Section I

CITY INFORMATION
GENERAL INFORMATION
Atascadero is ideally situated on the stunning California Central Coast, offering a blend of natural beauty and rural lifestyle. It is located 18 miles inland from the Pacific Coast midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco on Highway 101, and approximately 20 miles north of San Luis Obispo. The elevation at City Hall in the downtown area is 850 feet. Atascadero is the third largest city in San Luis Obispo County with about 28,590 residents, and is close to all methods of transportation. The City’s rural environment with significant open space, trees, hillsides, and large lot sizes is protected by its General Plan.

GOVERNMENT
The City of Atascadero is a General Law city operating within rules established by the State Legislature. The organizational structure of the government is of City Council-City Manager form.

The City Council-City Manager form of local government offers a unique blend consisting of an elected City Council of citizens responsible for policy making, and a team of professional administrators under the supervision of a City Manager. The City Manager is hired by and is responsible to the City Council. From its inception, the City Council-City Manager plan of municipal government has emphasized the unification of powers in a single legislative body—the City Council. In recent years, the importance of the City Council has increased significantly in reviewing proposals, judging what the community wants and needs, and in representing the policy after adoption. The research and fact finding is assumed by the City Manager and the management team in order to provide the City Council more time to study, determine, review, revise, and promote community policy.

CITY SERVICES
Atascadero provides a full range of services including Police, Fire, Wastewater Collection and Treatment, Building Services, Streets and Parks Maintenance, Transit, Engineering, Zoo and Recreation services for its citizens. Water is provided by Atascadero Mutual Water Company. Garbage collection is provided by Waste Alternatives. The County of San Luis Obispo maintains the local library.
CITY PROFILE

HISTORY

One Man’s Vision

Edward Gardner Lewis founded the community of Atascadero in 1913 as California’s first planned colony. As a successful eastern magazine publisher, he had previously created a similar utopian community at University City, Missouri. Lewis purchased the Atascadero Ranch for $37.50 an acre and celebrated the acquisition on July 4, 1913. Shortly after, investors came to homestead with tents and the area was transformed into a “tent city”.

Lewis employed the services of experts in agriculture, engineering and city planning to develop his dream colony for the anticipated 30,000 residents. In 1914 the land was surveyed and subdivided. Thousands of acres of orchards were planted, a water system was installed and construction began on an 18 mile road (now Highway 41 west) through the rugged Santa Lucia Mountains to the ocean, where Lewis built cottages and a beach front hotel called The Cloisters. The first civic building in Atascadero, The Printery, had the first rotogravure presses west of Chicago. Lewis then published the Atascadero News newspaper and the Illustrated Review, a photo/news magazine. The centerpiece of his planned community was an Italian Renaissance-style building, which was built between 1914 and 1918 with bricks made from local clay.

Shortly after incorporation in 1979, the City moved into this unique and beautiful building, and it became known as Historic City Hall. The building is now a treasured piece of history and one of California’s Historic Landmarks (No. 958).

Today, with nearly 29,000 residents, Atascadero is the third largest city in San Luis Obispo County. Many of the very principles that E.G. Lewis envisioned for his “utopian city” are ensured through the City’s general plan, which includes preservation of open space, protection of trees, creeks and hillsides, the keeping of domestic animals, and large lot sizes. It was Mr. Lewis who first had the vision in which he foresaw the future of Atascadero as a creative, rural community.
DEMOGRAPHICS

As of the 2000 U.S. Census, Atascadero’s population was 52% males and 48% females. Compared to countywide age distribution, Atascadero has younger middle-aged adults and children, reflecting a strong family-oriented community. The average family size is 3.05, and the average household size is 2.62.

Over 12% of the population has served in the United States Military. Married individuals make up 46% of the population.

Approximately 65% of the 9,531 occupied housing units are owner-occupied, and the remaining 35% are renter-occupied.

Individuals with incomes below the poverty line make up 9% of the population, compared to 14.2% state-wide and 12.4% nation-wide.
According to the American Community Survey, 2003 (U.S. Census), 88% of individuals over age 25 have graduated from high school and 31% have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Atascadero’s residential landscape is defined by rural tree-lined streets winding through quiet, family-oriented neighborhoods with working farms, ranchettes, stately Colony Homes, custom-built estates, well-appointed town homes, condominiums, and affordable apartments. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Atascadero is the preservation of open space, protection of trees and hillsides, the keeping of domestic animals, and large lot sizes. Atascadero was founded as an “utopian city” offering residents a peaceful rural community.
ECONOMY

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 62.4% of the City's population over age 16 is in the workforce, compared to 63.9% nationwide.

The American Community Survey, 2003 (U.S. Census), found the most common occupations were:

- Management, professional, and related occupations: 32%
- Service occupations: 23%
- Sales and office occupations: 23%
- Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations: 14%
- Production, transportation, and material moving occupations: 8%

Sixty-eight percent of the people employed were private wage and salary workers; 18% were Federal, state, or local government workers; and 14% were self-employed.

| Employment by Industry in San Luis Obispo--Atascadero--Paso Robles, CA MSA in 2003 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Type of industry               | City            | County          |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining | 3%              |                 |
| Construction                   | 11%             |                 |
| Manufacturing                  | 8%              |                 |
| Wholesale trade                | 4%              |                 |
| Retail trade                   | 11%             |                 |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities | 5%              |                 |
| Information                    | 1%              |                 |
| Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing | 5%              |                 |
| Professional and business services | 12%            |                 |
| Educational, health, and social services | 20%            |                 |
| Leisure and hospitality        | 10%             |                 |
| Other services (except public administration) | 5%              |                 |
| Public administration          | 7%              |                 |

Source: American Community Survey, 2003
Note: The Professional and business services category includes the following industries: Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services. The Leisure and hospitality category includes the following industries: Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services.
COMPARISONS WITH OTHER CITIES

Using 2008 data, the City performed a study to compile information from other cities in the County for comparison purposes. As shown here, Atascadero ranks second lowest in both Revenue per Capita and Expenditures per Capita. Atascadero encompasses a much larger square mile area and has more rural hillsides than other cities while also having the third largest population. At the same time, Sales Tax revenues have declined dramatically, and for the first time in the City’s history, a negative growth rate in Property Tax revenue is expected.

The study also showed that both Police Officers and Fire Fighters per thousand residents were below the County Average. Enhancing Public Safety is one of the three priorities of the City Council.
CULTURE, SERVICES, AND RECREATION

Atascadero is rich with recreational opportunities. It boasts the fully accredited Charles Paddock Zoo, the beautiful Pavilion on the Lake, an 18-hole golf course, five large parks, George C. Beatie Indoor/Outdoor Skate Park, and the newly constructed Colony Park Community Center.
Atascadero hosts a weekly Farmer’s Market and fun annual events like Hot El Camino Cruise Nite, the Wine Festival, Concerts in the Park, and Colony Days. Beaches and three local recreational lakes are only minutes away and host surfing, fishing, swimming, boating, hiking, biking or simply sightseeing.

The Central Coast is home to the California Midstate Fair, two California Missions, Hearst Castle, thousands of acres of vineyards, prestigious wineries, historical museums, a County Symphony, a Performing Arts Center, and cultural offerings of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and Cuesta Community College.
CITY PROFILE

EDUCATION

The Atascadero Unified School District is a progressive organization in a rural and supportive community that upholds a tradition of distinguished and high performing programs. Its mission statement is, “Empower students to be critical thinkers, life long learners, responsible citizens, and effective communicators by providing challenging and innovative educational opportunities adapted to the students’ unique needs and abilities in a safe and enriching environment under the guidance of a professional and nurturing staff.”

Recognized nationally for its excellence, Atascadero Unified School District is highly rated for student achievement as measured by the California Department of Education’s Academic Performance Index. This means that all Atascadero schools continue to meet and exceed state and local standards for student achievement and growth. Of the ten schools eligible for an API score, five schools achieved scores of over 800, placing them at the state’s highest level of expectation. Approximately 75% of the district’s students go to college upon graduation from high school. Geographically one of the largest school districts within the state, Atascadero Unified School District provides educational services to 5,037 students.

SHOPPING

Atascadero offers unique boutiques, a revitalized downtown, and Mission Oaks retail area, all with friendly people who are happy to greet and be of service in the generous, hospitable style for which Atascaderans are known.

WEATHER

Sunny and dry is the best description for the weather in Atascadero. What makes the summer climate attractive is the 40 or 50-degree difference between night and morning. An afternoon high of 95 – 100 degrees will typically be followed by late night and dawn temperatures in the 50’s, making Atascadero famous for its beautiful summer evenings. The average high in July to September is 94 degrees, with an average low of 50 degrees. Average winter temperatures are 61 degrees high and 33 degrees low. Early morning and late evening coastal fog often comes over the Santa Lucia range of mountains, but rarely advances across the entire city; if it does, it burns off by mid-morning, and is followed by the sea breeze. The principal contrast with nearby coastal communities is greater dryness and longer periods of sunshine. The average rainfall is 17 – 18 inches per year, primarily from October to March.

City Manager

Assistant to the City Manager

Administrative Assistants (2)

Systems Administrator III

Intern

Sr Technical Support Specialist

GIS Analyst I
Full Time Personnel: 21

Fire

Fire Chief

Fire Marshal/Code Compliance Officer

Fire Captains (6)

Fire Engineers (9)

Fire Fighters (3)

Fire Seasonals June-November (6)

Fire Reserves (18)

Administrative Assistant