

## Chapter 4. Community Character

One of Larkspur's top priorities is to preserve, enhance, and strengthen its community character. Larkspur's community character is influenced by a variety of factors, including its variety of neighborhoods, natural setting, strong school system, historic resources, library, and community events. The City strives to maintain and enhance these elements, and mitigate the elements that detract from community character: the geographic fragmentation of the community, the City's ambiguous boundaries, overhead utility lines, and vehicular traffic intrusion from other communities.

The Community Character Element intends to **maintain and strengthen the City's community identity and attractive and livable environment, and preserve its unique and valuable historic resources**. To develop a consistent, implementable set of goals, policies, and programs for Larkspur, the following factors were considered:

- **Larkspur's ambiguous boundaries.** The City is bounded by the town of Corte Madera, the unincorporated community of Kentfield, a portion of the unincorporated community of Greenbrae, the City of San Rafael, and the San Francisco Bay. With the exception of San Rafael, which is separated from the City by open space areas, it is difficult to distinguish the City from the immediately surrounding communities due to a lack of clear gateways. Additionally, a significant portion of Greenbrae lies within City limits. East and west Larkspur are physically separated by Highway 101, fostering a feeling of disconnection between the two areas.
- **Larkspur's natural environment.** Larkspur's natural setting is an integral component of the community's character. The City is bordered by the Baltimore Canyon, King Mountain, and Blithedale Summit Open Space Preserves, which provide access to Mt. Tamalpais and offer hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails. The San Francisco Bay borders its eastern limits, and Corte Madera Creek and its tributaries divide north Larkspur from south Larkspur. Larkspur residents value access to the natural environment and consider maintaining and strengthening that connection to be a community priority.
- **Larkspur's built environment.** In Larkspur and throughout Marin County, the natural environment - particularly hillsides and ridgelines - has played a major role in shaping urban form. Larkspur's 27 planning areas and residential neighborhoods are distinct and diverse, featuring a variety of architectural styles and housing densities. Many residents identify closely with their neighborhood, providing an underlying layer to the City's broader community identity.
- **Larkspur's historic resources.** Historic resources, as discussed in this General Plan, generally include features of the built environment, artifacts, and documents from Larkspur's past that have been preserved or otherwise exist in approximation to their original state. Notable historic features of the built environment include the Historic Downtown District, the Alexander Avenue Bridge, the Dolliver House, and the Remillard Brick Kiln. These reminders of

Larkspur's past are highly valued by City residents, business owners, and visitors alike, and their continued preservation is integral to Larkspur's community character.

- **Larkspur's archaeological resources.** Archaeological resources are the material remains of past human life, culture, or activities. Historic archaeological resources may include buried remains of built structures or artifacts dating from Larkspur's settlement by Europeans. Prehistoric archaeological resources in Larkspur include several known Native American sacred sites, which are protected under State and Federal law. The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, a federally recognized tribe and sovereign government, remains responsible for preserving the culture of the Coast Miwok people throughout its tribal territory, including Larkspur. The City has and will continue to ensure the continued protection of all archaeological resources existing within its Planning Area.
- **Community interaction in Larkspur.** The City has traditionally sponsored and supported community-wide events such as the annual Food and Flower Festival and the Fourth of July Parade (a production of the "Twin Cities," Larkspur and Corte Madera). The City's public facilities, including its parks, the City Library, and schools also serve as community gathering spaces and sponsor community events. The City will strive to support existing community events, to encourage new community events, and to provide new community spaces. (See Chapter 2, Land Use, for a detailed discussion of a downtown community gathering space).

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS

### ***Community Identity***

CHAR-1: Preserve, enhance, and strengthen community identity.

### ***Livable Environment***

CHAR-2: Maintain Larkspur's livable and attractive environment.

### ***Heritage Preservation***

CHAR-3: Assure the survival of Larkspur's special "sense of place."

CHAR-4: Promote a greater awareness of and sensitivity toward Larkspur's archaeological heritage.

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## **Community Identity**

### **CHAR-1: Preserve, enhance, and strengthen community identity.**

Policy CHAR-1.1: Streets should be named for local flora, natural features in the area, or persons or places of historic significance.

Policy CHAR-1.2: Strengthen the ties between neighborhoods while preserving neighborhood individuality and uniqueness.

*Action Program CHAR-1.2.a: Require all major new development or redevelopment to provide connectivity to and from the site for bicyclists and pedestrians. (See Chapter 4, Circulation, Policy CIR-6.1 and associated action programs for policies on enhancing bicycle and pedestrian connections in Larkspur.)*

*Action Program CHAR-1.2.b: 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. (See Chapter 2, Land Use, Policy LU-1.2 and Action Program LU-1.2.a.)*

*Action Program CHAR-1.2.c: Continue to maintain, improve, and upgrade the City's pocket and neighborhood parks that connect the City's neighborhoods. (See Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services, Policy FAC-1.1 and associated action programs for further policies addressing the City's parkland.)*

Policy CHAR-1.3: Visually integrate the various segments of the community.

*Action Program CHAR-1.3.a: Adopt design standards to ensure consistent street lamps, signage, street trees, street lamp banners, and landscaping in public spaces. The standards should consider appearance, function, cost, maintenance, and the ability to withstand vandalism when determining the type of street lamps, signs, trees, and other objects. (See Chapter 6, Natural Environment and Resources, Goal ENV-1 and Goal ENV-5 and associated policies and programs for more direction on maintaining and enhancing native, water conserving landscaping in the City.)*

*Action Program CHAR-1.3.b: Continue to maintain the street lamp banners in the Downtown and consider installation of additional banners along other City thoroughfares (e.g., Magnolia Avenue north of Bon Air Road).*

*Action Program CHAR-1.3.c: Consider the installation of consistent and visible signage at the City's various gateways to clarify the City's boundaries.*

*Action Program CHAR-1.3.d: Develop and implement a wayfinding (informational and directional) signage program that identifies the elements that create and enhance the City's identity, such as historic buildings.*

Policy CHAR-1.4: Support and provide Citywide events and activities that foster community interaction and togetherness.

*Action Program CHAR-1.4.a: Continue to permit and sponsor community-wide events such as the Food and Flower Festival, the Fourth of July Parade, and mobile food vending events.*

*Action Program CHAR-1.4.b: Work with the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations in the City to develop and promote new community-wide events and activities that provide both social and economic benefits to the community.*

*Action Program CHAR-1.4.c: The Recreation Department will work with the Larkspur-Corte Madera School District and the Tamalpais Union High School District to develop and promote performances by students in community spaces, such as visual and performing arts.*

*Action Program CHAR-1.4.d: In addition to offering and sponsoring organized group activities such as sports, the Recreation Department will provide and/or sponsor activities that are open to all community members (e.g., Movie Nights in Piper Park).*

Policy CHAR-1.5: Provide community gathering spaces throughout the City.

*Action Program CHAR-1.5.a: Support the development of a community gathering space in the Downtown area. (See Chapter 2, Land Use, Policy LU-4.4 and associated action programs for more direction on developing community spaces in the Downtown.)*

*Action Program CHAR-1.5.b: Support the development of a community gathering space in the North Magnolia commercial corridor to serve residents, area employees, and the commercial corridor's customers consistent with a Local Area Plan for the corridor. (See Chapter 2, Land Use, Policy LU-4.6 and associated programs for more direction on producing a Local Area Plan for the corridor.)*

*Action Program CHAR-1.5.c: Encourage the shared use of public spaces and facilities for community events. (See Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services, for additional policies regarding shared-use of community facilities.)*

*Action Program CHAR-1.5.d: Continue to support community events at public facilities, including the City Hall, the Library, City parks, and other publicly owned spaces.*

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## ***Livable Environment***

### **CHAR-2: Maintain Larkspur's livable and attractive environment.**

Policy CHAR-2.1: Promote development and redevelopment that preserves and blends harmoniously with the natural environment.

*Action Program CHAR-2.1.a: Initiate a volunteer-based landscaping program to enhance the ties between developed public spaces and the natural environment.*

*Action Program CHAR-2.1.b: Encourage the inclusion of native or adapted plant species, the removal of non-native invasive plant species, the retention of existing vegetation, and the replacement of trees proposed for removal in project landscaping plans.*

*See Chapter 6, Natural Environment and Resources, Goal ENV-1 and associated policies and action programs for more direction on maintaining and enhancing native landscaping in the City.*

Policy CHAR-2.2: Preserve the desirable features of the built environment that contribute to community identity, including but not limited to its scale and diversity.

*Action Program CHAR-2.2.a: Adopt an ordinance to reduce visual blight in the community due to graffiti and other acts of vandalism that attract from the attractiveness of the built environment.*

Policy CHAR-2.3: Preserve the remaining natural environment – trees, marshes, creeks, hillsides – as integral components of Larkspur's community character and identity.

Policy CHAR-2.4: Maintain a diversity of businesses to serve the community.

*Action Program CHAR-2.4.a: Prepare and implement an Economic Development Plan that strives to maintain existing businesses and attract new businesses that serve the local community.*

*Action Program CHAR-2.4.b: Encourage restaurants to provide outdoor dining areas, where feasible.*

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## ***Heritage Preservation***

### **CHAR-3: Maintain, and encourage Larkspur citizens to value, Larkspur's special "sense of place."**

Policy CHAR-3.1: Encourage broad-based community interest in and support of preservation activities.

*Action Program CHAR-3.1.a: Support the efforts of the Heritage Preservation Board and other organizations to engage and educate the community about the City's historic resources, including historic walking tours, publication of books or other written materials about the City's heritage, and presentations at local schools, libraries, and other public meeting spaces.*

Policy CHAR-3.2: Identify significant archaeological, historic, and natural resources representing all of the ethnic, economic, and cultural groups that have lived and worked in Larkspur.

*Action Program CHAR-3.2.a: Maintain and regularly update the Historic Resources Inventory, which documents historic structures, sites, areas, and natural phenomena. The Heritage Preservation Board shall continue to evaluate potential historic resources for inclusion in the inventory.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.2.b: Maintain updated maps showing the location of historic districts and other historic resources.*

Policy CHAR-3.3: Safeguard and maintain significant historic, archaeological, and natural resources, as defined and listed in the Historic Resources Inventory, the California Historic Resource Information System, and in conservation land use categories on the Land Use Map.

*Action Program CHAR-3.3.a: Apply the City's Heritage Preservation development standards and design review findings, when appropriate, and ensure compliance with applicable State laws during project review and construction.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.3.b: Apply the "H" Combining Heritage Preservation Zoning District to significant historic building sites or places identified on the Historic Resources Inventory. Insofar as possible, seek the cooperation of property owners for historic designation and zoning.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.3.c: Maintain and expand the City's archival system to preserve the community's historic documents and artifacts.*

Policy CHAR-3.4: Accommodate anticipated development and population growth while maintaining Larkspur's historic and natural resources.

*Action Program CHAR-3.4.a: Continue to conduct outreach and educate historic property owners on available State or federal programs that help fund the protection, preservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of historic, archaeological, and natural resources.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.4.b: Direct capital improvement programs toward protecting, preserving, rehabilitating, and enhancing publicly-owned historic, archeological, and natural resources.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.4.c: Provide a variety of local incentives for restoring and maintaining historic, archaeological, and natural resources.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.4.d: Coordinate City and other public agency or tribal programs so that the City's objectives and standards for preserving historic, archaeological, and natural resources are met.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.4.e: Use the principles and practices of land use planning to promote the preservation of historic, archaeological, and natural resources.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.4.f: Periodically review and update zoning regulations when deficiencies relating to historic preservation are identified, and consider amendments to foster historic preservation.*

*Action Program CHAR-3.4.g: For complex private rehabilitation or restoration projects, the City may require applicants to hire a qualified professional with experience in historic building renovation and may provide increased project inspection and review, as appropriate.*

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**Goal 4: Promote a greater awareness of and sensitivity toward Larkspur's archaeological resources.**

Policy CHAR-4.1: Consult and cooperate with the appropriate California Native American Tribe(s), the California Native American Heritage Commission, and the Northwest Information Center to identify, protect, and preserve Native American archaeological sites.

*Action Program CHAR-4.1.a: Consult with the appropriate Tribe(s) prior to the adoption or amendment of the General Plan, a specific plan, or the designation of open space.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.1.b: Provide archaeological findings and reports to the Northwest Information Center and the appropriate Tribe(s) for review and recommendations.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.1.c: Maintain confidentiality concerning locations of Native American cultural resources that are identified through consultation with the appropriate Tribe(s) and the Northwest Information Center.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.1.d: Support the holding of conservation easements by the Tribe(s) for land voluntarily set aside in Larkspur by landowners for the protection of Native American cultural resources.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.1.e: Treat with respect and dignity any human remains discovered at a project site, and ensure full compliance with the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and other appropriate laws.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.1.f: Provide property owners with background data regarding Native American archaeological sites located on their properties.*

**Policy CHAR-4.2:** Insure that the loss of archaeological resources is avoided, when feasible, or mitigated appropriately.

*Action Program CHAR-4.2.a: Seek funds from federal, State and local sources to acquire archaeological sites for park or other public purposes, and to preserve any artifacts.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.2.b: Consider amending the General Plan land use designations for Native American or historic archaeological sites, in order to preserve the archaeological record.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.2.c: When a project is found to be in proximity to a known Native American or historic archaeological site, City staff will work in conjunction with a professional archaeologist, or the appropriate Tribe(s) and the Northwest Information Center to determine the particular qualities to be preserved and the methods of preservation.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.2.d: Comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act to ensure a complete analysis of potential impacts to Native American and historic archaeological sites and mitigation options are performed.*

*Action Program CHAR-4.2.e: If an historic archaeological site is discovered during any phase of project development, require an assessment of the site's significance by the City's historic consultant and identify appropriate preservation strategies, if appropriate, before allowing project construction to commence.*

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## COMMUNITY CHARACTER BACKGROUND

### **THE ELEMENTS OF LARKSPUR'S CHARACTER**

Larkspur's greatest assets include its abundance of multi-use paths and trails; its natural setting between wooded hills and waterfront; its mix of housing types that encourage an economically diverse population; and its "small town" atmosphere anchored by the historic downtown and distinct and varied residential neighborhoods. Detracting from the community's character is the geographic fragmentation of the community, the City's ambiguous boundaries, overhead utility lines, and vehicular traffic intrusion from other communities.

#### **Boundaries**

Larkspur's physical boundaries are not clear. The City lies within Marin County's eastern urban corridor, where most of the County's population lives, and is one of several communities in the Lower Ross Valley. Curving around Larkspur in the shape of a horseshoe on its northwest boundary are the unincorporated communities of Kentfield and Greenbrae. The unincorporated San Quentin Peninsula lies adjacent to the Larkspur Planning Area east of the Larkspur Landing area. Larkspur is also bounded by the cities of San Rafael on the north, Mill Valley on the south, and Corte Madera on the southeast.

While highly visible ridges form natural boundaries between Larkspur and San Rafael and between Larkspur and Mill Valley, the City's boundaries with Corte Madera, unincorporated Kentfield, and a portion of unincorporated Greenbrae are not apparent. The absence of typical boundaries - creeks, major roadways, distinct changes in land use - makes it very difficult to identify where the transition occurs from one community to another. Indeed, half of Greenbrae is in the City of Larkspur and half is unincorporated, and its separate identity is reinforced by its postal zip code - Greenbrae 94904 (part of San Rafael's Post Office) versus Larkspur 94939.

Service boundaries in Larkspur may also seem ambiguous. The Twin Cities Police Authority provides police service to both Larkspur and Corte Madera (the "Twin Cities"), and in 2011 the Authority merged support and dispatch services with the San Anselmo Police Department. The City provides fire services within the City boundaries, but the Fire Department is considering consolidation on a regional level to maximize efficiency and capacity and minimize expenditures. The City is also divided amongst several school districts, with Larkspur children attending schools in the Larkspur-Corte Madera School District, the Kentfield School District, the San Rafael City School District, or the Tamalpais Union High School District. (For more detailed information about police, fire, school, utility, and waste services, see Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services.)

#### **The Natural Environment**

Throughout Marin County, the natural environment - particularly hillsides and ridgelines - has played a major role in shaping urban form. The general physical form of Larkspur and Corte Madera together can be described by viewing the left hand from above, with thumb and index finger separated and extended: the thumb represents the Corte Madera Ridge,<sup>1</sup> which separates Larkspur from Mill Valley; and the index finger represents the Southern Heights Ridge,<sup>2</sup> which separates Larkspur from San Rafael and extends eastward to form the San Quentin peninsula. The area between the thumb and index finger represents the flatter and more urbanized areas of Larkspur and Corte Madera. Where the thumb and index finger join, the Lower Ross Valley narrows and extends northwest into Kentfield and Ross. At the open end of the two fingers is the San Francisco Bay.

Major thoroughfares in Larkspur have also been greatly affected by topography. Excluding Highway 101, there are only two continuous routes through Larkspur, and both were sited to conform to topography. Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is the east-west connection between West Marin, the Upper Ross Valley, Larkspur, San Quentin, and the East Bay. After coming east through the center of the Ross Valley, the road hugs the base of the Southern Heights Ridge (Greenbrae), and after passing north of Wood Island and the Larkspur Ferry Terminal (two important landmarks), the road follows the shoreline of the Corte Madera Channel before diverting northward over the ridge and around San Quentin to the Richmond Bridge. The north-south route (College Avenue, Magnolia Avenue, Corte Madera Avenue, and Camino Alto) hugs the base of Ross Hill (opposite College of Marin) and the base of King Mountain (at Bon Air Road).

Most of the area between these roads is flat land, water, and marsh. Major exceptions are Bon Air Hill, Wood Island, and Palm Hill. Corte Madera Creek flows through the center of the valley floor. Although the once-natural lines of the creek have been engineered into a wide flood-control channel, the creek still meanders in several "S" curves. It is a pleasant looking waterway, and northwest of Bon Air Road, multi-use paths run along both banks.

*(For detailed information about the City's natural resources, including shoreline, wetland, riparian, and open space areas, see Chapter 6, Natural Environment and Resources.)*

## **The Built Environment**

All of Larkspur's "flatland" housing lies in the valley between Magnolia Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. The community's hillside houses are located on Palm Hill (a small landmark hill of single-family houses), on Bon Air Hill (a larger landmark hill, all multiple-family), in Greenbrae (north of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to the top of Southern Heights Ridge, all single-family), west of Magnolia (primarily single-family, with

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<sup>1</sup> Official USGS nomenclature. Its eastward extension between Corte Madera and Mill Valley is more commonly known as North Ridge (of Mill Valley)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Skylark Apartments being a major exception), and in Larkspur Landing (all multiple-family).

In very general terms, residences first developed in Larkspur west of the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad; second, they were built north of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard (Greenbrae); and only third, did housing move into the flatland areas toward the creek. Greenbrae is the City's largest neighborhood and represents the second wave of houses. The third wave - the newest developments - lie east of Magnolia Avenue, north of Doherty Drive, south of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

Larkspur's neighborhoods are very diverse. Many have views of and access to mountains and ridges, Corte Madera Creek and the Bay, or both. Appendix B discusses each neighborhood in terms of its particular personality and amenities.

No discussion of the urban form or community character of Larkspur can overlook the role of Corte Madera Creek. While the creek is an obvious open space resource and provides a focus along the length of the community, it also divides north Larkspur from south Larkspur. Between Magnolia Avenue in the northwest and Highway 101 in the east, only Bon Air Road bridges the creek. The result is that from the easterly sections of the community, one must go "out of town" through Corte Madera to travel between north and south Larkspur.

### **Gateways**

One's general impression of Larkspur depends on the point from which the community is entered or the place from which the City is observed. Larkspur is entered at six major gateways: from the east (from East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard alongside San Quentin Prison); one from the north (descending from the Southern Heights Ridge southbound on Highway 101); two from the west (southbound on College Avenue from the College of Marin, and eastbound on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard from Wolfe Grade); and two from the south (northbound on Magnolia Avenue from Corte Madera, and northbound on Highway 101 above the former railroad right-of-way and just south of the Lucky Drive intersection). The visual impressions from each of the gateways is quite different; they are reviewed in Appendix A.

### **NEIGHBORHOODS**

While there is some recognition of a larger image of community, most Larkspur citizens also see themselves as coming from a specific neighborhood. Many of these neighborhoods are named after the original development, which may have had only a few dozen homes. The size and location of these neighborhoods is a direct product of the scale and pace of development in Larkspur over the years. Thus, one way to define Larkspur is as a collection of neighborhoods.

Appendix B divides the city into five planning areas and 27 neighborhoods (shown on Figure B-1), and describes the location, boundaries, and a detailed description of each neighborhood.

### **LARKSPUR'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Larkspur's six K-12 public and private schools, and those in neighboring districts attended by Larkspur children, play a vital role in the growth and well-being of Larkspur children. They are a source of pride and community spirit not just among parents of school-age children but within the greater Larkspur community. Larkspur public schools have a reputation for academic excellence and rank among the top 10 percent of California schools as measured by standardized test scores. Young families often cite the strong school system as influencing their decision to move to Larkspur. A good school system often supports high property values in a community.

Larkspur citizens have historically invested in the high quality of education provided by Larkspur public schools, even during difficult economic times. In 2011, the Larkspur - Corte Madera School District facilities bond and Tamalpais Union High School District parcel tax measures received overwhelming voter support. Parents also contribute countless hours annually volunteering on committees that help schools thrive.

### **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

#### **The Historic Built Environment**

Much of Larkspur's charm and character is derived from its rich architectural and cultural heritage. Its historic structures are irreplaceable assets that contribute to the special and unique character of the City and are a source of identity and pride for its residents. In recognition of the importance of these resources to its community image, Larkspur has made a major commitment to historic preservation, in both the public and private sector.

The first residences were built after the 1840's in Baltimore Canyon, within walking distance of the railroad station. A large proportion of these were vacation homes, and varied in size from 500 square-foot cottages to 3,000 or more square-foot mansions and hotels. In 1887, C.W. Wright bought and laid out lots in Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio, the first organized tract development west of Magnolia. Development in the canyon and flatland areas west of Magnolia Avenue continued into the early 1900s, moving gradually north- and south-westerly following Corte Madera Creek. Hillside development in Greenbrae followed in 1946, and Larkspur Landing was developed in 1978.

#### **Historic Preservation**

In the 1970s, the Larkspur Heritage Committee took the first steps toward an historic preservation program by surveying the City to identify historic buildings, places, and organizations. Their survey resulted in the publication of the first *Larkspur Past and*

*Present* book in 1979, a comprehensive document that listed the City's historic resources and integrated historical perspectives of Larkspur's neighborhoods with accompanying walking tours. Updated versions of *Larkspur Past and Present* were published by the Larkspur Heritage Preservation Board in 1991 and 2010. The 2010 edition, dedicated to the City's Centennial celebration, contains detailed descriptions of each historic neighborhood, walking tour routes, excerpts from interviews with past and present Larkspur residents, historic photos, and other historic information.

Since 1979, the City Council has:

- Established an Historic Preservation Board (replacing the Heritage Committee);
- Added a Combining Heritage Preservation Zoning District to the Larkspur Zoning Ordinance which allows for application of an "H" overlay (see Figure 3-X for "H" zoned properties in Larkspur);
- Established the Historic Downtown District on the National Register of Historic Places;
- Approved a Downtown Specific Plan;
- Approved and updated an Historic Resources Inventory listing the City's designated historic resources;
- Adopted historic development standards and design review findings intended to protect the City's historic resources.

#### *The Role and Activities of the Heritage Preservation Board*

The Heritage Preservation Board is charged with identifying and encouraging the conservation of Larkspur's historic resources, raising community awareness of Larkspur's history and historic resources, and serving as the City's primary resource in matters of history and the rehabilitation of historic resources. The Board recommends the inclusion of historic resources to the inventory and the application of "H" zoning to the City Council, and prepares and submits applications for properties determined to be eligible for listing as a State Landmark or on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Board also reviews planning and building applications for structures listed on the Historic Resources Inventory for compliance with the City's heritage preservation standards and design review findings set forth in the Zoning Ordinance. The Board may recommend conditions of approval to the appropriate City reviewing official or body.

#### ***Historic Resources Inventory***

The most recent Historic Resources Inventory was adopted by the City Council in 2008, and was a product of the efforts of Heritage Preservation Board members, volunteers, City staff, and a consulting historic architect. The inventory lists structures, sites, areas, and natural phenomena that fit one or more of the following criteria:

- A reminder of past years, events and persons important in local, state or national history;
- An example of once common structure with a design that specifically relates to its now rare or nonexistent first use or business;
- A unique or irreplaceable asset to the City or a neighborhood, which asset enriches human life and/or serves an educational benefit by providing future generations examples of the physical surroundings of the past;
- An example essential to maintaining the overall historic character of a larger area;
- A structure having architectural significance. A structure determined to have architectural significance shall be one which is valuable as an example of:
  - Architectural design that is attributable to an historic period;
  - A commonly identified architectural style or method of construction;
  - Architectural design that is unusual, beautiful or ingenious;
  - A notable work of a major builder or designer;
  - Unusual quality of workmanship;
  - Unusual use of construction materials.

Due to research and time constraints, not all potential historic resources were included in the Historic Resources Inventory. However, additional properties determined to be eligible for inclusion on the Inventory are subject to design review and the heritage preservation standards established in the Zoning Ordinance, and are also subject to review under CEQA.

### ***Incentives for Historic Preservation***

In 2010, the Heritage Preservation Board issued the inaugural, annual Heritage Preservation Award to recognize extraordinary accomplishments in historic preservation by property owners of historic structures. The Board solicits nominations from the community for property owners who have completed restoration work within the past five years. Award recipients are selected according to Board criteria, with creative and innovative restoration projects receiving special consideration.

In addition to recognizing restoration efforts with the Award, the City may offer economic incentives for the preservation of historic buildings. One such program is the Mills Act, enacted in California in 1972, which authorizes local governments to enter into contracts with owners of qualified historical properties to reduce the property tax assessed against the property, in exchange for the active restoration and maintenance of the historic building.

### ***Notable Structures of Historic Interest***

- The Downtown Historic District is a grouping of historic buildings and sites, including City Hall. It constitutes “a capsule history of the town,”<sup>3</sup> as all periods of the City's history are represented. The District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Alexander Avenue Bridge is a concrete structure arching over the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks between Alexander and Acacia Avenues. It was built in 1927 and was scheduled for seismic retrofitting and rehabilitation in 2012. In 2011, the Bridge was one of the last remaining through-arch bridges remaining in California. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Dolliver House, constructed in the new township of Larkspur in 1888, remains substantially unchanged in 2011 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The former Escalle Winery, which houses a collection of historic buildings, is zoned with an “H” overlay and may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

Archaeological resources are defined as the material remains of past human life, culture, or activities. Archaeological resources may be sites containing sacred Native American cultural resources, the buried remains of historic buildings or structures, or found objects from the past. Native American archaeological sites (*or sacred sites*) are protected by Federal and State laws that dictate procedural requirements for consultation between municipalities and tribes and the identification and protection of sacred sites.

The State of California Office of Historic Preservation maintains regional historic resources information offices throughout California. The Northwest Information Center maintains historic resources records and information for 16 coastal, Bay Area, and inland counties, including Marin County.

#### **Native American Sacred Sites**

The Coast Miwok people preceded all other human presence in Marin County, and continue to live today in their traditional territory, which encompasses all of Marin County and the southern portion of Sonoma County. The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR), a federally recognized tribe and sovereign government, is responsible for preserving the culture of the Coast Miwok people throughout its tribal territory, which includes the City of Larkspur and its Planning Area.

The Bay Area region has been home to Native American tribes for over 10,000 years.<sup>6</sup> Until the beginning of Spanish colonization in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Coast Miwok Indians lived along Larkspur's marshes and creeks and hunted in the heavily wooded

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<sup>3</sup> *Larkspur Past and Present*. 1978.

<sup>6</sup> The National Park Service, Golden Gate National Recreation Area website. Accessed May 31, 2011.

hills around Mount Tamalpais. The Coast Miwok people were the first environmental stewards of the natural resources in their tribal territory, maintaining a pristine environmental legacy.<sup>7</sup>

Evidence of their prehistoric presence in what is now the Larkspur Planning Area has been found in several identified shell mounds and a habitation site.<sup>8</sup> These sites contain cultural resources (including human remains, funerary objects, and other objects associated with Native American culture) that are sacred to the Tribe and are protected under the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.<sup>9</sup> Government agencies in California are also required to consult with Native American tribes prior to adopting or amending the General Plan. Planning efforts must also respect the confidentiality of the nature and location of Native American places.<sup>10</sup>

Sacred cultural places are listed on the California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS). Their locations are kept confidential to prevent vandalism and artifact hunting and to protect landowners from trespass.<sup>11</sup> Access to information about sites in northwest California (including Larkspur) is managed by the Northwest Information Center (NWIC), one of eleven non-profit organizations affiliated with the State Office of Historic Preservation that provide access to the CHRIS. Access to site location information is usually limited to landowners, cultural resource consultants, planners, and scholarly researchers. Those granted such access sign an agreement to keep the information confidential and not to disclose it to unauthorized individuals or in documents distributed to the public.

It should be noted that less than five percent of the Larkspur Sphere of Influence has been surveyed for cultural resources, and there is a high probability of additional unrecorded sites.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it is important that archival or field studies or both be conducted during project review on a project-specific basis.

## **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Community-wide events in the City allow residents to interact and feel connected to each other and the community at large. Regular community events include the annual Food and Flower Festival (presented by the Larkspur Community Association), and the Fourth of July parade (a joint collaboration between the Town of Corte Madera and the City of Larkspur). Smaller weekly events, such as a weekly farmer's market at the Marin Country Mart, provide additional opportunities for Larkspur residents to mingle and enjoy all that the City has to offer.

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Tipon, Chair, Federated Indians of Rancheria Graton Sacred Sites Protection Committee. Memo to City dated April 13, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> City of Larkspur General Plan. 1990.

<sup>9</sup> California Health and Safety Code §8010.

<sup>10</sup> California Government Code §65352.4.

<sup>11</sup> California Government Code §6254.10 exempts archaeological site information from the California Public Records Act which otherwise requires that public records be open to public inspection.

<sup>12</sup> City of Larkspur General Plan. 1990.

The Larkspur Food and Flower Festival is generally held annually on Memorial Day weekend in the City's historic downtown. The festival typically features food and beverages from local restaurants, musical performances from local bands and more well-known acts, children's activities, and arts and crafts vendors. Because the festival attracts visitors from around the Bay Area, the festival also provides a valuable economic boost to downtown businesses. The Fourth of July Parade features floats created by community members, and is an especially favorite event among the City's young families.

Larkspur schools also serve as community gathering spots for a variety of unique and entertaining school sponsored events that are open to the public and which build community. On any given day one might attend a baseball or volleyball game, a musical, a band concert, a play, a chalk festival, or a science fair. Conversely, for students of Larkspur schools the city serves as a rich, open and safe classroom for learning everything from environmental science and archeology to local history. (For more information on Larkspur schools, see Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services.)

The Larkspur Library, located in the historic City Hall, also serves as a community gathering and event space. On a given day, the Library may be filled with patrons young and old, who are reading, studying, conducting research, meeting with friends, or accessing the Internet. During the evenings, the Library regularly hosts informative and fun presentations and events, including poetry readings, author meet-and-greets, book club discussions, and presentations on international travel which are well-attended and valued by Larkspur residents and regional visitors alike. (For more information on the library facility and the services it offers, see Chapter 5, Community Facilities and Services.)