

1.0 GENERAL CONCEPTS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Hidden Pines Specific Plan is one of seven specific plans prepared as the culmination to the Santa Maria Sphere of Influence and Concurrent Annexation Study. The specific plans are prepared for the six primary "Target Areas" which are the subject of studies documented in the Phase I Reports (June 1990) and the Final Environmental Impact Report (September 1992).

1.1.1 Purpose of the Specific Plan

Ideally, the specific plan directs all facets of future development, including the distribution of land uses, the location and sizing of supporting infrastructure, site planning and architectural guidelines, and methods of financing public improvements. The specific plans also include timetables for annexation and development. In this way, they will be useful in forecasting future growth and understanding the potential impacts of that growth in advance of any development.

1.1.2 Summary of Specific Plan Recommendations

Land Use. The 60-acre Hidden Pines planning area is located at the northern edge of Santa Maria, in an area surrounded by residential uses and open space. Development under the plan would preserve the area's existing character. To this end, 20 acres will be designated for future small lot single-family residential use, while the remaining 40 acres surrounding the existing Blosser Retardation Basin will be preserved as open space.

It is recommended that the alignment of Railroad Avenue be included within the proposed annexation area. Railroad Avenue has been constructed and serves development to the north in the City of Santa Maria and will serve property to be annexed under this Specific Plan.

Circulation. The planning area is not currently served by a circulation system. The area's planned grid pattern road system will tie into the City's existing road network via Blosser Road and Railroad Avenue. The plan also calls for a network of bicycle and pedestrian paths which link the planned residential area to Preisker Park, Robert F. Grogan Park and Rancho Verde subdivision. The existing Bradley Drainage Channel will serve as a crucial link in the proposed bicycle/pedestrian system.

Community Design. Noteworthy aspects of these guidelines include extensive use of drought-tolerant and native vegetation in landscape design, encouragement of energy-efficient architecture and site planning, and an emphasis on the use of landscaping in the design of land use buffers.

Infrastructure. The residential uses proposed under the Hidden Pines Specific Plan will necessitate considerable new water, sewerage and drainage infrastructure. An extensive network of 8- and 10-inch water pipelines needed to serve the residential area adjacent to Railroad Avenue will connect to the City's existing system south of the area. The proposed sewerage system will parallel the water system. The area's drainage needs are currently served by the Bradley Channel and Blosser Retardation Basin, both of which are located within the planning area. Improvements to those facilities as well as the construction of a 27-inch pipeline along Railroad Avenue comprise the important features of the drainage plan.

1.1.3 Organization of the Document

This document contains four components which guide planned policies and programs and establish development standards as a means of ensuring their implementation. The components include:

1.0 *General Concepts:*

Reviews the planning area's environmental opportunities and constraints, and includes overall goals and objectives for the plan.

2.0 *Land Development Pattern:*

The heart of the Specific Plan, this section contains the recommendations for the planning area's land use, circulation, community design, and infrastructure systems.

3.0 *Land Development Regulations:*

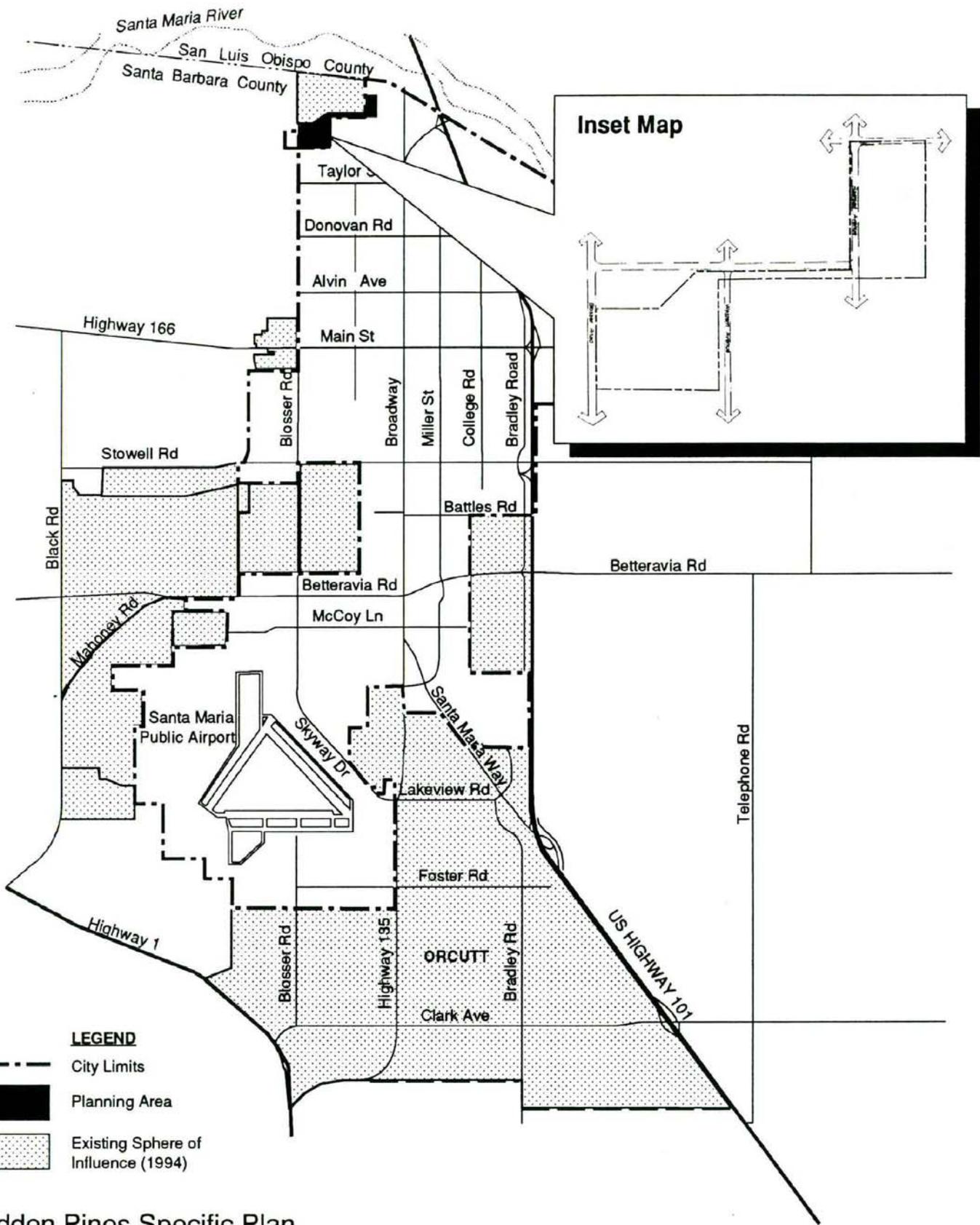
Details the regulatory framework and development standards which drive the plan and contains architectural, landscaping and site design standards for projects within the planning area.

4.0 *Implementation and Administration:*

Includes the development phasing, maintenance programs, and the financing mechanisms; needed to implement the plan.

1.1.4 Project Location

The Hidden Pines planning area is located at the northern end of the City of Santa Maria, approximately two and a half miles north of the City's central core. Upon annexation, the planning area will comprise the northernmost parcels found in the City, beyond which lie the Santa Maria River and San Luis Obispo County. Figure 1-1 shows the planning area's location in relation to the City and its sphere of influence.



LEGEND

-  City Limits
-  Planning Area
-  Existing Sphere of Influence (1994)

Hidden Pines Specific Plan



**PLANNING AREA
LOCATION**

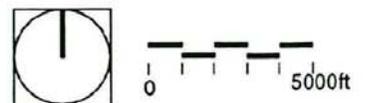
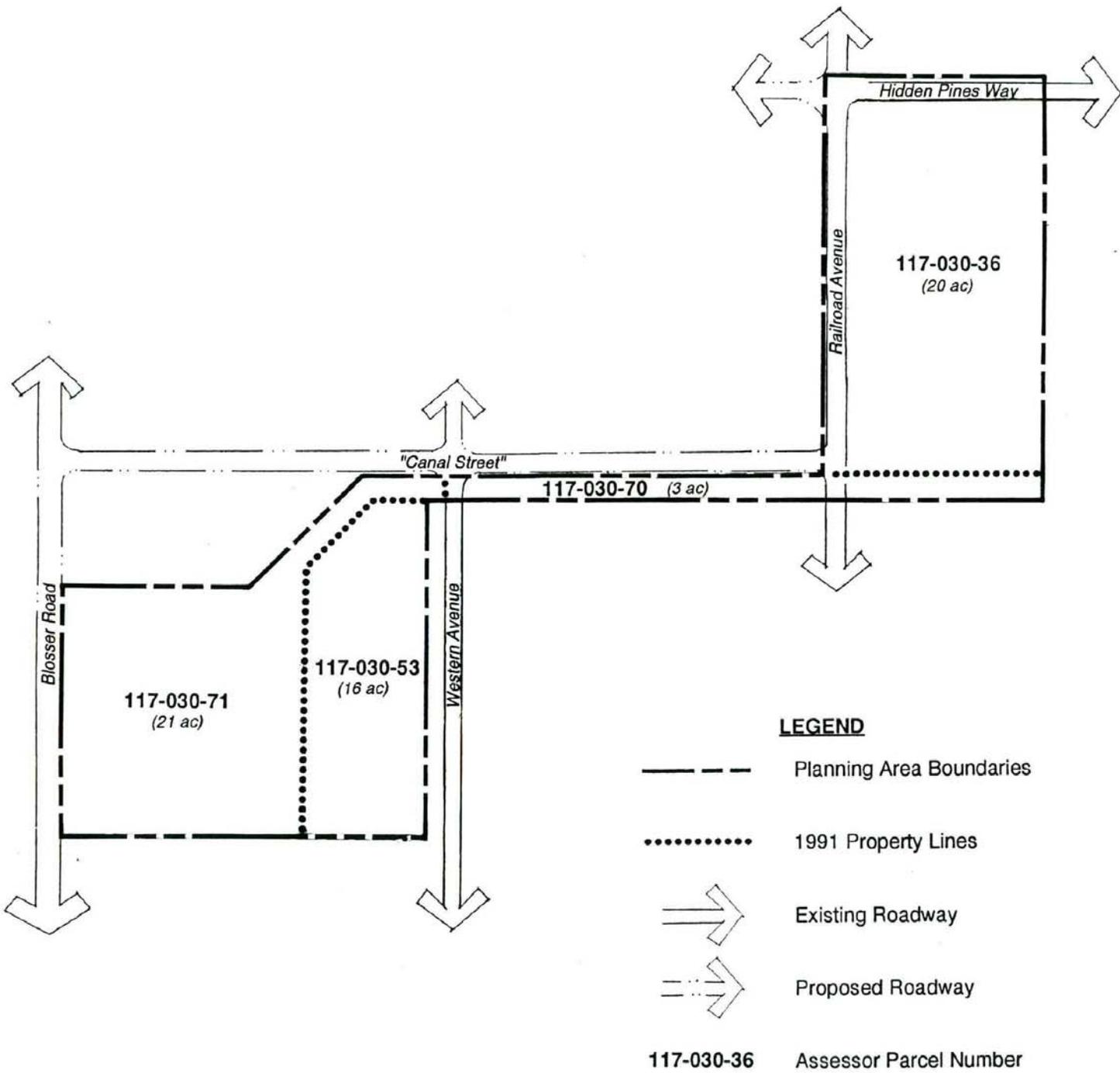


Figure 1-1



Hidden Pines Specific Plan



FUGRO

PLANNING AREA BOUNDARIES

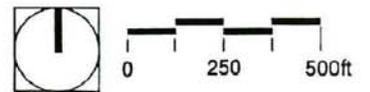


Figure 1-2

The planning area is comprised of two distinct portions linked by the existing Bradley Drainage Channel. The northeastern 20-acre portion is located approximately 1,500 feet northeast of the northernmost extension of Railroad Avenue, while the larger southwestern area encompassing the Blosser Retention/Recharge Basin, owned by the Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Conservation District, is located on the east side of the northernmost portion of Blosser Avenue. Figure 1-2 shows the boundaries of the planning area in relation to existing and proposed roadways.

1.1.5 Relationship to the City of Santa Maria General Plan

The Hidden Pines Specific Plan guides development in an area that is, as of this writing, outside of the City's corporate boundary. Upon annexation, the Hidden Pines planning area would come under the jurisdiction of the City of Santa Maria, and all relevant citywide goals, policies, and programs of the City's General Plan would apply.

In accordance with state law, the Hidden Pines Specific Plan has been prepared to be completely consistent with the City's General Plan. By definition, a Specific Plan includes a greater level of detail, especially with respect to site planning and development issues, than can be found in the master document from which it takes its direction. In this way, the Specific Plan can be seen as a bridge between the General Plan and the zoning ordinance.

1.1.6 Relationship to Other Specific Plans

Sphere Study Specific Plans. The Hidden Pines Specific Plan is one of seven specific plans being prepared pursuant to the City's Sphere of Influence Boundary and Concurrent Annexation Study (1989 through 1992). Like the Hidden Pines plan, the other six plans (known as the West Main, Blosser-Southeast, Blosser-Southwest, Mahoney Ranch, West Stowell and Entrada Este Specific Plans) establish annexation timetables and development standards for various areas joining the City. Consequently, the Hidden Pines Specific Plan bears a close relationship to its sister plans; indeed, each plan will purposely share a number of common development standards and guidelines.

Entrada Specific Plan. The Entrada Specific Plan is one of two plans presently adopted by the City. The objectives of the Entrada Plan are to "protect and enhance the quality of the environment and future development found along the major entrance-ways to the City of Santa Maria." However, due to the remote location of the Hidden Pines planning area, the provisions of the Entrada Specific Plan do not apply.

Santa Maria Research Park Specific Plan. The Research Park Specific Plan proposes development of lands within the Santa Maria Airport District, immediately south of the airport itself. Stipulations included in this plan will have no effect on the provisions of the Hidden Pines Specific Plan.

Rivergate/Roemer Specific Plan. The Rivergate/Roemer Specific Plan (adopted in January 1994) envisions a mix of commercial and residential uses on 194 acres in the northeastern corner of the City, east of the Broadway/U.S.Highway 101 interchange. Development under this plan will not directly affect development under the Hidden Pines Specific Plan. However, cumulative concerns related to public services and infrastructure would need to be addressed to ensure that sufficient emergency service protection, educational and other community facilities and utilities are available to future development.

1.1.7 Relationship to County Plans and Policies

Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan. The City of Santa Maria must coordinate closely with the County of Santa Barbara as well as the Santa Barbara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) in its effort to annex the Hidden Pines planning area. As a result of this process, future development in the planning area must be consistent with the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan, the governing document for development throughout the County. Although strictly speaking the policies contained in that document apply only to the County's unincorporated areas, the City must be cognizant of these policies when developing specific plans for areas it wishes to annex. Indeed, consistency with County policies forms a major criterion on which LAFCO bases its decisions regarding annexation of unincorporated areas into cities.

Local Agency Formation Commission Policies. The Santa Barbara County Local Agency Formation, or LAFCO, establishes standards designed to promote efficient and orderly development within urban areas. Since LAFCO has the power to approve or deny land annexation requests, it is critical that cities comply with LAFCO policies when developing specific plans for areas under consideration for annexation. A summary of these policies follows. For a more complete discussion, refer to Section 5.0 (Land Use/Policy Analysis) of the City of Santa Maria Sphere Study Draft EIR.

- *Discourage Urban Sprawl.* LAFCO policies are geared toward orderly and logical development. To this end, land annexations must be physically contiguous to existing city limits. In addition, annexations must be within a city's sphere of influence. Since the Hidden Pines planning area is not within the City of Santa Maria's Sphere of Influence, a boundary adjustment is necessary prior to or concurrent with annexation.
- *Protection of Agricultural Lands.* LAFCO Policy IV states that:
...agricultural resources and support facilities should be given special consideration in sphere of influence designation. High value agriculture areas...should not be included in an urban service sphere of influence. Because the Sphere Study Draft EIR found a low agricultural suitability for those areas to be developed under the Hidden Pines Specific Plan, the plan is in conformance with this LAFCO policy.

1.1.8 Relationship to EIR/Mitigation Measures

As stated previously, the Hidden Pines Specific Plan is prepared pursuant to the City of Santa Maria Sphere of Influence Boundary Study and Concurrent Annexation EIR. As such, policies and standards contained in this specific plan incorporate those mitigation measures deemed by the EIR as necessary to reduce environmental impacts resulting from this project to a less than significant level. For example, water and open space conservation measures contained in this plan are a direct result of the recommendations of the EIR. The following discussion of the area's environmental opportunities and constraints highlights many of the mitigations that are integrated into this plan.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Effective planning requires a basic understanding of a variety of environmental issues affecting land development. The Phase I Report and subsequent Draft EIR for the City of Santa Maria's Sphere of Influence Study evaluate the opportunities and constraints facing the area slated for development under the Hidden Pines Specific Plan. A summary of that information is presented below.

1.2.1 Land Use

The Hidden Pines Planning Area is actually comprised of two discontinuous parcels linked by a concrete drainage channel. These parcels, roughly 1500 feet apart from each other, are located at the northwest edge of the City of Santa Maria in an area generally dominated by agriculture and vacant land.

The 20-acre eastern parcel abuts a mobile home park to the east, and is separated from Preisker Park by that development. To the north of this parcel is the newly constructed Hidden Pines Way. North of Hidden Pines Way is the 207-unit Hidden Pines Estates subdivision where residential units are currently being constructed and sold. The land to the west of this parcel is in limited agricultural production.

The larger 40-acre western parcel currently serves as a catch basin for the previously mentioned drainage channel. Row crops bound this area to the west and north, and mobile home and single-family residential uses border the parcel to the south and east.

The uses proposed by this Specific Plan include single-family residential units for the eastern parcel and the maintenance of the western area in open space. The Sphere Study Draft EIR finds that such uses would be compatible with the existing scale of development and would not result in significant land use conflicts.

1.2.2 Circulation

There are adequate existing roads to serve the development of the planning area. Railroad Avenue was extended in early 1992, and the Railroad Avenue Bridge was constructed in 1990. The westernmost parcel, proposed for Recreation Open Space, would only have vehicular access from Blosser Road, but would also have pedestrian and bicycle access from the east along the drainage channel and from the proposed multi-purpose trail.

1.2.3 Infrastructure

Water. Although an existing eight-inch pipeline borders much of the southern boundary of the planning area, no extensions have been made into the area itself, except to accommodate irrigated agriculture. Future residential development will necessitate the extension of such lines on a larger scale. The Draft EIR for the Sphere Study estimates that development will generate an increased water demand of 32,957 gallons per day (GPD) in the Hidden Pines planning area.

Wastewater. An existing trunk line runs along the west side of Casa Grande Mobile Estates and down Railroad Avenue. There are smaller sewer lines at Railroad and Vista del Rio, south of the area. The sewer capacity report prepared by John Carollo Engineers indicates that under full development, the sewer trunks from this area would be surcharged and would need improvements. Such improvements are proposed in this Specific Plan.

Drainage. The entire Hidden Pines planning area has recently been removed from the 100-year floodplain, as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The area's drainage system is adequate to handle the runoff associated with such a flood event. A brief summary of the area's existing drainage facilities follows.

Three major drainage facilities serve the Hidden Pines area: Blosser Channel, Bradley Channel and the Blosser Retardation and Groundwater Recharge Basin. While Santa Barbara County Flood Control officials assert that the Blosser Channel and accompanying Retardation Basin could accommodate a 100-year flood, the Bradley Channel currently has insufficient capacity for such an event. Residential development proposed for the area would require an improvement of the Bradley Channel.

1.2.4 Agriculture

The planning area has supported a variety of row crops in the past, most recently kale, kohlrabi, and miniature vegetables. The Sphere Study Final EIR finds that 12 percent of this area currently consists of prime soil. However, all such soils are limited to the western parcel, which is slated to remain as open space. The 20-acre eastern parcel, which is ear-marked for residential uses, has no prime soils. Consequently, development in this portion of the Hidden Pines planning area would not significantly alter the agricultural opportunities present.

1.2.5 Geology and Soils

Due to the presence of the surface trace of the Santa Maria Fault some 1,500 feet southeast of the site, the City of Santa Maria's Safety Element (1987) locates the Planning Area in Ground Shaking Zone A, the zone subject to the greatest risk in the event of an earthquake. Nevertheless, the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan assigns this area a "low to moderate" risk based on its geologic, seismic and soil characteristics. Further, the County's document considers the area to have low liquefaction, landslide and expansive soils potential. The Sphere Study Draft EIR finds that such conditions would not pose an undue hazard to future development at the proposed scale and intensity.

1.2.6 Biological Resources

The western parcel of the Planning Area is of moderate biological sensitivity due to the presence of eucalyptus and Monterey pine trees which may provide bird nesting and Monarch butterfly habitat. Monterey pines are listed as a sensitive tree species of local concern. The eastern parcel is of low biological sensitivity due to the ongoing agricultural operations onsite and the disturbed nature of the surrounding area. The Sphere Study Final EIR states that no significant biological resources are expected to be affected by the proposed development.

1.2.7 Noise

The Hidden Pines planning area is bounded on three sides by existing residential development. Limited agricultural uses are located to the west of the 20-acre parcel. The proposed residential development is not expected to adversely impact existing uses adjacent to the site. Furthermore, because the site is not located near any major noise sources (such as U.S. Highway 101 or the airport), proposed residential development will not be significantly impacted by noise.

1.2.8 Visual Resources

Visual features of the Hidden Pines planning area are agricultural fields in the west and distant mountain ranges in the east. The western parcel features a retention/recharge basin which during rainy winter months becomes the dominant foreground visual landmark. A eucalyptus windrow exists along Blosser Road to the west.

The eastern portion is an infill project with agricultural views to the west and residential uses to the north, east and south.

The development planned will incorporate onsite features as part of the open space system. Residential development proposed will not be of a scale or intensity that would adversely affect distant views.

1.2.9 Cultural Resources

Archaeological investigations have revealed no evidence of cultural resources, indicating that the area is suitable for development. Similarly, no historic artifacts exist in the area.

1.3 GOALS OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN

The preparation of the Hidden Pines Specific Plan fulfills the intent of General Plan Land Use Objective 4h, which calls for specific development studies for areas having unusual development constraints or opportunities not easily accommodated by the provisions of the General Plan. To quote directly:

"Certain portions of the planning area...should be designated as special study areas [because]...they offer the possibility of particularly beneficial land use patterns which may enhance community objectives."

Further, the General Plan seeks to implement this objective through the preparation of:

"...specific development studies [which outline] detailed commitments to capital improvements, and [recommend] special development standards for the area."

Hidden Pines, an area not yet fully integrated into the City's infrastructural fabric, qualifies in this regard. Because of its largely undeveloped character, future development here requires special attention in order to properly address the unique locational and environmental concerns of the 60-acre planning area.

The goals of the Hidden Pines Specific Plan, while designed to address local environmental opportunities and constraints, must also be consistent with the established goals of the Santa Maria General Plan. These goals are listed here:

1. ***It shall be the goal of the Hidden Pines Specific Plan to provide residential opportunities to help meet the housing needs of the growing population of the City of Santa Maria.*** In accordance with General Plan Goal H.1, housing units shall be safe, affordable and environmentally sound.
2. ***It shall be the goal of the Hidden Pines Specific Plan to reflect the character of the adjacent residential areas in north Santa Maria.*** To this end, small single-family lots shall be encouraged.
3. ***It shall be the goal of the Hidden Pines Specific Plan to integrate storm drainage facilities into a coherent open space system.*** Open space shall be maintained in accordance with General Plan Goal ERME 3, which *"...considers aesthetic enhancement as a vital ingredient in all development efforts."*

Specific objectives, policies and programs relating to each issue area (e.g., circulation, land use) will be addressed in those sections.