2 PLANNING AREA DESCRIPTION

2.1 LOCATION

Hecker Pass is located within the City of Gilroy near the western city limit. Figure 2-1 illustrates the regional location of the Hecker Pass Area.

Figure 2-1: Location Map
The *Hecker Pass Specific Plan* covers all of the areas designated as "Hecker Pass Special Use District" on the "City of Gilroy General Plan Land Use Map." The *Specific Plan* also takes into consideration Bonfante Gardens, the municipal Golf Course, and the property between the "Hecker Pass Special Use District" and Santa Teresa Boulevard (the Village Green property). These land uses are important to consider since their interface plays an important role in how the *Specific Plan* was designed.

The Village Green Property, currently under construction at the southwest corner of Hecker Pass Highway and Santa Teresa Boulevard, includes a 3-story state-of-the-art Alzheimer Facility, 75 senior apartments, and 76 senior patio homes. This very dense urban development forms a strong urban interface to the rural Specific Plan Area. Rather than creating a hard edge, the *Specific Plan* gradually transitions the intensity of development from the Village Green project into the Specific Plan Area. Development immediately adjacent to Village Green will consist of less density and the incorporation of the rural design theme but will be more intense then development to the west, which will consist of agricultural fields and clustered residential units. This approach provides a more graceful entry into the Specific Plan Area and helps define the area as a gateway to the City.

The Gilroy Golf Course, located north of Hecker Pass Highway and east of Burchell Road, and Bonfante Gardens Theme Park provide recreational amenities to the Specific Plan Area. These adjacent uses serve as a potential draw for tourist and Gilroy residents. Therefore, the *Specific Plan* sites agri-tourist commercial development adjacent to the Golf Course to further attract tourists and Gilroy residents to these uses. The Golf Course also adds to the overall scenic value of the Specific Plan Area.

Figure 2-2 shows the Specific Plan Area in relationship to surrounding land uses.
Figure 2-2: Specific Plan Area and Surrounding Uses
Hecker Pass Highway divides the Specific Plan Area into two sections. Areas north of Hecker Pass Highway consist of steep hillsides, most of which cannot be developed. The highest elevation is 442 feet above sea level. Some flatter portions suitable for development exist near Santa Teresa Boulevard and near the western boundary of the Specific Plan Area adjacent to the Municipal Golf Course. The southern portion of the Hecker Pass Area consists of flat lands, the Uvas Creek floodplain, and the Uvas Creek Riparian corridor. The lowest elevation, located near the southeastern portion of the site in Uvas Creek, is 203 feet above sea level.
2.3 VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

The Hecker Pass Special Use District is comprised of primarily agricultural lands, grasslands, oak woodlands, and riparian woodlands. The agricultural and horticultural lands that make up the majority of the Specific Plan Area contain predominantly cultivated fields and horticultural operations and do not contain naturally occurring species, nor do they provide suitable habitat for wildlife. These agricultural fields and the historic structures associated with these properties, however, contribute to the rural character of the area and provide the scenic qualities that have been valued by the Gilroy community. Uvas Creek and the riparian woodland, which form the southern and western boundaries of the Specific Plan Area, contain the most environmentally sensitive habitat and provide much of the scenic qualities of the area. The hillsides north of Hecker Pass Highway provide a scenic backdrop for the Hecker Pass Area. These hillsides contain grasslands and oak woodlands, which also provide habitat for wildlife and plant species.

2.4 EXISTING LAND USES

The Hecker Pass Specific Plan Area consists of 29 parcels owned by 24 individual property owners. Figure 2-3 shows the individual parcels and their property owners. Numerous existing hillside residences and a Lutheran Church are located north of Hecker Pass Highway west of Santa Teresa Boulevard. A large portion of the steep hillsides north of Hecker Pass Highway has already been planned for development as part of the Country Estates and The Forest residential communities. The remaining lands north of Hecker Pass Highway are owned by the Hoey family and include the existing Hoey Ranch residence. The Gilroy Municipal Golf Course lies immediately west of the Hoey property, west of the Specific Plan Area.
Most development within the Specific Plan Area has occurred south of Hecker Pass Highway. Uvas Creek and its associated riparian corridor form the southern and western boundary of these properties. Lands within the Specific Plan Area located south of Hecker Pass Highway consist of the following:

- The Village Green Property (Portion of APN 810-21-006): Approximately 7 acres of the Village Green property, located south of the Third Street Extension and consisting of natural riparian habitat, are located in the Specific Plan Area.

- South Valley Community Church (APN 810-21-004 & 005): Immediately west of Village Green, is the South Valley Community Church property (Formerly the Conrotto and Takeyatsu properties). This property currently consists of vacant lands, fallow vineyards, two residences, and some dilapidated structures.

- The Filice Property (APN 810-21-003): West of the South Valley Community Church property is the Filice property, which remains undeveloped and consists of vineyards and some agricultural land dry farmed with hay.

- The Vanni Property (APN 810-21-002): West of the Filice property is the Vanni property. The Vanni family is actively cultivating vineyards on this property as part of the Solis Winery.

- Goldsmith Seeds (APN 810-21-001 & 005): Goldsmith Seeds, Inc. is the most prominent development in the Specific Plan Area. Goldsmith Seeds, Inc. is an ongoing flower seed production, research, and development facility, which consists of numerous greenhouses, office buildings, a swimming pool and other recreational amenities, planted fields and demonstration gardens. The demonstration gardens already provide a major tourist draw to the Hecker Pass Area.

- The Arias Property (APN 810-20-004): The Arias property consists of a residence and fallow agricultural fields.

- The Hoey Properties (APN 810-20-011 & 013): The Hoey family owns two large parcels south of Hecker Pass Highway in the western portion of the Specific Plan Area. These properties consist of a residence, a historic barn, various accessory structures, a tree farm, and fields of dry farmed hay.

- Castro, Thomas and Suner Properties (APN 810-20-007, 008, & 009): Two Oaks Lane forms the western edge of the Hoey properties and serves three existing residences (Castro, Thomas, and Suner).

- The Giacalone & Christopher property (APN 810-20-006): Two Oaks Lane also serves the Giacalone and Christopher property.

- South Valley National Bank/Raley's Property (APN 810-20-015 & portions of 810-20-16 & 810-19-013): The most westerly property in the Specific Plan Area is the South Valley National Bank/Raley's Property, which is currently vacant.

- Bonfante Gardens Property (portion of APN 810-19-013): A small portion of Uvas Creek, owned by Bonfante Gardens Theme Park, extends into the Specific Plan Area.

Since the lands north of Hecker Pass Highway consist primarily of steep hillsides, most of these lands have remained undeveloped. The limited development that has occurred north of Hecker
Pass consists of hillside residential homes and a Lutheran Church. Properties within the Specific Plan Area located north of Hecker Pass Highway include the following:

- **Hoey Property (APN 783-04-011):** The Hoey Family also owns a parcel on the north side of Hecker Pass Highway that consist of a residence, a barn and hills used for grazing cattle.

- **Country Estates (APN 783-45-044):** A small portion of the Country Estates property lies directly east of the northerly Hoey property and remains undeveloped due to steep slopes.

- **The Forest Properties (APN 783-03-003 & 070):** The Gilroy Forest Development consists of hillside residential homes within a gated community. Existing homes within this development are all currently located outside of the Specific Plan Area and are accessed via Rancho Real on the north side of the hill (outside of the Specific Plan Area). Future hillside homes have been planned for the portion of the Forest within the Specific Plan Area but because they have already received entitlements, they are not subject to the Specific Plan.

- **Orchard Valley Communities (APN 783-03-002):** This small property consists of one existing residence.

- **Existing Hillside Homes (APN 783-004, 009, 010, 020, 032 & 030):** These properties consist of existing hillside residences.

- **Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (APN 783-02-026):** This property consists of an existing Lutheran Church and preschool.