

# Folsom City Council Staff Report

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	4/14/2020
<b>AGENDA SECTION:</b>	Public Hearing
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<p>Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment – Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area (PN 19-308)</p> <p>1. Resolution No. 10399 - A Resolution to Amend the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories (without changing the maximum building height of 35 feet), to increase the maximum lot coverage for single-story residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow single-story homes situated on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment project</p>
<b>FROM:</b>	Community Development Department

**RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION**

Move to Adopt Resolution No. 10399 - A Resolution to Amend the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories (without changing the maximum building height of 35 feet), to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for single-family homes located within Villages 31, 32, 36, 40C, 48, 49, and 50 (Hillcrest and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivisions) of the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area for the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment project.

**BACKGROUND / ISSUE**

On December 1, 1992, the City Council certified the Environmental Impact Report and approved a General Plan Amendment, Rezone, Specific Plan and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map for the Russell Ranch project (now known as Empire Ranch). The 1,739.2-acre project consisted of: 3,105 single-family, low-density units; 739 single-family, high-density units; 344 multifamily units; a public golf course and private golf course; a regional commercial and neighborhood commercial site; parkland; and natural and improved open space. In 2000, the City Council approved a Specific Plan Amendment to amend the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to: establish separate development standards for each Subarea in the Plan Area, modify rear yard landscaping requirements for padded lots in the Plan Area, replace the private golf course in the Central Subarea with single-family residential land use and a five-mile looped trail system, and replace the 21-foot height limit for structures in the West, Central, East and South Sub areas, with Hillside Architectural Design Standards.

The applicant, Elliott Homes, Inc, is requesting approval of a Specific Plan Amendment to; increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories, to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for single-family homes located within Villages 31, 32, 36, 40C, 48, 49, and 50 (Hillcrest and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivisions) of the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area. The following are the specific text modifications proposed to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan:

Table 6-1A Development Standards for the West Subarea-Villages

Village #	48	49	50
Building Coverage Single-Story Residences (5)	45% <u>50%</u>	45% <u>50%</u>	45%, <u>50%</u>
Maximum Building Height (10)	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>

NOTES:

(10) Structures built on hillside lots shall not exceed two and one-half stories (35 feet maximum height); unbroken front or rear wall planes shall not exceed 21 feet in height; and structures shall be designed in accordance with Section 7.4.3. One-story single-family residences located on downslope lots are allowed to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area.

Table 6-1A Development Standards for the Central Subarea-Villages

Village #	31	32	36	40C
Building Coverage Single-Story Residences (5)	45% <u>50%</u>	45% <u>50%</u>	45% <u>50%</u>	45%, <u>50%</u>
Maximum Building Height (9)	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>

NOTES:

(9) Structures built on hillside lots shall not exceed two and one-half stories (35 feet maximum height); unbroken front or rear wall planes shall not exceed 21 feet in height; and structures shall be designed in accordance with Section 7.4.3. One-story single-family residences located on downslope lots are allowed to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area.

As noted within the Project Summary section of this staff report, the applicant has indicated that an increase in the maximum number of stories for single-family residences located within the two custom home lot subdivisions within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area from two-stories to two and one-half stories will allow more flexibility for the construction of homes on steeply sloped lots while also making the Empire Ranch Specific Plan consistent with the building height limit established by the Folsom Municipal Code for single-family residential districts. The applicant has also stated that an increase in the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences within the two custom home lot subdivisions within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area from 45% to 50% will allow more latitude with respect to building size and design. Lastly, the applicant has communicated that allowing one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area will enhance both the use and design of the lower level of the home.

The Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area features two single-family custom home lot subdivisions, the Hillcrest Subdivision (includes Villages 48, 49, and 50) located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Broadstone Parkway and Golf Links Drive and the Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivision (includes Villages 31, 32, 36, and 40C) generally located north of Broadstone Parkway and west of Empire Ranch Road. The Hillcrest Subdivision includes a total of 128 residential lots, 23 of which are currently undeveloped (18%). The Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivision includes a total of 446 residential lots, 187 of which are undeveloped (42%). A total of 210 undeveloped residential lots would be impacted by the proposed Amendment to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan.

The proposed project was considered by the Planning Commission at its February 19, 2020 meeting. The Commission engaged in a thorough review of the proposed project including a discussion regarding the existing and proposed development standards within the Empire

Ranch Specific Plan Area. In addition, the Commission asked for clarification regarding how the maximum allowable building height of 35 feet is calculated within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area and the City as a whole. Staff explained that the maximum allowable building height, which is not proposed to be changed with this project, is the vertical distance measured from the average level of the highest and lowest point of that portion of the lot covered by the building to the highest point of the roof, ridge, or parapet wall. No members of the public spoke regarding the proposed project. The Planning Commission adopted a motion (7-0-0-0) to recommend approval of the proposed project to the City Council, subject to the conditions of approval included with this report.

### **POLICY / RULE**

Folsom Municipal Code (FMC), Sections 17.37.090 and 17.37.050 require that applications for Specific Plan Amendments be forwarded to the City Council for final action, following a public hearing and recommendation by the Planning Commission.

### **ANALYSIS**

In evaluating the request for the Specific Plan Amendment, which will result in a number of modifications to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan development standards, staff took into consideration a number of factors including development standards established by the Folsom Municipal Code for similar residential districts, other comparable development standards adopted within the City, and potential impacts to existing single-family residences within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Development standards established by the Folsom Municipal Code (FMC, Section 17.13) for the Residential, Single-Family Dwelling Small Lot District (R-1-M), which is a similar zoning designation to the subject zoning designations of the properties impacted by the proposed Amendment, dictate requirements relative to maximum building height, maximum lot coverage, as well as minimum lot area, minimum lot width, setbacks, and parking. In relation to maximum number of stories and building height, the Folsom Municipal Code (FMC, Section 17.13.110) states that the “Building height limit requirement is two and one-half stories, but not to exceed thirty-five feet”. With respect to maximum lot coverage, the Folsom Municipal Code indicates that the “Maximum main building coverage in the R-1-M district is thirty-five percent of the lot area”. The Folsom Municipal Code does not make a distinction between one and two-story homes in terms of maximum building coverage.

The proposed Amendment to increase the maximum number of stories from two stories to two and one-half stories is consistent with the maximum building height limit currently established by the Folsom Municipal Code (two and one-half stories, not to exceed 35 feet) for similar zoning districts. The proposed Amendment to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50% is moderately higher than the maximum lot coverage (35%) established by the Folsom Municipal Code for both one and

two-story residences in similar zoning districts. However, the lot coverage increase request is similar to or lower than many recently approved subdivisions within the City including Mangini Ranch and Russell Ranch (both of which have smaller lot sizes than the subject lots in Empire Ranch) among others. Lastly, the proposed Amendment to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area is consistent with the Folsom Municipal Code as there is currently no development standard that would prohibit development of a lower level basement on a downslope one-story single-family residence within similar zoning districts.

In reviewing the proposed Amendments, staff took into consideration development standards approved for projects with similar residential components within the City including the Broadstone Unit No. 3 Specific Plan Area, the Parkway Specific Plan Area, and the Folsom Plan Area. In relation to maximum number of stories, the development standards for comparable developments allow single-family residences to be two and one-half stories tall, not to exceed 35 feet or allow single-family residences to be 35 feet tall with no restriction on the number for stories. With regard to maximum lot coverage, the development standards for comparable developments allow a range of maximum building coverage from 40% to 50% for one-story single-family residences. In addition, a number of subdivisions within the Folsom Plan Area have recently received approval to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 50% to 55% to accommodate various outdoor living features. Relative to building out the lower level basement area for one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots, some (Parkway Specific Plan Area) of the development standards for comparable developments are similar to the Empire Ranch development standards, while others (Broadstone Unit No. 3 Specific Plan Area and Folsom Plan Area) have no development standards that would prohibit development of a lower level basement on the downslope one-story single-family residences.

As described above, the proposed Amendment to increase the maximum number of stories from two stories to two and one-half stories is consistent with the maximum building height limit (two and one-half stories, not to exceed 35 feet or 35 feet tall with no restriction on the number for stories) established by the developed standards for comparable projects within the City. The proposed Amendment to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50% is lower than or equal to the maximum lot coverage (40% to 50%) established by development standards for comparable projects. Finally, the proposed Amendment to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area is compatible with a majority of the development standards for comparable projects as those projects have no development standards that would prohibit development of a lower level basement on the downslope one-story single-family residences.

In considering the proposed Amendments, staff also considered potential impacts the modifications to the development standards may have on existing single-family residences in the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area and surrounding residential neighborhoods. With respect to increasing the maximum number of stories from two to two and one-half stories, staff does not anticipate any negative visual impacts to nearby properties as the maximum allowable building height (35 feet) is not changing, but only the number of floors that can be incorporated into the home design. In addition, the surrounding residential neighborhoods outside of Empire Ranch are already permitted a maximum building height of two and one-half stories, not to exceed 35 feet for single-family residences, which is identical to the Amendment that the applicant is requesting. Staff has also determined that the lot coverage increase from 45% to 50% for one-story single-family residences will not have significant visual impact on nearby properties as the proposed increase is minimal in nature and is only applicable to one-story residences. In addition, staff has determined that allowing the lower level basement on the downslope one-story single-family residences to be partially developed will enhance the visual appearance of these homes by allowing for additional architectural details.

In summary, staff has determined that the proposed Specific Plan Amendment, which includes three Amendments to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, will be beneficial in resolving various challenges that homebuilders and homebuyers are facing in developing custom home lots within the Hillcrest and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivisions. In particular, staff has determined that increasing the maximum number of stories from two stories to two and one-half stories will allow residences within these subdivisions to be developed in a manner consistent with other subdivisions throughout the City. Staff has also determined that increasing the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50% will provide increased flexibility with respect to the size and design of single-story homes within these custom home subdivisions without causing any negative visual impacts. Lastly, staff has determined that allowing one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area will improve the use of the of the basement area while also allowing enhancements to the architectural design of the lower level of the home.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

No financial impact is anticipated with approval of Resolution No. 10399

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15061(b)(3) (Review for Exemption) of the CEQA Guidelines.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Resolution No. 10399 A Resolution to Amend the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories (without changing the maximum building height of 35 feet), to increase the maximum lot coverage for single-story residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow single-story homes situated on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment project
2. Vicinity Map
3. Specific Plan Amendment Exhibit
4. Site Photographs of Existing Homes in Empire Ranch
5. Planning Commission Staff Report, dated February 19, 2020

Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pam Johns", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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PAM JOHNS  
Community Development Director

## Attachment 1

Resolution No. 10399 – A Resolution to Amend the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories (without changing the maximum building height of 35 feet), to increase the maximum lot coverage for single-story residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow single-story homes situated on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment project



**RESOLUTION NO. 10399**

**A RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE EMPIRE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF STORIES FOR SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES FROM TWO-STORIES TO TWO AND ONE/HALF STORIES (WITHOUT CHANGING THE MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT OF 35 FEET), TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM LOT COVERAGE FOR SINGLE-STORY RESIDENCES FROM 45% TO 50%, AND TO ALLOW SINGLE-STORY HOMES SITUATED ON DOWNSLOPE LOTS TO BUILD OUT THE LOWER LEVEL BASEMENT AREA TO A MAXIMUM OF 25% OF THE FLOOR AREA OF THE PRIMARY FLOOR AREA FOR THE EMPIRE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT PROJECT**

**WHEREAS**, the Planning Commission on February 19, 2020, held a public hearing on the proposed Amendment to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, considered public comment and based on the information and analysis provided, determined that increasing the maximum building height from two-stories to two and one-half stories for single-family residences located in specific villages within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area will allow residences within these villages to be developed in a manner consistent with other subdivisions throughout the City; and

**WHEREAS**, the Planning Commission on February 19, 2020, held a public hearing on the proposed Amendment to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, considered public comment and based on the information and analysis provided, determined that increasing the maximum lot coverage for single-story residences from 45% to 50% for specific villages within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area will provide increased flexibility with respect to the size and design of single-story homes within these custom home subdivisions without causing any negative visual impacts; and

**WHEREAS**, the Planning Commission on February 19, 2020, held a public hearing on the proposed Amendment to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, considered public comment and based on the information and analysis provided, determined that allowing single-story homes situated on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area will improve the use of the of the basement area while also allowing enhancements to the architectural design of the lower level of the home; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed Amendment to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan is consistent with the City's General Plan, the Zoning Code of the City, and the Empire Ranch Specific Plan as Amended by the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment; and

**WHEREAS**, notice has been given at the time and in the manner required by State Law and City Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15061(b)(3) (Review for Exemption) of the CEQA Guidelines; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City Council of the City of Folsom hereby Approves a Specific Plan Amendment to increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories (without changing the maximum building height of 35 feet), to increase the maximum lot coverage for single-story residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow single-story homes situated on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment project as set forth in the Specific Plan Map Exhibit and the Empire Ranch Development Standards Tables attached as Exhibit "A" with the following findings:

**GENERAL FINDINGS**

- A. NOTICE OF HEARING HAS BEEN GIVEN AT THE TIME AND IN THE MANNER REQUIRED BY STATE LAW AND CITY CODE.
- B. WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT, THE PROJECT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND THE EMPIRE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN.

**CEQA FINDINGS**

- C. THE PROJECT IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) UNDER SECTION 15061(B)(3) (REVIEW FOR EXEMPTION) OF THE CEQA GUIDELINES.

**SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT FINDING**

- D. THE PROJECT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE CITY'S GENERAL PLAN, THE EMPIRE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN, AND RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE FOLSOM MUNICIPAL CODE WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** this 14th day of April, 2020, by the following roll-call vote:

**AYES:** Council Member(s):  
**NOES:** Council Member(s):  
**ABSENT:** Council Member(s):  
**ABSTAIN:** Council Member(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sarah Aquino, MAYOR

ATTEST:

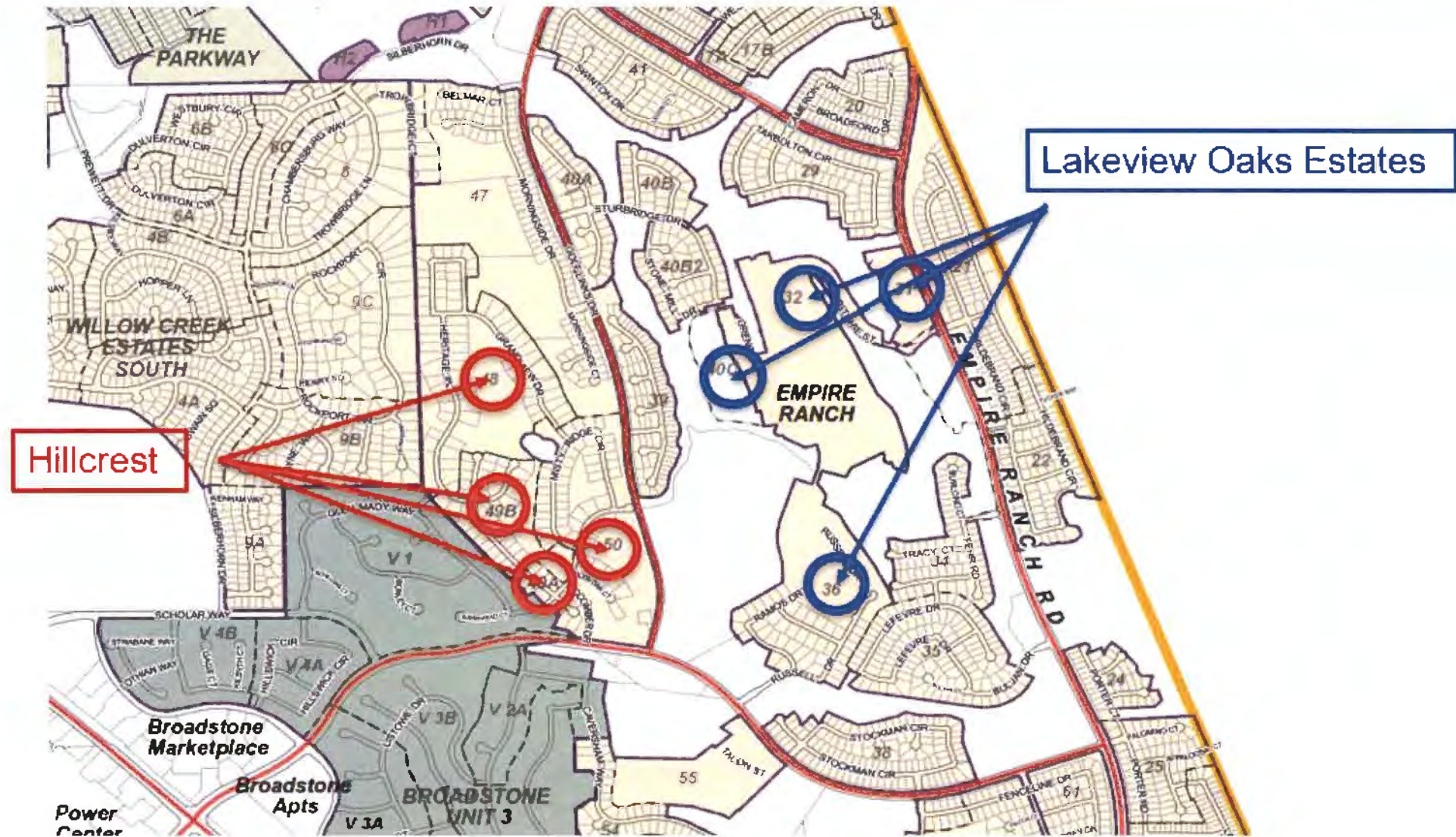
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Christa Freemantle, CITY CLERK

# Exhibit A

# Areas Affected by Changes



CITY OF  
**FOLSOM**



## Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment Exhibit

Table 6-1A Development Standards for the West Subarea-Villages

Village #	48	49	50
Building Coverage Single-Story Residences (5)	45% <u>50%</u>	45% <u>50%</u>	45%, <u>50%</u>
Maximum Building Height (10)	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½ Stories</u>

NOTES:

(10) Structures built on hillside lots shall not exceed two **and one-half stories** (35 feet maximum height); unbroken front or rear wall planes shall not exceed 21 feet in height; and structures shall be designed in accordance with Section 7.4.3. **One-story single-family residences located on downslope lots are allowed to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area.**

Table 6-1A Development Standards for the Central Subarea-Villages

Village #	31	32	36	40C
Building Coverage Single-Story Residences (5)	45% <u>50%</u>	45% <u>50%</u>	45% <u>50%</u>	45%, <u>50%</u>
Maximum Building Height (9)	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½</u> <u>Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½</u> <u>Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½</u> <u>Stories</u>	35 Feet <u>and</u> <u>2 ½</u> <u>Stories</u>

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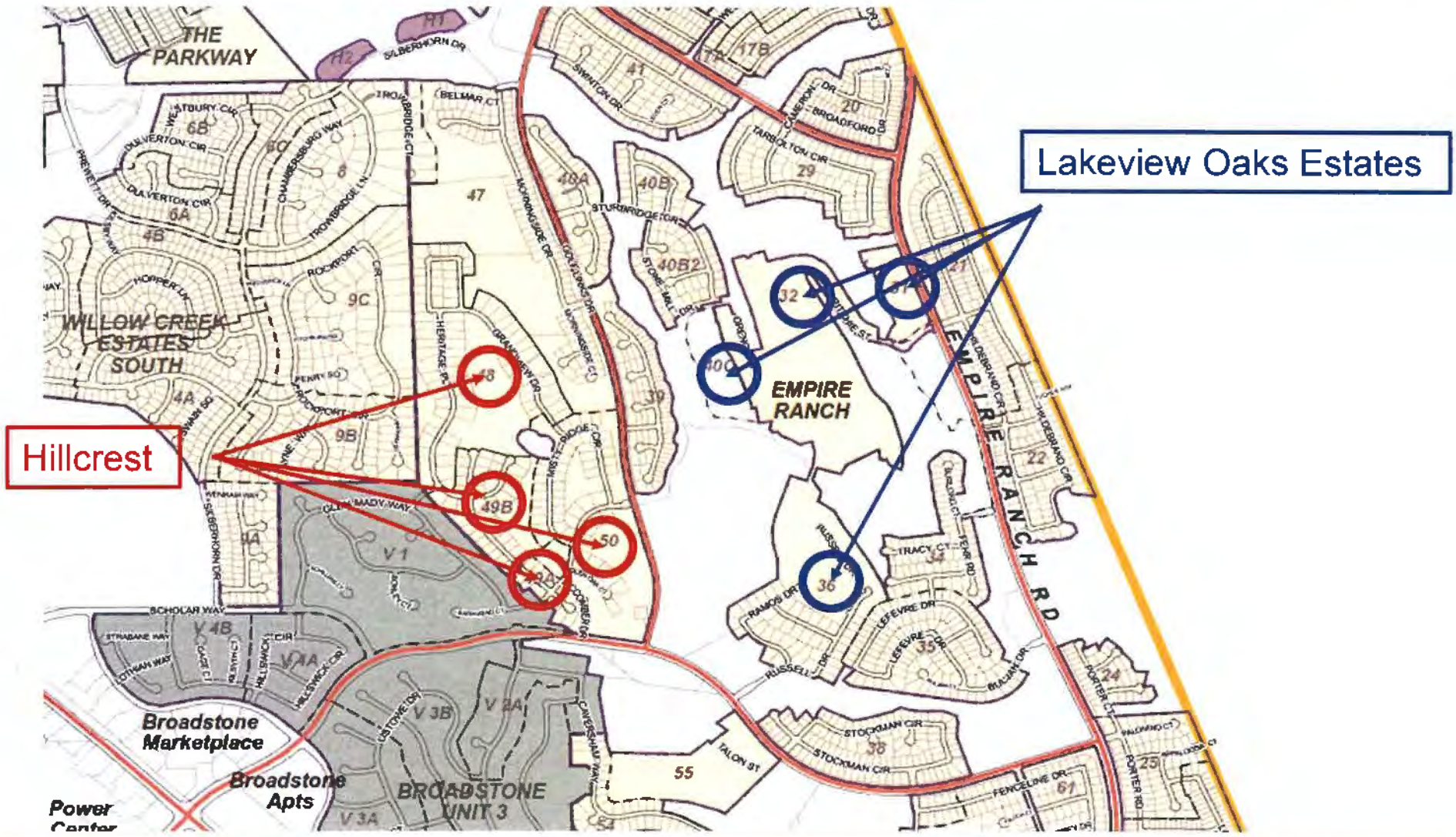
**Attachment 2**

**Vicinity Map**

# Vicinity Map



CITY OF  
**FOLSOM**



## Attachment 3

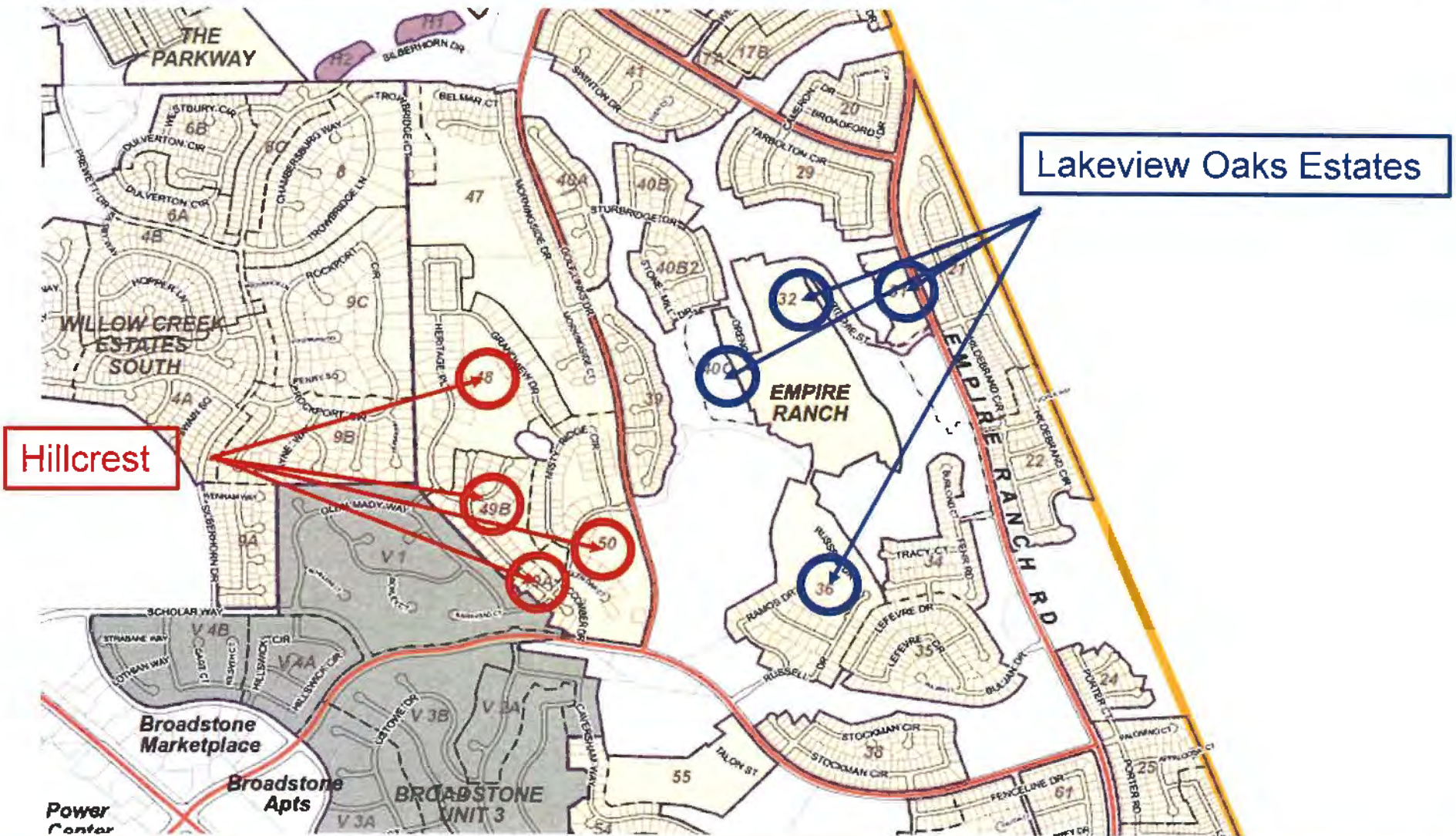
### Specific Plan Amendment Exhibit



# Specific Plan Map Exhibit



CITY OF  
**FOLSOM**



# Empire Ranch Development Standards



CITY OF  
FOLSOM

Table 6-1A Development Standards for the West Subarea-Villages

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## NOTES:

(10) Structures built on hillside lots shall not exceed two and one-half stories (35 feet maximum height); unbroken front or rear wall planes shall not exceed 21 feet in height; and structures shall be designed in accordance with Section 7.4.3. One-story single-family residences located on downslope lots are allowed to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area.

# Empire Ranch Development Standards



CITY OF  
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## NOTES:

(9) Structures built on hillside lots shall not exceed two and one-half stories (35 feet maximum height); unbroken front or rear wall planes shall not exceed 21 feet in height; and structures shall be designed in accordance with Section 7.4.3. One-story single-family residences located on downslope lots are allowed to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area.

## Attachment 4

### Site Photographs of Existing Homes in Empire Ranch







**Attachment 5**

**Planning Commission Staff Report  
Dated February 19, 2020**





CITY OF  
**FOLSOM**  
DISTINCTIVE BY NATURE

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1**

**Type: Public Hearing**

**Date: February 5, 2020**

## **Planning Commission Staff Report**

50 Natoma Street, Council Chambers  
Folsom, CA 95630

**Project:** Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment  
**File #:** PN-19-308  
**Request:** Specific Plan Amendment  
**Location:** Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area (Villages 31, 32, 36, 40C, 48, 49, and 50)  
**Staff Contact:** Steve Banks, Principal Planner, 916-461-6207  
sbanks@folsom.ca.us

### **Applicant/Property Owner**

Name: Elliott Homes, Inc.  
Address: 340 Palladio Parkway, Suite 521  
Folsom, CA 95630

**Recommendation:** Conduct a public hearing and upon conclusion recommend to City Council Approval of a Specific Plan Amendment to; increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories, to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for single-family homes located within Villages 31, 32, 36, 40C, 48, 49, and 50 (Hillcrest Subdivision and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivision) of the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area for the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment project (PN 19-308) subject to the findings (Findings A-D) attached to this report.

**Project Summary:** The proposed project involves a request for approval of a Specific Plan Amendment to make three modifications to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to assist homebuilders in addressing challenges they are facing in constructing custom homes within the Hillcrest and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivisions (Empire Ranch, Villages 31, 32, 36, 40C, 48, 49, and 50). The first modification to the Specific Plan is a request to increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories to better accommodate development of custom homes on steeply sloped lots and to be consistent with the Folsom Municipal Code for single-family residential districts. The second modification to the Specific Plan is a request to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50% to allow more flexibility in terms of building size and design. The third modification to the Specific Plan is a request to allow one-story single-family residences



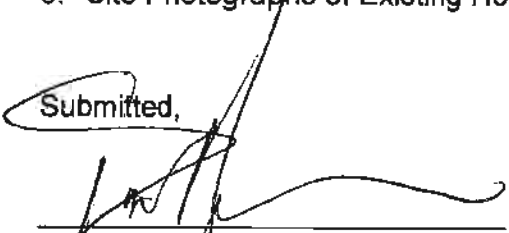
CITY OF  
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DISTINCTIVE BY NATURE

located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area to enhance the use and design of the lower level of the home.

**Table of Contents:**

1. Description/Analysis
2. Background
3. Vicinity Map
4. Specific Plan Amendment Exhibit
5. Site Photographs of Existing Homes in Empire Ranch

Submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
PAM JOHNS

Community Development Director

**ATTACHMENT 1  
 DESCRIPTION/ANALYSIS**

**APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL**

The applicant, Elliott Homes, Inc, is requesting approval of a Specific Plan Amendment to; increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories, to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for single-family homes located within Villages 31, 32, 36, 40C, 48, 49, and 50 (Hillcrest and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivisions) of the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area. The following are the specific text modifications proposed to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan:

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Village #	31	32	36	40C
Building Coverage Single-Story Residences (5)	<del>45%</del> <b><u>50%</u></b>	<del>45%</del> <b><u>50%</u></b>	<del>45%</del> <b><u>50%</u></b>	<del>45%</del> , <b><u>50%</u></b>
Maximum Building Height (9)	35 Feet <b><u>and</u></b> <b><u>2 ½ Stories</u></b>	35 Feet <b><u>and</u></b> <b><u>2 ½ Stories</u></b>	35 Feet <b><u>and</u></b> <b><u>2 ½ Stories</u></b>	35 Feet <b><u>and</u></b> <b><u>2 ½ Stories</u></b>

NOTES:

(9) Structures built on hillside lots shall not exceed two **and one-half stories** (35 feet maximum height); unbroken front or rear wall planes shall not exceed 21 feet in height; and structures shall be designed in accordance with Section 7.4.3. **One-story single-family residences located on downslope lots are allowed to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area.**

As noted within the Project Summary section of this staff report, the applicant has indicated that an increase in the maximum number of stories for single-family residences located within the two custom home lot subdivisions within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area from two-stories to two and one-half stories will allow more flexibility for the construction of homes on steeply sloped lots while also making the Empire Ranch Specific Plan consistent with the building height limit established by the Folsom Municipal Code for single-family residential districts. The applicant has also stated that an increase in the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences within the two custom home lot subdivisions within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area from 45% to 50% will allow more latitude with respect to building size and design. Lastly, the applicant has communicated that allowing one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area will enhance both the use and design of the lower level of the home.

The Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area features two single-family custom home lot subdivisions, the Hillcrest Subdivision (includes Villages 48, 49, and 50) located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Broadstone Parkway and Golf Links Drive and the Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivision (includes Villages 31, 32, 36, and 40C) generally located north of Broadstone Parkway and west of Empire Ranch Road. The Hillcrest Subdivision includes a total of 128 residential lots, 23 of which are currently undeveloped (18%). The Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivision includes a total of 446 residential lots, 187 of which are undeveloped (42%). A total of 210 undeveloped residential lots would be impacted by the proposed Amendment to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan.

**POLICY/RULE**

Folsom Municipal Code (FMC), Sections 17.37.090 and 17.37.050 require that applications for Specific Plan Amendments be forwarded to the City Council for final action, following a public hearing and recommendation by the Planning Commission.

## **ANALYSIS**

In evaluating the request for the Specific Plan Amendment, which will result in a number of modifications to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan development standards, staff took into consideration a number of factors including development standards established by the Folsom Municipal Code for similar residential districts, other comparable development standards adopted within the City, and potential impacts to existing single-family residences within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Development standards established by the Folsom Municipal Code (FMC, Section 17.13) for the Residential, Single-Family Dwelling Small Lot District (R-1-M), which is a similar zoning designation to the subject zoning designations of the properties impacted by the proposed Amendment, dictate requirements relative to maximum building height, maximum lot coverage, as well as minimum lot area, minimum lot width, setbacks, and parking. In relation to maximum number of stories and building height, the Folsom Municipal Code (FMC, Section 17.13.110) states that the “Building height limit requirement is two and one-half stories, but not to exceed thirty-five feet”. With respect to maximum lot coverage, the Folsom Municipal Code indicates that the “Maximum main building coverage in the R-1-M district is thirty-five percent of the lot area”. The Folsom Municipal Code does not make a distinction between one and two-story homes in terms of maximum building coverage.

The proposed Amendment to increase the maximum number of stories from two stories to two and one-half stories is consistent with the maximum building height limit currently established by the Folsom Municipal Code (two and one-half stories, not to exceed 35 feet) for similar zoning districts. The proposed Amendment to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50% is moderately higher than the maximum lot coverage (35%) established by the Folsom Municipal Code for both one and two-story residences in similar zoning districts. However, the lot coverage increase request is similar to or lower than many recently approved subdivisions within the City including Mangini Ranch and Russell Ranch among others. Lastly, the proposed Amendment to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area is consistent with the Folsom Municipal Code as there is currently no development standard that would prohibit development of a lower level basement on a downslope one-story single-family residence within similar zoning districts.

In reviewing the proposed Amendments, staff took into consideration development standards approved for projects with similar residential components within the City including the Broadstone Unit No. 3 Specific Plan Area, the Parkway Specific Plan Area, and the Folsom Plan Area. In relation to maximum number of stories, the development standards for comparable developments allow single-family residences to be two and

one-half stories tall, not to exceed 35 feet or allow single-family residences to be 35 feet tall with no restriction on the number for stories. With regard to maximum lot coverage, the development standards for comparable developments allow a range of maximum building coverage from 40% to 50% for one-story single-family residences. In addition, a number of subdivisions within the Folsom Plan Area have recently received approval to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 50% to 55% to accommodate various outdoor living features. Relative to building out the lower level basement area for one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots, some (Parkway Specific Plan Area) of the development standards for comparable developments are similar to the Empire Ranch development standards, while others (Broadstone Unit No. 3 Specific Plan Area and Folsom Plan Area) have no development standards that would prohibit development of a lower level basement on the downslope one-story single-family residences.

As described above, the proposed Amendment to increase the maximum number of stories from two stories to two and one-half stories is consistent with the maximum building height limit (two and one-half stories, not to exceed 35 feet or 35 feet tall with no restriction on the number for stories) established by the developed standards for comparable projects within the City. The proposed Amendment to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50% is lower than or equal to the maximum lot coverage (40% to 50%) established by development standards for comparable projects. Finally, the proposed Amendment to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area is compatible with a majority of the development standards for comparable projects as those projects have no development standards that would prohibit development of a lower level basement on the downslope one-story single-family residences.

In considering the proposed Amendments, staff also considered potential impacts the modifications to the development standards may have on existing single-family residences in the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area and surrounding residential neighborhoods. With respect to increasing the maximum number of stories from two to two and one-half stories, staff does not anticipate any negative visual impacts to nearby properties as the maximum allowable building height (35 feet) is not changing, but only the number of floors that can be incorporated into the home design. In addition, the surrounding residential neighborhoods outside of Empire Ranch are already permitted a maximum building height of two and one-half stories, not to exceed 35 feet for single-family residences, which is identical to the Amendment that the applicant is requesting. Staff has also determined that the lot coverage increase from 45% to 50% for one-story single-family residences will not have significant visual impact on nearby properties as the proposed increase is minimal in nature and is only applicable to one-story residences. In addition, staff has determined that allowing the lower level basement on

the downslope one-story single-family residences to be partially developed will enhance the visual appearance of these homes by allowing for additional architectural details.

In summary, staff has determined that the proposed Specific Plan Amendment, which includes three Amendments to the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, will be beneficial in resolving various challenges that homebuilders and homebuyers are facing in developing custom home lots within the Hillcrest and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivisions. In particular, staff has determined that increasing the maximum number of stories from two stories to two and one-half stories will allow residences within these subdivisions to be developed in a manner consistent with other subdivision throughout the City. Staff has also determined that increasing the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50% will provide increased flexibility with respect to the size and design of single-story homes within these custom home subdivisions without causing any negative visual impacts. Lastly, staff has determined that allowing one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area will improve the use of the of the basement area while also allowing enhancements to the architectural design of the lower level of the home.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15061(b)(3) (Review for Exemption) of the CEQA Guidelines.

#### **RECOMMENDATION/PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION**

Conduct a public hearing and upon conclusion recommend approval of a Specific Plan Amendment to; increase the maximum number of stories for single-family residences from two-stories to two and one-half stories (without changing the maximum building height of 35 feet), to increase the maximum lot coverage for one-story single-family residences from 45% to 50%, and to allow one-story single-family residences located on downslope lots to build out the lower level basement area to a maximum of 25% of the floor area of the primary floor area for single-family homes located within Villages 31, 32, 36, 40C, 48, 49, and 50 (Hillcrest and Lakeview Oaks Estates Subdivisions) of the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area for the Empire Ranch Specific Plan Amendment project (PN 19-308) subject to the findings (Findings A-D) attached to this report.

#### **GENERAL FINDINGS**

- A. NOTICE OF HEARING HAS BEEN GIVEN AT THE TIME AND IN THE MANNER REQUIRED BY STATE LAW AND CITY CODE.
- B. WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT, THE PROJECT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND THE EMPIRE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN.

**CEQA FINDINGS**

- C. THE PROJECT IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) UNDER SECTION 15061(B)(3) (REVIEW FOR EXEMPTION) OF THE CEQA GUIDELINES.

**SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT FINDING**

- D. THE PROJECT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE CITY'S GENERAL PLAN, THE EMPIRE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN, AND RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE FOLSOM MUNICIPAL CODE WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT.



**ATTACHMENT 2  
BACKGROUND**

**BACKGROUND**

On December 1, 1992, the City Council certified the Environmental Impact Report and approved a General Plan Amendment, Rezone, Specific Plan and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map for the Russell Ranch project (now known as Empire Ranch). The 1,739.2-acre project consisted of: 3,105 single-family, low-density units; 739 single-family, high-density units; 344 multifamily units; a public golf course and private golf course; a regional commercial and neighborhood commercial site; parkland; and natural and improved open space. In 2000, the City Council approved a Specific Plan Amendment to amend the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to: establish separate development standards for each Subarea in the Plan Area, modify rear yard landscaping requirements for padded lots in the Plan Area, replace the private golf course in the Central Subarea with single-family residential land use and a five-mile looped trail system, and replace the 21-foot height limit for structures in the West, Central, East and South Sub areas, with Hillside Architectural Design Standards.

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION**

SF (Single Family)

**ZONING DESIGNATION**

SP 92-3 (Empire Ranch Specific Plan Area) with Underlying Zoning of R-1-M (Residential, Single-Family Dwelling, Small Lot District)

**ADJACENT LAND USES/ZONING**

North: Single-Family Residential Development (SP 92-3) with Residential Development Beyond  
South: Broadstone Parkway with Single-Family Residential Development (SP 92-3)  
East: Golf Links Drive with Single-Family Residential Development (SP 92-3) Beyond  
West: Single-Family Residential Development (SP 95-1) with Residential Development Beyond

**SITE CHARACTERISTICS**

The Hillcrest and Lake View Oaks Estates Subdivisions are fully improved with streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, underground utilities, landscaping, lighting, and fencing. Approximately 259 of the 446 residential lots within the two subdivisions are developed

with single-family residences, with 187 lots remaining to be developed.

**APPLICABLE CODES**

FMC 17.13, Residential, Single-Family Dwelling, Small-Lot District  
FMC 17.37, Specific Plan District  
Empire Ranch Specific Plan