

LARKSPUR SMART STATION AREA PLAN
Public Review Draft



March 2014



draft

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1 INTRODUCTION



PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) is a passenger train and multi-use pathway project that will extend 70 miles from Cloverdale in Sonoma County to Larkspur, Marin County. SMART will utilize an existing but long-dormant rail corridor formerly used by the Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWP). The SMART corridor generally parallels U.S. Highway 101 through Sonoma and Marin Counties, and will serve 14 stations when completed. The first phase of the SMART project, expected to be operational by 2015 or 2016, will connect Railroad Square in Santa Rosa with Downtown San Rafael. Service from Santa Rosa north to Cloverdale, and from San Rafael south to Larkspur will be extended as SMART receives additional funding. The Larkspur station is planned to be located in the Larkspur Landing area, adjacent to Highway 101 and the CalPark Tunnel multi-use path.

Through the General Plan update process initiated in 2010, City officials and the General Plan Update Citizen Advisory Committee had identified the Larkspur Landing and Redwood Highway neighborhoods as having potential for future land use changes, due to its proximity to regional transit, the planned SMART station, and the CalPark Tunnel multi-use path. Future study of those neighborhoods was recommended to evaluate the potential and feasibility of land use changes, particularly in regards to circulation impacts and vulnerability to flooding and sea level rise.

That same year, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) announced the availability of grant funding for jurisdictions in the Bay Area with transit stations planned or under construction to conduct land use and circulation studies of the area extending a half-mile radius from the planned or built transit station—the “station area”(see Figure 1.1). The City of Larkspur applied for a station area planning grant of \$480,000 in January 2011 to fund land use and circulation studies of the Larkspur Landing area and a

portion of Greenbrae area. The City obtained matching grant funds totaling \$120,000 from partner agencies, including the Transportation Authority of Marin, the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District, the County of Marin, and the Sonoma-Marina Area Rail Transit District, and from the City itself. The funding partner agencies, all with direct interest in the station area, supported inclusion of the Redwood Highway area in the planning process, though it extends beyond the half-mile radius from the station, due to the interrelationship between circulation and land use between the three sub-areas.

In applying for the station area planning grant, the City Council confirmed the City's commitment to the grant program's goals, which are to:

- Boost transit ridership and reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Increase walking, bicycling, carpooling, carsharing, local transit and other transportation options for people in the area.
- Increase the housing supply, particularly affordable housing near station areas.
- Locate key services and retail opportunities near station areas.

The City Council also identified the City's priorities and desired outcomes¹ for the station area planning process:

- A circulation and parking plan for the Larkspur/Greenbrae area.
- A land use and housing opportunity study for the Larkspur Landing area that would look at potential mixed-use opportunities relative to the existing commercial, office, and ferry terminal sites.
- A study of the Redwood Highway area, including circulation, parking, land use, and housing.

In May 2011, ABAG and MTC granted \$480,000 in station area planning grant funds to the City to prepare a land use and circulation plan for the station area. The grant also funded preparation of a program-level Environmental Impact Report to analyze potential environmental impacts of circulation and land use changes in the station area and potential risks to development in the station area posed by natural hazards. Policy recommendations of the

¹ City of Larkspur Resolution 02-11.

Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan should be incorporated into the General Plan update process to provide guidance for the future of the station area.

PLANNING PROCESS

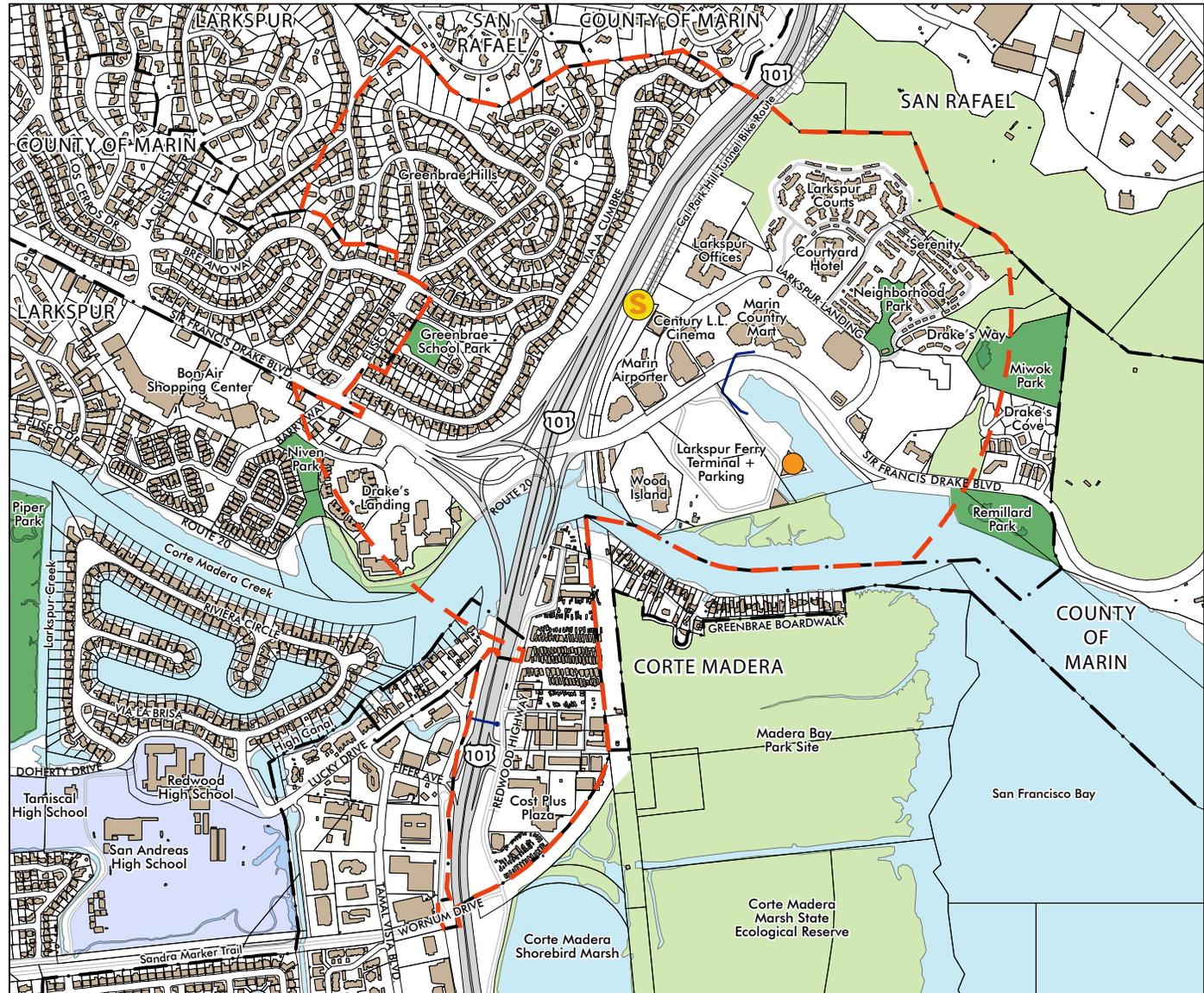
Preparation of the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan began in May 2012, marked by kick-off meetings of the City Council-appointed Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

Tasks and milestones throughout the station area planning process include:

- *Existing Conditions Report (July 2012)* – The Existing Conditions Report includes a comprehensive assessment of the existing physical conditions, regulatory context, and utilities and infrastructure found in the station area.
- *Market Analysis Memorandum (August 2012)* – This memo describes the demographic and economic trends in the station area; housing, household unit, and employment projections; and real estate market conditions and demand.
- *Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy (November 2012)* – This Strategy develops goals and implementation measures to provide a range of housing options affordable to households at all incomes.
- *Parking Demand Analysis Memorandum (November 2012)* – This memorandum documents the existing and future parking conditions for the station area and recommends parking ratios for residential and commercial developments.
- *Land Use Alternatives Analysis Report (December 2012)* – The Land Use Alternatives Analysis Report features the land use alternatives that were developed and analyzed for the station area, as well as a circulation framework that is common to each plan.
- *Infrastructure Needs Analysis Technical Report (March 2013)* – This report provides an analysis of the anticipated infrastructure improvements associated with the preferred plan identified in the Land Use Alternatives Analysis Report. The analysis includes utility and circulation infrastructure as well as new public parks and other amenities and improvements to two existing parks.

Figure 1.1: Station Area

- LEGEND**
- — — STATION AREA BOUNDARY
 - CITY/COUNTY BOUNDARIES
 - SMART STATION LOCATION
 - LARKSPUR FERRY TERMINAL
 - WATER
 - PARKS
 - OPEN SPACE
 - SCHOOLS



- *Implementation and Financing Strategy (March 2013)* - This memo identifies potential funding sources, time frames and implementing agencies for each infrastructure item. It also describes a variety of financing models and funding sources that may be considered over the long-term to fund future public improvements not yet identified. The Strategy also considers potential policies and programs for addressing housing and economic development needs in the station area building on the Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Strategy.
- *Urban Design Guidelines (April 2013)* – The Urban Design Guidelines provide concepts and standards to direct the physical form of future development.

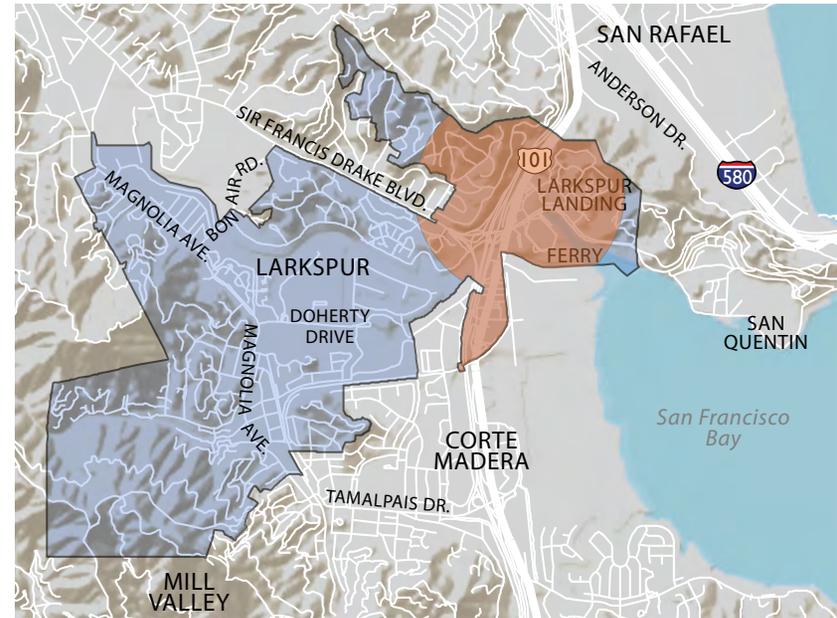
These documents, as well as the presentations made at each meeting during the planning process, are available on the Station Area Plan webpage (<http://cityoflarkspur.org/SAP>). A program Environmental Impact Report (EIR), also available on the webpage, has been prepared to analyze the environmental impacts of this Plan; the EIR provides more detail on existing and projected traffic generation than is included in this document.

AREA CONTEXT

The City of Larkspur is located in Marin County, bordered to the north by San Rafael, to the southeast by Corte Madera, to the south by Mill Valley, and to the west and north by the County of Marin. It is approximately 13 miles north across the Golden Gate Bridge from downtown San Francisco, and approximately 9 miles west across the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge from downtown Richmond and Contra Costa County. U.S. Highway 101 runs north-south through the eastern portion of Larkspur, connecting south to San Francisco, and north through Marin to Sonoma County.

The Larkspur SMART station area consists of 405 acres located in eastern Larkspur, approximately 1.5 miles northeast of the city’s downtown core, at the edge of San Francisco Bay (see Figure 1.2). The station area is defined by a combination of the Larkspur city boundary and a ½-mile radius around the planned SMART station location. The SMART station, representing the end of the SMART rail line as it comes south from San Rafael, is located in the

Figure 1.2: Larkspur’s Geographic Context

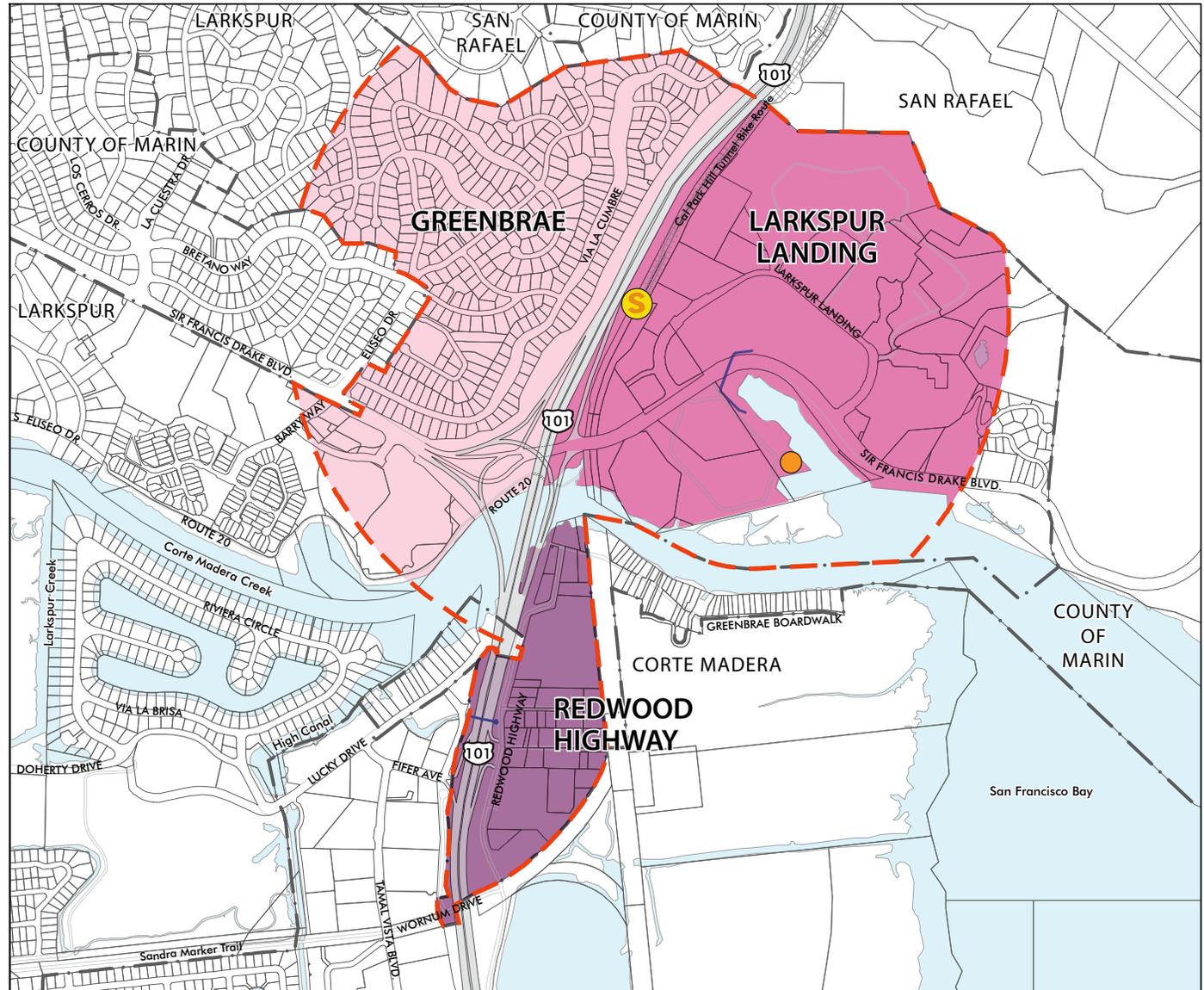


SMART right-of-way that parallels Highway 101, near the terminus of the Cal Park Hill Tunnel bike path, and behind and above the Century Larkspur Landing Cinema.

The station area is located where several jurisdictions converge, including Larkspur, San Rafael, Corte Madera and the County of Marin. It is bisected by Highway 101 running north-south, and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard running roughly east-west. Corte Madera Creek flows through the station area to the bay.

Figure 1.3: Station Area Zones

- LEGEND**
- STATION AREA BOUNDARY
 - CITY/COUNTY BOUNDARIES
 - SMART STATION LOCATION
 - LARKSPUR FERRY TERMINAL
 - LARKSPUR LANDING AREA
 - GREENBRAE AREA
 - REDWOOD HIGHWAY AREA



STATION AREA ZONES

As shown in Figure 1.3, the station area can be divided into three geographic sub-areas. The Larkspur Landing area is bounded by Highway 101 and the SMART right-of-way to the west, a wooded ridgeline and the San Rafael city border to the north, the ½-mile radius from the proposed future SMART station to the east, and Corte Madera Creek/Larkspur city boundary to the south. It comprises the proposed future SMART station site, the Larkspur Ferry Terminal, and a diverse mix of uses including retail, a hotel, offices, single- and multi-family residences, parks and open space, and a large, mostly vacant parcel owned by Sanitary District #1 of Marin County.

The Greenbrae area is bounded on the east and north by the ½-mile radius and the Larkspur city limits, to the east by Highway 101, and to the south by Corte Madera Creek and is bisected by Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. North of the boulevard is a portion of the larger Greenbrae Hills single-family neighborhood, while south of Sir Francis Drake are a mix of office, retail, gas stations and a residential townhome community.

The Redwood Highway area is located at the south end of the station area. It is bounded by Corte Madera Creek to the north, Wornum Drive to the south, and the city boundary on both the east and west. The Redwood Highway area consists of a mix of uses including retail, light industrial and higher-density residential development in the form of two mobile home parks and one RV park. Though the entirety of the Redwood Highway area is included in the station area, it extends south of the half-mile radius surrounding the SMART station.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Larkspur was originally inhabited by the Miwok Indians who hunted and fished along the salt marsh. The area was discovered in the early 1800s by the Spanish, became part of the Mexican Republic in 1824, and was then relinquished to the United States in the 1840s. The first settlers in town proper were lumbermen, farmers and ranchers. A railroad station was built in town in 1891, linking the town with the ferries that traversed the San Francisco Bay, and attracting summer visitors and the first commut-

ers. Commercial buildings and, in 1913, City Hall were built in what would become downtown, along Magnolia Avenue, a county road that connected Sausalito with San Rafael. With a population approaching 600 – double that in summer – the city celebrated its official incorporation in 1908.

Within the station area, development history begins before incorporation. The first significant settlement occurred just outside the station area in the 1850s, with California's first prison, San Quentin State Prison, and the adjacent San Quentin Village.

In the early 1890s, the Green Brae Brick Yard, owned by the Remillard Brick Company, began making bricks. Between 1891 and 1915, the company produced around 500,000 bricks per year in their Green Brae kiln, supplying bricks to the entire Pacific Coast. The brick yard supported a small community of laborers who lived nearby. The community included 16 cabins for workmen, a cookhouse, stable, blacksmith shop, vegetable gardens, and an orchard. Two buildings from the Remillard Brick Company's Green Brae operation have been preserved and both are located within the station area: the Remillard Brick Kiln and the Remillard Superintendent's House (see Figure 1.4).

Located at 125 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, the kiln, together with its chimney stack, is one of the few remaining examples of the Hoffmann Type kiln in the United States. The Brick Kiln was renovated in 1991 with the inclusion of an additional office building. Today, the Melting Pot restaurant occupies the historic kiln building. The Brick Kiln building is listed with the National Register of Historic Places, and is also a State Historic Landmark. The Remillard Superintendent's House is a one-story hip roof Victorian style house built in the 1890s. Originally located near the Remillard Brick Kiln, in 1984 the house was donated by the City of Larkspur to the San Rafael Cooperative Nursery School (now called the Children's Cottage Cooperative Pre-school), and was relocated to 2900 Larkspur Landing Circle. Any future development proposed in the Station Area Plan should respect these two historic buildings.

Just outside the station area and under the jurisdiction of Marin County is Greenbrae Boardwalk, a small community of waterfront houses along the

Corte Madera Creek. The Boardwalk has a vibrant history. The first ark (floating house) landed at Greenbrae Boardwalk in 1903. The Greenbrae Boardwalk community developed in the 1920s and 30s. Over the years, the arks have transitioned from houses on barges to houses on foundations above the mean high tide line. Today there are 49 homes on the Boardwalk.

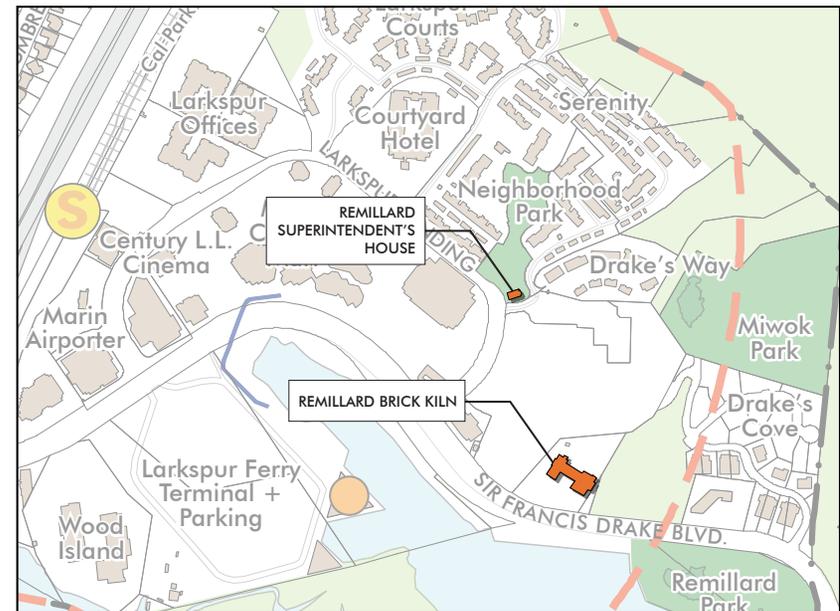
The Hutchinson Quarry began serious operations in 1924 in the area below the ridge in Larkspur Landing, using barges to supply quarried crushed rock to various locations around the Bay Area. The legacy can still be seen in the rugged 120-foot high gray stone cliffs behind the multi-family residential developments.

In the 1940s, residential development in the Greenbrae Hills neighborhood began. At that time, the Northwestern Railroad was extended south from San Rafael to provide a direct commute line to Point Tiburon. The Greenbrae Station stood near the future SMART station location. Rail freight traffic continued along this line until the 1980s.

The Larkspur Ferry Terminal began operating in 1976. Development of the Larkspur Landing area, with offices and a shopping center, began in 1978 and was designed to resemble a New England seaport town. Under new ownership and renamed, the shopping center (now Marin Country Mart) has recently been renovated. The Courtyard by Marriott Hotel opened in 1987, and the 250 apartments (built as condominiums) at Larkspur Courts were added in 1991. Since then, the completion of Serenity and Drake's Way apartments has created a large community of multi-family housing upon the hillside.

For generations community members have speculated that Sir Francis Drake landed somewhere between the San Quentin Peninsula and the Point Reyes Lighthouse in 1579. This explains the numerous references to Sir Francis Drake in the area. In 1989, a 30-foot tall statue of Sir Francis Drake by sculptor Dennis Patton was installed just off Sir Francis Drake Boulevard across from the Remillard Brick Kiln.

Figure 1.4: Historic Landmarks



(left) Remillard Brick Kiln
(above) Remillard Superintendent's House

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION

Community participation is an integral part of the station area planning process. The City employed a variety of methods to advertise public workshops, including citywide mailers, press releases and announcements in local newspapers, letters to property owners and residents, a Station Area Plan webpage (<http://cityoflarkspur.org/SAP>) and e-notifications on the City's website (with 200 subscribers), advertisements in the biannual Larkspur and Corte Madera recreation brochure, staff presence at various community events such as the Marin Country Mart Farmer's Market and Larkspur-Corte Madera Women's Club discussion panels, and staff canvassing neighborhoods to talk with residents and business owners and post event fliers.

Throughout the development of the Station Area Plan, the City disseminated information to the public and solicited public comments at the following meetings and workshops:

- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), comprised of residents, business and property owners, and citizens of the city. Meetings with the CAC were held on:
 - May 7, 2012
 - July 30, 2012
 - October 18, 2012
 - November 15, 2012
 - February 21, 2013
 - May 20, 2013
 - June 17, 2013
- Four community workshops:
 - July 23, 2012 (50 attendees)
 - November 5, 2012 (40 attendees)
 - March 7, 2013 (30 attendees)
 - December 3, 2013 (100 attendees)

All CAC and community comments were recorded and summarized in meeting summaries. Consensus comments were incorporated into the draft Plan, while minority opinions were recorded and retained for the record.



Community members worked together to envision and discuss future land uses for the station area at Community Workshop #1; discuss transportation and circulation issues and participate in a voting exercise related to land use and density at Community Workshop #2; and discuss proposed urban design guidelines, and identify where and what type of new public spaces and pedestrian and bicycle amenities are needed at Community Workshop #3.