

Chapter 3 VISION

In initiating the Specific Plan process, the City established the fundamental purpose for the Specific Plan and an initial vision for how that purpose could be realized in the North Camino Ramon Specific Plan Area.

SPECIFIC PLAN VISION

Since the Plan Area was originally developed, there have been significant changes to the community and region. As the region continues to develop there has been an increased emphasis on the need to grow in a smart and sustainable way. It is important locally that new growth meets the existing and future needs of the community while minimizing negative impacts to quality of life. Smart Growth, as a planning philosophy, is a way to promote resource and environmental protection while aligning socioeconomic factors such as housing, employment and mobility to create livable communities. Smart Growth, as a tool for development, can be expressed in both its physical built form as well as livability measures based on the relationship to the surrounding area and specific needs of the community. Therefore, livability, or what is defined as a livable community, provides for a variety of interpretations by a range of user groups and Community values. One vision of a livable community is described as:

“an attractive, pedestrian-oriented and easily accessible neighborhood, with houses close to shops, restaurants, workplaces, entertainment, and other activities. There are parks and great public spaces. People have choices in the types of homes provided, and new housing meets a variety of income ranges. For many, it is possible to commute to work by train or bus”. (Greenbelt Alliance webpage)

Smart Growth, as a tool to create livable communities, is characterized as the creation of:

“compact, transit-oriented neighborhoods that are walkable, bicycle-friendly with nearby schools, jobs, and shops and a range of housing choices for people of all income levels”. Smart Growth is a means to create “livable communities, towns and cities that are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable”. (Greenbelt Alliance webpage)

The General Plan 2020 established the fundamental framework for smart growth in San Ramon, which has been continued through the policies of the General Plan 2030. The visioning process for the Specific Plan builds on the Smart Growth mandated of Measure G and General Plan 2030, while recognizing that demographics, development patterns, industry, market trends and technology continue to evolve. The Specific Plan, as an implementation tool of the General Plan, will further refine the policies of the General Plan while adding new policies to satisfy the purpose and vision for the Plan Area.

Specific Plan Purpose: To create a long range, Smart Growth land use plan that can serve as a stimulus for economic development and planning, while enhancing livability, quality of life and meeting the needs of the residents of San Ramon.

The Specific Plan Vision will guide existing and future development in this area and by actively promoting General Plan and Specific Plan policies and principles to increase vitality, improve economic and environmental sustainability, while enhancing the shopping, services, lifestyle and entertainment opportunities available to the residents of San Ramon.

BUILDING THE VISION

Today, the Specific Plan Area is an automobile-oriented, low-density commercial area with little physical or visual relationship among its many retail, commercial service, and office uses. The Specific Plan envisions a long term development future based on Smart Growth principles for transit- and pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use districts with a blend of retail, service retail and workforce housing, in proximity to new and existing jobs. The Plan Area will have its own scale, sense of place and focus that is intended to be complementary and supportive of the City Center Project, Crow Canyon Specific Plan and the employment base of Bishop Ranch.

The Plan Area will evolve over an extended number of years as the Vision is implemented. Individual land uses and building types will also evolve over time, and may be very different from the norms of today. To ensure continuity within the Plan Area, the Specific Plan contains detailed goals and Policies illustrated by the Conceptual Land Use Plan (Figure 3.1). The Conceptual Land Use Plan is organized around a system of streets and public spaces that will form a framework for future land uses, architectural diversity, and provide implementation flexibility to take advantage of development opportunities as they arise within the Plan Area.

CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN, GOALS AND POLICIES

The following are the Goals and Policies for implementing the Specific Plan Vision. They are the basis for the development of the Conceptual Land Use Plan and the guiding principles by which future development concepts will be evaluated. The Goals and Policies are not intended to be absolute, but layout a foundation for the implementation of the Specific Plan Vision. Additional and more specific Goals and Policies related to Public Spaces, Circulation and Transit, Street Design, Parking, Utilities, and Public Facilities can be found in their respective Chapters.

GOAL VIS-1: Create an identifiable district with a unique sense of place.

Policy VIS-1.1: Plan for an integrated system of public spaces, transit and sidewalks to promote walkability and connectivity with a focus on the Central Commons, integrated landscape and site amenities.

Policy VIS-1.2: Encourage a compatible mix of uses, connectivity and architectural and visual diversity through the Specific Plan Development Standards and Architectural Guidelines.

Policy VIS-1.3: Develop a Public Art Program and funding mechanism for the Specific Plan area.

The Specific Plan's Public Art Program is intended to be an extension of the existing Art in Public Places program. The purpose of this policy is to encourage a comprehensive public art program for the Specific Plan area. The Specific Plan public art program would look at

ways to coordinate existing and proposed public art throughout the Plan Area by identifying potential high profile locations, public spaces and art themes unique to the proposed Specific Plan vision and proposed developments. Implementation of this focused Public Art Program would rely on the existing Art in Public Spaces guiding procedures and be subject to the approval of the Arts Advisory Committee through the standard review process. A fee program for funding public art may be considered as part of a proposed benefit district provided the outcome meets the requirement of the Art in Public Spaces Program. Any coordinated fee program would be subject to the Arts Advisory Committee and City approval. Public art requirements shall not be credited toward or used to satisfy park dedication requirements.

GOAL VIS-2: Increase economic vitality, employment opportunities and social activity within the Specific Plan Area through a mix of commercial, residential and public space uses.

Policy VIS-2.1: Broaden the range of commercial building types in San Ramon by encouraging a variety of commercial, restaurant and retail uses to locate in the Specific Plan Area.

New development in the specific plan area is intended to be complementary to the City Center project and Crow Canyon Specific Plan.

Policy VIS-2.2: Integrate larger floor plate uses into the pedestrian environment of the Specific Plan Area by ensuring that development applications are strongly supportive of internal pedestrian movements, and provide smooth pedestrian and landscape linkages to existing and anticipated surrounding development.

Encourage larger floor plate retail uses to be designed with the visual appearance of an aggregation of smaller building forms that are sympathetic to the smaller scale retail and residential uses envisioned for the specific plan area. Require landscape buffers between larger floor plate uses and residential uses.

Policy VIS-2.3: Encourage vertical and horizontal mixed use projects throughout the Specific Plan Area with integrated ground floor commercial uses in residential projects, live-work residential units and other support services.

Encourage the integration of childcare facilities into the Specific Plan Area.

Policy VIS-2.4: Encourage restaurant, cultural, and educational uses within the specific Plan Area to attract evening and weekend users.

Policy VIS-2.5: Provide opportunities for increased development density in the specific plan area by encouraging consolidation of existing development into larger development parcels that can take advantage of the higher Floor Area Ratio and mix of uses allowed under the Specific Plan.

Encourage parking to be located below grade, on building roofs, and in parking structures to free up land for additional development and public spaces. Promote the joint utilization of parking resources through shared public garages, in-lieu fees, development agreements and other feasible financing or development strategies.

Policy VIS-2.5: Required an economic analysis for new development projects to demonstrate that the proposed development is consistent with the economic goals of the Specific Plan and City.

The economic analysis is intended to ensure that the decision makers have the information necessary to make an informed decision regarding the project's economic impacts and should include information about the economic benefit and cost to the City. Additional information regarding any funding mechanism or assumptions that will supplement the cost of City services should also be included.

Policy VIS-2.6: Pursue new or modify existing revenue sources to ensure proposed development projects provide adequate funding to support the proportionate demand for City Services.

The determination of adequate funding of services is subject to City approval which can be demonstrated through a combination of revenue generation to the City including but not limited to taxes, benefit/assessment districts, private facilities/service providers and where appropriate modifications to tax sharing agreements. At a minimum, the funding level of services is expected to be consistent with the service levels in the surrounding areas and generally consistent with Citywide standards.

GOAL VIS-3: Provide for a variety of housing options in the Planning Area to serve the existing and future housing needs of San Ramon residents.

Policy VIS-3.1: Encourage residential development to serve existing and anticipated employment base in and adjacent to the Plan Area.

Housing for employees within walking distance of major employment centers including Bishop Ranch, PG&E, and the San Ramon Regional Medical Center should be encouraged.

Policy VIS-3.2: Encourage residential development to serve special needs user groups within the Plan Area.

Housing for Senior and disabled persons in close proximity to transit and essential services should be encouraged.

Policy VIS-3.3: Limit the number of residential units to a maximum of 1,124 units within the Specific Plan Area.

Policy VIS-3.5: Require each residential project to provide a minimum of 25% of the units as affordable workforce housing, 15% must-build and up to 10% of the workforce housing requirement may be met with the payment of an in-lieu fee unless an alternative affordable housing program demonstrating public benefit is approved by a Development Agreement or detailed Affordable Housing Agreement.

The goal of the policy is to achieve the minimum 15% must-build requirement for affordable housing. Allowing an alternative affordable housing program is recognition that each projects has unique circumstances and is consistent with General Plan Implementation

Policy 11.1-I-4 that allows the City to negotiate for appropriate affordable housing units based on the project conditions and type of housing units.

Policy VIS-3.6: Consider density bonuses of up to a maximum Floor Area Ratio of 1.25 for projects that provide more than the City’s required percentage of workforce housing and other community benefits.

Policy VIS-3.7: Allow separate but contiguous properties under a common ownership to build at higher or lower densities so long as their average density for the project as a whole falls between the allowable minimum and maximum densities and Floor Area Ratios.

CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN COMPONENTS

The Section contains descriptions and illustrative images of the element of the Conceptual Land Use Plan (Conceptual Plan). The Conceptual Plan has development potential associated with it for the purpose of analysis; however, the specific development details and design aesthetic will be evaluated on a project by project basis against the plan concept and goals for the Specific Plan.

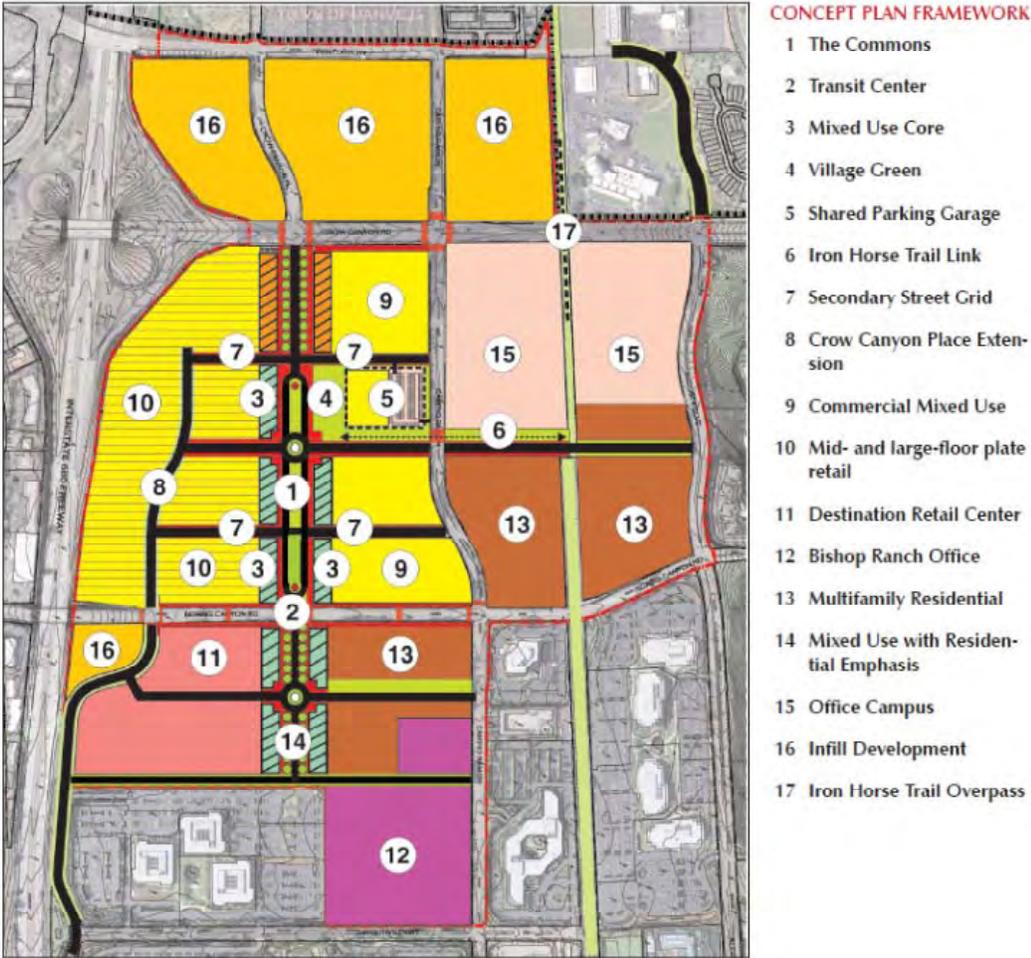


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Land Use Plan.

Mixed Use Core

The Mixed Use Core, as shown on the Conceptual Plan (Figure 3.1), is envisioned to consist of retail, restaurants and commercial services lining The Commons public space, with outdoor cafes and merchandise displays provide for an active and vital streetscape. This mix of uses and visual interest encourages pedestrian activity and makes the *park-once and walk* shopping possible and appealing. Residential units and/or other commercial uses will occupy upper floors above the active ground floor uses to provide additional vitality, and place residents, employees and visitors in close proximity to a multitude of goods, services and activities.



Examples of residential units/office over active ground floor commercial uses.

Shared Parking Resources

Shared parking is a fundamental goal of the Specific Plan. Centralized parking will reduce the overall number of parking spaces needed, lower individual property owner’s cost of providing parking, and encourage one-stop shopping. An overall parking management plan will encourage the use of shared parking throughout the Plan Area to take advantage of the mix of uses. A centralized parking facility/structure is envisioned within the central core (Figure 3.2), that would be within easy walking distance of the entire plan area.



Figure 3.2: Potential public parking structure.



Restaurants, cafes, and outside dining will add variety and vitality to the Village Green and The Commons frontages.



The Village Green and shared parking structure.

TRANSIT CENTER

When dictated by future development and increased transit demand, the existing Transit Center, currently located on Executive Parkway near Camino Ramon, will be relocated to a central location in proximity to The Commons public space and Norris Canyon Road. The transit center relocation will place all parcels within the Plan Area within a 10 minute walk, making access to jobs, stores and restaurants in the area convenient, and encourage residents within the area to take transit to their jobs elsewhere. A relocated Transit Center along the Norris Canyon Road corridor will take advantage of the planned HOV on-off ramps at the intersection of Norris Canyon Road and the I 680 freeway and improve transit access to the Plan Area.

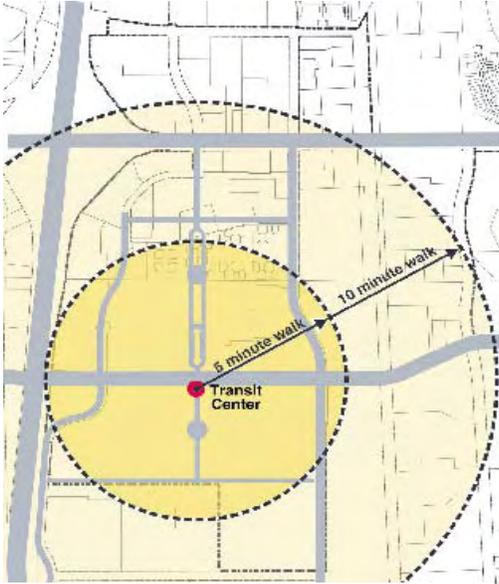


Figure 3.3: Potential Transit Center location.

DESTINATION RETAIL

Larger sites along Crow Canyon Place (Figure 3.1 #2 and #10), can accommodate new retail opportunities for stores and complexes that are currently missing in San Ramon, and for which residents now travel longer distances to other communities by car. The vision includes an integration of these uses into the adjacent pedestrian-oriented Commons through urban design improvements and by the adoption of the increasingly common use of structured parking in support of ground floor retail uses. Innovative designs and mix of uses will be encouraged to reduce the visual scale of larger buildings, and provide a well-landscaped pedestrian environment.



Crow Canyon Place will accommodate larger stores within a pedestrian-friendly environment, and provide easy access to Norris Canyon Road.



Larger stores will be integrated into the pedestrian environment of Central Core area.

COMMERCIAL MIXED USE

Additional commercial uses complementary to those in the Mixed Use Core will provide a complete mix of uses to serve the needs of the community and residents in the area (Figure 3.1 #9). Supermarkets, specialty markets, and drug stores may prefer the easy access provided by Camino Ramon, while larger office uses and smaller stores will increase the vitality of the Mixed Use Core.

Private parking facilities with ground floor retail and townhouse frontages will maintain the rich visual diversity for pedestrians in this core area.



Examples of commercial mixed use.

MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL

A wide variety of higher density housing is envisioned to be located throughout the area (Figure 3.1 #13). Loft units, apartments over retail stores, apartment and condominium buildings, townhouses, row-houses, and live/work units will all be encouraged to meet the needs of the community and provide housing near the large number of existing and future jobs within Bishop Ranch and the surrounding area. Small commercial uses will be integrated into ground floors to provide nearby services for residents and to enliven major pedestrian routes to encourage walking throughout the Plan Area.



Multifamily neighborhood with commercial services.



Examples of townhome and multifamily developments.

BISHOP RANCH OFFICE

The consolidation of existing Bishop Ranch office space from other parcels within the Specific Plan Area will be encouraged to allow more intensive development of other commercial and residential uses that are supportive of the Plan Vision and Bishop Ranch (Figure 3.1 #12). The future development in this area could develop as an extension of the City Center mixed use concept to provide additional opportunities to meet the needs of the community and reinforce the connection between the plan areas.



Examples of mixed use office development.

OFFICE CAMPUS

The current collection of office and office-support uses will evolve over time as a single or multi-user office complex (Figure 3.1 #15), within an integrated landscaped environment similar to other corporate office campuses in the nearby Bishop Ranch. Offering a unique and high quality working environment, this area will enable employees in these offices to easily walk to The Commons for lunch time dining and errands without the need to drive. Shuttles between the Plan Area and City Center project would have the potential to expand the daytime shopping and dining opportunities for the employees within the Plan Area, Bishop Ranch and surrounding areas.



Examples of office campus uses.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

All the currently developed parcels within the Plan Area will continue to evolve over time as existing businesses expand, opportunities for new commercial uses emerge, and as development patterns mature to include higher densities and more efficient parking and land use solutions. As such, the Specific Plan expects that infill development proposals will occur over time while actively supporting existing businesses through the interim use standard that will allow for the continuation of existing uses until such time as change is viable and makes sense for a property and/or business.



Infill development/adaptive reuse.

STREETS

Currently separated segments of Crow Canyon Place, along the western edge of the central block of the Plan Area, will be linked, and additional internal streets will be added to increase travel options and encourage pedestrian movements among the various areas. Special emphasis will be given to creating a unified walkable pedestrian environment within the core area. While most street locations will be defined, some will remain flexible to accommodate special uses and development opportunities. Figure 3.4 illustrates the existing street system to remain (black), and the anticipated new streets (red). Dashed streets are approximate in location and are intended to be more flexible to provide internal access and circulation to some of the larger blocks within the Plan Area.



Figure 3.4: Existing and propose street system.

PUBLIC SPACES

Sidewalks, landscaping, parks, and active public spaces as envisioned will complement the street system, enhance the public realm, and provide active and passive recreation opportunities for residents of the City and the Plan Area. As a whole, these elements will provide a strong visual identity to the Plan Area, and enhance the commercial and residential environment.

Major elements of the public space system include:

- The Commons linear park.
- Village Green Public activity space adjacent to The Commons.
- Wide sidewalks with extensive street tree and other landscaping.
- A broad landscape open space and pedestrian/bicycle link between The Commons and the Iron Horse Trail.
- Active and passive public spaces integrated into residential developments.
- Paseos, pedestrian pockets, and mini-parks integrated into individual developments.

Additional detail related to the public space vision and components is provided in the Chapter 5-Public Spaces.

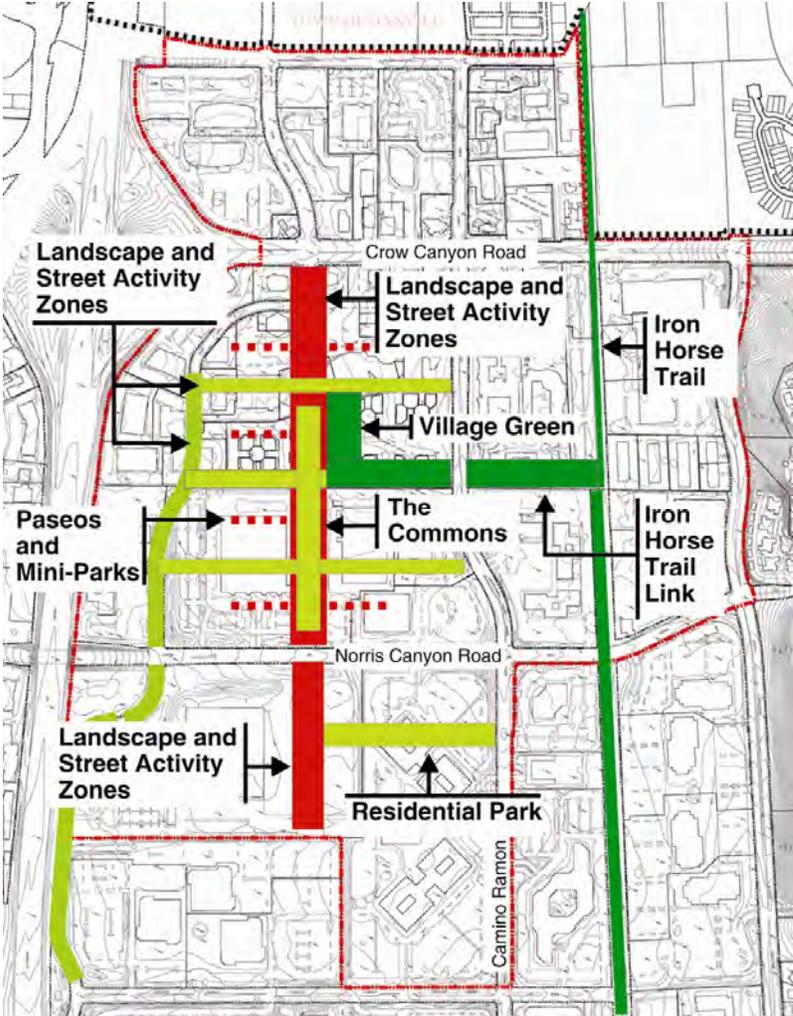


Figure 3.5: Proposed public space system.

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