

CHAPTER 2.

LAND USE

This section, complementary with the Land Use and Circulation map, contains Larkspur's land use goals, policies, and programs. Their overall aim is to preserve and enhance Larkspur's unique physical and natural setting, and its largely residential character, while accommodating suitable new development. This includes protecting Larkspur's hillsides and creeksides, and the vegetation, views, and general peacefulness associated with these natural characteristics. It also includes the protection of existing and future development from natural hazards, such as sea level rise and associated flooding. This chapter brings together all land use issues, limitations, and opportunities, and balances them with community needs and desires.

To develop a consistent, implementable set of goals, policies, and programs for Larkspur, the following factors were considered:

- **Opportunities for residential development.** Existing residential development in the City is a balanced mixture of multi-family and single-family housing. The community values Larkspur's "small town" feeling inspired by residential neighborhoods' connection to the outdoors, their varied architectural and historic character, and their proximity to commercial centers. The community wants to retain the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods by maintaining their scale and historic quality, while accommodating new residential development that fits with existing neighborhoods.
- **Opportunities for commercial development.** The City's existing commercial areas provide valuable services on a local and regional level and should be retained. All commercial areas should be attractive and accessible to all users by multiple modes of transportation. Existing commercial centers also provide a valuable opportunity for mixed-use development.
- **Opportunities for vacant or underutilized sites.** The City is largely built out, with very few vacant parcels remaining without approved project plans. The City envisions vibrant mixed-use and mixed-density developments on the remaining vacant parcels, and promotes the redevelopment and revitalization of marginal or underutilized properties.
- **Relationships with other governmental and non-governmental agencies.** Larkspur has close and vital connections to surrounding communities, including

an extensive network of open space areas and shared roadways and infrastructure. Land use decisions made by the City will impact surrounding communities and vice versa. It is important that the City maintain a dialogue with neighboring governmental and non-governmental agencies when planning local and regional development projects. The City's interests must also be represented and respected in regional development projects.

- **The nexus between development and the natural environment.** One of the community's most valued features in Larkspur is its beautiful natural setting, which includes creek and marsh habitats and protected open space areas. Future development should not impact Larkspur's sensitive environmental resources. Conversely, the City recognizes the safety risks posed by environmental hazards, such as flooding, earthquakes, and sea level rise, which may affect existing and proposed residential and commercial development in the next twenty years. The City aims to avoid or minimize impacts of development on the environment, as well as impacts of the environment on development to the greatest extent possible.

The Land Use goals, policies, and programs seek to address these issues, as well as any unforeseen impacts on the physical development of the City over the next twenty years.

LAND USE GOALS

Residential Neighborhoods

- LU-1: Maintain the integrity, cohesiveness, historic quality, and scale of Larkspur's residential neighborhoods.
- LU-2: Encourage a diverse demographic mix (especially age, family, and income) in Larkspur.

Commercial and Industrial Areas

- LU-3: Protect the integrity and cohesiveness of existing commercial and industrial areas.
- LU-4: Increase the economic viability and vitality of existing commercial and industrial areas.
- LU-5: Encourage commercial areas to provide an adequate mix of neighborhood-serving businesses as well as residential uses that are accessible by means other than the automobile.

Vacant or Underutilized Sites

- LU-6: Promote the development and revitalization of underutilized or marginal commercial, industrial, and residential sites.
- LU-7: Integrate natural features into new development to the greatest extent reasonably feasible on those lots where development or redevelopment is expected to occur.
- LU-8: Maintain the former railroad rights-of-way for public benefit.
- LU-9: Retain the existing availability of public transportation options in the San Quentin Peninsula.
- LU-10: Retain all or a portion of the San Quentin Prison site for park or other public use if prison use is discontinued.

Regional Relationships

- LU-11: Cooperate with other jurisdictions in solving regional problems, in protecting environmental resources, and in providing public services.

Environmental Responsibility

- LU-12: Reduce the impacts of development on the environment.
- LU-13: Ensure that residential and commercial development is adequately protected from environmental hazards such as wildland fires and flooding due to sea level rise.

Residential Neighborhoods

LU-1: Maintain the integrity, cohesiveness, historic quality, and scale of Larkspur's residential neighborhoods.

Policy LU-1.1: Residential density standards shall consider neighborhood characteristics, existing uses, surrounding uses, impact on the traffic capacity of the street system, access to services, geotechnical conditions, and natural resources.

Action Program LU-1.1.a: Apply open residential standards (up to 0.2 unit per gross acre) to areas having special open space value. This designation is also suitable for areas with limited development potential because of their unusual configuration (e.g., railroad right-of-way) or difficult access.

Action Program LU-1.1.b: Apply very low density residential standards (up to 1 unit per gross acre) to hillside areas with landsliding, seismic, or other geotechnical vulnerability. This designation is also suitable for areas with special open space value.

Action Program LU-1.1.c: Apply low density residential standards (up to 5 dwellings per gross acre) to hillsides and other environmentally sensitive areas, as well as within established low-density neighborhoods.

Action Program LU-1.1.d: Apply medium density residential standards (up to 12 dwellings per gross acre) to areas near commercial areas, such as Old Downtown, if consistent with adjacent land uses.

Action Program LU-1.1.e: Apply high density residential standards (up to 21 dwellings per gross acre) only in areas within easy reach of arterials, public transit, and commercial centers that provide a range of goods and personal services.

Policy LU-1.2: Limit the visual bulk of dwellings so that they fit in with neighboring homes and the physical setting.

Action Program LU-1.2.a: Continue to implement and update, as appropriate, design review standards established in the Larkspur Municipal Code to ensure development is compatible with the natural setting, preserves the character of the existing neighborhood, and considers neighbors' concerns with respect to privacy, solar access, streetscape, and scale and massing.

Policy LU-1.3: Encourage residential infill development or redevelopment that accommodates additional housing, provided that the project fits in aesthetically and

architecturally with the community and neighborhood character as determined through the City's design review process.



LU-2: Encourage a diverse demographic mix (especially age, family, and income) in Larkspur.

Policy LU-2.1: When practical, and with consideration for the integrity of existing low-density neighborhoods, allow flexibility in residential density standards to encourage a broad range of housing types.

Action Program LU-2.1.a: Encourage maximum densities in the medium and high density residential categories as described in this Plan only in those developments that promote social and economic diversity and environmental benefits, and only when impacts on neighborhood scale and ambiance are mitigated.

Action Program LU-2.1.b: Investigate impacts of allowing a mix of low- to moderate-density housing within single-family neighborhoods in existing structures (e.g., conversion of larger, older homes to multiple units), with design guidelines in place to ensure neighborhood character (e.g., scale and architectural style) is maintained and impacts on circulation, parking, and the environment are mitigated.

Action Program LU-2.1.c: Study the potential circulation, environmental, and other community impacts of establishing minimum densities in medium and high density areas.

Policy LU-2.2: Maintain the City's existing supply of mobile homes in the Redwood Highway area, which provide a valuable supply of affordable housing, while recognizing their location in an area at risk to flooding and the potential need to relocate or replace them with housing of equivalent affordability elsewhere in the area.

Action Program LU-2.2.a: Assess the mobile home parks' risk of flooding due to sea level rise as part of the Sonoma-Marin Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Station Area Planning Study. Apply adaptation and mitigation development standards once established. (See Action Programs LU-13.2.a, LU-13.2.b and LU-13.2.c for direction on adopting and applying standards.)

Action Program LU-2.2.b: Require new or expanded uses adjacent to existing mobile home parks to be compatible with the residential uses, or to be sufficiently buffered from them to mitigate any negative impacts on residents.

Action Program LU-2.2.c: Encourage transitional uses along Rich Street that provide a buffer between the mobile homes and industrial uses, with displaced mobile homes relocated elsewhere within the area.

Action Program LU-2.2.d: To protect the residential uses, investigate opportunities for rezoning the smaller RV park on Rich Street to allow for transitional uses, with displaced mobile homes relocated elsewhere within the area.

Action Program LU-2.2.e: To the extent the existing mobile home sites can be replaced with housing at equivalent affordability levels, investigate rezoning of the mobile home park at the intersection of Wornum Drive and Redwood Highway to allow for mixed use of commercial and residential, recognizing the proximity of the site to the future Wornum Drive interchange.

Commercial and Industrial Areas

LU-3: Protect the integrity and cohesiveness of existing commercial and industrial areas.

General Policies

Policy LU-3.1: Maintain existing retail commercial and industrial areas in attractive physical condition, and work to retain their special character and amenities.

Action Program LU-3.1.a: For each recognized commercial area, allow and encourage only those uses that reinforce the area's existing role, function, and scale.

Action Program LU-3.1.b: Adopt design review standards for commercial areas.

Action Program LU-3.1.c: Encourage destination trips to retail commercial areas and minimize through automobile traffic.

Policy LU-3.2: Discourage the creation of new commercial and industrial areas.

Policy LU-3.3: Allow expansion of existing commercial and industrial areas only under conditions that will not be detrimental to the surrounding residential community or existing retail uses in the city, that will improve the City's economic base, and that will reinforce the role or function of the areas as defined in each land use category.

Action Program LU-3.3.a: Continue to implement floor area ratio (FAR) standards to limit the intensity of commercial, retail, industrial, and professional office development. Only revise FAR standards after sufficient study to determine whether the revised standards will benefit the community and are consistent with General Plan policies.

Downtown Policies

Policy LU-3.4: Preserve the current mix of commercial, public and institutional, residential, and professional office uses in the Downtown and the residential areas nearby.

Policy LU-3.5: Maintain the existing scale of commercial establishments (smaller services and retail business), and the walkability of the Downtown.

Action Program LU-3.5.a: Continue to implement incentives to promote the retention and development of rental residential units on the upper floors of buildings in the Downtown. (Note: See the Housing Element for policies and programs addressing upper-story residential units above Downtown commercial properties.)

Action Program LU-3.5.b: Implement the Downtown Specific Plan.

Action Program LU-3.5.c: As necessary, update the Downtown Specific Plan to reflect current conditions, market trends, technical data, and community priorities. In addition to any new goals or policies, any updates to the Specific Plan should retain the intent of the goals and policies in the 1992 Specific Plan, specifically those pertaining to creating public spaces, enhancing non-motorized access, and supporting public events.

Policy LU-3.6: Maintain the architectural and historic character of Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy LU-3.7: Reinforce the image of Downtown as the clearly identifiable town center of Larkspur.

Redwood Highway Area Policies

Policy LU-3.8: Recognize the importance of the Redwood Highway industrial area to the community in providing necessary services not found elsewhere within the vicinity of Larkspur.

Policy LU-3.9: Support the commercial uses that exist along Redwood Highway and allow expansion, as appropriate, to serve the community.



LU-4: Increase the economic viability and vitality of existing commercial and industrial areas.

General Policies

Policy LU-4.1: Encourage existing commercial and industrial areas to provide attractive walkways and other pedestrian amenities (e.g., landscaping, benches, and down-lit lighting).

Policy LU-4.2: Ensure that the City's development standards support the economic success of businesses in Larkspur, to the extent feasible.

Action Program LU-4.2.a: Expedite review of applications for permitted commercial uses that comply with the City's development regulations and design review criteria.

Action Program LU-4.2.b: Consider amending commercial and industrial development standards in the Zoning Ordinance to be more flexible (such as reduced on-site or shared parking, increased building heights and FAR, amended sign regulations, etc.). Amend standards only where it can be demonstrated that no adverse traffic, aesthetic or land-use compatibility impacts will result.

Action Program LU-4.2.c: Review and update parking standards for commercial uses, as appropriate, with consideration of potential impacts on surrounding residential communities.

Action Program LU-4.2.d: Consider adoption of an Economic Development Plan for the City.

Policy LU-4.3: Maintain and enhance landscaping in commercial areas.

Action Program LU-4.3.a: Encourage landscape screening of off-street parking.

Action Program LU-4.3.b: Continue to apply landscape design guidelines established in the Downtown Specific Plan, the Central Larkspur Specific Plan, and any forthcoming specific plans or community plans that address commercial areas.

Downtown Policies

Policy LU-4.4: Strengthen the aesthetic tie between the Magnolia Avenue Downtown shops and the shopping center near the corner of Magnolia Avenue and Doherty Drive.

Action Program LU-4.4.a: Create a community-serving outdoor space at or near the Ward Magnolia intersection, in accordance with the design and development goals established in the Downtown Specific Plan and the Central Larkspur Specific Plan.

Policy LU-4.5: Encourage commercial uses in the Downtown that enhance the area's vitality as a commercial and community center.

North Magnolia Commercial Corridor Policies

Policy LU-4.6: Enhance the economic vitality of the North Magnolia commercial corridor and promote its development as a vibrant community center.

Action Program LU-4.6.a: Develop a Community or Local Plan for the North Magnolia commercial area or amend the zoning ordinance, depending on funding availability, to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Improve public parking and pedestrian/bicyclist access to serve area businesses. A parking study should evaluate opportunities for shared parking, additional parking spaces that can be accommodated in the existing right-of-way, and the reconfiguration of existing parking to accommodate more spaces and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety, in addition to other strategies.*
- 2) Improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety by widening sidewalks and providing safe bicycle travel lanes through reconfiguring the right-of-way.*
- 3) Provide amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists to encourage non-motorized traffic through the area, including convenient bicycle racks and benches.*
- 4) Create or encourage the creation of community-serving outdoor spaces in the City-owned parcel adjacent to the Hillview neighborhood or within redeveloped commercial sites along the North Magnolia Avenue commercial strip, such as a community garden or gathering place.*
- 5) Second or third story residential development over existing commercial development on the west side of Magnolia Avenue, where it can be accommodated and without impacting the views and safe circulation in the existing residential neighborhoods.*
- 6) Create landscaping guidelines for the area, including private and public parcels.*
- 7) Encourage the area's economic vitality by reviewing and updating, if appropriate, applicable City regulations for businesses (e.g., sign regulations).*

Action Program LU-4.6.b: Consult with the residents, business owners, and property owners in the North Magnolia commercial area to identify a unifying theme for the area. The theme shall guide the development standards in the Community or Local Plan or when amending the zoning ordinance to achieve the objectives established in Action Program LU-4.6.a.

Action Program LU-4.6.c: Apply consistent land use designations to commercial development in the North Magnolia area.



LU-5: Encourage commercial areas to provide an adequate mix of neighborhood-serving businesses as well as residential uses that are accessible by means other than the automobile.

General Policies

Policy LU-5.1: Encourage the development of upper-story housing, where appropriate, in commercial areas.

Action Program LU-5.1.a: Consider the reuse and redevelopment of large commercial parking lots with housing to accommodate infill development, provided that the project fits aesthetically with the surrounding community and minimizes impacts on views and circulation.

Action Program LU-5.1.b: Develop design criteria and multi-use shared parking standards for upper-story housing above commercial in existing and proposed commercial areas.

Policy LU-5.2: Encourage pedestrian and bicycle linkages between commercial areas and surrounding neighborhoods.

Action Program LU-5.2.a: Require new development or significant redevelopment of existing commercial areas to incorporate design features (building orientation, building materials, pedestrian connections, bicycle parking, parking location, landscaping) that encourage pedestrian and bicycle use and emphasize positive relationships with neighboring buildings and uses.

Action Program LU-5.2.b: Identify appropriate locations for pedestrian and bicycle linkages in commercial areas.

Action Program LU-5.2.c: Amend the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan as necessary to reflect the addition of planned bicycle and pedestrian linkages to commercial areas, their estimated costs, and their priority in implementation.

Downtown Policies

Policy LU-5.3: Improve access to Downtown, but do not encourage or permit new thoroughfares parallel to Magnolia Avenue, or one-way streets.

Action Program LU-5.3.a: Create additional non vehicular (pedestrian and bicycle) access points to Downtown to supplement Magnolia Avenue.

Bon Air Center Policies

Policy LU-5.4: Encourage the development of housing at the Bon Air Center, as allowed in the Bon Air Master Plan.

Action Program LU-5.4.a: Consider amending the Bon Air Preliminary Development Plan to allow other mixed-use development types in order to expand the range of housing options feasible on the site.

Vacant and Underutilized Sites

LU-6: Promote the development and revitalization of underutilized or marginal commercial and residential sites.

General Policies

Policy LU-6.1: Establish guidelines for the use and development of properties where change is expected to occur.

Action Program LU.6.1.a: Encourage the implementation of the Planned Development District for the 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle site.

Action Program LU-6.1.b: Study the potential for a mix of offices, small-scale, neighborhood-serving retail uses and medium density housing at 2 and 18 Bon Air Road. Higher residential densities will be considered for housing that is affordable to seniors and others.

Action Program LU-6.1.c: Develop conditions of project approval for other sites with development or redevelopment potential.

CLASP Subarea Policies

Policy LU- 6.2: The CLASP subareas will be developed into an integrated and cohesive mixed-use neighborhood in accordance with the guiding goals, policies,

and programs established in the CLASP.

Action Program LU-6.2.a: As necessary, update the CLASP to reflect up-to-date data and trends, and to address changing relationships and interconnectivity between the subareas as a result of the development of one or more of the subareas.

Policy LU- 6.3: Development in the CLASP subareas will provide the maximum community benefit possible; e.g., provide a mix of housing types and minimize impacts on traffic and schools.

Policy LU- 6.4: The CLASP subareas will be a focal point and activity center for the Downtown.

Policy LU- 6.5: Residential development in the CLASP Subarea 3 will have a low overall density to transition between the downtown and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

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LU-7: Integrate natural features into new development to the greatest extent reasonably feasible on those lots where development or redevelopment is expected to occur.

Policy LU-7.1: When required under project review, apply design review standards that require a balance between manmade features and the natural environment.

Redwood Highway Area Policies

Policy LU-7.2: Ensure that new development in the Redwood Highway area retains a sense of the area's physical setting by providing vistas of the ridgelines and access to the adjacent creek, marshlands, and the Bay beyond.

Policy LU-7.3: Ensure that existing uses and new development in the Redwood Highway area are sensitive to the fragile environment of the adjacent marsh.

Action Program LU-7.3.a: Restrict access to the marshlands by people and pets to designated areas.

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LU-8: Maintain the former railroad rights-of-way for public benefit.

Policy LU-8.1: Maintain the sylvan setting of the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way west of Highway 101.

Policy LU-8.2: Require the preservation of the station buildings near Ward Street and their incorporation into future redevelopment of the property.

Policy LU-8.3: Maintain and preserve the former electric booster station on William Avenue for public use.

Policy LU-8.4: Support retention of the former right-of-way east of Highway 101 for public transit use.



LU-9: Retain the existing availability of public transportation options in the San Quentin Peninsula.

Policy LU-9.1: Support retention of the present Airporter use on its 1.5 acre site on Larkspur Landing Circle.

Action Program LU-9.1.a: Designate the Airporter site as Public Facility to permit transit-oriented use, but also allow other uses that will enhance and not interfere with transit-related uses.

Policy LU-9.3: Support retention of the ferry terminal.



LU-10: Retain all or a portion of the San Quentin Prison site for park or other public use if prison use is discontinued.

Policy LU-10.1: Work with the State, the County, and the City of San Rafael to oppose any further expansion of San Quentin Prison that may negatively impact Larkspur.

Policy LU-10.2: Continue to monitor prospects for future growth and change at the San Quentin Prison site, and prepare for eventual reuse of the property.

Action Program LU-10.2.a: Explore the possibility of annexation of the San Quentin Prison area into the City's limits.

Policy LU-10.3: Preserve the Prison's Bay frontage adjacent to Larkspur for public parks and open space, and the ridgeline behind the Prison as open space.

Regional Relationships

LU-11: Cooperate with other jurisdictions in solving regional problems, in protecting environmental resources, and in providing public services.

Policy LU-11.1: Continue to participate with other communities and neighboring jurisdictions in regional and countywide planning studies.

Policy LU-11.2: Work with other communities in the Ross Valley to develop common policies for protection and enhancement of natural resources such as Corte Madera Creek.

Policy LU-11.3: When ideological conflicts arise between governmental agencies, base land use decisions in Larkspur on local community desires, where practical and legal.

Policy LU-11.4: Encourage regional agencies to recognize Larkspur's unique characteristics and constraints in regional planning efforts.

Environmental Responsibility

LU-12: Reduce the impacts of development on the environment.

Policy LU-12.1: Apply appropriate land use designations to environmentally sensitive areas to limit development in those areas.

Action Program LU-12.1.a: Review the Land Use map and update parcel designations as appropriate under the Open Space land use designation. Zoning designations included in this land use category include Open Space Area, Shoreline/Marsh Conservation Area, Educational/Environmental Resources Area, Water Area, and Parkland.

Policy LU-12.2: Continue to review all project submittals to determine whether they are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Policy LU-12.3: Continue to monitor all projects found to be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act for compliance with the Act.

Policy LU-12.4: Reduce GHG emissions from development in accordance with policies and programs established in the Larkspur Climate Action Plan.

Action Program LU-12.4.a: Monitor progress toward meeting GHG emission reduction targets established in the Climate Action Plan.

Policy LU-12.5: Promote energy efficient and green building practices for new, rehabilitated, or remodeled residential, commercial, and civic development.

Action Program LU-12.5.a: Implement the recommended Green Building, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy programs in the City's Climate Action Plan.

Action Program LU-12.5.b: Continue to ensure municipal code consistency with the California CALGreen code and apply CALGreen standards to building and planning application review.

Action Program LU-12.5.c: Continue to implement the Green Building standards established in the City's municipal code during building and planning application review for new residential and commercial development and qualifying remodel or rehabilitation projects.

Policy LU-12.6: Allow low-intensity development on hillsides and near Corte Madera Creek only if the design preserves natural features, such as significant stands of trees, forested hillsides, riparian vegetation, marshes, wildlife habitats, ridgelines, and buffer zones.

Policy LU-12.7: Encourage the use of cluster site plans for large parcels of land to retain valuable open space areas and ridgelines.

Policy LU-12.8: Require new development to preserve some natural area.

Action Program LU-12.8.a: Continue to implement slope and hillside development regulations requiring preservation of natural state.

Action Program LU-12.8.b: Continue to implement lot coverage and open space setback requirements for each zoning district.



LU-13: Ensure that development is adequately protected from environmental hazards.

Policy LU-13.1: Limit the exposure of existing and proposed development to environmental hazards.

Action Program LU-13.1.a: Maintain updated Seismic Hazards, Slope Stability, Fire Hazard, Noise Exposure, and Floodplain maps. Consult hazard maps to determine whether a proposed project is located in a high risk area.

Action Program LU-13.1.b: Provide environmental hazard information at City

Hall and on the City's website for property owners to reference.

Action Program LU-13.1.c: Provide information at City Hall and on the City's website regarding best practices for reducing risk of exposure to environmental hazards for property owners to consult.

Action Program LU-13.1.d: During project review, require use of building materials that reduce exposure to environmental hazards (e.g., fire-resistant roofing material).

Action Program LU-13.1.e: Continue to review projects for compliance with seismic safety building standards established in the International Building Code, or any subsequent code adopted by the City.

Policy LU-13.2: Require adaptation and mitigation strategies for existing and proposed development in areas identified as at risk of exposure to environmental hazards.

Action Program LU-13.2.a: Cooperate with regional agencies to develop adaptation strategies to protect development from inundation due to sea level rise.

Action Program LU-13.2.b: Adopt development guidelines and standards (e.g., elevating structures, development setbacks, etc.) in order to adapt existing structures and guide future development relative to flooding due to sea level rise, based on current scientific data.

Action Program LU-13.2.c: Investigate the efficacy, cost, environmental impacts, and other impacts of adaptive shoreline engineering strategies to protect development from encroaching tides.

LAND USE BACKGROUND

As with all elements of the General Plan, the Land Use Element describes the pattern of land development in Larkspur, identifies where change may occur, and presents goals, policies, and programs to guide such change. State law requires Land Use Elements to designate the distribution and general location of different land use categories (shown on the “Land Use and Circulation Plan” map) and to establish population density and building intensity standards for each land use category. It also identifies areas subject to flooding, as designated on floodplain maps produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency of the State Department of Water Resources.

The Larkspur Planning Area

According to State law, a General Plan may govern development of "any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning."¹

These adjacent unincorporated lands comprise the Sphere of Influence (SOI). Included in Larkspur's SOI are portions of unincorporated Greenbrae west of Highway 101 and the unincorporated portion of the San Quentin Peninsula, including San Quentin State Prison. The Larkspur Planning Area is coterminous with its SOI.

The Marin County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) determines the SOI for each local agency in Marin County. LAFCO is charged by State law to ensure the orderly and logical development of local government agencies, discourage urban sprawl, preserve open space and agricultural lands, and ensure that local government services are provided as efficiently as possible.² LAFCO must reevaluate the SOI of every local agency in the County every five years.

Prior to 2007, Larkspur's SOI included the unincorporated communities of Kentfield and Kent Woodlands (bordering the City in the northwest), and portions of Greenbrae and the San Quentin Peninsula. In a 2007 review of Larkspur's SOI (requested by the City), LAFCO determined that Kentfield and Kent Woodlands were “separate and distinct from the City...with independent sources of service comparable to services provided by the City.”³ Based on these and other findings, LAFCO removed those communities from the City's SOI. The unincorporated area of Greenbrae remaining within the City's SOI has not been interested in annexing to Larkspur.

Marin General Hospital, the largest hospital in Marin County, lies just outside Larkspur's City limits on Bon Air Road between South Eliseo Drive and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. The Hospital is located within the unincorporated portion of Greenbrae, formerly included in the City's SOI. The unincorporated community of Greenbrae has strong social, economic, and transportation ties to Larkspur and could be covered in the

¹ California Government Code §65300.

² California Government Code §56001.

³ Marin LAFCO Resolution 07-05, “Resolution Amending the Sphere of Influence of the City of Larkspur.”

Larkspur General Plan. However, Greenbrae and Kentfield prepared their own Community Plan in 1987 that covers most of the subject areas typical of general plans, including clear statements of the goals and policies needed to preserve the single-family character and natural amenities of those communities. Generally, the Community Plan and the Larkspur General Plan are in harmony. Accordingly, the Larkspur General Plan does not address development in the Greenbrae area included in its SOI but refers to the County's adopted Community Plan for the area.

The General Plan acknowledges the State's intention to continue operating San Quentin Prison, located on the San Quentin Peninsula east of Larkspur Landing in the long-term, as well as the County's regulatory jurisdiction over private land use changes at the site. As the site is located in the City's Sphere of Influence, the General Plan provides general policy direction for development on the San Quentin Peninsula if the prison is ever closed, reverted to private use, or annexed to the City. This policy direction should be revisited if the prison is ever designated for closure by the State.

Land Use Patterns in Larkspur

Growth was gradual in Larkspur until the move to the suburbs that followed the completion of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. Figure 2-2 shows the rapid increase in growth after 1940. Larkspur more than tripled in population between 1950 and 1980. Ninety-one percent of its housing was built after 1940.⁴ The rate of population growth slowed considerably in the 1970's and 1980's, and the population dipped briefly in 1990 before resuming an upward trend.

Figure 2-2. Larkspur Population, 1910-2010

	Population	% Increase
1910	594	-
1920	612	3%
1930	1,241	103%
1940	1,558	26%
1950	2,905	86%
1960	5,710	97%
1970	10,487	84%
1980	11,604	11%
1990	11,070	-5%
2000	12,014	9%
2010	11,926	-1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Reflecting its past as a summer home retreat and its more recent role as a bedroom community, Larkspur is primarily residential, with 59 percent of developed land devoted to single-family and multi-family residential uses. Commercial and industrial land uses

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau (2000)

occupy approximately 6 percent of developed land.⁵ Of the residential units, 52 percent are multi-family, 44 percent are single-family, and 4 percent are mobile homes.⁶

The remaining developed land is in public or institutional uses, such as schools and fire stations (6 percent), City parks (3 percent), and utilities, roads, and right-of-ways (18 percent). As Figure 2-3 shows, the distribution of land uses has remained static since the City began keeping track in 1965, except that the share of land devoted to residential use has gradually increased (from 25 to 38 percent), while undeveloped land dropped from 49 percent in 1965 to 22 percent in 2010.

Figure 2-3. Existing and Approved Land Use As a Percentage of Total City Acreage, 1965- 2011⁷

Land Use Category	1965	1973	1983	1989	2010
Residential	25	26	34	38	38
Retail Commercial, Offices	3	3	5	6	5
Industrial, Service Commercial	1	3	1	1	2
Public, Institutional	2	6	6	6	8
City Parks	1	3	2	2	2
Utilities, Roads, Right of Ways	13	17	13	13	18
Water Area	7	7	6	6	5
<i>Subtotal, % Total Land</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>78</i>
Public Open Space	-	-	15	15	18
Private Undeveloped	-	-	18	13	4
<i>Subtotal, % Total Land</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>22</i>
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: City of Larkspur, Department of Public Works and Engineering, 2011.

These percentages show that Larkspur is a mature city, with a limited amount of land available for development or redevelopment. In 2010, there were 42 acres of vacant land and 44 acres with redevelopment potential.⁸

⁵ City of Larkspur Planning Department and Department of Engineering staff survey, 2011.

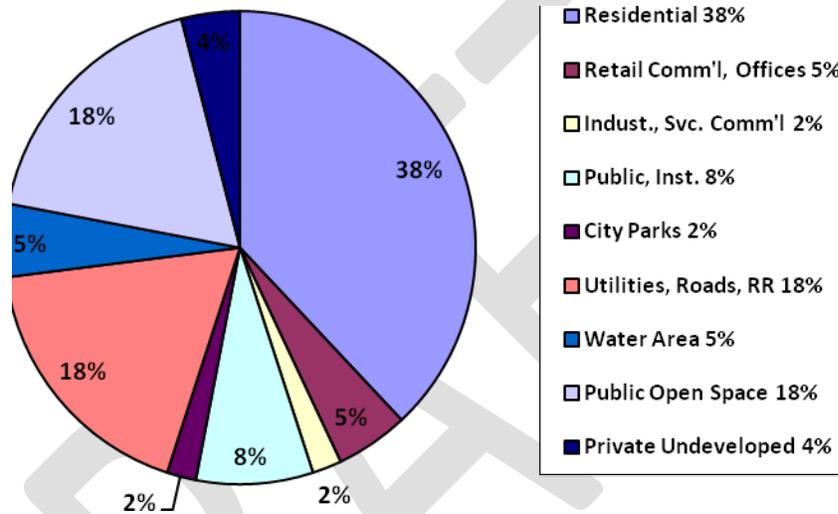
⁶ California Department of Finance (2010)

⁷ Larkspur in 2011 covered 2,043 acres of land and water, 86 acres more than in 1989. The total acreage figures for 1965 and 1973 are not considered reliable and are not presented here, but the percentage of land in each category is viewed as reliable. Note that the percentage of "Developed Land" in 2011 includes land area for which development was approved, but not yet built.

⁸ Areas with redevelopment potential consist mainly of existing commercial developments.

Larkspur had 1,931,448 square feet of commercial and industrial floor area in 2006. There has been no significant commercial or industrial development in the City since then. The square footage shown in Figure 2-5 is divided among six major categories of commercial and industrial land use.

Figure 2-4. Existing and Approved Land Use As a Percentage of Total City Acreage, 2011



Source: City of Larkspur, Department of Public Works and Engineering, 2011.

Figure 2-5. Commercial and Industrial Floor Area in Larkspur, 2006

Land Use Category	Square Feet
Industrial	
General Commercial	
Commercial Office	
Commercial Retail	
Commercial Residential (Mixed uses)	
Commercial Recreational	
Total	1,931,448

Source: Marin County Community Development Agency staff survey, 2006.

Land Use Categories

All land within Larkspur is classified into land use categories, which are shown on the

Land Use and Circulation map. State law requires the General Plan to determine “standards of population density and building intensity” for each land use category.⁹ However, in the event of a discrepancy between residential units per acre and persons per acre, the unit (not the population) density shall govern.

For residential uses, the densities shown (in dwelling units and in persons per gross acre) are maximums which are to be allowed only for developments that successfully promote social and economic diversity.¹⁰ Even then, the figures do not constitute an entitlement, nor is there any guarantee that any individual project will be able or will be permitted to achieve the maximum densities shown. For the commercial and industrial categories, the specific uses mentioned are illustrative only.

Residential

Open Residential. This single-family residential category allows up to 0.2 units per gross acre (up to 2 people per 5 acres). Minimum lot size is 5 acres, but smaller existing parcels would not be precluded from developing one housing unit.

Very Low Density Residential. This single-family residential category allows up to 1 unit per gross acre (up to 2 people per acre). Minimum lot size is 1 acre, but smaller existing parcels would not be precluded from developing one housing unit.

Low Density. This category allows up to 5 dwellings per gross acre (approximately 10 persons per acre). One house is allowed on each lot, unless a building permit is granted for a second unit. The addition of second units could increase density up to 10 dwellings (20 persons) per gross acre. The lowest minimum lot size is 7,500 square feet on parcels that are flat or on slopes up to 10 percent and may increase up to 43,560 square feet (1 acre) for slopes ranging from 10 to 25%. (Some lots predate zoning restrictions and do not meet these requirements, but may be determined to be legal building sites depending on how they were created.)

The City may require minimum lot sizes as large as 10 acres for areas with Residential Master Plan zoning. While maintaining an overall project density of 5 dwelling units per gross acre, the City may allow mixed residential (i.e., smaller lot sizes, multiple units on a single lot, and larger FAR's where permitted by a specific plan or Planned Development District).

Medium Density. This category allows up to 12 dwellings per gross acre (approximately 24 persons per acre). Maximum density decreases with slope to a minimum of two units per gross acre for slopes greater than 45 percent.

High Density. This category allows up to 21 units (about 42 persons) per acre on a flat

⁹ California Government Code § 65302(a)

¹⁰ Second units permitted by local regulation. State-mandated density bonuses for the provision of affordable housing are in addition to densities otherwise permitted in each of the residential land use classifications.

site (less than 10 percent slope), with a minimum density of 18 units per acre. Maximum density decreases with slope to a minimum of two units per gross acre for slopes greater than 45 percent.

Mobile Home Park. This is a residential category that allows only mobile homes and accessory uses, up to 14 units (about 28 persons) per gross acre. Its primary purpose is to protect existing mobile home parks from being converted to other residential or non residential use. (Recreational vehicle parks are allowed with a conditional use permit.)

Commercial/Industrial

Administrative and Professional Offices. This designation provides areas for office activities which serve local and regional needs. It allows administrative, executive, medical, dental, and business offices, some service establishments, medical supply sales, and laboratories. Some retail or service businesses may be allowed with a conditional use permit (provided they are primarily community-serving).

It is intended that Administrative and Professional Office areas will be characterized by buildings of low intensity and landscaped grounds. Floor area ratio (FAR) should not exceed 0.35, and landscaped areas (including patios and walks) should cover at least 30 percent of the lot area. Mixed-use office/residential may be allowed at a higher intensity (0.35 FAR for office/21 residential units per acre) with approval of a conditional use permit. Studios and one and two bedroom units are encouraged.

Neighborhood Commercial. This designation provides for neighborhood shopping areas to meet the frequent and recurring needs of nearby residents. Customers can be expected to arrive on bicycle or on foot, as well as by car. This category allows “retail” (e.g., apparel, art galleries, florists, grocery stores, photo, sporting goods, shoes); “personal services” (e.g., laundry and dry cleaners, shoe repair); bars and restaurants; and finance, insurance, real estate, administrative, executive, and business offices, and the like. Buildings shall be low intensity (maximum two stories) and have a maximum FAR of 0.4.

Upper-story residential units over first-story commercial uses are encouraged and exempt from FAR restrictions, except as may otherwise be stated in a specific plan or planned development plan. Studios and one- and two-bedroom units are encouraged. Senior housing is preferred. Upper-story residential density shall be limited by parking and height restrictions and mixed-use housing (i.e., commercial/residential) shall not exceed 21 residential units per acre. Live/work units may be conditionally permitted.

Commercial. This designation provides for the broader needs of residents of Larkspur and adjoining communities for goods and services, as well as neighborhood shopping needs. It is characterized by businesses that rely on customers making trips by car, and those uses that do not necessarily benefit from the high-volume pedestrian concentrations found in neighborhood shopping centers and Downtown. These include

auto accessory stores, carpet stores, catering establishments, department stores, and the like, as well as uses allowed in Neighborhood Commercial areas.

Upper-story residential units over first-story commercial uses are encouraged and are exempt from FAR restrictions, except as may otherwise be stated in a specific plan or planned development plan. Senior housing is preferred. Upper-story residential density shall be limited by parking and height restrictions and mixed-use housing (i.e., commercial/residential) shall not exceed 21 residential units per acre. Studios and one- or two-bedroom units are encouraged. Live/work units may be conditionally permitted.

Buildings are comparable in scale to those in the Neighborhood Commercial category and have a maximum FAR of 0.4. Hotels may be allowed to a maximum FAR of 1.0 where specific or master plans are required. The scale of such hotel structures would not be required to be comparable in scale to structures in the Neighborhood Commercial land use category, but shall be governed by an adopted specific or master plan.

Downtown. This designation applies to Larkspur's Downtown. It allows most of the same uses as those allowed in the Neighborhood Commercial designation, but with the goal of promoting personal services and retail sales of convenience goods while enhancing the vitality and character of the historic commercial area. All uses are to be compatible with the present mix of small-scale restaurants, drug stores, retail shops, and art galleries. Floor area ratio should not exceed 1.0.

Studios and one- and two-bedroom second-story residential units over first-story commercial uses are encouraged and exempt from FAR restrictions, except as may otherwise be stated in a specific plan or planned development plan. Senior housing is preferred. Second-story residential density shall be limited by parking and height restrictions and mixed-use housing (i.e., commercial/residential) shall not exceed 21 residential units per acre. The present two-story scale of buildings is to be maintained, and off-street parking is required for new development.

Industrial and Service Commercial. This designation provides for a wide variety of commercial, wholesale, service, and processing uses which are of value to the community at large. It allows warehousing, heavy commercial, auto and truck sales and repair, food and drink processing, construction yards, print shops, artist studios, and similar uses. Live/work units may be conditionally permitted. Floor area ratio should not exceed 0.4.

Public and Government

Schools. This designation applies to public schools and their grounds. Floor area ratios should not exceed 0.25.

Public Facilities. This designation applies to federal, State, County, special district,

and other publicly-owned facilities, not including schools and colleges. Floor area ratio should not exceed 0.25.

Open Space

Parkland. This designation applies to active and passive parks, and linear parks (landscaped paths) in urban areas. The only structures allowed are shelters, restrooms, storage sheds, and other structures needed to accommodate public use or provide for maintenance of the land. Floor area ratio should not exceed 0.10.

Open Space Area. This designation applies to any parcel of land or water which is essentially unimproved and is devoted to the preservation of natural resources, views, and wildlife habitats, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation and education, or public health and safety. It may include publicly owned lands as well as privately owned lands set aside as open space through conditions of development approval. The only structures allowed are shelters, restrooms, storage sheds, and other structures needed to accommodate public use or provide for maintenance of the land. Floor area ratio should not exceed 0.10.

Shoreline/Wetland Conservation Area. This designation applies to lands containing wetlands (mudflats, tidal and seasonal marshes), beaches, rocky shorelines, low-lying grasslands overlying historic marshlands, streams, and riparian vegetation. It may include publicly owned lands as well as privately owned lands set aside as open space through conditions of development approval. Land uses which provide or protect wetland or wildlife habitat, and/or which do not require diking, filling, or dredging, are encouraged.

Other uses which do not require diking, filling, or dredging but are less protective of habitat value may be permitted when it can be proven that the resulting public benefit exceeds environmental costs and liabilities. Public benefits shall include but not be limited to: public access, recreational, educational, or scientific opportunities, provision of essential water conveyance, transportation or utility services, and protection from flood or other natural hazards. The only structures allowed are shelters, restrooms, storage sheds, and other structures needed to accommodate public use or provide for maintenance of the land. Floor area ratio should not exceed 0.10.

Educational/Environmental Resources Area. This designation applies only to the College of Marin campus in Larkspur. It allows outdoor athletic and recreational programs and activities, landscape management and horticultural educational, environmental science, and nature study, and floodplain and wildlife habitat. No additional structures are allowed, except for classrooms, consistent with State law which gives community college districts independence from local zoning where their educational programs are involved.

Water Area. This designation applies to the channels of Corte Madera and Larkspur

Creeks, the lagoon within the Larkspur Marina development, and San Francisco Bay.

Residential Neighborhoods

Larkspur wants to maintain the many desirable physical and social characteristics its neighborhoods now have, including the existing balance of residential and commercial uses. To protect the integrity and cohesiveness of existing neighborhoods, incompatible development must not be allowed.

As land costs rise, property owners seek to maximize their investments by extensively remodeling and expanding existing houses. In some cases, they may find it economical to tear down an existing house and replace it with a new, larger house. This is especially true in older neighborhoods where houses were built many years ago as summer cottages. While the private redevelopment of single-family homes increases property values for their owners and their neighbors, it may also threaten the character and scale of existing neighborhoods.

Some of the large new houses literally overshadow their smaller neighbors, although they meet all zoning ordinance requirements. Others are proposed that do not meet current setback, site coverage, floor area ratio, and parking requirements. Property owners then seek approval of a variance, use permit, or exception (depending on the requirement). For floor area ratio exceptions, the Planning Commission must make a finding that the visual scale and bulk of a new or renovated house is compatible with the pattern in the neighborhood before approving the application (findings for FAR exceptions are established in the Larkspur Municipal Code).

Single-Family

Each of Larkspur's single-family neighborhoods has a distinct character which derives from its period of development or natural setting. Detailed descriptions of each neighborhood can be found in Appendix B.

Multiple-Family

More than half of the housing in Larkspur is in multiple-family (multi-family) developments. In 2010, the State Department of Finance estimated that 53 percent of Larkspur's housing was multi-family versus 44 percent that was single-family. This ratio is unusual for suburban communities, where the percentages normally are reversed. Of the twelve municipalities in Marin County, Larkspur has the highest percentage of multi-family housing.¹¹ Multi-family neighborhoods are described in Appendix B.

Commercial Areas

¹¹ California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit (2010)

Downtown

Downtown Larkspur is a generally one-lot deep, pedestrian-oriented commercial strip along Magnolia Avenue that retains Larkspur's historic, small-town character both in architectural design and in its role as the City's "main street." The area is designated as "Downtown" on the Land Use map. The Downtown is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is home to several notable historic buildings, including the City's Town Hall and Fire Station. Several specialty retail stores, a café, and restaurants complete the Downtown's walkable commercial frontage and serve the immediate retail and service needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and Larkspur as a whole. The historic City Hall and Fire Station sit on a small rise near the south end, and a shopping center anchors the north end. Across from City Hall is St. Patrick's Church and School. Other significant landmarks include the Blue Rock Inn and the Lark Theater.

The Historic District was officially recognized by the State of California in 1981 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. The Downtown is covered by a Historic Preservation District Overlay zone which requires Heritage Preservation Board review of zoning changes and building, demolition, and grading permits.

Downtown Specific Plan

As the historic center of Larkspur, Downtown is unique among the City's commercial districts. The 1990 General Plan contained several goals relating to: preservation of the Downtown's historic character; preservation of the existing mix of commercial, residential, professional, public and institutional uses; enhancement of the Downtown's vitality; and the creation of a "sense of place," or town center, along Magnolia Avenue. The City determined that the adoption of a specific plan for the Downtown area would be the most effective approach to achieving these goals.

The Downtown Specific Plan was adopted in 1992 and includes goals, policies, and programs to realize the community's vision for the Downtown area as established in the 1990 General Plan. The collaborative planning process was guided by a Steering Committee comprised of members from the Larkspur Community Association, Heritage Preservation Board, 1990 General Plan Citizens Advisory Committee, the Chamber of Commerce, the Planning Commission, and the Design Review Board.

This General Plan acknowledges the Downtown Specific Plan's guidance of land use decisions in the Downtown area. (NOTE: See discussion below of the Central Larkspur Specific Plan, which addresses development of two subareas located in the Downtown/Transitional Downtown area.)

Protecting the Character of the Downtown

One major threat to the character of the Downtown is the commuter traffic that passes through it on the Tamalpais Drive/Magnolia Avenue/College Avenue route that connects Highway 101 in Corte Madera with communities in the Upper Ross Valley. The

Circulation Element of this General Plan (Chapter 3) includes policies and programs to mitigate this vehicular congestion. Policy LU-5.3 and Action Program LU-5.3.a in this Element also address Downtown circulation issues.

Retail businesses in the Downtown are threatened by competition from large shopping centers and discount stores, both within Larkspur and in nearby communities. Downtown Larkspur should capitalize on its Historic District status, walking scale, and other assets to improve its economic standing. Past surveys show that the community viewed Downtown businesses as friendly and personal, but that there was not enough diversity, and (at the time) Downtown needed to improve its appearance.¹² Larkspur should cooperate with business organizations to enhance the physical environment of the Downtown and attract diverse new businesses. Community-serving businesses should be encouraged, while taking into consideration the economic viability and the street vitality of the Old Downtown. Building preservation, restoration, and any new construction should be in harmony with the street scale and historic periods represented.

North Magnolia Commercial Corridor

The North Magnolia commercial corridor is an approximately one mile long commercial strip along Magnolia Avenue north of Skylark Drive and south of Murray Lane. The corridor is characterized by single-story retail and other commercial businesses which directly abut the marsh on the east side and a single-family residential neighborhood on the west side. The corridor is largely served by on-street parking, though some off-street parking for the businesses is provided.

The Citizen Advisory Committee for the 2030 General Plan conducted a land use study of the North Magnolia commercial corridor in 2010. Among the Committee's findings were:

- The Commercial area is underutilized, with lingering quasi-industrial uses such as mini-storage facilities breaking up the commercial streetscape;
- The two different commercial classifications identified in the 1990 General Plan (the west side of Magnolia Avenue designated General Commercial, and the east side Neighborhood Commercial) promoted disjointed, incompatible uses;
- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure was limited, leading to an overreliance on personal automobiles for access;
- The marsh bordering development on the east side of Magnolia Avenue was a valuable natural asset that should be protected and made more accessible (whether physically, or visually) from the street;
- The single-story development type dominating the corridor could be expanded to second- or third-story mixed-use development in areas abutting hillsides or where views or adjacent residential development would not be impacted.

¹² Larkspur Community Association survey, February 1989.

The Committee determined that the North Magnolia Avenue commercial corridor could become a “second Downtown,” an attractive destination with community gathering spaces and a vibrant restaurant and retail environment, rather than an area to pass through. The Committee’s findings and goals for the corridor necessitate the development of a Community or Local Area Plan, which would provide specific development and land use standards for the corridor’s revitalization.

Medical Office Area

The Medical Office area lies along Bon Air Road between Magnolia Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and along South Eliseo Drive between Bon Air Road and Corte Real (excluding the residential uses present on the south side of South Eliseo Drive). The proximity of Marin General Hospital (which lies outside the City’s Planning Area) has had a significant influence on land use in this area, where numerous medical and dental offices serve central Marin. While offices are the primary use in the area, which is designated within the Administrative and Professional Office land use category, related retail and personal service uses, rehabilitation centers and small convalescent hospitals are also allowed.

Sohner Plaza, at the northwest corner of Bon Air Road and Magnolia Avenue, also houses medical and administrative offices and related retail and personal services that benefit central Marin. In 2010, a neighborhood-serving hardware store (operating under a conditional use permit) relocated from its former location on North Magnolia Avenue to the Plaza. Across Bon Air Road is a small commercial area, also occupied by medical offices.

Redwood Highway Area

Current Uses

The Redwood Highway Area (formerly known as “Greenbrae East” or the “East of 101” area) is a thirty-acre area of land lying east of Highway 101 and south of Corte Madera Creek. In 2011, the varied land uses in this area included:

- Three mobile home parks containing approximately 300 mobile home and recreational vehicle sites;
- A retail center with a grocery store (Cost Plus Plaza);
- Industrial and service industrial uses (e.g., a concrete company, construction material suppliers, auto and truck repair);
- Small independent retailers;
- A veterinary hospital; and
- A cooperative artist studio.

The industrial uses are a product of an earlier stage in Larkspur’s history when

manufacturing, heavy commercial uses, and mobile homes developed in central Marin. Today, these diverse uses help to meet an array of local and regional community needs. Cost Plus Plaza serves residents of the mobile home parks, other City residents, and regional visitors with such retail uses as Cost Plus World Market, Beverages and More, and Trader Joe's. In 2011, Trader Joe's was the only full-service grocery store in the Larkspur Planning Area east of Highway 101.

Land Use Studies

The Larkspur Planning Department conducted a special study of the Redwood Highway area in 1987. The study found that at the time, most residents, property owners, and business owners in the Redwood Highway area preferred to maintain the status quo, rather than encourage land use changes. The 1987 study also identified flooding and protection of adjacent marshes as major land use issues.

Following the 1987 study, the City rezoned approximately 10.7 acres of land where there were existing mobile home and recreational vehicle parks to a Mobile Home Park district to ensure mobile homes would not be forced out by other uses. These areas are designated Mobile Home Park on the General Plan Land Use map. The mobile home parks provide a valuable supply of affordable housing.

The Citizen Advisory Committee for the 2030 General Plan conducted a land use study of the Redwood Highway area in 2010. Among the Committee's findings were:

- The existing mix of industrial and commercial uses meets a community need and should be maintained.
- The mobile home parks constitute a valuable source of affordable housing.
- Development in the area is extremely vulnerable to both seasonal flooding and flooding due to sea level rise in the San Francisco Bay.

In particular, the CAC identified the risk of flooding due to rising sea levels, coupled with existing seasonal flooding issues, as a significant limiting factor to increasing commercial/industrial intensity and residential density in the area. The area is bordered by the Corte Madera Ecological Preserve on the east and the Corte Madera Shorebird Marsh on the south and southeast, and regularly experiences seasonal flooding. The CAC also noted the need for improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities within the area. (This issue is addressed in Chapter 3, Circulation.)

Relationship to other jurisdictions

Most of the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) railroad right-of-way (formerly the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way) to the east and the marshlands beyond are in the Town of Corte Madera. A small unincorporated pocket of land at the north end of the area abuts both Larkspur and Corte Madera, and includes a portion of the SMART right-of-way and a small residential community referred to as the Greenbrae Boardwalk. The Greenbrae Boardwalk is a colony of 50 houseboats stretching along the south shore of Corte Madera Creek near where it enters the Bay.

Though the Greenbrae Boardwalk may only be accessed through the City of Larkspur, it lies within the Town of Corte Madera's Sphere of Influence. Greenbrae Boardwalk residents hold a long term lease with the County of Marin for a County-owned parking lot located within the City of Larkspur. The City does not intend to annex the Greenbrae Boardwalk over the lifetime of the General Plan.

Planned Developments

Bon Air

The Bon Air Shopping Center and Drake's Landing Office Center are the major commercial components of the 70-acre Bon Air Master Plan development on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard west of Highway 101. The shopping center, which covers approximately 20 acres, is anchored by a supermarket and supported by specialty retail businesses, restaurants, small offices, and banks. The Drake's Landing Office Center (122,000 square feet) contains professional offices and a restaurant. The area's residential component consists of 42 townhomes (Drake's Landing) and 129 single family homes (Cape Marin; includes 20 below market rate units). The Bon Air Master Plan allows for second-story housing above first-floor commercial.

A small commercial area with a mix of medical and professional offices lies just west of the Bon Air Shopping Center on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

Larkspur Landing/San Quentin Peninsula

Current Uses

The San Quentin Peninsula is comprised of approximately 150 acres east of Highway 101 and north of Corte Madera Creek. In 2011, land uses in this area included:

- An approximately 16-acre shopping center and office complex (Marin Country Mart);
- Several office buildings;
- A hotel (The Courtyard at Marriott);
- A movie theater (Century 21 Theatre);
- Three City parks (Neighborhood Park, Miwok Park, and Remillard Park);
- Two multi-family developments: 342 units at Lincoln Village Circle, and 248 Units at Old Quarry Road (total 590 units);
- EAH affordable housing development: 24 units;
- A market-rate housing development: 23 units (partially completed in 2011);
- The Larkspur Ferry Terminal;
- The Marin Airpoter terminal.

In 2011, Marin Country Mart tenants included restaurants, locally-owned and chain retail stores, a gym, professional offices, and specialty retail boutiques. Just beyond the shopping center is the historic Remillard Brick Kiln, surrounded by office buildings, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and protected by Heritage Preservation zoning. In 2007, the City granted approvals for a project on a parcel owned by the Ross Valley Sanitary District (located at the intersection of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard East and Larkspur Landing Circle East) that proposed 126 housing units, a hotel, and the District's administrative offices and corporation yard.

San Quentin State Prison is located at the easterly end of the San Quentin Peninsula, just outside of the City limits in the unincorporated County. It falls under the City's Sphere of Influence. (See further discussion of San Quentin State Prison on page 2-32.)

Land Use and Circulation

Larkspur Landing's high-density housing in close proximity to regional public transit facilities (Larkspur ferry and local and regional bus lines) qualifies the area as a *transportation-oriented development*, a development model encouraged by the Association of Bay Area Governments to reduce commuting by private automobile.

Additionally, a voter-approved commuter rail system connecting Sonoma and Marin counties with the Larkspur Ferry Terminal (Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit, or SMART) is planned to terminate in Larkspur Landing, enhancing the area's existing role as a regional transportation hub. Rehabilitation of the Cal Park Tunnel, which links San Rafael and Larkspur Landing, was completed in December 2010. The Tunnel will accommodate both SMART rail cars and a multi-use pathway for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. The Larkspur SMART train station is planned to be located adjacent to the current Marin Airporter site, displacing a portion of the overflow parking used by Marin Airporter and Larkspur ferry passengers.

Sir Francis Drake Boulevard East, a regional commuter corridor stretching from east to west through the San Quentin Peninsula, provides access to:

- Highway 101, and Highway 580 (via the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge);
- San Francisco, via the Larkspur Ferry Terminal; and
- The San Francisco International Airport, via the Marin Airporter coach service.

Vacant or Underutilized Sites

Central Larkspur Specific Plan Area

The City Council adopted the Central Larkspur Specific Plan (CLASP) in 2006 with the intent to revitalize one of the City's gateways to its historic Downtown. The CLASP Area encompasses 27.58 acres of land along, and including, Doherty Drive and along

Magnolia Avenue between East Ward Street and Doherty Drive.

Figure 2-6. Central Larkspur Specific Plan Subareas

Subarea	Parcels Included (2010 Parcel Maps)	General Plan Designation	Existing Use	Acreage
1	020-254-08, 10 020-254-01, 11 020-254-02 020-254-07, 09 020-254-12	Downtown Commercial	Commercial and retail businesses; vacant lot; City parking lot; American Legion Hall; Larkspur Plaza Driveway; Doherty Park.	2.46
2	022-110-33 022-110-41, 42, 46	Downtown Commercial	Gas station; retail, commercial, personal service, and food sales.	2.77
3	020-110-45	Low Density Residential	Former wholesale/retail nursery.	16.8

The CLASP contains land use goals, policies and development standards intended to encourage mixed residential and commercial uses in Subareas 1 and 2, and mixed-density residential development in Subarea 3, the former Niven Nursery site. The CLASP also implements Action Program [22] of the 1990 General Plan, which directed the City to develop a specific plan for the former Niven Nursery site prior to changing the land use designation.

CLASP Subarea 3

CLASP Subarea 3 is a 16.8 acre former wholesale and retail nursery. Following the adoption of the CLASP, the site was re-zoned from Light Industrial to Planned Development. The CLASP designates the site as mixed residential, which is consistent with the low density residential land use designation established in the General Plan. The mixed residential designation encourages a mix of housing types, including single-family homes, cottage homes, and multi-family dwellings. Accordingly, density may vary within the site; however, the overall density will conform to the maximum density of five dwelling units per gross acre as allowed by the low-density residential designation. The site also includes a Parkland/Public Facilities designation to indicate that a neighborhood park and/or public facility is planned for the property.

The City granted approvals to a mixed-density residential project on the site in 2009. In accordance with the approvals, the City has the option to buy a portion of the property to develop as a community facility. Development of the residential project began in 2011.

Former Railroad Right-of-Way

Portions of the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way in Larkspur were purchased by the City or other public agencies and developed into paved multi-use paths. These paths are regularly used by Larkspur residents and regional visitors for

recreation purposes, commuter travel, or to get to and from common destinations such as schools and shopping centers. A north/south segment owned by the City parallels Holcomb Avenue from the southern City limit to the Downtown, and an east/west segment (portions of which are owned by either the City of Larkspur or the Town of Corte Madera) parallels William Avenue and the south boundary of Redwood High School.

The east/west segment, referred to as the Sandra Marker Trail, continues in an easterly direction through Corte Madera and connects to a north/south segment on the east side of Highway 101 outside of the City's Planning Area. This latter north/south segment is owned by the Sonoma-Marin Rail Transit Authority (SMART) and remains undeveloped. SMART reserves use of the right-of-way for future rail development. (Note: The Circulation Element, Chapter 3, contains goals, policies, and programs pertaining to the use of former rail right-of-ways for transit and paths.)

San Quentin Prison

As of 2011, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) had no plans for closing or otherwise changing the use of San Quentin State Prison, which is located on the San Quentin Peninsula within the unincorporated County and in Larkspur's Sphere of Influence. The 2009 CDCR Master Plan Annual Report recommended an annual investment of \$17 to \$21 million in the prison's infrastructure through 2020. The State has also invested millions in larger projects at the prison site, including a \$136 million Central Health Services Center that was completed in 2009.

Plans to build a nearly \$400 million Condemned Inmate Complex were scrapped by California Governor Jerry Brown in 2011 due to budget constraints, though it is unclear whether the State will revive the project in the future if the economy improves. In 2007, the Larkspur City Council approved Resolution No. 24/07 opposing the Condemned Inmate Complex and supporting an assembly bill sponsored by Assemblyman Jared Huffman that aimed to block the project's construction in light of cost and environmental impacts. Though AB 1743 was approved, it was hobbled at the executive level when Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the language placing restrictions on the project's funding. In November 2010, the County of Marin filed a lawsuit against the State to block the solicitation of bids for the construction of the Complex, claiming that Governor Schwarzenegger's line-item veto was illegal.¹³ The Larkspur City Council joined the County in opposing the proposed expansion, but the City was not party to the County's lawsuit.

Potential Future Land Use Changes

In recognition of the State's intent to continue operating the prison, the Marin Countywide Plan designates the prison site as Public Facilities. However, the County also prepared a San Quentin Vision Plan (SQVP) in 2003 that provides development objectives and policies should the State cease operation of the prison and make the

¹³ Johnson, Nels. "Marin sues state over San Quentin Death Row Plan." Marin Independent Journal. November 3, 2010.

site available for private development. The SQVP was guided by the San Quentin Reuse Planning Committee, comprised of stakeholders from the private and public sector (including the City of Larkspur). The SQVP envisions a sustainable urban village with a range of housing types and a circulation system that promotes non-vehicular modes of transportation (e.g., walking, biking, and transit). It also promotes the relocation of the ferry terminal currently located at Larkspur Landing to San Quentin.¹⁴

Regional Relationships

Larkspur lies within Marin County's eastern urban corridor, where most of the County's population lives and approximately 91 percent (nearly 31 million square feet) of the County's commercial and industrial floor area is located.¹⁵ Highway 101 is a north-south transportation spine that connects Marin communities in the eastern urban corridor. Larkspur is also part of a smaller sub-region, the Lower Ross Valley, with which it is even more closely linked by Corte Madera Creek (which flows through the valley), by Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and by public service and school districts that cross city boundaries. In an urban area such as central Marin County, land use, transportation, and environmental problems transcend the boundaries of individual cities. Many of these problems can be solved only through a pooling of efforts that cuts across political and geographical boundaries.

Environmental Responsibility

The Citizen Advisory Committee for the 2030 General Plan identified environmental responsibility as a key community value. Environmental responsibility encompasses a range of land use issues related to minimizing the impact of development on the natural environment. Some specific issues include:

- Environmental justice (i.e., not locating low-income housing in environmentally hazardous areas);
- Resource conservation (e.g., using recycled materials in new construction, remodels, or additions, and energy conservation); and
- Reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from mobile sources (e.g., cars and trucks).

Environmental responsibility also encompasses the impact of the natural environment on development. The most pressing environmental threat to development in low-lying areas in Larkspur, as identified by the CAC and several regional organizations, is sea level rise due to climate change. Sea level rise will impact built structures and infrastructure (including roadways, utility lines, and submerged pipelines) in the City along the San Francisco Bay and the banks of Corte Madera Creek. The most pressing threat to hillside development is the potential for wildland fires. Earthquakes and

¹⁴ Marin County Community Development Agency. San Quentin Vision Plan, 2003.

¹⁵ Marin Countywide Plan, 2007.

associated hazards (e.g., liquefaction and ground shaking) also pose a hazard to development throughout the City.

(See Chapter 7, Health and Safety, for a discussion of environmental hazards including sea level rise, wildland fires and earthquakes, and policies and programs the City will implement to protect human life and property from these hazards.)

Applicable State Laws

California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) mandates an environmental review process for all projects throughout the State. A “project” is generally defined as an action having potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.¹⁶

Senate Bill 97 (adopted in 2007) mandated that a project’s greenhouse gas emissions are subject to environmental review under CEQA. The CEQA Guidelines were updated in March of 2010 to include thresholds of significance for greenhouse gas emissions. The CEQA Environmental Checklist, provided in the CEQA Guidelines, lists common areas of impact to consider in the environmental review process, including greenhouse gas emissions, biological resources, noise, traffic, and others.¹⁷

Global Warming Solutions Act

In 2006, the California legislature adopted AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, which set a statewide goal to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. AB 32 also gave the California Air Resources Board (CARB) the authority to set regional GHG emission reduction targets. In 2010, the City of Larkspur adopted a Climate Action Plan to reduce GHG emissions from both municipal operations and the community to 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. The Climate Action Plan is the City’s guiding document to achieve the necessary GHG emission reductions from development in the City.

Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375) was adopted in 2008 to enhance the State’s ability to meet the statewide GHG reduction goal established by AB 32. The Act requires the State’s 18 metropolitan planning organizations to create planning documents called Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS) to illustrate how their regional GHG emission targets will be achieved. The SCS integrates land use, housing, and transportation planning at a regional level, planning processes that heretofore had been managed separately by the metropolitan planning organizations and regional transportation agencies. The Bay Area’s metropolitan planning organization and regional transportation agency (the Association of Bay Area

¹⁶ California Public Resources Code §21065

¹⁷ California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000–15387.

Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, respectively) began the SCS process in 2011, with completion anticipated by 2013. Consistency between General Plans and the SCS is not required.

Public School Sites

Three public school sites are located in Larkspur and are designated Public Schools on the Land Use map. Current school enrollment and enrollment projections are discussed in Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services.

1. Redwood High School (grades 9-12), a 60 acre site on Doherty Drive, is part of the Tamalpais Union High School District (TUHSD). TUHSD's administrative offices and corporation yard, an alternative high school, and an adult educational school are also located on the site.
2. Henry C. Hall Middle School (grades 5-8) occupies a 9.7 acre site on the north side of Doherty Drive. Piper Park wraps around the east and north sides of the school, and Boardwalk No. 1, a residential area, is located on its west side. Hall Middle School is in the Larkspur- Corte Madera School District.
3. The former Larkspur Corte Madera School, a 5.3 acre school site on Magnolia Avenue near the Larkspur/Corte Madera city limits, ceased operating as a public school in 1979 due to declining enrollment. Marin Primary and Middle School, a private school, has leased the school buildings from the Larkspur-Corte Madera School District since 1980. The Larkspur-Corte Madera School District retains some offices on site, and the grounds and playground equipment provided by the private school are open to public use.

Three public schools attended by Larkspur children are located outside of the City's Planning Area.

- Neil Cummins Elementary School (grades K-4) is a 10 acre site located on Mohawk Avenue in Corte Madera.
- Anthony G. Bacich Elementary School (grades K-5) is a 9.5 acre site on McAllister Avenue in Kentfield.
- Adaline E. Kent Middle School (grades 6-8) is located on an 8.7 acre site on College Avenue at Stadium Way in Kentfield.

Two private schools are also located in Larkspur.

- St. Patrick's School (grades K-8) is located on Magnolia Avenue at King Street. The site's land use designation is commercial.
- Marin Primary and Middle School (grades K-8) is operated at the former Larkspur-Corte Madera school site on Magnolia Avenue.

Marin Catholic High School (grades 9-12) is located at the corner of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Bon Air Road in Kentfield, just outside the City's Planning Area.

Public Facilities

Public facilities and services in Larkspur are discussed in detail in Chapter 5, Community Facilities and services. Public facilities in Larkspur include the following:

- City Hall and Fire Station No. 1 share a site at the corner of Magnolia Avenue and King Street.
- Fire Station No. 2, Drake's Landing, is located on Barry Way at Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.
- The Larkspur Ferry Terminal is located on a 25 acre site owned by the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District on the south side of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard east of Highway 101. Commuters embark from the ferry terminal for San Francisco. The terminal also includes the District's ferry maintenance facility and fuel storage tanks. Most of the site is occupied by surface parking.
- The Twin Cities Police Authority occupies a 1.3 acre site in the southern portion of Piper Park at 250 Doherty Drive. A new 17,970 square foot building and associated structures were under construction in 2011 to replace the former 3,150 square foot facility. (See Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services, for a more detailed description of the facility.)
- In 2011, the City shared corporation yard facilities with the Tamalpais Union High School District at 305 Doherty Drive. The City was actively seeking different locations for its corporation yard at the time.
- The College of Marin owns an approximately 25-acre site in Larkspur on Magnolia Avenue at Estelle Avenue. The site is designated Educational/Environmental Resource Area on the Land Use map.

Uses on the site are limited to outdoor athletic and recreational programs and activities, landscape management and horticultural educational, environmental science, and nature study, and floodplain and wildlife habitat. No additional structures are allowed on the land, except for classrooms, consistent with State law which gives community college districts independence from local zoning where their educational programs are involved. In 2011, the College began planning for a Child Study Center at the site.

Public facilities outside of the City limits but within Larkspur's Planning Area include:

- San Quentin Prison;
- College of Marin's Kentfield Campus, most of which is located in unincorporated Kentfield.

Open Space Areas

Parks in Larkspur

Larkspur's twelve neighborhood and community parks are designated as Parkland on the Land Use map. Neighborhood parks range in size from one third acre to eight acres, and vary in use from nature observation to active recreation. The community park is Piper Park, which encompasses 22 acres. A complete description of Larkspur's parks is located in Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services.

Parks outside Larkspur

Located just outside the City's Planning Area is the 13-acre Hal Brown Park at Creekside, located on the northern side of Corte Madera Creek west of Bon Air Road. The Park is owned and operated by the Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space.

Hillside and Right-of-Way Open Space

The Marin Open Space District owns and manages three open space preserves with lands located in Larkspur's Planning Area, which are designated Open Space on the Land Use map. The Baltimore Canyon Preserve consists of 193 acres in the southwestern corner of Larkspur. The Preserve is popular among Marin County hikers, and its network of trails connects to neighboring open space areas in Mill Valley and the unincorporated County. The King Mountain Preserve consists of 108 acres within Larkspur and is also a popular site for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. The Blithedale Summit Preserve is one of the District's largest preserve, totaling approximately 900 acres, a portion of which are located within Larkspur's Planning Area.

Other hillside areas designated as Open Space include the 20-acre ridge above Larkspur Landing. The Open Space designation was a condition of development approval of the residential developments at Larkspur Landing. Segments of the former railroad right-of-way along Holcomb Avenue were developed into a multi-use path (portions of which are owned either by the City or the Town of Corte Madera). These segments are shown as Open Space on the Land Use Map.

Shoreline/Wetland Conservation Areas

Portions of the shoreline along San Francisco Bay and the lands upland of Corte Madera Creek are designated Shoreline/Wetland Conservation areas. The Shoreline/Wetland Conservation areas are not continuous along the Creek because of pre-existing development. The designation applies to a 600 foot long strip on the south side of the Creek between Larkspur Plaza Drive and Bon Air Road. The width of this strip ranges from about 60 to 145 feet (where it expands into a wetland mitigation area) and covers 2.8 acres of wetlands, drainage ditch/view corridor, and multi-use path.¹⁸

¹⁸ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maps. The Marin Audubon Society, in a communication of March 10, 1990, notes that "Tidal

Other areas designated Shoreline/Wetland Conservation are (1) the marsh bordering Redwood High School on the south and east, which varies in width from 150 feet to 450 feet, with the widest expanse at the southeast corner of the high school grounds; and (2) a strip of land between Harvard Drive and Corte Madera Creek.

The Redwood Highway area, the land between Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and San Francisco Bay, the periphery of Wood Island, and the land beneath the Highway 101/Greenbrae interchange are also designated Shoreline/Wetland Conservation areas.

Land Use Changes

1. Renamed "Restricted Commercial" designation to "Neighborhood Commercial."
2. CAC suggested possible rezone of mobile home park at Redwood Highway and Wornum Drive to allow for mixed use.
3. Planned Development District at 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle approved in 2007.
4. Re-designate west side of north Magnolia Avenue to Neighborhood Commercial (formerly General Commercial).
5. Larkspur Landing area (including ferry terminal): possible changes after Station Area study, to be determined.

marshes exist in a continuous strip along Corte Madera Creek, except in a few locations along South Eliseo Drive where buildings have been constructed over the creek, where interrupted by bridges, and where substrate has been covered by riptide or boat docks at the Larkspur Marina."
