

TO: JAMES L. APP, CITY MANAGER

FROM: RON WHISENAND, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: OLSEN RANCH BEECHWOOD SPECIFIC PLAN (OBSP) PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS – INFORMATION ITEM

DATE: JUNE 5, 2007

Needs: For the City Council to receive information on the scope and status of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the OBSP.

Facts:

1. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an EIR is required to evaluate and mitigate potential environmental impacts that may result from the development of a Specific Plan.
2. The EIR for the Olsen Ranch Beechwood Specific Plan is being prepared by the consulting firm of Crawford Multari & Clark Associates.
3. City Council and the property owners have provided direction on the project alternative to evaluate in the EIR. This alternative which is based on the attached project description will include the density permitted in the General Plan plus potential impacts that may result from an additional density of up to 30 percent (“Density + +” scenario). Other project alternatives will also be included in the EIR.
4. Staff and the consultants conducted an EIR “scoping meeting” on May 22, 2007. While not required per CEQA, this meeting was held as an additional outreach effort to obtain broader input on what the community, property owners and affected public agencies think should be analyzed in the EIR, and to also answer general EIR questions.
5. The EIR scoping meeting was well attended, and constructive input was provided. Details of the suggestions offered are noted below.

Analysis  
and

Conclusion:

The intent of this report is to apprise the Council of: 1) the status of the environmental review process; 2) input received at the EIR scoping meeting; and 3) information regarding the proposed density in the Plan.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the EIR and Initial Study was circulated on May 4, 2007. The Initial Study is based on the formal project description in Attachment 1.

The NOP review period, which is the time in which comments may be received on what should be included in the EIR, extends through June 5, 2007. Once the scope of the EIR is solidified the consultants will formally begin preparation of the EIR. The anticipated date of completion for the Draft EIR (DEIR) is September 2007. Once the DEIR is complete, it will be circulated for public review for 45 days. Responses to comments received during the review period will be included in the Final EIR (FEIR). The FEIR and Draft Specific Plan will then be the subject of public hearings. It is intended for public hearings on this project to occur in early Winter 2008.

Several key environmental topics surfaced through preparation of the Initial Study (which is available in the Community Development Department) and from input received from the scoping meeting. While all environmental topics will be evaluated, the central topics for expanded analyses include:

- Traffic circulation - both internal to the project and impacts on surrounding local streets and the highways, in addition to long-term, cumulative traffic impacts this project might have in conjunction with all other reasonably foreseeable projects in the City.
- Water resources and infrastructure – reliable water availability and delivery as well as impacts to the supply of water resources. This issue also includes looking at improvements for water infrastructure.
- Waste water and infrastructure - capacity to process waste water at the treatment plant and infrastructure required to serve the project.
- Biological resources – protection of existing flora and fauna and their habitats, and mitigation measures. Specific species and habitats to address include oak trees, San Joaquin Kit Fox, creeks/riparian areas, and wetlands/vernal pools.

- Aesthetics and grading – form and character of the proposed development on the landscape, and grading needed for the development.
- Public services – coordination with the Paso Robles School District regarding facilities and services needed, and facilities to be provided with this project.
- Project density - varying densities may result in different environmental impacts, which may affect the topics listed above. The environmental analysis will also evaluate a higher density development scenario.

The EIR will likely include three to four alternatives. However the alternative contained in the project description will be the alternative that will be the most thoroughly evaluated. The project description includes a range of potential development which includes the density applied in the General Plan for the two planning areas (1,347 dwelling units plus 53,000 s.f. of non-residential development) up to an increased density of 30 percent above that amount (1,751 dwelling units plus 69,000 s.f. of non-residential development). Any increase above the General Plan density allocation would require a General Plan Amendment, which will also be evaluated in the EIR.

In regard to evaluating density, the plan was designed so that it will fit within the context of the surrounding landscape, including respecting the topography and oak trees. Further intensification of this project might result in unintended and/or undesirable impacts, if not negatively impact how the neighborhood functions. For instance, the street layout and circulation plan was designed with the density provided in the General Plan. The circulation plan would need to be carefully evaluated to ensure that the design of this system does not fail with intensified densities. Furthermore, with greater density will be the need to increase grading and potential oak tree impacts. And lastly, this project was intentionally designed to respond to the rural surroundings at the edge of town where areas of density within the plan can be accommodated by preserving natural landforms, and transitioning to the more rural surroundings. This project is not intended to accommodate an urban core, competing with the downtown or other centralized shopping areas. The consultants provided examples of successful traditional neighborhoods with commensurate the density proposed for this project.

Policy  
Reference: General Plan and Economic Strategy

Fiscal  
Impact: None.

After considering the information received, the City Council may provide additional input into the content of the scope of the EIR and the project alternatives.

Staff Report prepared by: Susan DeCarli, AICP, City Planner, Project Manager

Attachments:

1. Project Description

CITY OF PASO ROBLES – PLANNING DIVISION  
INITIAL STUDY FOR SPECIFIC PLAN PROJECT

**1. GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION**

**PROJECT TITLE:** Olsen Ranch/Beechwood Specific Plan

**LEAD AGENCY:** City of el Paso de Robles - 1000 Spring Street, Paso Robles, CA  
93446

**Contact:** Susan DeCarli, City Planner  
**Telephone:** (805) 237-3970

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Olsen Ranch and Beechwood Expansion Areas, within southeastern corner of city limits, north of Creston Road and south of Linne and Meadowlark Road.

**PROJECT PROPONENT:** City of Paso Robles Community Development Department

**LEAD AGENCY CONTACT/  
INITIAL STUDY PREPARED BY:** Susan DeCarli, City Planner  
Nicole Carter, Senior Environmental Specialist  
Crawford Multari & Clark Associates

**Telephone:** (805) 237-3970  
**Facsimile:** (805) 237-3904  
**E-Mail:** SDeCarli@prcity.com

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION:** RSF-3, RSF-4, NC

**ZONING:** Prezoned residential (various densities), neighborhood commercial

**2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Olsen Ranch/Beechwood Specific Plan will set forth a comprehensive program for development of the Olsen Ranch and Beechwood areas, as defined in the City's General Plan (shown in Figures 1 and 2). The Specific Plan includes street and infrastructure improvements, architectural design guidelines, pedestrian components, residential development, retail development, and recreation and open space. The following sections outline the proposals of the Specific Plan.

**Principles and Strategies.** The Specific Plan is based on several strategies, which stem from the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design. The specific strategies employed in the Plan include:

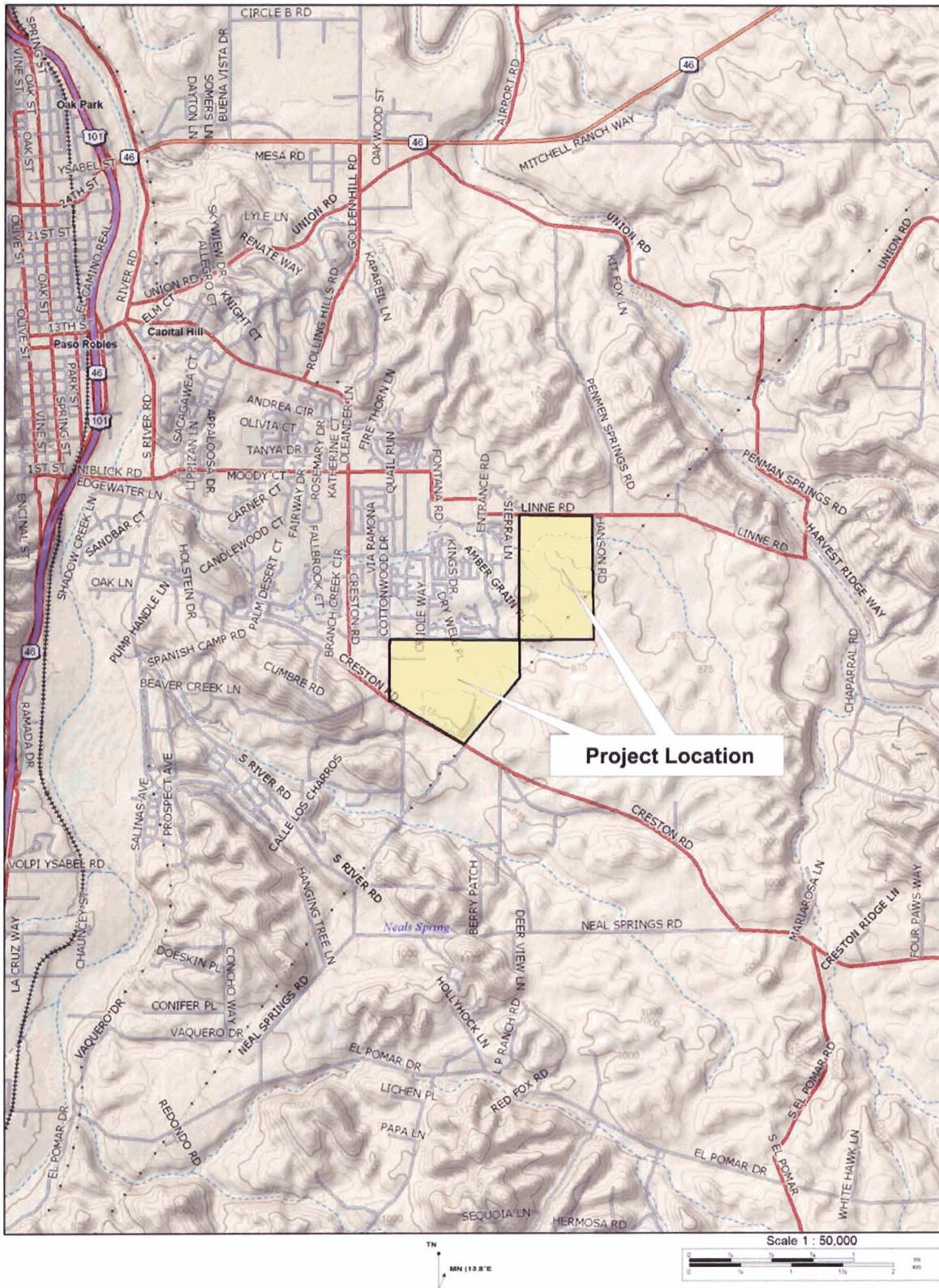
- *An interconnected network of multi-modal thoroughfares is provided.* A connected network disperses traffic and addresses circulation of cars, bicycles, transit and pedestrians throughout the area.

**Figure 1. Regional Location**





**Figure 2. Project Vicinity**



- *Parking is at the rear of buildings.* Parking is provided at the rear of lots, and is accessed by alleys, eliminating the garage or parking lot as the dominant feature of the main streetscape.
- *Five-minute walk from center to edge.* Residential areas should be within a five-minute walk of the center, to promote pedestrian access. Smaller block sizes (compared to conventional subdivisions) are included to encourage pedestrian activity.
- *Neighborhoods with a clear center.* Neighborhoods have a distinctive green, plaza, or other feature which identifies a center. Transit service is often provided at the center.
- *Housing types for a variety of incomes and ages.* Types range from apartments and townhouses to detached single family homes, encouraging a mix of incomes and ages in the neighborhood.
- *Neighborhood centers catering to a mix of residential, retail and office uses.* A sufficiently varied mix of uses is provided in the center to serve the weekly needs of residents, and to provide some nearby employment opportunities.
- *Carriage houses are encouraged.* Carriage houses are small units located in rear of single family houses. These units can be used for rental income, bonus or guest quarters, or spaces in which to work.
- *Schools are located within walking distance.* Providing schools within walking distance further promotes pedestrian activity in the area.
- *A variety of open spaces are provided.* A range of open spaces, from parks, attractive streets and sidewalks, and green belts are included in the design to provide recreational opportunities. Parks are within walking distance of residences.
- *Streets are suitable for pedestrians.* The streetscape is pleasant for pedestrians, offering ample walking space, shade, narrow widths and safe crossings.
- *Landscape is suitable for the setting and climate.* Providing a landscape suitable for the climate reduces the need for water, maintenance, and in keeping with the natural setting.
- *Civic buildings are located in prominent sites.* Civic buildings are located where they are visible from the community, such as at the termination of streets. Civic buildings provide opportunities for gathering, community building, and events.

As outlined above, the use of these principles in the design of the Specific Plan has a number of ancillary benefits, chief of which are improved pedestrian appeal, increased pedestrian safety, increased opportunities for exercise and recreation, slower moving vehicular traffic, and reduced dependence on longer vehicle trips to access daily needs.

**Project Proposals.** The Specific Plan divides the area into two distinct but connected neighborhoods, the Olsen Ranch Neighborhood and the Beechwood Neighborhood. Much of the project's proposals for the neighborhoods are similar; therefore, the following description addresses the consistent features of the two neighborhoods and then discusses particulars which are unique to each.

**Zoning.** The plan proposes to change the zoning in the planning area from the current categories, listed above, to Open Space (OS), Neighborhood Center (NC), Neighborhood General (NG), Neighborhood Edge 2 (NE-2), Neighborhood Edge 1 (NE-1) (see also Figures 3 and 4). This change represents a departure from the traditional zoning that rigorously separates uses into distinct zones (commercial, industrial, etc.), intended to be divided spatially, to a form-based type of zoning. Form-based zoning attempts to integrate uses through design and



Figure 3. Regulating Plan - Olsen Ranch

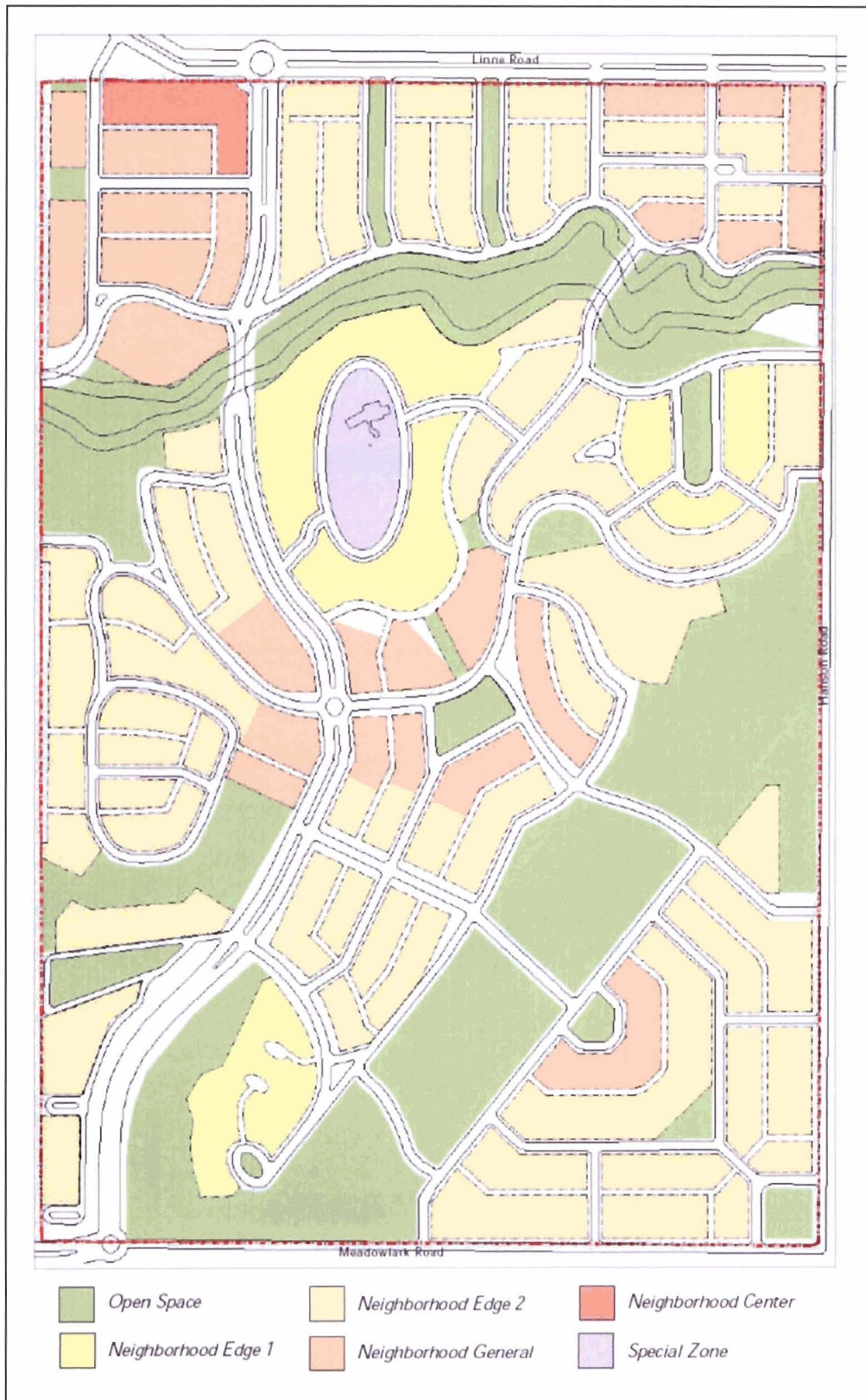
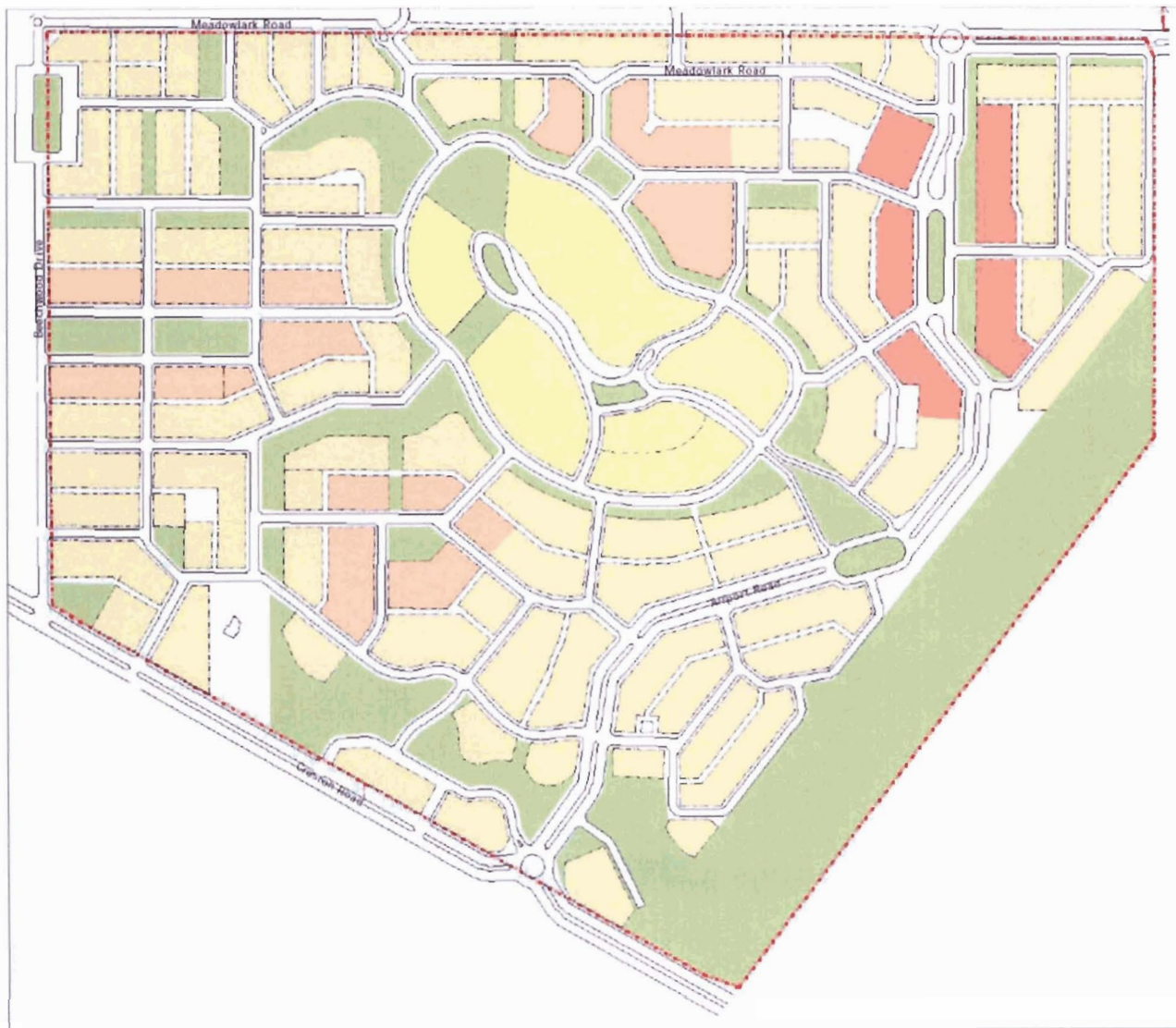








Figure 4. Regulating Plan – Beechwood



- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|  Open Space          |  Neighborhood Edge 2  |  Neighborhood Center |
|  Neighborhood Edge 1 |  Neighborhood General |  Special Zone        |

application of standards that are based on physically derived relationships of buildings, streets, and open spaces. Form-based zoning promotes mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly areas, providing, in this case, a diversity of housing types interspersed with appropriate commercial uses in addition to the regulated issues of use, building height, etcetera. Amendments to the City's Zoning Regulations will be necessary in order to implement these new zoning districts and form-based standards.

*Streets and Blocks.* The plan proposes an interconnected network of streets with blocks no longer than 400' in length. Streets are designed to meander in relationship to the natural topography, but to provide an organized system of blocks and neighborhoods. Street trees are proposed throughout the development. The conceptual street network proposed is shown in Figures 3 and 4. The major new circulation feature is a new boulevard proposed from Linne Road to the north, intersecting Airport Road, and continuing to Creston Road to the south.

*Open Space.* The Open Space plan for the project identifies a number of potential locations for open space features, including plazas, neighborhood parks, and passive open space. The development code contained in the Specific Plan outlines open space requirements. The major open space feature in the Olsen Neighborhood is a natural area located along the creek to the north. The Beechwood Plan includes two larger parks with at least three smaller parks or plazas. The PG&E ownership is retained for open space/agriculture through both the Olsen and Beechwood properties.

*Infrastructure.* The project will involve the extension of new water service, sewage collection infrastructure, and utilities. The project will include the extension of new water supply lines along major roadways in the planning area with lateral connections to individual blocks and lots. The project will include the extension of sewage collection lines with laterals to individual blocks and lots and at least one sewer lift station at the southwestern-most corner of the Beechwood project site. The project is designed to handle storm water on site, to the extent feasible, through landscaped swales, detention basins, natural features, and permeable paving or other permeable surfacing. This more dispersed system of storm water control and conveyance is designed to reduce the need for off site controls and to reduce off site impacts.

*Landscape.* The Specific Plan includes planting strategies for proposed walkways, trails, and other areas intended to improve the pedestrian environment. The planting plan emphasizes the use of native and/or climate-appropriate species, and includes measures to promote erosion control. Particular policies of the landscape portion of the development code include:

- The landscape shall define, unify and enhance the public realm.
- The landscape shall provide cultural and environmental benefits.
- The landscape shall mitigate environmental degradation resulting from stormwater runoff.
- The landscape shall consist of elements that are consistent with the character, climate and soils of Paso Robles. Whenever possible, plant materials will be indigenous to the region, or similar in character and habitat to indigenous materials.

To attain these goals, the following are provided in the Specific Plan:

- A street tree program for all thoroughfares.
- General landscape standards that set minimum planting requirements.
- Sustainable landscape practices, including indigenous trees tolerant of stress created during periods of drought, and receptive to the use of ecofriendly integrated pest management and indigenous plants or drought-tolerant species from Mediterranean and other arid regions.
- Sustainable stormwater management practices, including methods that reduce runoff and improve water quality.
- A wetland area at the low elevation of the Olsen Ranch property (Turtle Creek), including education signage.
- A program for the eradication of escaped exotic species within Turtle Creek.
- A viable recreational trail system for walking, jogging and bicycling that connects to the existing trail system.



- Preserve existing oak trees and oak woodlands and promote the planting of new oak trees in accordance with Goal C-3 of the Paso Robles General Plan and the Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance.

*Design.* The Specific Plan regulates design through the form-based development code contained therein. Intent, placement, parking, profile and type are all regulated, in addition to architectural style. Three different architectural styles specified for the Olsen Ranch area are Mediterranean, Western/Victorian, and Craftsman. Buildings are largely one to two stories in height. More detail regarding design can be found in the Specific Plan document.

*Olsen Ranch Neighborhoods.* The main Olsen Neighborhood lies northwest of the PG&E easement. A second neighborhood is proposed southeast of the easement. The main neighborhood is oriented on a large central area with the original ranch structures. Parklands encompass the creek and oak woodlands onsite, as well as the PG&E easement. The main neighborhood can be further subdivided as follows:

*Neighborhood Center.* Along Linne Road at the northwestern corner of the property is an area zoned for mixed-use and pedestrian-orientation. This area is envisioned with live-work and mixed use buildings, surrounded by a mix of detached and attached home products. This area is bordered by the existing senior development to the west, and a new boulevard to the east.

*North Eastern Neighborhood.* North of the creek and east of the northern park is an area of primarily detached single-family houses, with a small area of attached homes. This area also includes a potential school site.

*Central Neighborhood.* South of the creek is the central neighborhood, bisected by a boulevard which connects to Linne Road, and offering a variety of housing types and lot sizes. The central neighborhood includes Neighborhood Edge 1 zoning, with detached single-family dwelling on larger lots. These areas are zoned in this way to preserve existing oak trees and provide transition between rural and more urban portions of the site.

*South East Neighborhood.* The South East Corner neighborhood is centered on a neighborhood park surrounded by rowhouses or live-work units. The remainder of the neighborhood is comprised of single-family housing. The neighborhood includes at least two additional pocket parks to serve the population, and two roads through the PG&E easement provide connection to the main neighborhood. The PG&E easement is reserved for agricultural uses.

*Beechwood Neighborhoods.* The Beechwood Neighborhood as a whole provides a variety of housing types and lot sizes, from lower-density detached housing at the center, to higher-density attached homes. The Beechwood area does include a Town Center on Airport Road just south of Meadowlark Road. The Town Center is envisioned as a higher density mixed use area organized around a central plaza. Buildings are envisioned as two to three stories, in a variety of styles, with retail on the ground floor and residences above. Around the periphery of the Town Center, within walking distance, are residential neighborhoods of various types. The center of the property is developed as a predominantly single-family neighborhood on larger lots. Attached products are provided in three groupings north, east and south of the central neighborhood, and are surrounded by single family products on smaller lots.

**Buildout Scenario.** “Buildout” is most simply described as the total anticipated amount of development possible in a particular area. Buildout for the purposes of this project consists of two scenarios, (1) the development limits set by the City of Paso Robles General Plan, as follows:

**Table 1. Specific Plan Buildout (2025)**

	<b>Total (Buildout)</b>	<b>Buildout Population</b>
Olsen Ranch Residential	673	1,817
Beechwood Area Residential	674	1,820
<b>Total Residential</b>	<b>1,347</b>	<b>3,637</b>
Non-residential (square feet)	53,000	

*Initial Study-Page 8*