
Appendix B: Description of Neighborhoods

1. Northwest (north of Bon Air Road, on both sides of Magnolia Ave.).

a. *College Park* - This is a one-street subdivision of 18 homes on the east side of Magnolia Avenue, opposite Murray Lane, and abutting the south side of the College of Marin. The terrain is level. The houses are uniformly "California ranch style" dating from the 1950s or 1960s. The College of Marin and shops on North Magnolia and College Avenues are within easy walking distance of the neighborhood, as are the walking and bicycle paths along Corte Madera Creek and the hospital and medical offices just across the creek.

Parts of the neighborhood (primarily the houses along the east side of College Court) are in the 100-year Flood Zone. Also, these houses do not take advantage of - do not orient to - the College playing fields or the creek to the east. (There is only a small green wetlands between the homes and a College parking lot that was created by filling a former marsh.) Houses on the west side of the street are very close to - and are not buffered from - the noise and traffic on Magnolia Avenue.

b. *Murray Park* - the single-family homes (and two multiple-family apartment units) on the west side of Magnolia from Murray Avenue north to the City Limits (Murray Lane). This neighborhood extends west of the City Limits into unincorporated area.

This is a neighborhood of approximately 100 one- and two-story homes of various sizes dating from 1912 through the 1940s. (Approximately 30 additional homes lie west of the Larkspur City Limits in unincorporated Kent Woodlands.) Some were originally summer homes sited among the redwoods. A creek runs through the area.

The area is quiet. There is no through-traffic. Exit/entry is from North Magnolia Avenue via three streets - Murray, Frances, and Estelle Avenues. The College of Marin and shops on North Magnolia Avenue (and on College Avenue in Kentfield) are within easy walking distance of many Murray Park residences.

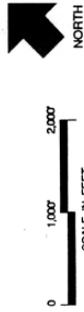
Neighborhood problems include landslides that have occurred in the area. Roads are narrow. The moving and storage company on North Magnolia adversely affects the neighborhood as the vans routinely use Murray and Frances Avenue for parking and turning around.

c. *Skylark* - This is a high density multiple-family development dating from 1969, prominent on the eastern slopes of the hill above (west of) Hillview and south of Murray Park. In the lower section, the building module is small - two to three dwelling units per building. Further up the hill, the buildings are larger and more "apartment-like." There are several common "amenity areas." The development is set in and surrounded by groves of trees. It has good potential for access to surrounding open space. However, the building layout produces auto and parking congestion, and parking is the first thing one sees.

d. *Hillview* - the single-family development between Magnolia Avenue and Corte Madera Creek north of Bon Air Road, and abutting the College of Marin Educational/Environmental Resource District on the east. There are approximately 120 single-family homes that remain predominantly one-story, in this 1955 ranch-style subdivision on level terrain along Corte Madera Creek. There is one entrance to the neighborhood off Magnolia at a four-way stop; Golden Gate Transit stops are located there. A linear park along Magnolia Avenue buffers the neighborhood. There is no through-traffic. The park paths lead north a short distance to shops along North Magnolia Avenue and to the College of Marin. All streets are named after universities or colleges.

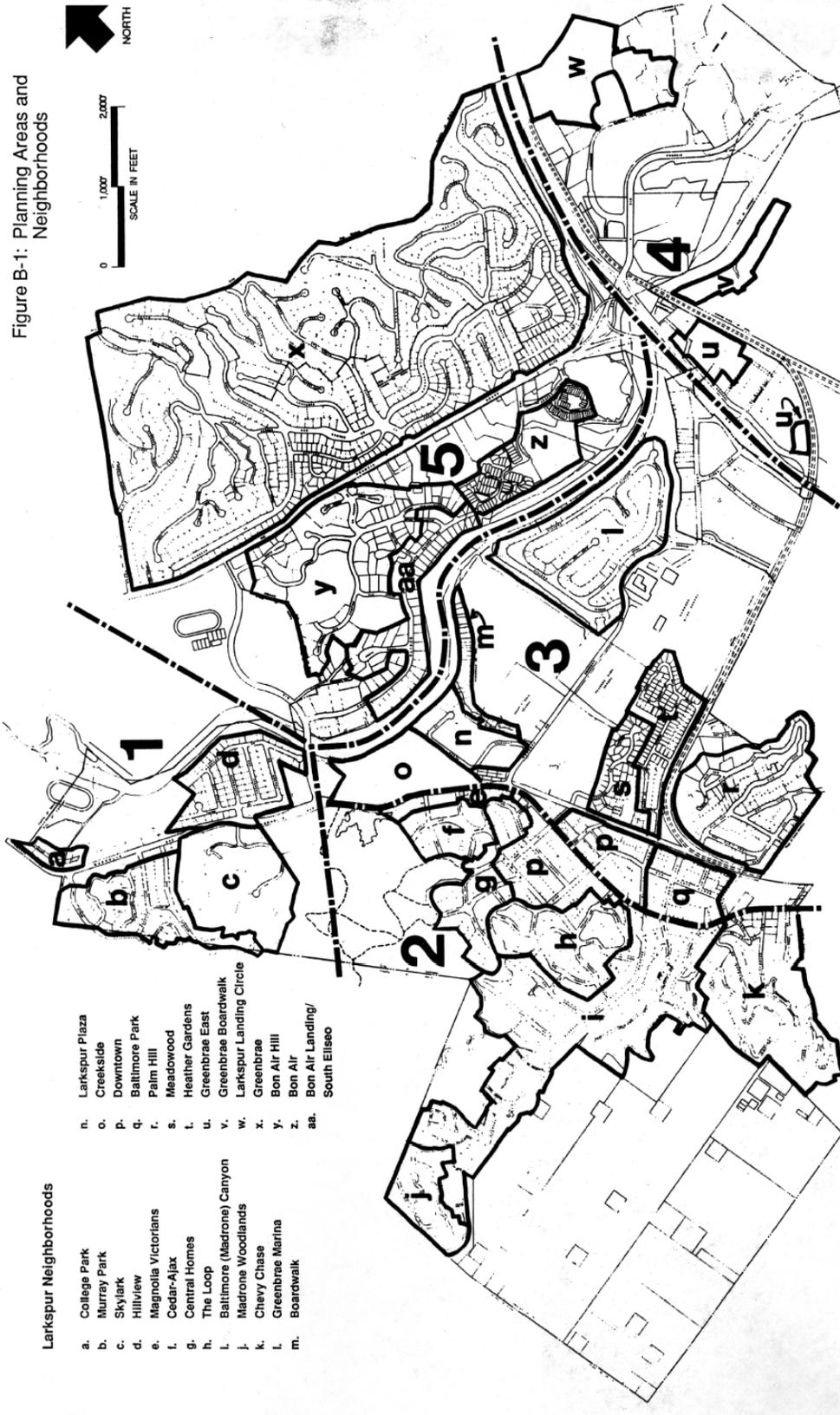
LARKSPUR GENERAL PLAN

Figure B-1: Planning Areas and Neighborhoods



Larkspur Neighborhoods

- a. College Park
- b. Murray Park
- c. Skylark
- d. Hillview
- e. Magnolia Victorians
- f. Cedar-Ajax
- g. Central Homes
- h. The Loop
- i. Baltimore (Madrone) Canyon
- j. Madrone Woodlands
- k. Chevy Chase
- l. Greenbrae Marina
- m. Boardwalk
- n. Larkspur Plaza
- o. Creekside
- p. Downtown
- q. Baltimore Park
- r. Palm Hill
- s. Meadowood
- t. Heather Gardens
- u. Greenbrae East
- v. Greenbrae Boardwalk
- w. Larkspur Landing Circle
- x. Greenbrae
- y. Bon Air Hill
- z. Bon Air
- aa. Bon Air Landing/
South Elliseo



Front yards are individually landscaped, but generally without fences or hedges. Sidewalks are paved and without borders. The subdivision enjoys good views of Mt. Tam and the surrounding hills. Some homes flank Corte Madera Creek. Parts of the neighborhood (primarily a central zone parallel to Magnolia Avenue) are in the 100-year Flood Zone.

2. Southwest (south of Bon Air Road, west of Magnolia Avenue).

e. *Magnolia Victorians* - approximately 30 homes along the west side of Magnolia Avenue from the Escalle Winery south to the Downtown. Approximately 12 of these homes were built in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Many were converted to rooming houses during World War II.

f. *Cedar-Ajax* - Here - west of Hawthorne Avenue and north of Citron Avenue - are predominantly newer, medium-to-large, single family homes on large lots heavily wooded with oak, bay, madrone, and redwoods. (Power lines running through the heavy tree cover cause frequent power outages during the winter.) Most lots are sloped, and the homes are multi-story. Views of the Ross Valley, San Francisco Bay, Downtown Larkspur, Corte Madera Ridge, Mount Tam, and King Mountain are spectacular. The neighborhood borders on the King Mountain open space area and has a rural feel, yet is close to Downtown. The area is "built-out" in the sense that all lots are built upon, but many houses are being expanded. There are no through streets, and very little parking space on the streets (but there is ample off-street parking). The streets are built of unreinforced concrete overlaid with a thin layer of asphalt, and are subject to cracking. Also, the narrow, curved streets combined with the lack of sidewalks make walking dangerous.

g. *Central Homes* - the apartments and homes lying immediately west of the "Magnolia Victorians" and Downtown, north of Sycamore and east of Hawthorne Avenue, and as far south as Walnut Avenue. The street system and homes date predominantly from the 1890s through the 1930s. Single-family homes are found on the hillside; they include a number of "California bungalows." multiple-family buildings occupy some of the flatter parcels. This area has perhaps the largest number of historic and architecturally distinctive homes in Larkspur. Most of the residents below Hawthorne - especially those south of Ward - are within walking distance of Downtown.

h. *The Loop* - southwest of *Central Homes* and includes Walnut, Hazel, Laurel, and Palm Avenues. This neighborhood is situated on a hilltop - the ridge between Downtown and Baltimore Canyon. Its 60-70 homes - modest to very large - were built mostly between 1890 and the 1930s. Lots are steep and heavily wooded with large trees. Views are excellent. The large lot size often allows building additions without blocking views or creating conflicts between neighboring properties. Despite the neighborhood's hilltop location, Downtown is within easy walking distance. While there is no through-traffic, the street system is poor. There is no room for parking on the street, and very little room for private off-street parking.

i. *Baltimore (Madrone) Canyon* - the area west of Magnolia Avenue, south of "The Loop" and as far south as Chevy Chase, and including West Baltimore and Piedmont Avenues. This neighborhood is centered on and bisected by Larkspur Creek, along which runs a popular hiking and dog-walking trail. The trail leads west, up the canyon, to large areas of unmanicured open space, much of it owned and maintained by the County and the Marin Municipal Water District. Connections with many trails along the slopes and ridges of Mount Tamalpais lead to neighboring towns - Mill Valley, Kentfield, Ross, and Fairfax.

The area was planned as a summer campground, and its houses come in all sizes and styles. Some were built as vacation homes as long ago as the 1880s. Others were built as late as the 1920s and 1930s, and there are a few new homes as well. Although most are one-story, there are many two-story homes. These homes lie under a magnificent canopy of second-growth redwoods.

In general, lot sizes are small. The small lots and older non-conforming structures raise issues regarding building additions. Lots on the north side of Madrone Avenue tend to be located on upslopes; those on the south side are on flat lots, and Larkspur Creek runs behind them.

Most of the neighborhood traffic - and all of the recreation traffic to Dolliver Park and the hiking trails in Baltimore Canyon - uses Madrone Avenue, which is a cul-de-sac almost a mile long. Parking is very limited in most locations. There is very little parking available at the two recreation destinations. The entrances to the neighborhood - at Madrone Avenue, West Baltimore Avenue, and Piedmont Road - are conveniently close to Downtown and schools. Problems for the neighborhood (other than traffic and parking) include trash in the creek; conflicts between hikers, animals, and private property; flooding along the creek; and landslides.

j. *Madrone Woodlands* - the hills at the west end of Madrone Avenue, including Belle Rive Place, Wilson Way, and a few other short streets. This is an area of newer homes dating from 1961 and into the early 1970s on the north side of Baltimore Canyon. Most of these homes are built on very steep sites.

k. *Chevy Chase* - west of Magnolia and south of Piedmont Road and Piedmont Court to the south City Limits, and entered via Park Way, Wiltshire Avenue, and Lark Court. Includes Marina Vista (but not Summit in Corte Madera), which some consider to be part of Christmas Tree Hill. This neighborhood dates from 1937 when a miniature golf course was installed at 55 Magnolia. Narrow - and with two exceptions, winding - streets give the area its charming character. Parking, however, is a problem.

3. South (south of Corte Madera Creek, east of Magnolia Avenue, and west of Highway 101).

l. *Greenbrae Marina* - east of Larkspur Creek and south of Corte Madera Creek to Doherty Drive (and in the area east of Redwood High School, south to the slough that marks the Corte Madera City Limits). This is a neighborhood of approximately 190 single-family one- and two-story homes. It sits in a matrix of open space, water, parks, and the High School.

The neighborhood was built in 1963 around a single loop road with two entrances off Doherty Drive. As a result, the neighborhood is free of through-traffic, but is impacted by Redwood High School parking and speeding on Riviera Circle. Approximately 70 lots located along the outside of the single loop road have direct access to the tidal salt water of Larkspur Creek, Corte Madera Creek, and Lucky Creek, and thus have direct boating access to the Bay. This type of relationship between houses and large boats is a unique asset shared by only a few developments in the Bay Area. (Public access to the creek is greatly limited, however.) Approximately 95 lots - those on the inside of the loop road - back onto a small enclosed salt water lagoon that is fed from Larkspur Creek. Many homes enjoy views to the water and Piper Park, with Mount Tam as a backdrop.

The rear portions of most lots are partially under water, which forces development to the front of the lot. Normally, larger lots of this size--70 feet wide by 125-170 feet deep - would have more generous setbacks, and the resulting streetscape would look less like a subdivision. Lack of privacy in the front of the house is, however, offset by the water area at the rear.

Major remodelings and additions on some homes have undermined the views and privacy previously enjoyed by neighboring homes. Second stories added above garages have changed the streetscape - the bulky additions seem to loom over the sidewalk. These additions apparently are driven by the prevailing escalation of housing prices, the demand for waterfront homes, and the demand for larger homes.

m. *Boardwalk* - approximately 30 homes along the south side of Corte Madera Creek and a tributary, along the western edges of Hall School and Piper Park. This well-defined, isolated, and historic community consists of small, one-story "arks" along the south side of Corte Madera Creek. Residents enjoy proximity to marsh wildlife, and no vehicular traffic. Known as "Arksville" in 1918, it is the last survivor of four houseboat colonies along Corte Madera Creek in Larkspur. The entire neighborhood lies within the 100-year Flood Zone. Access for emergency vehicles is very limited. The boardwalk requires constant maintenance.

n. *Larkspur Plaza* - west of the Larkspur Boardwalk, from Doherty Drive north to Corte Madera Creek. This neighborhood consists of two-story multiple-family buildings (condominiums) with parking-oriented entrances. The entire development lies within the 100-year Flood Zone. Because the buildings are laid out in a ring along the perimeter of the property, some units cannot take advantage of the views to either the creek or the mountain, and few units can take advantage of both. The buildings also wall off the creek from public view.

o. *Creekside* - a development under construction in 1989, located east of Magnolia Avenue, south of Bon Air Road and Corte Madera Creek, and west of "Larkspur Plaza." This neighborhood will have 71 single-family units. An adjacent development of 28 multiple-family units of affordable housing is being built by the Ecumenical Association for Housing. "Use and enjoyment" easements prevent homeowners from enlarging their units.

p. *Downtown* - This neighborhood adjoins both sides of the commercial strip that stretches along Magnolia Avenue from William Avenue on the south to Ward Street on the north. Downtown's apartments and homes extend to Hawthorne Avenue on the west and the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way on the east. The commercial part of the downtown extends north to Doherty Avenue, and its commercial buildings date from the late 1800s. It is listed on the California and National Registers of Historic Districts.

q. *Baltimore Park* - This small and level area - between Magnolia and the NWPRR right-of-way, between William and Alexander Avenues - has considerable architectural variety. Several houses (some dating from the early 1900s) and the Alexander Bridge (1927) are historical landmarks. Baltimore Avenue is unique, with its line of very tall palm trees (planted in 1910) and its semi-circular paved entrance to the neighborhood from the east (Holcomb Avenue) that faced the NWPRR passenger station. North of William Avenue, the paved path along the former railroad right-of-way makes it easy for bicyclists and pedestrians to get to Downtown and to the Lucky Shopping Center to the north. A dirt path branches to the east atop the right-of-way parallel to William Avenue to connect to Redwood High School. The path is available to and used by hikers and joggers from all over the Bay Area - although the path does not continue east across the Corte Madera flood control channel. Baltimore Avenue to the west connects to the trails through Baltimore (Madrone) Canyon.

Heavy traffic along Magnolia poses a modest but potential threat to Baltimore Park because cars could divert to Monte Vista or Holcomb Avenues to avoid three or four blocks of Magnolia Avenue. There is a potential for the neighborhood to increase in size and population if development occurs in the small triangle of railroad property at the southeast corner of William and Holcomb Avenues, or on the LCM School site.

r. *Palm Hill* - the area bounded by the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way and Holcomb Avenue on the west, the NWPRR and William Avenue on the north, and the Corte Madera City Limits on the south and east. This area opened for development in 1910. Some residents tend to think of Palm Hill as "just the hill" - excluding the flatter areas south of Elm and Bay View Avenues. There is little traffic, and views from the hill are magnificent.

s. *Meadowood* - approximately 75 homes located east of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way and south of the Niven Nursery, and along both sides of Meadowood Drive and the north sides of William and Chanticleer Avenues. This subdivision was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s along wide, quiet streets.

t. *Heather Gardens* - approximately 118 homes in the area north of William Avenue, east of "Meadowood," and south and west of Redwood High School. This is a neighborhood of tract 2-bedroom cottages built in 1942 on what are now considered substandard lots. Most of the homes have been remodeled and expanded to three bedrooms by converting the garage or adding a room in the rear. In the process, the homes have been individualized and are somewhat less uniform in appearance. Younger families are gradually replacing the original owners.

The "younger" residents have infused the "Gardens" with young children, a family orientation, and a new neighborhood spirit. A block party is held annually in Heatherwood Park. Magnolia Avenue shops and bus stops, churches, and all schools are easily accessible by foot, bike, or auto. A dirt path branches to the east atop the right-of-way parallel to William Avenue to connect to Redwood High School. The path is used by hikers and joggers from all over the Bay Area - although the path does not continue east across the Corte Madera flood control channel.

The streets (apart from William Avenue) are narrow. There is no through traffic (although William Avenue regularly endures some traffic from Redwood High School and bypass traffic from Magnolia Avenue during the Fourth of July Parade). The neighborhood is quiet. Parking in the neighborhood is limited. Electric and telephone utilities are above ground and visible. Parts of the neighborhood (primarily "the lower garden" the eastern portions closest to the High School fields) are in the 100-year Flood Zone. They were badly flooded in 1955, but not in 1982.

4. East (east of Highway 101).

This entire area enjoys magnificent views of Mt. Tamalpais and Northridge.

u. *Greenbrae East* - This is the name preferred by residents of the only two mobile home parks in Larkspur - the Golden Gate Trailer Park next to Cost Plus and Marin Travel Trailer Park. They make up the residential portions of this neighborhood on Redwood Highway. Marin Travel Trailer Park has about 250 spaces--90 permanent spaces (no vacancies); 100-120 that are rented by the month (90 are filled); and 50 overnight spaces. Total population in the park is 420. Golden Gate Trailer Park has 64 total spaces of which 20 are permanent, 20 are leased by the week or month, and 24 are overnights. Population in the park is 25. Both parks enjoy easy access to the marsh and open space adjoining the Bay. They are close to stores and the Larkspur Ferry. They provide affordable housing, much of which is occupied by the elderly.

The trailer parks lie within the 100-year Flood Zone, but the City has installed pumps to drain flood waters from the area. Traffic to and along the freeway and to the surrounding industrial and commercial uses is extremely heavy, and highway noise and fumes are noticeable in the trailer parks.

v. *Greenbrae Boardwalk* - This neighborhood is bordered on the north by Corte Madera Creek, on the west by the NWPRR right-of-way, and on the south by the Corte Madera Marsh Ecological Reserve. It lies in unincorporated area within the Corte Madera Sphere of Influence, but Marin County planning staff has recommended that it be moved to the Larkspur Sphere of Influence. Its only access point from land is from Larkspur, and as with the Larkspur Boardwalk, the homes along it can only be reached by foot from a common parking area. There are approximately 50 homes in this neighborhood. Some arks located here at least as early as 1920. Others were moved to this location from Bon Air in 1946.

w. *Larkspur Landing Circle* - This is an area of multiple-family developments (Lincoln Village I and II, and Larkspur Court) that lie between other (commercial) land uses, including office buildings, a hotel, and a regional-specialty shopping center, north and east of Larkspur Landing Circle. Within each Lincoln Village development, the architecture is uniform, buildings are consistent in scale (two- to three-story), and open space is clustered in manicured courtyards with a great deal of "hardscape." The walls of the former quarry and the new landscaping leave the area looking somewhat bare. (It will take some time for the landscaping to mature.) Vehicles circulate around the perimeter of the complexes. The resulting feeling is an "open" one, punctuated by buildings and parking lots that dominate the streetscape.

Residents enjoy a variety of services and employment opportunities, excellent transportation (by car, bus, and ferry), southern exposure for buildings and grounds, and spectacular views of the water and mountains. However, Highway 101 isolates the neighborhood from the rest of the

community, including libraries and schools. (All children, grades K-12, attend school in San Rafael.)

5. North (north of Corte Madera Creek, west of Highway 101).

x. *Greenbrae* - the entire hill from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard north to the San Rafael City Limits (the top of the Southern Heights Ridge), from Highway 101 west to Manor Road. Roughly the triangular southwestern half of this area is unincorporated. The northeastern half lies within Larkspur. This is an area of single-family ranch houses, the first ones having been built between 1949 and 1952. Houses in the northern part of the neighborhood are located on sloping lots and are predominantly a mix of split-level or two-story.

Greenbrae is easily identified geographically - it is clearly a long hill bounded by a major road below and a prominent ridge line. Major entrances are identified by lighted pillars and signs, and well-planted medians divide the streets, many of which are split-level. The landscaping in the area is mature and gives the neighborhood a measure of seclusion from the everyday hassle of city life. Traffic within Greenbrae is limited to that generated by the residents and service vehicles, since the meandering streets, many of which are culs-de-sac, make access to neighboring areas very difficult. The negative aspects of the street system are that the streets are narrow and most do not have sidewalks - which makes pedestrian travel hazardous, especially for children. Further, the street layout is often confusing to visitors.

Other negatives include unstable soils, poor drainage, and - in the older areas - small lots. Here the limited space between houses and proximity of most houses to the street creates a visual wall along the street edge. Finally, community identity in Greenbrae is hampered by its division into incorporated and unincorporated areas. For example, different agencies provide emergency services to the two areas.

y. *Bon Air Hill* - the multiple-family buildings on both sides of the hill on the south side of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, from Marin General Hospital on the west to the Bon Air Shopping Center on the east. On the north side of the hill are three-story multiple-family buildings dating from the 1940s and 1950s. The buildings are imposed on the hillside with minimal landscaping, no sidewalks, and no front setbacks. Two- to three-story multiple-family buildings dating from the 1960s and 1970s line the south side of the hill. From a distance, the light-colored buildings look like long horizontal "dashes" on the darker hill.

The area is oriented entirely to the auto rather than the pedestrian. Vehicular access to individual buildings is awkward. From the streets on the hill, where the setbacks from the street are small, the visual height of the buildings is maximized. There is no public open space.

Many residents are elderly. The median age for the census tract in which Bon Air Hill is located is a *relatively old* 49.1 years compared to 40.1 years for Larkspur as a whole and 35.1 and 36 for the two other Larkspur census tracts.

This census tract has the largest number of older persons (over 60 years old) of any community in Marin County.

The owners of the apartment buildings have maintained rents that appear to be lower than the market rate, and the presumption is that they could charge more but prefer the lower turnover. The buildings on the south side of the hill have good solar orientation and good views.

z. *Bon Air* - two residential developments (Marin Cove and Drake's Landing) located east of Bon Air Hill and South Eliseo Drive, between Corte Madera Creek on the south and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard on the north. The housing developments are part of a larger Master Plan for the entire Bon Air area (which includes the shopping center and offices). The easterly development - Drake's Landing - consists of approximately 42 two-story town houses. The westerly development - Marin Cove - has approximately 129 homes on somewhat larger lots. Residents of both developments enjoy good access to the creek and to Highway 101. Many homes have excellent

views across the water to Mount Tam. "Use and enjoyment" easements between the homes in Marin Cove effectively prevent homeowners from enlarging their units.

aa. *Bon Air Landing/South Eliseo* - the multiple-family buildings between Corte Madera Creek on the south and Bon Air Hill on the north, generally along the south side of Eliseo Drive and generally east of Corte Real. Most buildings are three-story blocks with flat roofs, and date from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The units are expensive condominiums with views to Mount Tam, and quick access to bike paths at both ends of South Eliseo Drive. Bon Air Shopping Center is within easy (and flat) walking distance, and the neighborhood also enjoys easy access to Highway 101. (Local drivers use South Eliseo Drive and El Portal as an alternative to Bon Air Drive to get to and from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.)

Except for two parks between the road and the creek, the buildings along the south side of South Eliseo Drive wall off public view of and access to the creek. Residents in buildings along the south side of the road enjoy private access to the creek.

There is no bike path connecting to Bon Air Road. Yet, many bicyclists - especially children on the way to and from school - ride in the street on South Eliseo. A great deal of traffic is generated by the mix of higher density residential along the eastern two-thirds of South Eliseo and the medical offices along the western third of the street. The medical building traffic is a major concern to the residents, and as traffic on Bon Air Road increases, use of the El Portal cut-through will increase.