Prepared for:
The City of San Luis Obispo

Prepared by:
RRM Design Group

On Behalf of:
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Specific Plan for Froom Ranch Area

The Froom Ranch Area, is currently under County of San Luis Obispo (County) jurisdiction, but is located immediately southwest of the City of San Luis Obispo (City) limits. The site is designated in the City’s Land Use Element (LUE) as Specific Plan Area # 3, which is subject to preparation of a Specific Plan to accommodate development proposals and address pertinent issues (identified as SP-3 on LUE Figure 10). The General Plan requires that a Specific Plan for the Froom Ranch Area be adopted prior to annexation of the Plan Area to the City.

Figure 1-1 Regional Map
The Froom Ranch Specific Plan provides a comprehensive land use program to guide future public and private development in conformance with the requirements set forth in California Government Code §65450 through §65457. The Specific Plan provides a bridge between the City’s General Plan and detailed plans such as development plans and subdivisions. It directs all facets of future development within the Froom Ranch Specific Plan Area including:

- Classification of land uses, including the proposed housing mix;
- Establishment of general site planning and development standards;
- Provision of supplementary design guidelines tailored for the Specific Plan area;
- Designation of required access and circulation elements;
- Location and sizing of infrastructure;
- Phasing of development; and
- Financing methods for public improvements.

1.2 Specific General Plan Guidance for Froom Ranch Area

Section 8.1.5 of the Land Use Element (LUE) of the City’s General Plan includes the following specific guidance for Specific Plan Area SP-3:

“The purpose of the specific plan is to provide design flexibility that will secure the appropriate development of the site while protecting sensitive environmental resources on the site. Development on the site should be a compact, mixed use project that provides workforce housing options and neighborhood commercial uses that support pedestrian and bicycle access. The specific plan for this area should consider and address the following land use and design issues.

a. Develop a design that is sensitive to environmental constraints and adjusts accordingly through design. Constraints include wetland protection, slope protection, historic structures, and open space protection.

b. Maintain viewshed of surrounding mountains and secure steeper hillsides as protected open space areas.

c. Variable height limits will be required to protect views of adjacent hills.

d. Provide access to trails.

e. Provide a plan for adequate and safe infrastructure, including appropriate points of access to Los Osos Valley Road.

f. Address neighborhood commercial needs of new neighborhood.

g. Provide connectivity to adjacent development.”

In addition, Section 8.1.5 of the LUE requires that the Specific Plan area include 50% open space and identifies ranges of square footage for commercial development (50,000 minimum – 350,000 maximum) and numbers of housing units (200 units minimum – 350 units maximum). The LUE chart with the performance standards for the area includes the caveat that “there can be a reduction in the minimum requirement based on specific physical and/or environmental constraints”. Both the Planning Commission and City Council through the General Plan Amendment Initiation process supported the intended
mix of uses with increased residential units related to the Life Plan Community and a lower level of commercial development. The Land Use Summary in Table 1.1 in Section 1.8 summarizes the proposed number of residential units as well as commercial floor area.

The Hillside Planning Area Section 6.4.7 of the LUE provides the upper limits of development that affects the site, which is part of the Irish Hills Area. That upper limit is the 150-foot elevation. In conjunction with project entitlements, the applicant requested modification of the text of the LUE to allow some development above the 150-foot elevation, subject to certain performance standards.

1.3 Plan Goals & Consistency with the General Plan

The Froom Ranch Specific Plan is designed to meet the goals established in the City’s General Plan by providing a framework for future development of the Froom Ranch Area. The Specific Plan is designed to be consistent with, and serves as an extension of, the City’s General Plan. The policies and standards in the Froom Ranch Specific Plan will take precedence over more general policies and standards during the review of public and private development projects within the Specific Plan area. In situations where policies or standards relating to an aspect of development have not been provided in the Specific Plan, the existing policies and standards of the City’s General Plan and Zoning Ordinance will apply.

Consistent with cited General Plan guidance in Section 1.2 above, the overall goals of the Specific Plan are to:

1. Develop new residential housing to meet the City’s housing needs.
2. Provide a variety of housing types and costs to meet the needs of renters and buyers with a variety of income-levels, including affordable housing for residents with low income levels.
3. Develop a Life Plan Community (LPC) to meet Housing Element goals to address special housing needs for retirement aged residents of San Luis Obispo.
4. Provide new retail commercial and offices adjacent to the existing Irish Hills Plaza shopping center to achieve land use synergy and enhance services available to residents.
5. Protect and enhance creek/wetland habitats, and maintain visual resources in open space areas.
6. Provide a trailhead park that addresses the recreational needs of Specific Plan area residents, neighboring residential areas, and supports the open space trails bordering the site.
7. Evaluate historic buildings within the proposed City trailhead park with adaptive reuse of some buildings and historical identification where appropriate.
8. Phase the proposed development so that public facilities are developed concurrently with each new phase in a rational and cost effective fashion.
9. Encourage the use of bicycles and walking within the Specific Plan Area by incorporating pedestrian paths and bicycle lanes along the roads and providing connections to the trailhead park and open space areas beyond the site.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The goals, policies, programs, design guidelines, and implementation processes included in this Specific Plan are intended to address the specific land use and design issues for the Madonna on LOVR Specific Plan Area, identified as SP-3 on Figure 10 of the Land Use Element. The definition of these implementation tools are as follows:

**GOAL**
Goals are a general statement of a desired community outcome.

**POLICY**
Policies are the course of principle or action to meet the goals. Policies typically include the word “shall.”

**PROGRAM**
Programs provide the specific mechanisms and guidance to implement policies and achieve goals.

**DESIGN GUIDELINE**
Design guidelines are intended to identify the character, quality, and layout of development desired in the project. They are utilized by developers, architects, and designers when preparing development plans. Design guidelines typically include “should” statements that are intended to be followed in most circumstances. Flexibility in interpretation of the design guidelines is permitted as long as the intent is followed.

**IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**
Implementation processes to develop the site with envisioned land uses are provided in Chapter 9. They identify the procedural requirements for entitlements associated with the Specific Plan.
Appendix A provides a comprehensive analysis of the project’s consistency with the City’s General Plan.

1.4  **Relationship to Other Adopted Documents**

1.4.1  **Zoning Ordinance**

The City of San Luis Obispo Zoning Ordinance (Title 17) provides standards for site-specific development and land use regulations that govern the size, shape, and type of use for development within the City. This Specific Plan document customizes some of the standards and regulations found in Title 17 to help implement the Specific Plan vision. In any instance where the Specific Plan conflicts with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, the Specific Plan provisions will take precedence. Where the Specific Plan is silent on a topic, the City of San Luis Obispo Zoning Ordinance requirements shall prevail.

1.4.2  **Subdivision Regulations**

The subdivision process within the Specific Plan area shall be governed by the City of San Luis Obispo’s Subdivision Regulations and Municipal Code as well as the State Subdivision Map Act (California Government Code §66410 et. seq.). Processing procedures, submittal requirements, and findings required by the City’s Subdivision Ordinance (Title 16) will be regulated as set forth therein.

1.4.3  **City of San Luis Obispo Bicycle Transportation Plan**

Updated in 2013, the Bicycle Transportation Plan provisions apply to the planning, development, design, and maintenance of bicycle facilities and activities within City limits. The document identifies an existing Class II bike facility along Los Osos Valley Road adjacent to the Specific Plan area.

1.4.4  **Community Design Guidelines**

The City of San Luis Obispo Community Design Guidelines (2010) describe and inform project designers and applicants of the City’s expectations and preferences for the quality and character of new development. These guidelines are considered by the Architectural Review Commission as a basis for evaluating the suitability and appropriateness of individual project design and help achieve attractive and environmentally sensitive development. The design guidelines provided herein supplement the Community Design Guidelines.

1.4.5  **San Luis Obispo County Airport Land Use Plan**

The San Luis Obispo County Airport Land Use Plan (ALUP) document regulates various aspects of airport operations throughout San Luis Obispo County. The San Luis Obispo
County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) acts as the governing body for coordinating the airport planning of public agencies within the County. The ALUP includes safety zones/area that restrict the type and density of development. The Specific Plan area is currently in Airport Safety Area S-2.

1.5 Specific Plan Format

The Specific Plan provides discussion of the Froom Ranch Area, its anticipated future development, and the goals, policies, programs, and standards that will guide aspects of development. The issues addressed in this Plan are:

- Land Use and Development Standards (Chapter 2);
- Conservation, Open Space and Recreation (Chapter 3);
- Design Guidelines (Chapter 4);
- Circulation (Chapter 5);
- Infrastructure and Public Utilities (Chapter 6);
- Public Services (Chapter 7);
- Public Facilities Financing (Chapter 8); and
- Implementation and Administration (Chapter 9).

In the following chapters, goals for specific issues are followed by policies specific to the Froom Ranch Area. These policies will be implemented through various programs presented in the Specific Plan. Standards will define actions or requirements that must be fulfilled by new development.

1.6 Location of Froom Ranch Area

The Froom Ranch Specific Plan Area consists of two parcels, totaling approximately 110 acres, located immediately west of Los Osos Valley Road within the County of San Luis Obispo’s jurisdiction, and adjacent to City of San Luis Obispo city limits (APNs 067-241-030 and 067-241-031). The site is located just south of the Irish Hills Plaza in the southwestern portion of City, and across Los Osos Valley Road from the auto park.

The northeastern portion of the Specific Plan Area is located within the City’s Urban Reserve Line, and the entire site is within the Land Use & Conservation Element (LUCE) Sphere of Influence (see Figure 1-3). Ultimately the Urban Reserve Line would be adjusted to reflect the approved land use map contained in the Specific Plan.
1.7 Planning Area Character

The Specific Plan Area is characterized by relatively flatter grassland areas which transition to steeper slopes before approaching City open space property at the base of the Irish Hills. The bulk of the property is undeveloped, but includes an assemblage of historical ranch and dairy structures on part of the site directly to the south of Home Depot, which is included in the adjacent Irish Hills Plaza shopping center. John Madonna currently uses the property as an office (main ranch house) and equipment storage yard to support his construction business (John Madonna Construction Co. Inc.). The site also includes unimproved roads, staging and materials storage, a quarry area, and a stormwater detention facility for the neighboring Irish Hills Plaza.
Figure 1-4 Existing Site Conditions
The Natural Setting

The site is composed of a variety of plant communities including annual and native grasslands, coast live oak/California bay woodland, and coastal scrub/chaparral habitats. Non-native annual grassland was the dominant plant community on the ranch, primarily occurring in the flatter portions of the Specific Plan area where past activities such as cattle/horse feeding occurred. The southwestern part of the Specific Plan area contains some native bunchgrass grassland areas where rock outcrops and thinner soils are present.

The site is bisected by natural drainages in the northeastern flank of the Irish Hills of the San Luis Range. Froom Creek traverses the Specific Plan area in a mostly north to south direction and joins San Luis Obispo Creek south of the Specific Plan area before flowing towards the Pacific Ocean in Avila Beach. Wetland habitat occurs in flat grassland areas where surface and subsurface water is impounded by Los Osos Valley Road and Calle Joaquin. The Los Osos Valley Road roadside channel is dominated by arroyo willow monoculture.

Historic Setting

The property was used as a dairy from the 1850s to 1977 and included a complex of buildings such as a dairy barn, creamery, granary, four-bedroom house, and bunkhouse. In 1976 Alex Madonna purchased the property and raised beef cattle on the property for several years. John Madonna purchased the property in 2011 and as previously mentioned, uses it for his construction business.

1.8 Specific Plan Features

Froom Ranch is envisioned as a primarily residential project with some commercial development in the northeast corner of the site closest to the adjacent Irish Hills Plaza. The project is divided into main components:

1) The Madonna Froom Ranch; and
2) The Life Plan Community (Villaggio).

The Madonna Froom portion of the site is in the northern portion of the Specific Plan Area, just south of the Irish Hills Plaza. It will contain the project's commercial uses, which are envisioned as a hotel and some retail with offices above. Residential development will be multiple-family workforce housing possibly subdivided into small lots. The High Density residential (R-4) portion of the site is planned to accommodate an affordable housing project as well as additional apartments. A trailhead park will provide a staging area and connection to open space trails and other park amenities. The park area will also include some historic structures which are adaptively reused for City facilities.

A major component of the planned residential uses is a Life Plan Community known as Villaggio. Villaggio provides a variety of different unit types for independent senior housing as well as access to higher levels of care such as Assisted Living, Memory Care, and Skilled Nursing, if they are eventually needed. The community will include some ancillary services for residents such as a recreational facility, restaurants, and movie theaters.
Open Space is the other predominant land use and occupies about 51% of the net site area, consistent with the annexation requirement of providing 50 percent of the site as open space. Details on the open space calculations are included in Table 2-3 of Chapter 2 and open space, goals, policies and programs are included in Chapter 3.

Table 1-1 below provides a summary of the land uses planned in the Froom Ranch Specific Plan.

**Table 1-1 Project Summary**

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<th>Land Uses</th>
<th>Size</th>
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<td>Multi-Family Housing</td>
<td>130 units</td>
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<td>Commercial</td>
<td>30,000 sq. ft.</td>
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<td>Hotel</td>
<td>70,000 sq. ft.; 120 rooms</td>
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<td>Trailhead Park</td>
<td>2.9 acres</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Land Uses</th>
<th>Size</th>
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<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>366 units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assisted Living Units</td>
<td>38 units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memory Care</td>
<td>17 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skilled Nursing</td>
<td>34 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restaurants &amp; Theaters</td>
<td>15,000 sq. ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational Facility</td>
<td>11,000 sq. ft.</td>
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The careful placement of various land uses that consider the site’s physical and environmental characteristics was a critical first step in designing the Specific Plan Area Land Use Plan. The Conceptual Site Plan, as shown in Figure 1-5, illustrates the relationships between land uses within the Specific Plan area.
Figure 1-5 Conceptual Site Plan