When some creeks overflow during major storms, they flood wide areas beyond their channels (Figure 8). San Luis Obispo wants to avoid injury or substantial property losses from flooding, while keeping or improving the creeks' natural character, scenic appearance, recreational value, and fish and wildlife habitat.

6.4.1 Creek and Wetlands Management Objectives

The City should manage its lake, creeks, wetlands, floodplains, and associated wetlands to achieve the multiple objectives of:

- A. Maintaining and restoring natural conditions and fish and wildlife habitat;
- B. Preventing loss of life and minimizing property damage from flooding;
- C. Providing recreational opportunities which are compatible with fish and wildlife habitat, flood protection, and use of adjacent private properties.
- D. Recognizing and distinguishing between those sections of creeks and Laguna Lake which are in previously urbanized areas, such as the downtown core, and sections which are in largely natural areas. Those sections already heavily impacted by urban development and activity may be appropriate for multiple use whereas creeks and lakeshore in a more natural state shall be managed for maximized ecological value.

6.4.2 Citywide Network

The lake, creeks, and wetlands should be part of a citywide and regional network of open space, parks, and -- where appropriate -- trails, all fostering understanding, enjoyment, and protection of the natural landscape and wildlife.

6.4.3 Amenities and Access

New public or private developments adjacent to the lake, creeks, and wetlands must respect the natural environment and incorporate the natural features as project amenities, provided doing so does not diminish natural values. ~~Developments along creeks should include public access across the development site to the creek and along the creek, provided that wildlife habitat, public safety,~~