

3 VISION



This chapter describes the process that led to the culminating vision for the station area and the components of that vision. Many points of view were shared and debated at four community workshops, seven Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, and discussions with property owners and other stakeholders. The CAC, in particular, devoted many hours to discussing options for the station area and reviewing proposals and guidelines that would shape the future of the area surrounding the SMART station. During those lengthy discussions, a number of consistent themes emerged, reflecting both concerns and opportunities for future land use changes and circulation system enhancements in the station area. Though not unanimous in their points of view, the CAC ultimately provided invaluable insights into the current issues facing the community-at-large, and direction in shaping the elements in this Plan.

BACKGROUND

The City of Larkspur received a station area planning grant in May 2011 from ABAG and MTC, which provided partial funding for this Plan. (Please see Chapter 1, Introduction, for a thorough discussion of the station area planning grant application process and funding agreement.) The goals of the station area planning grant program are to:

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

The City Council further identified three priorities to focus on throughout preparation of the Station Area Plan, as follows:

- 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.

The grant program goals encourage consideration of transit-oriented development (TOD) in station areas across the Bay Area. Transit-oriented development is found in many different configurations and locations throughout the region (and nationwide) ranging from high density development along the BART corridor, to residential development adjoining Caltrain stations, to the low-density development now being considered in Marin and Sonoma Counties in proximity to future SMART stations.

Successful TOD must be context-sensitive, responsive to the unique character and constraints of every location where it is considered. The following characteristics are particularly key to a successful TOD:

Supportive Land Uses and Densities: Residential, office and retail uses can all be supportive of transit use, depending on their location and configuration. Generally speaking, locating residential or office uses in close proximity to transit (within ¼ to ½ mile) is likely to result in added trips on local and regional transit.

Accessible Urban Framework: An accessible urban framework consists of the streets, sidewalks, and paths that accommodate travel by all modes: pedestrian, bicycle, bus transit, and auto. To be accessible, the framework must be complete and provide convenient access by each of these modes to and from homes, jobs and services throughout an area.

Attractive Public Environment: In order for people living or working in proximity to transit to walk or bike to that transit or other destinations within the area, the public environment of streets, sidewalks, trails, and pathways must be safe, attractive and inviting. Adequate sidewalk widths, bike lanes, landscaping and good lighting are important elements. In addition, providing plazas and parks contributes to the quality and attractiveness of these neighborhoods.

MTC provides helpful guidance in defining the TOD “place types” that are appropriate for different types of communities. As shown in Table 3.1 on the following page, place types range from regional job centers to transit neighborhoods. Due to its location within an existing suburban neighborhood, the Larkspur SMART station area most logically corresponds to the Transit Neighborhood place type, the least intensive designation as defined under the station area planning guidelines. The station area is already characterized by low- to moderate-density residential uses with some office and retail, in addition to existing transit service.

MTC’s station area planning guidelines also provide suggested densities of development for various place types. For the Transit Neighborhood place type, suggested uses and densities include:

- Housing mix: Low-rise, townhomes, some mid-rise and small lot single family
- Total units target (station area): 1,500 – 4,000
- Net project residential density: 20-50 dwelling units/acre
- Minimum Floor Area Ratio : 1.0 FAR

Table 3.1: MTC Place Types

	CENTERS				DISTRICTS	
	Regional Center	City Center	Suburban Center	Transit Town Center	Urban Neighborhood	Transit Neighborhood
What are/will be the characteristics of the Station Area?	Primary center of economic and cultural activity	Significant center of economic and cultural activity with regional-scale destinations.	Significant center of economic and cultural activity with regional-scale destinations.	Local center of economic and community activity	Predominantly residential district with good access to Regional and Sub-regional Centers	Predominantly residential district organized around transit station
What is/will be the transit mode in the Station Area?	All modes	All modes	All modes	Commuter Rail, Local/Regional Bus Hub, Ferry, Potentially BART	BART, LRT/Streetcar, BRT, Commuter Rail, Local Bus	LRT/Streetcar, BRT, Commuter Rail, Potentially Ferry, Local Bus
What is/will be the land use mix and density in the Station Area?	High-density mix of residential, commercial, employment, and civic/cultural uses	Moderate- to high-density mix of residential, commercial, employment, and civic/cultural uses	Moderate- to high-density mix of residential, commercial, employment, and civic/cultural uses	Moderate-density mix of residential, commercial, employment, and civic/cultural uses	Moderate- to high-density, predominantly residential uses with supporting commercial and employment uses	Low- to moderate-density, predominantly residential uses with supporting commercial and employment uses
What are/will be the characteristics of retail in the Station Area?	Regional-serving destination retail opportunity; need for local-serving retail	Regional-serving destination retail opportunity; need for local-serving and community-serving retail	Regional-serving destination retail opportunity; need for local-serving and community-serving retail	Community-serving and destination retail opportunity; need for local-serving retail	Primarily local-serving retail opportunity; need for some community-serving retail	Primarily local-serving retail opportunity
What are/will be major planning and development challenges?	Integrating dense mix of housing and employment into build-out complex	Integrating high-density housing into existing mix of housing and employment to support local-serving retail.	Introducing housing into predominantly employment uses and improving connections/access to transit	Increasing densities while retaining scale and improving transit access	Expanding local-serving retail opportunities and increasing high-density housing opportunities	Integrating moderate-density housing and supporting local-serving retail
Examples²	Downtown San Francisco, Oakland & San Jose	Downtown Hayward, Berkeley, Redwood City & Santa Rosa	Pleasant Hill BART, Dublin/Pleasanton BART	Hercules Waterfront, Suisun City, Napa, Livermore	Fruitvale in Oakland, Japantown in San Jose, Church/Market in San Francisco	Whisman Station in Mountain View, El Cerrito del Norte, Ohlone Chynoweth in San Jose, Glen Park

Notes:

1. Station Area typically refers to half-mile radius around station or roughly 500 acres.

2. Station Areas typically have a mix of characteristics of several Place Types. These examples are meant to be illustrative of the qualities only.

Source: *Station Area Planning Manual*, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, October 2007

INITIAL PLAN CONCEPTS

OPPORTUNITY SITES

In 2012, the City hosted two public workshops where community members were asked to envision their ideal future land use and circulation scenarios for the station area. The CAC held four public meetings to consider and discuss opportunities for additional development and improvements to circulation infrastructure, as well as concerns with existing challenges in the area and potential new challenges brought on by additional development.

Following discussion with the community and CAC, City staff and project consultants identified ten possible opportunity sites for land use change within the station area (See Figure 3.1). The sites were selected according to several criteria, also shaped by feedback from the community and CAC:

- Proximity to the SMART station or ferry terminal and thus greater likelihood of use of transit by residents or employees
- Physical development feasibility (vacant parcels, low intensity of existing development, or ability to structure parking and free up space currently dedicated to surface parking)
- Likelihood that new development would fit with existing neighboring uses (adjacencies to existing moderate intensity residential, office or retail development)
- Minimum potential for impacts on views from surrounding residential neighborhoods and public open spaces

Each opportunity site was studied to determine its feasible capacity for additional or new development. Studies took into account the scale and character of development indicated as desirable by the community, and included improved pedestrian and bicycle circulation, public open space, and other site amenities.

No opportunity sites were identified within existing residential neighborhoods. To the west, Greenbrae Hills is an established single-family community with no significant development potential and great integrity as a mature community. Drake's View, Larkspur Courts and Serenity are built at moderate densities, suitable in proximity to transit, and do not offer significant opportunities for further on-site development. The Redwood Highway area mobile home parks provide much needed affordable housing in the

Figure 3.1: Opportunity Sites

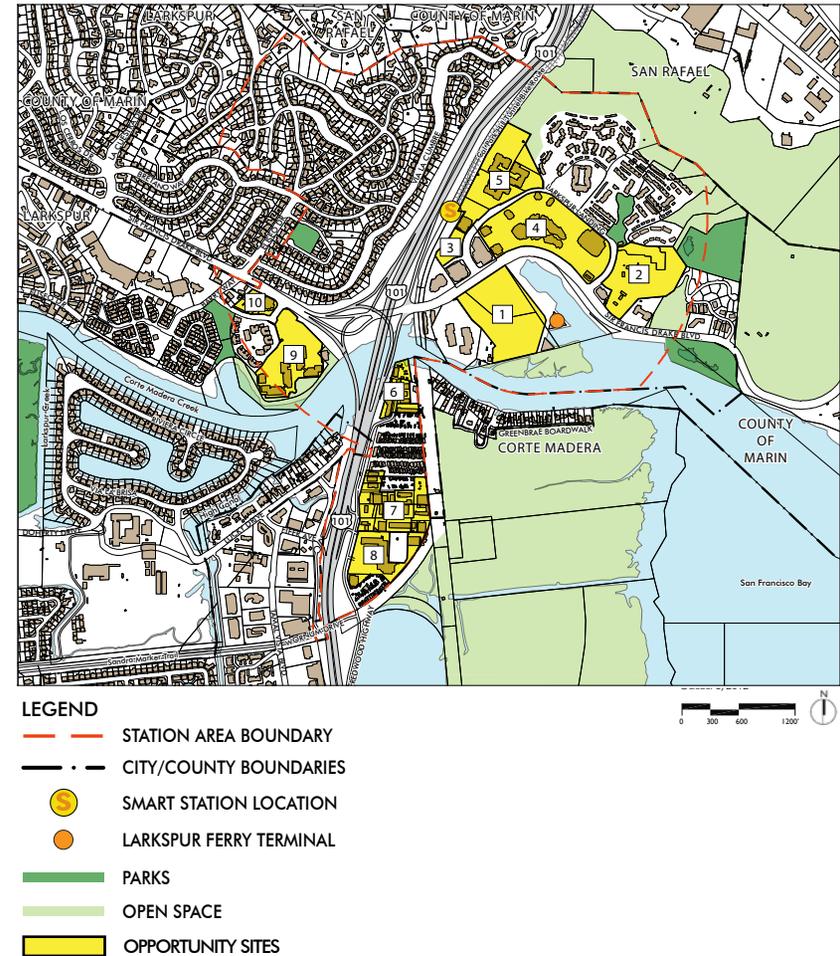


Figure 3.2: Land Use Alternative 1

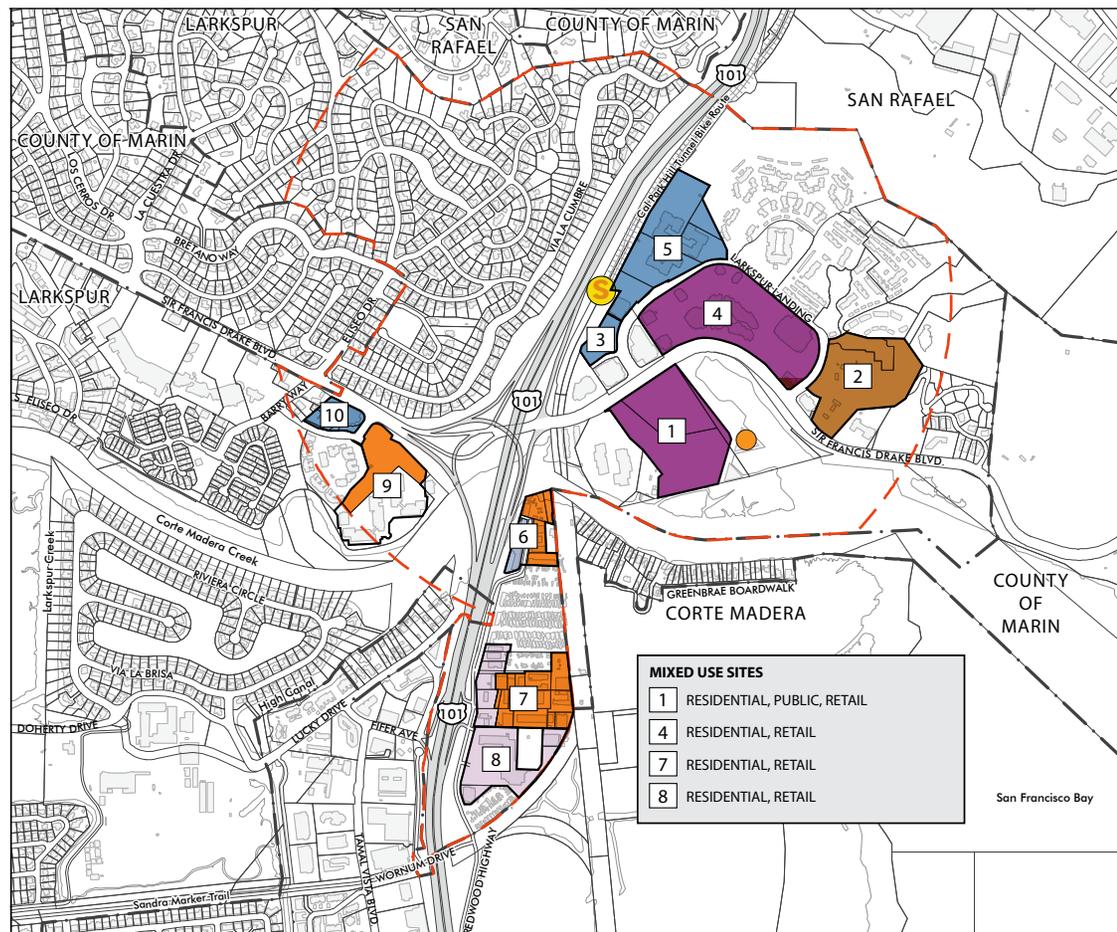
city that should be retained. Lastly, Drake's Cove and Drake's Way are both recently constructed developments unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

INITIAL LAND USE ALTERNATIVES

Guided by the Transit Neighborhood development guidelines and the feedback received from the community, City staff and project consultants formulated three alternative land use concepts to illustrate a range of possible futures for the station area (Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) for discussion with the TAC, CAC and community to gauge community preferences regarding mix of land uses, development intensities, and densities of residential development. However, the alternatives represented feasibility and capacity studies, not requirements for the development of specific properties within the station area.

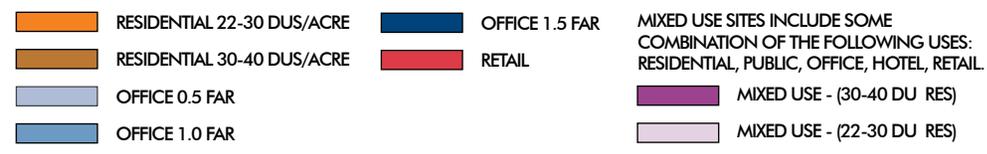
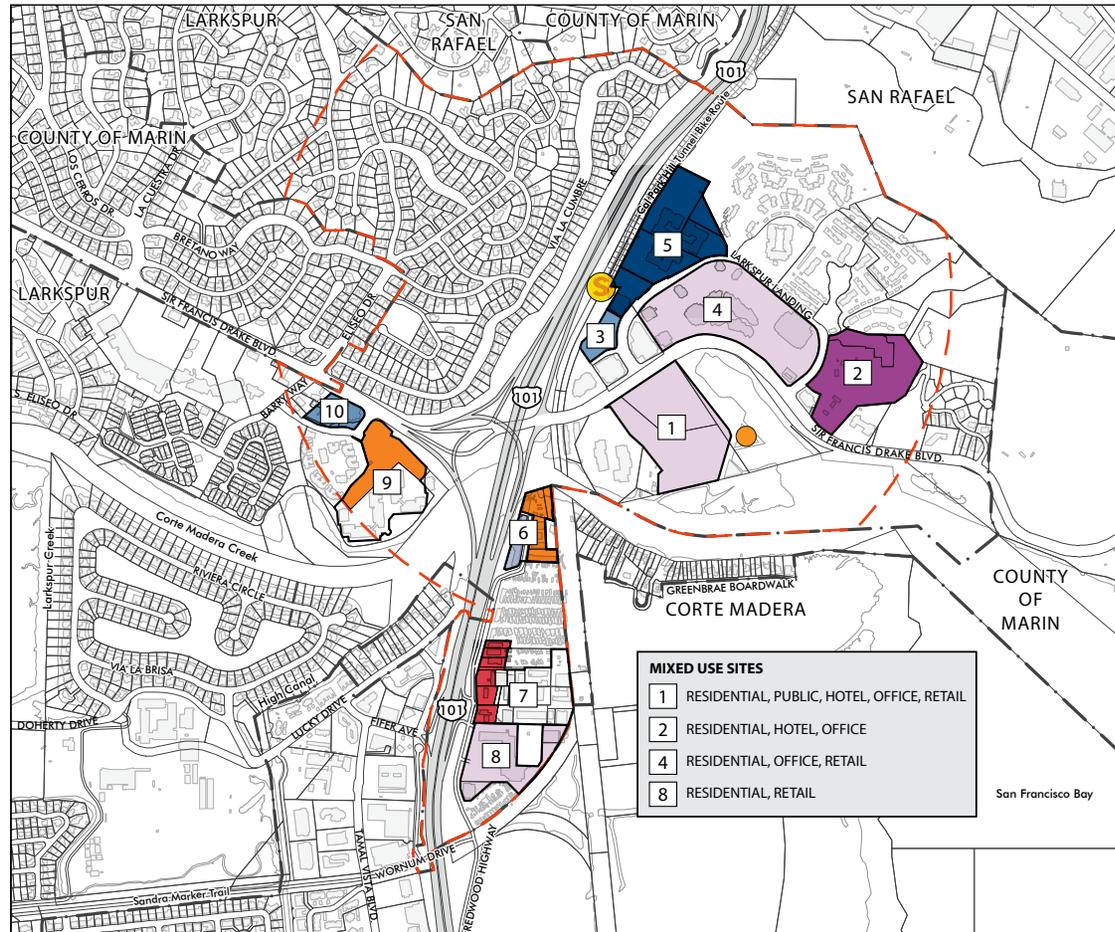
Several assumptions were common to all three initial alternatives:

- With new, intensified development, parking would generally be structured in order to achieve desirable densities and land use adjacencies. Parking may be included within the building, such as with residential, or may be found in a free-standing structure.
- Replacement parking for the ferry would be provided on the ferry site in a structure. Further study by the district, in coordination with the City, would be required to determine the recommended number of spaces and structure location. Additional ferry parking, could be accommodated off-site through shared parking agreements with adjacent properties such as the Marin Country Mart, Sanitary District



 RESIDENTIAL 22-30 DUS/ACRE	 OFFICE 1.5 FAR	MIXED USE SITES INCLUDE SOME COMBINATION OF THE FOLLOWING USES: RESIDENTIAL, PUBLIC, OFFICE, HOTEL, RETAIL.
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 OFFICE 1.0 FAR	 MIXED USE - (22-30 DU RES)	
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Figure 3.3: Land Use Alternative 2



site, or existing office buildings, or with a parking structure at the Marin Air-porter site.

Each initial land use alternative is described below.

Alternative 1: Higher Densities / Residential Emphasis

This alternative proposed the most substantial amount of new or intensified uses. All opportunity sites were assigned higher densities and intensities than the other two alternatives as a means of testing the upper end of potential development in the station area, consistent with guidelines for development in Transit Neighborhoods. The alternative presented an intensified residential neighborhood in the Larkspur Landing area close to both the ferry terminal and SMART station. This plan proposed new residential uses on the ferry terminal site, Marin Country Mart site, several sites in the Redwood Highway area and the area west of 101, and a mix of uses on other sites near the SMART station.

Alternative 2: Moderate Densities / Land Use Balance – Housing and Jobs

Alternative 2 proposed lower residential densities than Alternative 1 and presented a greater mix of land uses throughout the station area, thus increasing the potential for additional jobs as well as residential units. The densities assumed for the ferry terminal and Marin Country Mart site were somewhat lower than in Alternative 1, while the Larkspur Landing Offices site showed somewhat higher office intensities.

The Sanitary District No. 1 site included a mix of residential and office uses. In the Redwood Highway area the

Figure 3.4: Land Use Alternative 3

existing mix and intensities of auto-serving and industrial uses were retained, with some exceptions. Mixed-use development (including residential) was proposed at the Cost Plus Plaza site and office and residential development was proposed for the area's northern-most parcels, consisting primarily of storage uses.

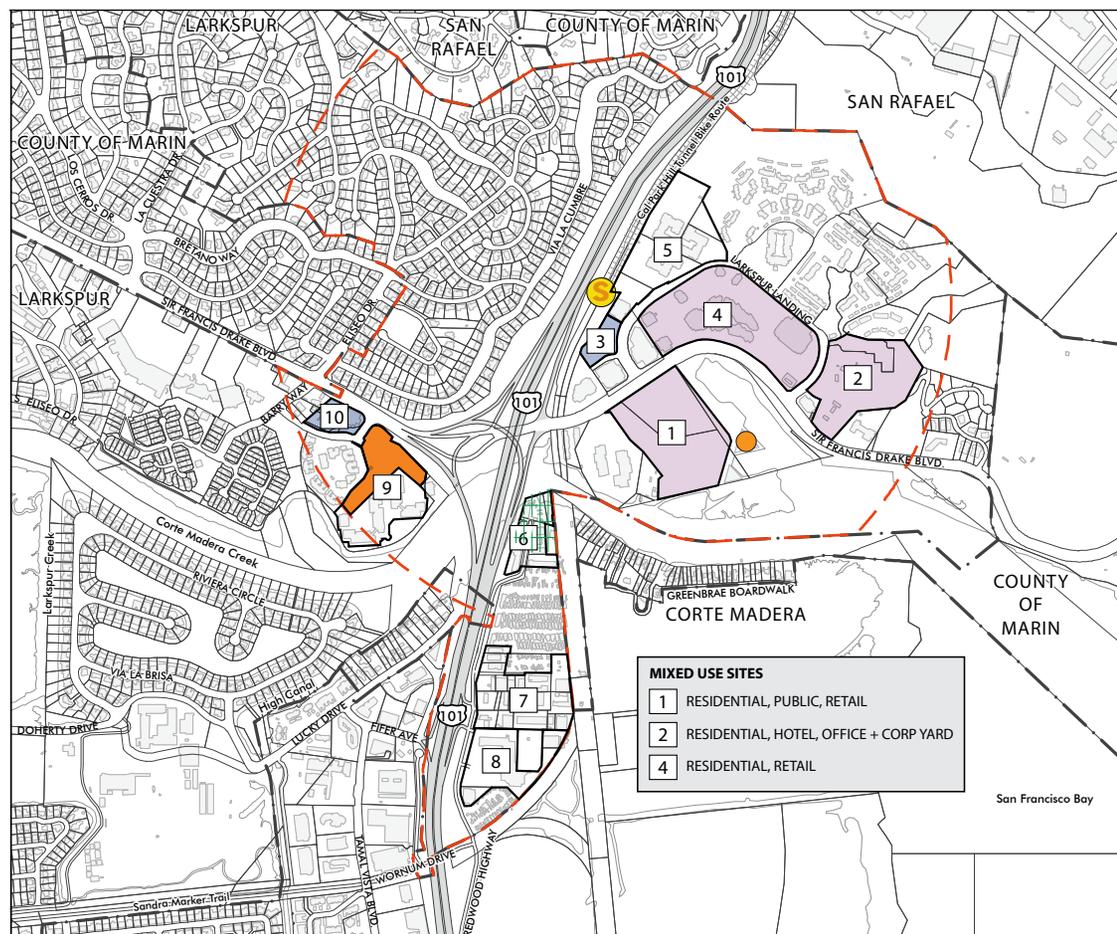
Alternative 3: Moderate Densities / Priority Sites Only

The third alternative proposed significant changes in land use only on the ferry terminal, Marin Country Mart, Marin Airpoter, and Sanitary District No. 1 sites, as well as the two small sites south of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in the Greenbrae area. Assumed densities were similar to those in Alternative 2.

No changes were proposed in the Redwood Highway area. This was primarily due to the area's low elevation, which results in flooding and future threats of inundation and presents a limiting factor to increased development intensity until such time that the City implements a comprehensive strategy for adapting to sea level rise. Additionally, the existing mix of industrial and auto-serving uses is unique to the City and southern Marin in general, providing valued service to the community.

Potential Development Yield of Alternatives

The initial exercise of preparing land use alternatives resulted in some important conclusions. It is feasible in terms of site capacity, although not necessarily desirable for other reasons, to development as many as 900 to 1,900 new dwelling units, and as much as 425,000 to 1,200,000 square feet of office and 274,000 to 365,000 square feet of retail space on the opportunity sites.



INITIAL CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK

While land use alternatives were being investigated, the circulation framework to serve existing and new land uses was simultaneously being tested.

A largely complete roadway framework already serves the station area. Regionally, the area is accessed via US 101 and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, with Larkspur Landing Circle and Redwood Highway providing additional access within neighborhoods. Private streets, limited local roads, and driveways serve housing, office and retail sites and parking lots. Only minor streets or lanes would need to be added to serve new development.

Transit facilities and operations are at the core of this Plan. For planning purposes, the initial circulation framework assumed that the SMART station would be located as currently planned along the SMART right-of-way above the cinema and Larkspur Landing offices. This assumption was based on two primary points of fact: the station's location is currently adopted policy of SMART; and the station's location is a defined component of the SMART project that was studied in the SMART Environmental Impact Report for which SMART has received a variety of federal, state, and regional grant funding to study and build. Ferry service was assumed to continue, with patron parking continuing to be provided on the ferry terminal site¹.

A number of local and regional projects are already planned by various agencies that will enhance pedestrian and bicycle circulation. This Plan provides additional recommendations to improve sidewalks, intersections, and multi-use trails, and to provide generous pedestrian access within any new development.

During the circulation framework visioning process, it was clear that added residential or employment uses in the station area would impact traffic circulation, especially at critical intersections along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard during peak travel hours. Although the vast majority of existing traffic congestion is not locally generated, added traffic from new development

in the station area could exacerbate the already difficult peak hour traffic conditions. In order to evaluate the land use alternatives, initial analyses of traffic impacts were conducted and are described in detail in the Access, Circulation and Parking section of this report.

¹ The District has historically explored and continues to consider the feasibility of providing a parking structure on the ferry terminal and Airporter sites, and also continues to explore development of off-site parking options on either a permanent or temporary basis.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON LAND USE ALTERNATIVES AND CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK

LAND USE

While not unanimous, a majority of the CAC expressed support for additional development in the station area at a moderate scale, assuming mitigation of traffic impacts. The CAC generally supported a mix of uses, in particular additional local-serving retail and services, such as a small grocery store. Individual comments included support for diversity in population and housing, in particular noting the suitability of the area for young commuters as well as older residents who could benefit from proximity to transit and amenities within walking distance.

Although there were strong supporters of higher residential densities and commercial intensities, many CAC and community members expressed concerns that the intensities of development proposed, especially in Alternative 1, were out of scale with Larkspur's community character.

The CAC and community members expressed a desire to retain existing land uses in the Redwood Highway area, including the affordable housing and light industrial development. There was consistent agreement that any land use change in the Redwood Highway area would require further study to account for potential infrastructure challenges that are beyond the scope of the Station Area Plan.

Initial feedback from the community and CAC indicated that the least intensive level of development presented in the alternatives was most desired. Furthermore, many community members and CAC members stated preferences for development levels below those contemplated in the initial land use alternatives. While the CAC expressed general support for a mix of uses and moderate intensities of new development in the area, the majority of the CAC had great concerns as to new development's impacts on already congested intersections along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

CIRCULATION

Community feedback on the circulation framework was ultimately crucial to shaping the preferred land use plan. Most significantly, the community and the CAC clearly voiced their opposition to exacerbating existing traffic congestion on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. The CAC supported the development of strategies to monitor traffic resulting from development throughout the station area, and to analyze the effect parking management and TDM policies could have on shifting modes to walking, bicycling and transit use.

There was generally unanimous support from the community and CAC for a variety of pedestrian and bicycle improvements in the station area. Of particular interest was adding additional access routes to the ferry terminal considering routes already being used informally by pedestrians and bicyclists.

It should be emphasized that the community—particularly the CAC—clearly stated that the SMART station should be moved to adjoin the ferry terminal in order to optimize use of each transit mode. In doing so, the CAC recognized that the currently planned station location was the result of previous City policy, and that the cost to design and construct a station closer to the ferry terminal would be high and is currently unfunded. Additionally, such a decision is within the purview of numerous agencies and funding mechanisms outside of the City's control. The CAC nonetheless felt that the benefits of this integrated transit linkage would be significant.

CONCLUSIONS

PRINCIPLES

After receiving community feedback at the July and November 2012 public workshops, the CAC agreed upon the following shared principles concerning the future of the SMART station area:

- **Larkspur supports efforts to enhance non-auto transportation options for the city and region as a means of minimizing GHG emissions and associated environmental impacts.**
- **Future development would be encouraged within the SMART station area to appropriately capitalize on the wealth of transit services that exist, are planned to be added, or could be envisioned in the future.**
- **New development in the SMART station area would be a mix of uses that are compatible in scale with the character of Larkspur as a low and moderate density community, a collection of “villages”, that values its natural resources, scenic views and small town quality of life.**
- **The station area is envisioned as a Larkspur neighborhood that would support a diversity of population, employment and retail services and that would encourage walking, bicycling and transit use as preferred modes of daily travel.**
- **Future development would continue to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and ensure access for all ages and abilities, maintain views from public places, and provide new and improved public open space amenities.**

CONSIDERATIONS

A majority of the CAC supported moderate levels of transit-oriented development in the station area, similar to those proposed by initial land use Alternative 3, with a particular emphasis on the following three concerns regarding the future of the station area:

- **The SMART station should be located closer to the ferry terminal.**
- **Implementation of area improvements would require coordination with regional entities and outside funding sources.**
- **Growth controls should be put in place to monitor development and traffic over time.**



The Larkspur Station Area Plan is envisioned as a Larkspur neighborhood designed to encourage walking, bicycling and transit use.

VISION FOR THE SMART STATION AREA

The vision for the SMART station area comprises five key elements that address the issues and opportunities associated with the area that emerged from the visioning process:

1. An Integrated Land Use/Transportation Strategy
2. A Unique Larkspur Village
3. Multi-modal Transportation Options
4. Community Open Space and Waterfront Access
5. Sustainable Development

AN INTEGRATED LAND USE / TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

The Plan described in the following chapters is an integrated land use and transportation strategy, wherein the success of one is dependent on the success of the other.

Throughout the discussions of land use, transportation and implementation strategies there are threads linking these elements together. Ongoing measurement of the success of programs intended to limit traffic, such as shared parking or transit service improvements, to manage conditions in the area over time, would be required.

This Plan would require local management but, importantly, would also require interagency coordination and cooperation. In particular, traffic and transit issues in the station area are regional in nature and must be addressed regionally. Recommended approaches to these issues are discussed in the implementation section of this Plan.



The Larkspur Station Area will embody an integrated land use and transportation strategy.

A UNIQUE LARKSPUR VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT

In the context of long-term development in the station area, the community expressed enthusiasm for a mix of uses that would allow daily amenities and services to be provided within walking distance of homes and offices. Many noted, and demographics confirm, that the growing senior population in Marin County would likely be transitioning from single family homes to more compact dwellings where proximity to retail uses and amenities would minimize the need for driving long distances or driving at all. The community supports provision of senior housing in the area along with expansion of retail services, for convenient access by residents, employees of businesses in the area, and transit riders.

A number of accessibility improvements would be needed to ensure ease of access within, into, and out of the station area. Improvements to sidewalks and crosswalks and the addition of new connections from SMART to the ferry would further enhance pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the area.

With a complete mix of uses - housing, jobs, shopping and entertainment - the station area would become a special neighborhood in the city, like the downtown in its diversity and activity, but with a unique waterfront location. Design guidelines are needed to ensure that future development capitalizes on the design quality and scale already existing in the station area, and also respects the village character of the city as a whole.



The Station Area Plan envisions a mix of housing, jobs, and entertainment within a walkable environment, as exemplified on this block of downtown Healdsburg.



The Larkspur SMART station area will become a special neighborhood within the city with a unique waterfront location.



The Larkspur Station Area Plan capitalizes on the area's multiple transportation options, such as the Cal Park Hill Tunnel (above) and the Larkspur Ferry (below).

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

The station area has a very rich transit environment. Today over 6,000 daily weekday passengers ride the Larkspur Ferry to San Francisco, and a robust regional bus operation on U.S. 101 operates as well. The Marin Airporter provides private coach service to SFO. The planned inclusion of the SMART station is a worthwhile expansion of transportation options that can connect with and be mutually supportive with the others.

Planning for the SMART project included a lengthy feasibility and alternatives analysis process during the early 2000's. Ultimately, the location of the Larkspur station was identified as shown in the plans in this document: adjoining the U.S. 101 corridor at the south end of the Cal Park Hill tunnel and within the SMART-owned right-of-way.

Throughout the process of preparing this Plan, the community observed that the current and planned transit facilities (ferry, SMART, Airporter, buses) are not located close to one another and may thus not optimize inter-service connections. The CAC and community strongly endorsed the idea of relocating the SMART station to be in closer proximity to the ferry, at a location to be determined but possibly adjoining the ferry terminal within the ferry parking area. SMART is currently proceeding with construction design for the extension as planned. There is currently no funding or planning to extend the SMART rail line to the ferry terminal. Neither this Plan nor installation of the SMART station in its planned location would preclude eventual extension of the rail line to the ferry. This Plan includes recommendations to improve access to and from the SMART station as planned.

In addition to transit system improvements, bicycle and pedestrian circulation improvements would facilitate easy access within the station area to and from transit as well as local services and amenities.

COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE AND WATERFRONT ACCESS

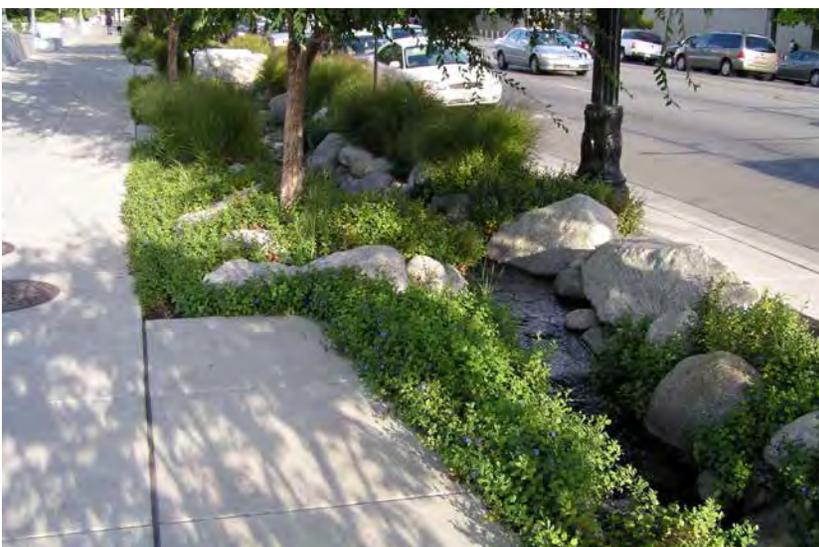
The station area offers unique opportunities to provide new community open space for this area of Larkspur. Within the various opportunity sites, additional publicly-accessible parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas can be accommodated in the station area, depending on the type and configuration of new uses provided on each site. Public open spaces that relate to the bay waterfront are also desirable.

On the ferry terminal site, a multi-use trail currently circles the perimeter of the commuter parking lot, providing access to the water's edge and views of the bay and surrounding hillsides. With the introduction of residential uses on the ferry site, it would be feasible to include an enlarged public park/plaza at the water's edge. This space would provide expanded opportunities to watch the ferries and shore wildlife, with seating and interpretive signage.

The southern edge of the Country Mart site, bordering Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, has recently been improved by landscaping, removing old trees and adding new plantings that restore a view to the water and surrounding landscape. This area is still, however, essentially a parking lot that is closed at times to accommodate the Saturday Farmers Market and the Sunday food truck event. By removing a small amount of parking and improving this area further with special paving and seating, a public plaza could be created that provides an expanded view of the bay. It would also serve as a potential venue for additional events and outdoor dining and could become an event space for the city or other public and private entities.



Public open spaces that relate to Larkspur's waterfront (top and above) are desirable with the station area.



In addition to sustainable strategies such as compact development and multi-modal transportation, the Larkspur Station Area Plan encourages green design through the use of green roofs (top), integrated stormwater management (above), and energy efficient buildings.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The City of Larkspur adopted a Climate Action Plan with the understanding that climate change may significantly impact Larkspur's residents and businesses, as well as other communities around the world, and that local governments play a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the potential impacts of climate change. The Climate Action Plan consists of strategies that the City and the community can take to address climate change, including increasing building energy efficiency, encouraging less dependence on the automobile, and using clean, renewable energy sources.

Of specific relevance for the Station Area Plan, the Climate Action Plan calls for the City to "study the Larkspur Landing Circle area and enhance the opportunities presented by the location of the Larkspur Ferry, the Marin Airporter, and eventually the SMART train station."

This SMART Station Area Plan embodies many strategies that are inherent in sustainable planning and design and directly respond to the CAP's policies:

- A compact development pattern that promotes walking and bicycling
- Sufficient employment and residents to support neighborhood amenities in proximity so as to not require driving trips
- Good access to a range of public transportation options for travel locally and regionally
- A circulation framework with an attractive pedestrian environment and connections to local and regional multi-use trails

Over time, the City would encourage property owners and developers to incorporate sustainable design practices in new development so as to address issues such as energy use, GHG emissions, and water conservation and reuse.