

Winter 2002

# Visioning a New Town in San Luis Obispo County, Fall 2001 / Winter 2002

CRP 410/ 411 Community Planning Lab

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# **Visioning a New Town**

**Site Selection and Concept Development**

**El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area, San Luis Obispo County, CA**

**City and Regional Planning Department  
California Polytechnic State University  
San Luis Obispo, California  
March 2002**



# Visioning a New Town

Site Selection and Concept Development

El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area, San Luis Obispo County, CA

Community Planning Laboratory (CRP 410 & 411)

City and Regional Planning Department

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San Luis Obispo, California

March 2002



## **PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*Visioning a New Town: Site Selection and Concept Development* was prepared as a class project by the fourth year City and Regional Planning students at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Students enrolled in the undergraduate Community Planning Laboratory conducted the study during two consecutive academic quarters, Fall and Winter of the 2001-2002 academic year. To develop this project, the students worked in collaboration with, and with financial assistance from the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building.

The students in the 2001-2002 Community Planning Lab would like to thank San Luis Obispo County, in particular the Director of Planning and Building, Victor Holanda, for giving us the opportunity to be involved with this project. We extend a special thanks to Mike Wulkan, Senior Planner, for his time, effort and guidance, which he provided throughout the entire project and Chandra Slaven for her extensive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) assistance. We would also like to thank and the Ad-hoc New Town Advisory Committee as well as the community members for their input and wisdom. A special thanks is extended to our professor, Zeljka Howard, whose leadership, guidance, and support has been extremely valuable and much appreciated throughout this entire process.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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*Visioning a New Town* was prepared as a class project by the students enrolled in the fourth year Community Planning Laboratory in the City & Regional Planning Department at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. The report provides an overview of the study conducted during two consecutive academic quarters, Fall 2001 and Winter 2002. There were two primary purposes of the study:

1. To serve as an exercise intended to expose students to the complex planning projects in “real-world” planning practice fulfilling Cal Poly’s motto, “Learn by Doing”
2. To assist the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building (the Planning Department) in the exploration of the possibility of locating a new town in San Luis Obispo County

There were two reasons for selecting the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area (the Planning Area) as a location for the study. First, the Planning Department was conducting an update to the El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan. Second, most of the data necessary to conduct a site selection was readily available and in digital format.

While the study was being conducted, another important consideration arose. The California State Department of Housing and Community Development mandated that San Luis Obispo County (the County) build 22,460 new housing units by 2008 to meet its fair share of growth. The State of California is expected to grow by 12.5 million people in the next twenty years and must build 250,000 new homes every

year through 2020 to meet the needs of the growing population. This mandate further validates the need to investigate innovative alternatives for managing growth and providing housing in the County.

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

The New Town project was completed in a two-phase planning process, each consisting of several interrelated tasks. The first phase of the project was initiated in Fall Quarter 2001, the end of September through mid-December, 2001. It included research of existing new towns, analysis of the existing conditions in the Planning Area, and identification of the relevant criteria for a digital site selection model. The second segment of the project took place in Winter Quarter 2002, January through mid-March, including refinement of the model, site selection and new town concept development.

Research for this project was continuous as it was important to research the many aspects of the Planning Area and issues related to site analysis and the development of concept plans.

## Phase One

The first task during Phase 1 entailed the research of thirty new towns in California and throughout the United States to provide an understanding of various aspects of new towns and new town planning. The issues researched include:

- Location
- Population Growth
- Governance Status
- Size of Land Area
- Developers
- Purpose
- Planning and Design
- Development Strategies
- Construction
- Employment
- Infrastructure
- Population
- Land Uses
- Amenities
- Implementation

The New Town case studies were used throughout both phases of the project. From this research, many issues and characteristics guided the site selection and concept plan development. Lessons learned from the research were applied to San Luis Obispo County, including how to maintain a job/housing balance, develop phases, and incorporate planning principles into new town development.

The second task during Phase 1 was a comprehensive analysis of the existing conditions of the Planning Area. This included a land use inventory of the existing antiquated subdivisions of the area and a visual survey. An *antiquated subdivision* is a subdivision that was created before the current planning regulations were in place and is therefore not in conformance with current regulations. The visual

analysis required of several trips to the Planning Area and the documentation of initial impressions of the land.

The land use inventory required the development of a special methodology involving aerial photographs and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data. Its purpose was to determine the amount of existing development in the 55 antiquated subdivisions and their potential buildout. The land use inventory methodology is included in this report as Appendix A.

The final task in Phase 1 was to select criteria that were necessary to consider when selecting a site for a potential new town and to develop a model for selecting that site. This task involved extensive research on all aspects of the Planning Area, including:

- Agriculture, Open Space, and Conservation
- Land Use
- Public Services and Utilities
- Transportation
- Noise
- Visual
- Socio-Economic

This research and the information from the new towns case studies, coupled with the availability of digital information, led to the selection of twenty-two specific criteria relevant to determining a suitable site for new town development. These criteria were then incorporated into a computer model created using ArcView GIS<sup>®</sup> and ModelBuilder<sup>®</sup>. This model

produced a map that showed the calculated suitability of the land based on the 22 criteria.

The process and findings of Phase 1 were presented to the Planning Department and other community members in mid-December.

### **Phase Two**

Phase 2 began with the refinement of the site selection model. Taking information from the community and the Planning Department as well as the research conducted in Phase 1, the criteria were weighted to produce a suitability map sensitive to the importance of each criterion. From this map, four potential sites were selected.

The second task of Phase 2 focused on site selection. The four alternative sites were researched in depth to determine their potential for development. Information that could not be included in the computer model was also considered at this time. After much consideration, a final site was selected. A thorough site analysis was then conducted involving many site visits.

The third task of Phase 2 was the development of concept plans for a potential new town. Using the information gathered in the previous tasks, five distinct alternative concepts were created. These were then analyzed and synthesized into two final concept plans. One represents the idea of “villages” and the other is based on a “town center” concept. These concept plans address planning issues related to the site including antiquated subdivisions, environmental

constraints, the Williamson Act, land use, agriculture, population, dwelling units, densities, and many others.

The two concept plans incorporate the research conducted throughout Phase 1 and 2 as well as information received from public participation, guest speakers, and the Planning Department. These concept plans represent the planning principles studied in this course and throughout the City & Regional Planning curriculum.

### **REPORT ORGANIZATION**

The final task of the project was the synthesis of the work conducted during both phases of the project into this report. All of the information gathered and the methodologies used are presented here. The report chapters include the following:

*Chapter 1: Planning Area* includes all of the gathered information about the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area. The original visual analysis and assessment is presented here with the findings of the antiquated subdivision land use inventory.

*Chapter 2: Site Selection Criteria* provides a description of all the criteria used in the site section model. It describes the development of the model and the weighting of the criteria as well.

*Chapter 3: Site Selection* contains the initial five sites selected and the analysis of their respective assets and



liabilities. It then describes the selection of the final site and presents the comprehensive site analysis for that site.

*Chapter 4: Concept Plans* presents the two alternative concept plans for the selected site in the design efforts. They represent the synthesis of the five alternative scenarios formulated. Included in this section are the planning goals adopted by the class and the objectives for each of the two alternatives.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement is essential to the planning process; in the words of Thomas Jefferson, “Citizens influence the public decision-making process and leaders influence through informing the citizenry.” Community involvement is key to good planning decisions and processes and should be included as much as possible to ensure good decisions are made.

Community involvement has many significant benefits. First, it ensures good plans remain intact over time. City councils, planning commissions, city managers, and planners come and go. Good plans can be watered down or changed over time. A plan that was developed with the help of the community is more likely to maintain its integrity in the end.

Community involvement also reduces the likelihood of continuous battles before councils and planning commissions with no positive results. Good communication between the planners and the public throughout the planning process

gives citizens a chance to express their own opinions, offer suggestions, and ask questions before the plan is formulated and presented to the elected officials.

Involving the public also speeds up the development process and reduces the costs of good projects. Even well designed projects that do not include any citizen input, can face extreme public opposition. Slowing down the development process can be very costly. Citizen input and participation increases the quality of planning and enhances the general sense of community and trust in the government. Professional planners are not the only ones with good ideas. Often citizens can bring attention to important planning issues that the planners and public officials have not recognized. Different points of view can shed light on a subject and put a new twist to it. Because all planning decisions will directly impact the people of the community, the community should be informed of all decisions and have a chance to offer input before the decisions are made. Collaboration is key to good planning.

Realizing the importance of community involvement, public input was sought as much as possible. However, due to the nature and timing of the project, community involvement was not employed as much and as extensively as desired. During the time this study was conducted, San Luis Obispo County and the Ad hoc New Town Committee were not yet ready to conduct extensive community involvement efforts. In order to keep from undermining the efforts of the County and the Advisory Committee, nominal community involvement activities were conducted during the course of this study.

Five community meetings were held. On December 13, 2002, County staff, the Ad hoc New Town Committee and the El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan Update Advisory Committee were invited to attend the presentation of the initial research and findings. The presentations included an overview of the new town research, a land use survey and build out analysis of the antiquated subdivisions, and a suitability analysis and a specially designed computer model using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Suggestions and comments received from the meeting were considered for further analysis.

A second meeting was held in Templeton on January 16, 2002. Members of the El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan Update Advisory Committee and residents of the El Pomar-Estrella area attended this meeting. The research on new towns was again presented as well as the site suitability model. The focus of this meeting was to inform the participants about the initial research and obtain comments and opinions related to the relative importance of the site selection criteria. The site selection model was refined to reflect suggestions and comments received at the meeting. Attendees were also asked what they thought a new town should include. These comments were recorded and later reviewed. Topics such as affordable housing, at-home work opportunities, school facilities, road conditions, preservation of agricultural resources, and various environmental concerns were discussed.

The final class presentation was held on March 15, 2002. The site selection and two alternative concept plans for the

new town development were presented to County staff, members of the Economic Advisory Council, the El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan Update Committee, the Ad hoc New Town Committee and members of the public. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and make comments.

In addition to the class presentations, the class participated in two public workshops organized by the San Luis Obispo County Ad hoc New Town Committee and County staff. The class assisted the committee members in recording public comments and presented the summary of the new town research. These workshops were held in the cities of Arroyo Grande and Atascadero, both in San Luis Obispo County.

The Arroyo Grande workshop was held on February 13, 2002 and the Atascadero meeting was held on March 7, 2002. The Ad hoc New Town Committee and County staff discussed future housing needs on the Central Coast and described why the possibility of a new town is being considered. Class members presented an overview of the new town case studies research. The public was split up into small groups and situated around tables. At each table, a student of the Community Planning Lab helped a member of the Ad hoc New Town Committee facilitate discussion and recorded comments during the meeting.

The public was asked to put themselves in the position of a developer, an environmentalist, a member of the board of supervisors, and a potential future resident, and describe what would be their main concerns for the development of a new town for each of their roles. Approximately ten minutes were

spent on each category of role players. The students recorded these comments (see Appendix B) and considered them in developing the concept plans. Common comments and concerns included incentives for developers, sources of water, political acceptance, affordable housing, employment, proximity of schools, and safety. These community meetings were an excellent way to get in touch with the public, communicate with the public and learn from the public.

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San Luis Obispo County (the County) is located on the Central Coast of California approximately halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. The County has a population of 248,200 according to Census 2000 data. It includes the seven incorporated cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo and the unincorporated areas of the County.

The study was conducted in the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area (the Planning Area), located in the northern region of San Luis Obispo County (See Figure 1.1). The Planning Area encompasses 131,020 acres and includes varied topography, including parts of the La Panza Range in the south, the flood plains of the Huerhuero and Estrella Rivers in the center, and the Cholame Hills in the north. Vegetation is predominantly grassland with scattered oaks and cultivated lands. Foothills in the southern portion of the area have blue oak, foothill pine, and chaparral, while the west central portion also includes oak woodlands (El Pomar-Estrella Environmental Constraints Analysis, 2001).

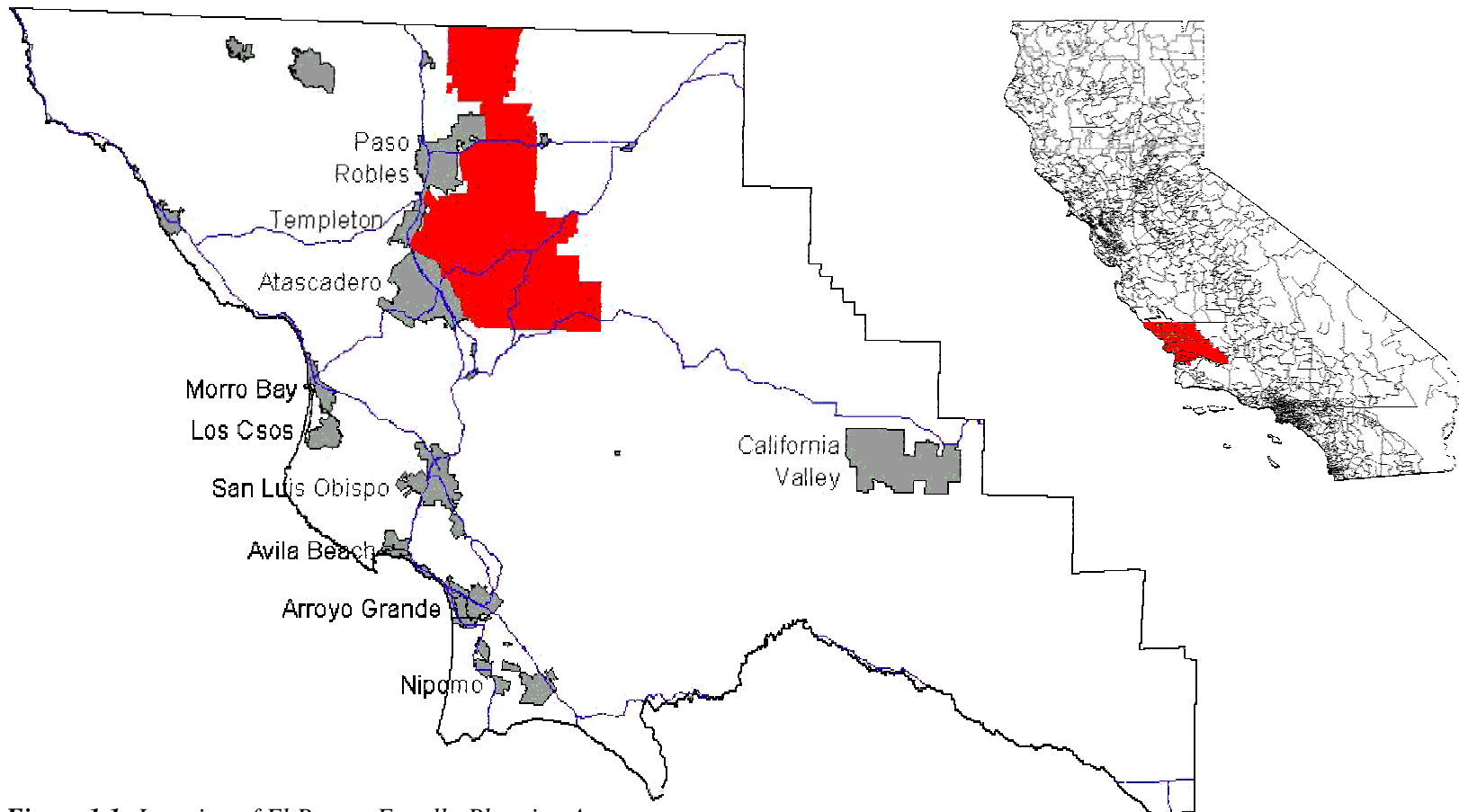
Most of the land in the Planning Area can be characterized as rural. Ranch homes are scattered throughout the site, located on both large lots and small vineyards. The topography consists of rolling hills of moderate gradient slopes. Low laying vegetation blankets the rolling hills and consists of mainly dried brush with shrubs and small oak trees growing sparsely throughout the area.

The climate within the Planning Area is very warm, with little or no breeze during the spring and summer months, and cold with moderate rainfall during the fall and winter months. The dry brush in conjunction with the hot spring and summer climates pose a potential fire hazard.

## **HISTORICAL/CULTURAL RESOURCES**

In order to avoid destruction of historical, cultural, and archaeological resources, it is important to identify areas where they are likely to be damaged so development can be avoided.

Historically, the area has had settlers since 7000 B.C. Therefore, numerous structures and roads could have historical significance inside the Planning Area. A survey was completed by the County to identify all existing structures that are fifty years old or older. The survey identified 500 buildings and will be used in determining any possible historical significance. These buildings include local missions from the late 1700's, adobes, several churches, cemeteries, one-room schools, barns, homes and post offices. No official study has been completed that would place these structures on the California Registrar of Historic Resources. The San Luis Obispo County Historic Society has designated Creston Community Church, built in 1886, as a County Historical Landmark. Several buildings have not been given landmark status but are considered to have historic significance. These are Geneseo School, built in 1886 in the German settlement area of Creston; the Chandler House, a two-story Colonial Revival Victorian house built around



**Figure 1.1:** Location of El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area

1882; Linne School, a school built in 1889 originally located on Creston Road but since relocated onto Chandler Ranch; and Riconada School, built in 1880 near Pozo, but relocated onto Chandler Ranch.

In addition to these structures, several old trails have possible historical significance. Missionaries, outlaws, and settlers bringing goods to and from homesteads used these trails. Traces of the trails located in the area are depicted on government survey maps from 1855 to 1858. Some of these

trails run along Huerhuero and Santa Isabel Roads, from San Luis Obispo to Huerhuero, from Paso Robles to Huerhuero, along the eastside of the Salinas River and from San Miguel to Tulare.

Any development within the Planning Area should not disturb any historical or archaeological resources. Since no current historical resources have been identified, an official survey of the 500 potentially significant sites should be completed prior to the completion of a final development plan. Development should not occur within 100 meters of the centerline of creeks to preserve any significant archaeological sites. All other areas within the Planning Area should be listed as having moderate archaeological significance until the areas have been surveyed.

## **LAND USE**

Conducting a land inventory of the planning area as well as collecting buildout information of the antiquated subdivisions within the site are the first steps of an in-depth site analysis of the area. The analysis revealed several facts about the area. The Planning Area includes varied topography: parts of the La Panza Range in the south, the floodplains of the Huerhuero and Estrella Rivers in the center, and the Cholame Hills in the north. Vegetation is predominantly grassland with scattered oaks and cultivated lands. Foothills in the south portion of the area have blue oak, foothill pine and chaparral, while the west-central portion also includes oak woodlands (El Pomar-Estrella Environmental Constraints Analysis, 2001).

Historically the area has been used for dryland farming, grazing and vineyards. A majority of the land in the area continues to be reserved for agricultural purposes. Residential developments are being established in the area northeast of the community of Estrella and in the area between Creston and Atascadero (Environmental Constraints Analysis, 2001).

Recently, the area has been changing to accommodate an increase in the number of vineyards, while dry farming and grazing has decreased. Accompanying this influx of vineyards is an increase in estate housing in the numerous antiquated subdivisions located in the Planning Area. The new residents, who are drawn by existing land uses, are moving into these subdivisions and applying stress to the service capacity of the Planning Area.

The terrain and changing agriculture industry in the area is very important, but another major area studied in the land use inventory is the antiquated subdivisions. Antiquated subdivisions are parcels of land that were subdivided in the early 20th century and do not conform to current land use planning policy. According to the El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan, "A significant part of the planning area (8 percent or 20,000 acres) contains parcels of less than 40 acres. Almost all of the smaller lots were created by subdivision in the early part of this century, when smaller lot sizes supported commercial agriculture. Most of these are still within larger ownerships in agricultural production. However, their transfers into individual ownerships could significantly reduce the acreage available for commercial agriculture." (El



Pomar-Estrella Area Plan 1998) Most of these antiquated subdivisions are characterized by the Study of Non-Conforming Subdivisions in Rural Areas as

*...land division for a speculative rather than an immediate market; parcels of various sizes ranging from ½ acre to 40 acres; individual or multiple ownership patterns; varying agricultural capability; mixed access varying from direct access to county-maintained roads, to secondary access over trails on private property, to no vehicular access; few maintained roads or other infrastructure improvements; locations in areas ranging from remote to close proximity to outlying villages; and sparse or complete lack of development (1977).*

According to Mike Wulkan, Senior Planner at the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning & Building, the primary problem with these subdivisions is their remoteness. Antiquated subdivisions make it possible for concentrated development of urban densities to occur in areas with little or no public services and inadequate roads.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Two socio-economic factors of concern are the job-housing balance and population demographics of the area. Currently there is a 1:1 job-housing balance within North County; yet, 35 percent of its citizens continue to commute outside of the area for employment. The demographics of North County are 87 percent Caucasian, followed by a percentage of those

of Hispanic origin. The population is predominately 65 years of age and older. Although this measure does not serve as a factor in site selection, it does serve as an indicator of who will move to the area as well as search for ways to implement a more diverse network of people on both an ethnic and economic scale.

### **Housing**

As indicated in a presentation conducted by Steve Devencenzi, Director of San Luis Obispo Council of Government (SLOCOG), San Luis Obispo County is expected to have a 1.2 percent increase in population in 2002 from 2001. In addition, the County is recorded as having a 14 percent population increase since 1990 according to the 2000 United States Census data. With only 144,000 units built in 2001 and an estimated 250,000 units per year need, San Luis Obispo County is experiencing a housing crisis. The median market price, which is stimulated by existing limited housing, currently stands at \$308,000 with 3.1 percent inflation. As an effect of the population influx and high market demand, existing stock of affordable housing is dissolving.

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) reported in November 2001 that San Luis Obispo County ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation as being the least affordable; only approximately 19 percent of the homes in San Luis Obispo County are deemed affordable for median income families. Some of the major reasons for the existing housing crisis are the cost of land within the county, development fees established by local ordinances, and construction methods, as

well as features needed to meet standards and safety codes. To add to the housing crisis, homes within San Luis Obispo County continue to be constructed for homebuyers with greater than median incomes making the price range far from most families' reach. In addition, the population of San Luis Obispo County continues to grow while fewer homes are being built, succumbing to the revenue generator that is brought forth through commercial development.

As SLOCOG representative Devencenzi states there are four ideas to consider when combating the County's housing crisis: establish a new town community, build workforce housing, develop regional strategies and alliances, and implement "Smart Growth" principles.

### ***Jobs and Economic Development***

The County of San Luis Obispo is experiencing slower economic growth than the state as a whole, however, the area is showing significant growth that is expected to continue for the next three years. In 2001, 1,982 new jobs were created, and 2,290 new jobs are estimated for 2003. In order to ensure this continued growth, the San Luis Obispo Economic Advisory Committee suggests that the area looks into the lack of affordable housing, the rise in the median home price, and the deterrent of "high end" home prices in retaining diverse businesses within the County.

Strong sectors of economic growth in the County have come from the construction industry and tourism. Retail sales have been another financial asset demonstrating a 5 percent increase in the last year. Another sector demonstrating a

significant growth in 2001 is public sector agencies such as San Luis Obispo County government, the California Men's Colony, Atascadero State Hospital, Cuesta College and California Polytechnic State University. Even with its past performance, the public sector cannot be relied upon for future growth due to current hiring freezes and proposed budget cuts.

Despite current growth in overall jobs in San Luis Obispo County, the agricultural sector is experiencing downsizing. Agriculture in the county has grown, fueled predominately by grapes. Wine grape sales inside San Luis Obispo County have grown by 50 percent since 1995. As a negative effect; however, grapes use less labor than other agricultural activities. In addition, with technological advances the agricultural workforce experienced a 9 percent decline.

One of the most important considerations is bringing jobs to support the future population. A strong job base is one of the factors in the success of a new town.

### **OPEN SPACE/AGRICULTURE**

The Planning Area occupies 131,020 acres and extends across portions of ten US Census survey areas. Most of the area consists of open grassland and woodland associations, much of which is currently used for livestock grazing. Topography of the Planning Area is highly variable and ranges from broad, open floodplains and valleys in the north to steep hills and canyons in the south. In the Planning Area, "open space" as a land designation does not exist; rather,

open space is more of a concept perceived by area residents as agricultural lands versus actual planned area.

Agriculture, open space, and conservation are important characteristics of San Luis Obispo County's landscape. The San Luis Obispo County General Plan Agriculture and Open Space Element identifies several policies relevant to these characteristics. The following policies are most relevant to the Planning Area:

- 6: *Visitor Serving and Retail Commercial Use and Facilities:* reflects the need for commercial uses to support agricultural production.
- 8: *Intensive Agricultural Facilities:* specifically provides for wineries existing adjacent to vineyards.
- 11: *Agricultural Water Supplies:* identifies agriculture uses as the highest priority for the uses of ground water resources.
- 17: *Agricultural Buffers:* identifies the occurrence of land use conflicts that arise from proposed adjacent non-agricultural uses to agricultural lands.
- 24: *Conservation of Agricultural Land:* "twofold: to protect land at the urban fringe by limiting the expansion of urban development; and to discourage urban/suburban sprawl by preventing 'leapfrog' development into the agricultural areas of the county."

In the Planning Area, agricultural operations involve more than 90 percent of the land area. The five major groups of agricultural operations include: animal, field, nursery and seed, fruit and nut, and vegetable. The monetary value of these major groups has increased by 43 percent since 1988, but the total acreage devoted to agriculture has decreased. The recent trends in San Luis Obispo County can be attributed to the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural land uses such as rural residential. "Statistics from the State Department of Conservation's farmland mapping program show that in the period between 1984 and 1995 there was an overall decrease in agriculture land of about 14,800 acres." (Agriculture & Open Space Element, 1998)

Moreover, in the last five years the region has begun a major shift from traditional agriculture such as alfalfa, apple, and dry land grain to vineyards. While alfalfa uses 3 to 4 acre-feet of water, vineyards use 1 to 1-1/2 acre-feet of water. As an effect of water conservancy in the areas, Paso Robles and the airport area are experiencing an intensification of agricultural uses, especially vineyards. Vineyards within the Planning Area are scattered throughout, mainly north of the Highway 46 corridor.

Protecting and encouraging the agricultural character of San Luis Obispo County is a desire reflected in the goals and policies of the San Luis Obispo County General Plan. However, there are methods of achieving those goals while still allowing for new development. The regulatory setting of San Luis Obispo County allows development to occur using

methods including the Transfer of Development Credit Program and agricultural buffers. The San Luis Obispo County Transfer of Development Credit Program is a “voluntary, incentive-based program” with intentions to retire lots to discourage a “pattern of new home construction that is remote from urban areas and services” and avoid the generation of any development and conservation problems, while agricultural buffers are set by San Luis Obispo County Agriculture/Measurement Standards (Transfer of Development Credit Program, 1999). These alternatives provide the opportunity to develop while preserving agricultural character and production.

The State of California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act is an implementation tool for the conservation of agricultural land in San Luis Obispo County as well. The benefit of the Williamson Act is that the property tax is based on the applicable agricultural value as opposed to the Proposition 13 value and that “The Williamson Act is estimated to save agricultural landowners from 20 to 75 percent in property tax liability each year.” Economic incentives for not joining into a Williamson Act contract may lead to the conversion of farmland. Nonetheless, the goals of the County clearly support the agricultural industry, and foresee retention of it as in the County’s best interest.

## **AIR QUALITY**

Aside from agricultural farming, air pollution and the occurrences of transport pollution from sources in the San Joaquin Valley are a major concern in the Planning Area.

These transport pollutants tend to travel to the area of study increasing the pollutant concentrations beyond the standard in California. Currently, San Luis Obispo’s Air Pollution Control District (APCD) analyzes the existing levels of pollutant concentrations where compliance with state and federal standards is mandated. The APCD specifically regulates pollutant concentrations from business and industrial sources. However, regulating pollutant concentrations from residential or agricultural sources is not the responsibility of the APCD.

## **BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

The biological resource analysis of the Planning Area concentrates on mapping and characterizing sensitive habitat and occurrences of endangered species in that habitat. “Biological resources consist of natural resources, underground and surface waters, vegetation and soils, creeks, streams, and wildlife resource.” The water basin of Paso Robles consists of permeable material. Throughout most of the area, the adjacent and underlying geologic units are less permeable, while the area in general is non-water bearing. In some of these areas, the basin contains poor quality groundwater that is not suitable for human consumption, but can be used on agricultural fields. There is concern due to the potential buildout of the Planning Area as well as the buildout of existing cities that may cause the basin to go into a phase of droughts.

San Luis Obispo County, according to the Land Use Element of the General Plan, seeks to avoid any land use category

changes in the Planning Area that would diminish its agricultural potential and introduce non-agricultural uses. Future development activities should take into account the potential presence of identified rare plants, and site-specific botanical surveys should be conducted as appropriate.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Public safety facilities are a major constraint to future development. The project area has limited public facilities and services. Specifically, there are no police stations or hospitals in the Planning Area and response times via ambulance can be in excess of twenty minutes depending on location.

### ***Fire***

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) provides fire protection in the area. There is a CDF station in Creston (Station 43), though it is not staffed twenty-four hours a day. If a large development was to be located in the area, it would be advisable for the station to grow in size and to have working firefighters on staff at all times. In order to reduce response times within the Planning Area, CDF has identified the area near Creston Road and Neal Springs Road as a possible site for a future fire station.

### ***Law Enforcement***

Along with added fire protection, at least one Sheriff's station should be built in the area. Currently, the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department serves the entire Planning Area. The only office is located in Templeton.

Ideal response times in urban areas are considered, by the San Luis Obispo Fire Department, to be less than five minutes.

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriffs Department serves all of the North County from its only substation in Templeton. There are only three to six officers patrolling the area at a time. With so few officers patrolling such a large area, the response times are long, sometimes as high as thirty minutes. If there is any growth or development, new public safety facilities will be needed.

### ***Water***

Another major constraint to future growth is water. The El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area gets the majority of its water from the Paso Robles groundwater basin. Residents use wells to draw their own groundwater for personal use. This basin is also used by the City of Paso Robles to supply water to their residents. The basin's groundwater levels have been declining in some areas and rising in others, but the overall trend is decline. Agricultural activities in the area require large amounts of water for irrigation. The draw on the basin is more than the recharge, and a large increase in consumption will decrease the water supply of the basin, rendering the resource useless in a matter of years. Alternative water resources will need to be researched, as well as water treatment plants and water reclamation plants. The entire Planning Area is currently using septic systems, but a sewer system will need to be built if a new town is developed.

### ***Other Facilities***

According to the San Luis Obispo County Service Level Survey, the majority of schools that serve the Planning Area are at or above the capacity level. There is only one small library in Creston and there are no regional parks in the Planning Area. Any new development would require large additions to the areas existing public facilities.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

A major constraint to the development of a new town in the Planning Area is road accessibility and condition. Many of the roads are made of dirt and gravel, and even the main State Highways 46 and 41 are only two lane roads. Also, to ensure public safety, all new roads must be built to the minimum CDF and county standards (20 feet) and their maintenance should be ensured.

Several collector roads are not adequately improved to county standards. Installation of many local streets will be needed as the residential rural and suburban portions of the Planning Area develop. Local streets should be constructed in these areas as a condition of approval for development permits in order that these areas develop with an adequate circulation system (Land Use and Circulation Element, 1998). Also important for a successful circulation system are bicycle trails, pedestrian trails and sidewalks.

According to the Circulation Element of the County General Plan, several roads shown as existing arterials are being used

as arterials, but, in fact, are not adequately improved to county arterial standards.

1. *Highway 46*

The State Department of Transportation is in the process of widening Highway 46 to four lanes from Highway 101 to the junction of Highways 46 and 41 east of Cholame.

2. *Highway 41 (Atascadero to Shandon)*

Minor improvements will be necessary to widen the pavement and shoulders and to correct poor alignment.

3. *Highway 229*

New construction and minor realignment from Highway 58 to Highway 41 will be initiated as necessary.

4. *Huerhuero – La Panza Road*

Reconstruction is proposed to expand to a 32- foot width for three miles south of Highway 41, also proposed is a minor alignment and grade improvements near its junction with Highway 41.

Improving the conditions of roadways will enhance accessibility to and from the new town as well as provide for increased access to the existing regional transportation system.

Currently, proximity to the regional transportation network is poor since no major public transportation facilities or bus lines run to or within the Planning Area. However, the existing regional transportation network available in the neighboring cities of Atascadero and Paso Robles is

adequate. As it stands, San Luis Obispo's public transportation network is not easily accessible from the Planning Area without a personal car. Taxi service is available but is expensive. If future development is to occur, it will be highly beneficial to implement a local transit system or jitney system running through the new town and into the nearby cities of Atascadero and Paso Robles to connect residents and visitors with the regional transportation network.

## **NOISE**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) defines noise as a "significant effect" when it "increases the ambient noise levels for adjoining areas." Noise is an important element in the planning of a new town. Noise levels over 60 dBA have been found to be unacceptable for most land uses, particularly residential. Significant sources of noise within the Planning Area are the Paso Robles Municipal Airport and State Highway 46. Noise levels exceeding 60 dBA exist around the airport in the western portion of the Planning Area, therefore, development should not occur around the airport. Noise levels exceeding 60 dBA can be heard up to 229 feet from the center of the highway, therefore, development should not occur within these 229 feet of the Highway. As defined in the San Luis Obispo County Noise Element from the 1993 General Plan, other sources of noise include railroad operations and industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities. Currently land uses are spread so far apart that the noise levels are insignificant. However, if new development is to occur, land use compatibility should be

considered in terms of noise output levels. Also, the CalTrans project to widen Highway 46 is expected to increase noise levels where construction equipment is operating during the 2 – 3 year construction period. Noise levels are predicted to be as high as 86 dBA. Development should not occur within at least 800 feet of the highway during construction to widen Highway 46.

# SITE SELECTION ANALYSIS 2

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## **PLANNING ISSUES**

### ***Accessibility***

Highways 1 and 101, two major transportation corridors of California, cut through the cities composing San Luis Obispo County. The County of San Luis Obispo operates public transit systems that function as both an inner city transit and connecting city transit.

It is important for the area of a new town to have accessibility by circulation networks and public transit to connecting towns for extended services and uses. Furthermore, it is important for the new town to utilize the existing terrain by establishing routes within the area for multi-modal transportation and making local uses more readily accessible.

### ***Agricultural Land***

The preservation of agricultural lands remains a concern to residents of San Luis Obispo County as well as the county government. For this reason, there is no intention to develop on prime agricultural lands. However, open space and some non-prime agricultural lands will need to be consumed for suitable development of a new town. Understanding the sentiment of county residents, development in these areas will be kept to a minimum.

### ***Antiquated Subdivisions***

There is a significant amount of “paper lots” or antiquated subdivisions within the Planning Area. Antiquated subdivisions are legal lots that preexist and therefore do not

fall under the current regulations of the subdivision ordinance. Development permits for these lots can be obtained with proof of an on-site well and a septic tank. As a result, antiquated subdivisions are conducive to producing uncontrolled sprawl in the Planning Area.

### ***Buffers***

Integrated cohesion between the natural environment and built environment is a goal within most developments, especially in rural areas. Land uses and open spaces in close proximity of each other will be focused for compatibility. In order to mitigate uses needing distance from open space, buffering should be implemented as specified by the San Luis Obispo Department of Agriculture/Measurement Standards in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

### ***Employment in the County***

Currently, the majority of employment in the County is located in the City of San Luis Obispo causing most North County residents to commute south for jobs. A new town can help offset this phenomenon by attracting services suitable for the demographics of North County as well as encouraging employment bases unique to North County and more specifically, the proposed new town.

### ***Existing Character and Lifestyle***

With any development, there is alteration to its pre-existing environment. Although this fact will not impede the development process, significant features, characteristics, and quality of livelihood can continue to be well preserved with resident involvement, community workshops, and public

activism throughout the planning process. Specific preservation concerns of residents in the Planning Area are horse ranches, wineries and clear night skies.

### ***Groundwater Basin Recharge***

Water resources are currently a problem in the Planning Area. Existing residents depend on groundwater recharge to replenish wells. The proposed development of a new town will create an influx in the current population and call into question the extent of service the groundwater will provide to residents. Prior to developing, a viable water source must be established. A large portion will probably come from the state (currently, state water pipes run along Highway 46) and a water reclamation process established during phases of development that uses the natural terrain to recharge the ground water basin.

### ***Housing***

A new town could encourage a variety of populations to the area; especially farm workers who will more likely be attracted by the surrounding agricultural uses. In response to existing conditions and patterns of housing and population distribution, the new town will need to devise a plan for housing that will suffice the diverse populations. This can be established through affordable housing, farm worker housing, cooperative housing, multi-family, single-family, mixed-use and ranchette-style housing.

### ***Sensitive Environment***

Sensitive ecosystems are acknowledged within the Planning Area. In order to preserve the existing habitat and habitat

corridors, it is important to maintain the environment designated as sensitive as having greater importance future development.

### ***Services and Utilities***

For any new town development, sufficient emergency services, community services and utilities should be established. The Planning Area is currently a clean slate that will allow infrastructure to provide these services and utilities. Due to its existing location, relying on services from neighboring cities is insufficient because of poor response times. Nonetheless, it may be sufficient to provide satellite facilities for the area, depending on its population projection.

### ***State Housing Mandate***

The San Luis Obispo County daily newspaper, The Tribune, (December 22, 2001) reported that San Luis Obispo might experience a population growth of nearly 50,000 people over the next 7 years under the newly enacted state mandate. According to San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, the City of San Luis Obispo alone is being requested to accommodate 15,000 new residents with a minimum of 6,843 new housing units, while smaller communities within the county are being asked to accommodate 2,200 new residents. If the County refuses the attempt to meet the state mandate request, a reduction in grant funding allocated to public services by the state of California would be a direct repercussion. Therefore, representatives of SLOCOG are currently negotiating to comprise and develop a suitable demand for housing in San Luis Obispo County. By

providing a planned development concept that meets the demand for housing in San Luis Obispo County, growth may be achieved in an orderly manner that is not conducive to sprawl.

### ***Uncontrolled Growth/Sprawl***

Sprawl is a concern of most residents that can only be mitigated through a well-devised concept plan and proper regulations. New development should contain sprawl through open space buffers regulated by a land conservancy group, or through development that starts as less dense near its town core and expanded to higher densities.

### ***Williamson Act***

Areas designated under the Williamson Act are preserved for agricultural cultivation; even areas that are not necessarily prime agricultural land. In addition, it remains in effect ten years after the owner options out of the Williamson Act program.

Because not all of the areas under the Williamson Act are prime agricultural lands, it is important to further assess non-prime agricultural land within the Williamson Act parcels for the possibility of selecting a suitable site for development.

## **SITE SUITABILITY ANALYSIS**

An important part of this study was the development of a method for selecting a suitable site for a potential new town development in the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area. The amount and complexity of information that needed to be analyzed necessitated the use of a computer model. One of the primary reasons that this was possible is that much of the data for the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area was already digitized and made available by the San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department.

The site suitability analysis involves several steps. It is first necessary to identify key criteria, then to determine relative importance of each criterion, and finally to develop a model that will show the overall suitability of the area based on the combined effect of all the criteria. John Lyle, Gideon Golany, and Ian McHarg each developed approaches to site selection that were used to create this methodology.

John Lyle, in his book, *Design for Human Ecosystems*, suggests designers should attempt to follow what he labeled “Gestalt Design.” He writes that when designing for human development, landscapes cannot be looked at in terms of their individual components. Instead, the landscape should be considered as a whole. Therefore, a holistic designer would look at the entire site and all of its processes to understand how the ecosystem is interconnected and how to work within those constraints.

Gideon Golany, in *New Town Planning*, states that five groups of criteria need to be addressed when selecting new town sites. He identifies these criteria as physical, environmental/ecological, potential local resource, political, and social/economic.

Ian McHarg, in his book, *Design with Nature*, developed what he termed the “graytone” suitability model. This model uses shaded overlays to denote scales of suitability. McHarg’s model allows the planner to consider all of the constraints and assets of a site at one time. By designating what characteristics of the land are most important, sites can be analyzed as a whole.

### **Synthesis**

The site selection analysis synthesizes the ideas of Lyle, Golany and McHarg into a workable suitability and site selection model. Lyle’s holistic perspective was used as a context for the model. Golany’s approach guided the identification and analysis of the key criteria for conducting the site suitability analysis as well as the classification structure. The model uses a shaded overlay system drawn from McHarg’s approach to interpreting the criteria’s combined effect on a site’s suitability for new town development.

### **The Digital Model**

Due to the complex and expansive area from which this site was selected, and the availability of digital data, a computer geographic information system (GIS) was used (See Figure 2.1). There were two primary objectives for the site selection model:

- Develop a methodology appropriate for site selection in the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area
- Select a suitable site for a new town development

The approach utilized ArcView GIS Model Builder<sup>®</sup> and Spatial Analyst<sup>®</sup> to compile the existing GIS data. This program allowed the application of McHarg’s overlay approach to a large quantity of detailed spatial data that would otherwise have been extremely difficult and unfeasible.

After each of the criteria had been put into the model, it was classified using Golany’s system. A ranking system was then produced to determine the importance of each criterion. Because of the sheer volume of information, the ranking was limited to *suitable*, *moderate*, and *unsuitable*.

The computer model produced final maps depicting suitability that incorporated all of the data available. These maps allowed the selection of the most suitable site.

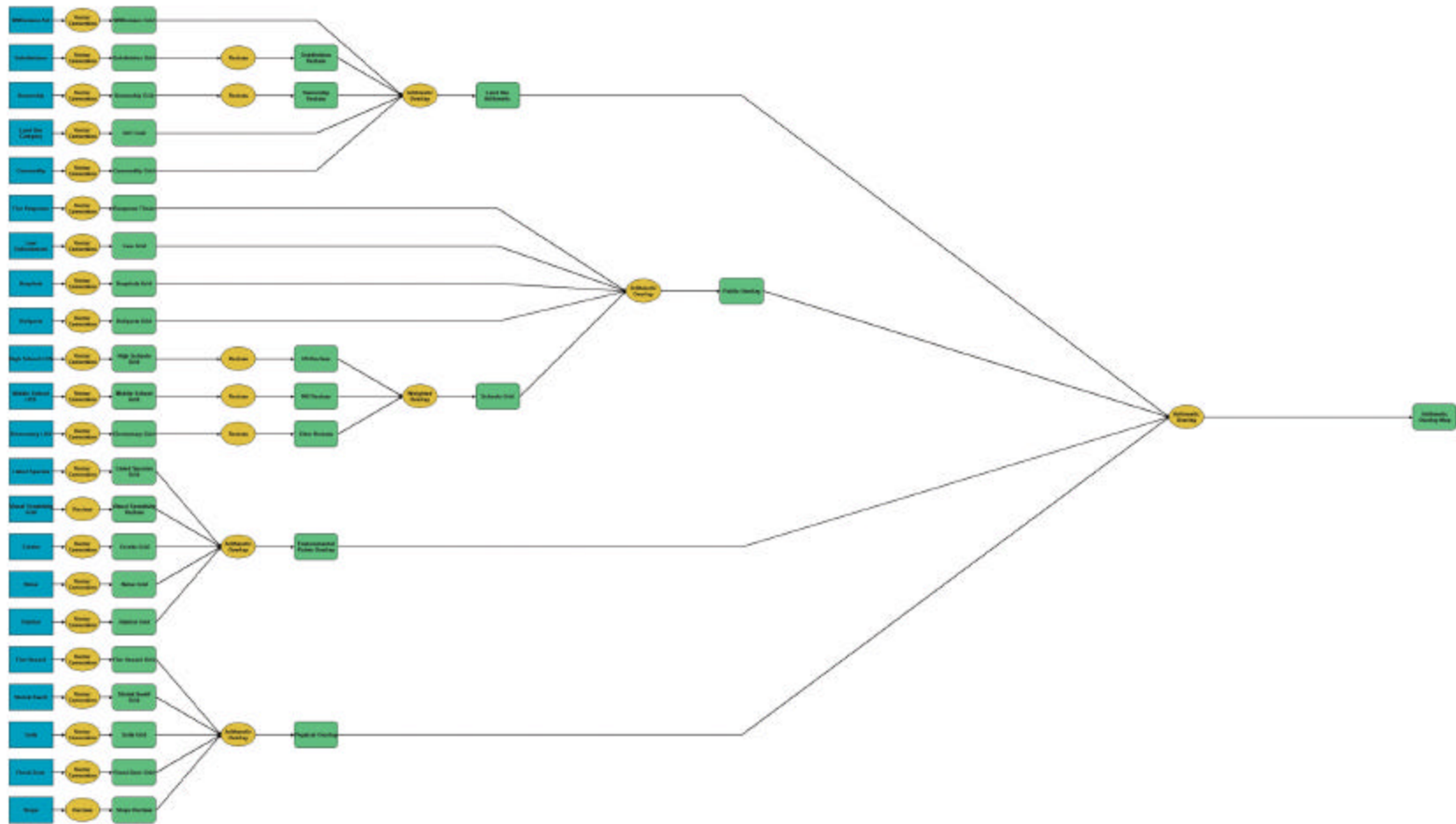
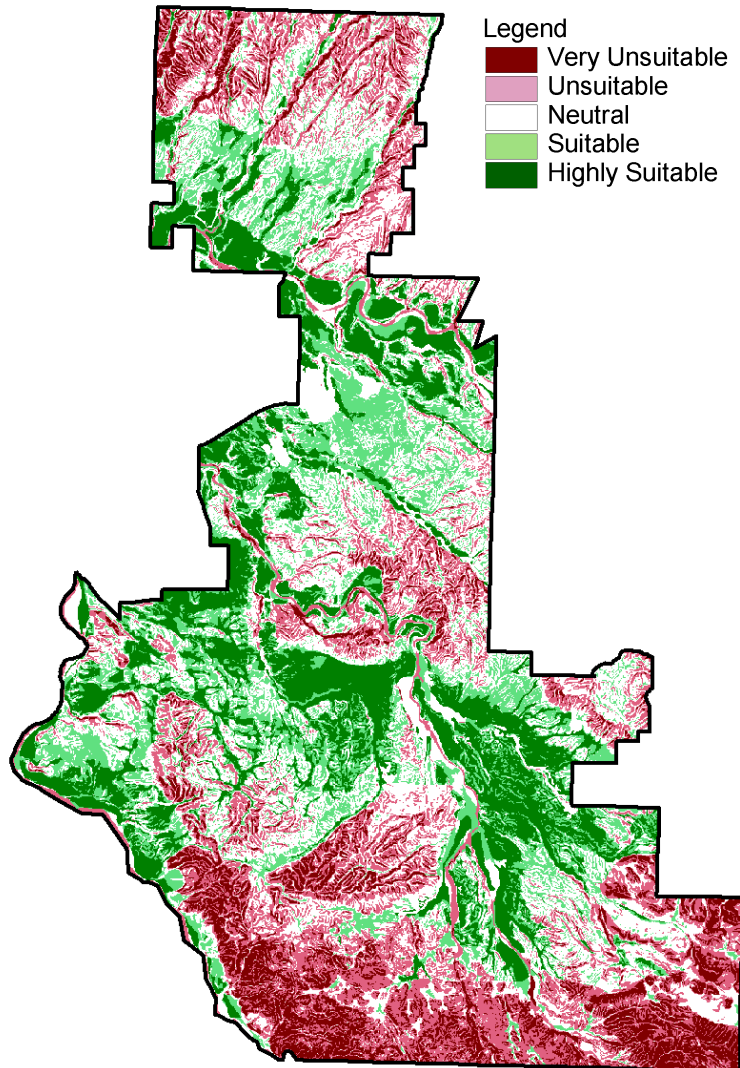


Figure 2.1: Digital Model Layout

**Figure 2.2: Physical Indicator Overlay**



## Site Selection Criteria

To make the amount of data manageable, Golany's system of criteria classification was used to create what were termed *indicators*. Indicators are the key categories pertinent to site selection. The model incorporates five different indicators: Physical, Environmental, Public Facilities, Land Use, and Socio-Economic; each encompassing four or five criteria. The Physical and Environmental indicators represent characteristics of the natural environment; Public Facilities and Land Use include the existing built environment and regulations; and Socio-Economic indicators show the accessibility of jobs/housing opportunities in the region.

### *Physical*

The physical indicator is the largest and most important (See Figure 2.2). It considers slope, soil, shrink-swell, flood zone, and fire hazard. These mainly indicate areas with high slope or areas within the immediate flood or fire zones. Although Golany's system includes landslide and seismic and volcanic activities, these criteria were not considered in the model because they do not represent a significant risk in the area.

### Slope

The slope is a very important criterion because it is the primary limiting factor to construction on a site. Land with slopes under 10 percent was ranked as suitable and slopes over 20 percent unsuitable. High slope areas can still be a part of a new town as open space and/or parks. This information was derived from the USGS Digital Elevation Model (DEM).

### Soil

Soils are another important factor because they indicate areas of poor drainage, prime agricultural land and potential erosion. They also influence the potential types of construction. Soil classification, because it is based on the agricultural soil classification, indicates not only the areas that are more difficult to build on, but also those that are of high agricultural value. Soils of class I and II when irrigated were ranked as moderate; III and IV as suitable; and all others as unsuitable.

### Shrink-swell

This criterion indicates the suitability of the soil based on its capacity to shrink and swell with its water content. Soils that change their volume dramatically with water content (i.e. those with a high shrink-swell rating) are less suitable for any type of construction.

### Flood Zone

The planning area does not contain any land within the 500-year flood zone. This criterion therefore takes into account only the 100-year flood zone. Areas within the zone were ranked as unsuitable and outside the zone as suitable. The information was digitally compiled by the San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) information.

### Fire Hazard

This information, compiled from the San Luis Obispo County Safety Element, takes into account the area's relative

flammability. It does not include fire response times for the area because that information is included in the Public Facilities indicator. The area was ranked as *moderate*, *high*, and *very high* hazard.

### ***Environmental***

The environmental criteria are important to consider when development occurs in order to minimize impacts to the surrounding ecosystem (See Figure 2.3). Golany writes, "a new town should grow in harmony with the natural environment." Planners must be aware of sensitive habitat corridors and avoid development in these areas.

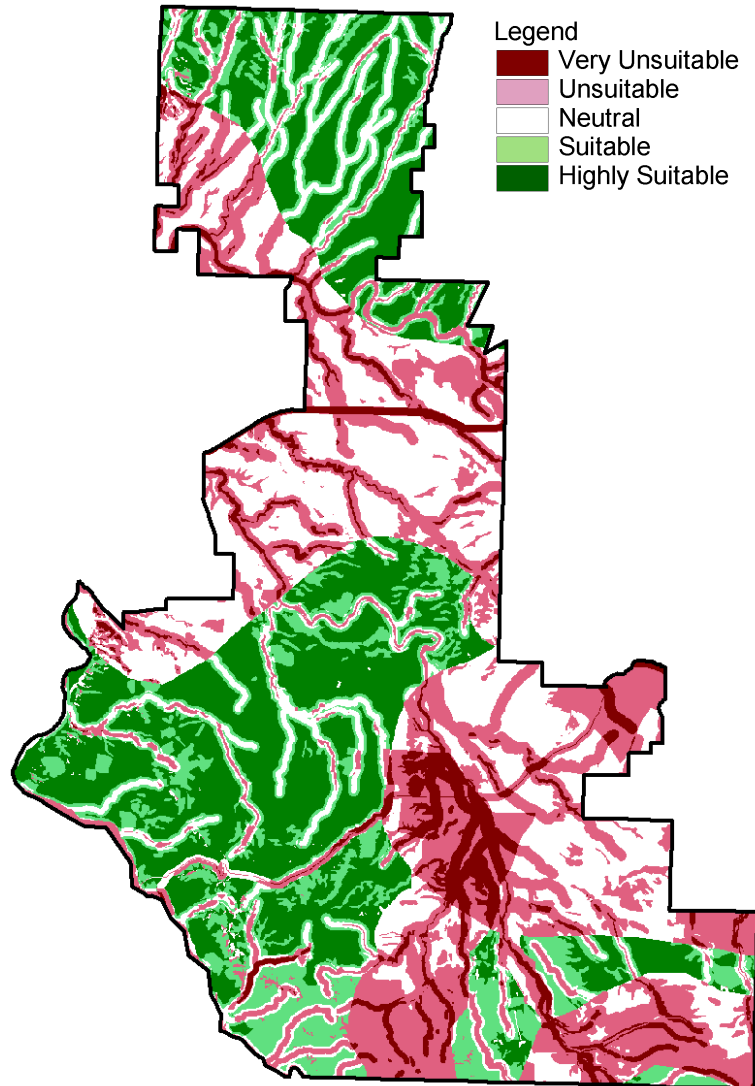
The environmental indicator considers noise, visual sensitivity, historical and cultural regulations, habitat sensitivity and major listed species habitat. This indicator was considered one of, if not the most important set of criteria by all of the parties involved including the residents of the area.

### Noise

Noise from Highways 46, Highway 41, and the Paso Robles Airport was considered. While this would usually be a more important criterion, we limited its importance in the model because of the extremely small area that it affects. The areas that are sensitive to these noise sources are plainly visible due to their close proximity to the roads and/or airport. This criterion creates a direct conflict with accessibility and a balance must be found. The information is derived from the San Luis Obispo County Noise Element.



**Figure 2.3: Environmental Indicator Overlay**



### Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity was derived from the data compiled by Crawford, Multari, Clark and Associates for the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area Constraints Analysis. The digital information that they provided was integrated into this model. Because of the area's obvious visual appeal, the areas prominently visible from the roads should be protected from over-development.

### Historical/Cultural

The historical/cultural criterion is less significant and will be dealt with on a smaller scale later in the development process. Regulations limit development within 100 meters of existing creeks to preserve the abundant archeological sites in those areas. The information was created from countywide streams information.

### Habitat Sensitivity

Habitat sensitivity takes into account ecological habitats that should be protected based around vegetation types. The two primary habitats in the area are oak and riparian woodlands and water habitats. The sensitive habitats are designated as either *high* or *very high* sensitivity. This data was compiled from the Constraints Analysis.

### Major Listed Species Habitat

The listed species criteria takes into account the Endangered and Threatened Species in the area, the Western Spadefoot Toad and the San Joaquin Kit Fox as well as a variety of indigenous plant species. The Endangered Species Act

(ESA) does not directly limit the development of an area, but it does require mitigation for the removal or destruction of a species' habitat.

### ***Public Facilities***

The public facilities indicator includes fire response times, distance to hospitals, distance to existing law enforcement, distance to emergency heliports, and school district level of service (See Figure 2.4). All of these except for the school's level of service were derived directly from the General Plan Safety Element. The school district level of service was derived from the County Level of Service survey. Parks, golf courses, and other small, community-oriented public facilities were left out of the model. A new town would necessitate building these facilities regardless of size or design.

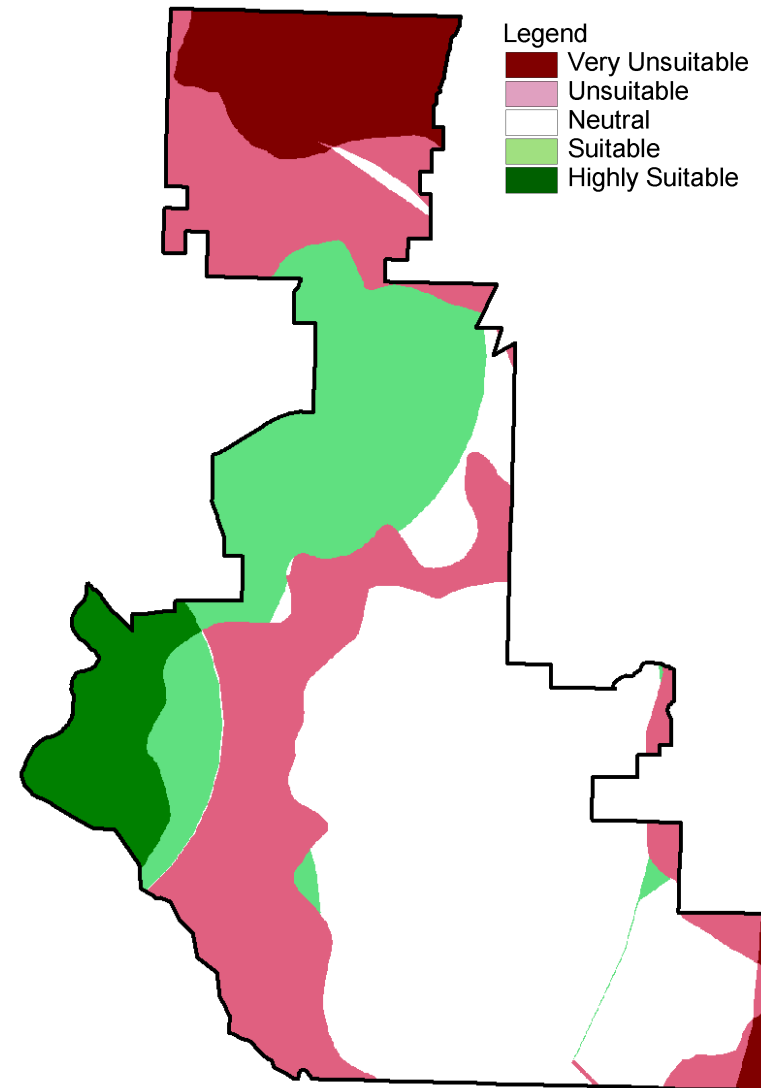
#### Fire Response Times

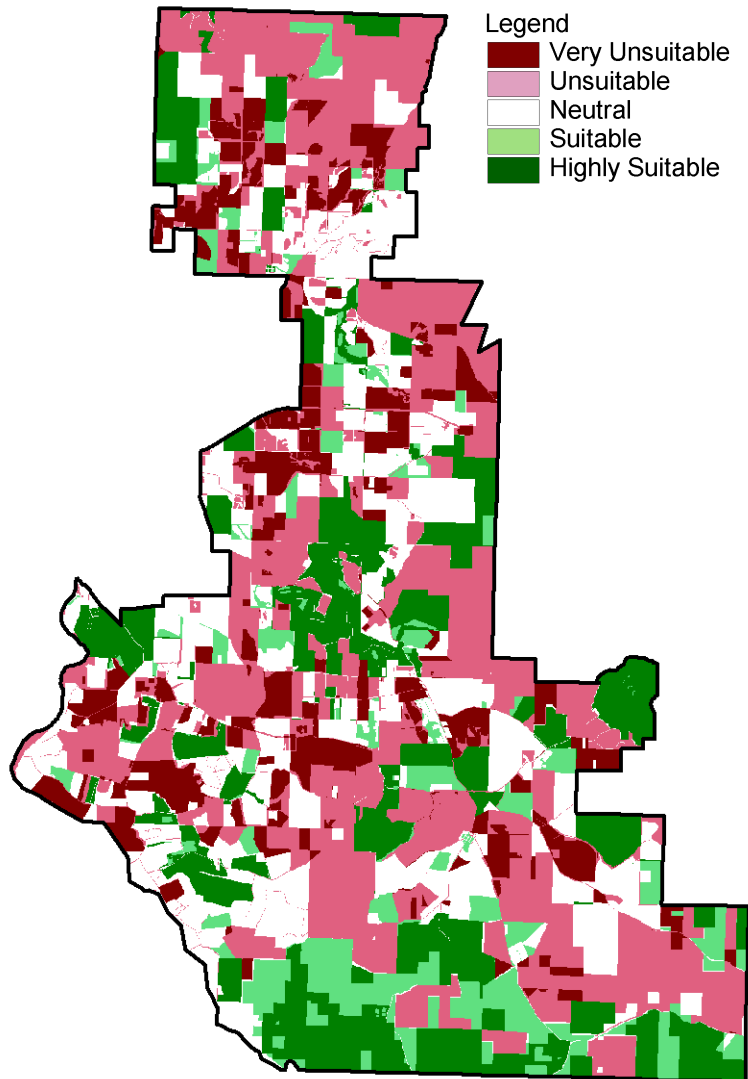
This information is compiled directly from the California Department of Forestry's (CDF) response times. Less than 5 minutes was considered suitable, 5-15 moderate and over 15 unsuitable.

#### Distance to Hospitals, Law Enforcement, and Heliports

These three criteria were weighted very low in the model. They were included solely because during the beginning stages of a new town project these facilities may be needed from the surrounding area. Any new town development will include these basic services.

**Figure 2.4:** *Public Facilities Indicator Overlay*



*Figure 2.5: Land Use Indicator Overlay*School District Level of Service

The level of service for school districts was compiled from County Level of Service survey for the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area. This criterion was also considered less important because the development of a new town would necessitate the construction of at least one new elementary school.

Land Use

The land use indicator includes the Williamson Act, land ownership concentration, land use designations and agricultural commodity (See Figure 2.5). This indicator was also considered a very important part of the model.

Williamson Act

Because non-agricultural uses cannot be built on Williamson Act parcels, this criterion is very important. These parcels cannot be changed from agricultural uses for ten years after the owner files not to renew the contract. Although the ten-year delay may be detrimental to the initial development phases of a new town, the timeframe is not likely to cause a large problem. Phasing of a new town project should be able to incorporate the ten-year wait.

Land Ownership Concentration

In the land ownership criteria, areas of contiguous lots with one owner were considered highly suitable for development. In the research of new towns conducted in conjunction with this study, one of the most important factors in determining a new town's feasibility was the consolidation of the land.

Large expenses for purchasing land can make a project unfeasible.

#### Land Use Designations

Although certain existing land use designations inhibit development, the adoption of a specific plan for any new town would require a re-evaluation of the designations. Therefore, this criterion is given little importance in the model.

#### Agricultural Commodity

The agricultural commodity criterion considers land with existing vineyards or other crops as undesirable for development because vineyards and other crops are valued highly both aesthetically and economically in both San Luis Obispo and California.

#### ***Socio-Economic***

The socio-economic indicator contains important factors in attracting and retaining citizens in the new town once it starts to develop. It includes the existing transportation system and all of the existing economic and social influences from the rest of the county and beyond. This indicator did not fit into the computer model because it primarily consists of economic information that is not spatial, and therefore cannot effectively be applied to a map. Because only a small amount of spatial data in this indicator was available digitally, it would require a much longer project timeline to include it in the model.

While they were not conducive to the digital model, these criteria were considered. They played an important role in the final site selection and concept design phases of the project. The socio-economic criteria also influenced the project in the goal setting and implementation stages.

#### **Criteria Weighting**

One of the most important things to consider when creating a new project in an area with existing communities is public participation. The planning and design processes must include cooperative efforts of all participants in the decision making process. Community members and potential future residents of a new town should have a voice.

Due to the constraints explained in the introduction, this project has received limited input from the public. While some information was obtained from the meetings with the El Pomar-Estrella Area Plan Update Committee and in the New Towns Workshops, it was not possible to get all of the input from the public that was needed. The model does, however, take all of the information available and include it into the site selection analysis and development of concept plans. In the future, increased public participation can be more effectively incorporated into the selection and weighting of criteria of the model.

Input by local residents and members of the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area at the community meetings indicated that the community most values environmental and prime agriculture land protection and preservation. The residents who commented felt that the primary goals of the site

selection process should be maintaining the agricultural heritage of the community and protecting the environment. In the final model, the Physical and Environmental indicators were weighted much heavier than the Land Use and Public Facilities criteria (See Table 2.1 and Figure 2.6). This is because the slope and other physical factors are much more difficult and costly to change than land use factors. In this

case, the physical indicator also accounts for greater agricultural preservation than the Land Use criteria.

**Figure 2.6: Pie Chart of Criteria Weighting**



**Table 2.1: Criteria Weighting Percentages**

Physical	35%	Slope	7%
		Soil	7%
		Shrink-Swell	7%
		Flood Zone	7%
		Fire Hazard	7%
Environmental	35%	Noise	7%
		Visual Sensitivity	7%
		Historical/Cultural	7%
		Habitat Sensitivity	7%
		ESA	7%
Public Facilities	10%	Fire Response	2%
		Hospital	2%
		Law Enforcement	2%
		Heliports	2%
		Schools	2%
Land Use	20%	Williamson Act	6%
		Commodity	5%
		Designation	4%
		Ownership	5%

Slope and listed species habitat are the most critical criteria in the model. Slope is the factor that changes the cost of development most dramatically. High slope areas (over 20 percent) are extremely difficult and expensive to build on and doing so contributes to environmental degradation due to erosion. The sensitive habitat areas are areas designated by the individual species’ habitat restoration plan and are critical for the species’ de-listing. The location of a new town within the habitat for one of these species could be catastrophic for the recovery of the species.

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## SITE IDENTIFICATION

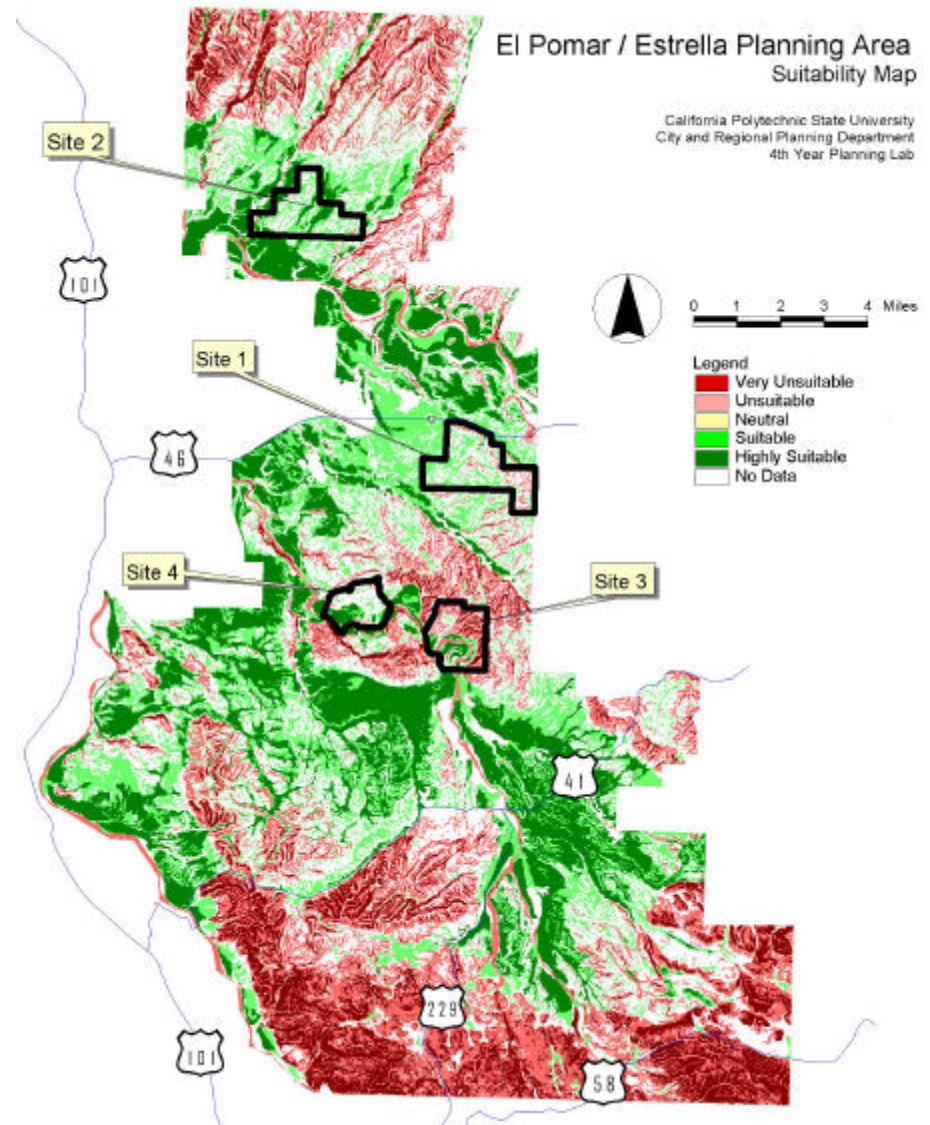
The following four sites were selected from the suitability map produced by the digital model (See Figure 3.1). The map reflects both the combined overlay and the overlays for each indicator. Sites along Highway 46, near the towns of Estrella and Linne, and along Huerhuero Creek came out in the overlay. Each site has unique properties. After the individual sites were selected, each was evaluated on the basis of the criteria to determine which site had the most potential.

### Site 1: Highway 46 East

This site lies on the East side of the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area along Highway 46 (See Figure 3.2). It is bounded by Highway 46 to the north, the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area boundary to the east, the Ground Squirrel Hollow subdivision to the south, and Geneseo Road and the Arciero Vineyards to the west. Union Road divides the site from Northeast to Southwest. The Paso Robles landfill is North of the site, while the east is bordered by vineyards. The total area of the site is 1,664 acres.

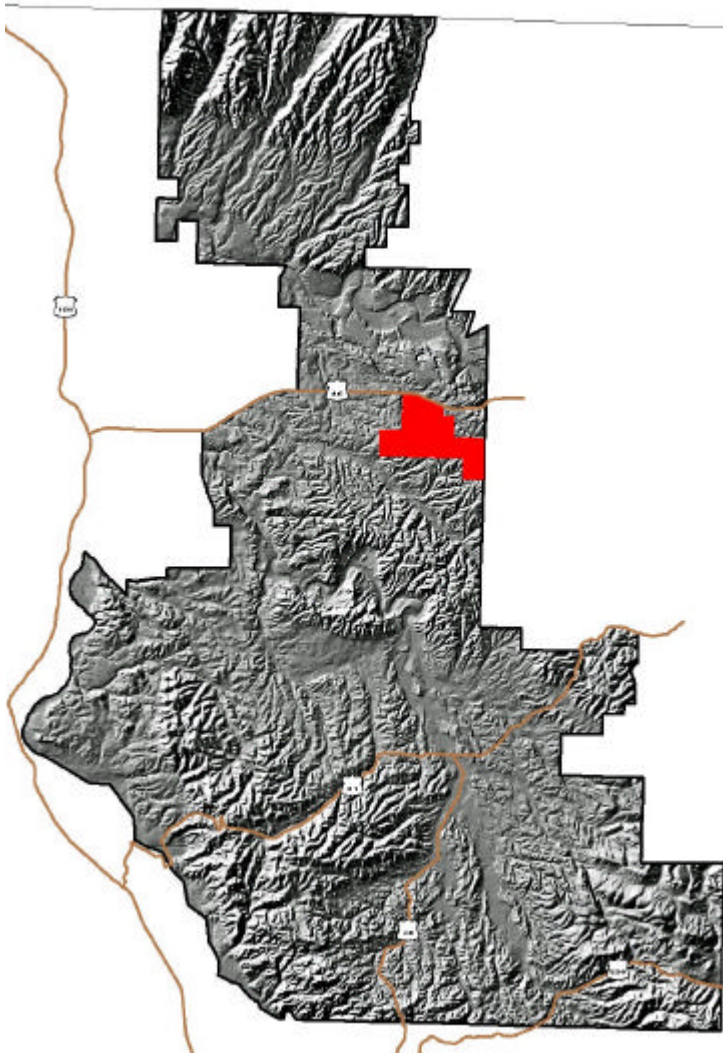
#### Assets

A large portion of the site is owned by one person. This is an extremely important asset for this project because it makes land assembly easier. The three large southeast parcels are, in effect, one continuous parcel.



*Figure 3.1: Site Selection Map*





**Figure 3.2:** Site 1-Highway 46 East

One large, centrally located parcel is under a Williamson Act contract. While this could be seen as a major obstacle to the development of a new town on the site, it is more likely to be beneficial to the phasing process. Because the parcel can be released from the contract ten years from non-renewal, it is well within the timeframe for development and construction of a new town. Even if the project construction could be begun in under ten years, the forced phasing of the site has the potential to boost the development pressures in the area.

An important note to consider is that very little of the site is considered prime agricultural land. Even the parcel under the Williamson Act has a soil type of IV. This means that while the area is designated agricultural, very few crops or other agricultural uses would be feasible on it. Over most of the site, in fact, the soil types are not suitable for even the vineyards that require less suitable soils.

The site's proximity to Highway 46 is a very important opportunity unique to this site. The highway's capacity is being increased to four lanes of traffic from Highway 101 to Whitley Gardens, just east of the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area. The accessibility that this major highway will provide indicates that the area in and around the site will experience a large increase in development pressure. Placing a new town on this new corridor will help to further the County's goal of moving development away from the Highway 101 corridor.

#### ***Liabilities***

While the site has a slope mostly under 10 percent, there is a substantial portion of the site between 10 and 20 percent.

While this slope does not preclude building, it does make development less feasible by increasing the costs involved in grading the site. Building on high slopes can also contribute to the environmental degradation of the area.

The north portion of the site directly borders Highway 46. This proximity to a major highway could cause severe noise problems. However, the area that would be affected by this noise is fortunately within the boundaries of creek development restrictions and therefore has no potential for active development.

Portions of the east end of the site are within sensitive oak woodlands. While this does not specifically prohibit development, these areas are best suited for open space, parks or passive recreation. The full-scale development of these areas would lead to the loss of the land's unique character.

The entire site falls within the habitat for the threatened San Joaquin Kit Fox species. This will severely limit the amount of development that may potentially be located on the site. While building is not directly limited in this area, the environmental review for any developments will require some sort of costly mitigation measures to ensure a minimal impact on the species.

There are many working and developing crops and vineyards on the site. Although this can directly limit the feasibility of a new town project, it has the potential to force a new town to maintain the agricultural heritage of the area.

## **Site 2: North Plains**

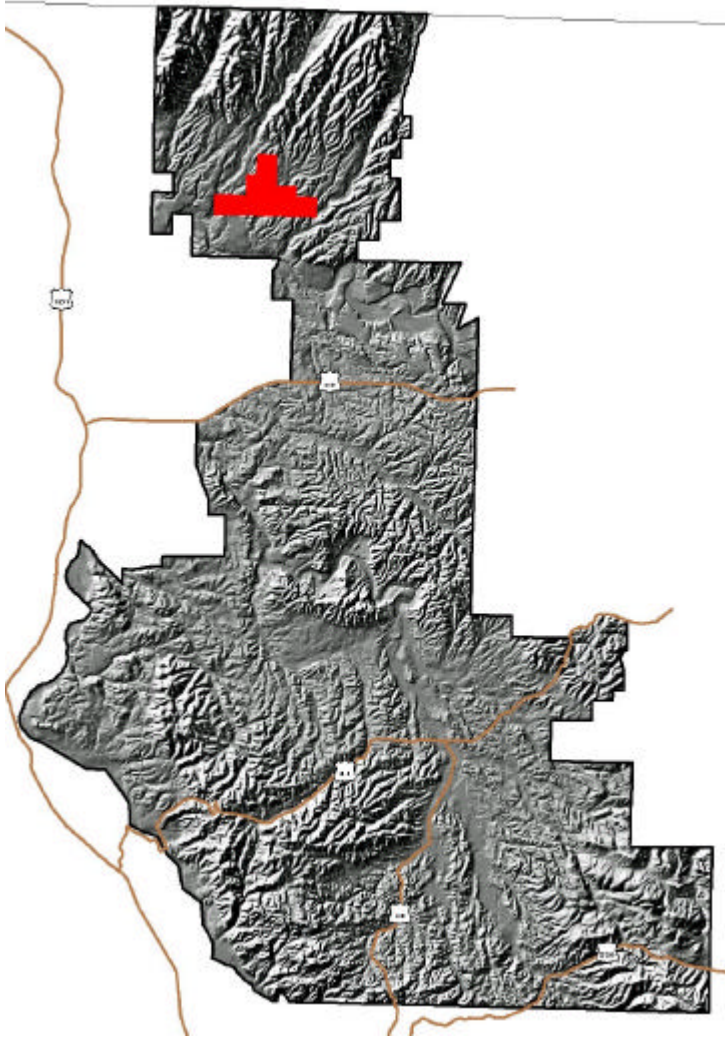
This site is located far in the north of the Planning Area (See Figure 3.3). It is bordered by vineyards and crops on three sides. To the southeast, it is bordered by the Independence Ranch subdivision. Ranchita Canyon Road splits the site from north to south. Estrella Road runs along the south. The terrain is mild, all under 20 percent slope and mostly under 10 percent. Four creeks run through the site from northeast to southwest. The western most of these being in the 100-year flood plain. The total area of the site is 1,292 acres.

### ***Assets***

This site is physically very well suited for development. It is mostly flat with a few areas of higher slope near the existing streambeds. The soils in the area are almost completely type IV and not suitable for most crops. The existing streams provide the opportunity for including natural water features to a new town.

### ***Liabilities***

Well away from existing roads and development, this site would need significant improvements to accommodate a new town. This in itself does not cause a problem. However, once new roads are in place, the site will no longer have an adequate buffer from Paso Robles. Because it is only one mile from the expected growth boundary of Paso Robles, any new development on this site would quickly become a part of that city.



**Figure 3.3:** Site 2-North Plains

Another concern for this site is its proximity to Monterey County. Because a new town developed at this location would greatly impact the bordering county, many additional agencies would need to be involved in the development process. This could cost the project not only time and money, but could determine the success of the project.

The area surrounding and including the North Plains site would be difficult to develop because of the abundance of existing agricultural uses. Since the creation of the data used in the model, over 30 percent of the site has been developed as vineyards. While the model showed this area as non-prime agricultural land, it is in high demand for vineyards. In addition, throughout the site many existing orchards were found.

### **Site 3:Huerhuero Creek**

This site is located near the center of the planning area on Huerhuero Creek and Geneseo Road (See Figure 3.4). It consists of a mountainous area in the north and a large plateau in the middle overlooking Huerhuero creek. The creek winds through the southwest portion of the site before heading south. The total area of the site is 1,116 acres.

#### **Assets**

Of the total 1,116 acres that the site encompasses, 738 are owned by one person. An additional 150 acres of the total site are owned by the Federal Government. This is a very important asset for development of a new town because, as discussed earlier, a new town's development is facilitated more quickly when the land can be assembled easily.

Another asset of this site is that it has a pre-determined size. The entire area is surrounded by parcels under the Williamson Act. While under normal circumstances this may cause a compatibility issue with a new town, the areas under the act are not suitable for agricultural uses other than grazing. The area consists of primarily VII and VIII class soils.

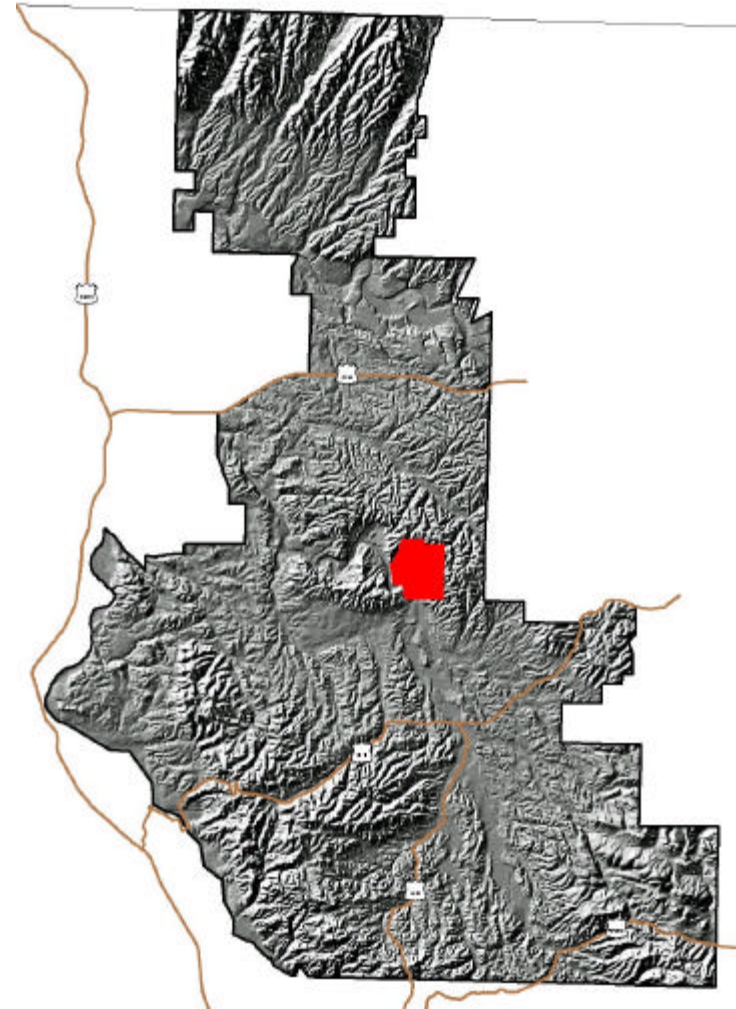
### ***Liabilities***

Slope is an important consideration for this site. A large portion of the site would be difficult to build on because it has slopes between 15 and 20 percent. The slope would limit development of the site to the areas near the creek or in the south portion where land assembly will be difficult.

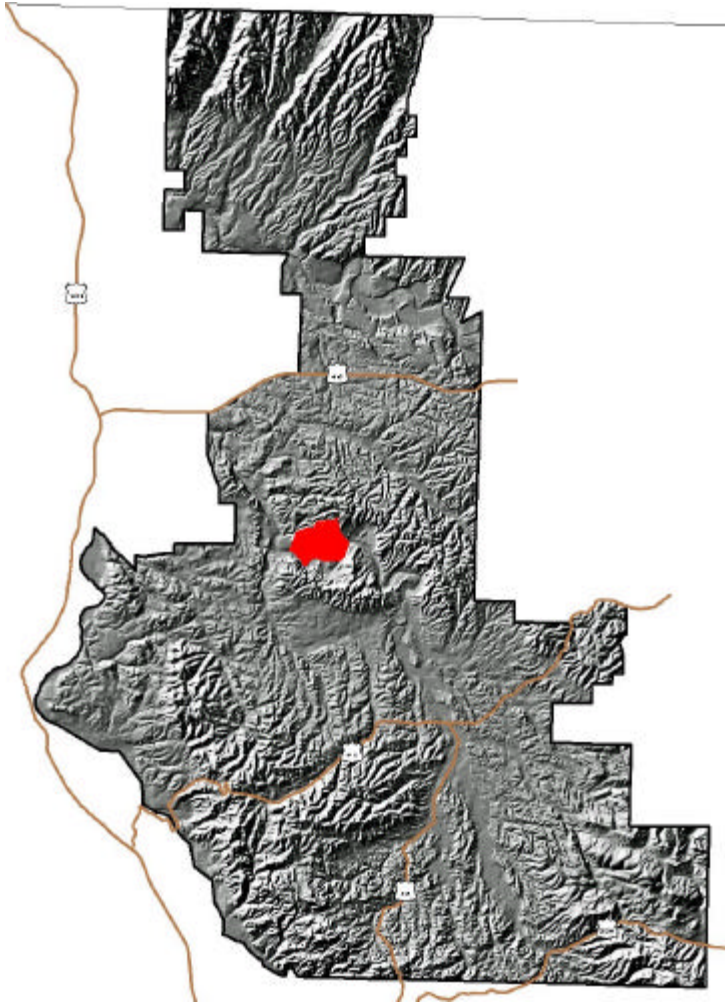
The location of this site would necessitate the widening of Creston Road if a new town was to be located there. Access could only be created by either drawing traffic through the residential areas of Paso Robles, the town of Creston, or the subdivisions between the site and Highway 46. The most likely point of access would be from along Geneseo Road from Highway 41. This would draw traffic directly through Creston.

### **Site 4: North Linne**

This site is located directly to the north of the existing township of Linne (See Figure 3.5). To the south, it is bordered by Linne Road and Huerhuero Creek. Much like the Huerhuero site to the east, North Linne is somewhat mountainous. On the southern portion of the site, closer to



**Figure 3.4:** Site 3-Huerhuero Creek



**Figure 3.5:** Site 4-North Linne

the existing development, the terrain levels out. There are two very small existing orchards on the site, but no vineyards in the area. The total area of the site is 1430 acres.

#### ***Assets***

This site has a unique opportunity since it is close to the existing township of Linne. The Community Services District already in place could be a valuable asset during development of the site. There are two areas of the site under Williamson Act; however, these are both primarily VII- and VIII-class soils suitable only for grazing. Another opportunity for this site is that it is wholly within an antiquated subdivision. By placing a new town here, development of Linne could be controlled and could avoid becoming a sprawling residential community.

#### ***Liabilities***

The slope of this site would pose a problem for development. While there are portions of the site with a slope under 10 percent, much of the site is between 15 and 20 percent. Development would be mainly limited to the flatter areas and very close to the flood plain, road and existing development.

One of the main problems of the area is that it is around 30 percent built out. Many of the parcels in the site already have houses on them. In addition, the residents of the existing development of Linne would pose a large opposition to any new development

Linne is a very secluded area. The only access to the site is from Linne Road from Highway 101 in Paso Robles. Any

new development would require the improvement of not only the road, but also its connection to 101 and relationship to the residential areas of Paso Robles.

### **SITE SELECTION RATIONALE**

The four alternative sites each have unique potential and constraints for development. When the socio-economic indicator is added to the data produced by the model, Site 1, Highway 46 East, is the best choice for development. Site 1 was chosen primarily because it is the most feasible. While it may not have the least sensitivity to development or be the most suitable, its proximity to Highway 46 is an overwhelming advantage over the other sites. The accessibility of the location is an important criterion when considering a new town site because it determines how the area will develop.

Proximity to a major highway not only provides valuable access for supplies, commuters and construction, but it also provides the opportunity for a source of revenue. Tourism is a proven method of increasing development pressure in area. It can be the catalyst that allows a new town project to succeed.

Another, very important consideration included in the selection of this site is how it represents the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area as a whole. Because this project is primarily a study of how to *approach* development of a new town, we chose to select a site that would contain some of the

major issues in the area. This site contains both an antiquated subdivision and a parcel under Williamson Act.

The antiquated subdivisions are important because they were created before the existing regulations were in place and they foster unplanned development. These subdivisions use water wells and septic tanks and, if left unregulated, population could triple in some areas. The Williamson Act is an important consideration because parcels under the act cannot be developed for non-agricultural uses for ten years after non-renewal of the contract.

### **SITE ANALYSIS – SELECTED SITE**

The selected site is a 1600-acre area, located on the northern side of the Planning Area, adjacent to Highway 46, at the intersection of Geneseo and Union. It is a relatively quiet area since the only major noise generator is Highway 46. The climate of the area is hot and dry. A breakdown of the climate can be seen in *Table 3.1*.

#### ***Land Use***

The selected area is sparsely developed. Most development occurs within the antiquated subdivision on the northwestern side of the site, along existing Compare, Plane View, Rabbit Hollow and Lucas Roads. This subdivision contains 133 lots, forty-six of which are developed.

The largest percentage of the land is being used for agricultural purposes. This includes the Tobin James Winery on the far north side, directly adjacent to Highway 46,

Arroyo Robles Vineyard on the northeast side of the site, and Arciero Winery that borders the northwest side of the site. Besides these three wineries indicated by the County's Geographic Information System, there are several vineyards throughout the Planning Area. Most are on the northwest side of the site and on a large parcel on the far southwest corner. There are many acres of fruit and nut trees running along Union Road, especially on the south side of Union Road on the west side of the site. Along the northwest side of Union Road are large, contiguous parcels of uncultivated land. There is a 176-acre parcel under the Williamson Act located at the south side of the site; however, it is unknown how much longer that parcel is under contract.

### ***Physical***

The area has a hilly topography ranging from 5 to 20 percent slopes. Union Road runs along a narrow valley between two ridges. The antiquated subdivisions and existing houses are developed on top of several hills above Union Road. Because the area is so hilly, most development should occur at the top of the many hills. There are so many valleys and

drainage courses along Union Road that there would be drainage, erosion, landslide and flooding concerns for any development along the road. Development could prove difficult and expensive in the lower regions of the area.

Four soil types exist in the selection area. As can be seen in *Table 3.2*, these soils are poorly drained, rocky, have great erosion potential, are poorly suited for septic systems and are not prime agricultural land. This would indicate larger lot sizes would be necessary if septic systems were to be incorporated in the Planning Area. According to the San Luis Obispo County Safety Element, the soils in this area contain a high amount of alluvium, which leads to a high potential for liquefaction in the event of an earthquake. The area is near the vicinity of the Rinconada fault, a fault that is active but shows no indication of seismic activity.

### ***Environmental***

The most biologically sensitive area on the site is within the seasonal stream that runs along Highway 46 on the north side of the site. According to the San Luis Obispo County El

<b><u>Climate Averages for Selected Site</u></b>													
	Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average Temperature	59	49	55	42	57	61	68	73	72	69	62	53	46
Average High Temperature	76	58	62	66	73	78	87	94	93	89	80	69	60
Highest Recorded Temperature	115	75	81	85	96	100	115	115	109	112	103	91	83
Average Precipitation (inches)	11.1	2	2	1.9	1.2	0.3	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.3	1.2	2.1
Average Number of Rainy Days	28.7	4.6	4.6	4.6	3.2	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.3	1	1.4	2.6	4.8

***Table 3.1: Climate Averages for El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area***

*Source: World Climate, <http://www.worldclimate.com/>*

Pomar-Estrella Area Plan Constraints Analysis, this riparian habitat is crucial to such species as willows, sycamore, and cottonwood, as well as various animals including garter snakes, skunks, weasels, coyote, raccoon, several species of birds and the endangered Western Spadefoot Toad. It is important that riparian habitat such as this is preserved. As stated in the Constraints Analysis, “larger, contiguous areas of undeveloped land within planning area are particularly important for providing linkages between regions and various habitat types.” Besides the obvious use of these streams as habitat by many types of plants and animals, areas within 300 feet of streams can often prove rich in undiscovered archaeological resources; therefore, any development should be avoided near them.

A Valley Oak Woodland exists on the north side of the site. This scattering of native oaks and scrubs serves as an important habitat and cover for raptors, hawks, barn owls, reptiles, snakes, deer, mice, coyotes, bobcats, woodpeckers, and bats. There are three large mixed oak woodlands on the site, mostly on the east side, which serve as cover for similar species. Fragmentation of this critical habitat and interruption of its potential as migration corridor for numerous species should be avoided at great cost. Any development near this habitat should respect the native oaks, cause as little impact as possible, and should be careful not to block migration corridors by such developments as fences, roads, buildings, or drainage swales. It is important to note these migration corridors and surrounding grasslands are commonly utilized by the Kit Fox, an endangered Californian mammal.

**Table 3.2: Soils Characteristics**

Soil Name	Drainage	Erosion Potential	Shrink-Swell	Septic Suitability
Arbuckle Positas Complex	very poor to moderate	moderate	low	slow
Arbuckle San Ysidro Complex	N/A	N/A	N/A	slow
Balco Nacimiento Complex	not well to moderate	moderate to high	moderate	high slope/rocky
Nacimiento Los Osos Complex	Not well drained	moderate	moderate	high slope/rocky

### **Fire Hazard**

There is a large amount of dried vegetation of varying types on the site. This mixture of ragweed, chaparral and other scrubs present an extremely high fire hazard. A combination of the CDF response time of over fifteen minutes, the two lane roads and the combustible overgrowth, poses a significant wildfire hazard. The topography of the site accentuates the fire risk. According to the San Luis Obispo County Safety Element, “Steep terrain causes fires to burn faster uphill, and also channels airflow, creating erratic wind patterns.” Therefore, it may be necessary to provide additional fire protection for the proposed new town area.

### **Visual Resources**

The visual resources of the site are what make the location special. To the south, the La Panza mountain range can be



viewed from many locations. The Cholame Hills dominate the northern views, and to the west, the continuance of the Cuesta Ridge can be seen. Within the area is a proliferation of rolling hills; the topography of the site combined with the oak stands and rural development make the area visually sensitive. Any development that occurs should pay careful attention to complimenting the landscape, be designed with compatible colors and be properly screened. Screening structures will be more difficult in open areas than near oak stands, but by careful design, the visual character of the site can be preserved. Because Union Road runs along an impression in the landscape, most development at the top of the hills will not be visible to automobiles. It is highly recommended that careful attention is paid to developing structures that are sensitive to the viewsheds – buildings, windows and viewpoints should be oriented to maximize the amenities.

## CONCLUSION

The site selection analysis synthesizes the ideas of McHarg, Golany and Lyle into a workable suitability and site selection model. Lyle's holistic approach and Golany's site selection categories helped designate the criteria that would be most crucial to locating a new town. Once indicators were established, McHarg's overlay system in the computer model allowed the development of suitability maps, and the selection of four possible new town locations. The importance of different indicators and criteria were adjusted in many combinations within the model. This allowed the development of a variety of suitability maps that vary

depending on what is designated to be most important. These maps show what areas are best suited for development and therefore greatly facilitate the site selection process.

In the final analysis, the information received from public workshops and the San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department helped weight the criteria more effectively. The inclusion of socio-economic criteria and this public participation was crucial to the site selection process. In the future, the computer model can be expanded to include these criteria.

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## **PLANNING GOALS**

### ***Land Uses***

GOAL A DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED IN ANTIQUATED SUBDIVISIONS IN A MANNER THAT WILL SUPPORT ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT AND BENEFICIAL USE OF LAND WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA.

GOAL B URBAN AND RURAL USES SHOULD BE COHESIVE AND INTEGRATED TO FORM A COMPATIBLE COMMUNITY.

### ***Population***

GOAL A VARIED HOUSING TYPES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED TO PROVIDE HOUSING FOR A DIVERSE POPULATION.

GOAL B POPULATION GROWTH SHOULD BE ANALYZED AND DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE PLANNED TO AVOID SPRAWL AND MAINTAIN COHESIVE NEIGHBORHOODS.

### ***Public Facilities***

GOAL A PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY SHOULD ACCOMMODATE GROWTH AS WELL AS PROVIDE HIGH LEVELS OF SERVICE AND SAFETY.

### ***Community Services***

GOAL A COMMUNITIES SHOULD INCLUDE ADEQUATE PARKS AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES RELEVANT TO THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE POPULATION.

GOAL B INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO HELP ALLEVIATE OVERCROWDING IN THE SCHOOLS THAT SERVE THE PLANNING AREA.

### ***Transportation***

GOAL A THE PLANNING AREA SHOULD BE INCORPORATED INTO THE PRE-EXISTING REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY.

GOAL B STREETS AND DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO SUPPORT EXISTING AND FUTURE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION.

### ***Open Space/Agriculture***

GOAL A PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL USES SHOULD BE SPECIFIED AND PRESERVED.

GOAL B OPEN SPACE SHOULD BE USED APPROPRIATELY TO PROTECT AGRICULTURAL AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT USES.

### ***Conservation***

GOAL A THE HABITAT CORRIDORS OF ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES SHOULD HAVE PRECEDENCE IN DEVELOPING AREAS.

***Economy/Employment***

GOAL A A DIVERSIFIED EMPLOYMENT BASED SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO ESTABLISH EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PROJECTED POPULATION.

GOAL B EMPLOYMENT GROWTH SHOULD BE MONITORED TO PREVENT A LARGE IMBALANCE OF AVAILABLE JOBS TO HOUSING SUPPLY.

## CONCEPT A: GENESEO

### Vision Statement

Geneseo is a new town located between Highway 46 and Union Road, 42 miles North of San Luis Obispo (See Figure 4.1). With a size of a little over 1,600 acres, the expected population at buildout will be between 10,000 and 15,000. Geneseo is designed to offer a combination of services and local amenities as well as affordable housing.

Geneseo's surroundings consist mostly of rural and agricultural lands that will create a relaxing setting for tourists who want to visit the country and the local wineries. An amphitheater in the area will hold concerts that will help the tourist draw as well. Geneseo will also have mountain biking trails throughout the town linking the town center to miles of recreation surrounding the area.

Geneseo will offer bike and pedestrian paths, which make it possible to walk or bike from one side of town to the other. These connections are called paseos and they will provide residents with additional safety. They are landscaped with native, water resistant plants. The paseos are well lit for nighttime safety. It will be faster to ride a bike to some parts of Geneseo than it will be to drive. This will decrease dependence on personal vehicles thereby reducing pollution and giving residents a nice sense of community.

The downtown area will be high-density, mixed-use with commercial uses on the first floor and residential units above. The buildings will have a western character with smaller

balconies that look down onto the street. In the middle of the mixed-use blocks will be small paseos with courtyards.

The homes in Geneseo range from the larger "ranchettes" to the higher density, single-family attached units. The attached units will have community courtyards and walkways. These walkways connect from the outer villages on the edges of the development into the core of the town. The ten villages around the core of the town will be very similar to that of Village Homes in Davis, California. The villages are housing developments built around community gardens and a small local community center. The villages consist of a mix of housing types with yards that flow into each other with common walkways along the front of the homes. Development will be dense in the center of the town and becomes less dense toward the edges of the town.

### Planning Objectives

#### *Land Use*

1. Create a community with residential, commercial, industrial areas and open space.
2. Incorporate land uses, including the residential villages, with the surrounding services to minimize the use of personal vehicles.
3. Provide a variety of land uses to help the community develop a mix of activities such as residential uses, retail uses, schools, offices, recreation, and public facilities.

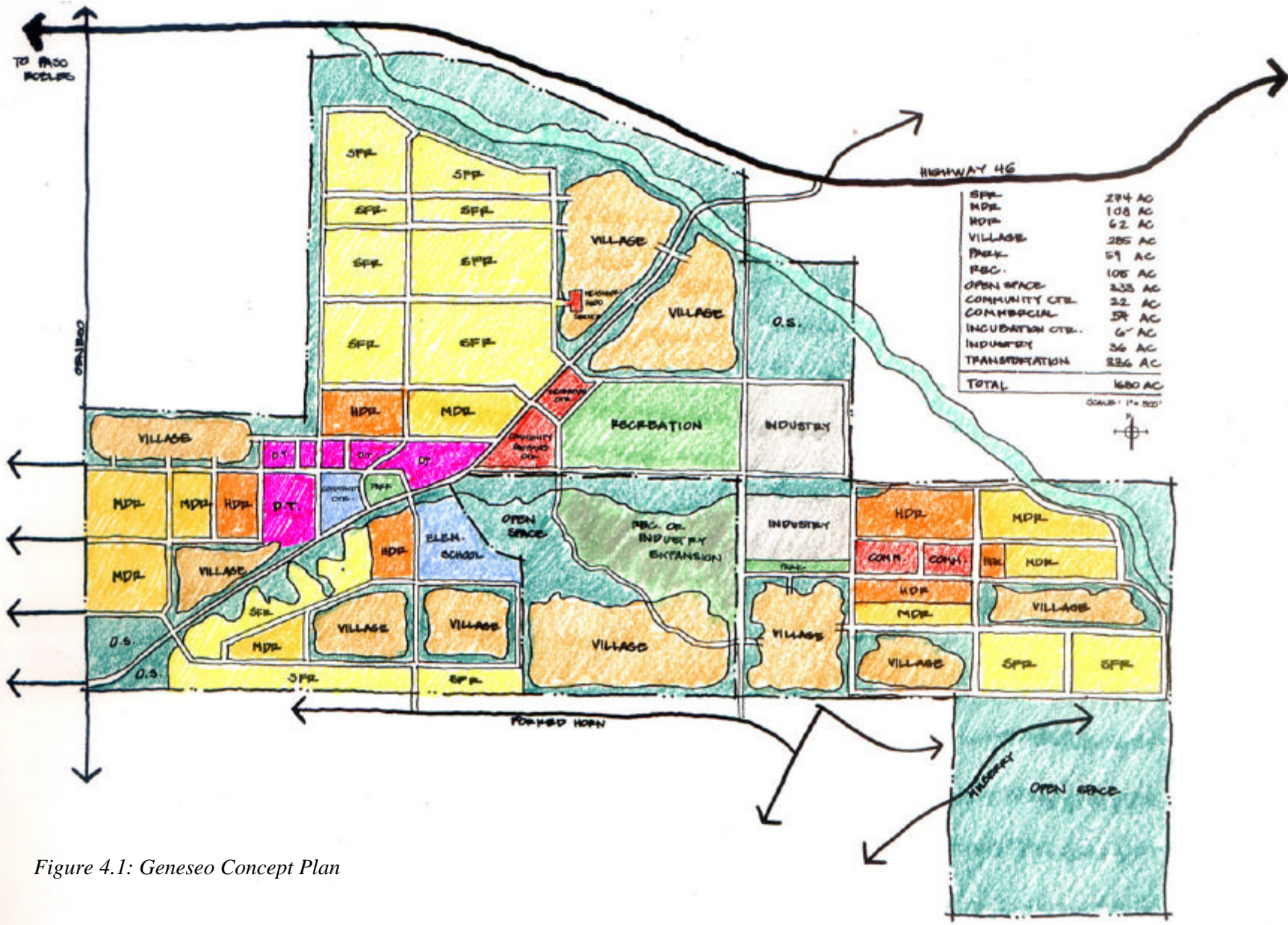


Figure 4.1: Geneseo Concept Plan

4. Establish residential areas that provide access to services and open space.
5. Design a safe environment that avoids building in hazardous areas.
6. Establish residential villages that provide all types of housing with neighborhood services within the village.

### ***Transportation***

1. Provide alternative means of transportation.
2. Provide an efficient street system as well as pedestrian and bike trails.
3. Create a street circulation system that is both visually pleasing and conducive to the reduction in the likelihood of damage on environmentally sensitive areas.
4. Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout the site to encourage these modes of transportation.
5. Provide bus or shuttle service from Geneseo to existing county job centers and regional transportation links.

### ***Open Space and Conservation***

1. Provide land uses for open space, parks, and recreation.

2. Locate parks throughout the town.
3. Create direct bike and pedestrian trails throughout the town.
4. Protect environmentally sensitive areas and species.
5. Protect wildlife corridors.
6. Create a natural drainage system through the site to capture water runoff.
7. Provide a water reclamation plant to capture, treat, and use reclaimed water.
8. Protect the creek throughout the site.
9. Promote water conservation through sustainable design and drought tolerant landscaping.

### ***Economic***

1. Provide revenue to support public services.
2. Provide a diverse economic base, including a variety of jobs.
3. Create flexible planning regulations, which respond to changing economic conditions.



## Population

The permanent population that will reside in Geneseo will closely resemble the current demographic breakdown of San Luis Obispo's North County. United States Census Population data for the year 2000 shows 79 percent of the population as Caucasian, 17 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent "other." The breakdown of several census blocks within Geneseo found similar demographics. The average age in the Planning Area is 37 years old. 30 percent of the North County population is nineteen or under. An additional 30 percent of the population is between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five.

The United States Census Housing data for the North County show 40 percent of the population contains three to five persons per household. Ten percent of the area's households provide shelter for five or more people. The remaining 50 percent of households in North County house one or two people per unit. These demographics suggest that a new town in the North County should include a housing mix with 50 percent being family-style housing. A small percentage of that 50 percent should be homes with more than three bedrooms. The remaining 50 percent should be smaller units for households of one or two people. The new town will provide housing for several different economic segments. The housing supply will range from one room cooperative living, to large single-family houses. Geneseo will provide housing for 10,000 to 15,000 people of all socio-economic classes. Geneseo is designed to draw people from within San Luis Obispo County. Employment opportunities are geared

towards manufacturing and tourism-related industries. This will create similar employment opportunities within close proximity for many working class residents who would otherwise commute to San Luis Obispo from North County.

**Table 4.1:** Geneseo Land Use Designations

Land Use Category	Acres	%
Residential	783	47%
Single Family	274	16%
Medium Density Residential	108	6%
High Density Residential	62	4%
Villages	285	17%
Mixed use	54	3%
Transportation	336	20%
Open space	325	19%
Flexible Use	60	4%
Parks	59	4%
Tourist Recreation	53	3%
Manufacturing	36	2%
Community Centers	22	1%
Incubation Center	6	0%

*Single Family Residential* (4 du/ac) – All size detached housing

*Medium Density Residential* (5-9 du/ac) – Single family attached housing

*High Density Residential* (10-12 du/ac) – Multi-family including cooperative housing and apartments

*Villages* (8-10 du/ac) – A mix of housing options with open space and community gardens surrounded by a green belt

*Mixed Use* (8 to 12 du/ac) – A mix of commercial and residential development

*Parks* – The parks and recreation designations serve as the center of the downtown and provide recreational amenities for visitors to the commercial core of Geneseo.

*Recreation* – The recreation designation provides for the development of a tourist facility such as an amphitheater, horse race track, mountain bike trails, or water park.

*Open Space* – The open space designation covers scenic view sheds, habitat corridors, environmentally sensitive areas and areas better suited for community recreation. These areas are to be left in their natural state.

*Public Facilities* – The public facilities designation provides areas for schools and the Geneseo community center including emergency and safety services.

*Incubation Center* – This designation provides for the development of a county business incubation center.

*Manufacturing* – The industrial designation provides for development of manufacturing and light industrial uses.

*Transportation* – The transportation designation provides for development of roads, bike paths, and pedestrian walkways.

### ***Special Features***

*Tourist Recreation Use* – see Economic Activities and Jobs section.

### **Sustainability**

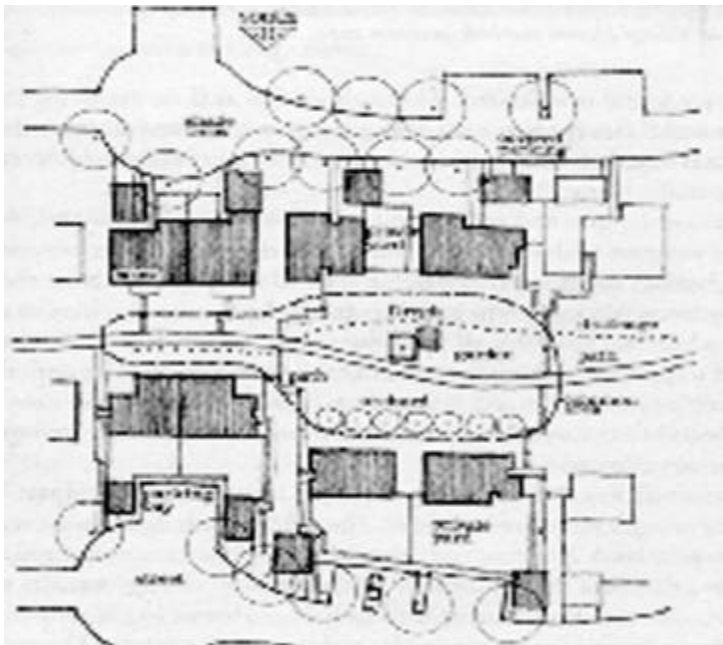
An environmentally sustainable environment is one in which the built environment is in harmony with its natural surroundings and utilizes sustainable technologies such as alternative modes of transportation and building materials that fit the natural surroundings. Creating a dense and easily traversed community encourages people to walk instead of using a car. Every housing unit in Geneseo is within one half a mile walk to neighborhood amenities. The schools, town center, recreational, manufacturing and open space areas are close to the center of the site and are connected by a series of bike and pedestrian trails.



*Section of swale system through villages plan*  
Source: *Designing Sustainable Communities*

Another sustainability feature is that the majority of streets are orientated east to west; ensuring homes can be built for maximum solar exposure in the winter and less solar exposure in the summer. Lining the streets with deciduous

trees provides for shade in the summer and sun exposure in the winter. The use of solar panels or photovoltaic cells is another feature. The solar panels can be incorporated into the homes or be built as stand-alone structures. Geneseo will be developed with a series of swales, burms and retention basins, taking the place of a conventional curb and gutter system. This system of natural water reclamation is an effective way to manage water runoff, while limiting paved surfaces allowing ground water to recharge. The water in the retention ponds can be used to irrigate landscaping and community gardens. Geneseo's development standards



*Typical layout of the village plan*

require the use of recycled and renewable materials such as straw bale used in construction of homes whenever feasible. Pavers and other ground covers will be used in place of concrete in all non-structural uses such as driveways and patios. Finally, the town offers a business incubation center to support development of sustainable industries.

### **Villages**

Villages are neighborhood communities containing common gardens and open space. The villages will contain a mix of housing types and sizes to promote a diverse community. The streets will be narrow to allow traffic calming making a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. The housing units will be clustered around pathways, village gardens and common greens. Access to streets will be provided through the rear of the units while walking and biking trails service the front of the units and provide easy access throughout the village plan. The villages blend nicely with the existing agricultural character of the area. Community gardens will be harvested and used to feed the village on a year-round basis. Included in the common areas will be a community pool with daycare facilities and play areas for neighborhood children.

### **Town Center**

A downtown core will be constructed as part of Geneseo. It will have an open plaza, large sidewalks, and narrow tree lined streets. Uses will consist of restaurants, coffeehouses, stores, professional services, pubs, and sitting areas. There will be plenty of bicycle parking, pathways and access to the city from all directions. The downtown core will serve as a



*East-West street layout allows for maximum solar orientation*

place to meet, dine and shop. The buildings in the downtown core will be two-story, western-style buildings, with small apartments or offices on the upper floors.

## **Housing**

### ***Single-family residential***

Units shall be approximately four units/acre and be designed with sustainable features. The orientation of buildings shall be south facing to maximize solar energy potential. The planting of seasonal vines and trees should also be implemented to allow for maximum solar heating in the winter and maximum shade in the summer. The typical unit will range between 1,000 to 2,000 square feet with a street-oriented design. The housing units shall provide front porches where appropriate and rear entry garages whenever possible.

### ***Medium-density residential***

Units will be 5 to 9 units/acre and include single-family attached units. These units shall be designed with sustainable features.

### ***High-density residential***

Units will be 10-12 units/acre. High-density residential includes apartments and cooperative housing. Most high-density residential will be centrally located in the downtown.

### ***Mixed-use***

Units will be 8 to 12 units/acre. Units will be located in the downtown area of the Geneseo. Opportunities for live/work housing and proximity to services and transportation systems will be available. Mixed-use units will primarily consist of first-floor commercial/office and second-floor residential units.



*Tree-lined streets and single-family residential units*  
Source: *Designing Sustainable Communities*

### ***Villages***

Units will be 5 to 9 units/acre including all housing types with community gardens and open space, surrounded by green belts.

### **Economic Development and Jobs**

Currently in the El Pomar/Estrella Planning Area, agriculture provides the majority of jobs. These are usually low paying and seasonal jobs. This area has become dependant on vineyards and the production of wine and this dependency has diminished the need for diverse labor. In addition, dependence on one industry is not healthy for an economy. It is to the County's advantage to identify microclimates throughout the county where other commodities can successfully be grown.

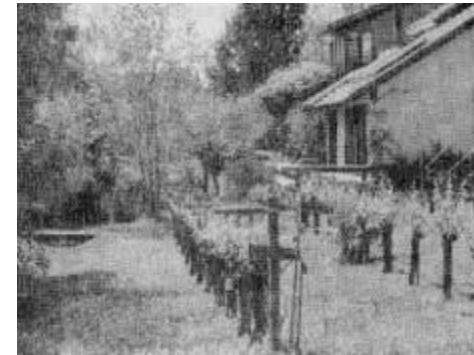


*Grapevines provide shade and snacks on a south-facing window*

This can be done by using Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Once locations are identified, landowners could be educated on how to produce and market alternative crops. This would help to diversify the county's economy and prolong the season of work for farm employees.

Paso Robles is only seven miles away from Geneseo.

Paso Robles has 10,890 jobs and 15 percent of the county's largest employers. Paso Robles has a large manufacturing sector in town and near the airport. Despite Paso Robles' strong job base, there are few housing opportunities for lower-income workers. Geneseo will provide housing for workers in nearby Paso Robles.



*A village home adjacent to a community garden*

As discovered in research of existing new towns, a solid economic base is key to the success of a new town. Geneseo has several types of employment opportunities. The Irvine, California new town case study shows that a combination of recreational use and low- and high paying jobs can create a strong economic base for a new town. Geneseo will house over 100 acres of manufacturing land, providing up to 1,600 head-of-household jobs. Based on potential jobs created, Geneseo has a 1:2 job to housing ratio.

### ***County Sponsored Business Incubation Center***

Six acres are set aside for a business incubation center. Here, the County can place small start up businesses in office and manufacturing space. The incubation will be used to promote sustainable businesses such as a solar plate assembly plant. The incubation center will provide these small

businesses with shared support workers, professional expertise and a discounted rent. A county sponsored business incubation center is a great investment for Geneseo. Most businesses started in incubation centers stay in the community once successful, providing future jobs. This incubation center can provide up to sixty jobs.

### ***Home/Work Opportunities***

Fiber optic cables will be placed with all other infrastructure as Geneseo is developed. This feature will allow for telecommuting and in-home work opportunities. The town center will provide basic services needed for those who choose this lifestyle. These services will include such conveniences such as a copy/teleconference center, post office, library and daycare facilities. The housing units will be designed to provide a separate workspace at home.

### ***Manufacturing Area***

Forty-five acres of Geneseo is planned for manufacturing and light industrial use in the first phase. The third phase has the potential to convert an additional sixty acres into manufacturing uses. At fifteen jobs per acre, this land could provide 1,575 living wage jobs. Considering the agricultural uses in the El Pomar/Estrella Planning Area, it is an appropriate location for a grape, fruit and/or nut processing plant. Most grape growers have to ship their fruit out of the county to be processed, thus losing jobs and income for the county. Based on the need for this use, the manufacturing plant can be built in the first phase of development and it can anchor the manufacturing/industrial village. A typical small-scale fruit processing plant needs a minimum of ten acres.

Equipping the facility to handle grapes, nuts, herbs, beans and other fruits can prolong the work season, thereby providing more year-round jobs.

### ***Recreation***

Geographic location, climate, topography and proximity of vineyards can be used to enhance economic activities within Geneseo. Geneseo can utilize miles of trails and recreational facilities to bring in activities to jump-start the economy. Recreational opportunities researched in this concept plan are: amphitheatre, horse race track, mountain bike trails and a water park.

### **Amphitheatre**

In a random survey of 100 people in San Luis Obispo County, an amphitheater was the most desirable recreational use proposed. An amphitheater appeals to nearly every segment of the population. All types of performances could be staged in it. Conducting research from the



*An amphitheater could provide economic activities*

Shoreline Amphitheater and its Mountain View staff, amphitheaters attract people to spend money at businesses surrounding the amphitheater. Some people will travel great distances to see a performance.

Amphitheater sites range from twenty acres to sixty acres. The site would need to be buffered with non-residential land uses. Ninety percent of workers at amphitheaters are part-time employees. These jobs would be second incomes to a family or jobs for teenagers in the town.

#### Horse Race Track

A horse race track would blend nicely with the expanding horse business in the El Pomar/Estrella Planning Area. It would also complement existing tourism in the North County generated by the wineries. A horse race track could provide between 250 and 500 permanent jobs, and up to 1,500 seasonal jobs. During peak season, a horse race track could draw over 5,000 people per weekend to Geneseo and fuel the tourism-based economy. According to Joe Anderson, Human Resource Director of Canterbury Park, about 50 percent of jobs are seasonal and 50 percent are permanent. Part-time employees work mainly during the summer season. The majority of the employees make a living wage.

#### Mountain Bike Trails

Incorporation of many miles of meandering, landscaped mountain bike trails within Geneseo and the adjacent hills would be a viable use for the large amounts of open space that would keep with the goals of preserving agricultural land. There are no substantial mountain biking trails between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Mountain bikers have been proven to trek long distances to have the opportunity to enjoy unparalleled trails.

#### Water Park

A water park located in Geneseo could be a great way to attract tourists and be a catalyst for growth. A water park is typically located on fifteen to thirty-five acres of land and features a variety of water slides, pools, picnic areas, concession areas and other recreation facilities. A water park can also be combined with other recreational facilities to diversify the population that it caters to. Water parks can also be combined with other facilities such as theme parks, amphitheaters and racetracks to heighten their appeal. This can be an effective way to deal with the fact that water parks are only open six to eight months of the year.

Depending on size, water parks usually employ between 300 to 600 workers while the park is open for business and 100-200 workers during the off season. While most of the jobs are on the lower end of the pay scale, the tourists and revenue that a water park will bring in will help support the downtown and other local businesses.

#### ***Retail and Office Space***

Commercial uses will be provided in the first phase of development. This phase will bring 5,000 people to Geneseo. The site is adjacent to two other subdivisions. There will be ten acres of community shopping, which will include a grocery store, a drug store and an auto parts store. The buildout population and the potential tourist market justify the fifty-four acres of mixed-use land proposed. Potential uses in the mixed-use zone are specialty shops, restaurants, gift shops and professional services. Sixty-four acres of this use multiplied by thirty-two jobs per acre will



*A community center will provide many necessary amenities*

provide over 2,000 jobs. Most of these are low paying jobs. To help offset this trend, Geneseo will strive to support mom and pop stores. Ideally, each small store would support a family living and provide some part-time jobs for teenagers or a second-income for a working family.

### **Water**

These facilities will provide many high quality jobs. Water quality technicians and truck drivers are needed for this service. These workers can live in Geneseo and can walk or bike to work.

### **Circulation**

Geneseo has two main entrances. The southern entrance is at Union Road off Geneseo Road. The north entrance is at Union Road off Highway 46. Seven collector streets connect the surrounding subdivisions to Geneseo. The circulation design of Geneseo will promote alternatives to using the automobile. Bicycle and pedestrian linkages will connect all sections of Geneseo. Due to the centralized design of the town and the urban village approach, any section of town will be accessible without having to travel more than two miles. The downtown core is also located so that it is within one mile of most residential uses. This will promote walking or using a bicycle as an alternative to driving. All automobile thoroughfares will also include bicycle and pedestrian trails (see *Figure 4.12*). Streets will also incorporate pedestrian elements such as bulb-outs at intersections, textured crosswalks, landscaped medians and wide sidewalks.

### **Public Facilities**

The El Pomar/Estrella Planning Area has a poor level of service in all categories of public facilities. A new town in this area will upgrade this level of service.

### **Community Center**

The community center is centrally located. A community library will be located in the center. The teleconferencing center will be a unique opportunity for the citizens of Geneseo to conduct meetings and any other work-related tasks. The transit center is also located here. Residents can



take a shuttle to Paso Robles or connect with car pools nearby.



*Open swale system developed in Village Homes, CA*

### ***Parks***

Geneseo offers thirty-two pocket parks (See Figure 4.2). These parks, ranging from one to two acres, are all connected by pedestrian and bicycle trails. Some of the parks will offer playground equipment for young children.

### ***School***

In its first phase, Geneseo will offer an elementary school. The El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area is in need of a school and Geneseo is an ideal place to locate it. The school will include sports fields, a jungle gym, foursquare courts, tetherballs, a handball wall, basketball courts and a community pool. These are all to be used by the community

when school is not in session. The schools additional recreational facilities will promote a more safe and harmonious community. The adjacent open space can accommodate a middle school or high school once the demand is present.

### ***Water Reclamation and Treatment System***

A series of swales, burms and retention basins will be implemented as an alternative to the traditional sewer system. Geneseo will provide a water treatment facility that will treat brown water for irrigation of community gardens and town landscaping. A community sewer system can solve the existing problems of future development in the area. The swale system is also less expensive and more efficient than traditional sewer systems.



*A new school in this area will relieve overcrowding*

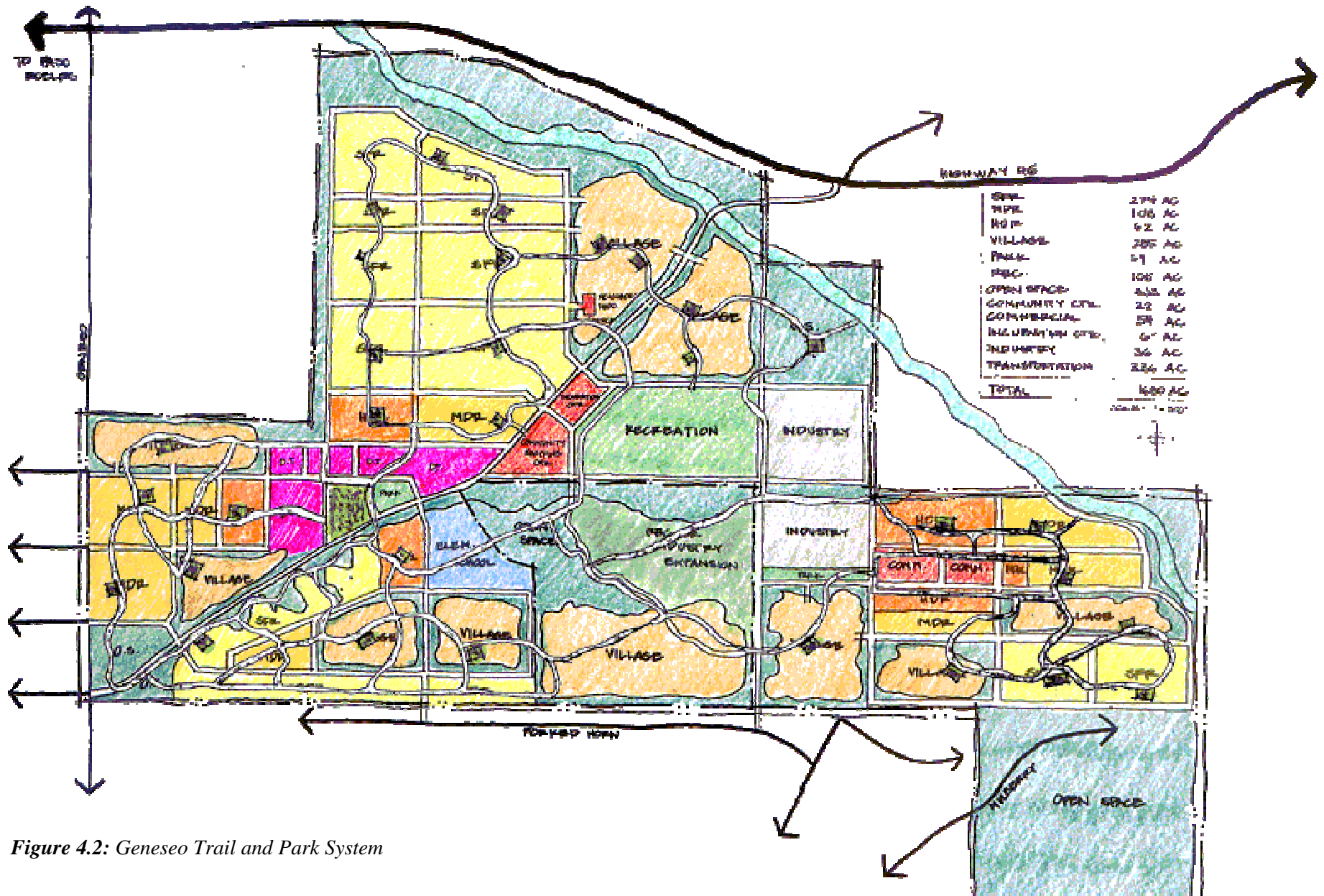


Figure 4.2: Geneseo Trail and Park System

### ***Community Water***

One of the main problems facing the El Pomar/Estrella Planning Area is that all development is serviced by well water. All water used in Geneseo will be from a community water source.

### **Open Space and Conservation**

#### ***Open Space***

The main open space areas are located in the southern corner of the site, a section of the Williamson Act land, and along corridors of the creek and Union Road. Bicycle and pedestrian trails will be located throughout the site including on the land preserved under the Williamson Act (See Figure 4.2). Additional open space is located along the creek and



*Paseo system will connect open space to villages*

above the existing subdivisions. Visitors to Geneseo will notice open space entering the site at both ends of Union Road. The southeastern corner of the site is dedicated to open space for the potential bicycle paths and pedestrian trails. Approximately 400 acres is dedicated to open space in Geneseo. The last area of open space is located near Highway 46, adjacent to one of the proposed villages along Union Road. Overall, the new town provides an adequate amount of open space that will serve the new community and preserve areas for wildlife.

#### ***Conservation***

The creek running through the site will be completely preserved with a 250-foot buffer. The creek will provide a wildlife and sensitive habitat corridor for species such as the kit fox. Another wildlife corridor will be connecting the property in Williamson Act to the creek. Open space corridors are located along the southern and northern sections of Union Road.

#### **Phasing**

Geneseo is planned to provide flexibility. The ratio of housing types in the villages can meet the market demand. The flex land use allows the town to expand either the recreation use or manufacturing use. Phasing creates a built in flexibility that will allow Geneseo to respond to future trends (See Figure 4.3). As learned in the Valencia New Town Case Study, releasing land in response to demand helps to ensure the successful development of available land.

### ***Phase One***

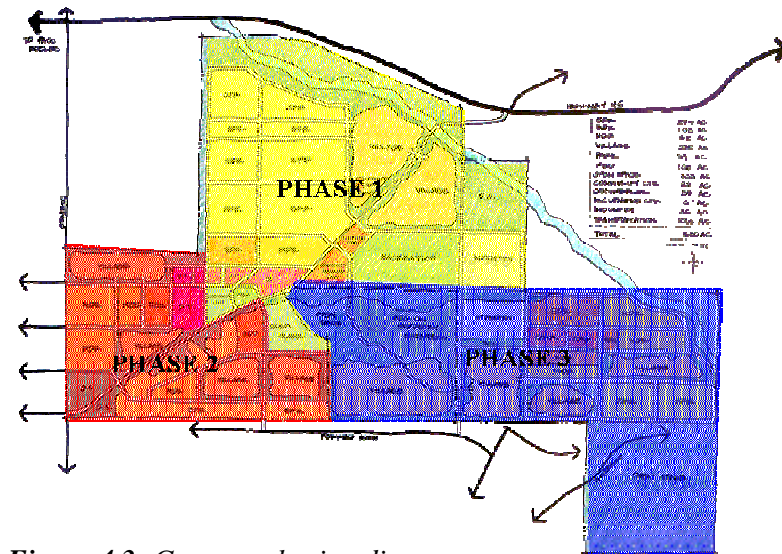
Phase 1 will incorporate the antiquated subdivision and raise its density to four units per acre. Five thousand new residents in Phase 1 of Geneseo and the adjacent subdivisions will justify twenty acres of mixed use in the downtown area and a ten-acre community shopping center. There will be a need for the facilities provided in the community center. The school will also be provided in the first phase of development. As learned in the new town case studies, an economic base is vital to the successful development of a new town. Therefore, fifty-three acres of recreational land and forty-five acres of manufacturing land are necessary in the first phase to create jobs. Two villages and a high density housing area will provide the necessary housing. The north entrance at Union Road off Highway 46 will be developed in this phase.

### ***Phase Two***

Phase 2 includes the southwestern corner of the site. The south entrance to the city will be created during this phase. The balance of the town center, four villages, and additional multi-family residential and single-family residential lots will be added.

### ***Phase Three***

Phase 3 includes the development of the southeastern corner of Geneseo. This section of the site incorporates 176 acres of land in preserved under the Williamson Act. Once this land comes out of a Williamson Act lot, a new village and a flex space will be developed. The rest of this area will include three additional villages and a mixed-use area that serves the



**Figure 4.3:** Geneseo phasing diagram

immediate area. New town case studies state the completion of a new town can take between fifteen to thirty years. Flexibility is a necessary component to new town phasing and Geneseo will grow based on market demand in San Luis Obispo County.

### **Transfer Development Credit Program**

A Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) program deals with the movement of development rights from one parcel of land to another (San Luis Obispo County, 1999). San Luis Obispo County's TDC program encourages the movement of development from land uses that are environmentally sensitive, lack infrastructure or are agricultural land. These properties are called the sending sites. Cambria, another

unincorporated area of the county, currently has a Transfer of Development Credits program in place run by the San Luis Obispo Land Conservancy. The program developed in Cambria is arguably more efficient than the county's TDC program. One of the main differences is that the Land Conservancy, a non-profit organization, acts as a third party TDC bank. The program initially was able to start because of a \$250,000 grant from the Coastal Commission. This \$250,000 is a self-sustaining fund due to the revolving monetary nature of the program. The program currently buys land from an owner, retires the land and banks the development credits. When a buyer in a qualifying area buys the credits from the Land Conservancy, the money from the previous transaction is replenished and the cycle continues. This transfer of development can serve many purposes. It is used to deal with problems often associated with antiquated subdivisions such as unbuildable lots as well as odd lot sizes. The Land Conservancy seeks to retire this land for these purposes as well as to protect sensitive and endangered species habitat. Traditionally, TDC programs are voluntary.

“The County's General Plan does allow and recognize there may be communities or distinct areas... who wish to develop their own program as a modification of the countywide program” (San Luis Obispo County, 1999). With this opportunity, an El Pomar-Estrella TDC program can be developed to address antiquated subdivisions specifically within the Planning Area. If a TDC program is to occur for the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area, antiquated subdivisions in the area would serve as qualified sending sites and lots in Geneseo would serve as the qualified receiving sites. A

program of this nature would serve to retire lots that are unable to be built on in other portions of the Planning Area while promoting organized and denser development within Geneseo.

### **Conclusion**

In order to blend in with the region, architectural features will incorporate a western character. The downtown core will have a main-street appearance with large sidewalks and storefronts. Streets will be kept narrow with on street parking to emphasize a pedestrian-friendly community. Ample amounts of trees and other landscaping will add to the “small-town” feeling and will make Geneseo an aesthetically pleasing community.

Bicycle trails will branch out from the downtown to the surrounding open spaces of Geneseo. These trails will be incorporated into the Williamson Act open space preserves. The recreation area will be located near the downtown. It will serve mainly as a tourist attraction and as an initial base for jobs and a catalyst for growth in Geneseo. As Geneseo's commercial core grows, the job base will shift away from being solely focused around the recreation area.

Solar energy, community gardens, natural water reclamation, and a pedestrian-friendly community distinguish Geneseo as a sustainable new town making it a self-sufficient environment containing a mix of amenities for all who live there.

## CONCEPT B: VISTA DEL CIELO

### Concept Plan Overview

Considering the state mandate enacted in the County of San Luis Obispo to accommodate the growing population, an objective for proposing a new town, Vista del Cielo, is to absorb approximately 7,700 people. This population will include the existing residents as well as future residents.

Presently, approximately 80 percent of San Luis Obispo County's population classify themselves as White/Caucasian. Those classifying themselves as Latino/Hispanic are the second largest group. The remaining percentage is a group comprised of various ethnicities. Considering these statistics as well as the largest age group (35-44), individuals moving into the area will be drawn from the working/professional age and retirement age residents of San Luis Obispo County. Although the concept plan of Vista del Cielo will not be able to drastically diversify the current statistics, the overriding objective of Vista del Cielo is to add more diversity to the region with the provision of particular activities and resources.

The largest population within the county encompasses the thirty-five to forty-four age group. Future residents will most likely consist of retirement-aged people, young starter families, agricultural workers and new San Luis Obispo County residents.

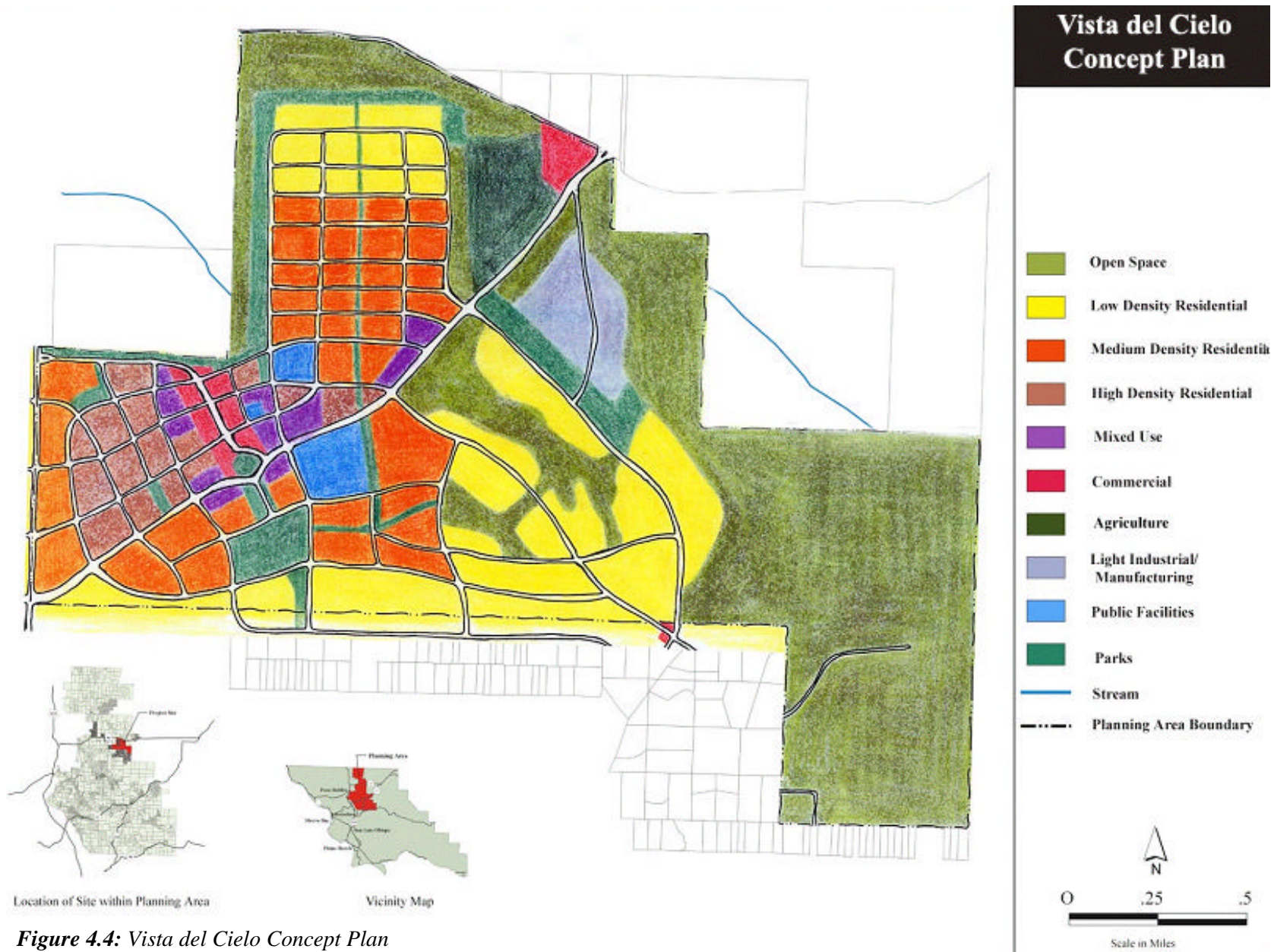
Vista del Cielo will develop housing types classified as single-family, single-family estate, multi-family, affordable

housing and cooperative housing for its vast economic levels and individual preferences. These housing types will be developed near activities such as community centers, churches, parks and schools.

Using the existing context of the proposed site, Vista del Cielo will create a mixed-use/professional/commercial corridor along Union Road that will filter into the Vista del Cielo Town Center (See Figure 4.4). Tobin James Winery tasting room is located at the corner of Union Road and Highway 46. Incorporating this feature as an asset, Vista del Cielo envisions developing restaurants, novelty shops, and a bed and breakfast/resort cluster as a tourist base. The area also plans to create a few light industrial parks for a high-scale income. Cold storage is also a consideration as many industries within the area pay large expenses to have crops shipped out of the County.

The concept plan takes advantage of the existing open space and natural terrain by incorporating pedestrian walkways, bike paths, and nature and equestrian trails throughout the site. Open space will also be designated by the specified buffers (regulated by the San Luis Obispo Department of Agriculture/Measurement Standards) around existing and developing agriculture, creeks and industrial uses. Neighborhood and town parks with playgrounds, picnic benches and green fields will initiate active outdoor uses.

Emergency facilities including a fire department, satellite police station and medical clinic will be located near the Vista del Cielo Town Center. The town center will also host



**Figure 4.4:** Vista del Cielo Concept Plan

a local library in close proximity to an elementary school and future high school. In addition to these services, Vista del Cielo will have a post office, arts center, various community centers and interspersed churches.

**Table 4.2:** *Vista del Cielo Population Characteristics*

Projected Population	PROJECTED PERCENTAGE
New SLO County Residents	15%
Existing SLO County Residents	20%
Existing Residents (On Site)	10%
Starter Families	25%
Local Workforce	10%
Retired	20%
Total	100%
Average Household Size	2.75
Total Population Projected	7,726

Vista del Cielo will be a walkable town with grid and curvilinear street patterns, especially along the mixed use/professional/commercial corridor and within the higher density communities, all located near the Vista del Cielo Town Center. This will be encouraged through the non-vehicle pedestrian walkways and trails. The town center will be home to the public transportation center which will provide a trolley network exclusive to Vista del Cielo and to a public transit bus system connecting to surrounding cities. The bus system is planned to accommodate the percentage of residents who will commute to work as well as seek other various unique activities.

## Main Features

Vista del Cielo's main features are a centralized design of land uses, where the dense uses are at the core and radiate out to lower densities. The centralized town center with the community park serves as the plan's focal point. Vista del Cielo's mixed-use corridor along Union Road was designed to direct people to the town center. The town will have a grid street system as well as a linked park and trail system. The tourism center of the town will be located at the corner of Highway 46 and Union Road. The tourism center will feature the Tobin James Winery, bed and breakfast, restaurant, day spa and salon, antique shops, and boutiques. There will be several large habitat reserves as well as agricultural land set aside for future agricultural uses. There will also be community gardens, and orchards.

## Land Use Categories

**Table 4.3:** *Vista del Cielo Land Use Categories*

Land Use Category	ACREAGE	PERCENTAGE
Open Space/ Agriculture	690	41%
Residential	531	32%
Commercial	25	1.5%
Industrial	42	2.5%
Streets And Roads	336	20%
Mixed Use/ Public Facilities	56	3.0%
Total	1,660	100%

(\*Marginal Error Of  $\pm 2\%$ )



***Agriculture***

The agriculture category will help conserve productive agricultural lands within Vista del Cielo. One dwelling unit per 20 acres is the maximum density permitted.

***Low-Density Residential (1-4 du/ac)***

The low-density category provides for the development of conventional, single-family detached houses and single-family estate homes.

***Medium-Density Residential (4-8 du/ac)***

The medium-density category provides for the development of medium density single-family uses and low to moderate density multi-family uses. Detached and attached single-family homes, duplexes and townhouses are allowed within this category.

***High-Density Residential (8-16 du/ac)***

The high-density category provides for the development of multi-family apartments.

***Mixed-use***

The intent of the mixed-use category is to allow the town center to incorporate any combination of commercial, office and residential uses. The purpose is to layer the various uses within Vista del Cielo's town center and surrounding areas to allow the following: a pedestrian friendly design, a variety of housing types, a mix or blend of uses, and the incorporation of public spaces.

***Commercial***

The commercial category provides for the development of commercial retail uses at a neighborhood, community and regional scale. This category includes the following designations: neighborhood commercial, community commercial, regional commercial and planned commercial center. Commercial uses will be permitted based on their compatibility with surrounding land uses.

***Industrial***

The industrial category provides for the development of light industrial uses, such as manufacturing, cold storage, and fruit and nut packaging and processing.

***Public Facilities***

The public facilities category provides for the development of various public uses such as city hall facilities, meeting halls, police station, fire station, medical clinic, postal services, churches, a community center, and a library.

***Schools***

The schools category depicts the location of proposed and needed schools.

***Parks***

The parks category depicts the proposed park sites located in Vista del Cielo.

***Open Space***

The open space category depicts the sites designated as preserves for sensitive habitat and wildlife. This category

allows for passive recreational uses, such as hiking trails and bicycle paths.

### ***Urban Separator***

The urban separators are a visible band of open space at the edge of allowable urban development. These urban separators provide an edge that buffers farmland from urban development. They can serve as recreational areas as well as key components of the town's open space system.

### **Economic Activities and Employment**

The town of Vista del Cielo will have a wide range of economic activities that will provide jobs and services to the residents of Vista del Cielo. The industrial park will attract small manufacturing firms to locate in Vista del Cielo and provide the necessary high paying jobs that will help the economy to thrive. There will be a wide range of activities offered including the Tobin James Winery Historical Tasting Room and a future bed and breakfast located on Union Road. The downtown of Vista del Cielo will have a mix of activities and will provide office space for people starting up their own business or looking to relocate. The design of the downtown will be pedestrian friendly. To insure that Vista del Cielo will offer quality education, a proposed middle school and high school will help alleviate overcrowding in other schools serving the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area.

### **Circulation and Transportation**

The circulation system has been laid out to interconnect with the major arterials and with the local streets. This system

allows for easier access into the surrounding neighborhoods and for access into the downtown area. On every street there will be bike lanes that range from Class A to Class C. The Paseos enable pedestrians to walk through town and explore other neighborhoods located in Vista Del Cielo. The antiquated subdivision in Vista Del Cielo will be improved and the necessary infrastructure put in place to allow that subdivision to interconnect with the entire circulation system. The widening of Geneseo Road and Highway 46 will allow for truck traffic to service the town and will allow for traffic to flow smoothly.

### **Public Services and Facilities**

- Fire Department
- Local Library
- Satellite Police Station
- Community Center/Churches
- Satellite Emergency Clinic
- Elementary School
- Post Office
- Proposed Future High School

### **Open Space and Conservation**

The design of Vista del Cielo uses the following policies to create a progressive and succinct community using open space. Open space will be used to buffer agriculture and highly sensitive areas from development. The majority of existing vineyards and orchards will be preserved. All highly

sensitive habitat and constraining features will be designated as open space. Parks will be placed near the town center.

### **Anticipated Impacts**

The anticipated impacts created by the community of Vista del Cielo will have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts are as follows: property tax/sales revenue will be created, the affordable housing market will be expanded, antiquated subdivisions will be better controlled, and employment and tourism in the county will increase. The negative impacts are as follows: increased water demand, increased traffic, increased population, displacement of existing residents and a decrease of open space.

### **Conclusion**

The existing terrain and environment of the proposed site provides both benefits and setbacks in that it adds to the visible aesthetics but prevents a significant level of development. This will hinder the overall objective of the new town: to develop a town that will suffice the growing population and provide sufficient economic activities for the area. While the concept plan will maintain a large portion of the existing land conditions, slight alterations to the land will be needed to maximize development to meet the concept plan.

Currently, the concept plan does not designate an area for either a water supply or a sewage treatment plant. Before developing the proposed site, terms of agreement concerning the water supply and sewage treatment must be addressed.

The concept plan for Vista del Cielo designs a suitable town providing various economic activities such as tourism, light industry, commercial, and professional uses, community clusters for a the speculated diverse population, and outdoor activities to enjoy the existing characteristics of the proposed site.

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## **APPENDIX A**

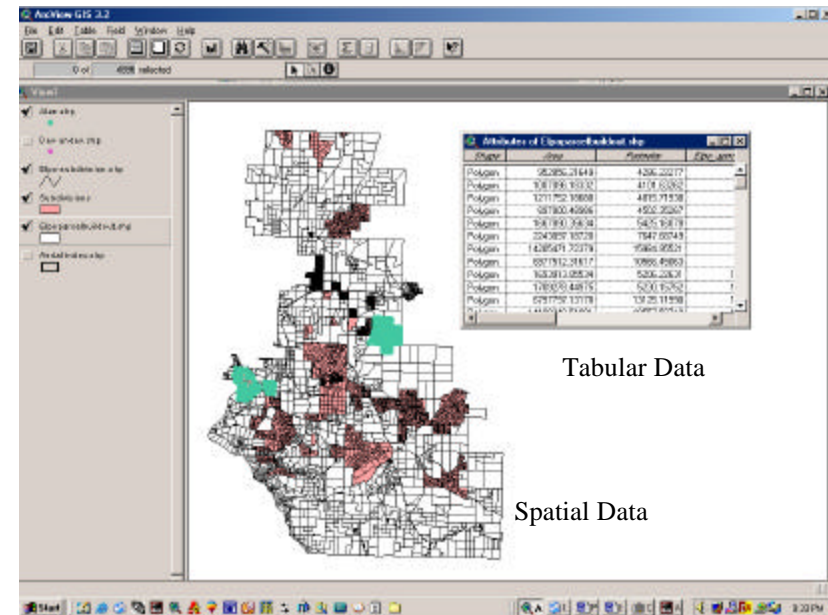
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## **METHODOLOGY FOR BUILDOUT ANALYSIS OF ANTIQUATED SUBDIVISIONS**

GIS (Geographical Information Systems) was used as a tool to figure out how many lots within each subdivision were built on and what the percentage of buildout is for each of the subdivisions. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), is a computer mapping tool which combines spatial and tabulated information together to create a useful system that makes it possible to input any desired information into a database and link it to the map so any given object on the map can be queried and analyzed. ESRI, the GIS leader, defines GIS as “a system of computer software, hardware, and data, and personnel, to help manipulate, analyze, and present information that is tied to a spatial location.”

GIS has two components: the spatial data - visual objects you can see on a map - and a database which holds attributes pertaining to those spatial data. For instance, a small square in the GIS map may represent a building, and when the square is selected, a table listing such attributes as location, floor size, use, owners, and any other desired data can be obtained. This spatial and tabular information can be combined in any manner of ways to ask an unlimited amount of questions of the data.



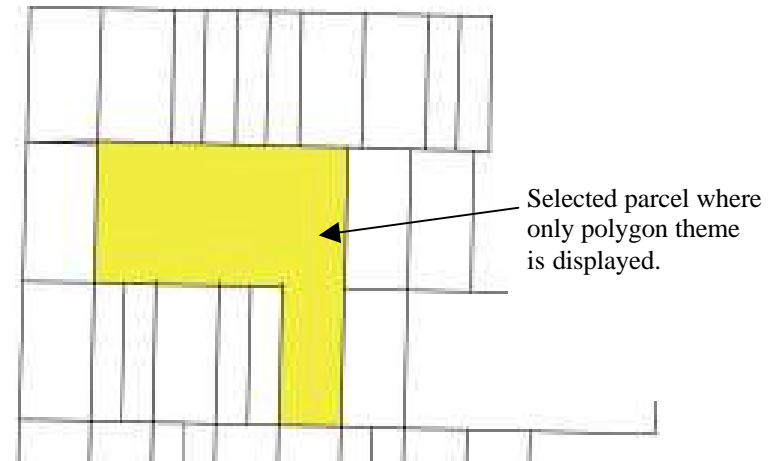
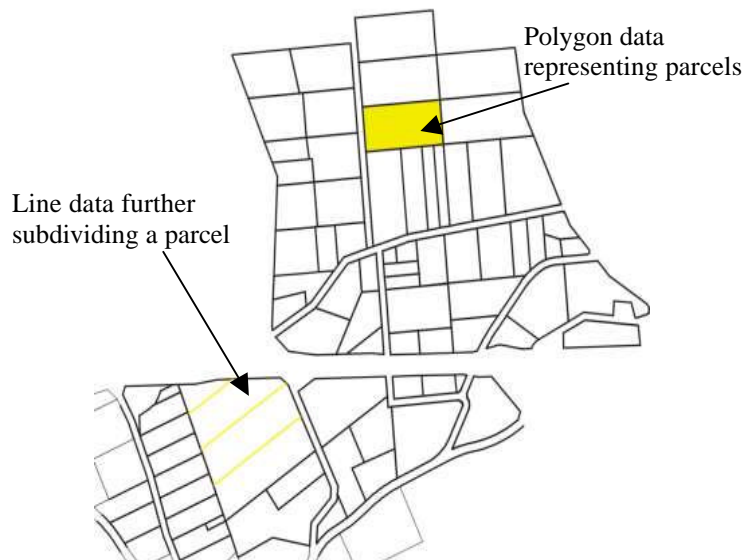
*Figure 1: A GIS consists of both spatial and tabular data.*

There are three different types of spatial (object) data in a GIS: point, line and polygon. Point data is ideal for indicating locations of interest on a map, such as bus stations. Line data is used to show such information as roads or transportation networks. Polygon data is used for such purposes as indicating parcels of land, or distinguishing large zones. Each type of data - point, line, and polygon – are embedded into a map layer called a “theme” which can be overlaid on top of one another. Only one type of object can exist on each theme, and each theme can have a multitude of objects each with its own table.

## THE PROBLEMS

In orchestrating the land use inventory, there were two themes, a polygon theme called “parcel data” consisting of all the parcels of land within the planning area and a line theme (or shapefile) called “subdivisions” which represented additional subdivisions splitting the parcels. These two theme layers laid on top of each other comprised the total lots and parcels for the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area.

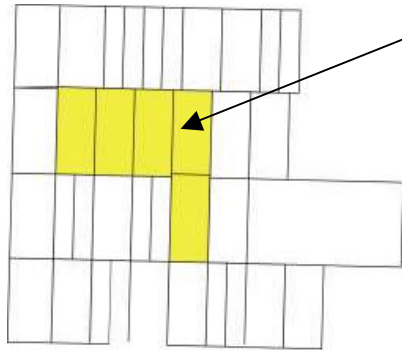
In an ideal situation, one could select a given polygon or polygons (representing a parcel) and can enter in any information regarding that parcel desired. Furthermore,



those parcels can be treated as individual objects to be queried to get the total number, the number in a particular area, the area, the percentages or a multitude of other combinations.

Unfortunately, because the parcel data was further subdivided by line data lying over the top of the parcels, (representing lot lines) trying to select one of the newly subdivided lots resulted in the entire whole parcel being selected.

Thus, there are actually many more lots than can originally be seen in the parcel data theme because the subdivision theme further subdivides them, and these lots cannot be counted as individual polygons. Since they are not individual objects, but just *lines* drawn over individual objects, they will give inaccurate total lot counts. Furthermore, it is not possible to calculate the area within one of those newly subdivided lots,



Selecting one of these subdivided lots will not select it individually because the lot lines are only overlaid line data. Instead, again the whole parcel selects, highlighting all five new lots. The lots cannot be treated individually.

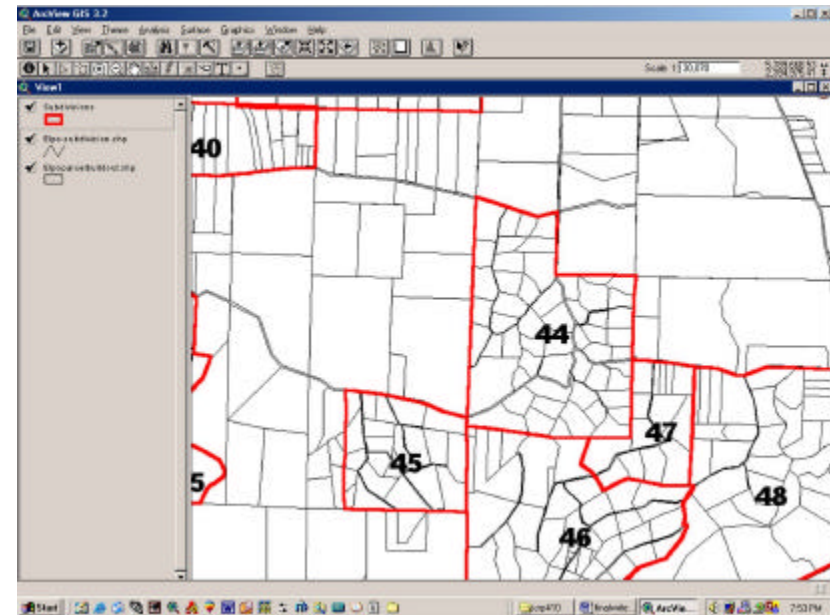
only the area of the entire parcel. Therefore, we needed to develop an alternative method to arrive at a total lot count, a count of developed versus undeveloped lots, and the total dwelling units.

**THE SOLUTION**

For each of the 54 subdivisions a new polygon theme was drawn which outlined each of the subdivisions. Then each subdivision was labeled by the numbers denoted on the county antiquated subdivision map. This was useful because these subdivision outlines could later be used to query information within the subdivisions, for instance, which subdivisions had the most lots, or which subdivisions were most built out.

Next, point themes were created and aerial photos were loaded of the El-Pomar Estrella Planning Area, and working through one subdivision at a time, a point was put on every single lot in the 54 subdivisions. Once a point

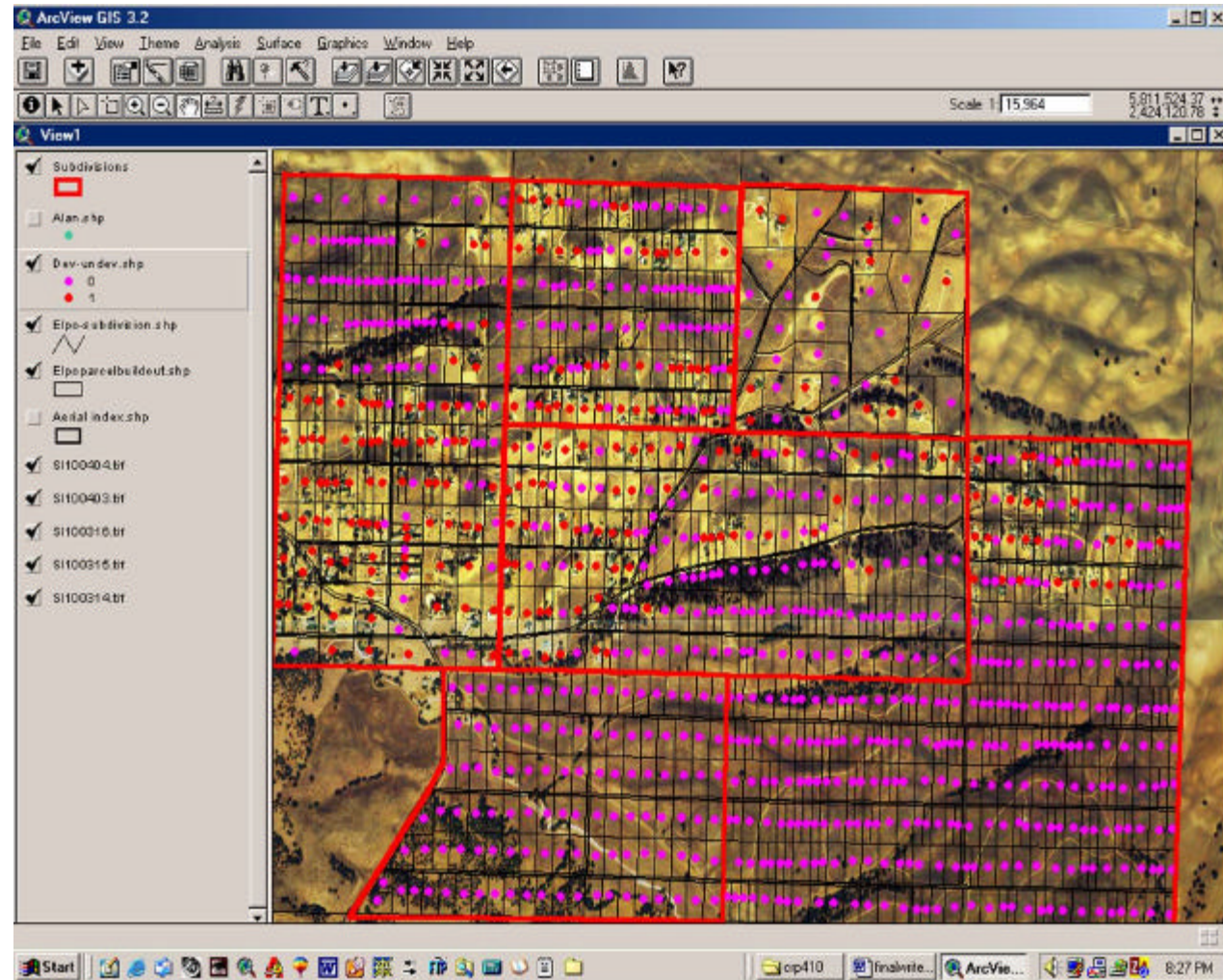
was put on a lot, information pertaining to that lot could be attributed to the point, such as whether the lot was developed, or how many dwelling units were on the lot. A dot was then placed on every lot that had some form of development on it, (as determined through the use of the aerial photos) and a dot was placed on lots with no development on it whatsoever. Development was defined as any lot having any type of improvement on it. Each dot was coded, “1” meaning the lot had development and “0” meaning no development was on the lot.



*First, outlines were drawn around all 54 subdivisions*

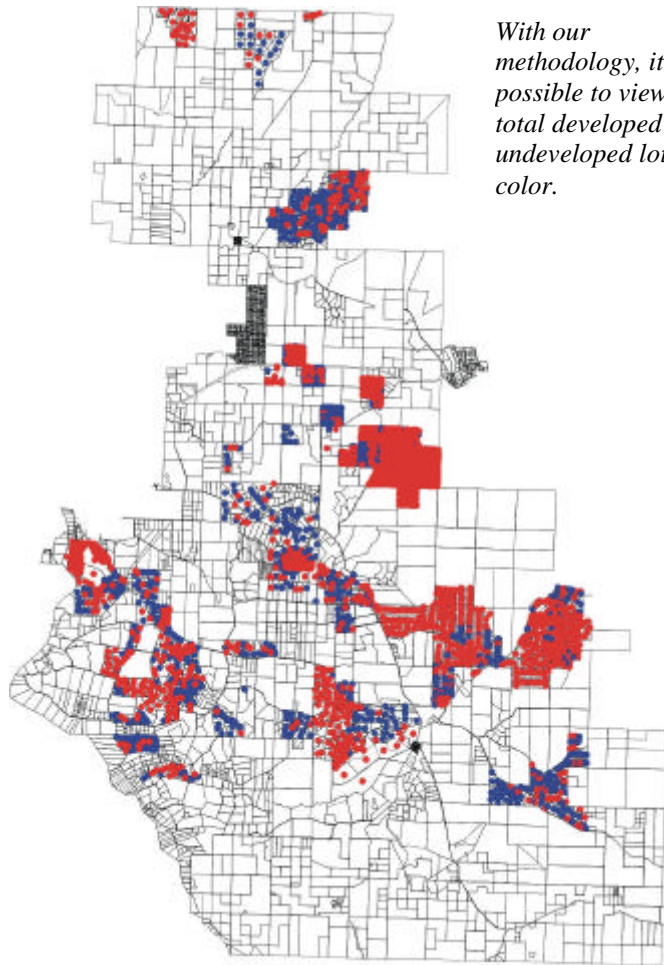
Next, another point shape file was created, and the subdivisions got a point on any lot that had at least one dwelling unit on it. This was done because the development shape file only considered if there was any type of development on lot, for example, some houses laid across lot lines and thus both lots were counted. This shape file was called “dwelling units” and varied from the development shape file by about 50.

The result of this methodology determined the amount of lots throughout the area, how many were developed, how many we undeveloped, how many lots had at least one dwelling unit on them, what percentages of the subdivisions were built out, or any other statistics we desired. With this Land Use Inventory and studying the antiquated subdivisions a



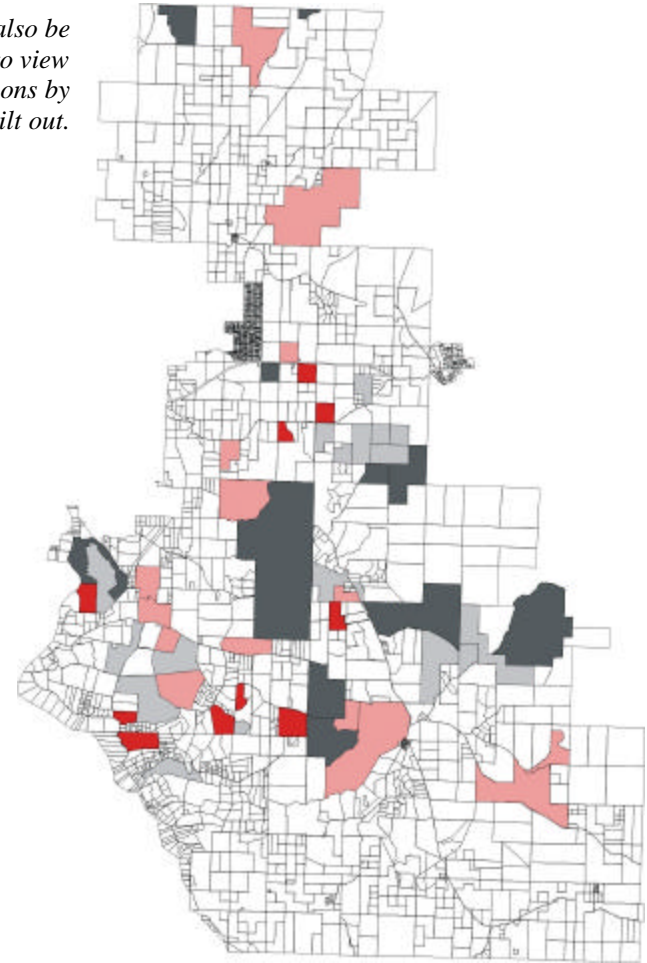
*Points were put into every single subdivision lot. They were coded “1” for developed and “0” for undeveloped. Here, the “0”s are purple and the “1”s are red.*

site has been chosen around all these constraints for a possible new town. The next step is the design as well as working with community members to come up with a plan that revolves around the Land Use Inventory and what the community members wish to see in their area.



*With our methodology, it is possible to view the total developed and undeveloped lots by color.*

*It will also be possible to view subdivisions by percentage built out.*





## **APPENDIX B**

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**NEW TOWN WORKSHOP COMMENTS 2001.01.16**

1. New towns should only be located along major highways such as Highway 101 and Highway 46.
2. [None]
3. Oak Trees; “Wetlands” (Birds); Look at Green Building
4. Lets keep this area agricultural
5. [None]
6. [None]
7. [None]
8. Light Pollution [added to Environmental]  
Communication Infrastructure [added to Public Facilities]  
Skate Park & Bikeway [added to Accessibility]  
Trails to Access Open Land [added to Accessibility]  
[Emergency Heliports] not necessary – can land anywhere  
Thank you for taking the time to do this! Small town with good schools & housing for all economic levels will most benefit this community. Low Light Intensity!
9. These [Physical Criteria] should be equally weighted  
Light Pollution [added to Environmental]  
Infrastructure for Communication [added to Public Facilities]  
Right to Farm Ordinance [added to Land Use]  
Antiquated Subdivisions [added to Land Use]  
Pedestrian/Bike/Equestrian Dedicated Trails & Ways [added to Accessibility]

[Land Use Category] can be changed too easily by gov’t. Placing a new town in an area that rapidly changes to rural the further away from the major artery (Hwy 101) makes sense if you place it very close to that artery. Otherwise, the logistics of infrastructure development will override the other criteria. You run the risk of immediately becoming a bedroom community to SLO wherever near 101 you site the new town, and you can’t really place it further away from 101. Thank you for eliciting the community’s input for your project – you are working on a difficult concept, but an important one. Good luck in your work.

10. The above are all important [Physical]  
Both [Hospitals and Law Enforcement] should be considered  
I do not want any of these [Accessibility Criteria]
11. Good job; daunting project! Keep an eye on your assumptions and document them.
12. I was very impressed by the students willingness to stop up and answer questions, and they did a very good job of answering some controversial questions.  
The presentation was well done, and the taking of public comment was well organized.
13. Water (H2O) [added to Physical]  
[Land Use] failed to assess the history, desire or goals of today’s residents (citizens)  
\* - Think “outside” the box  
Meet the goals of the majority of citizens  
Hi there! Sorry to put you through the “ringer”, but land

use is one area people do right over! Now – “Outside” the box. Please consider our stated goal: Maintain natural resources with agricultural land preserved. Why not put these young bright minds to solving a truly great challenge? Turn the many high quality agricultural micro-climates to the production of a local/export food system. The world of agriculture is going over seas/cross borders. There is and will be a pent up demand for high quality food, both fresh and processed. A tremendous opportunity is arising to meet this demand within our most unique micro-climates, just waiting to make SLO

counties applications known and utilized. We can and do grow world class food products. We need processing, sales, promotion, outlets, etc. Let’s think about it – could it be more feasible. Failure to investigate, study, explore this potential NOW! is a clear moral imperative. Let’s explore the concept fully. “Urban Planning” should also mean planning “real” ways to meet the vision & goals of the maturity of SLO County Citizens.

Site Selection Criteria		Public Comment		January 16, 2002																														
No.	Physical						Environmental						Public Facilities						Land Use						Accessibility									
	Slope	Soils	Shrink/Swell	Flood Zone	Fire Hazard	Water	Noise	Visual	Historic/Cultural	Habitat Sensitivity	Listed Species	Light Pollution	Fire Response	Hospitals	Law Enforcement	Heliports	Schools	Communication	Williamson	Land Use Category	Ownership	Commodity	Right to Farm	Antiquated Subsidy	Transportation System	Regional Transit	Jobs / Urban Centers	Existing Housing	State Park/Bikeway	Recreation/Equip. Trails				
1												2	3	1	4	5	2								1	2	1	3	4					
2	4	3	2	4	1	5	2	4	5	3	1	2	5	3	1	4	5	2	3	4	2	3	1		1	4	1	2	3					
3	3						1					1	4						2	2	2	1			5									
4	5	2	2	2	1	1	4	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1			1	2	2	1	2					
5																			2						1									
6	3	3	5	4	1	2	2	2	5	3	1	4	5	3	2	4	5	1	1	2	1	4	3		4	3	4	1	2					
7	2	1	5	4	2	3	3	2	1	4	3	5	5	4	3	1	5	2	1	1	4	3	2		4	3	4	2	1					
8	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	3	6	2	6	4	2	5	4	3	1	3	2	3	4	1		2	1	3	2	4	5	6			
9	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	6	3	4	4	2	1	3	6	4	5	3	6	2	4	1	5	3	5	1	4		2			
10	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	3	6	4	3	1	1	4	2	2	3	1	4	2		3	0	0	0	0					
11	4	5	1	4	3	2	2	3	2	1	4	5	3	3	2	1	5	4	1	4	3	2	1		5	3	4	2	1					
12	5	5	1	2	3	4	2	4	1	5	2	3	3	2	3	4	5	1	1	2	4	3	1		4	3	4	1	2					
13	3	2	4	5	6	1		5	4	1	2	3	3	2	4	5	1				3	2	1											
Mean	4.10	2.50	2.10	2.70	1.90	2.60	1.00	1.90	2.90	3.60	2.27	3.55	1.00	3.82	2.64	2.00	2.82	4.70	2.18	3.00	1.80	2.50	2.82	2.90	1.58	1.00	5.00	3.00	2.17	2.91	1.55	2.36	5.00	4.00
Med	4.5	2.5	1.5	3	1	2	1	2	2.5	2.5	3.5	2	4	4	3	2	4	5	2	3	2	2	3	1	1	5	3	2.5	4	2	2	5	4	
Mode	5	1	1	4	1	1	#N/A	2	2	5	3	2	5	4	3	1	4	5	2	#N/A	2	2	2	2	1	#N/A	#N/A	1	3	4	2	4	#N/A	#N/A
StdDev	1.10	1.58	1.60	1.42	1.37	1.64	#DIV/0!	0.99	1.29	1.73	1.64	0.90	1.44	0.98	0.81	1.26	1.47	1.06	1.08	2.63	0.79	0.97	1.47	0.68	1.00	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	1.55	1.19	1.64	0.82	1.36	#DIV/0!	2.83
Final	5	4	2	5	1	3		2	2	3	4	1	5	4	3	1	4	5	2		1	2	3	4	1		3	2	4	1	3			

**PUBLIC BRAINSTORM****Arroyo Grande and Atascadero New Town Workshops*****Developer***

- Close Proximity to Hwy/Freeway
- Streamline permitting
- Financing
- Economic Feasibility
- Is infrastructure available?
- Is there affordable land? Will it pencil out?
- Job base
- Market study and analysis
- Has this been done before? –Risk control

***Environmentalist***

- Loss of open space
- Loss of species
- Is this urban sprawl?
- Loss of habitat and ecosystems
- Are there adequate resources available
- Sustainability
- “Green” construction materials
- Safety issues regarding proximity to Diablo
- Preserve rural character
- Loss of agricultural land
- Give housing to small families before big families
- Multi-modal transportation
- Environmentally friendly industry

***Board of Supervisors***

- No mandates for housing/population
- Who will pay for infrastructure/public services?
- Make \$ for the county
- Developer agreement/contract
- Is there community support?
- Convert general hospital into New Town
- Convert military base into New Town
- Impact of development on transportation and vice versa
- Where else has it worked? –with similar conditions
- How do you attract industry/jobs?
- How will it affect the budget?
- The board will want to see a plan

***Residents***

- Affordable housing
- Up to date infrastructure
- Safety
- Parks
- Good schools
- Bike trails
- Pedestrian linkages
- Beautiful, flowing landscape
- Mixed use corner market
- Variety of housing choices
- Hospital
- Blend housing types
- Good shopping
- Community pool, softball/recreation
- Cultural arts center

- Good restaurants
- Outdoor cafes
- Urban core
- Little congestion
- Churches
- Public transportation
- Senior housing
- Medical/ dental/ legal
- Outdoor amphitheatre
- Skate park/ youth recreation
- Taco bell
- Mountain bike trails
- A school specializing in technology
- Multi-use community center
- Boys and girls club or YMCA