CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE
Adapted from the Santa Lucia Preserve
6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Eagle Ranch Specific Plan (ERSP) incorporates a significant amount of open space and parkland area for the use and enjoyment of local residents (refer to Figure 6-2). These areas create visual tranquility and provide a sense of calm, while the park and trail systems provide opportunities to promote a healthy community through exercise, play, and social interaction. The characteristics and elements included within these areas are described in the following sections.

6.2 PARKLAND

The City of Atascadero Municipal Code requires a minimum of five (5) acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (Section 11-7.05). The same is true for the Atascadero General Plan under Goal LOC 11, Policy 11.1, Program 4. Based on the estimated 587 Specific Plan area dwelling units at 2.25 persons per unit, a total of 6.6 acres of parkland is required. The Specific Plan area meets this requirement by providing approximately 19 acres of parkland in the form of a neighborhood park (7.4 acres), equestrian and bicycle staging area (1.4 acres - excludes park-and-ride lot), and multiuse paths (3.6 acres). Parkland facilities (ER-REC) are illustrated in Figure 6-1. Final sizing and location of parkland facilities will be determined during the Tentative and Final Mapping stages.

One centrally located public park will be offered for dedication to the City of Atascadero and will serve as a neighborhood focal point and provide recreational opportunities. This privately maintained public park is intended for passive uses that tend to be more subdued, such as limited turf areas, walkways and paths, picnic and seating areas, restroom, parking, a small amphitheater, and a playground. Parking for this area may be located at the Village Center and as on-street parking on surrounding collector and local roads. A dog waste bag (mutt-mit) dispenser should be installed in the public park to reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff and also at the northern and southern Atascadero Avenue entries, the San Carlos entry, the entry at upper San Diego Road, and any other appropriate locations along the multiuse path (HOA-maintained). See Figure 6-1 for a conceptual illustration of the public park and §6.2.1 for required program elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.1 Parkland Dedication Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Permitted Specific Plan Units</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>587 Primary Units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excludes unpaved trails and staging area park-and-ride lot

¹ Source: Atascadero Municipal Code Section 11-7.05
6.2.1 Public Park

The neighborhood park serves the Specific Plan area and the following amenities shall be included as part of program (as shown in Figure 6-1 above):

Required Park Program Elements

- Parking - minimum of 15 spaces and 1 ADA space. May be provided on-street, within the park, and/or joint use with adjacent commercial.
- Public restroom (2 flush toilets minimum)
- Group picnic area with shade structure that accommodates 4 picnic tables and a group bbq
- 7 additional picnic tables throughout park
- Playground with equipment for ages 2-5 years and 5-12 years
- Bike racks and trash receptacles.
- Two separate turf areas for passive recreation.
- Provision of an ADA accessible path around the playground and turf areas
- Entry signage, split-rail fencing along street frontages, and landscaping
- Trailheads and signage for pedestrian-only hiking trails.
6.3 OPEN SPACE AND AGRICULTURE

The majority of the 3,457-acre Eagle Ranch Specific Plan (ERSP) area is proposed to remain as open space and agricultural operations. Approximately 74.2%, or 2,563.6 acres, of open space is proposed throughout the Specific Plan area.

Open space within the Specific Plan area includes passive open space, agricultural operations, woodlands, open grassland, seasonal creeks, slope areas, scenic vistas, and No-Build areas. Agriculture areas will also include activities such as cattle and sheep grazing, and equestrian facilities. Tree replacement and wetland mitigation may also occur within open space areas where appropriate.

Central to the design of the Specific Plan area is the attempt to maximize the number of lots that have direct visual access to adjoining open space. In addition, visual corridors have been reserved at street ends and where practical, internal roadways have been aligned to maximize views of the surrounding open space from within the development area.

Open Space Interface

Open space areas are a visual amenity. Open space viewsheds have been maintained by placing roadways adjacent to open space boundaries when appropriate. Accessibility to open space areas will be provided via designated pathways and trails allowing these areas to be enjoyed by residents and visitors. Fencing along open space boundaries and through open space areas, such as along unpaved trail corridors, shall be an open view-type to maintain the visual open character of these areas per Table 2.1.

Permanent open space is broken primarily into two categories within the Specific Plan area. These areas include:

- Homeowners’ Association Open Space (HOA Open Space)
- Private Open Space (No-Build area)

6.3.1 Homeowners’ Association Open Space (ER-OS)

Homeowners’ Association Open Space (HOA Open Space) refers to open space lands that are owned and maintained by the Eagle Ranch HOA. These open space areas are comprised of 809.6 acres. Residents and the general public will have limited access to these lands via a network of trails throughout the Specific Plan area. The HOA will be responsible for fuel modification and trail maintenance. Figure 6-2 illustrates the location of ER-OS open Space.
6.3.2 Private Open Space (No-Build area)

Private open space consists of land within a private parcel that is subject to specific development restrictions and will be retained as open space by the property owner in perpetuity (see Figures 6-2 and 6-3). These areas are identified as "No-Build" areas. Development standards for No-Build areas are identified in Table 3.5.

The No-Build area regulates the developable portion of a lot in order to protect woodland habitat, riparian habitat, and steep slopes. Consistent with Table 3.5 of the Specific Plan, property owners are not permitted to develop or grade any portion of the property past the No-Build area line including, but not limited to, second residential units, pools, solid fences, storage sheds, farm animal pens, chicken coops, art studios, BMX courses, patios, outdoor showers, irrigated crops, decks, greenhouses, driveways, and garages. Hooved animals are also prohibited in the No-Build area except for the specific purpose of weed abatement for fuel modification/fire suppression; for this purpose only they are permitted in the No-Build area for a maximum of three (3) months per year. Permitted uses/activities are limited to natural surface/dirt walking trails and landscaping. Pedestrian crossings may be permitted to developable portions of the property if it is determined to be consistent with the requirements of appropriate state and federal resource regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over applicable resources. Waterway and wetland crossings may require additional environmental or supplemental City review processes.
6.3.3 Agriculture (ER-AG)

Part of the vision for the ERSP is to continue agricultural ranching operations on Eagle Ranch. Continued grazing is permitted within designated Agriculture (ER-AG) areas throughout Eagle Ranch (Figure 6-2). Grazing will be contained through a series of fences that will be installed and maintained by Ranch operators, including the placement of barbed-wire fencing adjacent to the rear property line (setback 3’ minimum) of residential lots adjacent to Agriculture. Public access through areas designated as Agriculture (ER-AG) shall be limited to the National Forest Service Connector Trail easement, the ALPS Connector Trail, and the Hwy 101 Trail (see Figure 4-11). These limitations are in order to maintain the integrity of ranching operations, to avoid trespass enforcement issues, and to discourage damage to ranch facilities and fences. See Table 3-16 for a list of permitted residential units allowed in the ER-AG zone.
6.4 NATIVE TREE REMOVAL

To protect the rural character of the Eagle Ranch community, and consistent with City General Plan policies, development within the Specific Plan area aims to protect the existing native trees and native woodlands to the greatest extent practical.

Except as otherwise noted below, native tree removal requirements and identified protected tree species shall be in accordance with City standards (Atascadero Municipal Code (AMC), Native Tree Ordinance).

6.4.1 Vacant Lots and Native Tree Removals for Construction

a. Residential Single Family Estate Lots (ER-R1):

1. Native tree removals for ER-R1 zoned residential estate lots within the Specific Plan area will be reviewed by the Community Development Department staff and/or the City Planning Commission at time of building permit or special use permit submittal. Tree removal permits shall be processed in accordance with the Atascadero Municipal Code Native Tree Ordinance. Early consultation with Community Development staff regarding tree removal is strongly encouraged.

2. When considering tree removal requests the City shall take into consideration the recommended maximum removals as identified in Appendix B of the Specific Plan. The number of potential tree removals noted on this map in Appendix B has been estimated based on tree coverage on each lot and shall serve as a guideline only. Efforts shall be made to protect native trees and minimize impacts whenever practical.

3. Native trees shall not be removed from vacant lots unless and until a tree removal permit has been approved and issued by the City of Atascadero, and mitigation has been determined.

4. Native tree removals shall be mitigated in accordance with the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance through either payment of mitigation fees or replanting. In order to provide flexibility for individual lot owners, native tree mitigation bank areas will be identified on the Eagle Ranch property and may be used to meet mitigation requirements for trees removed within the Eagle Ranch Specific Plan area, including residential lot development.

b. A tree removal permit processed in conjunction with the Eagle Ranch Vesting Tentative Tract Map shall authorize the removal of native trees associated with collector and local roads, and graded pad development including the Village Center, Highway Commercial site (ER-CREC-Hotel), and the ER-R2 graded pad lots.

1. Trees authorized for removal with the Tentative Tract Map shall not be removed from the site until subdivision improvement plans have been issued for grading and construction of improvements for that phase.

2. Efforts shall be made to preserve native trees and minimize native trees impacts whenever practical.

3. Any additional removals not approved with the Tentative Tract Map grading plans are subject to a tree removal permit in accordance with the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance. This includes tree removals associated with the Private Access Easement roads, any substantial modifications to road locations, and any additional grading in areas not previously approved with the Tract Map.

4. Minor modifications to road prisms shown on the Tentative Tract Map may be necessary during the development of construction documents in order to provide superior design. Tree removals in the adjusted road prisms may be permitted by City staff provided that the total number of removals is in substantial conformance with the Tree Removal Permit approved by City Council with the Tentative Map.
5. Native tree removals shall be mitigated in accordance with the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance through either payment of mitigation fees or replanting. Replanting shall be done either on the subject site of the removal, or within tree mitigation banks on the Eagle Ranch property.

6. Required replacement planting is permitted to occur within Eagle Ranch within a designated native tree mitigation bank. The location of the mitigation bank will be located within ER-OS area(s). The precise location shall be identified by a certified arborist and shall have water availability. Mitigation banks shall be maintained and monitored for a period of five (5) years to ensure required survival rates are met for new trees.

7. Replacement planting shall be bonded for prior to removal, and installation of new trees shall be completed within one (1) year of the tree removal.

6.4.2 Post-Construction Native Tree Removals

Existing native trees found within the Specific Plan area are viewed as a major contributing factor of the rural character envisioned for the Eagle Ranch community. To ensure the continuation of this rural character, residential single family property owners shall meet the following requirements regarding post-construction native tree removals:

a. No property owner within Eagle Ranch shall be allowed to remove native trees on their property without first acquiring a Tree Removal Permit from the City, including a plan for mitigation of the removed tree. This requirement for obtaining Tree Removal Permits will continue to be enforced after the initial development of the parcel. Post-construction tree removals are subject to the same requirements as pre-construction removals.

b. Any property owner found to have removed a native tree on their property without acquiring the proper Tree Removal Permit(s) from the City, will be required to mitigate with double fees or double replantings, in addition to payment of tree removal permit fees established by the City.

6.5 CREEKS

Several creeks/watercourses are located within the Specific Plan area. These small watercourses are unnamed and often appear insignificant, but are an integral component to the overall watershed network. They also absorb significant amounts of rainwater and runoff that are vital to groundwater recharge, pollution reduction, wildlife habitat, and flood control.

Properties on Eagle Ranch with jurisdictional waters located outside of the No-Build area, or where a watercourse runs within a No-Build area but could be impacted by development, may be subject to additional development regulations and additional permits. As determined to be appropriate by the City, these areas may be extended to include all jurisdictional waters through a full Jurisdictional Determination conducted by a qualified biologist. Therefore, development shall be set back from jurisdictional waters (creeks and wetlands) a minimum of twenty (20) feet from the ordinary high-water mark or in compliance with any conditions that may be required as part of the permitting process for state and federal agencies that have jurisdiction over these resources. Leach fields will be setback at least 200 feet from regional drainage basins and at least 100 feet from streams designated as jurisdictional waters.
CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE

6.6 FUEL MODIFICATION/VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Property owners shall implement a fuel modification/vegetation management plan in order to provide a minimum of 100 feet of defensible space from any structure, 50 feet of defensible space from all property lines, and 10 feet from all driveways or access easements (see Figure 6-4). This distance may be increased at the discretion of the Fire Department, due to slope, fuel type, or other condition where it is determined that 100 feet does not provide an adequate separation between a structure and vegetative fuels. These 100-foot fuel management zones are measured from the building(s) and must be maintained by the property owner, Ranch operator, or the Homeowners’ Association. Additionally, access easements may need to be provided between lots located at the end of certain shared driveway turnarounds in order to allow access to open space areas by the Fire Department. These are identified on the applicable vesting tentative map.

Creating and maintaining defensible space is essential for increasing a home’s chance of surviving a wildfire. It is the buffer between a structure and the plants, brush, and trees or other items surrounding the structure that could catch fire. This space is needed to slow the spread of wildfire and improves the safety of firefighters defending a home.

Creating defensible space through vegetation management does not include removal of native trees. Trees shall be protected and only dead branches or limbs in close proximity to structures shall be removed. Creeks, wetlands, and sensitive habitats shall be protected. Vegetation removal shall not be done in sensitive environments such as creek banks or wetlands, unless permits from reviewing agencies are obtained prior to any removal of vegetation in jurisdictional areas.

Private open space (No-Build areas) are subject to the same requirements for maintenance of defensible space in proximity to structures, property lines, and accessways. Grasses and other ladder fuels shall be removed, provided that the area is not in sensitive habitats such as creeks and wetlands. Creeks banks, wetlands, and other jurisdictional areas are protected and therefore not required to meet standard fuel management specifications.

The following guidelines should be implemented by property owners to create defensible space in addition to the requirements set forth in Atascadero Municipal Code:

3. Remove dead plants, grass, and weeds.
4. Remove dead or dry leaves from yard, roof, and rain gutters.
5. Remove dead branches that hang over roofs. Keep branches ten (10) feet away from chimneys.
6. Relocate exposed woodpiles away from any structure unless they are completely covered in a fire-resistant material.
7. Remove or prune flammable plants and shrubs near windows.
8. Remove vegetation and items that could catch fire from around and under decks.
9. Create a separation between trees, shrubs and items that could catch fire, such as patio furniture, swing sets, etc.
10. Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of four (4) inches.
11. Remove fallen leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches. However, they may be permitted to a depth of four (4) inches if erosion control is an issue.
12. Mow before 10 a.m., but never when it is windy or excessively dry.
13. Protect water quality. Do not clear vegetation near waterways to bare soil. Vegetation removal can cause soil erosion, especially on steep slopes.
A fuel management plan shall be required to be developed for the ER-OS open space areas. The HOA, developer, and ranch owner shall work in conjunction with the City’s Fire department to develop a plan for ongoing vegetation management. This may include grazing of farm animals or annual clearance of specific areas in order to ensure fuel breaks are maintained where necessary.

**Figure 6-4** Example of Large Residential Lot with Weed Abatement Areas