

CHAPTER 2: Land Use and Community Character



CHAPTER 2 LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Specific Plan outlines the types, locations, and intensities of land uses planned for the El Charro Specific Plan Area. In addition to describing those land uses within the Plan Area, this chapter addresses the relationship between proposed uses and the surrounding land uses. As of 2006, much of the land within and immediately adjacent to the Specific Plan Area is undeveloped; however, planning efforts for some of the adjacent areas are underway. The interface and compatibility between these adjacent uses will be important to the overall success of the area.

Livermore's General Plan land use goals discussed in Chapter 1 of this document help set the framework for the future development and community character throughout the El Charro Specific Plan Area. Through the Specific Plan process, the General Plan goals and other applicable City documents were further refined into goals that specifically address the Plan Area. The land use goals and policies will guide the implementation of the Specific Plan, and are drawn from input gained throughout the planning process, discussions with property owners, local stakeholders, and input from City staff.

This chapter contains a detailed description of the land use program for the Plan Area, as well as a description of the land use framework used to organize the land uses within the Plan Area.

2.2 LAND USE PROGRAM

As the western gateway to the City of Livermore, the design for the El Charro Specific Plan Area must be representative and reflective of the area's history and culture, and portray the proper City image. This area is located along a prominent regional travel corridor, I-580, that not only provides direct access to the Plan Area, but also gives its travelers a clear view of development within the Plan Area.

The El Charro Plan Area is comprised of 16 properties, with an aggregate area of approximately 250 acres. A majority of the Plan Area consists of non-urbanized land, some of which is being dry farmed. A few properties have additional uses, including a golf driving range and a small cluster of rural residential homes. The Plan Area is bordered by I-580 to the north, El Charro Road to the west, active mining quarries to the south, and a municipal golf course, open space, and regional airport to the east (see Figure 1-3 Property Ownership). New infrastructure improvements, including the expansion of El Charro Road, improvements to the El Charro/Fallon Road interchange, and the extension of Jack London Boulevard through the site will enhance this area's connection to the rest of Livermore and the surrounding region.

2.2.1 Commercial Uses

Through the implementation of this Specific Plan, Livermore intends to facilitate attractive retail development along its western edge. Due to the location of the Plan Area, retail uses that serve travelers along I-580 or have a regional or a super-regional draw, are the most appropriate for this area. As a result, commercial uses within the Plan Area will fall under two zoning categories: regional serving retail and highway-oriented commercial. Each will provide a variety of retail opportunities within the Specific Plan Area and draw on slightly different market segments, providing necessary retail services for the residents of Livermore and the surrounding region. The uses permitted within each of these zones are discussed in further detail in this chapter.

All commercial developments within the Plan Area, whether they fall under the regional retail zone or the highway commercial zone, are permitted a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.3 net acreage.¹ If all the commercially designated properties are developed at 0.3 net acreage, the City of Livermore will gain approximately 1.5 million square feet of retail space within the Plan Area.

Regional Serving Retail

Regional serving retail uses are planned for a majority of the area, approximately 152 acres, which includes those parcels designated as Planned Development-El Charro Specific Plan-Regional Commercial (PD-ECSP-RC). All property owners with PD-ECSP-RC designated land own 17 or more acres, all of which have frontage along I-580. These properties have a large amount of development potential due to the site's regional access, visibility, and the generally flat topography of the land.

Due to the visual prominence and scenic qualities of the area, retail development should be sensitive to the area's natural surroundings and designed to fit into this context. Incorporating appropriate design elements representative of the surrounding environment, which includes Livermore's rich agrarian history, will help create an appropriate transition from the natural to built environment. Design should respond to the City's visual policies, site constraints, and provide opportunities for view corridors through the area to capitalize on the distant scenic hills.

As shown in Figure 2-1, the Plan Area is envisioned to include several categories of regional retail development ranging in intensity and focus of commercial use. Regional serving retail categories may include food and entertainment, regional and sub-regional retail, mid-box retail, and lifestyle services such as general merchandise sales, outlet stores, home decorating, house wares, clothing and accessories, and mid-size retailers that sell goods such as electronics, sporting goods, or other consumer products. This full range of goods and services is what attracts the wider market segment typical of customers at the regional or super-regional level.

¹ For purposes of FAR calculation, net acreage excludes all road dedications, adopted plan lines, and creeks with associated setbacks.

Food and entertainment uses help balance commercial retail uses and encourage the length of visitors' stays by providing a different set of activities and amenities. While retail and shopping areas tend to provide quick food opportunities, this cluster of uses would provide additional restaurant opportunities that could provide a more relaxing and unique dining experience. Entertainment opportunities, such as those restaurants that combine an activity with food or a children's play area, would also be encouraged. These uses help to increase the regional draw of the retail area by diversifying a user's experience and appealing to a wider market segment.

Sub-regional retail uses take on many of the same characteristics as regional retail uses, but allow for uses that have less of a regional draw. The range of goods provided may be more focused than the wide range that regional retail uses provide, and may incorporate a department store, specialty shops, and other sub-regional retail needs.

The El Charro Specific Plan Area will offer not only a broad range of commercial uses, but also a variety of sizes. To accommodate a range of stores, retail square footages will range up to a maximum of 150,000. Allowing for larger floorplate tenants will provide space for retailers that cater toward a regional market that traditionally need more space to accommodate their inventory. These uses could include stores that sell household items, electronics, sporting goods, or a range of these items.

Lifestyle services are also permitted within this area. This area would include uses such as day or health spas, sports centers that could provide activities such as tennis or swimming, restaurants, and hotels. Public and quasi-public uses are conditionally allowed within this area.

Complementary uses, such as restaurants, family-oriented entertainment uses, lifestyle and visitor uses, and activity centers are also encouraged to provide patrons with multiple opportunities to visit and spend time in the El Charro Specific Plan Area. Refer to Chapter 7, Implementation, for a complete list of the types of uses permitted in the Specific Plan Area.

Highway Oriented Commercial

The Specific Plan's proximity to I-580 supports the need for highway oriented commercial uses near the freeway interchange. Therefore, highway oriented commercial uses will be permitted on the property located at the southeast corner of El Charro Road and Jack London Boulevard. This zone will be designated as Planned Development-El Charro Specific Plan-Highway Regional Commercial (PD-ECSP-HRC), and include 13 acres of the Plan Area. This property is within close proximity of the interstate, provides a high degree of visibility, and does not force users to navigate far off of the area's major streets.

Uses within the highway oriented zone may include hotels, gas stations, restaurants, and other uses that cater toward interstate travelers. Refer to Chapter 7 Implementation for a full list of uses permitted under this zone. Development that includes these uses will need to be mindful of the visibility of the Plan Area and take into account the design requirements outlined under Chapter 3 Design Guidelines and Development Standards in the Plan.

2.2.2 Open Space Areas

Immediately south of the designated retail development area, the City will maintain and enhance its current open space areas to serve as a buffer between adjacent natural resources and proposed land uses. Open space areas within the El Charro Specific Plan Area make up approximately 97 acres. This area within the Specific Plan is designated as Planned Development-El Charro Specific Plan-Open Space (PD-ECSP-OS), which is intended to protect the Arroyo Las Positas as a natural resource and its role in stormwater management for the Livermore area. These open space areas will also help buffer the future commercial uses from the active quarries to the south and the Livermore Municipal Airport to the east. The following describes the permitted uses within this designation.

Approximately 46 acres of open space located north of the Arroyo Las Positas will provide flood control and stormwater treatment and detention, as well as provide small picnic areas and benches to allow for intimate gatherings and resting spots. More active recreational facilities will not be provided, since this open space area is within the immediate vicinity of the Livermore Airport, and FAA and ALUC regulations limit such uses. Two or three small parking areas, with between 10 and 15 parking stalls each, will be provided on the south side of Jack London Boulevard to give users an opportunity to utilize this area and access the regional multi-use trail.

A portion of the City's open space properties immediately adjacent to the commercial developments may also be utilized for additional parking, depending on the needs of the developments in the Plan Area. Developments must be able to show justifiable cause for requiring additional parking, as excessive parking will not be allowed within the Plan Area. These supplemental overflow parking areas will also need to be discernable from other retail parking areas. The City may require the use of alternative forms of paving and other landscape and design elements to help make the distinction between these areas and minimize excessive impervious surfaces to alleviate stormwater runoff. These requirements will be determined by the City at the time of the request. The additional parking areas will be leased from the Livermore Airport and will need to obtain FAA approval prior to their use.

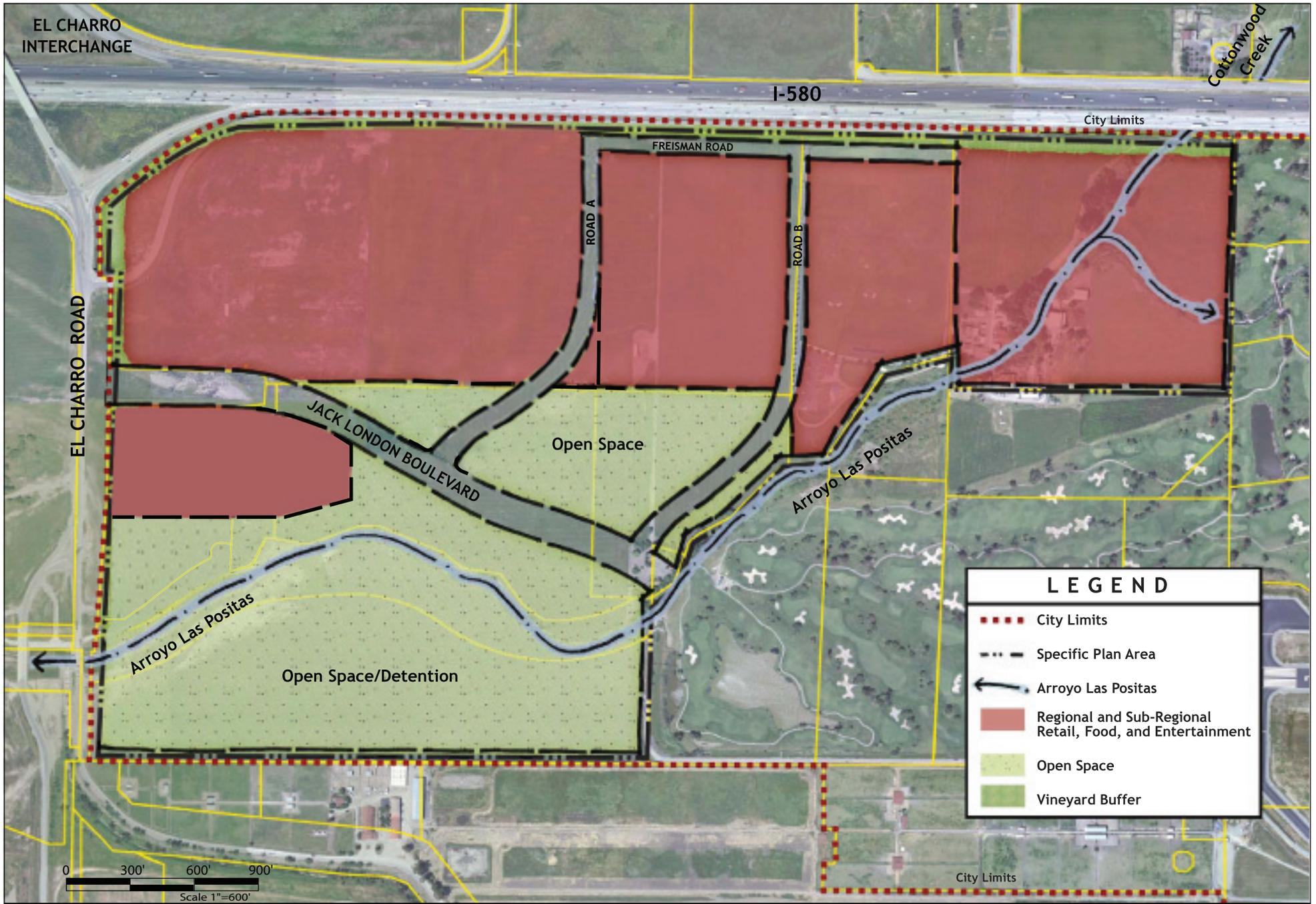


Figure 2-1 Land Use Program
CITY OF LIVERMORE EL CHARRO SPECIFIC PLAN

Note: This figure is conceptual in nature and subject to modifications based on subsequent development review.

A bioswale running along the northern side of the Jack London Boulevard extension, from Road B west to El Charro Road, will serve a dual purpose for the Plan Area. This swale will help mitigate and contain the flow of water from a 100-year flood event and serve as an urban design element that can add to the distinct nature of the El Charro Plan Area. East of Road A, a small bioswale will run on both sides of Jack London Boulevard. The additional landscaping inherent to the bioswale also helps define the Jack London Boulevard corridor as a gateway into the City of Livermore.

The approximately 35-acres of open space property south of Arroyo Las Positas will be used for stormwater management alternatives as well as any necessary golf course reconfiguration. Any use of this area for stormwater management will meet the intent of the Stormwater Management Master Plan. Further discussion regarding open space and its intended uses within the Plan Area is provided under Chapter 6: Community Services, Facilities, and Open Space.

2.3 LAND USE FRAMEWORK

The Specific Plan's goals, policies, and objectives provide a land use framework that will guide future development in the Plan Area. This framework will help define elements that will enhance Livermore's existing community and provide the environment that the City seeks. These elements include character and quality of development, open space, resource protection, pedestrian environment, and compatibility of land uses. The following are descriptions of each component that make up the land use framework, as well as the goals, policies, and objectives that will implement the Specific Plan's vision.

2.3.1 Character and Quality of Development

The El Charro Specific Plan provides the City of Livermore with an opportunity to showcase the character of the City as it has been represented to date through their current planning practices and policies. Not only is this area visibly prominent within the region due to its location along I-580, but the Plan Area will also serve as the western gateway to the City.

Future development planned by three different municipalities—Livermore to the southeast, Pleasanton to the southwest and Dublin to the north—will occur on all sides of the El Charro/Fallon Road interchange. Livermore's main objective is to distinguish itself from its neighbors and guide development within their community that represents the true character and history that the City has established through past planning efforts.

The quality of the future regional retail uses within the Plan Area is directed by Specific Plan policies and the design guidelines set forth as part of this Plan. Continuity of design throughout the different retail properties will ensure an enduring cohesive look and feel for Livermore's gateway retail development.

The design features in the Plan Area, including the City gateway elements, and the layout and design of the regional retail development will help to convey a strong City identity and sense of place within the El Charro Specific Plan Area. Design cues will distinguish Livermore from its neighboring municipalities and provide a clear sense of arrival to Livermore.

As mentioned, several elements will be implemented that will provide the framework for a gateway feature signaling the entrance into the City of Livermore. The main feature includes a landmark element that will represent the City's image and follow the guidelines described in the Specific Plan. This feature will be implemented on the northeast and southeast corners of the El Charro Road and Jack London Boulevard intersection. A smaller gateway gesture will be incorporated into the northwest corner of the City property that sits south of Jack London Boulevard.

Where commercial development runs along Jack London Boulevard, a more formal landscape design will line both sides of the street. Along this corridor, where open space or rural areas are found, the landscape elements will transition from formal street trees and plantings, to informal plantings, including low shrubs, natural landscape features, and vineyards.

A vineyard buffer, approximately 50 feet deep, will run along the length of El Charro Road on the east side of the street, from the El Charro/Fallon Road interchange and continue south to the arroyo, the edge of the Specific Plan. The vineyard buffer will also run along the south side of I-580 for the entire length of the Specific Plan. This buffer helps incorporate Livermore's viticulture roots and provides a natural screen between the street network and retail parking areas while enhancing the visual interest of the area.

Providing a consistent theme throughout the El Charro Specific Plan Area, by tying the retail areas, landscape treatments, and City gateway elements together, helps create a cohesive integrated development. The following goals, policies, and objectives will help implement and enhance the community character.

GOAL 2.1: Create an attractive and diverse regional retail district, which through its design and other features, will be a distinct gateway into the City of Livermore. The development will capture the quality of the region while reflecting the agrarian and viticulture history seen throughout the area.

Policy 2.1.1 Provide an appropriate mix of retail uses that serves the region's lifestyle and market needs.

Objective 2.1.1a: Include a range of retail districts within the Plan Area, from traditional low-density shopping centers to more intense urban nodes of activity.

Objective 2.1.1b: Retail and service commercial development within the Specific Plan area shall prepare an economic impact assessment relating to Downtown Livermore prior to site plan and/or conditional use permit approval.

Policy 2.1.2 Ensure that retail areas are attractive and well designed, with appropriate size and scale of development.

Objective 2.1.2a: No single retail tenant shall occupy a building space greater than 150,000 square feet.

Policy 2.1.3 Adopt design and development standards for the Plan Area that will help to create a vibrant, attractive, and consistently designed retail center. The design and development standards within this Plan ensure that land uses, building orientation, design, and landscaping reinforce the high quality retail environment envisioned for the El Charro Plan Area.

Policy 2.1.4 Establish gateway features at key locations, designed with a consistent theme that is unique to the El Charro Plan Area, and complementary of the City character.

Objective 2.1.4a: Install the main gateway feature at the northeast and southeast corners of the El Charro Road and Jack London Boulevard intersection.

Objective 2.1.4b: A vineyard buffer, approximately 50 feet deep, running along the east side of El Charro Road and the south side of I-580, will be provided by adjacent developments.

Objective 2.1.4c: Provide a landscape design along the north and south side of Jack London Boulevard that defines the corridor, not only as an entrance to the City of Livermore, but also as a transition between the built and rural environments.

Objective 2.1.4d: Include a low profile stone wall along the freeway frontage that reflects Livermore's agricultural heritage and enhances the City's western gateway.

Policy 2.1.5 Develop streetscape and landscape plans for primary roadways within the Plan Area, to ensure a high quality and attractive appearance.

2.3.2 Open Space Areas and Resource Protection

Within the context of land use planning, open space is defined as land largely free of development, and used as agriculture or working landscape, scenic amenity, natural resource protection, and/or public recreation. Open space preservation provides benefits to cities, residents, and the environment, in the form of fiscal benefits, recreational and scenic amenities, and resource protection. The City of Livermore has received recognition throughout the State of California for its open space planning, which to date has been mainly in the form of agriculture preservation policies and mechanisms.

Throughout the El Charro Plan Area, open space areas are envisioned to take on several forms: passive recreation areas, small gathering spaces, natural habitats, flood control areas, arroyo protection zones, and buffers between adjacent uses, such as the Livermore Municipal Airport and the quarry operations to the south. These multifaceted spaces will each provide a benefit to the surrounding local and regional community.

FAA regulations govern many of the uses permitted within these open space areas. Uses will need to remain unobtrusive and compatible with the adjacent airport facility. Goals, policies, and objectives outlined below will help facilitate use and preservation of the Plan Area's open space areas.

Goal 2.2: City open space areas will be maintained to provide a variety of community supportive functions that are compatible with the Airport Protection Area (APA).

Policy 2.2.1 Provide passive recreation opportunities within the City-owned open space areas, such as small gathering spaces and trails. Active recreation uses that concentrate more than 50 people per acre are not permitted. Some relocations of Las Positas Golf Course may occur, if necessary, to accommodate the Plan's infrastructure requirements.

Policy 2.2.2 A portion of the City-owned property may be used for additional overflow parking for the adjacent uses.

Objective 2.2.2a: Developments must meet minimum parking requirements on-site before utilizing City property for additional parking.

Objective 2.2.2b: Parking areas on City-owned property shall be readily distinguishable, through signage and design features, from those areas owned by adjacent retail developments. (See also Section 3.9 Parking Lot Design for additional parking guidelines.)

Policy 2.2.3: Ensure that development patterns within the El Charro Specific Plan Area protect natural resources and habitat areas within the Plan Area.

Objective 2.2.3a: Provide a 100-foot buffer (measured from top of bank) on either side of the Arroyo Las Positas and Cottonwood Creek, in order to help protect the arroyo habitat area. Due to excessive site constraints, adjust the buffer on Arroyo Las Positas on the Children’s Hospital site west of Cottonwood Creek to be 50-feet from top of bank to the north and 150-feet from top of bank to the south.

2.3.3 Pedestrian Environment

Pedestrian-friendly design elements will be integrated into the building design, parking lots, and the connections between sites. Human-scaled architectural elements, gathering spaces, and associated amenities help provide pedestrians with inviting and usable spaces. Strong, clear connections between the built environment and the surrounding open space areas will also be provided. In addition, much of the City-owned land in the Specific Plan Area will be multi-functional, providing pedestrians with passive recreation opportunities, as well as providing a buffer between retail uses and the surrounding uses.

Sidewalks and multi-use trails will be constructed to encourage pedestrian activity and movement through the area. A regional multi-use trail will be developed along the northern or southern bank of the arroyo, beginning with a connection to an existing segment of the multi-use trail at the intersection of El Charro Road and the arroyo and continuing across the arroyo to link up with the rest of the regional bike network. Multi-use trails will also connect the regional trail to Jack London Boulevard at its signalized intersections to facilitate safe crossing opportunities for its users.

Goal 2.3: Maximize the pedestrian experience within the Plan Area through both the built and natural environment.

Policy 2.3.1 Provide human scaled elements, including gathering spaces, throughout the Plan Area that will engage and encourage pedestrian movement.

Policy 2.3.2 Create opportunities and appropriate connections for pedestrians to access all retail and open space areas within the Plan Area.

2.3.4 Compatible Land Uses

Along with the land use opportunities that the Plan Area provides, there are several constraints in the area that have associated challenges in terms of creating compatible development. These challenges include visual and environmental issues, as well as capacity and land use compatibility issues.

Scenic Corridor

Interstate 580 provides a high level of visibility for future development within the Plan Area. Accordingly, high quality architecture is essential from public views adjacent to the freeway in this gateway location. This must be balanced with height restrictions placed on buildings adjacent to the Interstate intended to preserve view corridors to the surrounding hills. The I-580 Scenic Corridor is located along both the north and side sides of I-580, within 3,500 feet of the freeway's centerline.

The view angle limits freeway-fronting development to one-story buildings, approximately 20 feet in height located about 290 feet from I-580 (see Chapter 3 for additional guidelines on the Scenic Corridor setback).

The General Plan Amendment allows for limited projections above the 2.2-degree view angle. As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are two circumstances under which buildings or architectural elements may, or are encouraged, to project vertically into the delineated Scenic Corridor—institutional uses and for special architectural elements. These conditions potentially affect two parcels within the Specific Plan Area:

1. *Children's Hospital:* The site is located in the northeastern corner of the Plan Area. This site is divided into three areas by the Arroyo Las Positas corridor. Because of the setback requirements associated with these conditions, the potential net developable area and building envelope(s) on this site would have both unusual shapes and be relatively small.

While the site would remain suitable for traditional commercial land uses, institutional uses may require projections into the Scenic Corridor's view plane. In order to accommodate auditorium-style rooms large enough to hold gatherings of people, institutional buildings often require ceiling heights taller than those used for commercial structures.

2. *Johnson-Himsl Parcel Adjacent to Interstate 580:* The Livermore General Plan recognizes this area as an important western gateway into the City. This Plan allows for the development of a regional serving lifestyle shopping area on this site. Accordingly, the design of this development must provide more vertical height to facilitate high quality architecture fronting the freeway, while still preserving views of distant hills.

These projections consider the functional needs of the proposed land uses, and the potential visual implications of these projections. The overall intent is to provide development and landscaping that creates a cohesive district within the City, serves as a City gateway amenity, while preserving views of the southern ridgelines. Viewers will discern a layered landscape, with foreground views of vineyards, trees, shrubs, parking and streets, middle ground views of buildings, including overall massing and roof forms, and background views of hills and windrows of trees in the distance.

Airport Restrictions

The Plan Area is located immediately to the west of the Livermore Municipal Airport, which establishes distances of ground clearance for take-off and landing safety. In the case of the Livermore Airport, the FAA mandates a minimum 800-foot wide buffer along the full length of the runways, and 1,000-feet beyond the runway ends. The Airport Protection Area (APA) extends this buffer to 5,000 feet along all sides of a runway, except to the west where the distance is increased to 7,100 feet. To enhance public safety the APA protects the Airport from the encroachment of incompatible uses, particularly the construction of new, or expansion of existing, residential areas. The FAA further restricts uses on those properties within the direct flight path for the two runways to provide a buffer between any surrounding uses and the airport, which in this case includes City of Livermore-owned properties. City lands purchased with FAA grant monies have use restrictions that ensure compatibility with airport uses.

Quarry Uses

Active quarries are located just south of the El Charro Specific Plan Area and permitted to operate 24 hours a day. The quarries use El Charro Road, which forms the western boundary of the Plan Area, for primary access to their properties and the majority of their commercial trucks that are transporting materials on and offsite. Quarry operations in this area contain a level of quality aggregate material that is considered a Statewide Resource; therefore, development within the Specific Plan must account for and accommodate quarry traffic in their development proposals.

Natural Resource Areas

Several other factors limit development potential, including the natural habitat surrounding the arroyo and any flood control improvements.

The arroyo and its buffer impact some parcels more than others, since development is not allowed within 100 feet of the arroyo (measured from top of bank). The only exception to this is the Children's Hospital site, where development is not allowed within 50-feet from top of bank to the north, and 150-feet from top of bank to the south. The arroyo and Cottonwood Creek, for instance, significantly impact the Children's Hospital property because they divide the property into three

areas. Cottonwood Creek enters from the north and Arroyo Las Positas enters from the east; they join in the middle of the property and continue down through the southwest corner. Current access to the property is provided by Freisman Road at the northwest corner. Future development on this parcel would have to invest in significant infrastructure improvements in order to provide access and effectively utilize all three areas. The Sywest and Johnson-Himsl properties that abut the arroyo are unable to develop the portion of their land that falls within this designated setback area.

Goal 2.4: Develop a land use program within the El Charro Specific Plan Area that is compatible with surrounding land uses and sensitive to the natural environment.

Policy 2.4.1 Locate land uses within the Plan Area to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses, including quarry operations and the Livermore Municipal Airport.

Objective 2.4.1a: All land uses proposed on properties in the Airport Protection Area (APA) will need prior City approval.

Objective 2.4.1b: All building heights throughout the Specific Plan area are subject to height regulations established in the Specific Plan and supersede height restrictions established in the Livermore Planning and Zoning Code.

Objective 2.4.1c: All uses on land purchased by City for airport buffer with FAA grant funds will need to comply with FAA grant assurances.

Objective 2.4.1d: To minimize potential conflicts with quarry trucks operating along El Charro Road, driveway access on El Charro Road between Jack London Boulevard and the I-580/El Charro-Fallon Road interchange, other than emergency vehicle access, will not be permitted.

Objective 2.4.1e: Land uses will be generally consistent with density standards contained in the Safety Zone Policies of the Alameda County Airport Land Use Policy Plan (ALUC, July 1986). Uses are defined as compatible when not exceeding a density of 25 persons per net acre over an 8-hour period, or a density not exceeding 50 persons per net acre for more than two hours per day.

Objective 2.4.1f: All properties within the Specific Plan area will be required to record avigation and noise easements prior to development, to ensure full disclosure and consistency with the objectives for land use compatibility with the Livermore Municipal Airport and the Alameda County ALUC Plan. The

easements shall specifically note that operations and flight numbers at the Livermore Municipal Airport could increase in the future.

Objective 2.4.1g: Development anticipated on the approximately 12-acre Johnson-Himsl parcel (contiguous to El Charro Road and bordering the southern right-of-way of the proposed Jack London extension) will be generally clustered in the northerly portions of the property. Limited lower intensity development will be allowed in other portions of the property providing it does not encroach into emergency landing areas, avoids concentration of development along an alignment consistent with the runway centerline, and does not pose a hazard to air navigation.

Policy 2.4.2 Minimize land use conflicts within the El Charro Specific Plan Area by establishing requirements for entryways, setbacks, delivery and loading areas, and other design and development standards.

Policy 2.4.3 Locate land uses within the Plan Area in a manner that is sensitive to Livermore's Scenic Corridor and visual protection policies.

Objective 2.4.3a: All development within the Specific Plan Area will follow the Scenic Corridor polices and procedures outlined by the City of Livermore's General Plan.

Policy 2.4.4 Noise sensitive land uses, such as churches and hotels/motels, shall provide technical analysis by a professional acoustical engineer to determine measures to attenuate noise to acceptable levels, as necessary.

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