



# San Rafael Canalfront

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN PLAN

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# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In summer 2008, the City of San Rafael initiated the Canalfront Conceptual Design Plan project. The San Francisco Bay Trail along the Jean and John Starkweather Shoreline Park at the edge of San Rafael's bay front offers some of the Bay Area's most beautiful views of the San Francisco Bay. However, the section of the Bay Trail that connects Starkweather Shoreline Park through the Canal neighborhood and across the waterway through a busy network of streets and out east toward China Camp State Park remains to be designed and completed.

The Canalfront Conceptual Design Plan sets the stage for creating a "paseo" ("promenade" in Spanish) through one of the most dynamic communities in the Bay Area. The Plan identifies the most appropriate way to travel through an auto-dominated area, the best ways to access the Canal waterfront, and the most suitable crossing improvements. A companion document to the Plan is the design guidelines regarding the design of new buildings in the plan area, and desired waterfront amenities.



## THE CANALFRONT AREA

For over 100 years, the Canal waterway has been a sustaining part of the San Rafael community. The water linked the Miwok to the bay, and brought the missionaries up to the bay in their search for a warm place north of the San Francisco mission. Industry and marine-based businesses thrived along the waterfront for decades. Over time, however, the uses in the area have changed to take advantage of the frontage along Highway 101 and to provide retail for a growing population. Today, retail centers, car dealerships, housing, and marine-related uses such as boat sales, repairs and storage front the waterway.

### Dredging

*The Canal waterway consists of two channels, the Inner Channel and the Outer Channel, with the boundary being in the vicinity of Pickleweed Park. The Inner Channel was last dredged in 2003 with 100 percent federal funding of \$3,000,000 for the project.*

*In 2008, the estimate for the next dredging project, for both the Inner and Outer Channels, is \$6,500,000. As of Fall 2009, approximately \$2,500,000 in federal funds have been reserved for the project. This funding is sufficient to allow for preliminary work such as completing required U.S. Army Corps of Engineer surveys and environmental review, and obtaining permits. The project may proceed as a modified dredging project based on the current funding. Members of the boating community and City of San Rafael leaders and staff continue to advocate for additional funding so that the waterway continues to provide an enjoyable and accessible boating experience.*

### PLANNING PROCESS

For over 30 years, the San Rafael community has dreamed of a better looking and more-accessible waterfront along the Canal waterway. The walk from the Canal neighborhood to Montecito Shopping Center, San Rafael High School, Downtown and the Transit Center is an unpleasant journey, and one that residents have long advocated to improve. Residents and boaters alike recognize the important role the maritime businesses and activities have in creating the vitality of the waterway. As places such as Montecito Shopping Center and Seafood Peddler improved their businesses, people have seen the possibilities for more public access to the waterfront. These dreams and ideas resulted in two policies and two programs in San Rafael General Plan 2020 that set the stage for planning for the canalfront.

In 2006, the Canal Transportation Plan was completed after over a year of community meetings. In addition to creating a Vision for the waterfront, the plan included two specific recommendations:

#### High Priority Project: Canal Crossing

“A pedestrian/bicycle connection from the Canal Neighborhood to Downtown, San Rafael High School, Montecito Shopping Center and other locations north of the waterway would be provided. Initial studies would involve the evaluation of potential alternatives including various bridge designs, a tunnel, shuttle, or improvements to existing routes.”

#### Medium Priority Project: Canalfront Paseo

“The Paseo would provide pedestrian/bicycle access on both sides of the Canal waterway. Together with the Canal Crossing, the Paseo would provide access to Downtown, Montecito Shopping Center and other locations to the north as well as fill a gap in the San Francisco Bay Trail between Pickleweed Park and Pt. San Pedro Road.”



In Spring, 2008, the City of San Rafael received a Bay Trails grant from the Association of Bay Area Governments and a Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant from the California Department of Transportation to prepare a design plan and design guidelines for the Canalfront.

The City Council solicited applications and appointed 19 people to a Canalfront Advisory Committee to prepare a Canalfront Conceptual Design Plan. The members represented a diverse group of interests: residents, business owners, boaters, and community leaders. The City Council charged the Committee with preparing a plan that addressed four tasks:

- Define access points to and along the Canal waterfront as identified through a community design process, and as selected following an engineering and economic feasibility analysis
- Identify the most appropriate location and type of a Canal crossing improvement(s), based on an engineering and economic feasibility analysis and starting with an initial list of crossing options as described in the Canal Transportation Plan)
- Serve as a foundation for completing the Bay Trail from Pickleweed Community Center to Pt. San Pedro Road, including bicycle and pedestrian access to Downtown, the Transit Center, Mahon Creek, Montecito Shopping Center and San Rafael High School
- Provide design guidelines to maximize waterfront amenities through redevelopment opportunities along the Canalfront

With input from committee members, the City contracted with Royston Hanamoto Alley & Abey for design services, and with the Canal Welcome Center for community outreach. The project area generally included properties facing the waterway, from the Transit Center to Pickleweed Park on the south side of the Canal and to the City limit line on the north side of the Canal.

In the summer of 2008, the committee members learned about the Canal by touring the waterway by boat, visiting City-owned sites along the waterfront, and hearing about projects already underway. The committee received and reviewed two reports about existing environmental conditions: Background Report (September 2008) from Nichols Berman Environmental Planning, and Phase I Hazardous Waste Initial Site Assessment (October 2008) from Questa Engineering. In addition, the members identified a number of constraints and opportunities for the canalfront.

## San Rafael General Plan 2020

### **Policy NH-74: Community Wide Asset**

*“Promote and improve the San Rafael Canal as a community-wide asset for public and marine related uses, where public access, use and views of the water are maximized, and sensitive wildlife habitat areas are protected. The San Rafael Canal shall be maintained as a navigable waterway.”*

### **Program NH-74a: Design Plan and Vision**

*“Prepare a Canal Waterway Vision to determine the land use needs for the community, provide solutions to improve the appearance of the Canal and its waterfront and to increase public access, including possible expansion of Beach Park. The Vision should continue to have a marine-related focus. Conduct a community-based vision process with merchants, residents, business people, boaters and others who live, work near, and use the waterway.”*

### **Policy NH-78: Waterfront Design**

*“Require low scale buildings that provide public views of the water and which do not dominate the Canal. Design factors important in reviewing specific development proposals include pedestrian access, building setbacks from the water, height, landscaping, Canal view protection and enhancement, wildlife habitat protection and high quality architectural design.”*

### **Program NH-78a: Canalfront Design Guidelines**

*“Prepare, as part of the Canal Waterway Vision, design guidelines in order to improve the appearance of buildings along the Canal Waterfront and incorporate opportunities for public access.”*

After a full day of focus group meetings in October 2008, the committee members learned a lot more about the challenges and possibilities in the area:

**FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK -- OCTOBER 2008**

|                        | <b>Constraints</b>   | <b>Opportunities</b>   |
|------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Transit Center</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highway 101 acts as a visual and physical barrier</li> <li>• One-way streets limit bicycle movement</li> <li>• Fast moving traffic from many directions creates safety concerns</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to downtown and Transit Center</li> <li>• Provide clear connection from downtown to waterfront</li> <li>• Improve streetscape amenities, lighting and wayfinding</li> </ul>  |
| <b>North of Canal</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrow bridge restricts safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing</li> <li>• Access to backside of Montecito Plaza is limited</li> <li>• Traffic and limited crossings divide neighborhood from waterfront</li> <li>• Canal is not readily visible to customers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for a crossing location</li> <li>• Improve Grand Avenue Bridge for pedestrian and bike crossing</li> <li>• Reorient retail to face the waterfront</li> <li>• Improve service alley behind Montecito plaza for multiple uses</li> <li>• Encourage waterfront businesses</li> <li>• Potential for full-service public boat docks</li> <li>• Link to Bay Trail and improve street crossings for safety</li> <li>• Provide clear connection to downtown and transit Center</li> </ul>   |
| <b>South of Canal</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Francisco Blvd. East feels unsafe to pedestrians and cyclists</li> <li>• Lacks continuous waterfront connection for pedestrians and cyclists</li> <li>• Beach Park is outdated and under utilized</li> <li>• Few commercial properties currently engage the waterfront</li> <li>• Entirety of Canal is not easily visible and accessed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for a crossing location</li> <li>• City-owned parcel at Beach Park</li> <li>• Potential for strong connection to downtown</li> <li>• Easily accessible from Highway 101</li> <li>• Enhance appearance/functionality of Beach Park</li> <li>• Encourage future waterfront amenities and businesses</li> <li>• Current public access to Canal from yacht Club Drive</li> <li>• Improve wayfinding to encourage visitation to public park</li> <li>• Enhance safety through lighting and streetscape improvements</li> </ul> |
| <b>Canal Street</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street is narrow</li> <li>• Difficult to get to the waterfront</li> <li>• No easy way to get to Montecito and San Rafael High School from the neighborhood</li> <li>• Derelict boats docked along the waterway</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for a crossing location</li> <li>• Improve bicycle and pedestrian experience and safety</li> <li>• Improve streetscape amenities and lighting</li> <li>• Improve water quality and appearance of Canal</li> <li>• Improve park/plaza area at the end of Canal Street.</li> <li>• Provide public access points to Canal</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Pickleweed Park</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of direct boating access to the water</li> <li>• Bicycle trail is incomplete; pedestrian trail is unimproved</li> <li>• Ecologically sensitive area</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete link to the Bay Trail</li> <li>• Potential kayak launch point</li> <li>• Protect wildlife habitat and provide interpretative signage</li> <li>• Open expansive view of Bay and Canal</li> <li>• Potential for public gathering area at water's edge</li> </ul>   |



The focus group participants identified that the following top community desires for improvements along the Canal:

1. Improved waterfront access
2. Crossing
3. Designated bike path
4. Waterfront promenade or 'paseo'
5. Improved lighting

In October, the committee held its first community workshop to share what had been learned, and to start work on a vision of what might be possible along the waterfront. At the workshop, people were asked:

- How can we improve the cyclist and pedestrian experience?
- Where do people gather for outdoor activities?
- How would you improve access to the Canal?
- Can you envision a public boat dock or launch in this area?
- What improvements can be made that would enhance connection to the waterfront?
- What are the key issues with connecting to the Transit Center?
- Where and what type of crossing do you envision and why?

Nearly 70 people came to Bahia Vista Elementary School on a Saturday morning to share their ideas with each other.



#### Ten Points on Waterfront Redevelopment

1. **The transformation of an urban waterfront is a recurring event in the life of a city.**
2. **The aura of a city largely resides and endures along its waterfront.**
3. **It is the capacity for geographic persistence that is one of the most valuable qualities of urban waterfronts.**
4. **Cities have to measure grand expectations against the reality of local markets and traditions, and the resistance to change - which much be reconciled for a revitalization to succeed.**
5. **The broader the overlap between land and water, the more successful a city can be in maximizing its water assets.**
6. **Waterfront developments are long-term endeavors with the potential to produce long-term value.**
7. **Under used or obsolete waterfronts come alive when they are transformed into desirable places to live, not just to visit.**
8. **The cities that devote their waterfronts to public use are finding that this enhances the value of the nearby development.**
9. **The success and appeal of waterfront development is intrinsically tied to the environmental quality of both the water and the shore.**
10. **Thoughtful redevelopment means avoiding the generic and the mediocre.**

*from Richard M. Rosan, President,  
Urban Land Institute*

### The Bay Trail Plan

**The Bay Trail is an alignment for what will become a 400-mile recreational “ring around the Bay.” Approximately one-third of the trail already exists, either as hiking-only paths, hiking and bicycling paths or as on-street bicycle lanes. When completed, the Bay Trail will create connections between more than 130 parks and publicly accessible open space areas around San Francisco and San Pablo Bays. By providing access to a wide array of commercial ferries and public boat launches, the trail will establish connections to “water trails” which will enable outdoor enthusiasts to appreciate the Bay not only from the shoreline, but from the water as well.**

From:

[http://www.abag.ca.gov/bayarea\\_info/baytrail/baytrailplan.html](http://www.abag.ca.gov/bayarea_info/baytrail/baytrailplan.html)

During the winter, with the help of the landscape design and bridge consultants, members used these visioning ideas to draft three alternatives to share with the community. These alternatives represented a range of the types of changes that could be made to create a new Bay Trail alignment, new ways to get to the Canalfront, and new connections across the Canal. The larger community was invited back to a second workshop in March 2009, to see and comment on the three alternatives.

After going over the results, the committee gave direction to the design professionals to prepare a Draft Conceptual Plan that could be shared with friends, neighbors, co-workers and employees.

Over the summer months of 2009, committee members shared the draft vision and plan with various groups and organizations in San Rafael. They also went on a tour of Petaluma, Napa and Alameda to see examples of waterfront projects that were the result of similar planning projects. The committee began its review of the Draft Design Guidelines that will give direction to designers of new development along the waterfront. The draft guidelines were also reviewed by Community Development staff, the Design Review Board and a group of local architects. Using the input from the summer focus group conversations, the Draft Plan was refined into a final document. The Canalfront Advisory Committee officially endorsed the Conceptual Plan and Design Guidelines in October 2009, and sent it to the City Council in November.



## OUR VISION OF THE SAN RAFAEL CANALFRONT

Our Vision is a description of what we want the Canal waterfront to be like in the future. The conceptual plan builds on this vision to give shape and direction on how we can achieve this dream.

### ***The Canalfront Paseo is an enjoyable, safe and attractive way to travel from Pickleweed Park around to Pt. San Pedro Rd.***

- The Paseo is an extension of the Bay Trail from the Starkweather Shoreline Park path where people enjoy expansive views of the San Francisco Bay. On the north side of the Canal, the Bay Trail continues on to China Camp State Park.
- Along the Paseo, there are connections between neighborhoods north and south of the Canal, and from those neighborhoods west to the Transit Center and Downtown.
- With the Paseo, residents have an easy and pleasant journey to shops, transit and San Rafael High School.

### ***The waterway has wonderful boating opportunities.***

- The Canal is known as a great place to enjoy sailing, boating, rafting, and docking. Sailing classes, canoe rentals, and kayak launches are just a few of the choices for people who come to enjoy the Canal waterway.
- The waterfront is home to viable marine businesses which contribute to the maritime character. Examples of the commercial activities that thrive along the Canal include boat sales and rentals, boat repairs, fishing supply stores and marinas. In addition, along the waterway, docked boats and live-aboards contribute to the maritime quality of the area.

### ***Being on the canal waterfront is a unique experience.***

- The canalfront is a destination, a place that's inviting and safe and interesting.
- This is a place for all the communities of San Rafael. This is an inviting destination for families and working people, for visitors and people who call San Rafael home. It's a safe and interesting place to be. There is a sense that there is something different around the corner, maybe a game board, some public art, or an exercise center.
- There are places for residents and visitors to refresh along the way, with places for children to play and spaces for seniors to enjoy.
- Along the waterfront, there are places to work, live and have fun, and there are places to celebrate creativity, diversity and local history.

### ***A restored Canal ecosystem***

- There are safe places for the birds and plants along the waterfront.
- Through the improvements that have been made, the community has a demonstrated and shared stewardship of the waterfront and the Canal.





*Waterfront pathways and pedestrian bridges*



## OVERVIEW

The San Rafael Canalfront Conceptual Plan is the result of an 18-month community-based planning process to envision a beautiful and fun waterfront along the San Rafael Canal. The plan is the result of extensive public outreach, hundreds of comments from the community, a thorough analysis of existing conditions and issues, and public review of multiple alternative plans.

The following recommendations summarize key elements of the San Rafael Canalfront Conceptual Plan. For the purposes of this description, the planning area has been broken into four sub-areas: Transit Center Area, West Canal Area, Canal Street Area and Pickleweed Park.



*Waterfront recreation*



Existing Conditions; Enlargement of the Transit Center Area



## TRANSIT CENTER AREA

The Transit Center Area is located between Tamalpais Street and Irwin Street and from Third Street to the Canal. The Transit Center is the hub for transit services in San Rafael, with bus connections to and from the Canal and Montecito neighborhoods. It is located on the west side of Highway 101 adjacent to Hetherton Street.

### Analysis

- Highway 101 acts as a physical and psychological barrier between the Transit Center and the Canalfront areas east of 101.
- Sidewalk widths on Second and Third Streets are narrow.
- The areas under the freeway are used for private parking or open space that is not publicly accessible. In some places, a chain link fence separates the open space areas from the street.
- The area under the freeway is highly visible to people entering San Rafael from the 101 off-ramps and as such, is the first impression of the city.
- There are publicly-owned parcels in the area, including Caltrans properties and the Sanitation District's pump station near the Highway 101 off ramp.

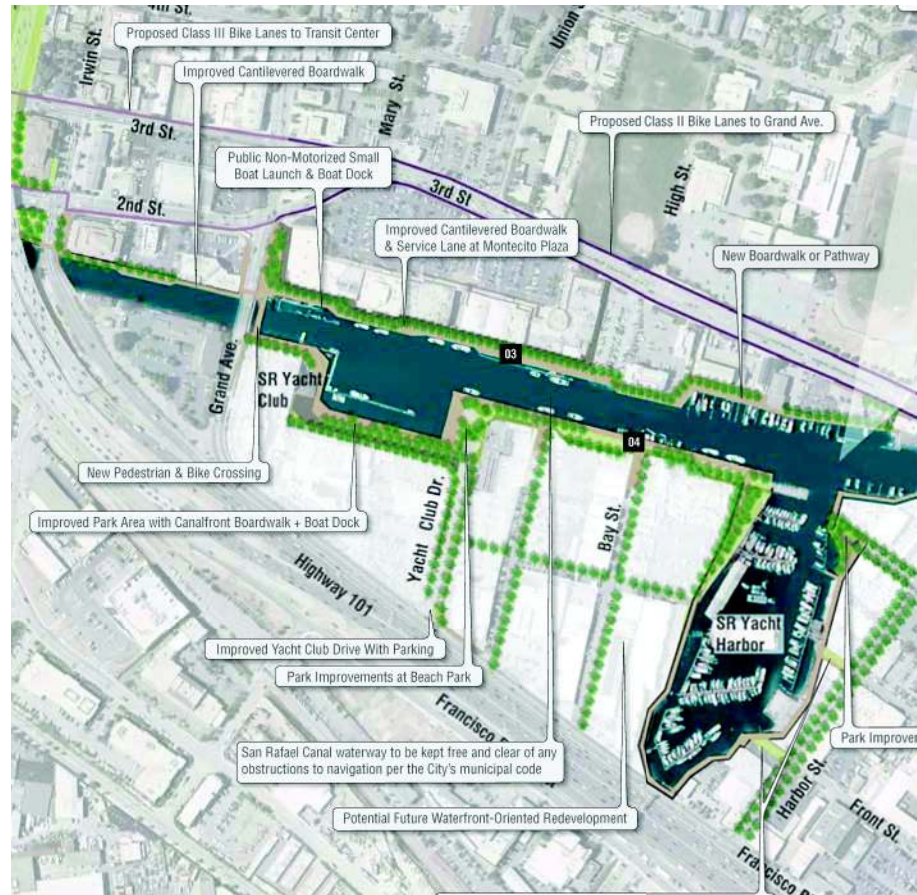
**Recommendations**

- Develop an art program for selection of artists for this area. Encourage art that provides additional appropriate lighting to increase the sense of safety.
- Explore the feasibility of a pedestrian and bicycle connection from the Canal Paseo under Highway 101 to connect to the Mahon Creek path.
- Develop storm water quality improvements and mitigations in wetland areas.
- Enhance wildlife habitat where possible.
- Widen sidewalks to a minimum of 8' where possible along Second and Third Streets
- Develop pedestrian walks and planting along creek areas under freeway.
- Study opportunities to improve the open areas under 101 with other uses, such as recreational amenities or exercise stations.



*Art and lighting under highway*





*Enlargement of the West Canal Area*

## WEST CANAL AREA

The West Canal Area is the area located between Third Street on the north and Francisco Boulevard East on the south, and between Irwin and Harbor Streets. This area is zoned for mixed use, allowing retail, hospitality, residential and marine-related uses. It includes both freeway-oriented businesses, shopping centers, auto dealerships and small light industrial businesses. It is highly visible from Highway 101 and from Second and Third Streets to the north.

### Analysis

- Area is zoned for mixed use development but currently is primarily commercial or light industrial, with some marine-related businesses.
- Area is highly visible from Highway 101.
- Linear character of existing buildings restricts views towards the Canal.
- One large city owned parcel exists at Beach Park at the end of Yacht Club Drive.
- Three small city-owned parcels exist at the ends of Canal





*Montecito Shopping Center*

Street, Mill Street and Front Street at Harbor Way. T

- Pedestrian access through the area is limited to sidewalks along Francisco Boulevard East, Second and Third Streets and behind portions of the commercial buildings along the north canalfront.
- There is heavy pedestrian and bicycle use by Canal neighborhood residents who are walking to downtown, the transit center, San Rafael High School and the Montecito Shopping Center. Almost 500 students from the Canal neighborhood attend the high school, and hundreds more residents walk Francisco Blvd. East to go shopping or Downtown.
- Street sidewalks are narrow along heavy traffic streets.
- No bicycle lanes exist.
- Access to the Canal waterfront in this area is limited to very few locations, such as Beach Park and the backside of the Montecito shopping center, nearly all of which are not easily seen or discovered.

- No continuous pedestrian access along the waterfront exists.
- Private property adjacent to the waterfront limits any ability to create a continuous waterfront walkway.
- Existing docks are used for boating activities, including live-aboards. Some docks are in disrepair, and others have been recently improved.

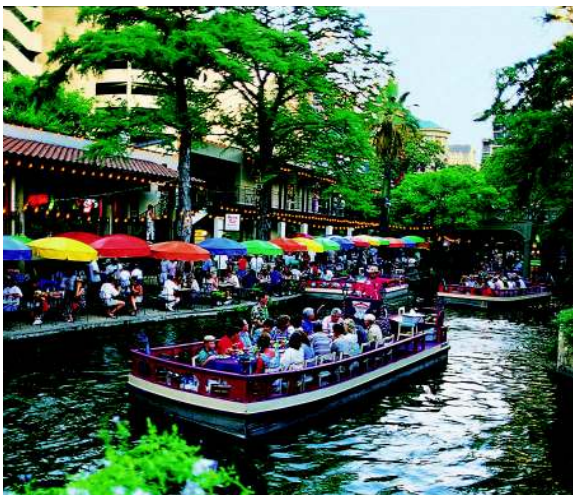
**Recommendations**

- Develop continuous walkways along the north and south sides of the Canal. The walkways could be at natural grade or cantilevered from the top of the bank. When property is proposed for redevelopment or remodels, encourage property owners to provide easements where needed to allow a continuous walkway.
- Encourage development on both north and south sides of the Canal as mixed use development with residential units on upper stories and commercial at ground level. Activate the waterfront with commercial business such as restaurants with outdoor seating along the Canal.
- Study the possibility of a publicly accessible boat dock along the north waterfront.
- Create connections from Mary and Union streets to the Canal. Encourage visual and pedestrian access to the paseo. Future development of adjacent areas should extend pedestrian corridors and alleys to the Canalfront walkway.



*Bridge examples*

- Redesign Yacht Club Drive as tree-lined street. Incorporate a pedestrian walkway and a bicycle path along the street.
- Redesign and revitalize Beach Park and Yacht Club Drive to incorporate better access areas such as viewing terraces and picnic areas, enhanced marine uses (i.e. a non-motorized small boat launch), beach volleyball or other recreation, and a children's area with a marine theme. Encourage water-related concessions in the park such as a kayak launch, a canoe school, or sailboat rentals.
- Improve the bicycle/pedestrian crossing at Grand Avenue.
- Investigate the acquisition of a parcel of land at the southeast corner of the intersection of Second Street and Grand Avenue for a public park/plaza, and entryway to the Canal waterfront.
- Pursue code enforcement action to improve the appearance of properties along the waterway.
- Incorporate detention basins, bioswales or other sustainable water quality improvements to improve storm water treatment in area.
- Investigate the feasibility of bicycle/pedestrian crossings at the mouth of San Rafael Yacht Harbor and at the end of Canal Street, as shown on the map. Potential crossings should connect to the waterfront walkway.



*Water taxi*



*Group picnic area*

## SAN RAFAEL CANALFRONT



Enlargement of the Canal Street Area

## CANAL STREET

The Canal Street includes Canal Street from Pickleweed Community Center to Harbor Way. The area is primarily high density residential with some single-family homes along the waterfront near Pickleweed Park.

### Analysis

- The area between Canal Street and the waterway is a mix of high density multi-family housing from 2-4 stories and single family housing.
- Canal Street is two lanes with parking on each side.
- The on-street parking is heavily used as the apartments were built to comply with earlier lower parking standards
- The existing sidewalk on Canal Street is narrow.
- There are no points for the public to access the Canal.
- Views to the Canal are extremely limited.



*Class II bike lane*



*Kayak launch*

- Building design and existing development restricts access to the Canal.
- There is no continuous pedestrian access along the waterfront.
- A range of docks, piers and walls front the Canal.
- Many of the existing docks and piers are not utilized and are deteriorating.
- Some existing buildings are constructed over the water, limiting ability to get a shoreline walkway.
- Many people in the neighborhood walk, rather than drive, resulting in heavy pedestrian traffic.
- Canal Street is a designated class 3 bicycle route. The heavy car traffic makes it desirable to find a way to facilitate bicycle travel on this street.
- The Canal neighborhood is surrounded by the Canal and freeways, and could be isolated if an earthquake damaged the roadways.

### **Recommendations**

- Study options to widen the sidewalk and to add a Class II bicycle lane along Canal Street.
- Develop a continuous publicly accessible pedestrian walkway on the waterfront as opportunity arises.



Enlargement of Pickleweed Park

## PICKLEWEED PARK

### Analysis

- Pickleweed Park and Community Center are heavily used by the community.
- The existing wetland and marsh area as a habitat is important to local wildlife and ecosystems.
- The existing unpaved maintenance path around the park is eroded and not ADA accessible.
- There are few interpretive exhibits in the park.
- The park is an opportunity for environmental education about the bay and wetland environment.
- There is no defined connection of the existing Bay Trail to the Starkweather Shoreline Path.

## Recommendations

- Study the area in front of the Pickleweed Community Center to incorporate a Class II bicycle route from the existing Starkweather Shoreline Bay Trail.
- Design a small non-motorized personal watercraft launch area at the northern end of Pickleweed Park, and evaluate the area west of the Pickleweed Community Center for ways to transport watercraft from the parking lot to the launch area.
- Provide a path accessible for maintenance vehicles and pedestrians around the perimeter of Pickleweed Park, while also maintaining the natural character of the existing trail.
- Provide seating areas for wildlife observation in Pickleweed Park.
- Enhance habitat along the shoreline and within the park where possible.
- Provide interpretive signage along the Bay Trail path around the waterfront edge of Pickleweed Park.



*Kayak launch*

## IMPLEMENTATION

For decades, many people in San Rafael have said that the Canal waterway could be a jewel in San Rafael's crown. There is something about the peacefulness of the water, the beauty of the reflections, the views of Mt. Tam and the hillsides from the waterfront, and the energy of maritime activities that attract residents to visit the Canalfront, as difficult as it is to find a place to view the water. Some improvements have been made over the years, inspiring people to ask 'what more is possible?'

This Conceptual Plan sets forth a vision and ideas for Bay Trail and canalfront improvements. Describing the vision is just the first step in seeing the ideas become reality. The vision provides a road map toward the future, giving us direction of where we want to go, and the chance to control some of the changes that will come our way. Implementation will require a partnership with the private sector and the broader community, and a commitment to seeing quality development. In an era of reduced funding, most development and improvements will emerge from the private sector. Priorities should be based not on an expectation of local funding, but on a desire to maximize investments the community makes of outside funding:

- What programs will be a catalyst for other actions?
- What improvements are timely opportunities?
- What development will generate tax revenues for the community?
- What projects are manageable in scope and offer quick results?

The next few years will be a time of exploring funding sources, applying for regional, state and federal grants, and pursuing partnerships so that progress may be made sooner on implementing this plan.

Grant Funding for implementation can come from the following sources:

- San Francisco Bay Trail Grant Program,
- Transportation for Livable Communities grant program from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)
- Regional Bikeway Network (MTC)
- Safe Routes to School program from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD and Caltrans)
- Safe Routes to Transit program (BAAQMD)
- Bicycle Facility Program program (BAAQMD)
- Hazard Elimination Safety Program (Caltrans)
- Bicycle Transportation Account (Caltrans)
- Planning grants and construction loans (California Department of Boating and Waterways)



The Canal has languished many years as a hidden treasure. The following programs will provide the greatest impetus for the timeliest desired changes for the Canal waterfront:

**Bay Trail Alignment.** Request changes to the adopted Bay Trail alignment from Pickleweed Park to Third Street, as shown on the Conceptual Plan.

**Bay Trail along Canal Street.** Explore the possibility of providing a Class II bike path, a wider sidewalk, and/or a mixed use pathway along Canal Street west of Medway. Survey the right-of-way on Canal Street to identify opportunities to widen the sidewalks. Study parking options and traffic options, such as making part of Canal Street one-way.

**Canalfront Paseo for West Canal Area.** Describe public amenities, landscaping, and habitat improvements. Work with the community to identify and understand potential issues with redevelopment. Include street, signature and other trees, plant lists, paving design and detailing, site furniture specifications, maintenance guidelines, lighting design and specifications, wayfinding design and specifications, interpretive and historic signage, and public art. Include a Beach Park Plan to maximize public access to a revitalized recreational center. Explore opportunities to serve the larger communities, for vendors to provide boat rentals and/or lessons, for ways to enliven the area, and reasons for people to visit the park.

**Grand Avenue Bridge.** Construct a wider crossing of the Canal at Grand Avenue. The new bridge could be cantilevered off the existing bridge, or be a separate parallel bridge. This pedestrian/bicycle-only crossing should have places for people to enjoy the exceptional view of the waterway.

**Public Art under Highway 101.** Pursue mechanisms to install public art lighting and other improvements under Highway 101. For example, establish a public art program for the area underneath Highway 101 that celebrates San Rafael's cultural heritage and/or natural environment to provide visual interest.

**Pickleweed Park.** Design park improvements for the Pickleweed Park Bay Trail improvements, including the pathway around the water's edge, a small non-motorized boat launch and a method to help boaters transport their vessels from the parking lot to the launch. Investigate the possibility of providing a Class II bicycle path in front of the Community Center. Work with the Pickleweed Advisory Board to identify proposed improvements.

**Zoning for Height Bonuses and Development Incentives.**

Develop zoning recommendations for height bonuses for crossing improvements, parking within structures, and exceptional public canalfront amenities as well as changes to the property development standards, and to the allowed uses to encourage desired development.

Longer term projects are those which require a lot of work over several years by a large number of people and organizations working together. These are activities that can be undertaken as funding becomes available and as the community is willing to undertake the projects. Larger opportunities, not apparent at this time, may mean that some projects become possible, and the community can engage in the process of working together toward implementation. Longer term projects typically involve considerable investigation, engineering and environmental review:

**Canal Street Waterfront Bay Trail Feasibility Study.** Conduct an engineering survey of the waterfront area to the north of Canal Street, study the feasibility of a canalfront walkway, and study options for interface between walkway and private docks. The boardwalk must be out of the required navigable waterway as defined by municipal code and allow docking and access to docks as needed. Involve property owners in the planning of the boardwalk.

**Study for the Crossings.** Explore the feasibility and design of crossings in the West Canal area.

**East/west connection under Highway 101.** Investigate potential improvements to the area west of Grand Avenue bridge to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access to the Transit Center separate from the street network. Work with Caltrans to improve the appearance of the area under Highway 101.

**Bay Street Redevelopment Feasibility Study.** Study options for redevelopment of the Bay Street area. Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings where feasible to retain the eclectic character of area. Look for redevelopment opportunities to maximize the freeway visibility of the lots facing Highway 101, and to add uses that contribute to the vitality of the waterfront location. Develop general plan and zoning amendments to implement the recommendations.

As implementation begins, here are agencies that may need to be involved, depending on the improvement:

**US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is involved in the protection

of wetland, navigation and coastal maintenance and improvements to ports and harbors, regulatory compliance and permit activities, flood control planning activities, and emergency management. The open waters of the San Rafael Canal are regulated by the Corps under both Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act.

### **US COAST GUARD**

The US Coast Guard oversees the continued safety and navigability of the nation's inland and coastal waterways. The General Bridge Act of 1946 and related Code sections in US Code Title 33 are meant to insure that all bridges, including pedestrian and vehicular draw bridges and other potential obstructions such as piers and docks built over or along the shoreline of the nation's navigable water bodies do not interfere with either commercial or recreational passage of boats and other watercraft. The Bridges unit makes a specific determination for each bridge construction permit application based on the existing and potential future use of the navigable waterway and the kinds of clearances required to permit continued safe operation of boats and other watercraft. Draw bridges are looked at closely to insure that they have been designed to open efficiently and that there are adequate programs in place to operate the bridges and to maintain them in good working condition.

### **US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AND NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) collectively are responsible for administration and enforcement of the federal Endangered Species Act. While the potential for occurrence of any federally listed special-status species is low in the developed portions for the study area, a number of species are found in the remnant coastal salt marsh habitat at the mouth of the San Rafael Canal and others may occur in the aquatic habitat of the canal.

### **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) is responsible for the conservation, protection, and management of California's fish, wildlife, and native plant resources. A number of State listed special-status species occur in the remnant coastal salt marsh at the mouth of the San Rafael Canal, or are suspected to occur in or disperse along the Canal.

### **CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD**

The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) is responsible for upholding state water quality standards pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and for regulating fill of hydrologically isolated wetlands under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. Modifications to the open waters of the San Rafael Canal would require authorization from the RWQCB under Section 401.

### **CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION**

The State Lands Commission holds title to, has jurisdiction over, and regulates land use of the State’s “Sovereign Lands”, including land within the proposed Canalfront study. In 1923, before the San Rafael Creek realignment by the US Army Corps, the City of San Rafael received a State grant that turned over development responsibility of Sovereign Lands along San Rafael Creek to the City. The historic alignment of the lower San Rafael Creek area is fairly well known, primarily from a state sponsored survey of the area conducted by G.F. Allardt in the early 1870s (referred to as Allardt’s Canal). The historic alignment of the Creek was altered in 1928 as part of a navigation improvement project authorized and paid for by the Federal government. During the process of straightening and realigning San Rafael Creek, some of the historic channel and Sovereign Land administered by the City of San Rafael was filled and incorporated into adjacent private properties without the consent of the State Lands Commission.

Resolution of title issues is important not only to a Canal Crossing and Canalfront walkway, but also to protect public resources, enable private parties and the city to obtain title insurance and loans, sell public bonds, and obtain grant and financing for development of private and public facilities from lending institutions and state and federal entities. The City’s continued coordination with the State Lands Commission to resolve title problems that resulted from the realignment of the historic Allardt’s Canal in 1928 will be an integral part of any future projects within the planning area.

### **ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS**

The Association of Bay Area Governments is the responsible agency for the Bay Trail alignment. Proposed modifications to the Bay Trail require approval by ABAG staff and the Bay Trail Steering Committee. This would be necessary in order to obtain any Bay Trail funding for follow-up design and trial construction.

### **BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), a state agency, was established in 1965 to protect and manage activities that affect San Francisco Bay. The area in this planning study that may be under the jurisdiction of BCDC may be a segment of the walkway along the eastside of Pickleweed Park connecting to the existing Shoreline Park Path and Bay Trail. This portion of the walkway may require a permit from BCDC.

## COMMUNITY GROUPS

San Rafael Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
Canal Alliance  
Canal Welcome Center  
Canal Youth Council  
City Council  
Community Development Department  
Concilio  
Dredging Committee  
Loch Lomond Marina  
Lowrie's Yacht Harbor  
San Rafael Design Review Board  
Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods  
Marin Yacht Club  
Montecito Area Residents Association  
Montecito Plaza Shopping Center  
San Rafael Parks & Recreation Commission  
Pickleweed Advisory Board  
San Rafael Yacht Club  
San Rafael Yacht Harbor  
San Rafael Planning Commission  
Redevelopment Agency Citizens Advisory Committee  
Spinnaker HOA Community Members

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Phil Abey  
George Adams  
Helmut Atiollinga  
Bruce Bagnoli  
Bob Barton  
Anna Belanger  
Jerry Belletto  
Crispy Berit  
James Bill  
Rocky Birdsey  
Ben Bolt  
Jane Brennan  
Tom Brennan  
Bridget Brewer  
Greg Brockbank  
Matt Butler  
Jeannie Cahill  
Brian Capelli  
Mike Christian  
Anthony Cavallo  
Lee Cordner  
Maria Corona  
David Cromb  
Carolyn Walker Davis  
Jorge Del Aguila  
Linda Delair  
Erik Erickson  
Jessica Fairchild  
David Foster  
Eric Framsen  
Jonathan Frieman  
Michael Gadoua  
Amada Galeana  
Lisa George  
Jim Geraghty  
Barry Glickman  
Elida Gramajo  
Chris Green  
Gladys Gilliland  
Frank Hall  
Fran Halperin  
Carol Hamel  
Janise Harmon  
Vickie Hatos  
Peg Henderson  
Gilbert Hensley  
Roberto Hernandez  
Jerry Jameson  
Magdalena Jimenez  
D.J. Johns  
George Johnstone  
Bill Jones  
Jeannette Jones  
Lisa Klairmont  
Harold Kleiderman  
Hugo Landecker  
Ann Laurence  
Duke Lange  
Sharon Lapin  
David Law  
Pat Lopez  
Stuart Lum  
Larry Luckham  
Man Minh Phan  
Carlee McCarty  
Preston McCoy  
Luis Mejia  
Severo Mendoza  
John Merton  
Berneice Moore  
John Moore  
Craig K. Murray  
Tom Oblatz  
Stan Orman  
Jim Owen  
Marina Palma  
Ron Patterson  
Rosalind Patterson  
Nabia Portillo  
Ted Posthuma  
Bonnie Lowrie Preston  
Roger Preston  
Clay Prescott  
Ofelia Ramirez  
Robidia Reyes  
Sandra Reyes  
Maria Guadalupe Rico  
Roger Roberts  
Leonor Rojas  
Rene Rushin  
Elizabeth Rodriguez  
Sonia Salanic  
Rosa Sanchez  
Samantha Sargent  
Kurt Schmidt  
Elida Doldan Schujman  
Lisa Shafer  
Heidy Signor  
Maria Cristina Silva  
David Smith  
Sue Spofford  
Jean Starkweather  
Lillian Trac  
Doug Traeger  
Anabela Vicente  
Juan Villalobos  
Jody Wheeler

