

**Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION**

The North Camino Ramon Specific Plan Area (NCRSP) represents a unique opportunity for the City of San Ramon to create and implement a new vision for one of the City's older development areas. Initial development at this entry to the City occurred when development patterns and opportunities were very different. Since this original development pattern was first established, commercial development in Danville to the north (Costco) attracts local consumers while Bishop Ranch Business Park to the south has become a premier employment center for the Bay Area. Development in the Dougherty Valley and Westside areas have provided a residential balance to the job rich environment and created more demand for goods and services locally. The approved City Center project provides a vision for the next decade, while the evolution of the NCRSP Area will ensure that there are continued opportunities to meet the community's economic, employment, housing and quality of life needs well into the future.

NORTH CAMINO RAMON SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

The North Camino Ramon Specific Plan Area is located in the Crow Canyon and Bishop Ranch planning areas, adjacent to Interstate 680 and San Ramon's boundary with the Town of Danville. The area is part of the multi-city corridor including Danville, Alamo, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, and Concord to the north; and Dublin, Pleasanton and Livermore to the south. The Plan Area contains approximately 295 acres, including existing roadways, and is characterized by a wide range of uses including retail, service commercial, professional offices and warehouses. Most uses are located in older commercial structures surrounded by surface parking.

In a regional context, the Plan Area, along with the adjacent Bishop Ranch and San Ramon Regional Medical Center, provide many jobs for people throughout the East Bay and the broader Bay Area. Bishop Ranch is one of the major employment centers in the San Francisco Bay Area. Over 44,000 employees are estimated to work in or near the Plan Area, representing local, regional and national businesses, and generally commute to work by private automobile or the several bus routes that connect the area to other cities and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations.

Locally, the Plan Area provides San Ramon residents and workers with select services to meet their daily needs. The proximity to the Crow Canyon Road interchange with Interstate 680 and the commercial components within the Plan Area provide residents who commute to jobs outside of San Ramon with a convenient shopping stop on their way home from work. Currently, there are no residential units in the project area.

In recent years, new office space and updated retail/commercial space have been added to the Bishop Ranch Planning Area south of the Specific Plan Area. Development approval for the City Center project at Camino Ramon and Bollinger Canyon Road is another indicator that the broader commercial core of San Ramon is entering a new era of growth and renewal. The City Center project will contain a mix of retail, entertainment, hotel, residential, and city government uses providing a major focal point for San Ramon.

Following the approval of the City Center project, the City's long range planning efforts, coupled with economic development goals, began to look at future opportunities in the North Camino Ramon Area. This Planning effort responds to a desire to be proactive and look at ways to guide the future development pattern within the Plan Area to address future community needs and goals while complementing the approved City Center project. Based on a series of background studies and market analysis, summarized in Chapter 2 Existing Conditions, it became clear that there is unmet retail demand that could be captured locally and that there are potential opportunities for a more efficient land use pattern that could be achieved as part of a mixed-use land use concept.

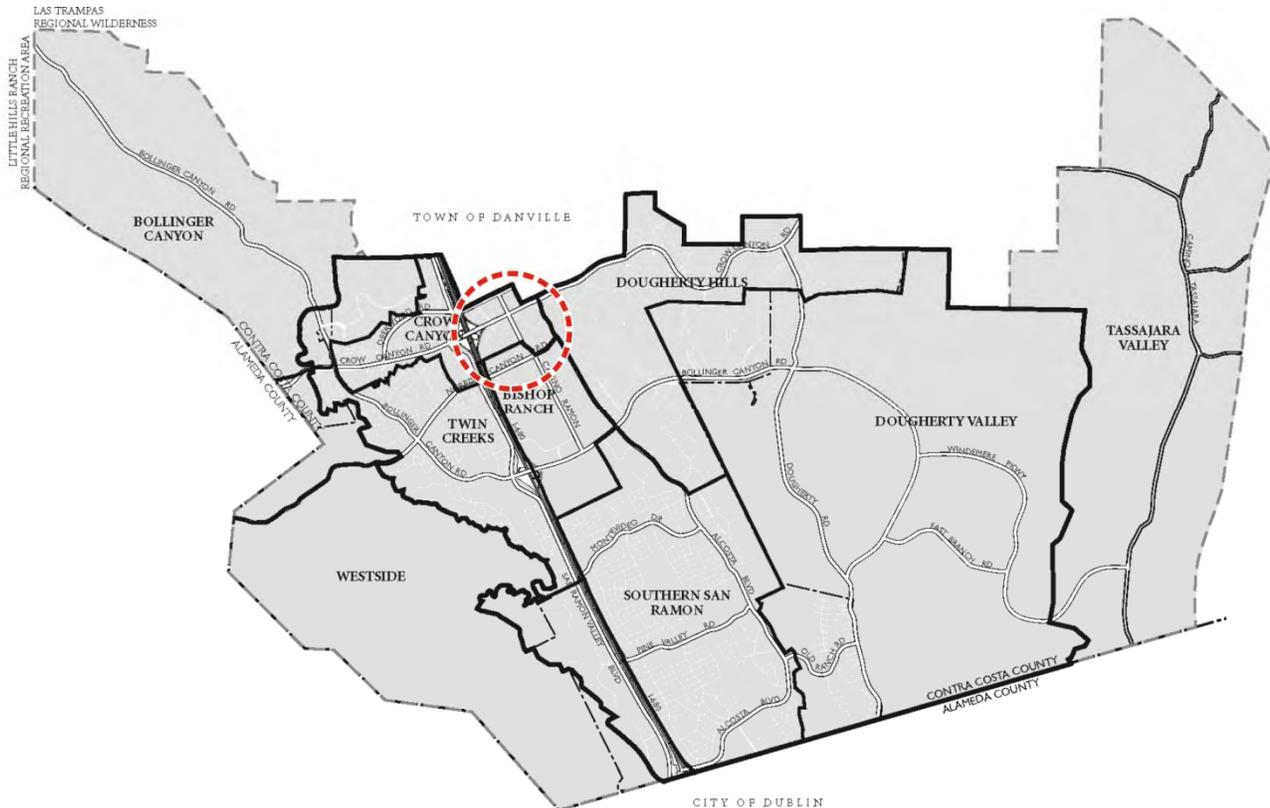


Figure 1.1: Specific Plan Area Location.

Priority Development Area Designation

In 2008, discussions began regarding the creation of the North Camino Ramon Specific Plan Area. Subsequent actions by the San Ramon City Council authorized the submittal of an application to designate the North Camino Ramon Plan Area as a Priority Development Area (PDA) under the FOCUS program. The FOCUS program is led by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), with support from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) — in partnership with congestion management agencies, transit providers, and local governments throughout the Bay Area.

The FOCUS program, as a regional development and conservation strategy, promotes a more compact land use pattern for the Bay Area. It unites the efforts of four regional agencies into a

single program that links land use and transportation by encouraging the development of complete, livable communities in areas served by transit thereby allowing for conservation of significant resource lands. The PDAs are locally identified, infill development opportunity areas located near transit. Established PDAs receive preference for funding and technical assistance to encourage implementation of the smart growth concepts embodied in the FOCUS program.

The NCRSP area has been designated as a Potential PDA and once the City completes the Specific Plan and the PDA is fully approved, the City will be able to pursue additional funding for capital and infrastructure improvements to assist in implementing the Plan (PDA).

Sustainable Communities Strategy

The current Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) being developed by ABAG and MTC is the Bay Area's regional response to the mandates of SB 375 and AB 32 (California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006). While statewide reduction measures, locally adopted Climate Action Plans and other greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction programs are a solid start toward meeting the GHG reduction targets; fundamental changes in land use patterns and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are also thought to be necessary. As such, the proposed SCS, as with the PDAs, seeks to align regional transportation and planning goals to meet GHG reduction and affordable housing targets. A cornerstone of the SCS depends on the compact land use and transit-oriented development patterns already associated with the local Priority Development Areas (PDAs). The North Camino Ramon Specific Plan, as a locally identified potential PDA, will also play a key role in the local implementation of the regional SCS to address State mandates for GHG reduction.

THE SPECIFIC PLAN PLANNING PROCESS

The Specific Plan planning process was established and implemented to provide a multi-step framework for the City and property owners to develop a realistic plan and implementation program to release development potential within the Plan Area, expand retail opportunities, and improve City tax revenues while creating a strong sense of place and community.

The San Ramon City Council, Planning Commission and the City's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) examined the potential of attracting additional retail uses that are not currently located in San Ramon as well as opportunities for a variety of housing types in proximity to new and existing jobs. The City Council, Planning Commission and EDAC held joint workshops to consider alternative plans and implementation strategies with input from interested citizens and property owners.

The Specific Plan planning process was divided into three phases:

Phase 1: Alternatives Identification: Current conditions were investigated and summarized; interviews conducted with major property owners; market potentials evaluated; research conducted into plans and implementation programs for similar projects; and a range of three initial alternative development concepts formulated. Three alternative concepts were developed and reviewed in a workshop with the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Advisory Committee on July 21, 2009. Public input was taken at that workshop and the concepts were further refined.

Phase 2: Alternatives Evaluation: The three alternative development concepts identified in Phase 1 were evaluated from the multi-disciplinary perspectives. Transportation impacts were evaluated, cost estimates were developed for major infrastructure improvements, fiscal impacts to the City estimated, and urban design concepts developed and illustrated. The alternatives were compared, and reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council in a public workshop meeting on December 3, 2009 with direction given to staff and the planning team to develop a hybrid plan drawn from the best elements of the three alternative concepts.

As the preferred alternative was refined, the City continued its outreach efforts through multiple presentations and updates to the City committees as well as information presentations to the local Chamber of Commerce, civic organizations (Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs) and property owner meetings to solicit additional feedback.

Phase 3: Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report: Following the refinement of a hybrid concept plan, and confirmation by the City Council, Planning Commission, and Economic Development Advisory Committee, the City continued with a series of presentations to local service groups, the Chamber of Commerce and City Committees regarding the preferred hybrid concept plan. Throughout this outreach and public hearing process the Plan concepts and content have continued to evolve resulting in the final North Camino Ramon Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report documents.

SPECIFIC PLAN REQUIREMENTS

A specific plan is a tool for the systematic implementation of the City's General Plan. It establishes a link between the policies of the General Plan and the individual development proposals in the specific plan area.

Section 65451 of the California Government Code mandates that a specific plan be structured as follows:

(a) A specific plan shall include a text and a diagram or diagrams which specify all of the following in detail:

(1) The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.

(2) The proposed distribution, location, and extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.

(3) Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable.

(4) A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out paragraphs (1), (2), and (3).

(b) The specific plan shall include a statement of the relationship of the specific plan to the General Plan.

SPECIFIC PLAN COMPONENTS

The North Camino Ramon Specific Plan contains the following Chapters:

- Chapter 1:** **INTRODUCTION** contains an overview of the planning area, the planning process and plan components.
- Chapter 2:** **EXISTING CONDITIONS** provides a summary of conditions and market opportunities that exist within the plan area.
- Chapter 3:** **VISION** is a narrative and graphic scenario of a vision for the area including a Conceptual Plan framework to assist property owners and future decision-makers in understanding the Specific Plan intent.
- Chapter 4:** **LAND USE** contains the land use plan and new land use designations established to implement the NCRSP vision and mixed use goals and policies based on the assumed development program. It also contains provisions for interim uses and parking standards.
- Chapter 5:** **PUBLIC SPACES** sets forth the components of the Public Spaces Framework and development guidelines for active and passive recreational spaces within the Plan Area.
- Chapter 6:** **DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS** contains development profiles and requirements for major streets, sidewalks, open spaces as well as individual Development Block diagrams.
- Chapter 7:** **DESIGN GUIDELINES** provides guidance for improvements, site planning, architectural design, signage, and sustainability measures that will be utilized by the City in evaluating future development projects.
- Chapter 8:** **TRANSPORTATION** sets forth the Plan Area network and policies for vehicular, transit, pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
- Chapter 9:** **UTILITIES** provides information and conceptual plans for all major utility systems needed to accommodate development in the specific plan area.
- Chapter 10:** **PUBLIC FACILITIES** outlines the public facility needs for the area.
- Chapter 11:** **IMPLEMENTATION** provides an overview of the needs, measures and strategies envisioned to enable a public/private partnership to implement the mixed-use vision for the Plan Area.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENERAL PLAN

The North Camino Ramon Specific Plan provides more detailed information and requirements for the implementation of the City of San Ramon General Plan 2030, based on the unique conditions and opportunities of the Plan Area. General Plan 2030 Implementing Policy 4.7-I-4 calls for the preparation and implementation of a North Camino Ramon Specific Plan (NCRSP) as framework for infill development that is pedestrian/bicycle friendly, mixed use, transit-oriented and based on smart growth principles.

The North Camino Ramon Specific Plan is adopted by ordinance and is the policy document with binding legal authority to guide land use, circulation, and infrastructure decisions within the Specific Plan Area. The North Camino Ramon Specific Plan is consistent with and provides more detailed guidance to many General Plan policies. A summary of the Specific Plan policies has been provided in Appendix A.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) identifies and refines policies within the City of San Ramon General Plan that would decrease the City's emissions of greenhouse gases to meet the requirements of AB 32. The Specific Plan as an implementation tool of the General Plan must also be consistent with the General Plan and CAP goals for greenhouse gases reduction.

The Specific Plan by its purpose, design intent and policy direction includes CAP strategies related to:

- **Land Use:** higher-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented, pedestrian-oriented, and compact development.
- **Transportation:** provision of transit facilities, pedestrian connections, bicycle infrastructure, traffic calming, use of low emission vehicles, transportation demand management, end of trip facilities, and parking measures.
- **Energy Conservation** (15% beyond CA Title -24)
- **Water Conservation**
- **Waste Reduction and Recycling**
- **Regional Cooperation**

It is expected that the implementation of the Specific Plan will be compliant with the CAP thresholds for greenhouse gases reduction; however, it will also be necessary to document consistency with CAP through project specific findings associated with the project level approvals and/or any supplemental environmental review required.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A program level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared concurrently with the Specific Plan, utilizing the assumed residential and commercial development program in the Specific Plan area as set forth in the Specific Plan Vision.

As specific development proposals are submitted, the City will determine whether or not the environmental effects of the proposed project are within the parameters of, and addressed by, the Specific Plan's EIR. If the City finds that a proposed development project will have no additional impact on the environment beyond those identified by the Environmental Impact Report, the City shall make a written finding of consistency with the Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report or subsequent environmental review.

Should the City determine that there are potential environmental impacts not studied in the Specific Plan EIR or subsequent environmental review and that environmental conditions have changed substantially since its adoption, the City may require further environmental evaluation

to determine appropriate revisions to a development proposal, conditions of approval, or additional mitigation measures.

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFIC PLAN

Minor Amendment

Minor amendments to this Specific Plan include adjustments to right-of-way alignments and dimensions, location and configuration of parks and open spaces, modifications to design guidelines, or any other modification deemed, in the opinion of the Zoning Administrator, to be minor in nature.

Minor modifications consistent with the Specific Plan Policies may be approved by the Zoning Administrator. All minor modifications to the Specific Plan shall be documented as part of a Development Plan and/or Architectural Review application depending on the scope of the proposed change. Prior to Zoning Administrator's action, notification of the proposed minor amendment shall be provided as follows:

1. A public notice shall be required prior to the Zoning Administrator's decision. The public notice shall state that the Zoning Administrator will decide whether to approve or disapprove the proposed Amendment application on a date specified in the notice, and that a public hearing will be held only if requested in writing by any interested person before the specified date for the decision.
2. When a public hearing is requested, notice of the hearing shall be provided in compliance with Chapter D7-IV, and the Zoning Administrator shall conduct the public hearing before a decision on the application in compliance with Chapter D7-IV (Public Hearings).

Major Amendment

Major modifications such as expansion of the Specific Plan Area boundary, changes to development standards, changes to goals and policies, and an increase to the maximum allowable development shall require a Specific Plan Amendment pursuant to Government Code 65453.

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