



July 13, 2023

Mr. Kevin Canning,
OC Planning, OCPW
333 W. Santa Ana Blvd., Ste 144
Santa Ana CA 92701
United States of America

VIA MYOCESERVICES AND BY EMAIL TO KEVIN.CANNING@OCPW.OCGOV.COM

Re: Saddleback Meadows Use Permit – Project Development Standards

Dear Mr. Canning:

Please consider this application for a Use Permit for the Saddleback Meadows project (“Project”), establishing select site development standards including building height and setbacks. This 222-acre project site (78-acre development area) is well known to the County of Orange and is situated on vacant land on the eastern side of El Toro Road, approximately ½ mile south of the intersection of Santiago Canyon Road and Live Oak Canyon Road (“Property”).

I. PROJECT HISTORY

The Saddleback Meadows project received its initial approvals in November 2002, including a Zone Change/FTSP Amendment (“ZC 98-3”), Area Plan AP 98-2 (“AP”) and Vesting Tentative Tract Map 15230 (“VTTM”), Revised Supplemental EIR 566 (“RSEIR 566”). This original approval proposed a 283-unit single family development and was challenged in court, culminating in a May 2004 Settlement Agreement (“2004 Settlement Agreement”) that required several modifications to the project to address the concerns raised in the lawsuit. The 2004 Settlement Agreement also included provisions granting the petitioners the right to review and comment on any proposed subsequent revisions to the project to ensure that any project modifications would continue to address the areas of concern raised in the lawsuit and addressed by the settlement.

To address the requirements of the 2004 Settlement Agreement, a redesigned project (referred herein as “2004 Modified Project”) was considered and approved by the County in August 2004. The 2004 Modified Project reduced the development from 283 to 266 single family lots with associated revisions to the grading plan. Corresponding changes to the subdivision map were approved as VTTM 15230 Revision 1 (“VTTM Rev. 1”).

Following the approval of the 2004 Modified Project, the project applicants (California Quartet) commenced more specific development and improvement plans to order to implement the Project. As a result of the subsequent studies, changes were made to address various engineering, geological and environmental conditions. The parties to the original lawsuit and California Quartet, mediated certain aspects of the development which resulted in a modified settlement agreement in 2019 (“Modified Settlement Agreement”).

In September 2022, Changed Plan CP170051 (“Changed Plan”), VTTM 15230 2nd Revised (“VTTM Rev. 2”), and a revised Area Plan 98-2 (“AP (181 units)”) were approved by the County of Orange (referred herein as “2022 Modified Project”), addressing the project constraints identified by the Modified Settlement Agreement. The development of the 2022 Project is substantially smaller than the original project in many respects:

1. Unit count reduced from 266 single family detached lots to 181.
2. Development impact area reduced from 134 acres to 78.3 acres, a 38% reduction. This included eliminating the residential development area in the eastern portion of the project site while maintaining the same general spine road alignment as the 2004 Modified Project.
3. The average lot size decreased from 6,843 SF to 6,062 SF.
4. Total grading quantity reduced by approximately 2,000,000 cubic yards.
5. Open space increased from 73% to 84% of the site.
6. Eliminated the water tank from the offsite ridgeline area and eliminated the associated water tank access road.

II. SCOPE OF PROPOSED USE PERMIT

ZC 98-3 modified the Bridlewood Residential District (BWR) of the Foothill Trabuco Specific Plan and identified Residential Estates (Planned Community) development standards for the Project. This has remained unchanged with the approvals of the 2004 Modified Project and 2022 Modified Project.

With the material changes and smaller footprint of the 2022 Modified Project, some of these development standards are no longer appropriate nor consistent with VTTM Rev. 2 or AP (181 units) approved by the County in 2022.

Accordingly, this Use Permit seeks to establish certain appropriate Planned Development standards for the Project.

We request that the following development standards be approved for use in the Project:

1. Maximum Building Height (feet): Thirty Five (35')
2. Setbacks (feet):
 - a. Front Setback from Ultimate Street R/W: Ten (10')
 - b. Side Setback from Ultimate Street R/W: Ten (10')
 - c. Rear Setback from Ultimate Street R/W: Ten (10')
 - d. Side Setback from Property Line not abutting Street R/W: Five (5')
 - e. Rear Setback from Property Line not abutting Street R/W: Ten (10')
3. Maximum Building Site Coverage: Total minus setbacks.
4. Minimum Building Site Area Per Unit (sq. ft.): Four Thousand (4,000 sq. ft.)¹
5. Additional standards:
 - a. Patios: No attached or detached covered patio shall be located closer than three feet (3') to a property line except the street-side property line of a corner lot, in which case a minimum distance of eight feet (8') shall be maintained.
 - b. Projections into required setbacks: Eaves, cornices, chimneys, outside staircases, balconies and other similar architectural features may project a maximum of four feet (4') into any required front, rear or side setback within one foot (1') of the

¹ Minimum building site area is established in the AP (181 units).

property line, whichever is the least projection into the required setback. Porches may encroach up to three feet (3') into a front-yard setback, but in no case shall be located closer than seven feet (7') from the front property line.

- c. Miscellaneous Provisions and Exceptions:
 - i. Attached accessory buildings shall be considered as a part of the main building.
 - ii. Detached accessory buildings shall be located no closer than the setback permitted for the main building.

As shown in Table 1 on the following page, the requested development standards are in line with similar residential zoning for the County of Orange's Residential Single-Family (RS) district, the Portola Hills Planned Community Detached Single-Family Dwelling district (located across El Toro Road from the Project), and Foothill Trabuco Specific Plan Portola Bluff and Plano Trabuco Residential Districts (PBR and PTR-6000). This table also illustrates how standards other than the County's Residential Estates development standards, which are intended for significantly larger lots, are more appropriate for the 2022 Modified Project as reflected in the approved VTTM Rev. 2 and AP (181 units).

This application does not seek approval of any standards that would impact the rural-like character of the project. The Rural Character Statement provided with the approved Area Plan 98-remains applicable to guide community-wide design concepts, elements, and features (Rural Character Statement included as Attachment 1). Numerous Project design features have been incorporated to work together to help establish rural characteristics, such as:

1. Contour grading with landform enhancement provides for edge treatments responsive to the natural terrain.
2. The community's spine road alignment responds to the terrain and allows for landscape plantings on both sides to create a rural-like experience while driving through the community.
3. Creative site planning responds to the intended rural character with enhanced setbacks from the spine road, allowing the project to create a more natural and organic ambiance in keeping with the rolling hillside setting, surrounded by large areas of onsite open space.

Detailed project architecture and landscaping will be separately submitted, as may be required, for Use Permit approval at a later date.

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Table 1: Development Standard Comparison

	Proposed	County of Orange – Residential Single-Family (RS) ¹	Portola Hills Planned Community – Detached Single-Family Dwelling, Conventional ²	Foothill Trabuco Specific Plan – Portola Bluff Residential District (PBR) ³	Foothill Trabuco Specific Plan – Plano Trabuco Residential (PTR-6,000) ³
Maximum Building Height	35'	35'	35'	25'	35'
Front Setback from Street	10'	10'	10'	10'	15'
Side Setback from Street	10' ⁴	10'	10'	10'	15'
Rear Setback from Street	10'	10'	10'	10'	15'
Side Setback from Property Line	5'	10' one side only, or 10' total of two sides combined.	10' one side only, or 10' total of two sides combined.	10' one side only, or 10' total of two sides combined	5' minimum, but must have minimum separation of 20' between buildings
Rear Setback from Property Line	10'	0'	10'	10'	15'
Maximum Building Site Coverage (% of Site)	Total minus setbacks ⁵	35	Total site area less required setbacks	Total minus setbacks	60
Minimum Building Site Area Per Unit (sq. ft.)	4,000 ⁶	7,000	3,000	4,000	6,000

1. Per County of Orange Zoning Code Table 7-9-31.3.

2. Per Portola Hills Planned Community Development Plan, Section IV – Residential Site Development Standards.

3. Per the Foothill Trabuco Specific Plan, Sections III-D-4.0 and III-D-5.0.

4. Corner lots to be measured to street, not property line.

5. AP (181 units) establishes single-family residential lots account for 11% of the site.

6. Established in the AP (181 units).

III. SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMANCE WITH VTTM 15230

This Use Permit application proposes no changes to the approved VTTM Rev. 2; therefore, the Project remains in substantial conformance with VTTM 15230.

IV. CEQA CONSISTENCY

No changes are proposed to the lotting, unit counts, grading limits, development area, streets, proposed open space, or any other Project components that have been established with the approved VTTM Rev. 2 and AP (181 units), already considered by Addendum No. 2 to RSEIR 566 (“RSEIR 566 Addendum No. 2”). The Project remains CEQA compliant.

V. CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The proposed development standards are in substantial compliance with the original approval actions and project considerations for Saddleback Meadows. The Project is consistent with the County of Orange General Plan, Orange County Zoning Code, Foothill Trabuco Specific Plan, and other applicable documents.

Thank you for your consideration of our Project and I’d be pleased to answer any questions you have.

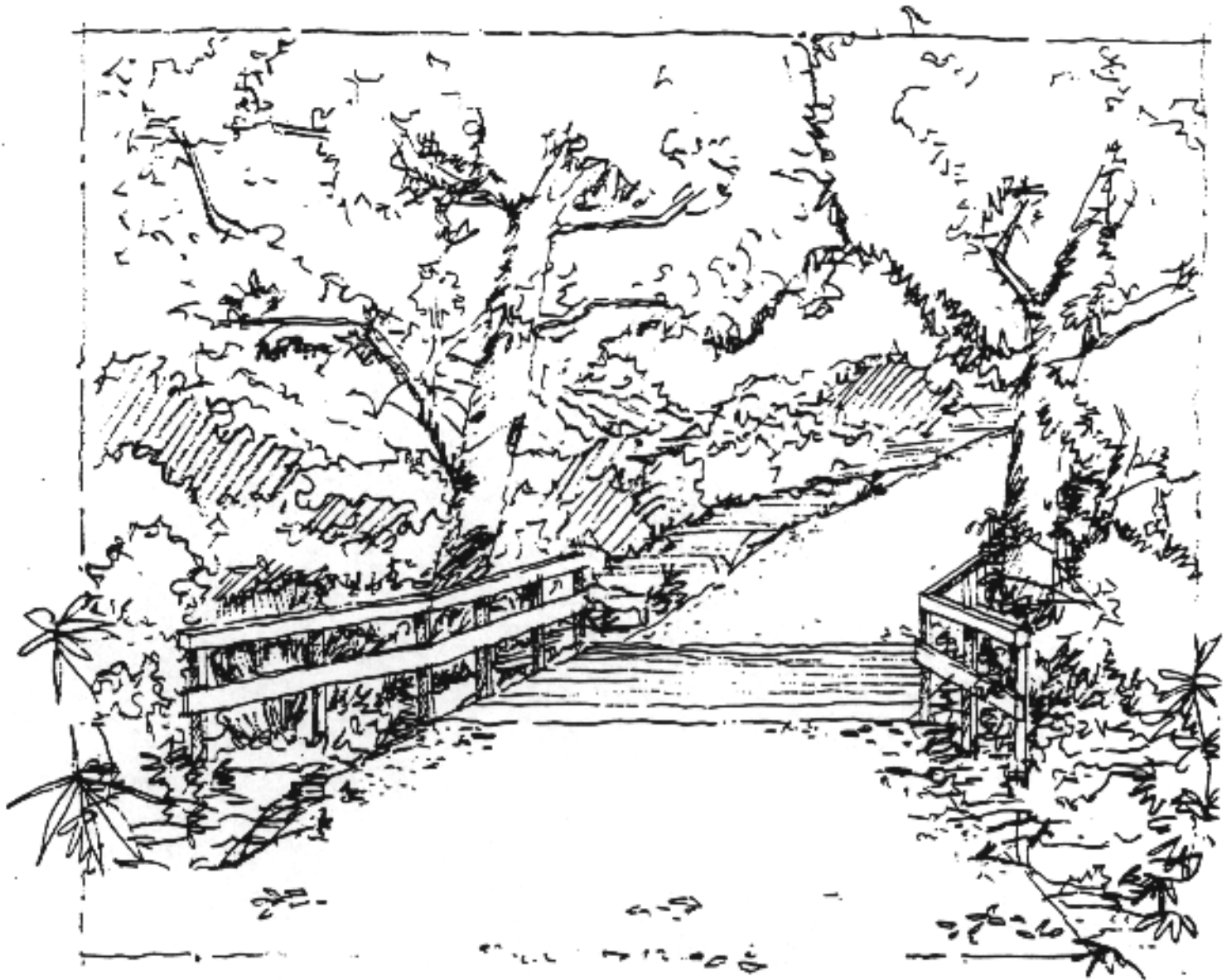
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'WRAD', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Recupero
RECUPERO AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

Attachments:

1. Rural Character Statement



SADDLEBACK MEADOWS

RURAL CHARACTER STATEMENT

Prepared for:
California Quartet, Ltd.

2354

004317

SADDLEBACK MEADOWS

RURAL CHARACTER STATEMENT

July 24, 1996

Prepared for:
California Quartet, Ltd.

Prepared by:
Michael Madden Associates

2355

004318

SADDLEBACK MEADOWS RURAL CHARACTER STATEMENT

Purpose and Intent

The purpose and intent of this "character statement" booklet is to express the preliminary community design concepts that will eventually create the visual and physical character that the Saddleback Meadows community will have. This booklet addresses the basic design elements and considerations necessary in developing any community character, and ties those elements and considerations to the Saddleback Meadows community. It responds to the project teams intent for a rural community theme and character, as well as responding to design considerations expressed by Saint Michael's Abbey, Hidden Ridge residential community, and the Ramakrishna Monastery. It is a preliminary study intended to reflect the underlying design vocabulary that has been a consistent component of all land use and site planning studies conducted for this property.

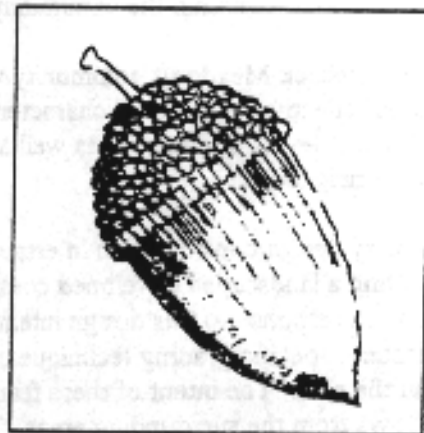
This "Rural Character Statement" is intended to be used as a guideline for community design and as a "tool of measure" to be used by the Planning Commissioners during the review of the Use Permit. The Use Permit requires a precise grading plan, detailed landscape plans, fuel modification plans and programs, architectural plans for all structures, and the precise location of all building and structures.

The planning and design of any proposed community is a combination of the physical site plan on the land and the design parameters initially established relating to the desired community character. The end result is a community whose physical character and composition relates directly with the landscape, streetscape and architectural fabric.

Approaching the Saddleback Meadows project with this philosophy, and with the desire to plan and design a community reflecting the qualities and character of a rural townscape, the initial community design elements establishing the rural character are presented in this booklet.

The "Rural Townscape" Character

The term "rural character" conjures up images of small towns set upon the land amidst a country setting. Winding roads are enveloped in trees and tree canopies. Rolling hills, field walls of stone and rock, woodlands, grasslands and fields surround the towns and provide a separation between each town. Natural areas outside of the towns are enjoyed by the people of the area for hiking, bicycling and horseback riding, exploring and treasure hunting, picnics, and rides in the country. Seasonal color through changing foliage and wild flowers accent the landscape, further emphasizing the character and appeal of the rural townscape and surrounding environment.



Villages and towns are visible and apparent within the landscape, yet blend with the land through a multitude of introduced, as well as natural features and elements. These include:

- A. Country roads that transition into a town's main street;
- B. Open fields or woodlands filtering into the outskirts of the town through open fields and parks, eliminating the visual boundary of the town and the country;
- C. In hillside environments, steep winding streets that climb with the hillside;
- D. Streetside elements such as wood rail fencing, simple wooden signs, and old street lamp;
- E. The informal arrangement of trees and other plantings, whether curbside or used in other manners, accenting the natural appeal rather than rigid uniformity; and
- F. Buildings and related architecture presenting softer earth tone qualities and utilizing materials that blend and are in harmony with the landscape and the natural elements.

The Rural Character of Saddleback Meadows

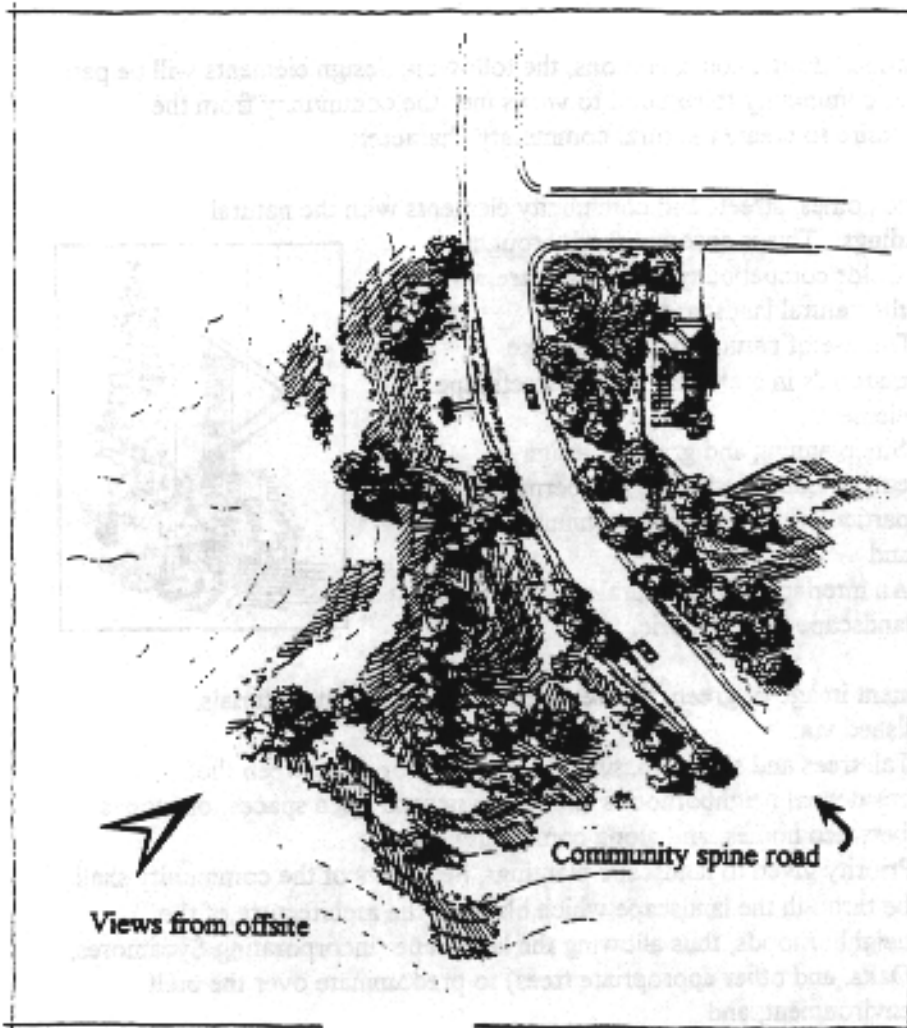
The character of the Saddleback Meadows community will be observed from two perspectives, these being:

- A. The "macro" scale:
 - 1. Public views into the community from off-site (El Toro Road, Saint Michael's Abbey, Hidden Ridge and the Ramakrishna Monastery); and
 - 2. Views of the community from within.
- B. The "micro" scale:
 - 1. Views of community elements along highly visible public edges noticeable by the passing public, such as the El Toro Road edge and natural slopes adjacent to Saint Michael's Abbey, Hidden Ridge, and the Ramakrishna Monastery; and
 - 2. Visual elements and design details throughout the community noticeable from within the community.

The Saddleback Meadows community will incorporate community wide design elements and features reflective of the rural character. These features and elements will respond to the "macro" and "micro" levels of concern, as well as addressing the design considerations expressed by the adjacent neighbors.

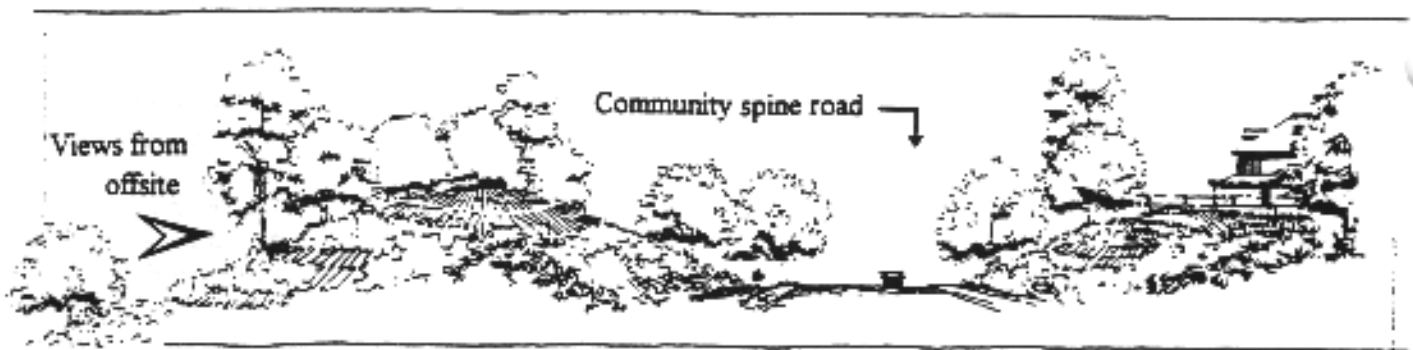
A primary design consideration in establishing the rural character of Saddleback Meadows is presenting a landscaped enveloped community when viewed from the surrounding areas and from within. In response to this design intent and the interests of the Abbey, Hidden Ridge and the Monastery, specific grading techniques, site planning, and landscape elements will be incorporated within the plan. The intent of these features will be to enhance the views of Saddleback Meadows from the surrounding areas. This will be accomplished through:

1. Creative contour grading that emphasizes and expands upon landforms;
2. Berming at select and appropriate locations to blend with natural terrain features while providing screening and buffering views into the project site from the Abbey, Hidden Ridge and the Monastery;
3. Creative site planning techniques that minimize rows of backyards along highly visible edges, incorporates slopes, landscape zones and landforms between homes and the surrounding neighbors, and neighborhood streets that climb with the terrain rather than flat roads common to non-terrain sites; and
4. An aesthetic community wide landscape that provides visual enhancement through significant perimeter and interior plantings, providing filtered views of the community from the surrounding areas and responds to seasonal changes.



Numerous design features work together to establish the rural character. Contour grading with landform enhancement provides for edge treatments responsive to the natural terrain. The community's spine road alignment responds to the terrain and allows for landscape plantings on both sides to create the rural experience while driving through the community. Creative site planning responds to the intended rural character with setbacks from the spine road.

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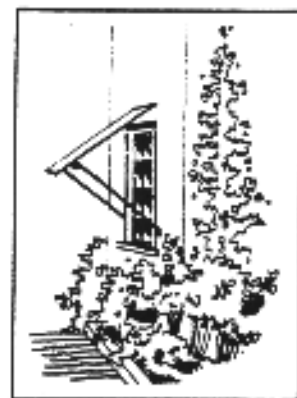


Contour grading and the creative use of berms and landforms along the community's spine road provide for screening and buffering of views into the project site from offsite.

Based upon the above described design considerations, the following design elements will be part of the Saddleback Meadows community to respond to views into the community from the surrounding areas and the desire to create the rural community character:

A. Blend the homes, streets and community elements with the natural surroundings. This is accomplished through:

- 1.) Color compatibility of architecture with the natural landscape;
- 2.) The use of natural and natural-like materials in architecture and streetscape elements;
- 3.) Site planning and grading design encouraging landforms and berming, particularly along main community streets; and
- 4.) An interlace of the natural and introduced landscape as one fabric.



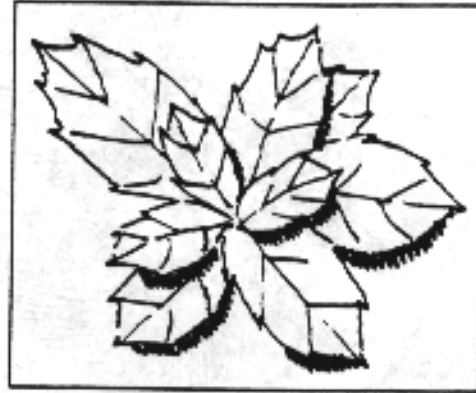
B. Predominant image of green, nature, open space and plant materials, accomplished via:

- 1.) Tall trees and shrub massings planted on slopes between the residential neighborhoods and within natural open spaces, on slopes between homes, and along community streets;
- 2.) Priority given to landscape plantings, i.e. views of the community shall be through the landscape which blankets the architecture of the neighborhoods, thus allowing the landscape (incorporating Sycamores, Oaks, and other appropriate trees) to predominate over the built environment; and

- 3.) Side slope and street tree plantings in the neighborhoods to provide for visible tree canopies above the rooflines.

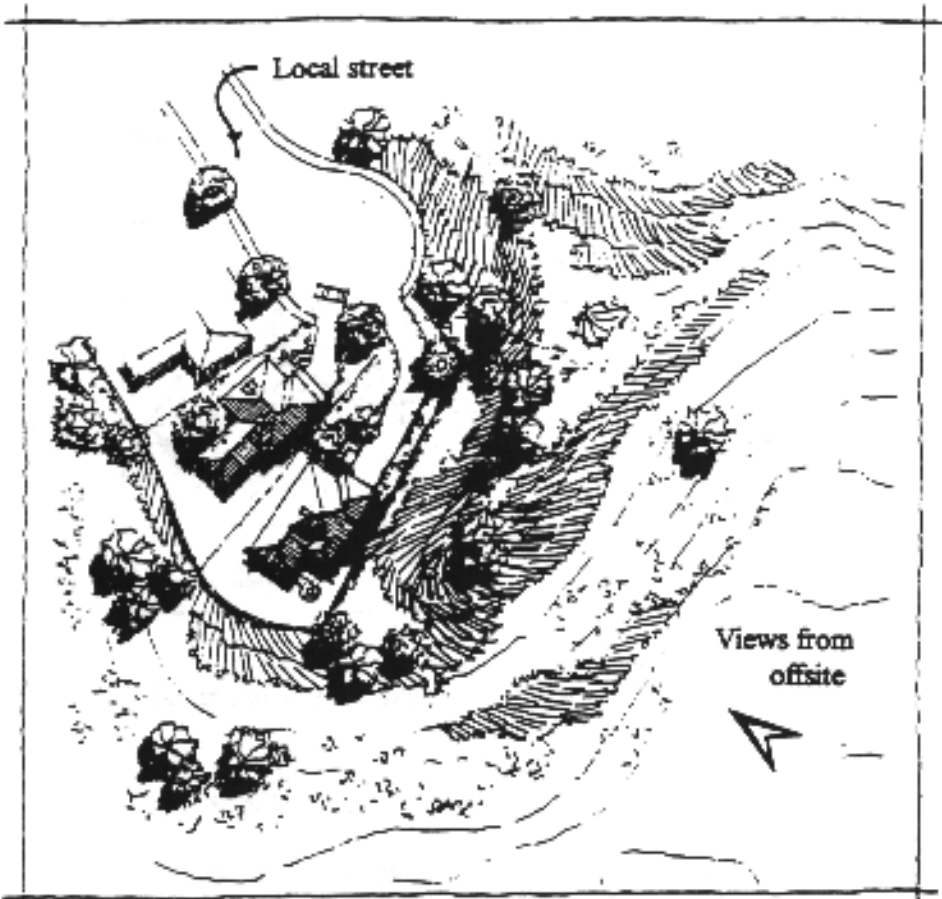
The following design parameters will be part of Saddleback Meadows in response to views from within the community and the desire to create the rural community character:

- A. View windows into natural open spaces from the community streets and "pocket parks";
- B. Informal plantings of landscape elements along the community streets, slopes and within the neighborhoods;
- C. Blending of landscape elements and landform features transitioning from the natural to the man-made;
- D. Movement in three-dimensions through landforms and plant massings, curvilinear, winding streets, and grade elevation in streets to accommodate the natural terrain;
- E. Architecture: roofs, facades, design elements and details having a theme of natural materials and elements; and
- F. Visual imagery along the community streets:
 - 1.) Informal slope plantings with tall canopy type trees for visual enclosure, presence and seasonal color;
 - 2.) Natural appearing materials such as wood rail fencing, stone/rock walls;
 - 3.) Narrow meandering walks and trails;
 - 4.) Minimal but thematic street signs and street lighting; and
 - 5.) Neighborhood tree planting requirements.

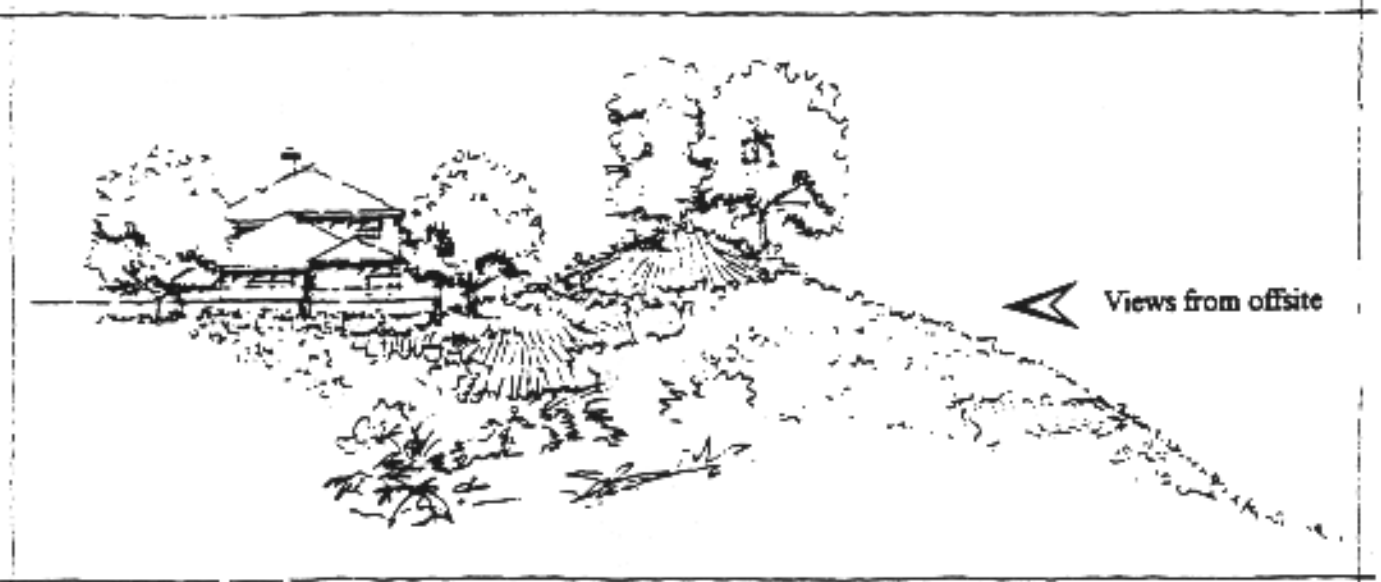


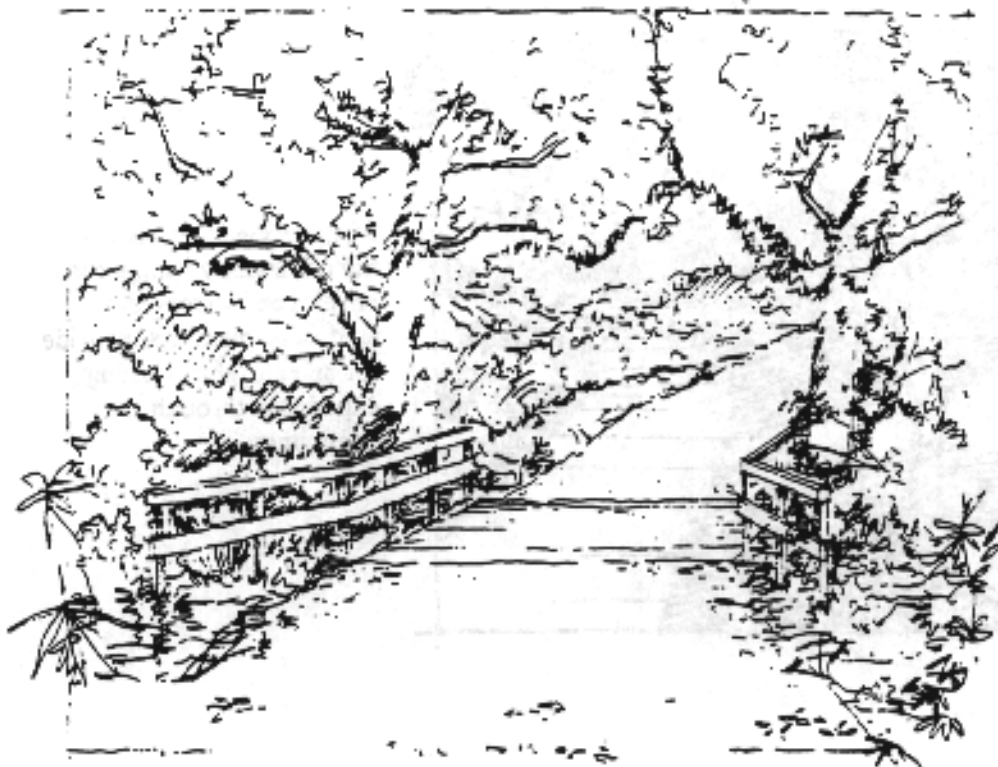
Based upon the above description of design intent in creating the rural character for the Saddleback Meadows community and responding to neighboring design interests, the following pages provide examples of design features and elements of the Saddleback Meadows project.



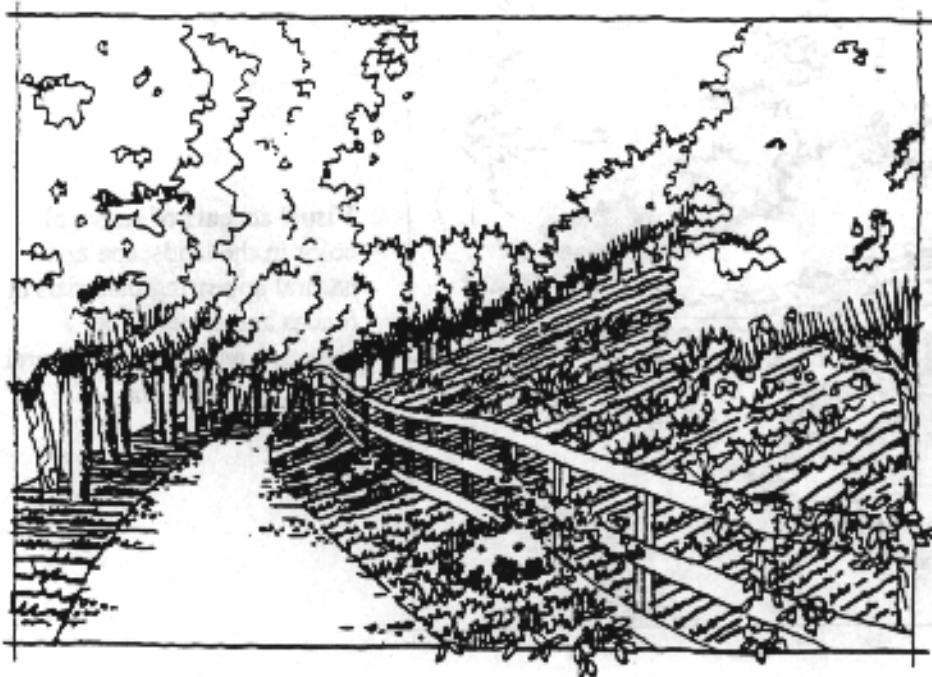


Consideration given to landforms and the replication of the existing terrain features along select project edges provides for a sense of "enclosure" for the neighborhoods while buffering views into the project from surrounding areas.

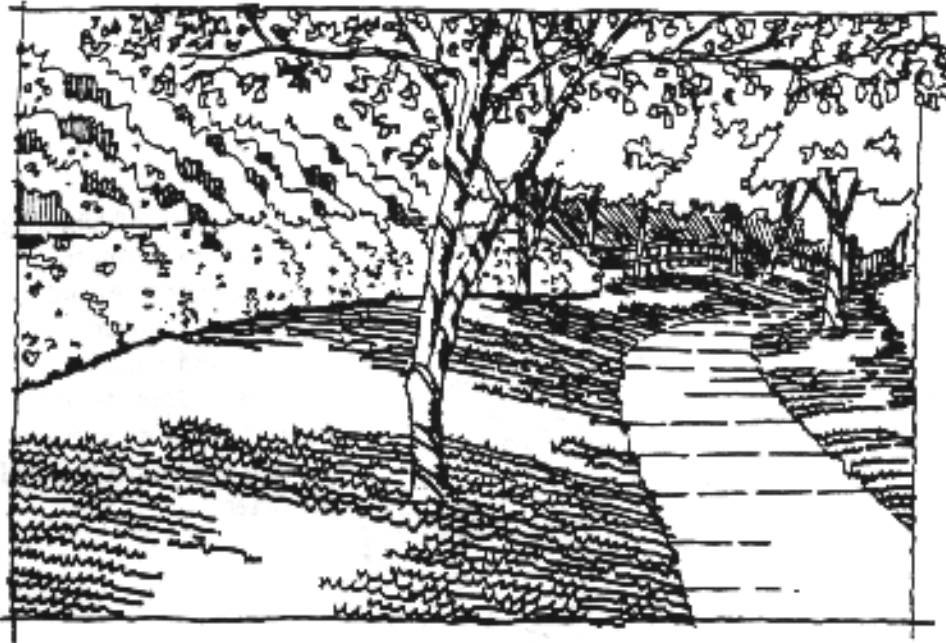




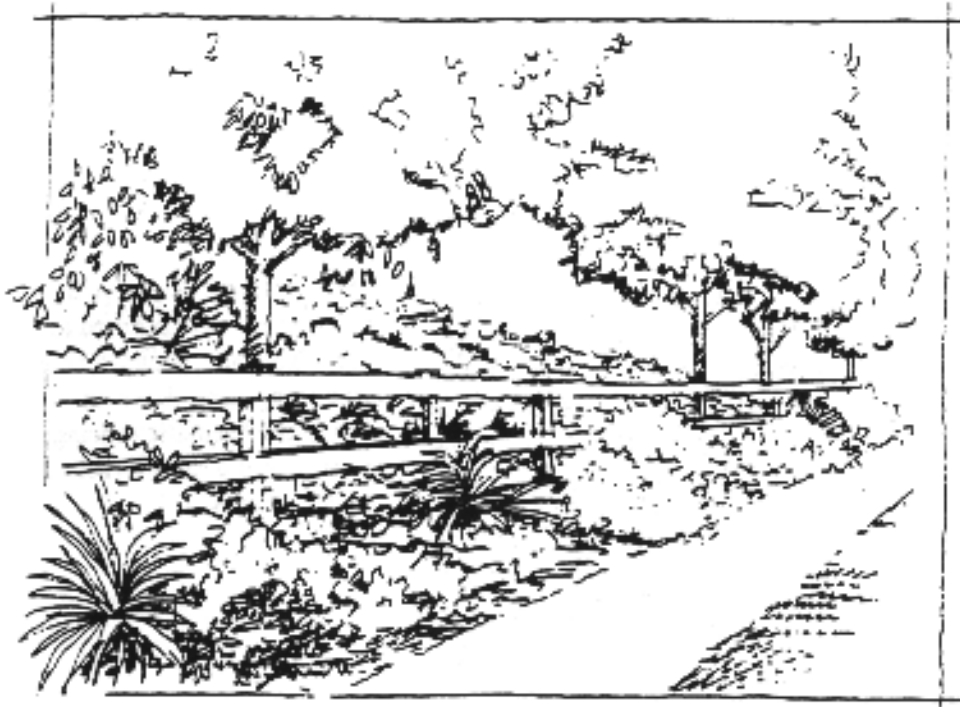
Riding, hiking and bicycling trails provide access to natural open spaces and should feature natural elements and materials. Wooden bridges provide access across swales while visually reinforcing the rural character.



Horse trails and/or bicycle trails can be incorporated as part of the community theme. Landscape setbacks from streets and thematic fencing encourage the rural flavor of the community.



Meandering sidewalks along the community's spine road, enveloped by trees and landscape plantings, provide for an enjoyable walking experience through the community.



Visual accents of seasonal color in the landscape and natural appearing materials in fences and streetscape elements encourages the rural character within the community.



Simple wood-like sign posts provide information and direction while reflecting the desired character of the community.

Visual detail along public edges (El Toro Road) emphasizes the rural nature of Saddleback Meadows. Wood-like fencing, canopy trees and slope planting reflect the community theme and allow for filtered views into the hills beyond.

