

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: ED GALLAGHER, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: BEECHWOOD AREA SPECIFIC PLAN: ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

DATE: OCTOBER 8, 2013

Needs: For the Planning Commission to conduct a public workshop and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding design principles to be incorporated into the overall site design for the Beechwood Area.

Facts:

1. On August 15, 2013, the owners of property in the Beechwood Area submitted a conceptual site plan for development of this 238 acre area. This plan proposes 1,011 residential units, mixed-use areas along Creston Road, and a variety of parks/open space areas. A reduced copy of the conceptual plan and the accompanying transmittal letter is attached (Attachment 1).
2. In November 2012, the property owners filed an application to amend the General Plan to increase the density from 674 units to 1,011 units, a 50% increase.
3. On April 16, 2013, the City Council adopted Resolution 13-057 (Attachment 2), which encouraged property owners to submit specific plans or specific plan amendments and to prepare accompanying general plan amendments and environmental assessments.
4. The owners are seeking confirmation from the Planning Commission and City Council that their conceptual design is acceptable prior to incurring additional expense to prepare a more-detailed specific plan.
5. Attachment 3 is a list of design principles based on policies and actions contained in the General Plan, Economic Strategy, and Gateway Plan.

Analysis &  
Conclusion:

The issue to be addressed in the public workshops is the degree to which the specific plan is consistent with City policies and whether the plan is acceptable as designed or whether it should be modified before proceeding to prepare a more-detailed specific plan.

In December 2011, City staff met with the property owners and suggested a set of design parameters that focused on the following principles:

- Providing interconnected streets instead of cul-de-sacs.
- Orienting those homes situated along major exterior streets (e.g. Meadowlark Road and Beechwood Drive) to front those streets, rather than turning their backs on them. The purposes for this principle include increasing neighborhood safety by "putting eyes (of residents) on the street" and avoiding the creation of an aesthetically-inferior "canyon effect" with streets walled off on both sides (particularly one that would be ¾ mile long in the case of Meadowlark Road). Additionally, units that face a street attract on-street parking for guests and residents, which is effective in slowing traffic.

- Placing garages behind the front of homes, which could be accessed either via driveways to the street or via alleys. The purpose for this principle is to improve the streetscape by allowing it to be dominated by yards rather than by garages and parked vehicles. This, in turn, makes the street a better environment for walking and observing (“eyes on”) the street and makes the neighborhood safer.
- Providing narrower streets (than elsewhere in the City) to reduce paving and traffic speeds. (Note: The City recently adopted reduced width street standards.)
- Providing shorter blocks, and/or mid-block pedestrian/bicycle paths in areas with large lots and blocks.
- Providing a mix of housing types and densities.
- Providing bicycle and pedestrian paths.
- Providing neighborhood centers (which could be parks) that are designed to encourage pedestrians and bicycles and provide for neighborhood gathering places.

The conceptual site plan submitted on August 15 accomplishes the following of these principles:

- Streets are laid out in a grid/looped pattern; there is only one cul-de-sac, which extends onto a knoll.
- A variety of housing types and densities are provided.
- A variety of parks/open space areas are provided, which could be the venue for neighborhood centers.
- Pedestrian and bike paths are provided.

However, the conceptual site plan includes the following features that conflict with some of the above principles, making the neighborhood less walkable and safe, and would contribute to more traffic congestion:

- Several blocks are considerably longer than 600 feet. This conflicts with Circulation Element Policy. It offers fewer options to motorists, funneling traffic into a limited number of intersections, which become “choke points” where congestion could occur. It also tends to discourage walking as an alternative mode of transportation (as opposed to recreational walking) as the paths between destinations are longer.
- Lots along Meadowlark Road, Beechwood Drive, Airport Road, and the East-West Central Drive back up to these streets; walls and/or fences would line those streets. This would leave those streetscapes “unsupervised”, less safe and less-inviting to pedestrians, particularly school children walking to Peterson School. It would also contribute to higher vehicular speeds along those streets, as there would be no on-street parking to help calm the traffic. Additionally, these streets would not be as attractive or inviting as would a neighborhood with homes facing the street.
- The conceptual site plan is insufficiently-detailed to determine if garages would be placed in rear yards or behind the front of the homes. A large-scale site plan (such as that provided) alone is insufficient. Typical lot plot plans are an important supplemental detail to demonstrate how lots can be developed to achieve this.

### Multi-Family Densities and Site Areas

The Housing and Land Use Elements presently designate 10 acres of land in the Beechwood Area for multi-family housing at 20 units per acre (RMF-20). This designation was assigned in the 2003 General Plan as part of the City's requirement under the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Plan to provide sufficient sites for low and very low income households. The RHNA for the upcoming 2014 Housing Element has a substantially-reduced allocation for low and very low income households, and the City could consider reducing the acreage to be designated RMF-20.

The conceptual site plan shows two sites as being designated RMF-20 that appear to be about a half-acre in area. Both sites are surrounded by single family residential areas. This does not appear to make for a good neighborhood mix. It is suggested that these half-acre areas could be used for lower density multi-family such as 8 units per acre.

### Overall Density

The City has long had a policy of demanding measurable public benefit in return for an increase in density. This was the basis for Planned Development Overlay Zoning. While the conceptual plan does minimize use of cul-de-sacs and proposes open space, it is primarily a conventional subdivision design that proposes walled streets that, despite landscaped parkways, will not create safe, supervised walkways for pedestrians or calm traffic.

Assuming that the City wishes to create safer, more-walkable neighborhoods, it would follow that certain design principles should be implemented. Density would then be awarded upon demonstration, via sufficiently-detailed plans, of conformance with such principles and on environmental analysis that concludes that any potentially significant impacts can be mitigated.

The conceptual plan shows "mixed use" areas along Creston Road. The owners' letter indicates that the intent is to allow these areas to develop, in whole or in part, either as commercial or as residential based on future demand. If the overall request is for 1,011 dwelling units, then it would be appropriate for the City to specify that the 1,011 units include any development in the "mixed use" area.

### Parks and Open Space Areas

The conceptual site plan shows several small parks and open space areas distributed throughout the planning area. However, the conceptual plan contains no details about the proposed development of these areas. Will they serve primarily as drainage detention and/or Low Impact Development areas? Will there be any playgrounds or informal play areas (e.g., for pick-up football or soccer games)? Will there be any central gathering facility (e.g., pavilion or gazebo)?

The City's ability to maintain parks and open space is limited by budgetary constraints. These areas should be owned and maintained by a homeowners association.

Reference: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Housing Element, Economic Strategy, Gateway Plan

Fiscal

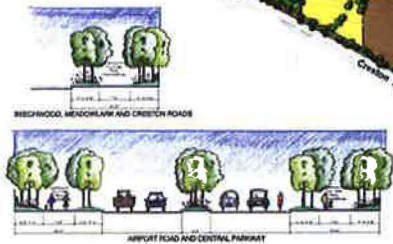
Impacts: None yet. A fiscal impact analysis will need to be prepared for the Draft Specific Plan.

Options: a. Consider the issues raised in this report and make a recommendation to the City Council for those design principles to be incorporated into the Beechwood Area Specific Plan.

b. Amend, modify, or reject the above option.

Attachments:

1. Conceptual Plan and Transmittal Letter
2. Resolution 13-057
3. Design Principles



Erkline Group + Harrod Builders + Huebner Enterprises, Inc.

Beechwood Ownership Group

Beechwood Illustrative Site Plan

studio 01  
INTERNATIONAL  
August 12, 2013

August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Ed Gallagher**

Community Development Director  
City of Paso Robles  
1000 Spring Street  
Paso Robles, CA 93446

**Paso Robles**

AUG 15 2013

**Planning Division**

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your response to the updated Beechwood Plan we submitted to you on July 3, 2013. Attached please find a revised plan that addresses most of your concerns and incorporates some of your requests and suggestions.

Please understand that this illustrative plan is just that, a preliminary plan with lots and roads laid out on the property to establish land uses and density distribution for the Specific Plan and subsequent start of the EIR.

We anticipate changes will occur as we go through the Specific Plan process. However, final lot sizes and interior road placements will not be determined until after the EIR & Specific Plan are approved and Tentative maps are submitted to the City. This illustrative plan is being prepared for presentations to both the Planning Commission and City Council for their acceptance before any additional time, effort or money is spent on the Specific Plan process and EIR.

Changes in our revised plan include:

- 1) Two roundabouts to calm traffic along Central Parkway. Central Parkway is the two lane E/W connector road Staff asked us to insert into the plan.
- 2) Completed trail system within the Central Park. This will allow additional pedestrian access points to the trail without adding a "ring" type road placed in tough topography that would likely require large retaining walls and the destruction of mature oak trees. The ring road would also encourage unnecessary vehicle traffic into a primary pedestrian trail system where walking / jogging and bike riding is preferred.
- 3) Elimination of long cul-de-sacs with additional street connections. The one remaining cul-de-sac is very short. Most streets, if not all streets, are now open ended to allow and encourage pedestrian and bike traffic.
- 4) Expanded all 40 ft wide lots to a minimum of 50 ft. This will allow garages to be recessed behind the front façade of the home elevations and eliminate garages as the dominant feature. Actual / final lot widths will be determined at the Tentative Map stage.
- 5) Added cross sections to illustrate a Charolais Road type recreational trail system on the major roads to promote walkability. Even though Charolais Road allows higher traffic speeds, the trail system is still extremely popular because of its design and mere existence. We feel our trail system will quickly become the favorite feature within the development and will be used by everyone living on the south east side of Paso Robles.
- 6) Commercial areas are designated as Mixed Use and will allow either / or commercial / residential usage, based on future demand.

**Circulation:**

This plan has ten connection points to the existing neighborhoods. The sub neighborhoods within the planning area have two to four connections to their neighboring areas. Along with our comprehensive recreational trail system, this plan offers a very walk able design, respects separate property ownership and allows a variety of properties to proceed to development in different areas, all at the same time, as the market demands.

Meadowlark Road and Beechwood Road are established / existing City streets with sound walls, landscaping, curb /gutter / sidewalk & utilities already in place. The Studio 81 design team believes that a plan with homes facing these streets would only serve to isolate these new homeowners from the rest of their neighbors and neighborhoods.

Studio 81 believes closing Meadowlark Road only creates new problems. Diverting traffic onto a parallel road in the new subdivision or the existing subdivision to the north was considered by all, heavily discussed, determined to be undesirable and rejected. Our enhanced recreational trail along Meadowlark Road will improve the visual character and allow this road to be used as designed. Our design team feels four way stops at Airport and Oriole will keep traffic speeds to a minimum.

Beechwood Drive is also an existing street with the same existing issues and we propose the same solutions as with Meadowlark, including adding a four way stop in the middle at the intersection of Central Parkway and Beechwood to calm traffic. Again, the recreational trail system with its wide setbacks and landscaping will provide much needed visual enhancements to Beechwood Drive.

The small parks are placed to acknowledge the need for neighborhood parks, but actual placement will be set towards final design once grading, hydrology, etc. are studied through the Specific Plan process. As noted above, the commercial areas are designated "mixed use". To project possible usage at this time is premature, if not impossible. Future development on the sites will still require City approval. Site plans, architecture, access, etc. would be discussed & agreed upon at that time.

As noted earlier, our intention was to provide usage, density and a tentative road network that would receive the blessing of the City's decision makers and provide a framework for the Specific Plan & EIR. The plan can be modified as necessary.

We thank you for your comments and hope to set a date for a review of the plan by the City Planning Commission and / or City Council.

Sincerely,

Tom Erskine  
Ray Harrod  
Mike Harrod  
Jay Huebner

Cc: Jim App / John Falkenstein / Susan DeCarli / PC Members / CC Members

## RESOLUTION NO. 13-057

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO DE ROBLES  
UPDATING AND SUPERSEDING RESOLUTION 09-055 REGARDING PROVIDING DIRECTION AND  
PROCESSING PRIORITIES FOR VARIOUS SPECIFIC PLANNING EFFORTS

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WHEREAS, at its meeting of May 5, 2009, the City Council adopted Resolution 09-055 to set priorities for allocation of staff time to process development and amendment of specific plans; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 09-055 provided that, henceforth, property owners were to be responsible for all costs related to the processing of specific plans; and

WHEREAS, the City's General Plan has established population planning threshold of 44,000 persons, based on the available capacities of the water system, wastewater treatment system, transportation systems, and environmental resources; and

WHEREAS, the City's General Plan calls for establishing Specific Plans on the Chandler Ranch, Olsen Ranch, and Beechwood Area and provides density targets that are within the City's buildout population planning threshold of 44,000 residents; and

WHEREAS, the City is processing or has received applications for the following specific plans: Chandler Ranch, Olsen Ranch, Beechwood Area, and an amendment of the Borkey Area specific Plan to accommodate an expansion of the River Oaks development; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the inventory of vacant land for residential development that is ready for subdivision and development is substantially limited to the referenced specific plan areas; and

WHEREAS, via General Plan Amendment 2012-02, the Land Use Element adopted a 5.0% vacancy rate and an updated average population per household ratio (2.66) that collectively raised the number of dwelling units that could be built within the 44,000 population planning threshold by 594 units over the 16,818 units shown in Table LU-3 of the Land Use Element to 17,412 units, as amended by General Plan Amendment 2012-02; and

WHEREAS, the additional 594 units have not been assigned, via the Land Use Map, to any properties; and

WHEREAS, property owners within each of the above-referenced specific plan areas have submitted written requests for assignment of a portion of the additional 594 dwelling units in a manner that the collective requests exceed 594 dwelling units; and

WHEREAS, the City's Economic Strategy, adopted in 2006, calls for the following measures for development of residential neighborhoods:

- Encourage community development in live/work, mixed use, and compact, pedestrian oriented forms to accommodate all income levels and lifestyles;
- Increase labor force residents in the City;
- Create streetscapes, pathways, and public spaces of beauty, interest, and functional benefit to pedestrians;
- Preserve energy and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, at its meeting of November 16, 2004, the City Council directed that the Olsen Ranch and Beechwood Area Specific Plans be combined into a single specific plan; at that time, the City had been advancing public funds to prepare specific plans; and

WHEREAS, with the adoption of Resolution 09-055, the requirement to prepare a single specific plan for the Olsen Ranch and Beechwood Area has proven to be a hindrance to the development of either area; the General Plan does not mandate that these two areas be addressed by a single specific plan; and

WHEREAS, at its meeting of June 5, 2007, the City Council directed that the Environmental Impact Report for the combined Olsen Ranch/Beechwood Area Specific Plan may study alternative land development patterns with density bonuses of 15, 30, and 50 percent;



WHEREAS, the City Council and Planning Commission conducted a public workshop on January 29, 2013 to discuss revising priorities for preparing and amending Specific Plans (as currently set forth in Resolution 09-055) and for allotting up to 594 additional dwelling units within the 44,000 Population Planning Threshold that were identified via General Plan Amendment 2012-002;

WHEREAS, at its meeting of March 19, 2013, the City Council considered the issues discussed by the City Council and Planning Commission at the January 29, 2013 public workshop and accepted additional testimony from the public on this matter;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, DETERMINED AND ORDERED, by the City Council of the City of El Paso de Robles as follows:

1. Prior to a comprehensive update of the General Plan, the City Council will not approve general plan amendments that collectively increase the number of dwelling units at build out above 17,412 dwelling units (=16,818 + 594).
2. The City Council encourages applicants to submit specific plans or specific plan amendments and to prepare accompanying general plan amendments and environmental assessments. The City shall process project applications as they are submitted and shall evaluate each application on its own merits.
3. Separate specific plans, general plan amendments, and EIRs may be prepared and processed for the Olsen Ranch and Beechwood Area.
4. City staff will process specific plan and related applications expeditiously while simultaneously attending to other Council goals. However, staff resources are limited, and the City does not warrant that it will be able to process applications within applicants' desired timeframes. The city may hire contract planners, at applicants' expense, to facilitate processing of applications.
5. City staff shall continue to provide the Council with quarterly status reports of all specific plans.
6. All consultant and staff time costs incurred by the City prior to May 5, 2009 to prepare specific plans and their environmental impact reports (EIR) shall be recovered by the City via specific plan fees to be paid at the time of occupancy of buildings as provided by Government Code Section 65456.
7. All consultant and staff time costs incurred since May 5, 2009 to prepare specific plans and their EIRs shall be borne by property owners and deposited upfront and deposit maintained until the specific plans, general plan amendments, and associated EIR work, including public hearings and approval by the City Council, is completed.
8. Any specific plan work shall include early community input and review prior to acceptance of a draft specific plan as follows:
  - a. Draft specific plans shall first be submitted to staff for review and feedback with applicant;
  - b. A community workshop before the Planning Commission and City Council shall be conducted prior to the City's acceptance of a draft specific plan for processing;
  - c. Preparation of an EIR shall begin only after completion of the community workshop and City Council direction on the draft plan;
  - d. Preparation of the draft specific plans, general plan amendments, and EIRs shall undergo the normal public review and adoption process.
9. This resolution supersedes Resolution 09-055.

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2013 by the following Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Strong, Hamon, Martin, Steinbeck, Picanco

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

ATTEST:

Caryn Jackson, Deputy City Clerk

  
Duane Picanco, Mayor

**Neighborhood Design Objectives:**

- Encourage the development of walkable neighborhoods;
- Provide a street grid that offers several paths for vehicles so as to avoid congestion at choke points; and
- Facilitate use of alternative modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicycles, transit);
- Provide central places to gather. These may be in parks or plazas in commercial areas.

**Design Principles**

These principles are rooted in policies contained in the Land Use, Circulation, and Housing Elements of the General Plan and in the Economic Strategy. The overall goal is to use some of the best features of the City’s historic West Side. Major principles include:

- Streets are laid out in a grid pattern, preferably without cul-de-sacs;
- Blocks are relatively short (300 to 600 feet) to encourage walking;
- Entrances to houses and other buildings face the street, preferably with porches or stoops, which make front yards a sort of “outdoor living room” that fosters interaction with neighbors and enhances public safety, by placing “eyes on the street”;
- Architectural styles promote safe, walkable neighborhoods;
- Residential front yards are relatively shallow (e.g. 10 - 15 feet);
- Living spaces within homes are oriented toward the street (rather than having bedrooms up front unless they are on second floors);
- Parking is placed behind houses and other buildings; access to parking is via alleys and/or driveways to rear parking;
- Neighborhoods have a center, a gathering place, which could be a park or commercial center with a plaza;
- Within each neighborhood, a variety of housing types and densities are provided;
- Pedestrian and bike paths are provided through neighborhoods and connect to regional paths;
- Transit stops are provided.

**City policies that call for these principles include:**

- Develop neighborhoods and planning areas using compact urban forms that foster connectivity, walkability, alternative transportation modes with:
  - a. Attractive streetscapes,
  - b. A pedestrian friendly setting,
  - c. Coordinated site design, architecture, and amenities,
  - d. Adequate public and private spaces; and,
  - e. A recognizable and high quality design aesthetic. (*Land Use Element Policy LU-2D*)
- Establish safe pedestrian and bicycle paths, for children and their parents to schools and other major destinations such as downtown, retail and job centers. (*Circulation Element, Policy CE-1A*)
- Transportation improvements shall improve accessibility and promote physical activity. (*Circulation Element, Policy CE-1A, Action Item 19*)

## Neighborhood Design Principles

- To the extent practical, new residential streets shall provide a grid roadway system with block lengths of 300 - 600 feet. Cul-de-sac streets shall be discouraged. Street widths shall be no greater than as needed to accommodate emergency service vehicles. Design standards compatible with traditional neighborhood shall be developed. (*Circulation Element Policy CE-1B, Action Item 1*)
- Require new specific plans for undeveloped areas (Chandler Ranch, Olsen Ranch, Beechwood Area, and any to follow) to provide a balance of housing opportunities (types and densities) for all income groups. (*Housing Element Policy HE-1.2, Action Item 7*)
- Require new specific plans for undeveloped areas (Chandler Ranch, Olsen Ranch, Beechwood Area, and any to follow) to incorporate land use and circulation patterns that use compact urban forms that foster connectivity, walkability, and alternative transportation modes. (*Housing Element Policy HE-6.2, Action Item 22*)
- Encourage community development in live/work, mixed use, and compact, pedestrian oriented forms to accommodate all income levels and lifestyles. *Economic Strategy – Place*
- Planning for the Olsen Ranch / Beechwood area should adhere to the T2, T3, and T4 (*i.e., TND*) design standards contained in this document. (*Gateway Plan, Creston Road Gateway*)