

Description and Key Elements of Specific Plan

The Specific Plan will guide the long term realization of a vision for Middle Green Valley in which long-term conservation of agriculture is accomplished alongside and sustained by a series of connected and sustainable rural neighborhoods. This Plan is a result of community, landowner, and County consensus building and cooperation, recognizing the need to protect the unique rural qualities of the area, while providing the means for appropriate settlement patterns to take place.

The General Plan policies for the Study Area served as a backbone for the development of the Plan, however, those policies were also considered minimum requirements in its development. Not only does the Plan directly address the policies laid out in the General Plan concerning the Middle Green Valley area, but it also strives to address many of the other goals, objectives, and policies set forth in the General Plan. Appendix C to the Plan provides a matrix identifying over 100 of the General Plan's goals and policies with which the Specific Plan can be found to be consistent. They relate to agriculture, water use, energy resources, biological and recreational resources, public health, sustainable land use, and many others. This matrix is an important reference tool which shows how the complexities of the proposed Specific Plan advance and build upon the important goals and policies set forth in the General Plan.

The heart of the Specific Plan is an emphasis toward preserving, maintaining, and managing the open lands and agricultural areas while utilizing the Plan's community development as a tool to achieve this goal. As the Plan states, the development is viewed as a "community within a conservation framework".

The Plan's support and protection of the agricultural landscape cannot be overstated. Links to the valley's agricultural heritage are found intertwined within all aspects of the vision, the community Plan, implementation strategies and the Neighborhood Code. For much of the century, Green Valley has served as a vital agricultural resource for the production of grapes, orchards, and row crops. Over the last 20 years, agricultural success has been intermittent. Urban encroachment has threatened the local farming economy, while attempting to compete in a global marketplace for food products. As one landowner stated, "We can grow anything. We just can't sell it."

This Plan provides for long term financial stability for farming in Middle Green Valley. Concepts such as clustered development, the transfer of development rights program, establishment of the Green Valley Agricultural Conservancy, transfer fees used to fund the Conservancy, agricultural easements, and establishment of the Green Valley Farm Stand to provide access to locally produced products will all serve to support the viability and success of local agriculture in the valley, while allowing for it to be a more visible part of day to day life. While these tools directly serve the local farming economy, the allowed land uses and Neighborhood Design Code will ensure that the built environment, both in land use and in design, reflects the rural agricultural history of California and this area.

The following concepts serve as key elements to the Specific Plan:

Green Valley Conservancy: The Plan calls for the establishment of a conservancy, which will oversee the management and monitoring of conservation easements encompassing the approximately 1,490 acres of agricultural lands, pastures, and natural areas. The conservancy would be an objective organization which would focus its attention on education, resource and open space preservation, community connectivity, and agricultural awareness.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program: In general, the concept of traditional TDR programs is to serve as a land use regulatory tool where development rights can be severed from one parcel(s) and transferred or sold to other parcels. The parcels that give up their rights (sending areas) are then permanently restricted by easements and the parcels receiving the rights (receiving areas) are provided with a greater density for development. This technique is generally used to relocate development away from sensitive natural resource areas, important farmland, historic resources, or areas within viewsheds. Traditional TDR programs are market-based and rely on the negotiation of private, one-by-one transactions for eventual implementation. The TDR Program, as implemented through the Specific Plan and "Sales Participation Agreement" for MGCV, builds on these traditional TDR tools, but has been carefully designed to avoid some of the traditional difficulties associated with TDR Programs to help ensure its success and the implementation of the Specific Plan.

Neighborhood Design Code: The Neighborhood Design Code (NDC) provides Development Standards, Design Guidelines, and the design review process which will guide and direct the development of the neighborhood areas. The development plan focuses on the primary goal of preserving rural character while defining appropriate development patterns. The patterns draw from settlement traditions of small California towns.

The first important aspect of the NDC is the introduction of Transect Zones, which provide for six different zones ranging from the most natural and passive of areas (Conservation area) to the more intensely developed areas (Neighborhood Center). Different Building Types are assigned to each Transect Zone, consistent with the nature of the permitted development in those areas. The Building Types include: Agriculture/Community, Courtyard, Bungalow, Farmstead, Meadow, Compound, and Secondary Units/Ancillary Structures. Each Type includes its own placement, form, and other development standards. The Building Types and Standards are described in Section 5.4 of the Specific Plan.

Sustainability: Where the intended design and build-out of the Specific Plan area are that of a small rural California town, the actual design concepts and integration of the land uses is more modern in nature. Many of the elements incorporated into the Plan are typically associated with sustainable types of development. Examples include: water efficient landscaping, reuse of water for landscaping/toilets, sustainable stormwater approaches, conservation easements for agriculture preservation, development clustering, and the creation of a whole community which encourages pedestrian oriented neighborhoods.

Infrastructure and Financing: The Plan provides options for providing potable water and waste disposal to the area. Options for water include connecting to the City of Fairfield, utilizing SID water (treated by the City), or community groundwater wells. For waste disposal, the options include connecting to the Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District for sewer service or an onsite package treatment facility. To allow for this, the County must form a County Service Area (CSA), governed by the Board of Supervisors.