



*Contra Costa County
Community Development Department*

*Adopted by the Board of Supervisors
October 6, 1992*

The Alhambra Valley Specific Plan Advisory Committee

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ALHAMBRA VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Specific Plan Area - Location and Description

The Alhambra Valley is located in unincorporated Contra Costa County, just outside and south of the City of Martinez in the north central part of the county. Alhambra Valley is primarily a rural area and is located within the Alhambra Creek watershed. Steep hillsides with gently sloping hilltops are typical physical characteristics of the valley. The valley floor has both wide areas and is narrow other places and supports a variety of agricultural activities which include grazing of livestock, growing of orchards and other row crops. Most of the valley is densely vegetated with native trees, shrubs and annual grasses which cover much of the hillside areas; most homes are scattered throughout the area at rural-residential densities.

The boundary of the planning area is roughly defined by the watershed surrounding Alhambra Creek and is totally within unincorporated Contra Costa County. More specifically, the specific plan area is located south of Highway 4 and west of Pleasant Hill Road. Its regional location is shown on Figure 1. It encompasses approximately 2,800 acres (4.5 square miles) and has over 650 residents. Although the Specific Plan is located entirely within the unincorporated part of the county, a portion of the plan area is located within the sphere-of-influence of the City of Martinez. Briones Regional Park borders the Valley on the west and south, and the City of Martinez borders the eastern and northern edges.

B. Purpose and Intent of the Specific Plan

The Board of Supervisors adopted the new Contra Costa County General Plan 1990-2005 in January of 1991. Specific Plans are intended to be vehicles for implementing the goals and policies of a jurisdiction's General Plan, and can only be adopted or amended if they are consistent with the jurisdiction's General Plan, or if that General Plan is amended for consistency.

The Alhambra Valley Specific Plan has been developed to provide additional guidance to implement existing County General Plan policies which may apply to the area. The County General Plan contains provisions which regulate land use, development on sloped and hillside areas and limits the areas appropriate to urbanization as defined through the Urban Limit Line. The Specific Plan contains provisions which provide the guidance needed to implement these general land use policies within the boundaries of the specific plan area.

California State Planning Law authorizes a jurisdiction to adopt specific plan for any area within its jurisdiction for purposes of providing additional detail to the implementation of its General Plan. Section 65459 of the Government Code specifies that specific plans include text and diagrams specifying:

- o The distribution, location and intensity of land uses, including open space, within the plan area,

- o The distribution, location and capacity of infrastructure, including transportation, sewage, water, storm drainage, solid waste and energy systems;
- o Standards and criteria for development and utilization of natural resources;
- o An implementation program, including capital improvement plans, regulations and financing strategies.

The Specific Plan is a long-range planning tool to guide both public and private investment in Alhambra Valley. The Specific Plan implements County General Plan policies related to land use, transportation and conservation by establishing strict regulations for the protection and enhancement of natural resources and scenic beauty of the valley.

Figure 1

C. Conformity to the County General Plan

1. Relationship to the County General Plan

The Specific Plan contains detailed guidance about development on hillside areas through establishment of slope density policies and hillside design guidelines which consider the physical characteristics of Alhambra Valley. The specific plan also discusses in more detail how the Urban Limit Line will be interpreted throughout the specific plan area. Also included in the plan text is a description of preferred roadway widths and how local roads should be improved to accommodate local traffic and to achieve other goals and scenic resource goals and objectives of the specific plan.

The Specific Plan does not deviate from adopted General Plan policies and because of this consistency, the development envisioned under the Specific Plan will only occur at adopted General Plan development densities. The land use regulations and other proposals contained in this Specific Plan document are intended to implement General Plan policies.

2. Relationship to the Urban Limit Line and the 65/35 Land Preservation Standard

The County General Plan also contains a countywide growth management program which was passed by voter initiative in November of 1990. The Countywide Growth Management Program establishes what is known as the Urban Limit Line and defines the limits of urbanization throughout the county and does not allow for general plan amendments which would lead to urbanization.

Because the Urban Limit Line is broadly defined in the County General Plan, the Specific Plan takes steps to more clearly define this boundary. Along with the Urban Limit Line, the Growth Management Program also established the 65/35 Land Preservation standard, which limits the amount of urbanization throughout the county to 35 percent. The remaining 65 percent is devoted to non-urban uses. The Specific Plan conforms to Growth Management Standards because the urbanization which is allowed by both the County General Plan and Specific Plan occurs within the Urban Limit Line and is already counted towards that portion of the county which is to be urbanized.

The growth management program also establishes certain requirements for performing traffic studies for development projects. The Specific Plan does not propose any development which was not anticipated under the County General Plan and therefore does not need additional analysis for adoption of the Specific Plan as far as Growth Management requirements are concerned. However, individual development applications which are submitted in the future are subject to Growth Management requirements for meeting levels of a service standards for not only traffic and circulation, but also for the other urban services which are needed to support development. This issue is discussed in more detail in a later section of the Specific Plan.

D. Public Participation

The County Board of Supervisors gave direction to planning staff in August 1987 to prepare a specific plan for Alhambra Valley through a citizen planning committee which was assembled for this purpose. Known as the Alhambra Valley Specific Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, this group met regularly between August 1987 and September 1990. In early spring of 1992, the Committee reconvened to review the newly formatted plan document and to make minor changes to conform with the Contra Costa County General Plan 1990-2005. The Cities of Lafayette, Martinez and Pleasant Hill have also participated in the review of the new specific plan.

E. Plan Organization

This plan places the goals and policies in Chapter II. Plan Designations are outlined in Chapter III and Land Use Regulations in Chapter IV. The Design Guidelines, a major feature of the Specific Plan effort, is included in tact as Chapter Five of this document, while Implementation is included as Chapter 6 in this plan.

II. GOALS AND POLICIES

The Contra Costa County General Plan 1990-2005 contains a number of goals and policies which have applicability to the Alhambra Valley. These General Plan policies will continue to apply as they relate to both public and private development projects in the area. The following additional goals and policies provided added detail for the Specific Plan area.

A. THE ENVIRONMENT

Goal 1: *Preserve and enhance both the natural and man-made environment in Alhambra Valley.*

- Policy 1: Structures shall be designed to blend into, rather than dominate the natural setting, especially on ridgelines. The massing of new dwellings should be compatible with the natural setting.
- Policy 2: Only allow development which is sensitive to available natural resources and features. New development shall generally conform with natural contours and avoid excessive grading.
- Policy 3: Hilltops, ridges, rock outcroppings, mature stands of trees and other natural features shall be preserved to the greatest extent possible in the design of new projects.
- Policy 4: Require development proposals to include an environmentally-superior design alternative as part of the environmental review process.

Goal 2: *Restrict development in environmentally sensitive areas.*

- Policy 1: Avoid conventional development in flood inundation zones; prohibit development in Federal Emergency Management Act 100-year flood zones.
- Policy 2: Slopes over 26 percent shall be considered unsuitable for residential development. Conventional padded development is prohibited in these areas. Hillside areas greater than 30 percent slope shall not be developed for residential building sites and shall not be included in any calculations to meet net parcel size requirements.
- Policy 3: Slope stability shall be a primary consideration in the ability of land to be developed. Allow no development in landslide areas unless the area is stabilized through high-quality engineering design, and construction and approved by the County.

Goal 3: *Enhance watercourses and associated riparian habitat to their natural state to restore water quality, wildlife diversity, aesthetic values and recreation opportunities.*

- Policy 1: Require a creek setback for any development proposal along a creek or natural waterway.
- Policy 2: Require a Creek Preservation plan to restore and enhance this resource.
- Policy 3: Ensure that any new parcels which are proposed along watercourses meet the minimum lot size requirements of that General Plan description.

Goal 4: *Minimize air, water, noise and soil pollution in Alhambra Valley.*

- Policy 1: Protect perennial and intermittent streams from pollution caused by dumping, sewage, seepage, laundry water or siltation.
- Policy 2: Encourage energy efficient features in new development and require that new additions or remodeling projects conform with building code regulations related to energy conservation.
- Policy 3: The use of toxic and nutritive chemicals by agricultural operators shall be minimized.

Goal 5: *Protect historical and archaeological resources.*

- Policy 1: Protect the Altamarino Adobe and the Stenzel family graveyard.

B. NEW DEVELOPMENT

Goal 1: *Allow development in accord with the goals and policies of the Countywide General Plan as it pertains to Alhambra Valley.*

- Policy 1: Establish regulations for new development that ensure compatibility with General Plan designated land uses.
- Policy 2: Ensure that the applicable rules for environmental protection are applied to both major and minor subdivisions.

C. PUBLIC SERVICES & FACILITIES

Goal 1: *Provide adequate levels of public services within Alhambra Valley. Ensure new public facilities are sensitive to the natural setting.*

Policy 1: Dedication of public roads in unstable hillside areas shall not be accepted by the County. Private roads which would require an excessive degree of maintenance and repair costs shall not be allowed.

Policy 2: Detention basins shall be designed to provide recreation and open space opportunities when basins are not being used to hold water if liability and maintenance issues can be resolved.

Goal 2 *Minimize soil erosion and runoff throughout Alhambra Valley.*

Policy 1: Require new development to provide on-site storm water and drainage facilities which accommodates full buildout and considers a range of design alternatives.

Policy 2: Control erosion in natural watercourses where creek capacity and bank stability necessitate, while maintaining consistency with the Creek Preservation plan for that development. Minor structural improvements, e.g. drop structures, may be allowed if consistent with the concepts of the Creek Preservation Plan.

Policy 3: Encourage appropriate agencies to develop watershed management practices to reduce soil loss and excessive runoff and to minimize effects on downstream areas.

Policy 4: Encourage public participation in the review of design issues for major flood control projects.

Goal 3: *Ensure that adequate and a quality water supply is available to areas designated for new homes.*

Policy 1: The service area for the Martinez water system shall be limited to the area outside the Briones Hills Agricultural Preservation Area.

Policy 2: Water service systems for new development shall be required to meet State and County regulatory standards for water delivery, water storage and emergency water supplies.

Policy 3: Prior to approval of development entitlements, new development shall obtain verification from the appropriate water service agency, be it the City of Martinez or the County Health Services Department, that an adequate and safe water supply can be provided to serve development. All new subdivisions created after adoption of Specific Plan within Urban Limit Line shall be connected to Martinez Water Department.

Policy 4: Require all new development to be served by a public sewer service or to provide an adequate and safe septic system which meets the standards of the County Health Department.

Policy 5: The establishment of small community well water systems to serve proposed subdivisions shall be prohibited.

- Policy 6: The physical and service infrastructure, public and private, which supports agriculture shall be promoted.
- Policy 7: Efforts to assure an adequate, high quality and fairly-priced water supply to irrigated agricultural areas shall be supported.

D. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

The specific plan acknowledges the rural residential character of Alhambra Valley and actively supports the continuation of agricultural activities not only within the specific plan area, but in the lands to the west. The County General Plan contains several goals and policies related to agriculture and the most significant of these goals and policies are listed in this section.

The Specific Plan fully encourages the retention and maintenance of existing agricultural uses as long as they prove to be viable economic pursuits, while acknowledging potential land use conflicts with nearby or adjacent urban uses. The intent of the County General Plan policies related to conflicts between agricultural and urban uses is to give priority to maintaining the agricultural use. The following Specific Plan goals and policies express this intent.

Goal 1: *To encourage and enhance agriculture and to maintain and promote a healthy and competitive agricultural economy in Alhambra Valley.*

- Policy 1: Agriculture shall be protected to maintain the semi-rural atmosphere and to retain a balance of land uses in Alhambra Valley.
- Policy 2: The County shall encourage agriculture to continue operating adjacent to areas of planned urban development.
- Policy 3: Retain and encourage the use of Williamson Act contracts to preserve agricultural uses.
- Policy 4: A full range of Agriculturally-related uses shall be allowed in agricultural areas.

Goal 2: *To minimize and resolve conflicts between agricultural and urban uses.*

- Policy 1: Establish regulations for new development that ensure its compatibility with agricultural uses.
- Policy 2: Allow only development that is compatible with existing agricultural, residential and open space uses.
- Policy 3: Require adequate (a minimum 60 foot) setbacks for structures located within or adjacent to areas with either an Agricultural Lands or Parks and Recreation land use designation.

- Policy 4: Inform and educate prospective home buyers in or near agricultural areas regarding the nuisance and hazards associated with nearby agricultural practices.
- Policy 5: Agriculture shall be protected from nuisance complaints from non-agricultural land uses.

E. TRAFFIC, CIRCULATION AND SCENIC ROUTES.

Goal 1: Maintain Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads to two travel lanes as a way to reduce through traffic and as a way to preserve the scenic qualities of these corridors.

- Policy 1: Establish an 80 foot right-of-way for Alhambra Valley Road and an 84 foot right-of-way for Reliez Valley Road.
- Policy 2: To the extent possible, improve and maintain the aesthetic views from and natural features which occur along scenic corridors.
- Policy 3: To the extent practical, enhance public access from scenic routes to parks, trails and other public attractions.
- Policy 4: Enhance views from designated Valley Gateways, which include Alhambra Avenue at Alhambra Valley Road; Alhambra Valley Road at Reliez Valley Road; and Alhambra Valley Road at the Vaca Creek Crossing.
- Policy 5: Limit Reliez Valley and Alhambra Valley Roads to one travel lane in each direction while allowing safety features such as turning lanes while providing for separated trails within the right-of-ways of those roads.
- Policy 6: Acknowledge that the existing trees along Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads significantly contribute to these scenic corridors and all efforts shall be made to preserve them.
- Policy 7: Prohibit the installation of any solid board fences along Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads. Allow only open rail fencing within the front yard setback on all properties fronting these roadways.

Goal 2: Maintain safe road conditions throughout the Specific Plan area.

- Policy 1: Underground overhead electrical and telephone transmission lines as part of any major road improvement or utility project.
- Policy 2: Minimize access points along Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads.

- Policy 3: Minimize traffic congestion problems in front of John Swett School.
- Policy 4: Give priority, in terms of road improvements, to the continuous segment of Alhambra Valley Road and Alhambra Avenue from the Reliez Valley Road intersection to the Santa Fe Railroad trestle.
- Policy 5: Mitigate any public safety hazards caused by new development which relate to traffic, circulation and parking.
- Policy 6: Establish a road signage program which discourages through traffic and maintains safe travel speeds.
- Policy 7: Provide adequate sight distance at entryways to new development.
- Policy 8: To the fullest extent possible, reduce traffic-related impacts of new development on adjacent property owners and neighboring jurisdictions.

F. SCENIC RESOURCES & COMMUNITY DESIGN

A major feature of Alhambra Valley is the perception of the many scenic vistas and areas of significant topographic variation of the landscape, which are characteristic throughout the valley. Views of ridgelines and hills form the backdrop for much of the valley. These views help reinforce the rural residential feeling of Alhambra Valley and provide an important balance between the rural atmosphere and low-density residential areas within and just outside the valley.

Goal 1: Preserve and protect areas of identified high scenic value.

Goal 2: Preserve the rural-residential atmosphere in the area.

- Policy 1: Develop and adopt design standards to regulate new residential development and which maintains the rural-residential atmosphere in Alhambra Valley.
 - Policy 2: To the extent feasible, scenic features should be protected or maintained, either through land dedication to a public agency or through the granting of scenic or conservation easements.
 - Policy 3: High quality engineering of slopes shall be required to avoid soil erosion, downstream flooding, slope failure, loss of vegetative cover, high maintenance costs, property damages and damages to visual quality. Slopes in excess of 26 percent shall be developed to follow the natural contours of the land while development on slopes over 30 percent are prohibited.
 - Policy 4: In order to conserve the scenic beauty of Alhambra Valley, developers shall generally be required to restore the natural contours and vegetation of the land after grading and other land
-

disturbances. Public and private projects shall be designed to minimize damages to significant trees and other visual landmarks.

- Policy 5: Extreme topographic modification, such as filling in canyons or removing hilltops shall be avoided. Clustering and planned unit development approaches to development shall be encouraged. All future development plans, whether large-scale or small-scale, shall be based on identifying safe and suitable sites for buildings, roads and driveways.
- Policy 6: The construction of new structures on open hillsides, the top of scenic ridges or within 50 feet of the ridgeline shall be discouraged.
- Policy 7: Enhance and protect access to established scenic routes through the development of trails and other facilities.
- Policy 8: New projects shall be designed to blend in with the rural setting of Alhambra Valley as much as possible; the use of fire resistant materials shall be encouraged.
- Policy 9: New buildings which are proposed in highly visible areas, such as on hillsides, shall be sited, designed and landscaped so that supporting columns, piers and building undersides are not visually dominant.
- Policy 10: The use of scenic easements shall be encouraged to protect agricultural and park lands which abut land with urban land use designations.

G. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

- Policy 1: Ensure that any proposed general or specific plan amendments are sent in a timely fashion to neighboring jurisdictions for their review and comment.

III. PLAN ELEMENTS

A. The Urban Limit Line

The precise location of the Urban Limit Line (ULL) does not follow property lines in some areas. The line as it was approved by the voters was somewhat conceptual. This Specific Plan establishes the precise location of the Urban Limit Line in the Alhambra Valley area. The ULL generally runs along the boundaries of the General Plan land use designations, except with some minor variations, as shown in Figure 2.

For purposes of defining the maximum amount of future development which could occur within areas which are designated for residential development, this Specific Plan estimates that no more than 231 additional new housing units will be developed from the date of adoption of this plan.

Although the Specific Plan establishes this limit on new development, efforts to develop an infrastructure fee may require the need to revise or develop new projections to more accurately assess the amount of possible new development in the Specific Plan area and the study area covered by the Reliez Valley Task Force.

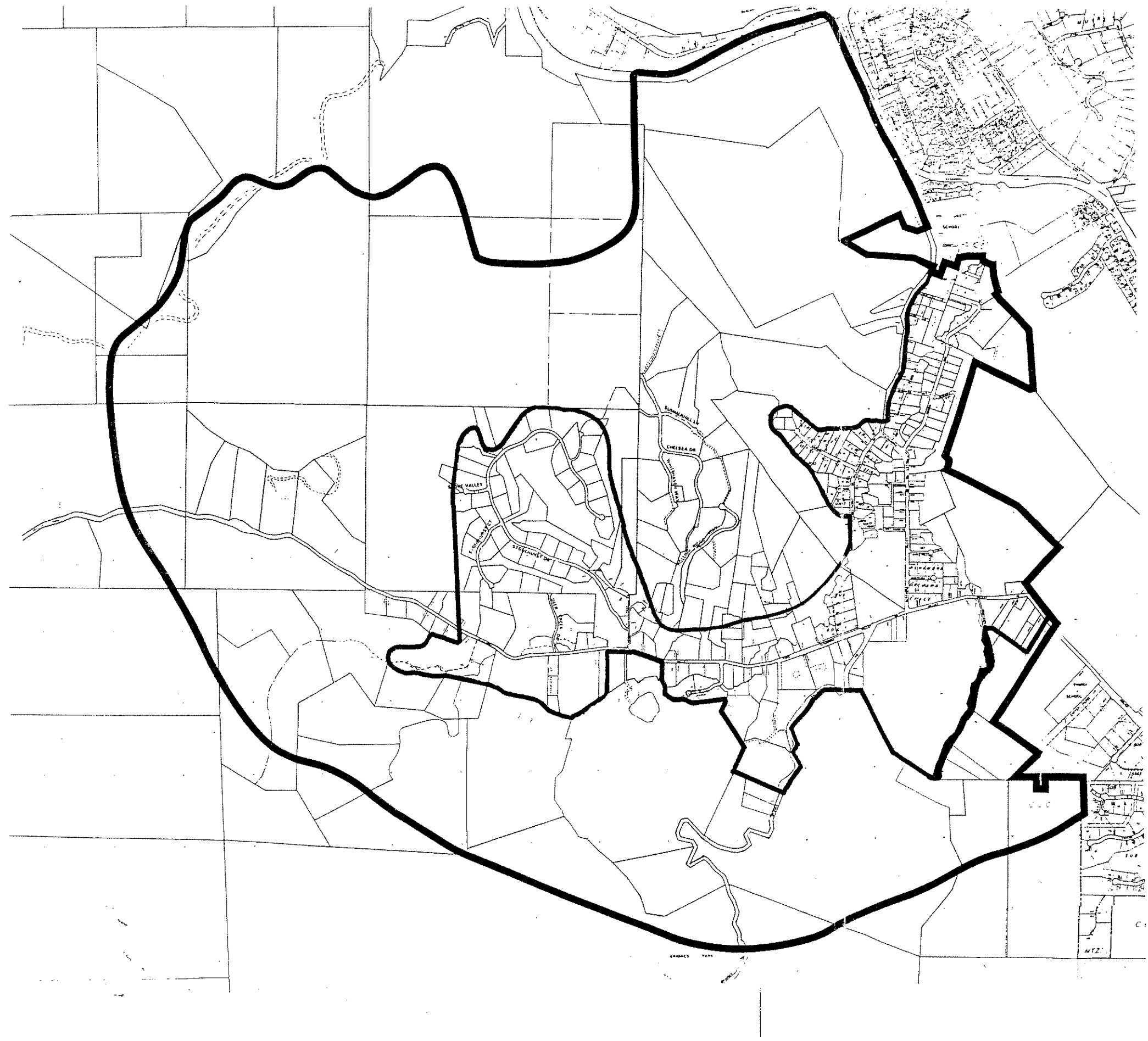
B. Specific Plan Land Use Element: Land Use Designations and Compatible Zoning Categories

Figure 3 shows the land use designations within the Specific Plan area. Specific Plan land use designations do not always follow property lines. A description of these categories is listed below along with compatible zoning designations.

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, VERY LOW DENSITY (SVL)

This designation has been applied to property generally located on either side of Alhambra Valley Road as the road turns east towards Richmond. This designation has also been applied to a portion of the Stonehurst residential development, north of Alhambra Valley Road. This designation allows a maximum of one single family unit per net acre. The minimum parcel size is 43,560 square feet according to the County General Plan

Compatible zoning designations for this General Plan land use category are Single Family Residential, R-40 (40,000 square feet net minimum parcel size); R-65 (65,000 square feet net minimum parcel size); R-100 (100,000 square feet net minimum parcel size); the Planned Unit District (P-1) and all Agricultural Districts (A-80; A-40; A-20; A-4; A-3; A-2).



URBAN LIMIT LINE





↑
NORTH
1" = 1500'

FIGURE 2

ALHAMBRA VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN LAND USE

↑
NORTH
1" = 1500'

LEGEND

-  AGRICULTURAL LANDS
-  PARKS & RECREATION
-  RESTRICTED OPEN SPACE
-  PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC
-  SINGLE FAMILY RES. - VERY LOW
-  SINGLE FAMILY RES. - LOW
-  PROTECTED CREEKBED - NATURAL
-  PROTECTED CREEKBED - PARTIALLY IMPROVED
-  * POTENTIAL PARKLAND ACQUISITION

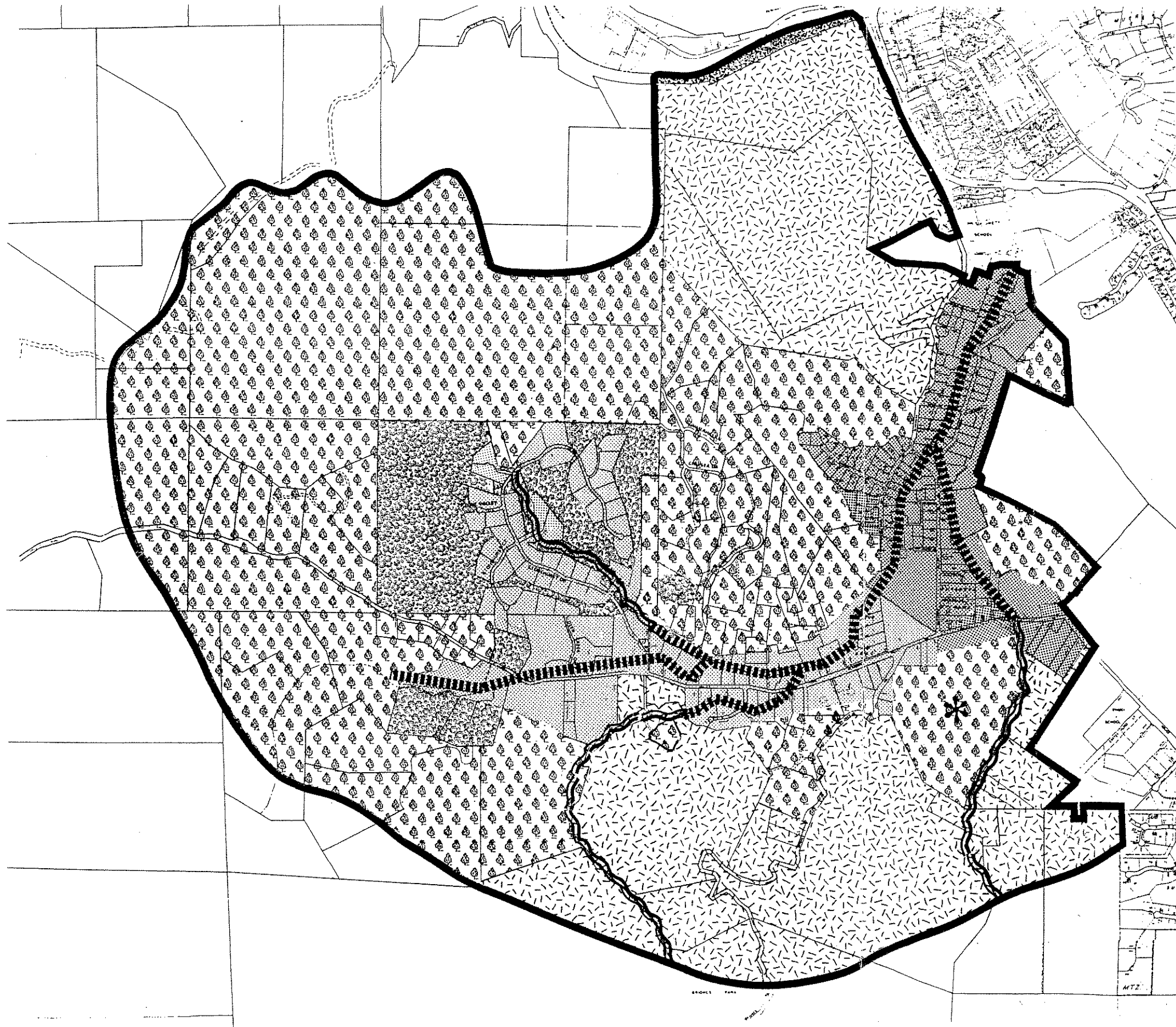


FIGURE 3

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, LOW DENSITY (SL)

While the County General Plan allows a density range between 1.0 - 2.9 units per net acre. This Specific Plan restricts new parcel sizes to 20,000 square feet or larger. Unique environmental characteristics of a parcel may warrant larger minimum lot sizes. This designation has been applied to lands on the valley floor along Reliez Valley Road and along either side of the northern leg of Alhambra Valley Road.

Compatible zoning designations for this General Plan land use category are R-20 (20,000 square feet minimum net parcel size), R-40, R-65, R-100, P-1 and all Agricultural districts.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS (AL)

This land use designation has primarily been applied to the privately-owned hillside lands in the Planning Area. The purpose of the Agricultural Land designation is to allow for agricultural and other types of open space uses. Lands designated Agricultural Lands shall be restricted to a maximum density on one lot per five net acres. All Agricultural zoning districts and the P-1 district are compatible with this designation. Some lands in the Specific plan area have an Agricultural Preserve (A-4) zoning designation and are also under Williamson Act Contracts. These lands are expected to remain in agricultural or other compatible use for the duration of the contracts, which is for a 10 year annually renewing time frame. Termination of contracts through the cancellation method shall be discouraged.

RESTRICTED OPEN SPACE (ROS)

This land use designation has been applied to lands for which future development rights have been deeded or are to be deeded to a public or private agency. This includes the areas which are shown as scenic easement on the approved Stonehurst project (Subdivision #7091) and other smaller areas which contain similar restrictions. The most appropriate use of Restricted Open Space areas involve resource management, such as establishing a "safety zone" around identified geological hazards. In some cases grazing may be permitted if consistent with the conditions of development approval. Other appropriate uses are low density, private recreation facilities for use by nearby residents.

All Agricultural zoning districts and the (P-1) are compatible with this designation. The construction of a residential or other urban structure, or approval of a subdivision that might allow the same is not compatible with this designation.

PARKS & RECREATION (PR)

The Parks and Recreation designation includes all publicly-owned East Bay Regional Park District and State of California land holdings. This designation is applied to the Briones Regional Park occupying most of the southern portion of the Planning Area and the southern portion of the John Muir Home Historical National Monument. This designation allows passive and active recreation-oriented uses. Subdivision of this land is inconsistent with this designation. All Agricultural zoning districts and the P-1 zoning district is compatible with this designation.

PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC (PS)

This designation has been used to reflect the Atchinson-Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad right-of-way which is located along the northern section of the planning area. Any zoning district would be compatible with this General Plan designation.

Overlay Designations

In addition to the land use designations which have just been described, the Specific Plan also establishes two overlay designations for the purposes of protecting creekbed area in the planning area.

The following designations identify natural, or substantially natural watercourses whose primary function is to convey run-off from surrounding lands to downstream locations. Besides drainage, the watercourses also support riparian habitat for the naturally occurring vegetation and wildlife, which in turn contribute to the scenic beauty and natural habitat within the Alhambra Valley.

These protected watercourse designations restrict the deliberate removal of riparian vegetation. Further, proposed drainage discharges into a protected watercourses are reviewed to minimize erosion of creekbanks and visual impacts. Two Creekbed categories are identified on the Specific Plan Land Use Map:

1. *Natural Creekbeds* - Creekbeds designated as "Natural" are watercourses which have not been altered in either form or habitat since the area was first settled. These creek segments show little evidence of creekbank erosion or engineered buttressing. This designation is intended to retain the existing creekbed form and riparian habitat.
2. *Partially-improved Creekbeds* - Creekbeds designated "Partially-improved" identify watercourses whose original natural form has been altered along some sections. Along these watercourses, some creekbanks have been buttressed to retard erosion. In some cases, drop structures have been installed in the bottom of channels. Nevertheless, many of the natural riparian features and scenic qualities associated with natural creekbeds are still intact. The intent of the "Partially-improved" designation is to retain and enhance the riparian habitat and scenic qualities of these creeks consistent with prudent drainage controls and protection of existing residential development.

The area within a designated setback area of the creekbed may not be used for lot-density calculations or for meeting minimum parcel size requirements for proposed subdivisions.

Conforming zoning categories for the Natural Creekbeds and Partially-improved Creekbeds designations include those districts which are compatible with the underlying land use designation which are described in the text above and on the Specific Plan land use map. The Specific Plan describes in further detail allowable, conditionally permitted and prohibited uses in Chapter IV of this document.

C. The Briones Hills Agricultural Preservation Area

The Specific Plan strongly supports the intent of the Briones Hills Agricultural Preservation Area agreement which was signed in 1988 by the County, the City of Martinez and seven other adjoining municipalities. That compact states that the jurisdictions voluntarily agree not to annex any lands within the 64 square mile area for the purposes of allowing urban development.

Approximately 30 percent of the Specific Plan area is encompassed by lands covered by the Briones Hills Agreement. The affected land is located on the west and northern extremes of the Specific Plan area (see Figure 5) and encompasses the Briones Regional Park; portion of John Muir Home Historical National Monument; and properties north and west of the Stonehurst subdivision which are designated as Parks and Recreation and Agricultural Lands by the Specific Plan land use map. Extension of Public Sewer and Water services into the Briones Hills Agricultural Preservation Area are inconsistent with the intent of the Briones Hills Agricultural Preservation Agreement.

BRIONES HILLS AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION AREA
WITHIN ALHAMBRA VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN AREA



↑
NORTH
1" = 1500'

LEGEND

-  BRIONES HILLS AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION AREA
 PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY

FIGURE 4

D. Circulation Element

Insofar as Alhambra Valley is situated on the fringe of the urbanized areas of central Contra Costa County, the principal mode of transportation within the Valley will continue to be the private vehicle. The road system is skeletal in form and relatively detached from the road systems of surrounding areas. For purposes of defining the road system function and design, the Specific Plan classifies three types of roadways which parallel the County General Plan categories which are shown on the Circulation Element Map (see Figure 5). These designations include:

- Arterials:** Arterials move traffic to and from freeways, expressways or collectors and are part of an integrated system of major through roads. This function is of county-wide or inter-city importance rather than serving local area traffic.
- Collectors:** Collectors are for internal traffic movement within a community, carrying traffic to arterials and between neighborhoods. They are low speed roadways that do not ordinarily carry a high proportion of through trips. Collectors may also serve to provide access to property. Access from abutting parcels in residential areas shall be discouraged. Driveways and parking may be restricted.
- Local Roads:** Local Roads are low speed, low-capacity roadways that provide circulation within neighborhoods and access to adjacent land. Street design standards and layouts are used to discourage through traffic movements, avoid high travel speeds and volumes; and minimize neighborhood noise and safety impacts. Curbside parking is usually allowed.

In 1989, the County participated in a joint traffic study with the Cities of Lafayette, Martinez and Pleasant Hill. The study examined existing and projected traffic levels within the Planning Area, and to the south on Reliez Valley Road. The study indicated that existing average daily traffic volumes on Alhambra Valley and Reliez Roads were approximately 4,300 vehicles per day.

The study also projected future traffic levels based on a review of land use policies of each jurisdiction and anticipated development outside the study area. The study concluded the existing collector road system is basically adequate to handle project traffic but that safety improvements would be needed in the form of drainage improvements, shoulder widening, resurfacing and provision of turning lanes where needed. The recommended actions to mitigate the impact of added traffic from development are included below as programs to be implemented as part of this Specific Plan:

1. Alhambra Valley and Reliez Roads are to function as parkways consisting of two travel lanes. Safety and related improvements to these roadways shall be made which preserve the rural-residential character of the corridor. Proposed improvements would include construction of drainage, road shoulder, and separate, adjoining trail improvements; and turning lanes; repaving/reconstruction of the existing roadbed as necessary; and landscape improvements.

[illegible]

LEGEND

FIGURE 5

2. Alhambra Road Improvements - The road width for the northern leg of Alhambra Valley Road and Reliez Road shall generally be 32 feet in width and shall be designed as shown on the attached cross-section (see Figure 6). Road improvement priority should be given to the continuous segment of Alhambra Valley Road and Alhambra Avenue from the Reliez Valley Road intersection to the Santa Fe Railroad Trestle. In areas which are already developed, it may not be feasible to acquire an 80 foot right-of-way. In these instances, the right-of-way may be as narrow as 60 feet and provide those improvements which are shown in Figure 6.

The improvements include travel lane and shoulders, trails and drainage facilities. The right-of-way for Alhambra Valley Road (both north and west legs) shall generally be 80 feet in width. Right-of-way shall be preserved and acquired as necessary. There are many heritage quality trees along Alhambra Valley Road. All road improvements shall attempt to preserve these resources.

3. Reliez Valley Road Improvements - Reliez Valley Road represents the eastern section of the primary travel corridor through the planning area. The right-of-way width for the segment of Reliez Valley Road within the Specific Plan area shall be approximately 84 feet. Safety and related improvements to these roadways shall be made which preserve the rural-residential character of the corridor. Proposed improvements would include construction of drainage, road shoulders; separated trail improvements; turning lanes; repaving/reconstruction of the existing roadbed as necessary; and landscape improvements. Like Alhambra Valley Road, Reliez Valley Road contains many heritage quality trees. All efforts shall be made to preserve them.

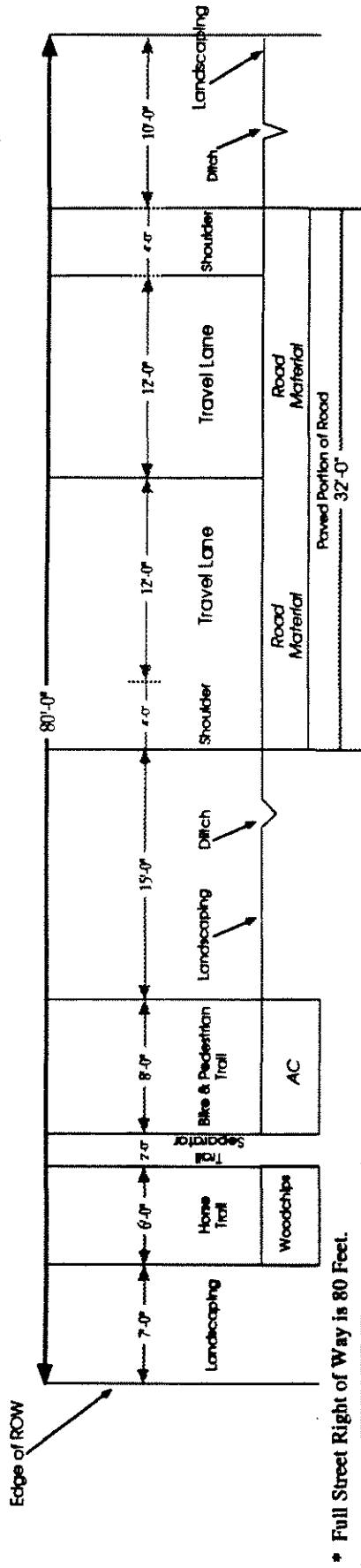
In these instances, the right-of-way may be as narrow as 60 feet and provide those improvements which are shown in Figure 6. The improvements include travel lane and shoulders, trails and drainage facilities.

4. Construction activity associated with development projects within the Planning Area shall be regulated as follows:
 - a. Use of Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Road by load-bearing construction trucks shall be minimized.
 - b. Damage to Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads which is caused by construction activity shall be mitigated.
 - c. Noise and dust impacts generated by construction activity shall be mitigated.
5. Minimize driveways and access points onto Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads.

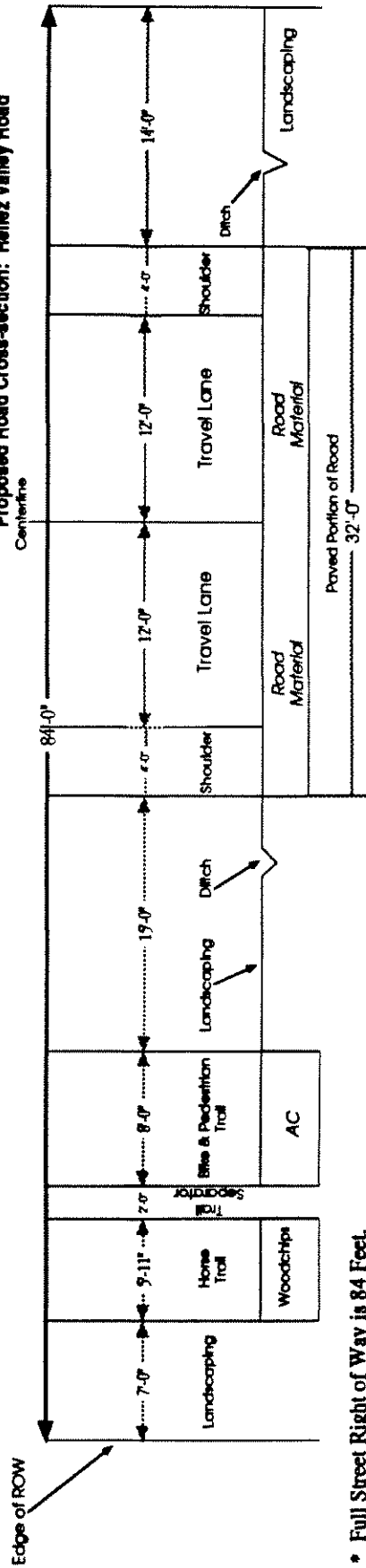
ALHAMBRA VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN - FIGURE 6

Preferred Road Cross-sections

Proposed Road Cross-section: Alhambra Valley Road



Proposed Road Cross-section: Rialto Valley Road



E. Scenic Routes Element

The Plan designates Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads as scenic routes as shown in Figure 7. Scenic routes provide a dramatic viewing experience of the surrounding area for residents and those traveling through the valley. As part of this Scenic Routes Element this Specific Plan designates "Valley Gateways" at three locations along these scenic routes. A "Valley Gateway" is an area which will help frame the driver's perception of the area as the car passes through the area. The intent of the Specific Plan is to preserve the existing views from these gateways.

Three points have been selected because they are located at the "entrances" or "gateways" to Alhambra Valley and are identified as follows and shown on Figure 7:

- a. Alhambra Avenue at Alhambra Valley Road;
- b. Alhambra Valley Road at Reliez Valley Road; and
- c. Alhambra Valley Road at Vaca Creek Road.

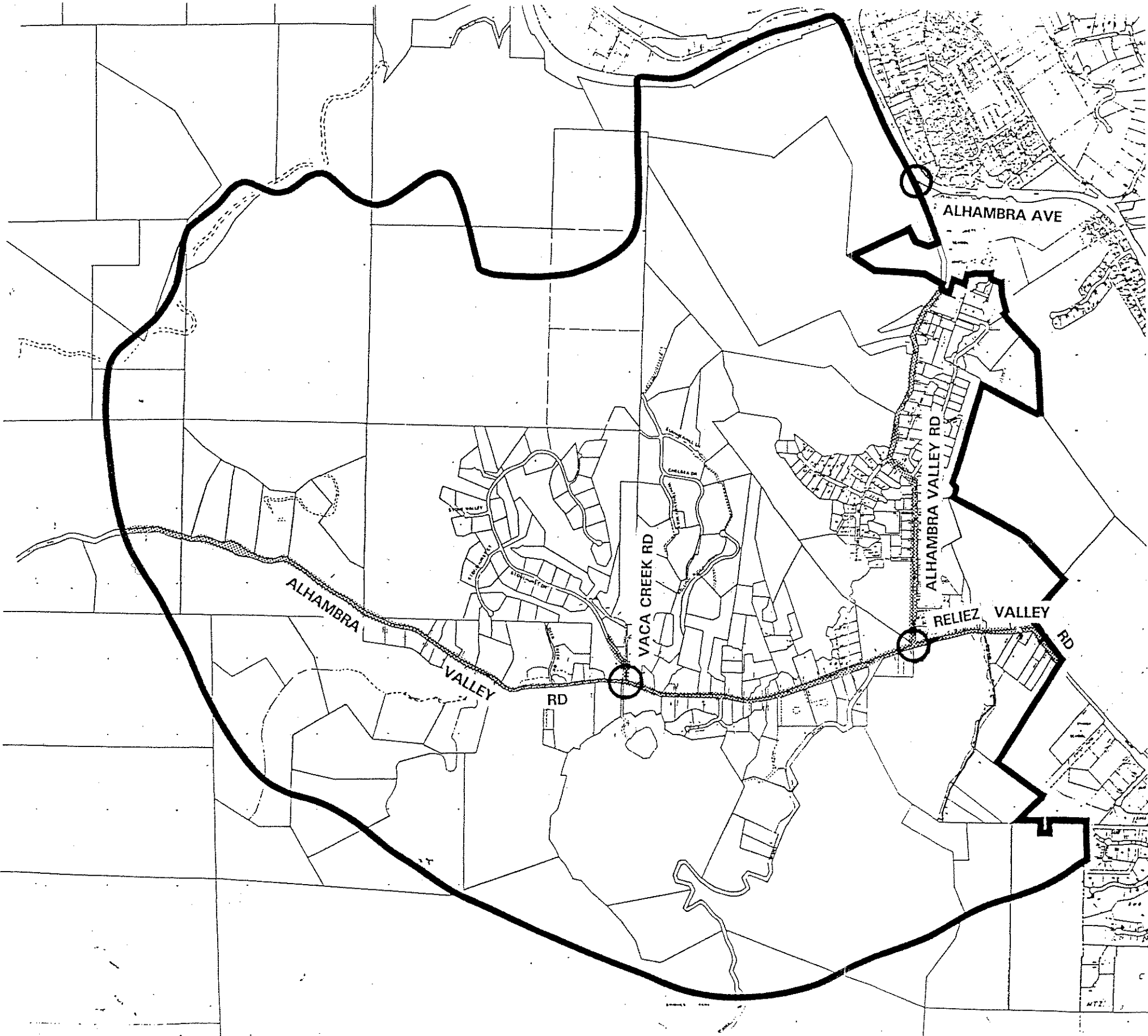
F. Recreation and Historical Structures Element

The Specific Plan supports the expansion of park and recreation facilities to serve the growing Central County population. New acquisitions are encouraged to fill out both Briones Regional Park and the John Muir National Historic Site. Acquisition of the land surrounded by the John Muir National Historic Site is specifically encouraged by this Plan. When land development applications are processed adjacent to these facilities, land dedications may be appropriate to create a better park boundary.

Figure 8 provides a public trail system which ties into other proposed trails of the County, the City of Martinez and/or the East Bay Regional Park District. Trails provide a linear corridor that is primarily intended for pedestrian, equestrian and bicycle use. The trail plan focuses on non-motor oriented facilities in order to maintain the tranquil setting for its users and nearby residents.

The Specific Plan calls for the protection of the Altamarino Adobe and the Stenzel family graveyard. These sites are shown in Figure 8. Any development proposal which are processed adjacent to these facilities shall be designed to provide for the enhancement and preservation of these resources.

SCENIC ROUTES & VALLEY GATEWAYS
IN
ALHAMBRA VALLEY



↑
NORTH
1" = 1500'

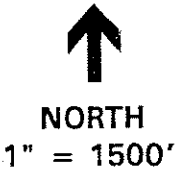
LEGEND

SCENIC ROUTES

VALLEY GATEWAYS

FIGURE 7

PUBLIC TRAILS & HISTORIC SITES
ALHAMBRA VALLEY



STRENTZEL FAMILY GRAVEYARD

ALTAMARINO ADOBE

LEGEND

- BICYCLING, HIKING, & RIDING TRAIL
- HIKING & RIDING TRAIL

FIGURE 8

IV. LAND USE REGULATIONS

A. Preserving the Physical and Aesthetic Characteristics of Alhambra Valley

Alhambra Valley should remain a rural residential area which supports a low-density housing pattern and which encourages the retention of existing agricultural activities as feasible economic pursuits. The Specific Plan acknowledges the steep terrain and scenic attributes of the valley and because of these characteristics, new development should complement the existing environment in terms of form, scale and physical appearance. Structures should complement the existing topography to the greatest extent possible while reducing visual impacts of such development through the use of landscaping and siting techniques.

In order to protect the aesthetic resources, to preserve the many natural features of Alhambra Valley and to achieve the goals and objectives set forth by this Specific Plan, a set of regulatory devices which affect the location, density and appearance of new development are proposed in the form of hillside development policies and design guidelines. These devices complement the existing guidelines for hillside development which are found in the County General Plan. However, this Specific Plan establishes a stricter standard than the County General Plan in the area of slope protection. Whereas the General Plan calls for the protection of hillside areas which exceed 26 percent slope, this Specific Plan prohibits any residential development on lands which exceed 30 percent slope.

The primary purpose of the regulations is to control development of hillside areas and to illustrate the preferred appearance of engineered slopes and new buildings. Implicit in the design guidelines is the preferred siting of new structures as they may relate to the existing natural and built environment. This includes siting of structures to avoid ridgelines, significant trees and vegetation and design of proposed roadways.

California State Planning law requires that no tentative subdivision map may be approved and no zoning ordinance may be adopted unless it is consistent with this Specific Plan. All proposed subdivisions shall be reviewed for consistency with Specific Plan policies and design guidelines. Subdivisions which are approved prior to the adoption of the Specific Plan are generally exempt from Specific Plan policies for purposes of recording a final map or parcel map. However, subsequent structural and grading proposals are subject to review for compliance with the design guidelines which are established through this Specific Plan and presented in Chapter 6 of this plan document.

B. Development Regulations

Use permit applications for property in the unincorporated part of the County are required to comply with the uses specified in this Plan. Additionally, all development applications in the unincorporated areas shall receive the review and approval of the Zoning Administrator for conformance with the Specific Plan prior to the issuance of building permits to ensure compatibility with the Design Guidelines of this Plan.

1. Hillside Properties

The primary purpose of the hillside development policies is to control development on hillside areas for the purposes of avoiding potential geotechnical hazards and for preserving the scenic view from the valley floor. Recognizing these concerns, the Specific Plan adopts the following regulations:

- a. The construction of new structures on the top of scenic ridges or within 50 feet of the ridgeline shall be discouraged.
- b. When development is permitted to occur on hillsides, structures shall be located in a manner which is sensitive to available natural resources and constraints.
- c. Hilltops, ridges, rock outcroppings, mature stands of trees and other natural features shall be considered for preservation at the time that any development applications are reviewed.
- d. Any new development shall be encouraged to generally conform with natural contours to avoid excessive grading.
- e. Generally, residential density shall decrease as slope increases, especially above a 15 percent slope.
- f. New water tanks that would harm the visual quality of a scenic ridge shall be buried, camouflaged or screened to mitigate their impacts.
- g. The Design Guidelines in Chapter 6 shall be followed to provide better guidance for development, particularly as it relates to grading, massing and relationship of structures to ridgelines and other natural features.
- h. Significant hillsides with slopes over 26 percent or more shall be considered unsuitable for types of development which require extensive grading or other land disturbance. High quality engineering design and construction techniques are required to ensure that any development which is allowed in these areas are both aesthetically and environmentally sensitive. Additionally, any development on slopes which exceed 30 percent slope is prohibited.
- i. Visual analysis may be required as part of the permit approval process to better determine the effects of new development, grading and landscaping on the built and natural environment, including parklands.

2. *Creek Setbacks and Creek Preservation*

Development applications must still comply with all provisions and policies contained in the County General Plan, especially those related to riparian habitat found in Chapter 8 of that document.

- a. All development applications which include a portion of a creek within the site shall be required to provide, as part of the development application submittal, a "Creek Preservation and Enhancement Plan," which provides the following: 1) Visual materials and a narrative which describes existing creek conditions; 2) a description of the methods of protecting and enhancing the creek resource; 3) scaled drawings which show a cross-section of the existing creekbed and creekbank; 4) scaled drawing which show any proposed improvements to the creekbed and creekbank; and 5) a creek re-vegetation plan.

Any revegetation of creeks should use native riparian vegetation from the local seed stock. The overall Creek Preservation and Enhancement Plan is subject to the approval by any other agency with review authority which may include Contra Costa County, the County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the State Department of Fish and Game. The State Fish and Game Department will review proposals for purposes of issuing Streambed Alteration Permits.

- b. This Specific Plan does not allow the creek setback area to be included in any calculation which determines a lot's net parcel size or for meeting minimum lot size standards for any residentially-planned designation.
- c. The appropriate width of the creek setback will be determined as part of the review of the tentative subdivision map. The creek setback width shall be a minimum of 50 feet, but may be expanded by the County Community Development Department if necessary to protect the creek or its adjacent riparian habitat.

3. *Agricultural & Urban Land Use Compatibility*

County General Plan policies acknowledge potential conflicts between agricultural and suburban uses. It is the policy of the Specific Plan to generally give priority to maintaining the agricultural uses found within the Specific Plan area. New development shall be governed by the following guidelines:

- a. Require adequate setbacks for any non-agricultural structures which are located within or adjacent to cultivated agriculture.
 - b. Where a discretionary development permit is sought within or adjacent to areas designated for agricultural use, reduce potential conflicts by the creation of a natural or constructed buffers between the agricultural and urban use. Such buffers must occur on the parcel for which the discretionary permit is sought.
 - c. Where unmitigatable conflicts exist between agricultural and residential uses, priority shall generally be given to maintaining the agricultural use.
-

- d. In grazing areas, include within buffers fencing that will effectively contain grazing animals, keep domestic dogs out of grazing areas and deter trespassing.
- e. Require an agricultural notification statement in the property deeds for all new residential lots created in or adjacent to planned agricultural districts. The statement shall inform owners about allowed adjacent agricultural practices.

4. Allowable Land Uses within the Specific Plan Area

Land uses within the Specific plan area shall be limited to residential, agricultural, equestrian, recreational and open space uses. Any interpretation of these land uses will be made by the County Planning Commission. Land uses in the unincorporated part of the Specific Plan area shall be restricted to the uses allowed in the R-20; R-40; R-65; R-100; P-1 or all Agricultural Districts except where those uses conflict with the provisions stated below.

Permitted Land Uses

The land uses which are permitted as a matter of right are:

- Single family dwellings, accessory structures and auxiliary uses.
- Large family day care homes.
- Public-operated parks and recreation facilities.
- Private greenhouses, gardens and orchards.
- The raising of poultry, rabbits and other animals where such animals are primarily for the use of residents of the premises upon which such animals are kept and not for resale or distribution.
- The keeping of livestock, per the underlying zoning designation.
- Publicly-owned buildings and structures.

Conditionally Permitted Land Uses

The following uses may be permitted with approval of the County Zoning Administrator subject to certain conditions.

- Publicly-owned buildings and structures.
- Home occupations;

- Commercial greenhouses;
- Second-family dwelling units provided the lot meets minimum parcel size requirement for the corresponding zoning district; in residentially-designated areas, second dwelling units shall be subordinate in scale and architecturally harmonious with the principal residence.
- Child care centers;
- Horse-riding academies, horse riding instruction and commercial stables; and
- Kennels.

Prohibited Uses

While the following uses may be conditionally permitted in the County's single family residential or agricultural zoning districts, they are not considered appropriate uses in the Specific Plan area.

- Commercial nurseries (except for Christmas tree farms);
 - Second-family units greater than 1,000 square feet in size.
 - Medical and dental offices.
 - Churches and religious institutions.
 - Private schools.
 - Commercial radio/television receiving and transmitting facilities.
 - Hospitals, eleemosynary and philanthropic institutions and convalescent homes.
5. *Home Designs* - New home designs shall blend in with the semi-rural character of the area. Buildings on hillsides should complement the topography of the site. Exterior building materials of wood, wood shingles and brick are preferred and exterior colors should be earth tone colors. Bright colors should be avoided. Structures shall comply with the design guidelines found in Chapter V.
 6. *Non-residential Structures* - Agricultural and equestrian structures must comply with the development standards of the A-2, General Agriculture, zoning district.
 7. *Protection of Property Rights* - To protect property owners with agricultural or equestrian facilities, new home buyers should be notified that these activities exist in the area and that there are certain impacts that some people may find objectionable associated with these activities. New homeowners shall
-

acknowledge the right of adjacent property owners to continue those uses by signing a document to this effect which will be recorded with the deed.

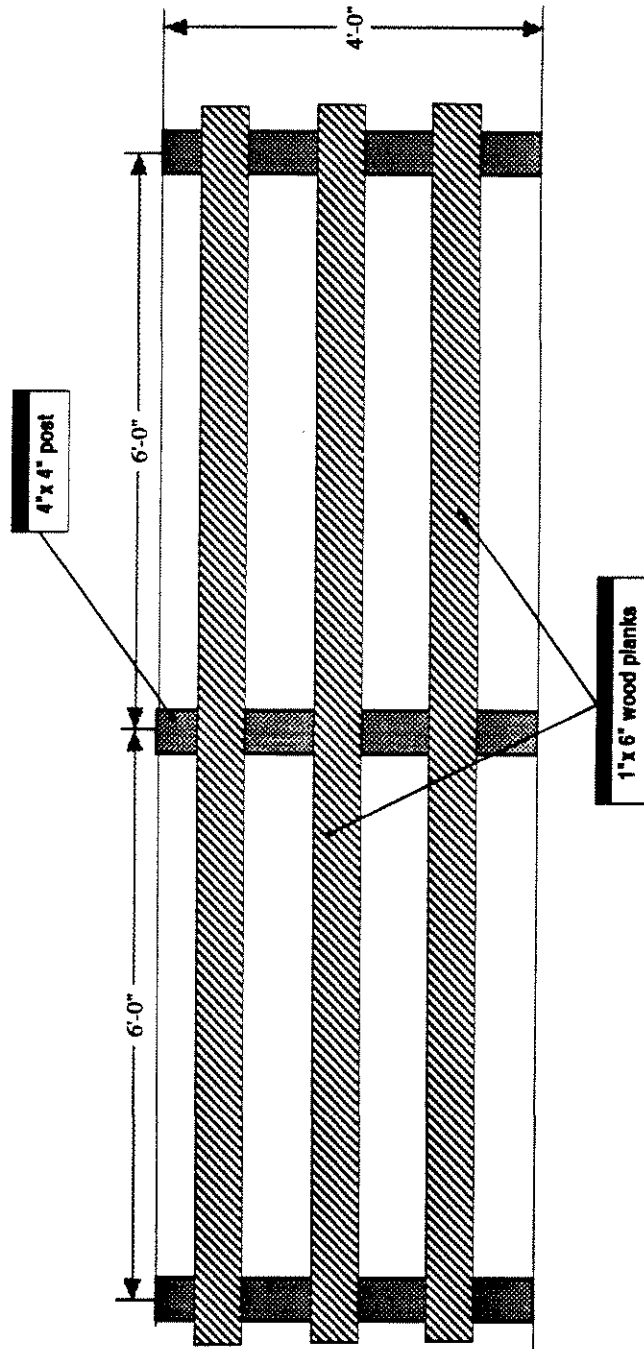
8. **Grading** - Grading should be minimized in the Specific Plan area, particularly on hillsides and along natural creeks. All projects proposed on parcels greater than five acres are required to obtain a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit which is issued by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). Erosion control plans shall be submitted as part of any development application.
9. **Public Utilities** - All new utilities must be placed underground. New residential development shall be connected to a public sewer, a public water supply or provide a septic system which meets the standards of the County Health Department. All new residential development shall also provide on-site storm drainage and shall pay a fee for off-site drainage improvements, if required.
10. **Remodeling and Additions to Existing Structures** - To the extent feasible, permits for remodeling shall be in conformity with the goals and objectives of this plan pertaining to the Design Guidelines established by this Plan. The County Permit Assistance Counter staff shall review all remodeling permits for conformity with the intent of this Specific Plan.
11. **Scenic Route Tree Planting** - As a way to enhance the aesthetic and scenic qualities along the Alhambra Valley/Reliez Valley Road (AVRD/RVRD) Scenic Corridor, new subdivision shall be required to plant along their road frontage new specimen trees according to the following:
 - a. Beginning at either end of the parcel's frontage, trees should be a minimum 50 foot intervals;
 - b. Trees shall be a minimum size 24" boxed Live Oaks; and
 - c. Shall be located approximately 10 feet from the road shoulder area.

12. **Fencing**

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| FRONT YARD: | New fencing up to four feet in height is allowed at the front property boundary and within the front yard setback. Fencing shall be an open-rail design as shown in Figure 9. |
| REAR AND SIDE YARDS: | Solid board fencing and walks alongside and rear property boundaries are to be discouraged in cases where an agricultural use is adjacent to proposed development; efforts shall be made to ensure that appropriate fencing and buffers are provided that best suit that agricultural activity, with reasonable limits. To minimize visual impacts of perimeter lot fencing, fencing on slopes greater than 15 percent shall be open rail or wire. Barbed wire may be used to keep grazing animals from wandering into residential areas. |

ALHAMBRA VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN - FIGURE 9

Typical Open Fence Section



Scale: 0.5" = 1'

V. DESIGN GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been prepared for the Alhambra Valley Specific Plan. They are intended to provide a framework for high quality residential development that will complement and be compatible with the existing residential community in the Valley. The guidelines have been developed from information and decisions made by the review of the Alhambra Valley Specific Plan Committee and County Planning commission. These guidelines express the desired landscape and architectural character for future residential development in the valley. The intent of these design guidelines is to provide the County and the existing Valley Community with the necessary assurances that future residential development will attain the level of quality desired by the Valley Community.

These guidelines are also intended to serve as design criteria for use by planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers and builders, and to provide guidance for the County planning staff and the County Planning Commission when reviewing future residential development proposals, or remodeling of existing residences. These guidelines are also intended to provide a viable framework for clear direction which will achieve the Specific Plan's goal of quality residential development without limiting the residential design creativity.

The guidelines are not meant to discourage unique and inventive design solutions, nor are they iron-clad rules. Deviations from the guidelines should be for good reason and the result should be one that will enrich the various patterns of the Alhambra Valley.

The County shall require the establishment of a Design Review approval process for all development proposals of significance within the Planning Area. The Design Review process shall encompass all new single family residences; remodeling of existing residences which involve an addition of 50% or more to the existing gross floor area; and proposed grading involving the movement of 1,000 cubic yards or more of soil material. During the Design Review process the following site planning, building design and landscape guidelines shall be utilized.

The Design Guidelines have two principal goals: to reduce the effective visual bulk of development and to reduce the environmental impact of development. Both goals are to be achieved by following several design principals. The goals and principles are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I

**SUMMARY OF DESIGN GUIDELINES GOALS & PRINCIPLES
FOR THE ALHAMBRA VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN**

GOAL 1 - REDUCE EFFECTIVE BULK

Principals

1. Cut building into hillside.
2. Terrace building using slope.
3. Reduce effective mass with vertical and horizontal articulation.
4. Follow hillside contours.
5. Follow contours with horizontal elements.
6. Avoid downhill cantilevers.
7. Avoid large retaining walls.
8. Use materials to reduce bulk.
9. Use underground spaces.
10. Avoid single form solutions.

GOAL 2 - REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Principals

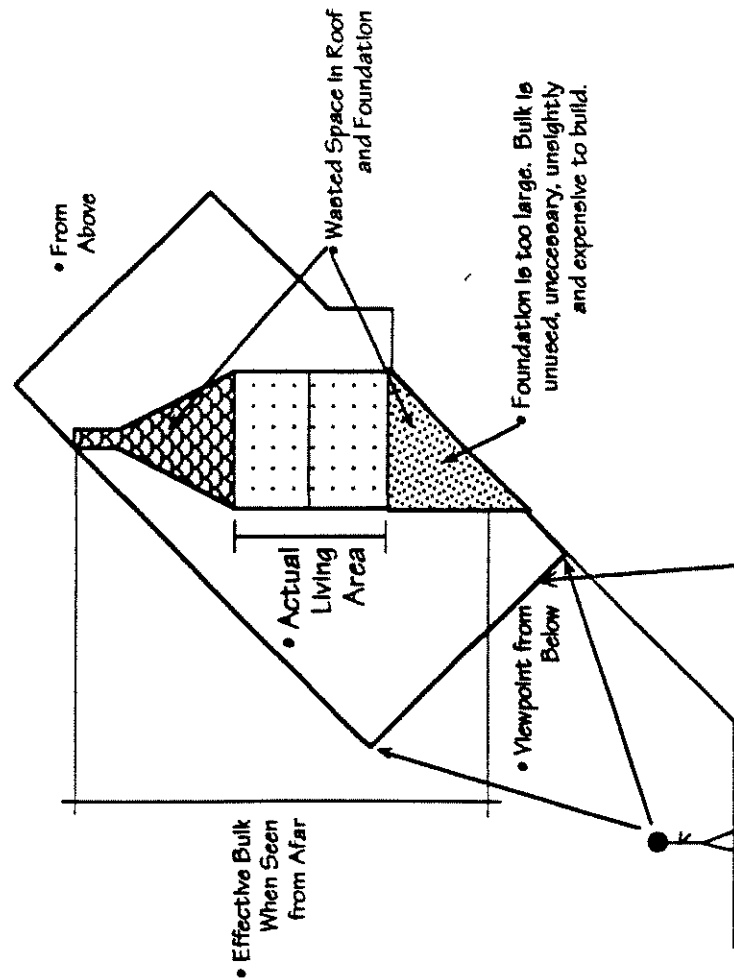
1. Use form and materials which blend with texture of environment.
 2. Do not use large expanses of single material.
 3. Use native materials wherever possible.
 4. Use non-reflective materials.
 5. Screen foundations and underside of structures.
 6. Make the landscape work for you.
 - a. Landscape with foresight.
 - b. Use natural and planned landscape.
 - c. Use earth formations to minimize impact.
 - d. Use native drought-resistant plants.
 7. Avoid sprawling plans.
 8. Site building to avoid prominence.
 9. Height limits.
 - a. Limit.
 - b. Variances.
-

10. *Protection of Ridgeline View* - Design of new residential structures should be located and designed so as to minimize the obstruction of any ridge silhouette as viewed from scenic routes on the valley floor.
 11. *Drainage* - Each building site should be graded so that concentrated water caused by improvements do not flow onto an adjacent property, but instead, is directed into a natural drainage channel, street or storm drainage facility.
 12. *Fences* - Fences should be designed and located so that they do not block vehicle and pedestrian sight lines and so that they are compatible with the design of the residential building and are aesthetically attractive.
 13. *Roofs* - All roofs on new structures shall be of non-combustible materials and achieve a Class "A" rating or better.
 14. *Exterior Lighting* - Both construction and permanent exterior lighting should be designed to eliminate glare and annoyance to adjacent property owners, passerby and vehicular traffic. Lighting should be shielded and directed downward. Lamps should be low wattage and have an incandescent light color.
 15. *Erosion Control* - Landscape plans should include appropriate planting to repair, reseed and/or replant all grading cuts to prevent erosion.
 16. *Driveways* - The maximum slope of new residential driveways should not exceed 25%; all driveways with a slope of 20% or more shall be constructed with grooved concrete. Driveways should be designed to follow as closely as practical to the natural contours of the property and to provide safe access, minimal grading and least amount of retaining walls as practical.
 17. *Siting of Leachfields* - Placement of leachfields for proposed tentative subdivision map applicants shall be limited to natural slopes of 20% or less.
 18. *Interior Sprinklers* - All new residences may be equipped with interior sprinkler systems to aid in the suppression of fires. The use of fire retardant materials is encouraged.
 19. *Drought-Tolerant Landscaping* - Landscaping for new residences shall comply with the County policy on Water Conservation Landscaping. The County policy cross-references the guidelines developed by the East Bay Municipal Utility District. Turf areas shall be restricted to a maximum of 25% of the total planting area. Automatic irrigation controls with moisture sensing devices for turf areas are required. Low volume irrigation systems shall be required for non-turf areas.
-

GOAL 1: To reduce effective visual bulk of a structure and to avoid monumental and excessively large dwellings.

Structures stand out prominently on hills when seen from a distance or from below. Most hillside structures cannot be screened effectively until trees grow to maturity - a process which takes many years.

NO - Siting of structure enlarges viewshed from below.



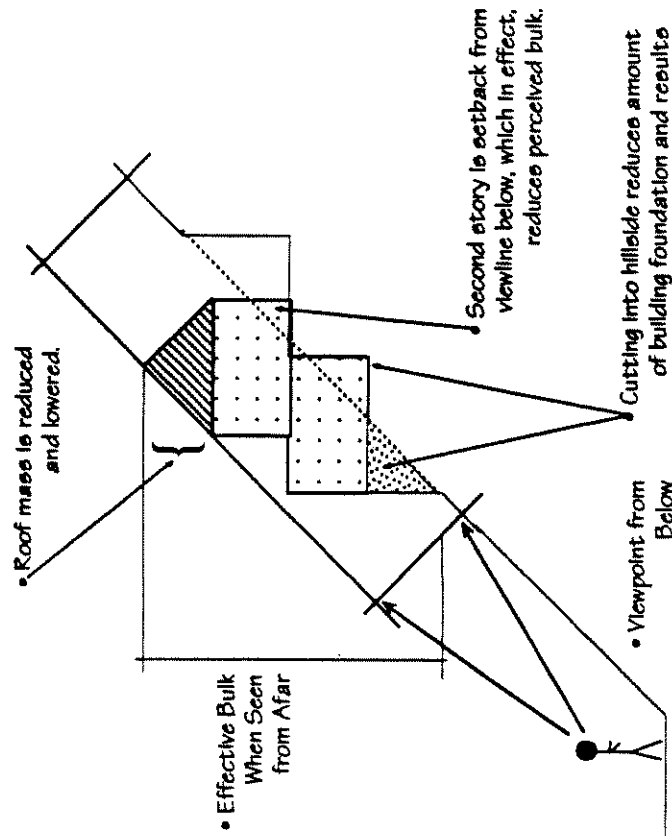
Note: This is how bulk, not height, is measured and perceived from below.

Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines Figure: G1-P1

Principal 1: Cut building into hillside to reduce effective visual bulk.

- expose maximum of a half story (≈ 5 feet) of foundation to view in elevation;
- expose maximum of a half story of roof to elevation.

YES - same amount of living space redesigned reduces viewshed from below..

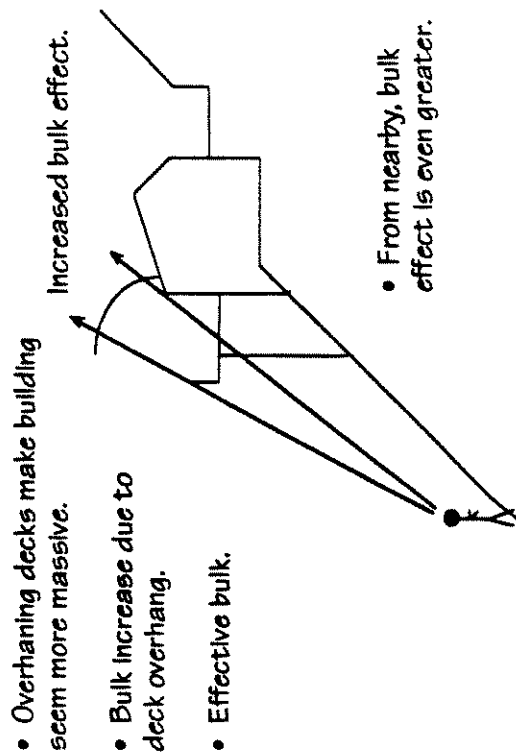


These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

Principal 2: Terrace building using the slope. Use roofs of lower levels for the deck open space of the upper levels.

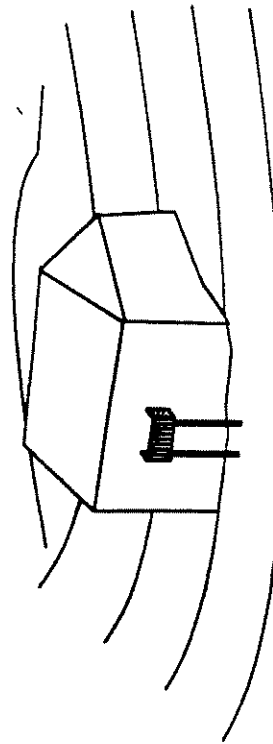
12 foot wide decks (minimum) needed to effectively break up mass.

NO



NO

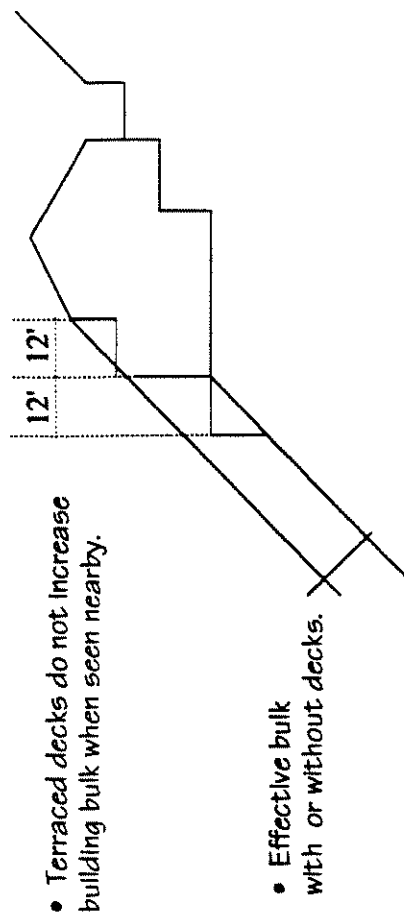
Building stuck up in the air stands out on the hillside.



Avoid decks hanging from the downhill side with long pole supports.

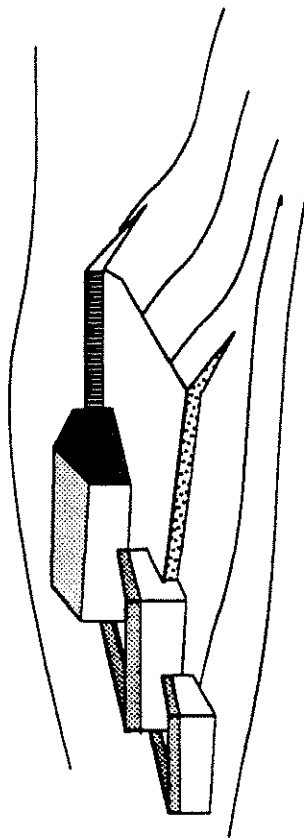
Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines
Figure: G1-P2

YES



YES

Building correctly fits into the ground and minimizes effect on the hillside.



Use roof decks, low levels decks and side of building decks.

These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

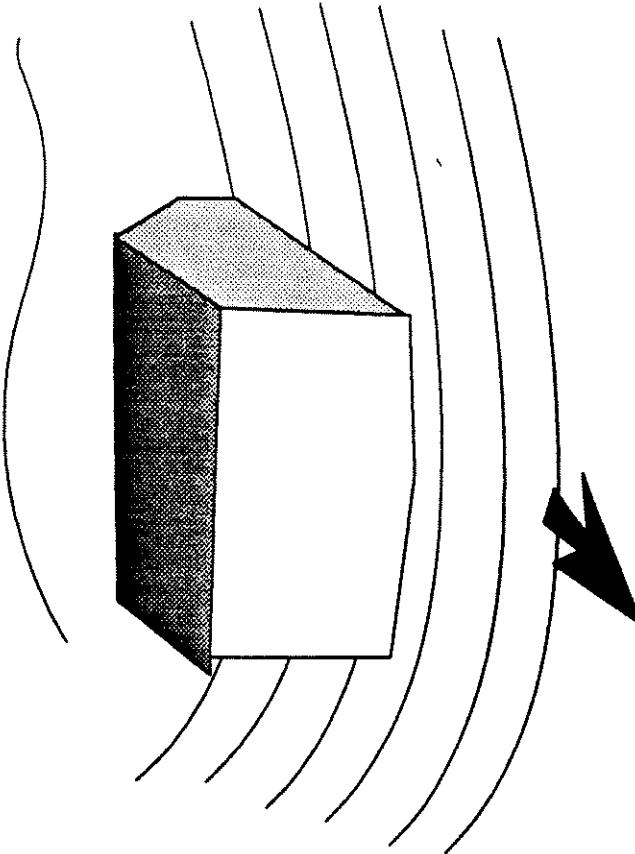
Principal 3: Avoid large expanses of any material in a single plane. On downhill elevations, break up building masses with horizontal and vertical elements.

Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines
Figure: G1-P3

Suggested Deck Standards: Minimum deck setback: 12 feet; Maximum vertical height: 10 feet; Maximum horizontal width: 30 feet.

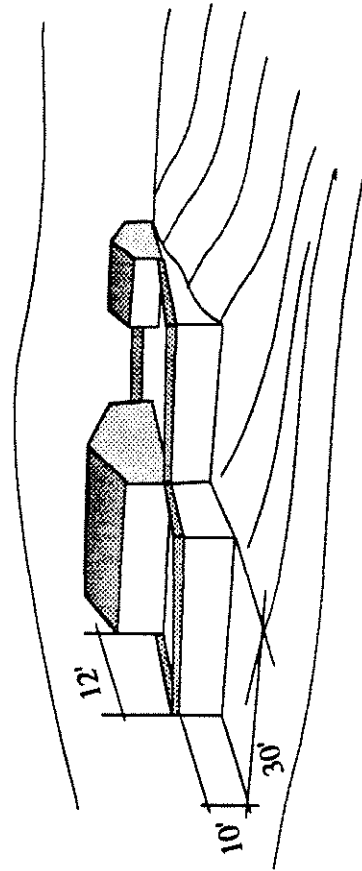
NO

- Large single plane downhill increases visual bulk.



YES

- Breaking up building mass reduces visual bulk. Deck elements must be large enough, however, to be effective.



- Minimum deck setback: 12 feet
- Maximum vertical height: 10 feet
- Maximum horizontal width: 30 feet.

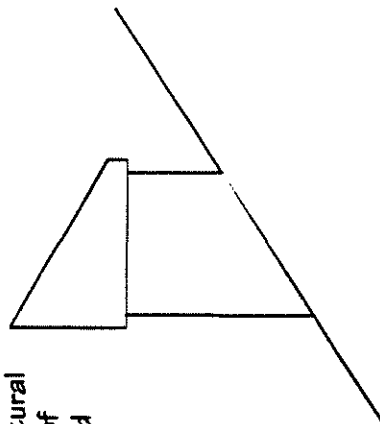
These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

Principal 4: Avoid large expanses of any material in a single plane. On downhill elevations, break up building masses with horizontal and vertical elements.

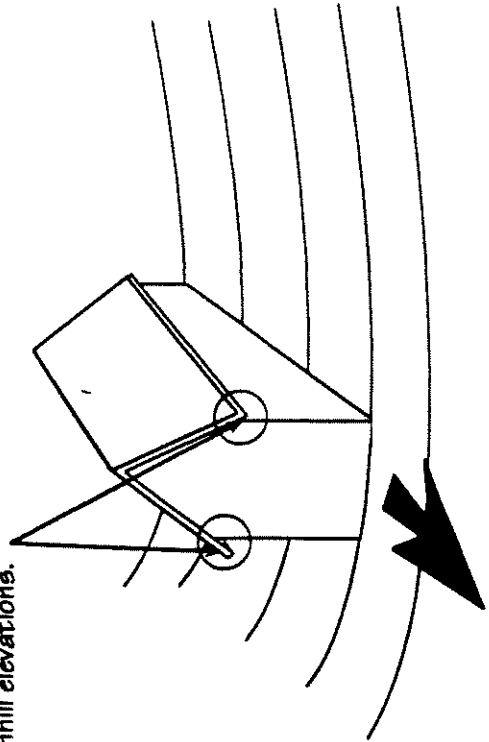
Occasionally, a portion of the structure can "go against the grain" of a slope for a particular reason and in moderation.

NO

- Angular forms which slope in the opposite direction to the natural slope destroys relationship of hillside and building mass and increases effective bulk.



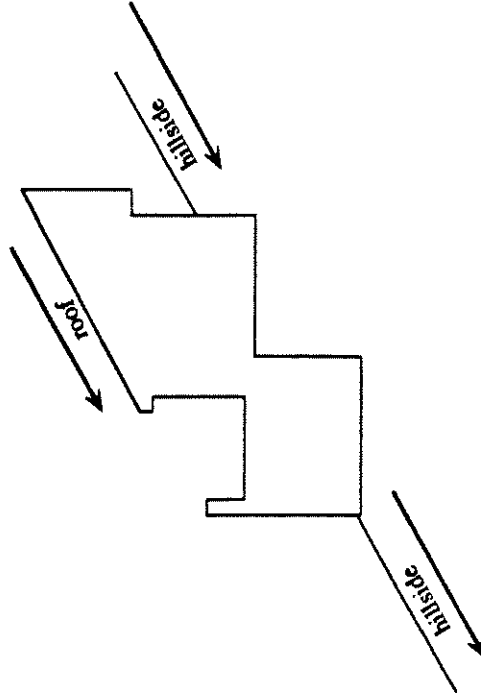
- Avoid large gable ends on downhill elevations.



Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines Figure: G1-P4

YES

- Roof slope approximates that of the natural slope of the hillside and follows its direction. The building follows the ground form better.



These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

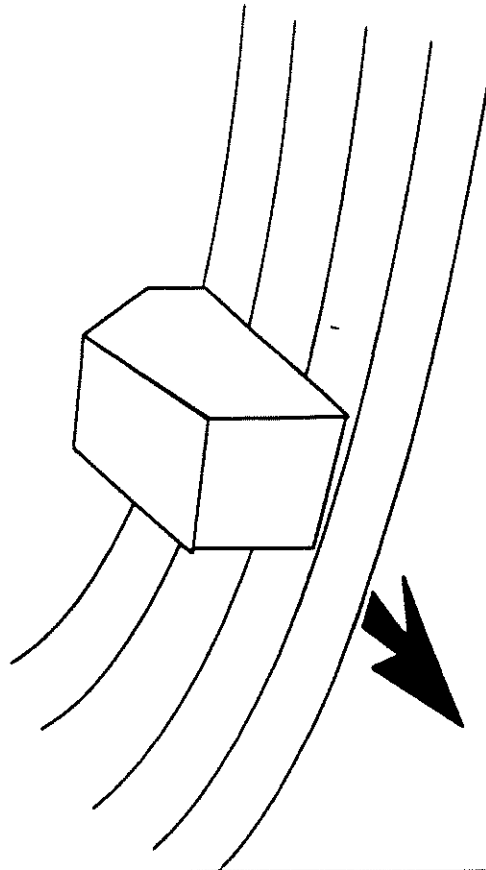
Principal 5: Follow the hillside contours with horizontal building elements to better integrate the structure into the site.

Suggestions: Do not use more than two-story high elements without major horizontal articulation

**Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines /
Figure: G1-P5**

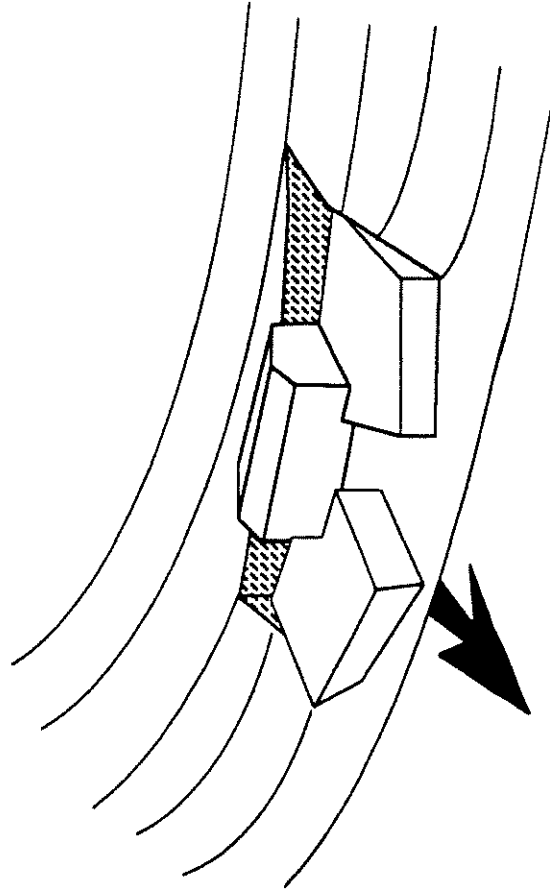
NO

- Building stands out as a major object.



YES

- Building mass follows contours and flows with the site.



These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

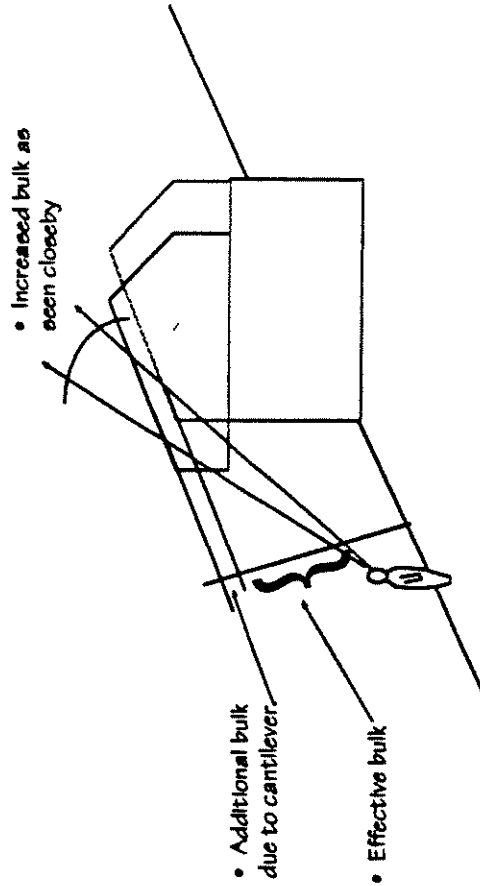
Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines Figure: G1-P6

Principal 6: Avoid cantilevers on downhill faces of buildings.

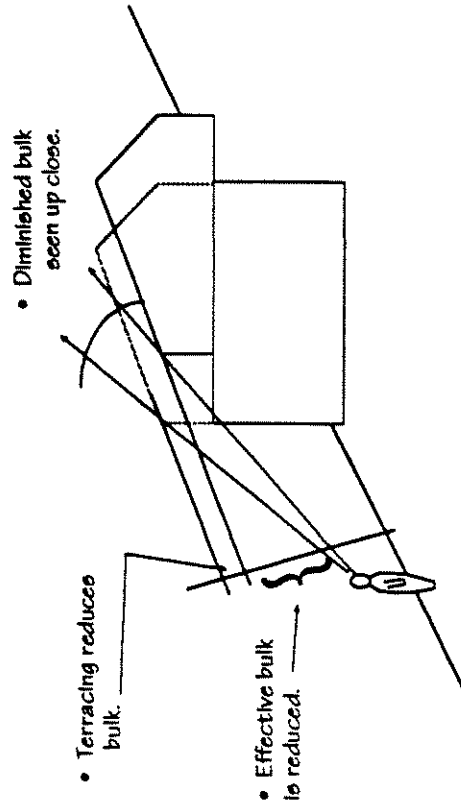
Limit downslope cantilevers to the dimensions necessary to provide proper sun screening over windows and walls.

NO

- Avoid large gable ends on downhill elevations.
- Additional bulk makes building appear taller and more monumental.



YES

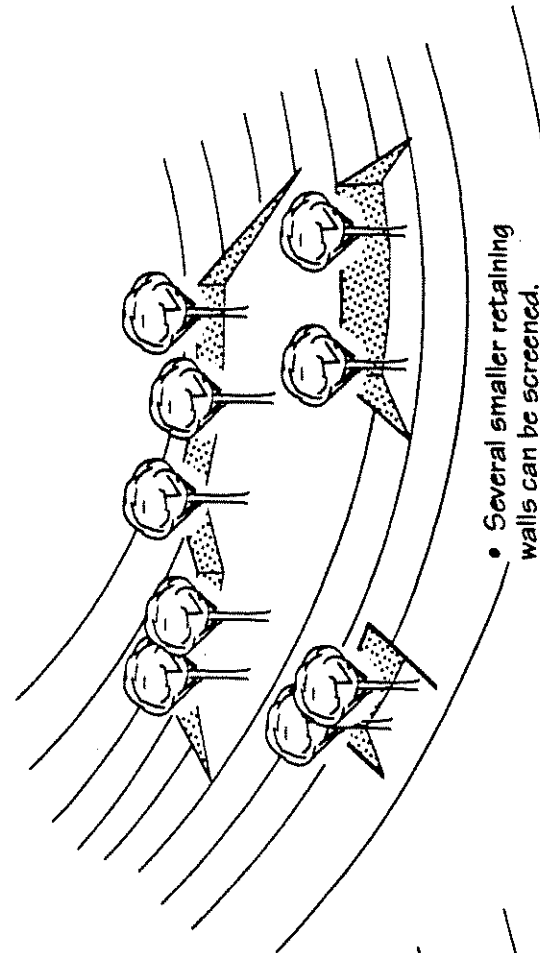
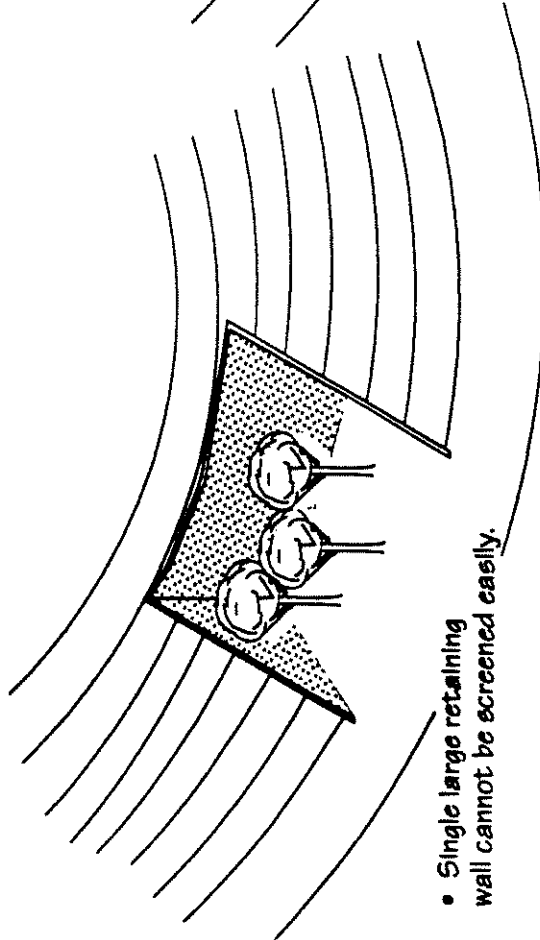


These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

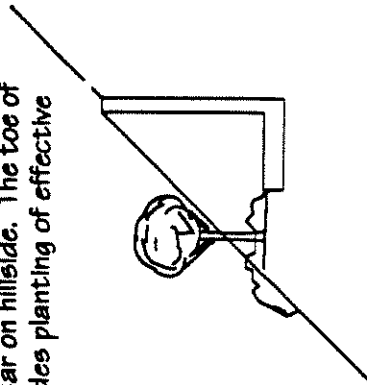
Principal 7: Avoid large retaining walls in a uniform plane. Break retaining walls into separate elements such as terraces.

Suggested standards: Maximum vertical dimension of a single retaining wall should be six feet.

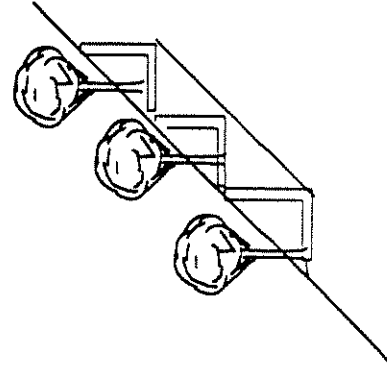
**Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guideline
Figure: G1-P7**



• Single retaining wall makes a massive scar on hillside. The toe of wall precludes planting of effective screen.



• Terraced retaining walls break up mass.



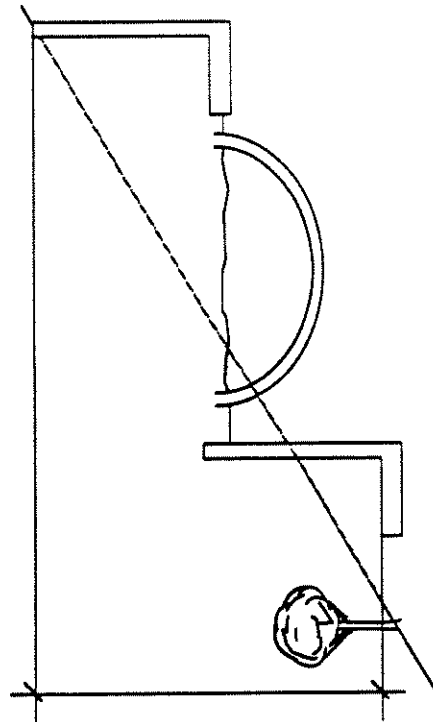
These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

Principal 7: Avoid large retaining walls in a uniform plane. Break retaining walls into separate elements such as terraces.

**Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines
Figure: G1-P7b**

NO

- No plantings possible due to the toe of retaining wall.

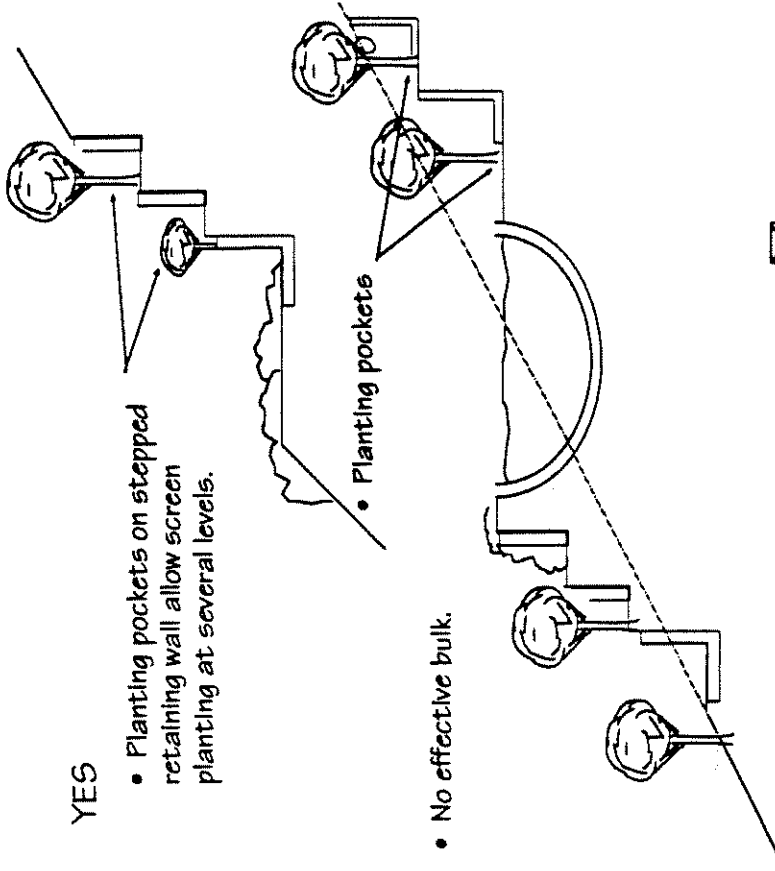


- Effective Bulk

- Large concrete retaining wall surfaces can be seen for miles and can take years to conceal with plantings and trees.

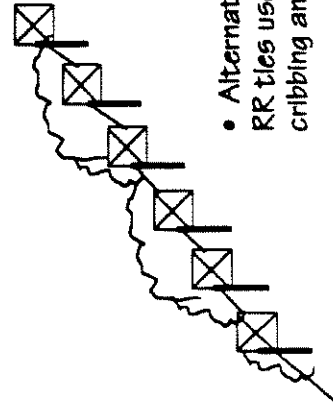
YES

- Planting pockets on stepped retaining wall allow screen planting at several levels.



- Planting pockets

- No effective bulk.



- Alternate possibility: RR ties used for cribbing and planting.

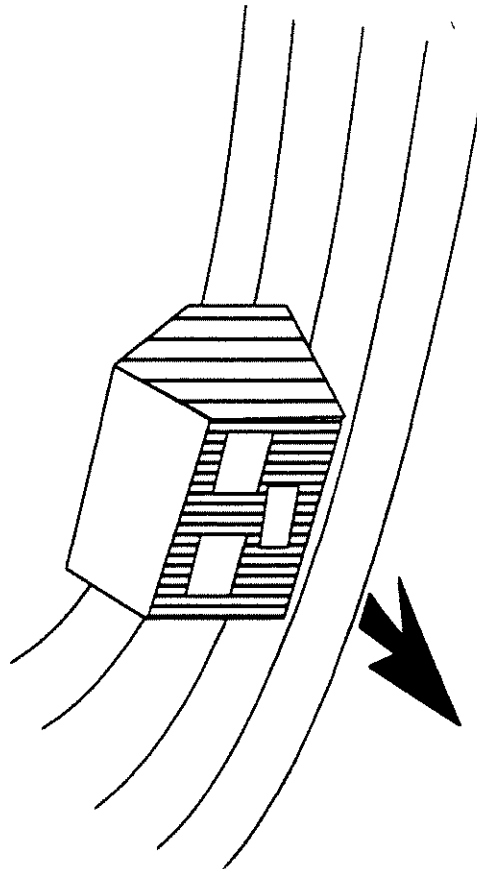
These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

Principal 8: Use changes of material to "soften" large building elevations and to blend into the hillside.

Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines
Figure: G1-P8

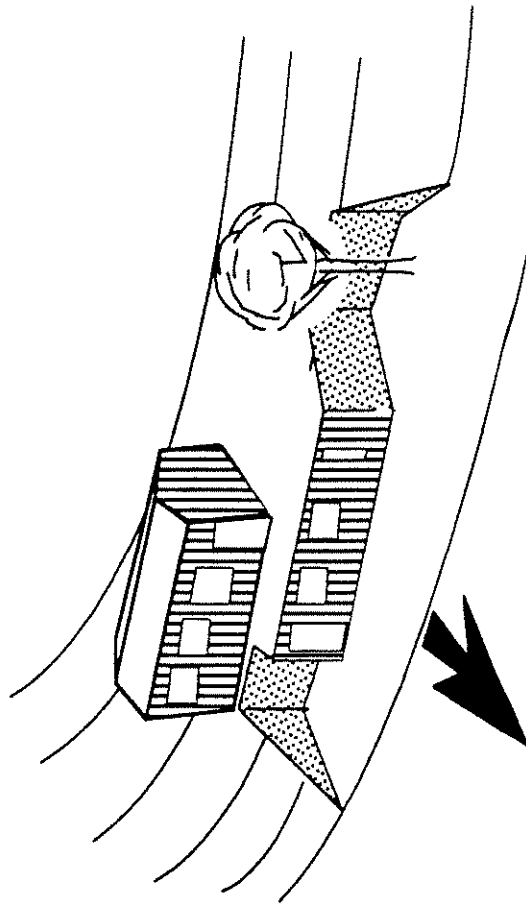
NO

- Large facades of uniform material is lifeless. Even if modulated by windows, facade is still plain.



YES

- Natural materials, wood and windows in small increments provide more interesting human scale and varied pattern to topography.
- Stone foundations and retaining walls relate well to the ground.



These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

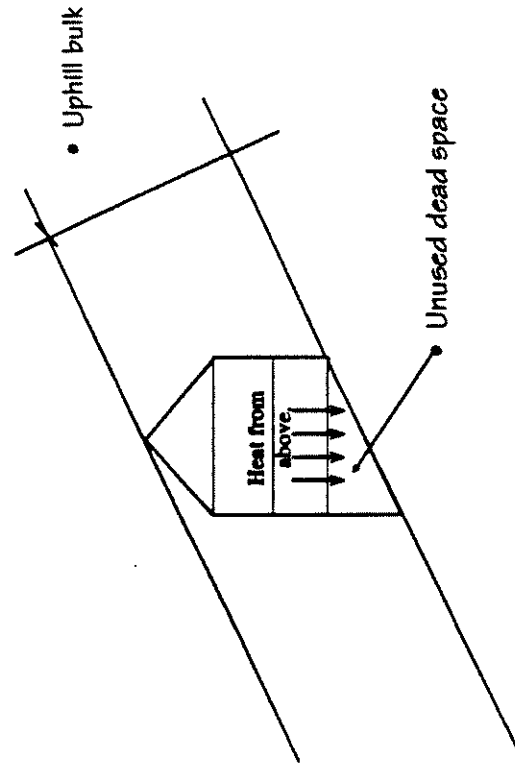
Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines

Figure: G1-P9

Principal 9: Excavate underground or below grade rooms to dramatically reduce effective bulk, provide energy efficient and environmentally desirable spaces.

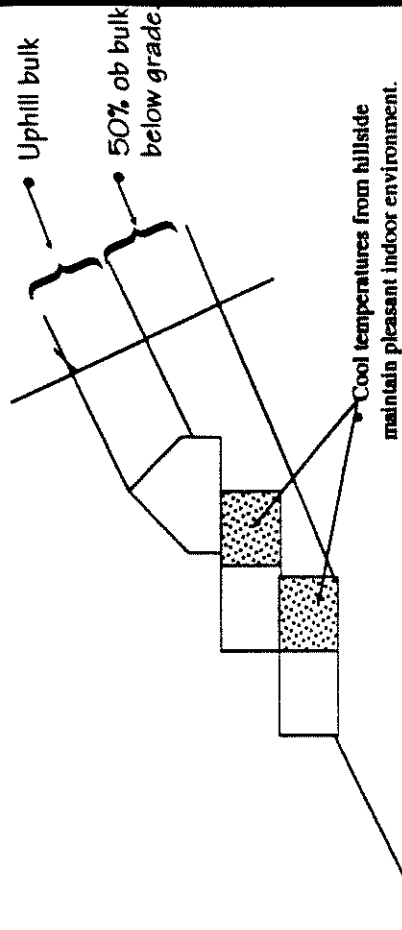
NO

- Sauna, workshop, billiards room wine cellar require air conditioning.



YES

- Cool, quiet space under ground.



- Shops, billiards, storage, halls closets, wine cellar. Space is cooled naturally by being placed into the hillside.

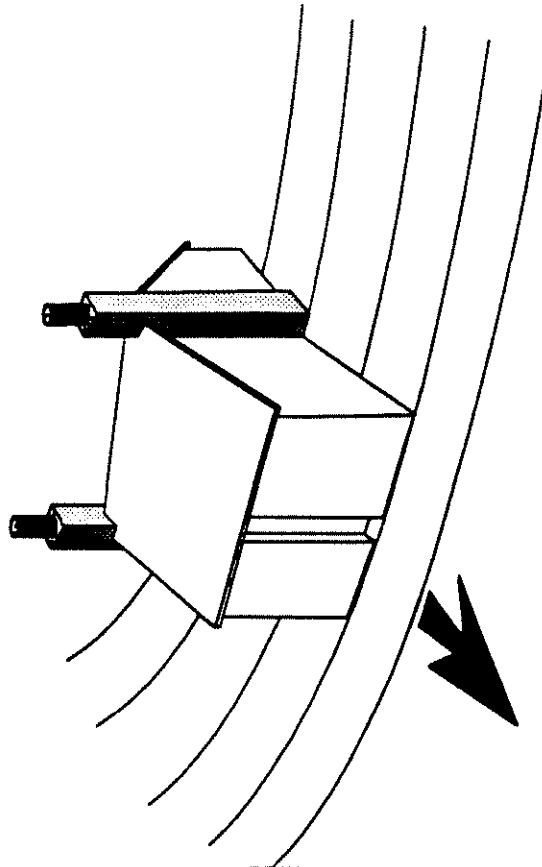
These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale

Principal 10: Balance structure's horizontal elements with vertical accent elements like stairs or chimneys. Avoid single form solutions to the building envelope.

Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines
Figure: G1-P10

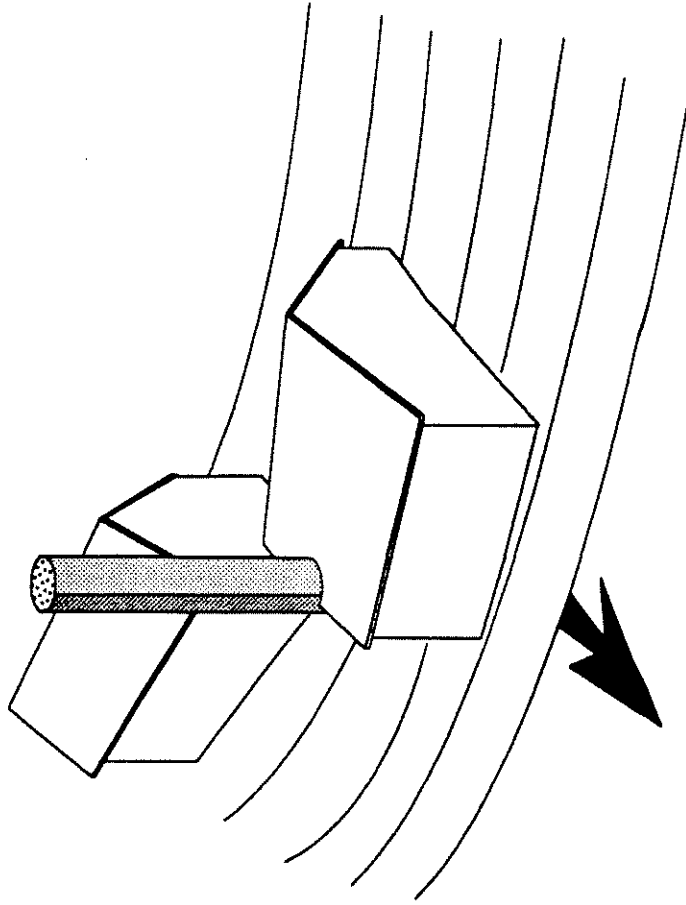
NO

- Large "colonial" on a steep hill is inappropriate to the site.



YES

- Broken-up massing and more natural "flow" of structures blends in with the topography of the site (see .H. Richardson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Green & Green).



These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines

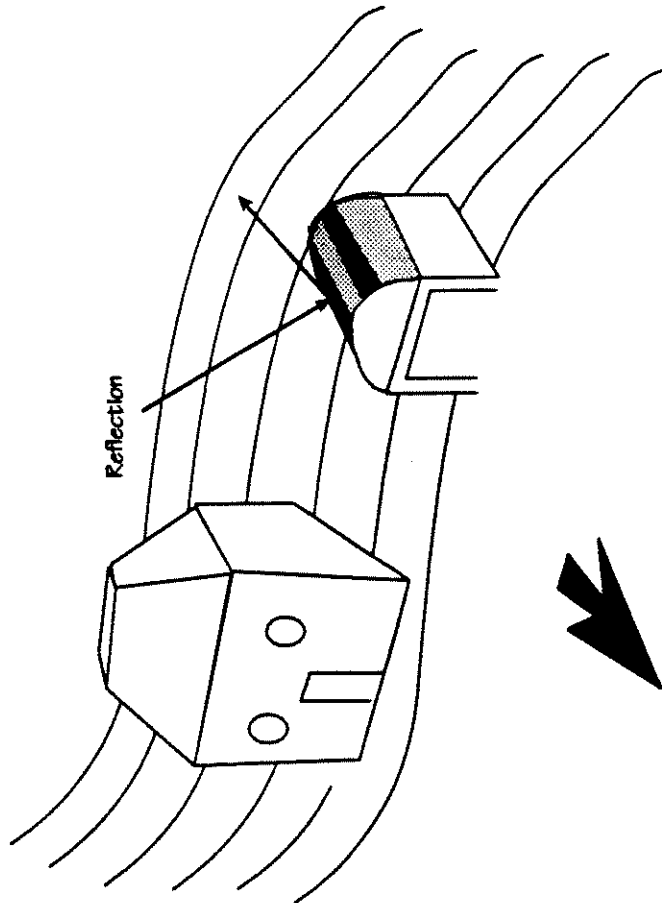
Figure: G2-P1

GOAL 2 To reduce the general environmental and visual impacts of new dwellings in the neighborhoods. Designs and siting of new buildings should respect existing structures and other features of the site and surrounding properties.

Principal 1: Do not use colors, textures, materials and forms which will attract attention by not relating to other elements. Remember, the hillside, seen as a whole, is a texture of dwellings, trees and open spaces. No one dwelling should stand out.

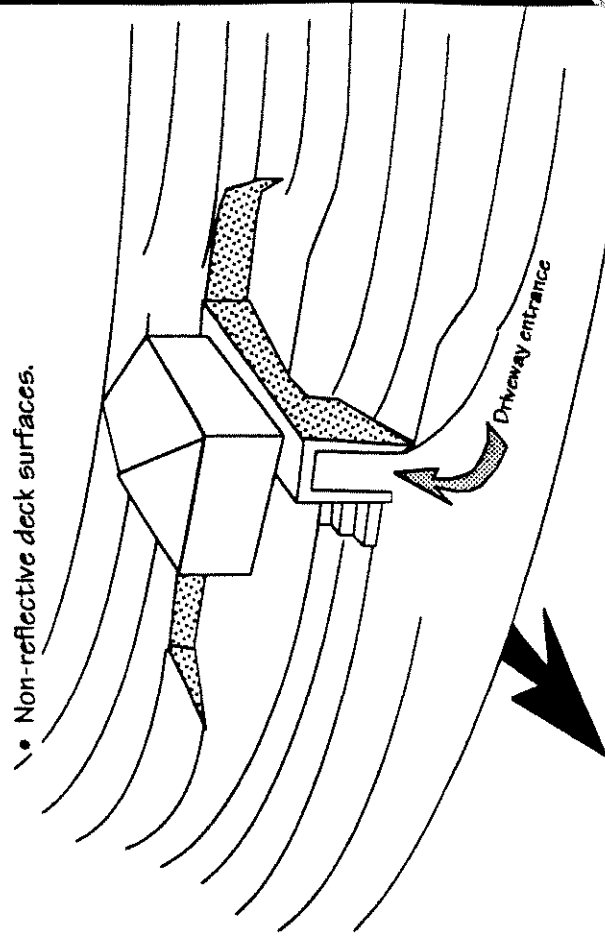
NO

- Avoid bright colors
reflective materials



YES

- Native stone, earth-toned brick or textured concrete retaining walls.
- Natural, earth-tone shingles (non-flammable) and non-reflective solar panels.
- Wood-stained medium-value, earth-tones.
- Non-reflective deck surfaces.

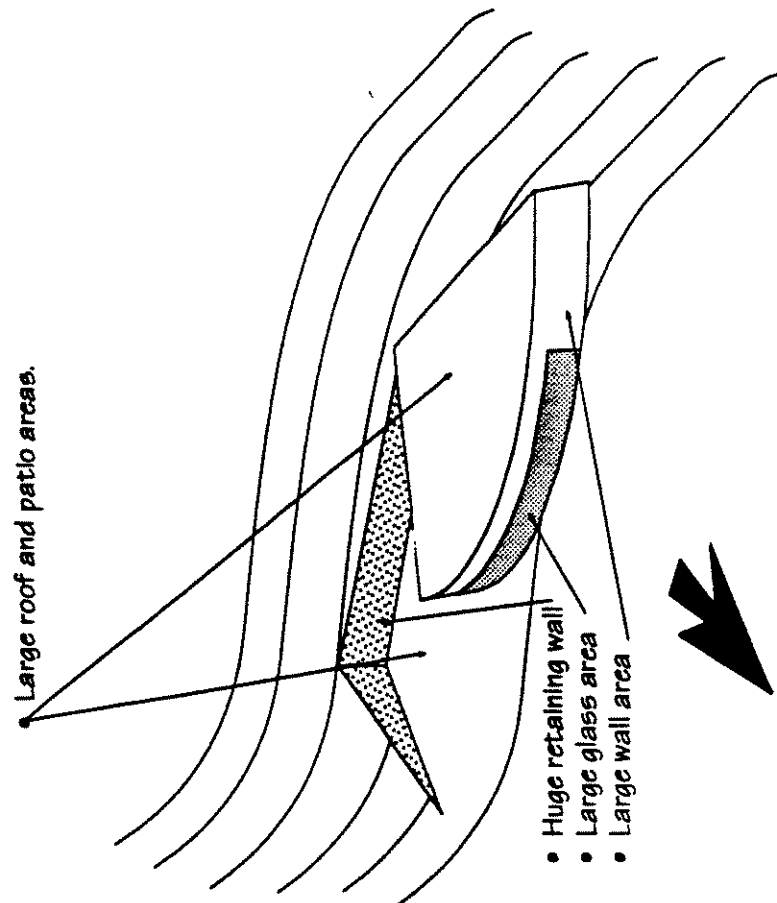


These graphics illustrate design principles and are NOT to scale.

Principal 2: Do not use large expanses of a single material on walls, roofs or paved areas. Remember, most dwellings are seen from below and above by others higher on the hillside.

Suggestions: Maximum of 300 square feet of any single material in any plane. Areas larger than 300 square feet stand out on the hillside.

NO

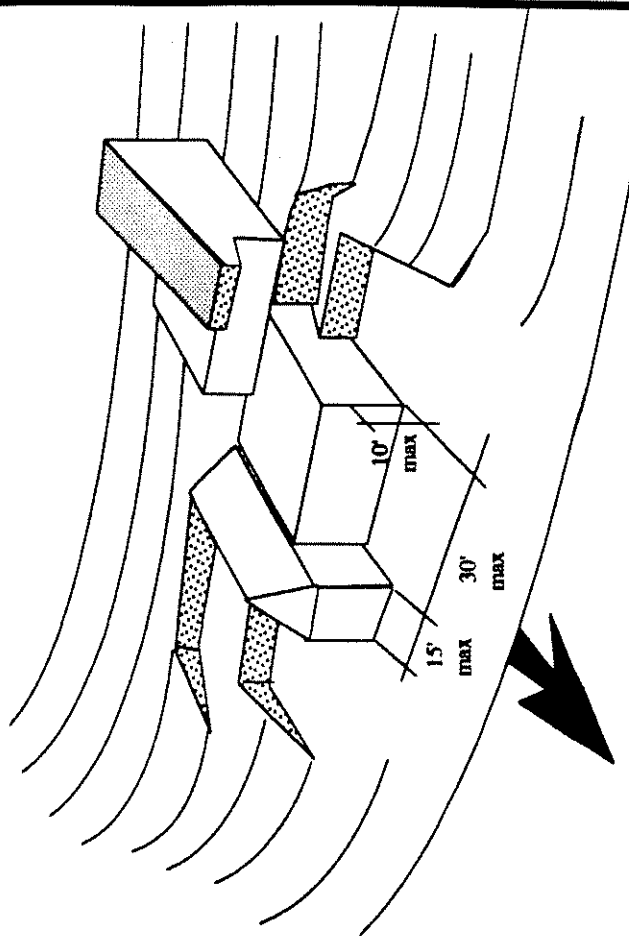


Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines

Figure: G2-P2

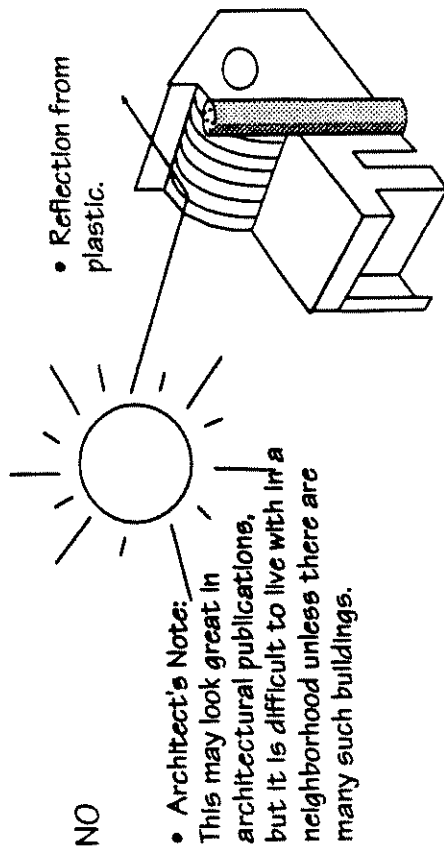
YES

- Large roof areas broken up.
- Retaining wall broken up.
- Terraced patios and decks.
- Wall areas broken up.

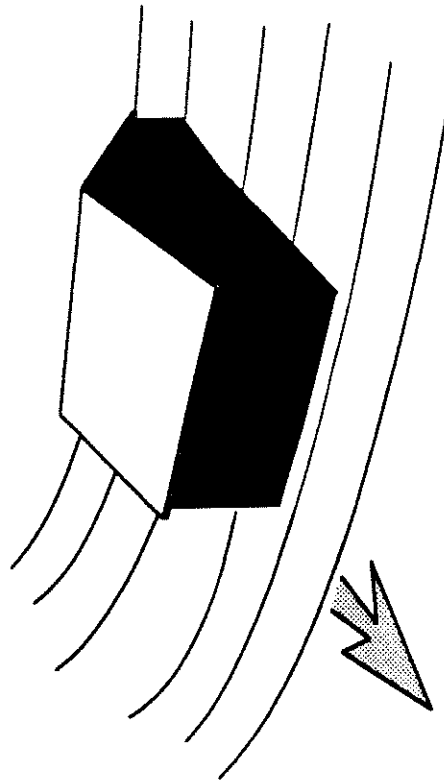


These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

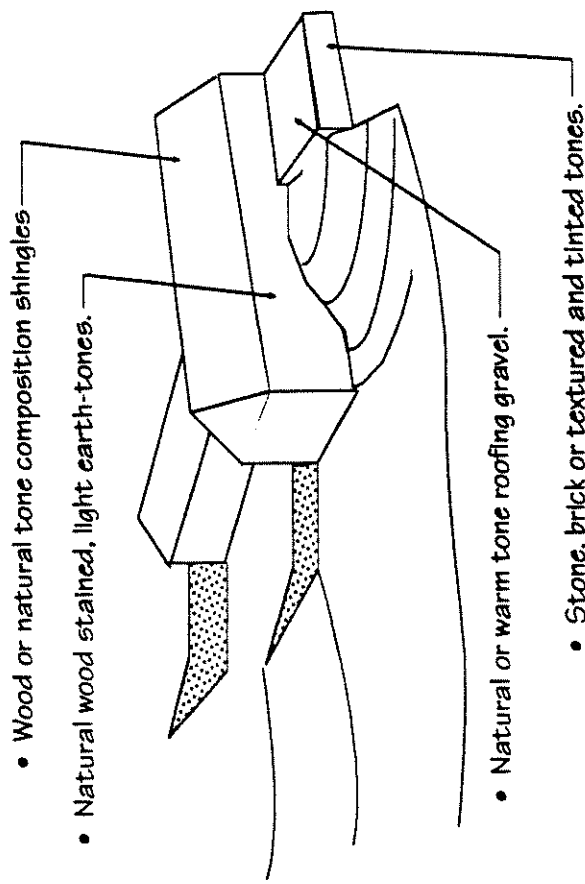
Principal 3: Use native and natural materials which blend with the hillside where possible. Use synthetic or compound materials (concrete, stucco, metal, plastics and glass) with moderation and care.



• Very dark or very light painted structures stand out on hills which are usually dried native grasses and brush with light to medium values.



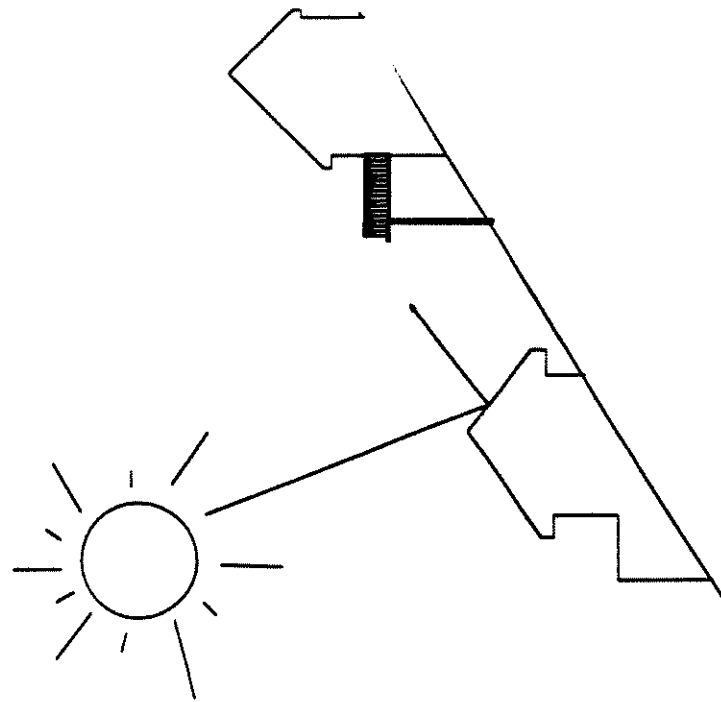
YES



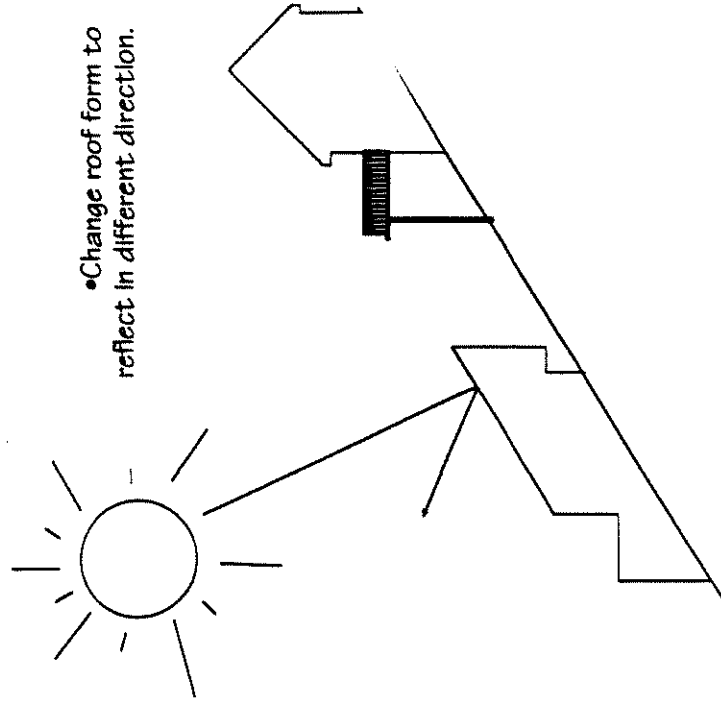
Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines **Figure: G2-P4**

Principal 4: Use great care with reflective materials and exposed undersides of structures. Glass, aluminum and plastics all reflect light and can cause great annoyance for neighbors. Dark anodized aluminum is best. Where possible, use non-reflective glass or plastic for skylights. Control building forms so reflections do not strike other residences.

NO



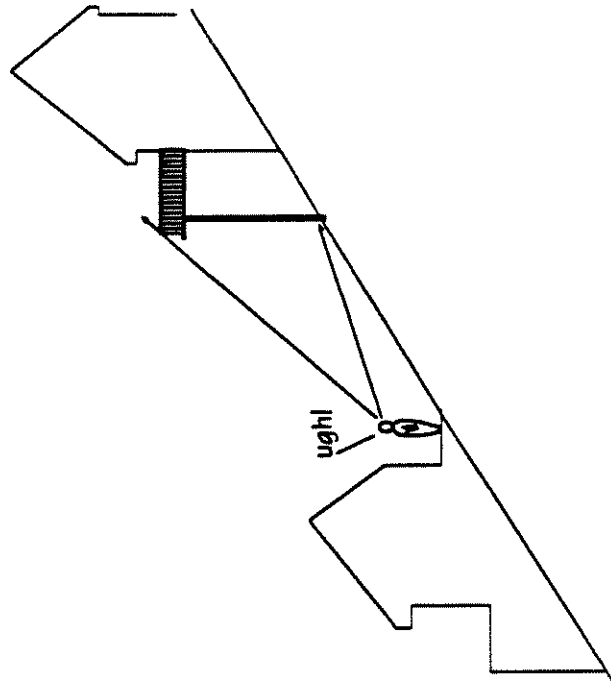
YES



Principal 5: Avoid unsightly exposed structural and mechanical elements unless well-integrated into the design concept. Exposed structures are eyesores for people lower downhill.

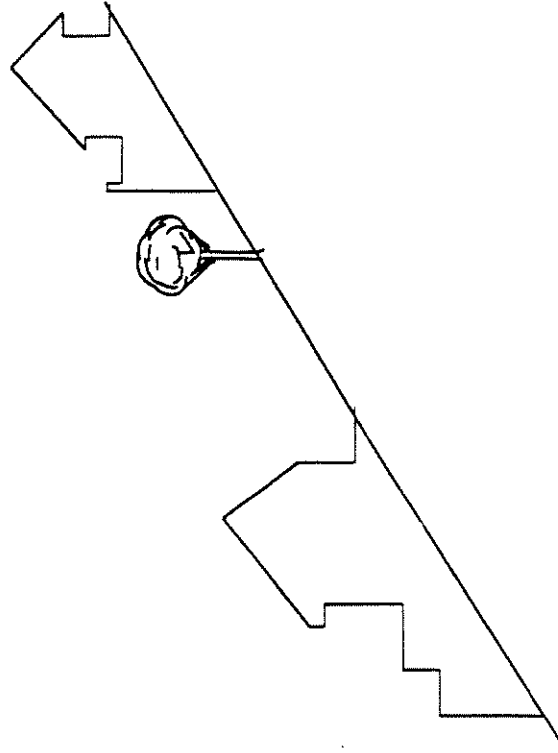
NO

- Poorly concealed lateral bracing, deck joists, plumbing drains, etc. can be unsightly.



YES

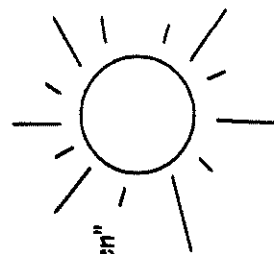
- Use foundation screening and closure of exposed structure or mechanical work unless well-integrated with the design concept.



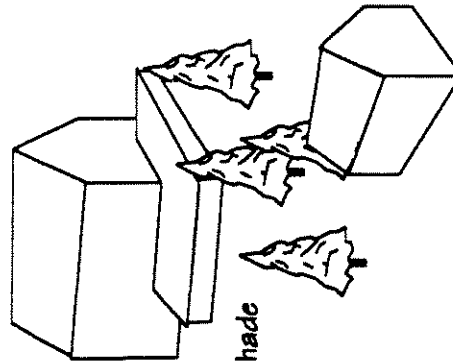
Principal 6: Use native and natural materials which blend with the hillside where possible. Use synthetic or compound materials (concrete, stucco, metal, plastics and glass) with moderation and care.

A. Install landscaping with foresight.

NO

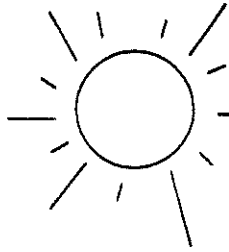


- Fast-growing trees planted for privacy "screen" grow into a view block for neighbors.
- Fast-growing trees die within a short period of time.

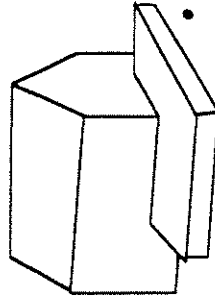


- Trees planted too close to dwelling become possible root-expansion and fire problems.
- House receives no sun shade benefits from trees.

YES

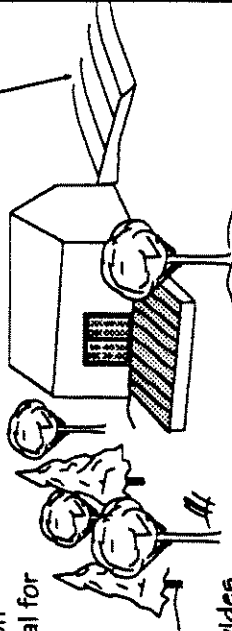


- Fast-growing, low-height trees provide privacy but maintain views.



- Mix fast-growing and slow-growing trees to screen house from the hot sun.

- Automatic irrigation systems are essential for good maintenance of landscaping and even for fire protection.



- Specimen tree provides beautiful object to look at and becomes part of the view, not something which obstructs the view.

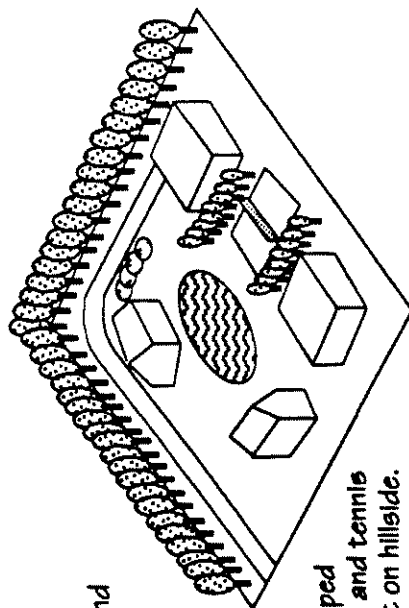
- Well-covered planting and patios help reduce fire hazards

Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines

Figure: G2-P6 b/c

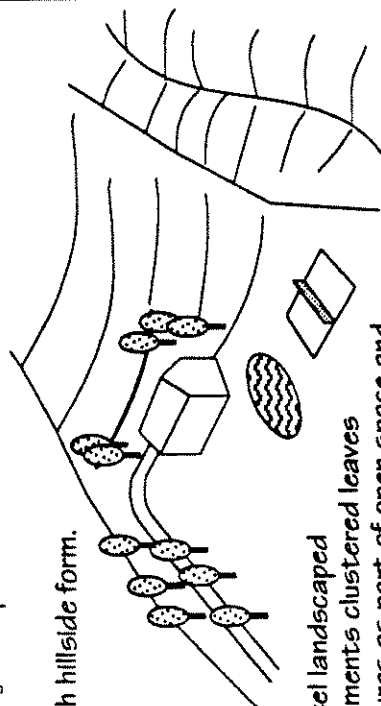
B. Avoid landscaping entire large parcels of land. Instead, plan small discrete courts and patios of well-landscaped areas, leaving larger areas native and natural.

NO



- Huge maintenance and irrigation problem.
- Large parcel landscaped with out-buildings, pool and tennis court which stands out on hillside.

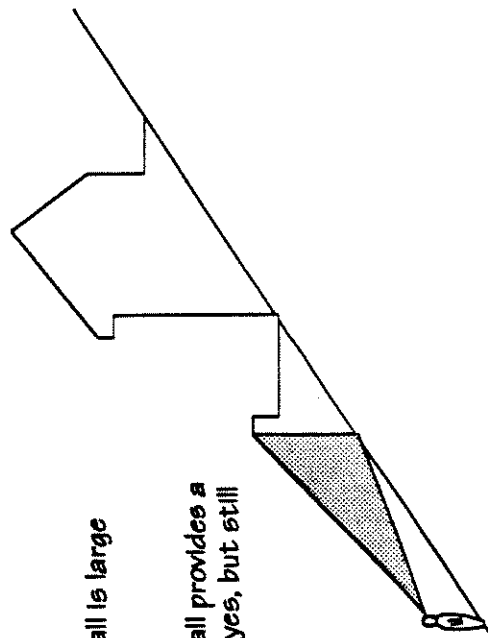
YES



- Smaller maintenance and irrigation problem.
- Blends with hillside form.
- Large parcel landscaped with major elements clustered together with natural features as part of open space and does not attract undue attention.

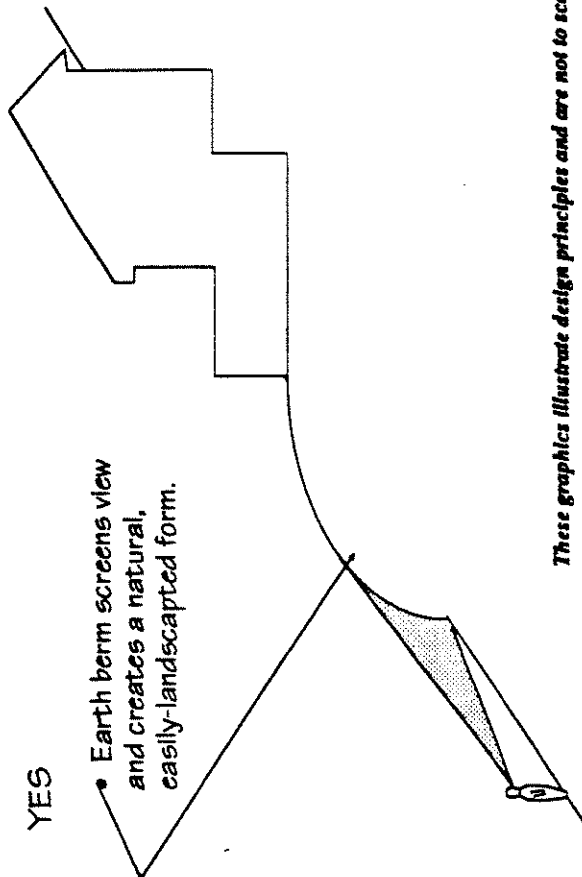
C. Use earth berms and land forms to enhance dwelling, minimize impact conceal unsightly elements and parking lots.

NO



- Retaining wall is large and unsightly.
- Retaining wall provides a visual screen, yes, but still unsightly.

YES



- Earth berm screens view and creates a natural, easily-landscaped form.

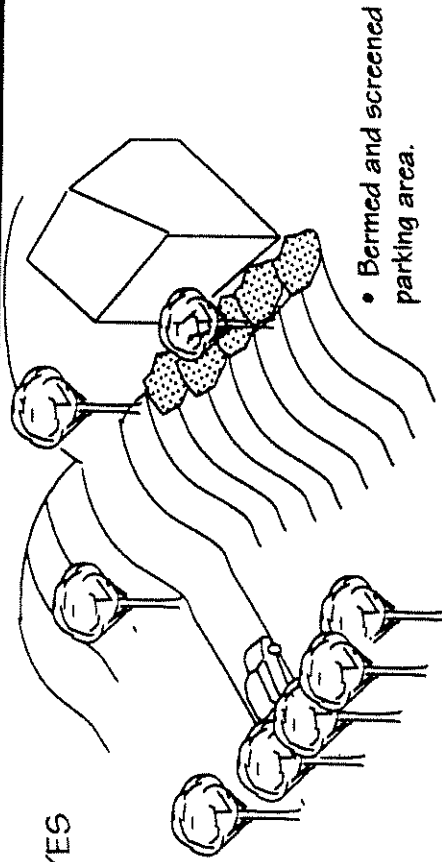
These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

D. Drought-resistant trees and bushes plus natural vegetation should be used wherever possible. Certain fast-growing trees (Monterey Pine, Blue Gum Eucalyptus) are discouraged unless they are planted with the concept of fast growth - later removal by the owner in conjunction with slower growing varieties. Some trees are particularly susceptible to fire (pines and eucalyptus) and should never be planted near dwellings, while some vegetation (iceplant) is extremely fire resistant. Some trees are desirable, albeit, slow growing (California Live Oak). These should be mixed with other planting since they provide beautiful, drought-resistant, low-maintenance shade when mature.

Alhambra Valley Specific Plan - Design Guidelines

Figure: G2-P6 d

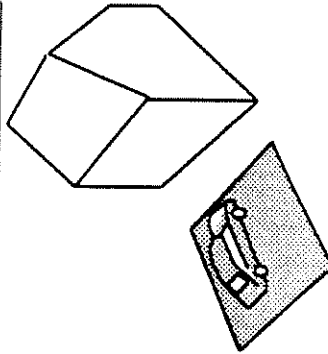
YES



- Bermed and screened parking area.

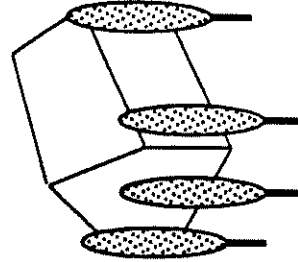
- Planting used to create shade in parking lot. Reduces heat buildup and glare from cars.

NO



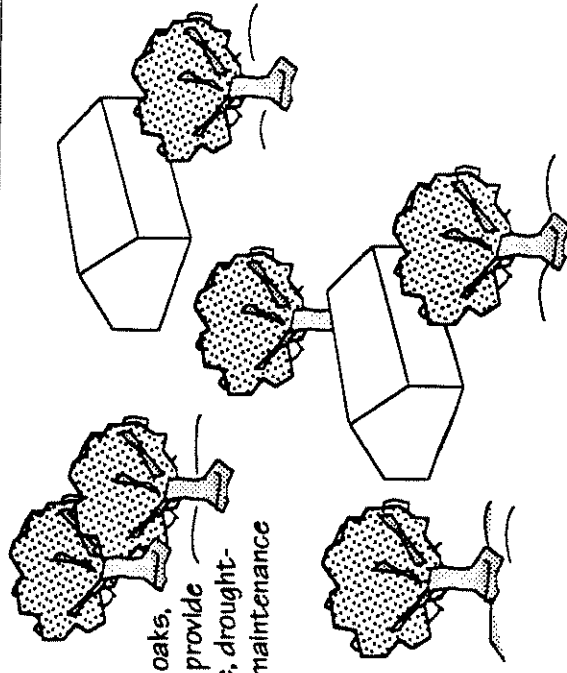
- Unsightly parking lot.

NO



- Poorly planned landscaping of fast-growing pines and eucalyptus will eventually block view for distant dwellings next door and for even one's own home

YES



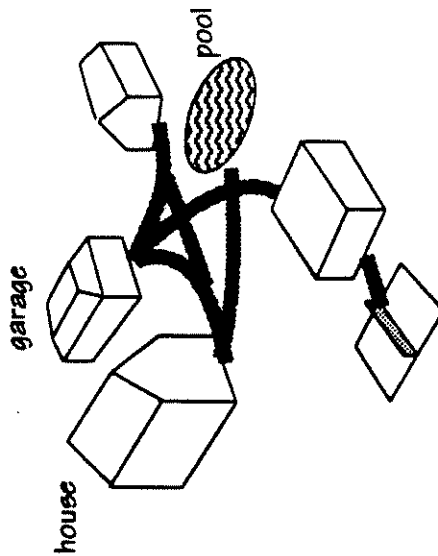
- Well-suited oaks, when mature, provide beauty, shade, drought-tolerant, low-maintenance landscaping.

These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

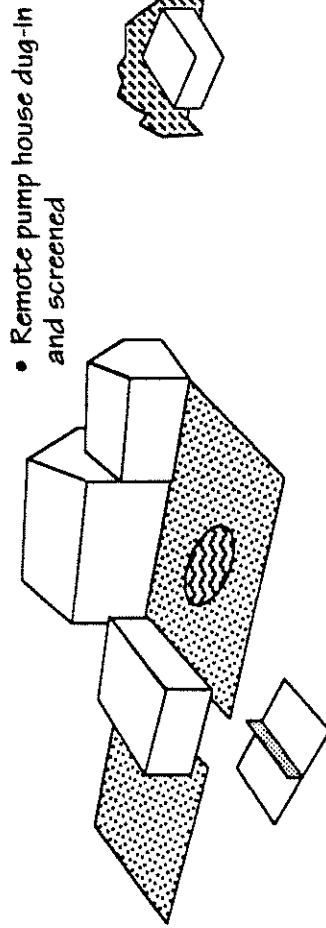
Principle 7: Remotely located outbuildings are discouraged.

Swimming pool houses, pump houses, too sheds, garages and other structures remote from the principal dwelling make the effective bulk and general amount of building on a site seem larger. If possible, these facilities should be in the main dwelling, or, if remote, they should be dug into the hillside or substantially screened with berms, plantings, fences, etc. Note: This is not meant to discourage cluster plans with courtyards between garage and dwellings.

NO



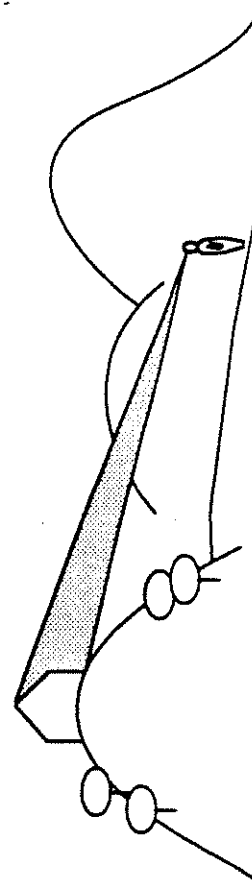
YES



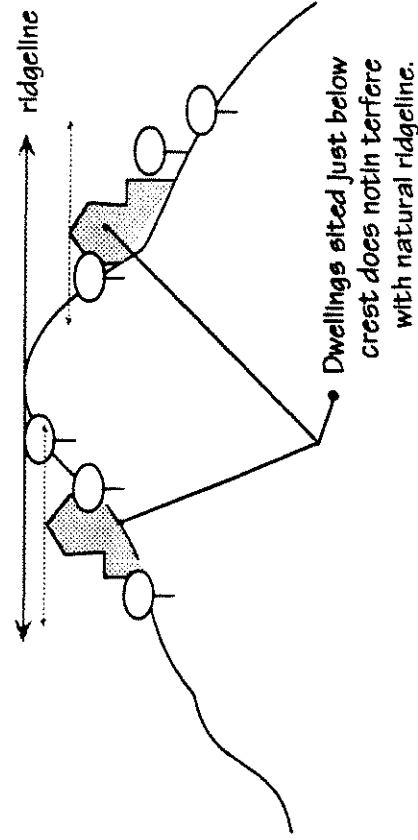
- Remote pump house dug-in and screened

Principle 8: Site buildings so they don't stand out.

Do not build on crest of knolls, ridgelines or other visually prominent locations. Remember all structures on the hill are part of a rich texture of buildings, landscaping and open space. No one dwelling should be exceptionally prominent.



- The "egotrip" buildings in prominent locations can be seen detrimentally from everywhere.



These graphics illustrate design principles and are not to scale.

VI. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Alhambra Valley Specific Plan focuses on the review of development applications and developing conditions of approval for proposed projects. Implementation also consists of other measures which must be enacted by the County and are described in further detail in this section.

A. SCENIC CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Prior to construction of major County-funded improvements, a scenic corridor improvement plan shall be developed by the Public Works and Community Development Departments. The improvement plan shall conform to the circulation and scenic route policies of the Specific Plan and shall provide the following:

1. Widening of Alhambra Valley and Reliez Roads to generally provide a 32 foot wide pavement width (including shoulders) while maintaining two travel lanes and allowing for turning lanes.
2. A separated, eight foot wide, meandering trail, able to accommodate bicycles, pedestrians and equestrians, next to Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads.
3. An inventory shall be developed which identifies existing mature trees and other significant vegetation along Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Road which could be affected by any future road improvements. This inventory should be used to develop the overall scenic corridor improvement plan.
4. Development of a plan to underground aerial transmission lines.
5. Cost estimates and construction timeline for the overall improvements.

Neighborhood groups and the City of Martinez shall be provided an opportunity to comment on the proposed improvement plan prior to the commencement of any construction activity. Development proposals within the planning area may be required to pay a fee which would be used to develop and implement the scenic corridor improvement plan.

B. INFRASTRUCTURE FEE

In coordination with the City of a Martinez and other nearby municipalities, including the Cities of Pleasant Hill and Lafayette, an infrastructure fees shall be collected. The purpose of the fee is to assess new development within the planning area for a reasonable contribution for the costs of the planned infrastructure improvements. The fees shall provide for:

1. Planned off-site improvements to the road system and for the provision of trails along those roads designated on Figure 6;
2. domestic water supply facilities which include pump stations, reservoirs and mains-to-reservoirs connections;
3. park dedication fees;
4. fire facilities fees;
5. drainage mitigation contribution; and
6. costs for the preparation of this Specific Plan.

All fees to be placed in separate trust accounts. The water facility fee shall be transferred in a timely fashion to the City of Martinez. A program shall be developed among Lafayette, Martinez, Pleasant Hill, and County to determine appropriate disbursement of all road fees collected by these jurisdictions for projects which effect Alhambra Valley and Reliez Valley Roads. Discussion to be initiated within six months of final adoption of Alhambra Valley Specific Plan. Those fees not yet adopted should be established by ordinance. All fees should be adjusted annually.

C. NONCONFORMING LAND USES, LOT SIZES OR STRUCTURES

Some land uses, lot sizes or structures which presently exist in the planning area may be inconsistent with the requirements proposed in the Specific Plan. These are considered legal, nonconforming uses and the County will permit them to continue. If a property owner has a legal nonconforming use or structure and wishes to expand or change that use or structure, the owner must apply for a conditional use permit or variance from the County. This action will permit the continuation or expansion of the use subject to conditions and a finding that such expansion or structural alteration is necessary to protect a property right and will not impair the character of Alhambra Valley or the immediate area.

If a legal, nonconforming building is destroyed and if the cost of the reconstruction is less than 50 percent of the total building value after reconstruction, the destroyed building may be reconstructed as it previously existed.

All illegal, nonconforming land uses and structures will be abated by the County. An illegal nonconforming use is one that was never lawfully established through the County and operates in violation of either building or zoning regulations since its establishment. Abatement of a nonconforming use or structure may be abated if it is a public nuisance.

Lot sizes may also be nonconforming if the lot does not contain the minimum requirements for net parcel area, width and frontage as specified through the underlying zoning district. Provided such lot was not created in violation of any previous

zoning ordinance, the lot is considered to be a legal, nonconforming lot regardless of size. Any lot may be developed for any use which is permitted in that zone even though such lot does not meet the requirements of that zoning district for area, width or frontage. Applicants who wish to develop and cannot meet the requirements of the Specific Plan, may apply for a variance.

D. EXCEPTIONS TO SPECIFIC PLAN REQUIREMENTS

The Specific Plan sets forth requirements which allow for future development in the area. To minimize impacts between agricultural and residential or other uses, conditions such as provisioning open space and landscaped buffers, rear and side yards, setbacks from environmentally sensitive area, maximum building height or lot coverage will be required to develop properties within the Specific Plan.

In certain situations, a property owner may not be able to develop the property consistent with all land use regulations or within the design guidelines of the Specific Plan. This plan discourages exceptions or variances to create lots smaller than the minimum specified in the Specific Plan land use categories. Exceptions to some of the development requirements or design guidelines may be granted to the property owner or developer subject to a finding of undue hardship which is described as follows:

- Due to the circumstances applicable to the subject property, including the size, shape topography, location or surroundings, the strict application of the regulations which are contained in the Alhambra Valley Specific Plan deprives the property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and zone in which the subject property is located. The County will have the authority to impose any other conditions which the jurisdiction deems appropriate to minimize the impact of the development as proposed.

E. GENERAL PLAN AND SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENTS

Both the County General Plan and Alhambra Valley Specific Plan may be amended once adopted. The Specific Plan attempts to clearly define how development will occur in the planning area. Once adopted, it is the intent of the County that the Specific Plan goals and policies be maintained.

If a proposed plan amendment is submitted for lands within the planning area or adjacent agricultural lands, that amendment shall not be approved without an opportunity for other jurisdictions to review, comment and issue a recommendation to legislative body which needs to act on the proposed plan amendment. If the General Plan is amended, the Specific Plan must be amended in order to remain consistent with the County General Plan as required by state law.

F. SPECIFIC PLAN EFFECTS ON PROPOSED PROJECTS

California State Law requires that no tentative subdivision map be approved and that no zoning ordinance amendments be adopted unless they are consistent with an adopted specific plan. All proposed subdivisions and other planning entitlements shall be reviewed for consistency with the Alhambra Valley Specific Plan policies and design guidelines.

Subdivision approval prior to the adoption of this Specific Plan is generally exempt from the Plan policies for purposes of recording a final map or parcel map. However, subsequent structural and grading proposal are subject to review for compliance with the design provision of this Specific Plan.

G. CONFORMITY WITH GROWTH MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Every development proposal shall be reviewed for its compliance with the County's Growth Management Standards to ensure that the proposal meets all standards for traffic congestion and urban services.

H. DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

With one year of final adoption of the Specific Plan, the Contra Costa Department of Public Works will initiate a joint study of the City of Martinez on the drainage conditions and needs with the greater Alhambra Valley.

I. ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Consistent with the proposed cross section of Figure 6 of this plan, the Contra Costa Department of Public Works has two safety-related road improvements which will be developed. They are:

1. The Reliez Valley Road Re-alignment Project which is located between the Park District entrance and Brookwood Lane; and
2. The Reverse Curve Re-alignment Project between Millthwait Drive and Wanda Way.