CHAPTER 3: CONSERVATION, OPEN SPACE, & RECREATION

3.1 Introduction

A key vision of this Specific Plan is to provide additional open space within the Specific Plan Area to protect natural resources and to augment the dedicated City open space area of the Irish Hills adjacent to the site. This chapter of the specific plan sets the framework for protecting the open space and sensitive resources and for providing recreational opportunities. The Specific Plan identifies areas for recreational facilities in a public park, and provides for the preservation of approximately 54% of the total Specific Plan Area as Open Space (59.0 acres).

The City’s Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE) defines open space as:

...any land or water area that remains in a predominantly natural or undeveloped state and which is generally free of structures, inside or outside City limits, within the San Luis Obispo Planning Area ... such lands protect and preserve the community’s natural and historical resources, define the urban boundary, and provide visual and physical relief from urban development. (Conservation and Open Space Element, Chapter 8)

Open space areas create visual tranquility and provide a sense of calm while the park, historic structures, and trail systems provide opportunities to promote education of the local area and foster a healthy community though exercise, play, and social interaction. This Chapter discusses the provision of open space, recreational spaces, and protection of historic and scenic resources, as well as includes goals, policies, and programs for ensuring conservation and protection of these valuable resources.
Figure 3-1 Site Constraints Map
3.2 Natural Open Space

Open space is the predominant land use occupying 59.0 acres or 54% of the total Specific Plan Area. This 59-acre total includes the proposed project open space of 51.9 acres, as well as the existing open space easement of 7.1 acres (see Figure 3-2 below).

Natural open space areas include wetlands, creek corridors, areas with significant slopes, and development buffers. At Froom Ranch, open space is woven throughout the Specific Plan Area giving residents and visitors a feeling of openness and visual serenity. Consistent with policy direction, the open spaces provided in the project are contiguous and often directly abutting adjacent open space areas.

Figure 3-2 Open Space Plan
The project site is a total of 109.7 acres. However, the net site area is 101.2 acres, which is the total site area of 109.7 acres less 8.5 acres, comprised of the 7.1 acres of the existing open space easement, as well as the 1.4 acres of undedicated Calle Joaquin roadway.

The proposed 51.9 acres of project open space is 51% of the net site area, which complies with the City's General Plan performance standard of providing a minimum of 50% of the Specific Plan Area as Open Space/Agriculture (LJE Section 8.1.5. SP-3, Madonna on LOVR Specific Plan Area). Table 2-3 in Chapter 2 provides detailed open space calculations.

With project development, the existing 7.1-acre open space area would be reconfigured. The reconfigured open space area would have the same overall area of 7.1 acres as the existing easement and incorporate site wetland areas. The relationship between the existing and proposed easement areas is shown on the previous page in Figure 3-2.

The original easement agreement was recorded in May 2010 a condition of development of the development of the Irish Hills Plaza project to provide permanent open space (Document # 2010023616). The easement agreement specifically references that the easement area may be used for wetland and biological resources mitigation banking. The reconfigured area encompasses project wetland areas in a more efficient pattern than the existing easement area based on the wetland delineation reviewed by the Army Corps of Engineers in their Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination.

### 3.2.1 Creeks and Wetlands

Froom Creek is an intermittent stream with a relatively small watershed that originates in the Irish Hills to the southwest of the Froom Ranch Specific Plan area. Froom Creek is a relatively narrow channel with incised banks that bisects the Specific Plan area in a north to south direction, and ultimately flows beneath U.S. Highway 101 via two concrete box culverts, heading to its confluence with San Luis Obispo Creek. Due to the lack of dominant wetland vegetation within or adjacent to the channel, Froom Creek was classified as a non-wetland waters of the U.S. and state of California subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board and California Department of Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction pursuant to the Clean Water Act (Sections 401 and 404) and California Fish and Game Code (KMA, 2016).
The Specific Plan Area also includes three other small, unnamed intermittent watercourses that contribute to the overall watershed network. They absorb significant amounts of rainwater and runoff that are vital to groundwater recharge, pollution reduction, wildlife habitat, and flood control. In addition, the Specific Plan Area includes about 7.25 acres of jurisdictional wetland habitat located on the southwestern part of the site near Los Osos Valley Road and Calle Joaquin. These areas are dominated by willows and other aquatic plants. The area also provides habitat value for birds and other wildlife. The wetland area will continue to be set aside as permanent open space with project development.

Froom Creek has a history of periodic flooding with estimated overbank flows occurring every five to six years (Balance Hydrologics, 2005). Studies have shown that while some overbank flow contributes to wetland habitat along Calle Joaquin, the primary function of Froom Creek appears to be groundwater recharge, and subsurface maintenance of the Calle Joaquin wetland area. Historically, Froom Creek had a different alignment from what is currently on the site today. Based on review of an 1895 U.S. Geological Survey topographic map, the creek channel took a more direct northeasterly path as it exited the Irish Hills and ultimately connected with Prefumo Creek and San Luis Obispo Creek.
With this information, and taking into consideration the unique characteristics of the Specific Plan area, a program has been developed (Program 3.2.2a) to restore Froom Creek to its historic location on the property, keeping its current hydrologic connection to San Luis Obispo Creek and connection to the wetlands habitat near Calle Joaquin. Development of the Specific Plan area will enhance and restore the historic creek corridor alignment, and allow it to traverse future development areas. The restored creek corridor will be enhanced with native plant communities that will thrive, be non-invasive, and require little maintenance. This would increase the functions and values of the riverine system including enhancing wildlife habitat and resolving the periodic flooding issues, while also providing an opportunity for people of all ages and abilities the chance to experience the unique ecological and pastoral qualities of the creek setting.

**Goal 3.2a:** Protect and enhance creek, riparian, and wetland habitats in the Specific Plan area.

**Goal 3.2b:** Ensure circulation improvements and development envelopes within the Specific Plan Area minimize impacts to creeks and wetlands.

**Policy 3.2.1:** Designate and set aside creeks, wetlands, and riparian vegetation as Open Space.

**Policy 3.2.2:** Avoid and minimize impacts to wetland, creek, and riparian areas.
Program 3.2.2a: Froom Creek may be restored to its historic drainage pattern with City and jurisdictional agency approvals. Froom Creek shall meet the following performance standards:

1) Include a natural bottom, and utilize existing boulders and cobbles that are relocated from the existing creek corridor.
2) Contain a low-flow channel that allows for pooling, deposition, and load transport.
3) Incorporate stepped pools and terraces to control fish migration patterns.
4) Be designed so that storm drainage will overflow into the adjacent existing wetlands during storm events.
5) Accommodate 100-year storm flows within the creek banks.

Figure 3-4 Froom Creek Corridor Enlargement

Program 3.2.2b: Development is subject to a 35-foot creek setback from Froom Creek. The setback shall be measured from top of bank (see Figure 3-5). The location of top of bank shall be shown on all proposed project plans.
Program 3.2.2c: Landscaping along creeks and drainages should include native riparian plants, located in naturalistic spacing and groupings to enhance and blend with the surrounding open space.

Program 3.2.2d: Plant species that are listed by the California Invasive Plant Council (CalIPC) as invasive are prohibited within riparian corridors. Existing invasive plants and noxious weeds shall be removed prior to landscape installation.

Program 3.2.2e: Development from other site drainages is subject to a 20-foot setback.

Program 3.2.2f: Development shall be set back from all on-site wetland habitats on the project site. The location of wetland vegetation shall be shown on all proposed project plans.

Policy 3.2.3: Impacts to wetland, creek, and riparian areas shall be mitigated consistent with the City’s Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE), and other regulatory agency requirements as appropriate.

Policy 3.2.4: Roadway crossings over Froom Creek should be accomplished by use of natural bottom culverts.

Policy 3.2.5: Given that the creek corridor will be restored with development and there is a substantial 35-foot creek setback to protect resources, recreational trails installed with a pervious material may be placed within the setback area (see Figure 3-6).

Program 3.2.5: The Froom Creek setback area may contain a pedestrian trail that is six-feet wide and surfaced with decomposed granite. Rest areas should be provided in key locations along the creek corridor and contain benches.
3.2.2 Protected Plant Species

A Biological Resources Inventory Report was prepared for the Specific Plan Area (KMA, January 2016) to determine the presence of special status plants. The Report includes survey results for those species that are known to occur on serpentine based soils and as having potential to occur on the Ranch. The Survey identified 204 plant species of which 13 are designated as special status species. The special status species are listed below:

- Blochman's dudleya (*Dudleya blochmaniae*)
- Brewer's spineflower (*Chorizanthe breweri*)
- Cambria morning glory (*Calystegia subacaulis ssp. episcopalis*)
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*)
- Chorro Creek bog thistle (*Cirsium fontinale* var. *obispoense*)
- Club hair mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus ssp. clavatus*)
- Congdon's tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *congdonii*)
- Eastwood's larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp. *eastwoodiae*)
- Jones's layia (*Layia jonesii*)
- Mouse-gray dudleya (*Dudleya abramsii* ssp. *murina*)
- Palmer's spineflower (*Chorizanthe palmeri*)
- San Luis mariposa lily (*Calochortus obispoensis*)
- San Luis Obispo owl's clover (*Castilleja densiflora* ssp. *obispoensis*)
Nine of the special status plants listed above are California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) List 1B species, and one is a List 2 species (Chaparral Ragwort). List 2 means that the species is rare in California but more widespread elsewhere. The federal and state endangered Chorro Creek bog thistle was also identified on-site but was confined to the wetland areas in the southwestern part of the Specific Plan area. The remaining species are CRPR List 4 species that are on a watch list and are relatively common to the area.

**Goal 3.2.c:** Preservation of unique plant communities, particularly those that support special status species.

**Goal 3.2.d:** Protect important biological resources including “Plant Communities of Local Concern” such as the Serpentine Bunchgrass Grassland to the extent feasible with development.

**Policy 3.2.6:** Protect and enhance habitat through re-introduction of native California vegetation and removal of non-native species.

**Policy 3.2.7:** Avoid or minimize impacts on sensitive natural communities, special-status plant species and habitats through the implementation of mitigation measures at the discretion of the Community Development Director. Special status species include those identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and/or the City of San Luis Obispo. Mitigation may include creation of twice the area of habitat lost (2:1 ratio), of equal quality and similar kind, within the Specific Plan Area or adjacent open space.

**Program 3.27a:** Place development footprints beyond primary occurrences of plants. Where impacts are unavoidable, establish elsewhere on site or in the adjacent open space area (particularly successful with Congdon’s tarplant).

**Program 3.27b:** Maintain a minimum of a 50-foot setback from occurrences of the Chorro Creek Bog Thistle.

### 3.2.3 Fault Lines

Fault traces of the Los Osos Fault occur on-site. Lineaments as seen on aerial photographs and geologic maps, along with field observation of surface topographic expression, were used to determine where exploratory site work, including trenching, should occur. Fifteen individual trenches were excavated to locate the fault traces and determine their approximate age. In addition, published technical reports were referenced to further define the characteristics of fault traces.

The Los Osos fault zone is a reverse thrust type fault that dips to the south and maintains a discontinuous rupture pattern. Due to differences in deformation, development setbacks of 50 feet, 30 feet, and 25 feet have been established at the site.

**Seismic Goals, Policies and Programs:**

**Goal 3.2.d:** Minimize impacts to future residents from potential seismic activity.
Policy 3.2.3: Comply with applicable State and local standards for development near fault traces.

Program 3.2.3: Habitable structures, residences, critical support facilities, care facilities, and buildings occupied more than 2,000 hours per year shall be developed outside of required setbacks. Roadways and utilities may occupy areas of active faulting.

3.3 Historic and Cultural Resources

Cultural resources refer to the potential presence of significant historical, archaeological, and/or paleontological resources. The Specific Plan Area includes several historic structures developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s as part of a ranching and dairy farm complex. The site also includes two recorded prehistoric sites.

John Madonna, the applicant and property owner for the project, commissioned technical reports which covered both archaeological (prehistoric) and historic resources associated with the site. The reports are entitled “Froom Ranch Specific Plan Cultural Resource Assessment” and “Froom Ranch Specific Plan Historic Resource Assessment”; they were prepared by the firm First Carbon Solutions in conjunction with Chattel Inc. and are dated July 2017.

3.3.1 Historic Resources

Site History

The property was used as a dairy from the 1850s to 1977, and included a complex of buildings, constructed at various times, such as a dairy barn, creamery, granary, four-bedroom house, and bunkhouse. These buildings remain standing in the northwestern portion of the Specific Plan Area, just south of Home Depot, but several are in very poor structural condition and are not habitable.

The namesake for the ranch is its original developer, John Froom, a native of Canada. He came to the area in the 1870s as a laborer. He leased 500 acres of the ranch in 1890 and began dairying with 50 cows. After John Froom’s death in 1929, Bill Froom, one of the sons of John, took over the ranch and ran it until 1977. Alex Madonna purchased the property in 1976, and Bill Froom continued to live on the ranch until 1998. Mr. Madonna raised cattle beef on the property for several years. The property is currently used by John Madonna as an office and storage yard for his construction business.

Existing Historic Structures

The Historic Resource Assessment prepared for Froom Ranch identifies the complex of historic structures as potentially eligible for consideration as a local resource and meets National Register criteria for a historic district. The report notes that the complex is an excellent example of early 20th century ranching and dairy industry development in San Luis Obispo County and the structures represent predominant Craftsman and vernacular styles of that era.
The following table provides a summary of the existing historic buildings on the site, date constructed, when known, condition, and proposal for the building once the site is further developed. The current conditions and proposals for the historic structures are based on site inspections, and input from technical experts, including a structural engineer, Greg Stork of Stork, Wolfe & Associates, and an architectural historian, Robert Chattel of Chattel, Inc. The existing locations of all these buildings is shown on Figure 3-7.

### Table 3-1. Contributing Historic Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year Built</th>
<th>Architecturally Significant</th>
<th>Condition Summary</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main Residence</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good, most recently used as office for Madonna Construction.</td>
<td>Rehabilitate as building for City Parks and Recreation: • Structurally reinforce roof and walls; • Provide new foundation; and • Install utilities to building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Old Barn</td>
<td>Unknown, est. 125 yrs old</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Good; extensively renovated.</td>
<td>Remove and document per Secretary of the Interior (SOI) standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bunk House</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Remove and document per SOI standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Round-Nose Dairy Barn</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Cantilevered front end sagging; gaps in exterior siding.</td>
<td>Reconstruct and relocate building out of fault setback consistent with SOI standards for adaptive reuse in park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Creamery House</td>
<td>Unknown, likely prior to 1900</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Poor, serious structural deficiencies and dry rot; not habitable.</td>
<td>Reconstruct western portion of the building as City park restrooms. Re-imagine eastern portion for use as a covered area for picnics and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Granary</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Poor, serious structural deficiencies and dry rot; not habitable.</td>
<td>Remove and document per SOI standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shed Building</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>Remove and document per SOI standards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buildings listed in Table 3-1 would be assessed and documented consistent with Secretary of the Interior (SOI) Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Interpretative signage that provides information on building history and function should be provided to inform the public.
There are several other small buildings as well as a modern, telecommunications tower that is camouflaged to look like a water tower to appear visually compatible with adjacent ranch buildings. These buildings are inventoried in the following table.

### Table 3-2 Other Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year Built</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cell Tower</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Retain in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Storage Building</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Remove, not historic per historic report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Outhouse</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Remove, modern building repurposed as bathroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3-7 Map of Historic Buildings*
Historic Goals, Policies & Programs:

**Goal 3.3.a:** Where feasible per City Historic Preservation Ordinance Section 14.01.020 (#18), identify, preserve, and adaptively reuse historic resources that embody the ranch character of the Specific Plan area.

**Policy 3.3.1:** Assess and document historic buildings consistent with the Secretary of the Interior (SOI) Rehabilitation Standards and Guidelines.

**Policy 3.3.2:** Install interpretative signage to provide information on historic buildings for information and documentation to the public.

Program 3.3.2a: Include historic dairy equipment in onsite displays or donate to local historic society.

Program 3.3.2b: Harvest old wood and other building features from demolished or refurbished buildings for use elsewhere on-site.

**Significant Historic Buildings Proposal**

Based on guidance from the historic report, input from the applicant’s architectural historian, feedback from City staff members, and the conceptual review of the Specific Plan area by the City's Cultural Heritage Committee (CHC), the proposal is to incorporate the most significant historic structures into the project plans, which are the Round-nose Dairy Barn, Creamery House, and Main Residence. The three buildings would be located within the 3.6-acre public trailhead park as a complex (see Figure 3-9, Trailhead Park Plan).

Because a portion of the Round-nose Dairy Barn is located over an earthquake fault, the locations of the three structures would shift downhill. The goals of the site plan are to keep the buildings grouped together in the same relative horizontal configuration, and create grade changes between buildings to mimic proportionately the existing vertical relationship, but also provide for required accessibility. Figure 3-8, Proposed Plan for Historic Buildings, illustrates the relationship between the existing and proposed locations of the three most significant historic buildings.

The building proposals are as follows:

**Round-nose Dairy Barn** – The building would be moved out of the fault setback, reconstructed to SOI standards, and adaptively reused. The building would not be fully sealed and have open beams without internal drywall. Some existing siding would be harvested and reused for rebuilt facades.

**Creamery House** – The proposal for the final product is to be more interpretative, rather than a full reconstruction. The main goal with the rebuilding is to preserve the overall building form and rooflines. The western portion of the building would be rebuilt to house the restrooms within a custom footprint with the same dimensions as the existing building. The plan for the eastern portion of the building beyond the restrooms would be to capture the silhouette and be more open. The area is envisioned as a covered picnic area within the park.
Main Residence – The building would fall under the SOI rehabilitation standards.

The final details and proposals for use of the buildings will be developed with consultation with the City Parks and Recreation Director and Parks and Recreation Commission. Further details of the proposed trailhead park development are included in the following Section of this chapter.

Figure 3-8 Proposed Plan for Historic Structures
3.3.2 Pre-Historic Resources

The Specific Plan area includes two previously recorded prehistoric resources. The design for the proposed project would completely avoid the area surrounding these two sites. Therefore, neither of the previously recorded prehistoric sites would be affected by project development.

In addition, several isolate prehistoric artifacts and historic features were discovered and their locations mapped during the project survey. A small concentration of stone artifacts, including a projectile point, a core, and chert waste flake was found on a hilltop of the project. In addition, isolate waste flakes were encountered along the west bank of Froom Creek in the northern portion of the project, and an isolate biface was mapped in the southeastern portion of the project area.

Pre-Historic Goals, Policies & Programs:

Goal 3.3.b: Long-term protection of pre-historic cultural resources.

Policy 3.3.3: Provide for the protection of known archaeological resources.

Policy 3.3.4: Section 4.30 of the City of San Luis Obispo’s Archeological Resource Preservation Guidelines, Mitigation Methods, and Avoidance, are hereby included by reference.

3.4 Recreation Resources

The City of San Luis Obispo requires a minimum dedication of ten (10) acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Based on the estimated 130 Specific Plan area dwelling units outside of the Life Plan Community at 2.29 persons per unit, a total of 2.9 acres of parkland is required. The Specific Plan area meets this requirement by providing 3.6 acres of parkland in the form of a public trailhead park. Parkland facilities are illustrated in Figure 3.8. Final sizing and location of parkland facilities will be determined during the Tentative and Final Mapping stages.

3.4.1 Trailhead Park

As discussed in the previous section of this Specific Plan, the Froom Ranch project site includes a complex of historic structures that are typical of early 20th century ranching and dairy industry development in San Luis Obispo County. The Trailhead Park will preserve and maintain the existing historic character of Froom Ranch by retaining the most architecturally significant historic structures on the property, and incorporating them into the park. A key part of the park’s vision is to celebrate the site’s history and to educate the public about the former dairy and ranching uses.

A principal goal of the park is to provide connections to the surrounding public trails. The Trailhead Park is designed to conveniently link the project and the park to the surrounding public trails along Froom Creek and the adjacent Irish Hills Natural Reserve, and to provide off-street parking to accommodate trail users. In addition, the park will provide typical support features such as benches, picnic tables, restrooms, and a play area.
The Froom Ranch Trailhead Public Park parcel is approximately 3.6 acres in size, consisting of 2.9 acres of space for park facilities, and 0.7 acres of open space, which includes a drainage channel. The entire parcel would be dedicated to the City of San Luis Obispo. The open space area would be in an easement and privately maintained; this area provides the park with a buffer from the adjacent shopping center.

Figure 3-9 Trailhead Park Plan
**Landscaping**

The landscaping for the park will primarily consist of low-growing and drought-tolerant native grasses to mimic the historic setting of the ranch. Drought-tolerant trees and shrubs will be strategically placed in informal groupings behind the historic structures to provide shade and buffers from the parking areas and adjacent residential and commercial areas. Dense evergreen vegetation will be used where needed to screen commercial service areas, the existing cell tower, and to soften fence lines and walls. Landscaping along the adjacent creeks and drainages will include native riparian and drought-tolerant plants, located in naturalistic groupings to extend the park-like setting and enhance and transition from the project to the surrounding open space. Trees along Local Road “A” would be grouped to allow views into the site, and the parkway planting in front of the park should complement the park’s landscape palette.

**Pathways**

Primary park pathways will be 6-feet to 8-feet wide, and paved with a colored and textured concrete paving. Plaza areas at building entrances will be paved with decorative permeable pavers, brick, and/or colored and scored concrete. Key plaza and path intersections could also include decorative historical mosaics in the paving or stamped footprint patterns of the local wildlife.

**Lighting & Fencing**

Lighting and fencing should be historically accurate to the Froom Ranch setting. A ranch style wire fence is suggested to delineate the boundaries of the playground, cell tower, and adjacent drainage area. Lighting is not currently proposed within the Trailhead Park or adjacent open space areas, and the park and open space areas are intended for daytime use only. If lighting is required, it is suggested to be minimal and placed only within the Trailhead Park at the parking areas and primary plazas for security purposes only.

**Trailhead Park Areas & Features**

The Trailhead Park is proposed to include the following areas for recreation and play. Refer to the Conceptual Trailhead Park plan for examples of park amenities, landscape character, and area locations.

1. **Areas 1 and 2: Vehicular Access and Off-Street Parking**
   a. **Parking** - The Trailhead Park will provide approximately 30 parking spaces, which includes 1 space for ranger parking and 1 space for handicapped parking, and a conveniently located central drop off area. Primary vehicular and parking areas will be paved in asphalt.
   b. **Emergency Access** - An emergency access road will link the adjacent commercial area and the public park through an easement, and provide for pedestrian access and restricted access to the commercial loading area. The access road is proposed to be decorative and appear to be a pedestrian area, paved with colored and scored concrete, or drivable pavers. Removable bollards will be utilized to restrict vehicular access into the park.
c. **Cell Tower Access** - Restricted vehicular access to the adjacent cell tower will be provided through an easement, with a portion utilized for pedestrian access to the picnic area and a pathway that connects with the adjacent Irish Hills Natural Reserve. Vehicular access will be restricted by removable bollards at the parking area, and will include a gate at the cell tower’s property boundary. The cell tower maintenance road is envisioned to utilize a natural resin aggregate flexible paving, or colored and scored concrete.

2. **Areas 3 to 5: Historic Plazas**
   a. A small series of plazas with interpretive and directional signs are proposed throughout the Trailhead Park to educate and direct park visitors. Plazas should be located on the back sides of the buildings where feasible to not detract from the natural setting.
   i. **The Main Residence Plaza (Area 3)** – This area will contain an interpretive sign, and could also include decorative paving, public art, bike racks, and benches and/or a seat wall. The Main Residence should maintain the existing front steps and utilize a ramp behind the house to provide accessibility. The Main Residence should include one prominently located palm tree near the front of the house to mimic the historic setting.
   ii. **The Creamery House Entry Feature (Area 4)** – This area will contain interpretive and directional signage, and could also include a drinking fountain, trash and recycling receptacles, and benches and/or a seat wall. The Creamery House will contain public restrooms within the west portion of the building, and an open trellis area on the eastern portion for a sheltered picnic and gathering space. The open trellis areas will contain steps to mimic the existing grade differential between the building areas, and be linked by an accessible ramp.
   iii. **The Round-nose Dairy Barn Plaza (Area 5)** – This area will contain interpretive signage, and could also include decorative paving, and benches and/or a seat wall.

3. **Area 6: Playground Area (ages 5 to 12)**
   a. The playground is proposed to be located behind the Round-nosed Dairy Barn to not detract from the historic character of the ranch.
   b. The fenced playground will contain informal play features made from natural elements such as wood, rope, and boulders. The playground area should include items to mimic the adjacent creek such as boulders, sand play, and wood timbers.
   c. The playground will contain interactive interpretive elements to educate playground users about the site’s history and natural setting, and should include benches, trash and recycling receptacles, and adjacent picnic areas.

4. **Area 7: Trailhead Plaza**
   a. A trailhead plaza is proposed in a key location to conveniently link the parking areas with the Froom Creek and adjacent Irish Hills Natural Reserve trail systems.
b. The trailhead plaza will contain benches, bike parking, directional signage, trail maps, and/or interpretive signs about the surrounding natural environment and site history.

c. The trailhead plaza may contain decorative accent paving and boulders.

5. Area 8: Picnic Area
a. An informal picnic area is proposed to provide group picnic opportunities. The picnic area will contain picnic tables, and trash and recycling receptacles. The picnic area could contain a barbeque, and/or perimeter seat walls to facilitate more users. The picnic area is envisioned to be paved with a natural resin aggregate flexible paving.

3.4.2 General Principles:

1. Parks should provide pedestrian linkages to the existing trail system within the adjacent Irish Hills Natural Reserve.

2. Primary pedestrian pathways in the parks should be six-feet to eight-feet wide, and paved with a colored and textured concrete surfacing. Trail rest areas would be surfaced with textured concrete or decorative permeable pavers.

3. Paving for parking in the parks would be asphalt. Paved plaza areas should be decorative permeable pavers, brick, and/or colored and scored concrete.

4. Ranch style wire fencing should be used to delineate the boundaries of the parks and adjacent open space areas.

5. Lighting should be minimal and placed within the parking areas and primary plaza areas only if required for safety purposes. Fixture styles should be historically accurate to the Froom Ranch setting.

6. Fencing or walls should be provided to separate adjacent existing and proposed residential uses, with pedestrian entries provided in key locations.

7. Park landscaping should primarily consist of drought-tolerant trees, shrubs, and native grasses to mimic the historic setting of the ranch.

8. Dense evergreen vegetation should be used when necessary to screen unsightly views such as service areas. Screening vegetation should also be utilized between the park and residential lots where needed to provide privacy and to soften fence lines and walls.
3.4.3 Life Plan Community Parks

The proposed Life Plan Community is not included in the calculation of required parkland dedication above due to its unique community land use plan, special needs of residents, and provision of a full complement of recreation facilities and opportunities within its portion of the overall Specific Plan. Overall, the Life Plan Community will be provided with abundant and age appropriate recreation facilities.

The Life Plan Community includes many types of active and passive recreational opportunities, such as: an outdoor swimming pool, spa pool, gym, trails, pickle ball, bocce ball, community gardens, resident gardening plots, theater, outdoor seating areas, library, and craft rooms. Generalized references to potential recreational areas, recreational facilities, and community gathering areas are shown in Figure 3-10.

The Life Plan Community will also have a connection to Irish Hills trails. For security reasons, these would be controlled access linkages to trails beyond the Life Plan Community, which would be provided by coded gates in fencing. Appropriate signage will be added at key locations to properly direct hikers to public trails and avoid confusion with entry points to the privately secured Life Plan Community (see Figure 5-12). See additional discussion in Section 5.5.3 and a fencing guideline in Section 4.4.4.
Figure 3-10 Life Plan Community’s Recreational Areas
3.5 Scenic Resources

The Specific Plan area is characterized by relatively flat grassland areas near Los Osos Valley Road which transitions to steeper slopes before approaching open space property at the base of the Irish Hills. The City's General Plan states the Specific Plan area should “maintain viewshed of surrounding mountains and secure steeper hillsides as protected open space areas” and that “variable height limits will be required to protect views of adjacent hills” (LUE Section 8.1.5. SP-3, Madonna on LOVR Specific Plan Area b, c).

The street corridor of Los Osos Valley Road that provides the eastern boundary of the Specific Plan area is identified in the City's Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE Figure 11) as a scenic roadway of high scenic value. This designation attests to the scenic value and beauty of the Irish Hills that are aptly named for the emerald green hue they display in the winter and spring months.

Scenic Resources Goals, Policies & Programs:

**Goal 3.5.a:** Retain scenic corridors of hillside areas throughout the City.

**Policy 3.5.1:** Minimize impacts to public views of backdrop hillside views from scenic roadway corridors.

**Program 3.5.1a:** During the development review process, the Architectural Review Commission (ARC) shall approve landscaping plans for the City's landscaped setback areas along the site's Los Osos Valley Road scenic corridor. Trees shall be clustered to allow some backdrop view corridors.

**Program 3.5.1b:** Development plans shall include photo simulations showing visual impacts from various key viewing areas of proposed project development to the approval of the Architectural Review Commission (ARC).

**Goal 3.5b:** Allow limited development of residential units above the 150-foot elevation.

**Program 3.5.2a:** Strategies to limit any impacts of new buildings above 150-feet to visual resources include, but are not limited to:

1) Minimizing the use of retaining walls with over 8 feet of exposed face;
2) Locating development behind natural landforms to screen buildings;
3) Limiting the roof heights of buildings to that of the adjacent Mountainbrook Church (238');
4) Use of earth tone colors for main building walls; and
5) Limiting exterior lighting and requiring that all fixtures are shielded and directed downward in compliance with the City's Night Sky Preservation Ordinance.
Program 3.5.2b: Limit the roof height of any structures above the 150-foot elevation to 238’. This is the roof height of the existing church on the adjacent property to the southwest of the Specific Plan area.

Program 3.5.3c: Protect clusters of rare plants in place, where practical.

The General Plan and the 150-Foot Development Limit Elevation

The Specific Plan area is located in the County, just south of the City limits. The Irish Hills Planning Area (west side of Los Osos Valley Road, south of Madonna) was first identified on the 1977 City of San Luis Obispo General Plan Map. The northern portion of the Irish Hills Planning Area was identified as an expansion area for future development (where residential development above Irish Hills Plaza now exists), while the area to the south was shown as open space since development was not anticipated during that General Plan timeframe.

The City initiated its hillside planning program between 1982-1984 in two main phases. The Irish Hills area maps showed the Specific Plan Area as open space and outside the Urban Reserve Line (URL). For areas in the expansion area and within the URL, there is reference to a 200’ development limit elevation. General Plan maps between 1977 and 2014 consistently showed the Specific Plan Area outside the URL except for a small commercial expansion area just beyond the boundaries of the Irish Hills Plaza.

With the designation of Specific Plan Area #3 in the adopted Land Use & Circulation Element (LUCE) in 2014, a specific development limit line for the Froom Ranch property was not identified. Therefore, the earlier development limit of 150 feet for the Irish Hills Area included in Hillside Planning Policy 6.4.7.H. prevails without the benefit of a detailed reconnaissance and analysis of resources unique to this site. Properties included within the Irish Hills area vary from one another in terms of topographical changes and site resources. Unique to the project site are the proximity of the drainage channel and wetlands to Los Osos Valley Road.

Topography above the 150-foot limit in some locations of the Specific Plan Area is gentler and more suitable for residential development. The Specific Plan demonstrates that the requisite 50% open space standard for Froom Ranch is satisfied even with development beyond the 150-foot elevation contour. In addition, sensitive site resources, such as protected plant species and serpentine rock outcrops, have been carefully mapped and will be avoided while still allowing for development to occur.

As noted in Program 3.5.2a above, development above the 150-foot elevation contour will be limited in scale, use appropriate earth colors used for wall surfaces, and shield light fixtures, to blend in with its surroundings. Photo simulations were prepared for decision-makers to evaluate that potential visual impacts associated with development above the 150-foot elevation contour were mitigated.