

4.2 POPULATION AND HOUSING

This section describes the demographics of the residents of Larkspur and the current housing environment, including availability and affordability of housing. Projected needs for additional housing units associated with regional demands for affordable housing are also discussed. References consulted include *Projections 2002*, published by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) (2001), as well as the General Plan Housing Element.

4.2.1 EXISTING SETTING

REGIONAL SETTING

Population

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated the population of Larkspur in 2000 at 12,014 persons. According to the California Department of Finance, the January 1, 2002, population of Larkspur was 12,000 persons, and the January 1, 2003, population was 12,050 persons. Of that 2003 population, 88.4% was white, 4.3% was Hispanic, 0.8% was black, 3.9% was Asian, and 2.6% was other.

In general, Larkspur's residents are well educated and earn a good income; Larkspur has a larger percentage of older adults than nearby areas. In Larkspur, 22% of the population is 65 years or older (versus 13.5% for Marin County and 10.6% for California) (U.S. Census Bureau 2003). In contrast, the percentage of persons under 5 years old in Larkspur is 4.7%, while the percentage in Marin County is 5.4%, and in California it is 7.3%. The median age in Larkspur is 45.9. (U.S. Census Bureau 2003.)

Income

The median household income in 1999 was \$66,710, with 60% of the households earning more than \$50,000 per year, and 33% earning more than \$100,000. Of the 2,940 families in Larkspur in 1999, 53 (1.8%) were living at poverty level.

Housing

The California Department of Finance estimated that as of January 1, 2001, there were 11,859 persons living in occupied housing units and 155 people living in group quarters, for a total population of 12,014. That same year, there were a total of 6,414 dwellings in Larkspur, of which 2,435 were single-family detached units, 365 were single-family attached units, 544 were multifamily structures with two to four units, 2,832 were multifamily structures with five or more units, and 239 were mobile homes. A total of 6,178 units were estimated to be occupied at that time, resulting in a vacancy rate of 3.7%. On average there were 1.93 persons per household in Larkspur on January 1, 2001. (California Department of Finance 2003).

Fewer than 252 difficult-to-develop acres remain out of a total city acreage of 2,065. With the removal of 114 open-space acres from the remaining acreage, only about 138 difficult-to-

develop acres are actually available for future development in Larkspur. The project site has been completely disturbed in the past and remains partially developed. The surrounding area is completely developed.

Identification of Housing Needs

In *Projections 2002* (December 2001), ABAG estimated that the total population of Larkspur will reach 13,300 by 2025 and that the number of households in Larkspur at that time will grow to 6,580. That would represent an average of approximately 2.02 persons per Larkspur household in 2025 (ABAG 2001). ABAG projected a need for the construction of 303 new residential units with a range of affordability in Larkspur between January 1999 and June 2006 (Table 4.2-1), to provide a “fair share” of the regional demand for housing, including housing for low- and moderate-income households.

Household Classification	Definition	Number of Units	Percent
Very Low Income	50% of area or county median income	56	18.5
Low Income	Between 51% and 80% of the area or county income	29	9.5
Moderate Income	Between 81% and 120% of the area or county median income	85	28.1
Above Moderate Income	Above 120% of the area or county median income	133	43.9
Total		303	100
Source: Association of Bay Area Governments 2001			

LOCAL SETTING

There are currently no residential units in Subareas 1 and 2. In Subarea 3, the Niven property originally was 17.9 acres, but a small portion (1.1 acres) of the property south of East Ward Street was sold, and two homes were built on the parcel. That subdivided land is not a part of the Specific Plan area. Currently, six residential structures occupy the remaining 16.8-acre Niven property. Three of the units are dilapidated and unoccupied; two are used for storage, and one unit—a modular unit—is occupied. A caretaker and his family occupy the modular unit.

REGULATORY SETTING

The *City of Larkspur General Plan Housing Element* (adopted by Resolution 79/90 on December 19, 1990) has an overall goal of promoting social and economic diversity by providing safe and affordable housing to all social and economic segments of the community without degradation of the environmental setting. Section 1.1, Key Issues, of the Housing Element notes that the

city is approaching buildout, and further states, “As the city reaches buildout, the emphasis shifts from growth to renewal. Continual development has impacted the existing infrastructure (roads, public facilities, and the availability of utilities). High market values for housing and land constrain development of low- and moderate-income housing, posing a greater challenge to the City of Larkspur.” The California Government Code (§65583(b)(2)) states that “It is recognized that the total housing needs identified ... may exceed available resources and the community’s ability to satisfy this need within the context of the general plan requirements ... Under these circumstances, the quantified objectives need not be identical to the identified housing needs, but should establish the maximum number of housing units that can be constructed, rehabilitated, and conserved over a five-year time period.”

Based on data from the late 1980s, the Larkspur Housing Element indicated that approximately 46% of low-income households that *owned* homes in Larkspur were overpaying for housing, and approximately 82% of low-income households that were *renting* in Larkspur were overpaying for housing. Given the increase in local housing costs since that time, it is likely that a large proportion of low-income households continue to overpay for housing in Larkspur.

The 1990 Housing Element presents a number of objectives, policies, and programs, many of which address the need for low- and moderate-income housing. The Larkspur Housing Element indicates that even if buildout is attained, the need for housing units affordable to very low- and low-income households, as identified by ABAG, will not be met for the following reasons:

- < Remaining undeveloped sites are, for the most part, the most difficult sites to develop. Either they are on steep slopes with geotechnical problems or they are on marsh fill and subject to settlement problems.
- < Many of the sites lack adequate infrastructure to support development; the roads are at Level of Service (LOS) D, resulting in excessive traffic congestion on main city thoroughfares.
- < Development of canyon areas would create fire hazards in heavily vegetated hillside areas.
- < Sensitive environmental conditions make the few remaining available sites expensive to purchase and to develop.

The Housing Element addresses the need for affordable housing. Objective 2 acknowledges the development of new low- and moderate-income housing in Larkspur. “The City seeks to provide its ‘fair share’ of low and moderate income housing.” Program 2.1.1 of Objective 2 establishes specific policies for new housing developments of 10 or more units that include provisions for low- and moderate-income households:

Program 2.1.1 (a). Housing developments of 10 or more units at densities less than 7 units per acre must provide for the sale or rental of a minimum of 5% of all units at prices affordable to moderate-income households and 5% affordable to low-income households.

Program 2.1.1 (b). Housing developments of 10 or more units at densities of 7 units or more units per acre must provide for the sale or rental of a minimum of 7.5% of all units at prices affordable to moderate-income households and 7.5% affordable to low-income households.

The Niven property (Subarea 3) is identified in the Larkspur Housing Element as having the potential to support the development of up to 90 single-family residential units (including nine low- and moderate-income units) on the 17.9-acre site once the nursery use at the site has been abandoned, traffic concerns have been addressed, and a specific plan for such development has been adopted. Since the publication of the Larkspur Housing Element, the size of the developable portion of Subarea 3 has been reduced to approximately 16.8 acres, as described above.

During public workshops on the draft Specific Plan, concern was expressed that many of those employed in Larkspur (particularly those who work in the local school system and who provide other public services) are not able to afford housing within the community. It was suggested that some of the housing that may be proposed within the Specific Plan area should be affordable to local workers.

4.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Implementation of the Specific Plan would have a significant impact on population or housing if it were to result in:

- < the inducement of substantial population growth in an area either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure);
- < the displacement of substantial numbers of existing housing units, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere; or
- < the displacement of substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

PROJECT-LEVEL IMPACTS

Introduction

Under the Specific Plan, it would be possible to develop a maximum of 132 residential units: 28 multifamily units in Subarea 1; 19 multifamily units in Subarea 2; and 85 single-family, cottage, and multifamily residential units in Subarea 3. The actual number of residential units

in all three subareas would depend upon the ultimate mix of land uses proposed by developers and approved by the City. For the analysis in this section, it was assumed that the maximum potential number of residential units would be developed.

In Subarea 1, 28 multifamily units could be developed on the Nazari property, with a maximum area of 36,000 gross square feet. The actual number of units would be determined by both the amount of space devoted to other uses within the parcel area (office, retail sales, etc.) and the size of the residential units.

Subarea 2 is currently developed with retail uses. A total of 19 multifamily residential units could be developed under the Specific Plan, depending upon the mix of uses. It is unlikely that the subarea would be developed with residential uses because of existing viable commercial uses, especially a relatively new Albertsons supermarket and a gas station; however, for this analysis it was assumed that all 19 residential units would be developed in Subarea 2.

Potential residential development in Subarea 3 would include a mix of 25 to 35 single-family homes and 23 to 33 cottage homes, with the total not to exceed 58 market-rate homes. In addition, 27 multifamily housing units would be allowed on a 1.2- to 1.5-acre site. These 27 units would be restricted to affordable housing to conform with the Housing Element goal to provide affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families. The site may be made available for purchase by the City, a nonprofit housing provider, or a third-party developer at fair market value. In the event that the site is not purchased, potential development could be an additional 12 cottage units instead of the 27 affordable units. If that were the case, the total number of residential units in Subarea 3 would be limited to 70 units. The affordable housing requirements set forth in the Housing Element (which requires that 10% of the total number of units in a housing development be affordable units) would apply.

The Specific Plan would allow for the development of a maximum of 132 residential units, of these, 19 units in Subarea 2 and up to 27 in Subarea 3 would be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. In addition, at least three of the potential units on the Nazari property would be affordable, for a total of 49 units, or 37% of the maximum potential housing count, affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Development of these low- to moderate-income housing units in the Specific Plan area would contribute to the stock of affordable housing in Larkspur.

Impact
4.2-1

Inducement of Substantial Population Growth. *Implementation of the Specific Plan would induce population growth of up to 264 residents, representing 2.2% of the city's population. Such an increase is not considered substantial population growth. This impact is considered **less than significant**.*

Development of the project area under the Specific Plan would result in the construction of up to 132 housing units. At an average of two persons per household (based on California Department of Finance's 2001 data for households within the City), the estimated population living in the Specific Plan area following the construction of the maximum number of housing

units that could be built would be approximately 264 residents. The new residents living within the Specific Plan area would represent approximately 2.2% of the city’s current population. If local population growth continues as projected by ABAG, in 2025 the residents of the Specific Plan area would represent approximately 2% of the city’s total population. The Larkspur General Plan has anticipated the development of housing in Subarea 3 once the nursery at that location is no longer operational, by designating it as suitable for low-density residential development. The development of the Specific Plan area with 132 housing units, as proposed under the Specific Plan, could meet up to 43.6% of the City’s regional housing need allocation (303 units) between 1999 and 2006. According to ABAG, 56% of the housing need would be for affordable housing units, and approximately 56% of the 132 housing units in the Specific Plan area may be considered affordable. An increase of up to 264 residents, representing 2.2% of the city’s population, is not considered substantial population growth, nor would the project involve development on a site that has not been planned for development in the General Plan. This impact is considered less than significant.

Impact
4.2-2

Displacement of Existing Housing or Population. *One occupied modular housing unit within the Specific Plan area would be eliminated, resulting in the displacement of the unit and its residents. This impact is considered less than significant.*

There is one occupied modular housing unit within the Specific Plan area. This unit, currently occupied by a caretaker of the Niven property and this family, would be eliminated as a result of proposed Specific Plan development, resulting in the displacement of one residential housing unit and its residents. Because the displacement of one housing unit is not considered to be substantial, this impact is less than significant.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Larkspur and the surrounding area are predominantly built out, with little developable land remaining. The properties adjacent to the Specific Plan area have already been developed; thus the Specific Plan would not induce substantial growth in the immediate vicinity. The development of a maximum of 132 residential units in the Specific Plan area, 27 of which would be low- to moderate-income housing units, would provide additional housing opportunities for the area. The construction of affordable units would contribute to the City’s goal of providing its “fair share” of low- and moderate-income housing in the area. A significant amount of growth would not be induced in the area, no substantial displacement would occur, and affordable housing would be added to the area’s housing stock. Therefore, there would be no cumulative impacts on population or housing as a result of the Specific Plan.

4.2.3 MITIGATION MEASURES

PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are required for the following less-than-significant impacts.

- 4.2-1: Inducement of Substantial Population Growth
- 4.2-2: Displacement of Existing Housing or Population

CUMULATIVE MITIGATION MEASURES

There would be no significant cumulative impacts on population or housing as a result of the Specific Plan; therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

4.2.4 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

No significant project or cumulative impacts on population or housing would result from implementation of the Specific Plan.