Atascadero City Council
Staff Report - Community Development Department

Staff Authorization to Process General Plan Amendment and Annexation Application

Eagle Ranch Specific Plan
(Eagle Ranch, LLC / RRM Design Group)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The City Council may direct staff to process the project application by adopting Draft Resolution A. This action would include directing staff to return to the City Council for a Specific Plan project process;

   OR

2. The City Council may withhold authorization for staff to process the project application by adopting Draft Resolution B. Withholding authorization for staff to process the application does not deny the application.
DISCUSSION:

Background:

The Eagle Ranch is an undeveloped 3,450± acre area located on Atascadero's southern boundary. The majority of the site is part of the Historic Atascadero Colony and is believed to contain approximately 450± undeveloped colony lots and a network of un-built colony roads. The area has been used historically for ranching and agricultural purposes and includes numerous structures that were used for these purposes. The site is characterized by sloping, oak covered hillsides and many areas with extremely steep, mountainous terrain. Other unique features of Eagle Ranch include the headwaters of Atascadero Creek which originate on the ranch.

View of Eagle Ranch
The City’s 2002 General Plan identifies the Eagle Ranch property as a future master plan area to include reconfiguration/clustering of existing colony lots and roadways, resort facilities, and inclusion of public open space, conservation easements, trails, and recreation areas, prior to annexation into the City (see following policies). The General Plan requires that a Specific Plan be approved by the City to provide a comprehensive development plan for the property that addresses issues including:

- Clustering of colony lots
- Public facilities
- Circulation facilities
- Parks
- Open space
- Conservation easements
- Resort facilities
- Fiscal analysis of service costs

General Plan Policies related to Eagle Ranch

LOC 1.2.8. Cooperate with LAFCO and the County to incorporate the Eagle Ranch into the City’s Sphere of Influence for eventual annexation.

LOC 1.2.9. It is the City's position, that Eagle Ranch shall be developed within the City and any development of the site prior to annexation will be opposed.

LOC 1.2.10. Prior to the annexation of Eagle Ranch a Specific Plan shall be approved by the City which will provide a comprehensive development plan for the property that address issues including, clustering of Colony lots, public facilities, circulation facilities, parks, open space, conservation easements, and a fiscal analysis of service costs.

LOC 1.2.11. Update and maintain the Zoning Ordinance to designate the Eagle Ranch property as a future Specific Plan area to be subject to future environmental and site-specific review prior to annexation.

Table II-5: Master Plan of Development Overlay Areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overlay Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>EIR Maximum Density</th>
<th>Special Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11.            | Eagle Ranch Annexation | Development of existing 400 colony lots | • Specific Plan required  
• Historic colony lots and roads to be reconfigured and clustered to minimize impacts  
• Public open space, trails and parks to be provided  
• Resort facilities |

The General Plan identifies Eagle Ranch as Master Plan of Development Area #11
The General Plan identifies Eagle Ranch as Master Plan of Development Area #11
On June 24, 2003, the City approved bringing the Eagle Ranch property within the City's Sphere of Influence, consistent with the City's General Plan Policy LOC 1.2.8. The current Eagle Ranch General Plan Amendment and Specific Plan application represents the next step in the planning and entitlement process.

Figure 11-5: General Plan Urban Reserve Area

Consistent with General Plan policy LOC 1.2.8. Eagle Ranch has been added to the City's Sphere of Influence.
On March 3, 2008, the City of Atascadero Community Development Department received a General Plan Amendment and Specific Plan application for a Master Plan Development concept proposed on the Eagle Ranch property. The Eagle Ranch Specific Plan application identifies the site as currently containing 452 residential Atascadero colony lots and associated roadway network, originally established by E.G. Lewis in 1914. The Specific Plan would likely include reconfiguring these residential lots and roadways, and identify a variety of housing types, commercial uses, parks, trails, open space, resort facilities, and an equestrian center. Consistent with Council Policy that require a comprehensive public participation process for General Plan Amendments no land use plans or development concepts have been proposed at this point. The proposed application exhibits are preliminary and conceptual at this time in order to facilitate a broadened environmental and public review process. The project will require the following entitlements from the City of Atascadero:

- General Plan Amendment
- Prezoning
- Annexation / LAFCO reorganization
- Specific Plan
- Tentative Tract Map
- Multiple Conditional Use Permits
- Environmental Impact Report

City Council policy requires City staff to forward the proposed Eagle Ranch General Plan Amendment and Specific Plan request to the Council with a background report and request for authorization to process the application. Council must authorize staff to process all General Plan Amendment applications. The Council's policy also requires all General Plan Amendments to be reviewed and processed in a manner to facilitate citizen participation.

Staff has outlined an approach for Council action that is consistent with General Plan Amendment policy. The Council has the option to (1) direct staff to process the project applications; or (2) withhold staff authorization to process the applications which would result in no further action related to the project. If the Council needs more information before making a decision, the item may be referred back to staff for additional analysis.

If the Council directs staff to process the Council General Plan Amendment policy suggests the following process

1. **Neighborhood and Community Meetings**
   The applicant and staff will cooperate on a series of neighborhood and community meetings to solicit public concerns and discuss issues related to the proposed project.

2. **Joint Study Session.**
   A joint City Council/Planning Commission study session will be required early in the project review process to identify project alternatives and priorities.
Project Summary:

1. Applicant: RRM Design Group, Victor Montgomery Professionals
   3765 S. Higuera Street, Ste. 102
   San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

2. Owner: Eagle Ranch, LLC
   P.O. Box 25010
   Ventura, CA 93002

3. Project Addresses: See Attached Maps

4. Assessor Parcel Numbers: Refer to resolutions

5. General Plan Designations: Unincorporated within Sphere of Influence
   Identified for future annexation

6. Zoning District: No City zoning districts or pre-zonings have been established

7. Existing Use: Cattle Ranch

As previously identified, the Specific Plan would include reconfiguring the existing 452 residential colony lots and roadways, and identify a variety of housing types, neighborhood commercial uses, a park, trails, open space, resort facilities, and an equestrian center on the 3,450± acre project site. The proposed application exhibits are preliminary and conceptual at this time, in order to facilitate a broadened environmental and public review process. The project will also require formal annexation into the City of Atascadero upon completion of the Specific Plan.
Eagle Ranch Site Area With Existing Parcels
Analysis:

A complete project analysis that accurately assesses the benefits and impacts of the proposed project would require significant time and staff resources to complete. Since staff has not been authorized to process the application, staff has not prepared an analysis of the proposed project. The project plans, maps, and justification statement have been attached for the Council’s information. Staff has not analyzed the proposal as the project application contains limited information. If the City Council authorizes the project to proceed, staff anticipates a public participation process in which more detailed information will become available. As project options and alternatives are developed, staff will return to the City Council for additional input and direction on the project.

What is a Specific Plan?

The adoption of a specific plan is necessary in order to develop and implement a master plan to regulate development within the overall project area. The specific plan, would become the regulatory framework that implements the General Plan and its policies/programs, as well as, establishes the standards by which development shall occur within the plan area. Specifically, it would incorporate precise design standards and guidelines that could provide flexibility by superseding the City's existing zoning code, public works standards, and other regulations. Most importantly, the specific plan would also provide policies for the installation and financing of infrastructure throughout the project area.

A specific plan is a planning process created by State Law that allows for the master planning of large areas. A specific plan creates a bridge between the broad policies of the General Plan and the specific regulations of the zoning ordinance. The Atascadero General Plan identifies specific plans as the preferred way to implement large planning projects in Atascadero. General Plan policy requires specific plans for all projects involving more than 100 residential dwelling units.

The specific plan process has been used in Atascadero on the Woodridge project and is similar to a Planned Development Overlay (PD). PD’s however, are limited to use on smaller projects and cannot regulate off-site infrastructure and financing requirements. Specific plans were created in State Law to deal with the master planning of larger planning areas, with multiple property owners, and complex infrastructure requirements. The State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has developed a comprehensive guide to specific plans. In the guide, OPR lists the following unique benefits of the specific plan process:

*The Planner's Guide to Specific Plans*

- A thorough specific plan can enable planners to effectively implement selected long term general plan objectives in a short time frame.
- Specific plans are flexible, allowing public agencies to create standards for the development of a wide range of projects or solutions to any type of land use issues.
The plan may be organized into a concise set of development policies and include land use regulations, a capital improvement program, or financing program within a single document.

A specific plan may be used to implement the policies of an optional economic development element of a general plan. Policies of the general plan which are specific to financing infrastructure improvements and extensions, or cost recovery programs may be implemented by matching land uses with supporting public facilities. This is done to assist development engineering departments and developers avoid ineffective or undersized streets, sewers, water lines, and other necessary improvements. In addition, it may directly impose exactions in association with the general plan's capital improvement policies.

The specific plan process must provide opportunities for the general public, as well as residents located within planning areas, to assist in the planning of their particular communities. Public involvement helps define the community's vision of future growth and development.

Future development proposals may benefit from the foundation created by the specific plan. For example, a Program EIR adopted to fulfill the plan's CEQA obligation may streamline the processing of subsequent discretionary projects by obviating the need for additional environmental documentation.

The specific plan represents a good tool for developing a community "sense of place." A creative and innovative specific plan may bridge the gap between monotonous urban development and a livable neighborhood.

Environmental Review / CEQA
Although no environmental review has begun, any decision to process the project will require analysis in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff anticipates that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be processed simultaneously with the Specific Plan and would contain analysis on the proposed applications as well as various project alternatives that could feasibly attain most of the project objectives. Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, and jurisdictional boundaries. The EIR would also include a "no project" alternative which would allow the Council to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project or any of the project alternatives.

Due to the comprehensive scope of an EIR, its preparation would require an experienced and qualified professional consultant under contract and management by the City. The cost of preparing the EIR and Specific Plan will be the full responsibility of the applicant.

Traffic Impacts
The project is expected to impact traffic to Santa Barbara Road, Atascadero Avenue, Morro Road, U.S. Highway 101 / Santa Barbara Road interchange and other adjacent streets. The significance of these impacts is unknown at this time and will require project-specific analysis by a traffic consultant as part of the project EIR.
Native Tree Impacts and Grading
Although no native tree reports, biology reports, or grading plans have been submitted at this time, staff anticipates these impacts may be significant and will require mitigation. The significance of these impacts will be analyzed in the project EIR.

FISCAL IMPACT
Staff is unable to speculate on the significance of this impact at present. Part of the project’s EIR review will include a fiscal impact analysis. The purpose of the analysis will be to analyze all of the project’s costs and revenues and provide the Council with a complete picture of the project’s fiscal impacts on both the City of Atascadero and the local business community. The General Plan identifies resort facilities as part of the project. Staff’s opinion is that a substantial tourist serving resort component must be included to improve the revenue potential of the project.

ALTERNATIVES:
The City Council may refer the application back to staff for additional analysis or clarification of specific issues. The Council should provide direction on issues that require additional analysis.

ATTACHMENTS:
Attachment 1: Applicant’s Justification Statement for General Plan Amendment
Attachment 2: Draft Resolution A – Authorizing Staff to process Eagle Ranch GPA
Attachment 3: Draft Resolution B – Withholding Authorization for Staff to process Eagle Ranch GPA
Eagle Ranch – Justification Statement

The General Plan Amendment and Specific Plan for the Eagle Ranch property are required under the City’s General Plan. Policy 1.2.10 states, “Prior to the annexation of Eagle Ranch a Specific Plan shall be approved by the City which will provide a comprehensive development plan for the property that addresses issues including open space, conservation easements, and a fiscal analysis of service costs.” The proposed Specific Plan will be the implementing document for the City of Atascadero’s General Plan for the Eagle Ranch property. The Specific Plan will address all aspects required under State Law and will also include any requests for adjustments to City Zoning Regulations, development standards, or processing requirements. At this stage in the process, it is not known what those adjustments will be.

Key goals for the project include reconfiguring and clustering the existing 452 colony lots, providing open-space, continuing the agricultural uses, maintaining the rural character of the area, and annexing the Specific Plan area into the City of Atascadero. The key benefit of the Specific Plan, not available under other zoning districts, is the flexibility to reconfigure and cluster the existing lots. This flexibility will facilitate the provision of open space, allow for the continued agricultural uses, and provide the ability to minimize or avoid adverse environmental impacts.
DRAFT RESOLUTION A

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
ATASCADERO, CALIFORNIA AUTHORIZING STAFF TO PROCESS A
GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DIAGRAM AMENDMENT
FOR THE EAGLE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN
(Eagle Ranch, LLC / RRM Design Group)

WHEREAS, an application has been received from RRM Design Group, 3765 S. Higuera Street, Ste 102, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 (Applicant) and Eagle Ranch, LLC, P.O. Box 25010, Ventura, CA 93002 (Property Owner), to consider a project consisting of a General Plan Land Use Diagram Amendment for a Specific Plan and City Annexation project on a 3.450± acre project site located southwest of the City incorporated limits (APN: 045-302-011, 051-391-003, 051-401-001, 051-411-004, 051-391-002, 051-411-002, 051-411-003, 051-421-001, 051-431-001, 051-441-001, 051-451-001, 051-461-002, 051-471-001, 051-481-001, 051-491-001, 051-501-001, 051-501-002, 051-501-003, 051-511-003, 051-511-002, 051-511-001, 051-521-001, 051-521-004, 051-531-003, 051-541-001, 051-541-002, 051-541-003, 051-551-003, 051-551-004, 051-551-001, 051-561-002, 051-571-001, 051-581-001, 051-591-003, 051-591-001, 051-601-003, 051-601-002, 051-611-001, 051-611-002, 051-621-001, 051-631-005, 051-631-002, 051-641-002, 051-641-001, 051-641-003, 051-651-001, 051-661-001, 051-671-001, 051-681-001, 051-691-012, 051-691-007, 051-691-008, 051-691-015, 051-691-009, 051-691-014, 051-691-013, 051-701-001, 051-701-002, 056-271-001, 059-012-018, 059-121-002, 059-121-003, 059-121-004, 059-121-007, 059-121-008, 059-131-015, 059-131-014, 059-201-013, 059-201-007, 059-211-004, 059-351-006, 059-351-005, 059-351-004, 059-361-004, 059-361-002, 059-361-001, 059-371-001, 058-381-002, 059-381-002, 059-391-002, 059-391-002, 059-401-001); and,

WHEREAS, the Atascadero City Council considered authorizing staff to process the proposed application at a public meeting on May 27, 2008 consistent with the City’s General Plan Amendment Policy; and,

WHEREAS, the project area is included in the City’s Sphere of Influence; and,

WHEREAS, the Atascadero General provides a policy direction for the processing of a specific plan and annexation for the project area; and,

NOW THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Atascadero, hereby resolves to authorize staff to process the requested General Plan Land Use Diagram and Text Amendment for The Eagle Ranch General Plan Text Amendment to allow a Specific Plan on the project site. The General Plan shall be processed concurrently with a Specific Plan. A series of Neighborhood and Community workshops along with one or more joint Planning Commission /
City Council study sessions will be required. Staff will return to the City Council with a detailed project description and a defined Specific Plan project area, subject to the following exhibits:

EXHIBIT A: GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DIAGRAM  
EXHIBIT B: LOCATION MAP  
EXHIBIT C: EXISTING PROJECT SITE AERIAL

On motion by Council Member _________________________, and seconded by Council Member ______________________, the foregoing resolution is hereby adopted in its entirety by the following roll call vote:

AYES: ( )

NOES: ( )

ABSTAIN: ( )

ABSENT: ( )

ADOPTED:

CITY OF ATASCADERO, CA

____________________________
Mike Brenler
Mayor

ATTEST:

____________________________
Marcia McClure Torgerson, C.M.C., City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

____________________________
Brian Pierick, City Attorney
EXHIBIT A: General Plan Land Use Diagram

Figure 11-2: General Plan Land Use Diagram

- **Existing Designations:**
  - General Commercial
  - Commercial Retail

- **Proposed Designations:**
  - General Commercial/High Density Residential
  - Commercial Retail/Residential Multi

**Area of conversion from Commercial Retail to Residential Multi-family:**

No land use or zone change proposed.

**City of Atascadero**

**Eagle Ranch**

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This diagram is a representation of generalized data, subject to official data and bound by certain limitations. A detailed report is published in the text.
EXHIBIT B: Location Map

Area of conversion from Commercial Retail to Residential Multi-family
No land use or zone change proposed.
EXHIBIT C: Existing Project Site Aerial
DRAFT RESOLUTION B

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF ATASCADERO, CALIFORNIA

WITHHOLDING AUTHORIZATION FOR STAFF TO PROCESS A
GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DIAGRAM AMENDMENT


FOR THE EAGLE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN
(Eagle Ranch, LLC / RRM Design Group)

WHEREAS, an application has been received from RRM Design Group, 3765 S. Higuera Street, Ste 102, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 (Applicant) and Eagle Ranch, LLC, P.O. Box 25010, Ventura, CA 93002 (Property Owner), to consider a project consisting of a General Plan Land Use Diagram Amendment for a Specific Plan and City Annexation project on a 3.450± acre project site located southwest of the City incorporated limits (APN: 045-302-011, 051-391-003, 051-401-001, 051-411-004, 051-391-002, 051-411-002, 051-421-001, 051-431-001, 051-441-001, 051-451-001, 051-461-002, 051-471-001, 051-481-001, 051-491-001, 051-501-001, 051-501-002, 051-501-003, 051-511-003, 051-511-002, 051-511-001, 051-521-001, 051-521-004, 051-531-003, 051-541-001, 051-541-002, 051-541-003, 051-551-003, 051-551-004, 051-551-001, 051-561-002, 051-571-001, 051-581-001, 051-591-003, 051-591-001, 051-601-003, 051-601-002, 051-611-001, 051-611-002, 051-621-001, 051-631-005, 051-631-002, 051-641-002, 051-641-001, 051-641-003, 051-651-001, 051-661-001, 051-671-001, 051-681-001, 051-691-012, 051-691-007, 051-691-008, 051-691-015, 051-691-009, 051-691-014, 051-691-013, 051-701-001, 051-701-002, 056-271-001, 059-012-018, 059-121-002, 059-121-003, 059-121-004, 059-121-007, 059-121-008, 059-131-015, 059-131-014, 059-201-013, 059-201-007, 059-211-004, 059-351-006, 059-351-005, 059-351-004, 059-361-004, 059-361-002, 059-361-001, 059-371-001, 058-381-002, 059-381-002, 051-391-002, 059-391-002, 059-401-001); and,

WHEREAS, the Atascadero City Council considered authorizing staff to process the proposed application at a public meeting on May 27, 2008 consistent with the City’s General Plan Amendment Policy; and,

WHEREAS, the Atascadero City Council considered authorizing staff to process the proposed application at a public meeting on May 27, 2008 consistent with the City’s General Plan Amendment Policy; and,

WHEREAS, the Atascadero City Council determine that it was not in the City’s interest to process the proposed General Plan Amendment at this time; and,

NOW THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Atascadero, hereby resolves to withhold the authorization for staff to process the requested General Plan Land Use Diagram and
Text Amendment for The Eagle Ranch General Plan Amendment and Specific Plan on the project site.

EXHIBIT A: GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DIAGRAM

On motion by Council Member _________________________, and seconded by Council Member ______________________, the foregoing resolution is hereby adopted in its entirety by the following roll call vote:

AYES: (   )

NOES: (   )

ABSTAIN: (   )

ABSENT: (   )

ADOPTED:

CITY OF ATASCADERO, CA

______________________________
Mike Brenler
Mayor

ATTEST:

______________________________
Marcia McClure Torgerson, C.M.C., City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

______________________________
Brian Pierick, City Attorney
EXHIBIT A: General Plan Land Use Diagram

Figure II-2: General Plan Land Use Diagram

This diagram is a representation of selected plans, strategies, and policies and is intended to illustrate the key elements of the City of Atascadero General Plan. The map highlights the current and proposed land use designations, with a focus on the conversion of commercial retail areas to residential multi-family areas. The map also indicates the boundary of the City of Atascadero and the location of Eagle Ranch.

No land use or zoning changes are proposed for the area shown in the diagram.