CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE
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INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage. The vision for Rio d’ Oro is a self-sustaining, ecologically responsive, multi-generational community with small town charm. This community will strike a balance between the natural environment and the land uses required to provide an active lifestyle with all the services needed to support residents of every age. The innovative spirit of this plan and its location along Highway 70 provide a unique opportunity to set the bar for future development in Butte County.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Rio d’ Oro Specific Plan is to provide the land use framework for the development of the 689-acre site with a mix of parks, open space, retail, housing, and public service uses. Specifically, its purpose is to:

- Determine the appropriate location and intensity of development and mix of land uses within the Specific Plan Area.
- Guide the character of land planning to ensure that high-quality, placemaking improvements are made to create a safe and inviting, pedestrian-oriented, retail destination.
- Establish public and private sector implementation measures and responsibilities that adequately address both local and regional impacts.
- Define the future location and dimensions of streets, rights-of-way and other access ways.
- Identify basic utilities, infrastructure, and public services necessary to support the community.
- Institute planning concepts, utility designs, and building techniques that are environmentally responsible. These are highlighted throughout the document in the form of “Green Concepts” and are easily identified by the following symbol:
1.2 Specific Plan Setting

The first step in the planning process involves identifying the Specific Plan Area’s context within the surrounding community and region. This requires an analysis of the physical, cultural, and political issues that affect the Specific Plan Area.

1.2.1 Location and Jurisdiction

Rio d’ Oro is located in the south central portion of Butte County, just south of the City of Oroville. Highway 70 splits the Specific Plan properties into two distinct areas.

- The majority of the Specific Plan Area is located just west of Highway 70. Rural residential uses, Pacific Heights Road, the Feather River, and the Oroville Wildlife Area form the westerly boundary of this area. Existing industrial uses, including a rock quarry, form the northerly boundary. An existing mobile home park and executive golf course define the southerly boundary.
- The remaining Specific Plan Area is located east of Highway 70, just north of Palermo Road. See Exhibit 1-1: Vicinity Map. This portion of the Specific Plan Area is surrounded by rural residential uses.

The project site is located in an identified growth area in the Butte County General Plan 2030 (adopted October 26, 2010) and the City of Oroville General Plan update (adopted June, 2009). The land use designation in the Butte County GP 2030 for the site is “Specific Plan to be developed.” The conversion of agriculture and/or grazing land to the “Specific Plan to be developed” was addressed in the GP 2030 EIR and Statement of Overriding Considerations. The Butte County Draft General Plan identifies this area as a potential growth area, Study Area 27. The study area designation permits the consideration of uses consistent with those proposed by this Specific Plan. Although Rio d’ Oro will remain under County jurisdiction for some time, the Specific Plan Area’s location may be suitable for future annexation into the City. The City of Oroville’s Draft General Plan proposes a modification to the existing Sphere of Influence, which would be extended to include the Specific Plan Area. The intensity of uses identified for the area by the City’s Draft General Plan are also consistent with those proposed by this Specific Plan.

The Specific Plan Area is located approximately 3 miles from The Oroville Airport, within the jurisdiction of the Airport Land Use Commission. A large portion of the Specific Plan Area, west of Highway 70, falls within Airport Land Use Safety Zone D.
Exhibit 1-1: Vicinity Map
The Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan restricts uses excluded by the underlying zoning and requires airspace review of all uses over 100 feet tall. Since the Specific Plan establishes the zoning for the Specific Plan Area and no uses proposed by the Specific Plan are permitted to reach over 100 feet in height, the Specific Plan is consistent with this Plan.

Rio d’ Oro also falls within the jurisdiction of Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG), who is responsible for regional transportation planning and the implementation of AB32 and SB375. AB32 requires a statewide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 based on 1990 levels. SB375 further implement AB32 by requiring Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) such as BCAG to establish thresholds for greenhouse gas emissions in order to meet the statewide goals. These thresholds directly impact new development within local jurisdictions and will be a basis for future environmental review, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), for all new development in the region. At the time of this document’s preparation, thresholds have yet to be determined for the Oroville Area; however, the Specific Plan provides a multitude of greenhouse gas reduction techniques including land use design, circulation design, neighborhood design, and building design to reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions. It is anticipated that these techniques will result in compatibility with future BCAG plans.

1.2.2 Butte County and Oroville History

Gabriel Moraga is thought to be the first visitor to this area, arriving in 1808. The lush green valley he discovered was filled with groves of oak trees and wild game. The indigenous people of the area were of the Konkow band of the Maidu Tribe. The Feather River, then unnamed, was the dominant physical feature. This river would later be named “Rio de Las Plumas” by the explorer Captain Luis Arguello in 1820. The name reflected the numerous wild pigeon feathers that floated along the river.

In 1845, the first permanent settlement in this part of Butte County, Ophir City, began. Shortly thereafter, the discovery of gold changed this small settlement into a tent town almost overnight. John Bidwell’s discovery of gold on the Feather River in 1848 resulted in a population boom as thousands converged on the small town in search of prosperity. In 1856, the name Ophir City was changed to Oroville, literally meaning the “City of Gold” in Spanish. This town and the surrounding area soon became one of the most important gold mining establishments in California.

The gold boom in Oroville attracted a number of prominent historical figures to Butte
County. Former US Vice President and Secretary of State Thomas Hendricks, former California Governor and US Senator George C. Perkins, and Former President Herbert Hoover all participated in the area’s gold mining industry prior to embarking on their successful political careers. Elizabeth Hughes, one of the first of four women elected to the state legislature in 1919, started in Butte County as a local educator.

The gold mining industry contributed to the many inventions that established Butte County as a land of ingenuity. In the 1880’s, Major Frank McLaughlin completed one of the grandest mining operations in history by diverting water from the Feather River through a tunnel at Big Bend, north of Oroville. His next big feat was the construction of “the Golden Gate,” a dam constructed by Chinese laborers that diverted waters of the Feather River into a large flume. The diversion of the river was intended to capture any gold that earlier miners missed. In 1898, the methods of gold mining changed to gold dredging, resulting in Wendell Hammond and Colonel Thomas Couch’s invention of the first continuous bucket elevator dredger, which was constructed in Oroville. Even the world famous Thomas Edison participated in Oroville’s gold mining ingenuity by establishing the Edison Ore Milling Company in Oroville to promote his gold separating machine and to seek platinum for his new light bulbs.

Once gold deposits began to diminish, the area’s residents searched for new sources of income. The area’s abundant resource of lumber emerged as a major industry in the area. Originally oxen were used to haul huge timber from local forests to nearby mills for processing, but the invention of the small steam engine revolutionized the industry by making hauling easier and more efficient. The result was the expansion of lumber operations in the County and the construction of three large mills in the Oroville area.

The area’s favorable climate also presented opportunities for agricultural success. Olives and oranges became the major crops in the area. The local agriculture industry began with the planting of a seedling orange tree from Mazatlan, Mexico. Joseph E.N. Lewis planted this seedling in 1856 next to the Bidwell Bridge. This orange tree, the first to be planted in Northern California, was dubbed “Mother Orange.” To avoid submerging the tree underwater during the construction of the Oroville Dam, the tree was relocated to downtown Oroville, where it still stands today. In 1887, the first statewide citrus fair was held on the courthouse lawn in downtown Oroville. Decorations made of thousands of oranges and other citrus products celebrated this new industry. Olives became the next successful agricultural industry when Mrs. Freda Ehman made a name for herself in the canning industry by developing,
processing, and canning the black, ripe olives harvested from local orchards. Her canning operations were so successful that she became known as the “Patron Saint” of the US canning industry. Pierson and Grinnell Burt also achieved success in the olive industry with their self-labeled olives. Olives were later added to the Fair, resulting in the construction of the grand exposition building that is now used as the Oroville Municipal Auditorium.

Butte County’s innovative spirit was reflected once more in 1957 with the construction of the Oroville Thermalito Complex. The complex consists of Lake Oroville, the Oroville Dam, the Hyatt Power Plant, Thermalito Diversion Dam and Power Plant, The Feather River Hatchery, Thermalito Power Canal, Thermalito Forebay, Thermalito Pumping-Generating Plant, Thermalito Afterbay, and the Lake Oroville Visitors Center. This complex system, completed in 1968, was designed to generate power by storing, diverting, and releasing millions of acre-feet of water. The complex also provides flood control for the local area as well as drinking and agricultural water for Central and Southern California. Oroville Dam itself is an engineering marvel. At 770 feet high, the dam is the tallest earthen dam in the nation and in the top 20 in the world. The complex was also designed to compensate for salmon and steelhead spawning grounds lost during the construction of the Dam. Special fish barriers, a fish ladder, and a fish hatchery ensure that salmon and steelhead populations continue to thrive.

Butte County also has a history for environmental stewardship. Before “green building” became the latest trend in the building industry, Butte County, the City or Oroville, and local utility service agencies already began harnessing the power of the sun for energy use. In 2002, the Sewerage Commission Oroville Region (SC-OR) established the nation’s first wastewater treatment plant powered by solar energy. The 520 kilowatt system received a rebate check of $2,342,000 from PG&E, the largest rebate in PG&E history. This system, along with photovoltaic systems already installed on local businesses, city buildings, Butte County’s governmental center, the State Theater, the Pioneer Museum, and private homes contribute to the 4.0 megawatts already generated within the area. This commitment to clean energy resulted in Oroville being dubbed “Solar City USA” on Earth Day in 2003.
1.2.3 Opportunities and Constraints

Designing for nature requires a thorough understanding of the existing conditions of the subject site. Each site is unique in its composition and quality of the natural features, views, and context within the larger ecological community. The first step in any planning process requires a comprehensive assessment of the environmental conditions of the site including the presence of slopes exceeding 15%, mature trees, landmarks, view with scenic or historic value, wetlands, water bodies, sensitive species, and any other notable features of the site. Wind conditions and solar exposure are also evaluated to determine the appropriate orientation and location of parks and buildings. This knowledge creates the framework from which all uses are derived. This framework is illustrated in Exhibit 2-1: Opportunities and Constraints.

Wind and Solar Exposure

Wind and solar exposure are important considerations in the creation of environmentally sustainable communities. These two factors play a critical role in determining the orientation of specific uses to provide passive heating and cooling. These factors also provide opportunities for the generation of alternative energy sources.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Determine the suitability of the subject site for alternative sources of energy such as wind and solar energy.

The Oroville region enjoys a typical Northern California Mediterranean climate. Winter months are somewhat cool to cold, with temperatures typically ranging from mid to high 50s down to the 30s. Summers are typically hot with temperatures ranging from the low 80s up to the low 100s. Spring and fall consist of temperate days and cool nights with little humidity. Daytime temperature are generally in the high 60s to 70s. This Mediterranean climate provides excellent south-facing solar exposures, making the local area ideal for passive solar designs and the harnessing of solar energy. Much of the developable portions of the Specific Plan Area consists of open grasslands with few trees, further enhancing opportunities for solar exposure.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Determine the suitability of the subject site for passive solar heating and cooling.

The prevailing wind affecting the Specific Plan Area generally blows in a south-southeast (SSE) direction toward the Thermalito Afterbay. Wind in the area can be categorized as calm with occasional gentle breezes. Average wind speed ranges between 3-6 miles per hour with higher wind speeds in winter, spring, and fall. Since utility-scale wind farms generally require average annual wind speeds of at least 13 miles per hour, this area does not provide opportunities for wind energy generation. However, the gentle wind speeds create a comfortable outdoor environment.
Exhibit 1-2: Opportunities and Constraints

Legend
- Existing Trees
- Developable Area
- Natural Preserve
- Not a Part
- City Gateway - Monument Opportunity
- Primary Community Entry
- Existing Views
- Prevailing Wind Direction (SSE)
- Trail Opportunity
- Potential Creek Crossing Location
- Existing Highway Noise: Berm & Landscape Opportunity
- Solar Orientation (S, SE, SW)
- Viewpoint Photo Location (See Exhibit 1-3)

Not to Scale
Exhibit 1-3: Viewpoint Photos

A: Highway 70 looking south
B: Highway 70 looking north
C: West side of Pacific Heights Road
D: Existing mineral supplemental tub for livestock. Looking east across site
E: Existing Dingerville Mobile Home Park
F: Looking south along the main arroyo
G: Existing rock tailings
H: Entrance to Oroville Wildlife Area
I: Feather River, west of Pacific Heights Road
J: Pacific Heights Road looking south
K: Existing arroyo
L: Looking northeast toward Table Mountain
M: Granite Construction
N: West side of Highway 70, just south of Pacific Heights Road
O: Southeast corner of Pacific Heights Road and Highway 70 intersection
Soils and Topography

The topography of the Specific Plan Area ranges from 120 – 243 feet above sea level and consists of a variety of landforms. The site terrain includes wide, flat, open areas on both sides of Highway 70, gently rolling hills adjacent to two existing ephemeral streams or arroyos that divide the Specific Plan Area in an east-west direction toward the nearby Feather River, and steep hillsides along the westerly edge of the Specific Plan Area near the Feather River. The Specific Plan Area has been significantly altered over the years by ranching, farming, and gold mining activities beginning around the middle of the 19th Century.

The Specific Plan Area consists primarily of grazing land and does not contain prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of State significance. Grazing land is not considered an important soil by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA).

GREEN CONCEPT

Conserve farmland by locating new development on lands that do not contain prime soils, unique soils, or soils of state significance as identified in a state Natural Resources Conservation Service soil survey.

The majority of the Specific Plan Area is located within Zone ‘X’ as demonstrated on the Flood Rate Insurance Map Panel 06007CO0980C, Butte County Unincorporated and Incorporated Areas, dated June 8, 1998. Zone ‘X’ is defined as a moderate to low risk area located outside the 1-percent annual chance floodplain. Insurance is not required in these zones due to the unlikelihood of flooding in the area. A very small portion of the Specific Plan area, at the bottom of slopes along Pacific Heights Road, is within the 100-year floodplain; however, this area will remain undeveloped.

GREEN CONCEPT

Avoid floodplains by locating new development outside the 100-year floodplain as identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

As part of the Specific Plan process, a series of geotechnical evaluations were conducted to determine the suitability of the Specific Plan Area for development. The following three reports are provided in Appendix E:

- Preliminary Geotechnical Investigation
- Geohazard Investigation
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
According to the Preliminary Geotechnical Investigation, soils within the Specific Plan Area consist of sandy clay and silt underlain by sandy cobbles and clayey sand to a depth of 7 feet. Between 7 feet and 10 feet, soils include very dense sandy cobbles. Groundwater was not encountered during field testing. Testing of soil samples revealed that the Specific Plan Area is suitable for residential construction provided that grading activities and foundations comply with the recommendations as presented in the report.

The Specific Plan Area is not located within the Alquist-Priolo special studies zone. No known active or other surface faults are known to occur near the Specific Plan Area. Relatively deep groundwater, shallow bedrock, and relatively low levels of seismic activity indicate that the potential for liquefaction is low, making the Specific Plan Area suitable for development.

Slopes adjacent to the drainage and along Pacific Heights Road may experience relatively small local slides during an earthquake; however, these conditions do not necessarily pose a threat if properly avoided during construction. The Specific Plan Area is not known to encounter ground subsidence.

A Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessment of the Specific Plan Area revealed two potential contamination issues. The first is directly related to the presence of rock tailings or rock waste piles left from past mining activities in the arroyos. These dredge tailings contain metals or other chemicals commonly associated with gold mining activities during the early 20th century. If these rock tailings are unearthed during grading within the grading plan limits, it can be stockpiled on-site and potentially reused for on-site community features such as decorative walls and entry monument features. No processing or crushing of the rock tailings will be permitted on-site.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Clean up contaminated areas within the subject site to improve and enhance important habitats and improve water quality.

The second potential contamination is the result of a nearby property owner’s activities, resulting in designation of that adjacent property as a national priority site. These activities may have caused groundwater contamination in the area, meaning that the Specific Plan Area must rely on other sources of water other than groundwater. Since the contaminated site is not within the Specific Plan’s boundaries, the Specific Plan cannot directly require clean-up of this site; however, all development within the Specific Plan Area shall comply with Butte County Environmental Health Department standards and State Department of Toxic Substance Control standards related to this...
"Area of Concern" and shall comply with requirements of the California Health and Safety Code Chapter 6.5, Article II, Section 25221 (a).

**Wetlands and Water Bodies**

The Feather River, a predominant feature of the Oroville area, is located approximately ¼ mile west of the Specific Plan Area, generally extending in a north-south direction parallel to Pacific Heights Road. This river provides opportunities for many activities including swimming, fishing, and kayaking.

A Draft Delineation of Waters of the U.S. was prepared by Gallaway Consulting, Inc. in 2007/2008 and identified vernal complexes and seasonal wetlands within the site that are hydrologically connected through ephemeral drainages to two intermittent drainages located within the arroyos. The arroyos are the defining physical feature of the Specific Plan Area. Intermittent drainages of the size on-site do not generally contain water long enough for water-based recreational activities. Although these areas are designated as natural open space by which access will be limited to maintenance and monitoring, they serve a superior design purpose by establishing a strong sense of place, a majestic setting for the future community, and the opportunity for adjacent parks and active use open space areas.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Work with ecologists to determine the location of important wetland features, preserve the most significant features, and determine appropriate setbacks as agreed to by the regulatory agency.

Wetlands within the Specific Plan Area are characterized as vernal pools and swales, along with seasonal wetlands and swales. Acting as a biological filter, wetlands initially collect pollutants and nutrients from rain events and surface flows prior to water entering streams and rivers. In addition, they prevent erosion and sedimentation of more permanently flowing drainage systems by reducing flow and creating ponded areas, which in turn provides habitat for waterfowl, song birds, and small mammals.

The Specific Plan considers on-site hydrological function and allows for the preservation of the main vernal pool and swale complex located east of Highway 70, as well as the two intermittent drainages within the arroyos. Gallaway Consulting, Inc. evaluated the proposed project in terms of impacts to waters and provided recommendations on avoidance and setbacks, where feasible. The open space area along the east side of Highway 70, establishes an attractive gateway for the city of Oroville, while avoiding ecologically significant wetland habitat for federally listed vernal pool invertebrates and two special-status plants. Rio d’ Oro preserves approximately 52.8 acres of on-site wetland and other waters of the U.S. features, including vernal pools, seasonal wetlands and intermittent drainages. All wetlands
and other waters of the U.S. impacted by the project will be mitigated for through the restoration, enhancement and preservation of on-site and off-site in-kind waters in a manner consistent with federal and state requirements, recognizing the established policy of “no net loss of wetlands.”

**Flora and Fauna**

As part of the planning process, floral and faunal surveys were conducted within the Specific Plan Area, consistent with federal and state policies. Habitats within the property consist of annual grassland with inclusions of vernal pools/swales and seasonal wetlands/swales, along with blue oak woodland and valley oak woodland. Large valley oaks and blue oaks occur predominantly along the arroyos that traverse the property and adjacent to Pacific Heights Road. Botanical surveys resulted in the observation of two special-status plants, Ahart's dwarf rush and slender Orcutt grass, both vernal pool inhabitants. Federally listed vernal pool invertebrate species were also identified on-site during protocol-level surveys. The Specific Plan Area most special-status plant and wildlife species populations and a significant portion of listed invertebrate habitat.

Oak woodlands and annual grasslands provide important breeding and foraging habitat for numerous species of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Special-status species observed on the property utilizing these habitats include raptors and owls. Additional pre-development surveys will be conducted for these species, as required by federal and state laws. Mitigation for Impacts to special-status species and/or their habitats will be implemented as determined by federal and state regulatory agencies and the CEQA lead agency.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Work with ecologists to determine the existence of special status species within and around the subject site.

A number of mature oak trees are contained on site, primarily adjacent to the arroyos and along the sloped areas adjacent to Pacific Heights Road. These mature trees provide an excellent resource for shade and attractive open space areas, serving as a great opportunity for community open space and a visual amenity. Requirements in the County Code would provide additional protection for oak trees. For individual developments within the Specific Plan area, valley oak trees and other areas of special biological importance such as creek or river frontages would need to be surveyed at the time of filing a tentative map. In addition, existing trees must be preserved during grading according to the requirements of the County’s Department of Development Services (Butte County, Code of Ordinances, Chapter 20-125).
**Archeological Resources**

Historic themes commonly represented in the area’s cultural resources include mining, transportation, water storage/transport, and agriculture and ranching. A formal Archaeological Inventory Survey was conducted within the Specific Plan Area in August of 2006 and has been included in the Appendices of this document. The survey was conducted to fulfill the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Determine the location of any historical or archeological resources within the property boundaries.

The inventory included a record search at the Northeast Information Center at CSU, Chico, consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission, consultation with Native American parties with cultural ties to the Specific Plan Area, and a pedestrian survey of the entire Specific Plan Area. The record search identified no potentially significant cultural resources that had been recorded, formally or otherwise, within the Specific Plan Area. The Native American Heritage Commission identified no Sacred Land listings within or adjacent to the Specific Plan Area. Similarly, the potentially interested Native American parties that were consulted were not aware of known resources within the Specific Plan Area.

The archaeological field surveys proved negative for potentially significant cultural resources. The Survey concludes that the Specific Plan Area's history includes disturbances associated with mining, tree removal, ranching, fire suppression, road construction, and utility installation. As a result, there is a low potential for surface-level cultural resources to occur in and around the Specific Plan Area.

The absence of surface-level cultural resources does not completely equate to the absence of currently unidentified resources that could be unearthed during construction and earth-moving activities. For this reason, all applicable plans and specifications shall include provisions for the accidental discovery of currently unidentified cultural resources within the Specific Plan Area.

Although not historically significant, the numerous piles of waste rocks or tailings located within the main arroyo are associated with the history of the Specific Plan Area itself. Since maintaining these tailings may potentially contain metals or other chemicals commonly associated with gold mining activities, their removal is desirable. Removal of these tailings, if pursued, provides an excellent opportunity for reuse of natural on-site materials in community features such as decorative walls, and entry features throughout the Specific Plan Area to further perpetuate the history of the site and sustainable land planning and development practices.
Edge Conditions and Proximity to Other Uses

Highway 70 is the most prominent edge condition of the Specific Plan Area, forming the easterly boundary of the developable portion of the Specific Plan Area. Although this could be viewed as a negative constraint, the Specific Plan is focused on improving this corridor as an amenity benefiting not only the Specific Plan Area but also Butte County. Currently the first sight drivers see when they enter into the area are the numerous industrial buildings and storage yards located north of the site. The Specific Plan’s proximity to the highway and its location south of these industrial uses provides an opportunity to establish a new and improved entry into the Area.

Pacific Heights Road makes up the northern and western boundaries of the Specific Plan Area and provides a tremendous community design opportunity. The existing roadway consists of a narrow two-lane rural road with mature landscaping, soft shoulders, and a few residential driveways. Through careful design of the internal circulation system for the Specific Plan Area, traffic will be directed through the Specific Plan Area to avoid additional traffic impact to Pacific Heights Road, thereby minimizing the need for improvements to this road and maintaining the scenic qualities of this corridor.

Just west of the Feather River lies the Oroville Wildlife Refuge and the Freeman Bicycle Trail. The proximity of the Specific Plan Area to these uses establishes the Specific Plan Area as a prime location for a community that enjoys hiking, biking, fishing, and watching wildlife. Furthermore, the Specific Plan Area’s proximity to Lake Oroville and the Thermalito Afterbay provide additional opportunities for the enjoyment of outdoor activities and the natural beauty of Butte County. The Specific Plan provides trail heads at the edges of the site to allow for future potential trail connections to areas north and west of the site. The final location of these connection points will be coordinated with the Feather River Parks District, the Oroville Wildlife Refuge and any other appropriate agencies as part of the Tentative Map approval process for adjacent neighborhoods.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Promote the development of a regional trail system by providing trail connections to adjacent properties.

The Specific Plan Area is adjacent to existing development to the north and south. Dingerville, a small mobile home park populated mainly by seniors, includes permanent mobile homes, an RV park, a 9-hole golf course, a pool, a community building, and its own waste water treatment plant. Limited rural residences are located on 5 acre or larger parcels along Pacific Heights Road and include homesites, equestrian facilities, and other rural residential development.

**GREEN CONCEPT**

Prevent urban sprawl by locating new development within or near existing communities.
1.3 Design Inspiration & Guiding Principles

The greatest inspiration for the development of Rio d’ Oro is the innovative heritage of the surrounding area and the incredible natural features of the Specific Plan Area itself: The beautiful arroyos that wind through the Specific Plan Area, the gently rolling hills, the reality of the working cattle operations, the presence of gold mining tailings, the wildflowers and oak trees that dot the landscape, the complex ecologies and a “spirit of the land” that constantly shifts with movement of the sun and seasons. Incorporating the area’s innovative spirit and preserving its superior natural beauty will distinguish this community in the marketplace, maximizing value in the development process for the County, the community, and its future residents.

To achieve a strong sense of innovation and environmental stewardship, neighborhoods shall be designed as an extension of the existing natural features of the Specific Plan Area. The arroyos shall be showcased as defining elements of the community. A number of guiding principles have been identified to integrate the aesthetic and historic dimensions of the Specific Plan Area and the surrounding area into the physical setting, lifestyle, and experiences of future residents. The key guiding principles include:

- Environmental Stewardship
- Traditional Neighborhood Development
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Mix of Uses
- Sense of Place
- Perpetuation of Butte County Heritage
- Gateway Entry
- Multi-Generational Community
Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship provides the fundamental concept for the Rio d’ Oro Community. Rio d’ Oro’s goal is to extend a living legacy for future generations. This stewardship begins with the preservation of the Specific Plan Area’s hydrological function and sensitive habitat areas and continues by developing environmental education, interpretive resources, and nature facilities as the community develops.

Environmental stewardship requires an integrated approach. Individual environmental measures on their own do not achieve the goal of sustainability unless they are considered within the scope of the larger system. Therefore, “green” features of the land use plan have been integrated throughout this document and can be easily identified by the Green Concepts identified on that page. In addition to the green features of the land use plan, green concepts have been provided to guide the future development of individual neighborhoods within the Specific Plan Area. Since each neighborhood has a unique setting and is intended to establish a unique character, these green concepts must be flexible enough to allow for appropriate and innovative design techniques that address the specific needs of that neighborhood.

The project would be required to be constructed in compliance with the standards of Title 24 that are in effect at the time of development. The project would also aim for a 20% increase over Title 24 standards. To ensure the implementation of the Specific Plan’s goal of sustainability while still accommodating creative and reasonable designs, and at least 50 points in the Build-it-Green checklist provided as Appendix E: Technical Studies. It should be noted that although 50 points must be achieved, formal certification through Build-it-Green is encouraged but not required.
Traditional Neighborhood Development

Post World War II development focused on suburban development and the American dream of owning a home far from the hustle and bustle of the City. The unfortunate result of this type of development has been urban sprawl, long commute times, “cookie cutter” neighborhoods, and less focus on family and the community. Rio d’ Oro’s goal is to change and improve on this development trend by using Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) principles.

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) focuses on creating communities that embrace the traditional patterns of small towns and villages established prior to World War II. These towns and villages are typically centered around a distinct “center” such as a square or green, providing an identity and a place for neighbors to come together as a community. TNDs promote walking rather than driving by providing and locating the center within walking distance of all homes. Streets are narrower to encourage reduced traffic speeds, and rows of large shade trees are planted to shade streets and sidewalks, creating an attractive and comfortable pedestrian atmosphere. Circulation patterns limit block lengths, include few cul-de-sacs, and provide multiple connections to distribute traffic more efficiently, reduce the need for sound walls, provide multiple routes, and allow pedestrians to move more freely through the community. The primary features of TNDs are as follows:

• Discernible Center
• Five-minute walk to the Center for all homes
• Variety of housing types
• Parks and schools within walking distance of most homes
• Narrower residential streets
• Multiple street connections
• Buildings close to the street
• Parking and garages removed from the street frontage
• Significant buildings used as focal points and community “icons”

Healthy lifestyles

To most people, the dream of a better life includes the opportunity for a healthier life. Rio d’ Oro provides residents with every opportunity for exceptional health. Green building techniques provide healthier indoor living environments. The extensive community trail system allows people to walk or bike instead of drive, increasing their physical activity and reducing their contribution to air pollution. Green planning practices and energy conservation design measures improve water and air quality. All of these factors work together to provide a healthier lifestyle for all the area’s residents.
Mix of Uses
Rio d’ Oro is envisioned as an all-inclusive community where residents have nearly everything they need without having to leave the community. This requires a wide mix of uses to provide for the everyday needs of the community including jobs, education, shopping, services, and entertainment. By providing such uses, the length and number of vehicle trips may be reduced. These uses also serve as a community-wide activity and social center.

Sense of Place
A “sense of place” refers to unique characteristics that help define that location from any other place. This sense of place can be expressed in a number of ways including the natural and built environment. Rio d’ Oro’s unique natural setting provides an already established sense of place with its majestic oaks, scenic arroyos, proximity to the Feather River and the Oroville Wildlife Refuge and its views of the distant mountains. Whether residents are walking along the Arroyo Trail, fishing in the Feather River, bicycling through the Oroville Wildlife Refuge, or taking in the view of the Sutter Buttes and Table Mountain, they will always recognize this area as a unique “place” and a place they are proud to call home.

Perpetuation of Butte County Heritage
Since the late 19th Century, the residents of Butte County have created a historical legacy rich in color, texture, and historical significance. The architecture of a place, which develops over time in response to regional events and climates, tells the area’s unique story. With its rich and colorful history, Butte County’s diverse palette of architectural styles provides a unique sense of place. Architectural styles found in Butte County include Spanish, Mission, Craftsman, Farmhouse, Cottage, Monterey, Ranch, Colonial, American Traditional and many more. The architecture of the Rio d’ Oro community should draw upon this heritage by incorporating contemporary interpretations of architectural styles found in Butte County. Such styles include Farmhouse, Colonial, Spanish, Mission, Craftsman, Cottage, Monterey, American Traditional and Ranch. Architectural designs should also respond to the area’s abundant natural resource by maximizing views, taking advantage of solar orientation, and incorporating local materials.

Gateway Entry
The Specific Plan Area is positioned to provide a gateway entry for this portion of Butte County. Entry into the area on northbound Highway 70 currently consists of a series of large industrial uses, which do not reflect the County’s unique historical character. The Rio d’ Oro Specific Plan provides an opportunity to redefine this corridor and establish a unique place with a strong sense of community and a high quality living environment.
Multi-Generational Community

The Rio d’ Oro Specific Plan community is intended to become a community where all residents can achieve an optimal lifestyle regardless of age, thus creating a multi-generational community. The Rio d’ Oro Specific Plan provides an array of amenities that equally address the needs and inspirations of residents of multiple life stages, from young, single professionals to families; from empty nesters to retirees. Where appropriate, there might be some emphasis on amenities for certain age groups; however, basic programming and infrastructure will be universal in accommodation and appeal. The Specific Plan recognizes that a successful multi-generational community requires seamless integration of all age groups, engaging people across all life stages, and recognizing the independence and value of all generations. Essential elements include appropriate housing, transportation and mobility options, and supportive community benefits and services. The community’s physical and activity structure should support to the fullest extent possible each individual’s journey toward fulfilling their ultimate human potential through all life stages.

Multi-generational home design is about creating a home for everyone to enjoy long-term, with features and products that make a home safer, more comfortable, and more livable. While this design concept accommodates people of all ages, it does so without compromising architectural and aesthetic appeal. Single level living and first floor access with appropriate size and space for everyday experiences will provide options for people in all life stages. Comfortable living features will accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and abilities that embrace the market’s evolving culture and lifestyle.