GENERAL PLAN
LAND USE CATEGORIES

September 12, 2018

Understanding
the Language of Land Use

General Plan Map

- Required part of every General Plan
- Shows desired conditions in the horizon year (2040)
- Must display:
  - “proposed general distribution, general location, and extent of land uses”
  - “standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the plan”
- Color-coded categories correspond to each use
- Provides the basis for zoning
San Rafael General Plan Maps—
then and now

• Maps from the 1960s and 70s used a few broad categories
• General Plan 2000 (1988) introduced more precise categories
• General Plan 2020 (2004) expanded the list

• Better planning through technology?
• General Plan now often matches zoning map, especially in mature communities
Things to Keep in Mind

- 2040 General Plan Update provides an opportunity to confirm or modify categories
  - What's working?
  - What could be better?
  - Any opportunities to simplify?
- “Default” condition is that existing designations are carried forward
- Property owners may request Map amendments
- City may suggest amendments
- Impacts of Map (and policy) changes to be evaluated through EIR

And now…

A quick walk (sprint) through our 28 land use categories
Hillside Resource Residential

Privately owned land with severe slope and access constraints—often undeveloped

Max 0.5 units/acre

Example: privately owned hillsides adjacent to China Camp State Park

Hillside Residential

Moderate to steep lands—often previously subdivided in County

0.5 – 2.0 units/acre

Example: Country Club, Los Ranchitos, Bayside Acres
Large Lot Residential

Flat or gently sloping large single family lots

Example: Peacock Gap Large Lots, Locust Av

0.5 – 2.0 units/acre

Low Density Residential

Single family neighborhoods

Example: Terra Linda, Santa Venetia, Sun Valley, Glenwood, Gerstle Park, Bret Harte

2.0 - 6.5 units/acre
Medium Density Residential

- Duplex, garden apartments, small lots
- Example: Bay Pointe/Spinnaker Lagoon, Contempo, edges of Downtown, W. end of Freitas
- 6.5 – 15.0 units/acre

High Density Residential

- Apartments and condominiums
- Example: Canal area, Lincoln Av, Nova Albion, parts of Smith Ranch
- 15 - 32 units/acre
Fifth/Mission Residential/Office

Residential and office uses allowed. Retail in specified locations

15 - 32 units/acre

Fourth Street Retail Core

Retail, service, entertainment, cultural, office, residential, and live-work with active ground floor uses

32 - 62 units/acre
General Commercial

General retail and service uses, car sales, hotels, etc.

15 - 32 units/ acre

Example: Northgate Mall, Merrydale area, Marin Square, Francisco East and West

Hetherton Office

Offices with ground floor retail and services

32 - 62 units/ acre
Lindaro Mixed Use

Auto service, contractor, light mfg, live-work, warehousing, retail/service

6.5 – 15.0 units/acre

Lindaro Office

Office, hotel, cultural, entertainment, residential

15 - 32 units/acre
Marine Related

Water-dependent businesses and other uses that draw people to the water

Example: yacht clubs and marinas, boat repair, Montecito Shopping Center

6.5-15.0 units/acre

Neighborhood Commercial

Neighborhood-serving retail and service uses

Example: Terra Linda Shopping Center, Regency Cinemas, B St Safeway, Medway area

6.5-15.0 units/acre
Office

General offices, medical and professional offices, admin hdqtrs, etc.

Example: Los Gamos, Regency Center (Smith Ranch), Redwood Hwy Corridor

15 – 32 units/acre

Public/ Quasi-Public

Govt or quasi-govt. buildings or facilities, utilities, etc.

Example: City buildings, Schools, County property, Cemeteries, PG&E, treatment plants

15 - 32 units/acre
**Residential-Office**

Residential and office uses. Limited retail or service allowed with CUP.

Example: Lincoln corridor

15 – 32 units/ acre

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**Retail-Office**

Retail and service uses, with office and residential also allowed.

Example: Miracle Mile, east edge of Downtown

15 - 32 units/ acre
Second-Third St Mixed Use

Office and office support retail and service uses, with residential as envisioned by Downtown Plan

32 - 62 units/ acre

West End Village

Specialty and neighborhood retail, personal services, small offices, upper story housing on 4th or on ground floor elsewhere

15 – 32 units/ acre
Industrial

Motor vehicle services, storage, contractor yards, sand and gravel, manufacturing, recycling, truck terminals, ancillary offices and services, etc.

No housing

Light Industrial/Office

Less impactful employment-generating activities: auto services, storage, distribution, light manufacturing, offices and business parks, limited retail

No housing
Airport/ Recreation

Specified by a covenant agreed to by the City, Marin Co, and the property owner, including airport, private and public recreation, and utilities

No housing

Mineral Resources

Quarry and brick yard uses, utilizing mineral resources of regional significance

No housing
Parks

- City, County, and State parks
  - Example: China Camp, McInniss Golf Course, City parks
  - No housing

Open Space

- Secured public and private open space
  - Example: Marin County Open Space District, other restricted open space areas
  - No housing
Conservation

Areas with visual or other natural resource significance, including the environmentally sensitive portions of larger sites with some development potential.

Example: Tisconia Marsh, parts of Canalways, Marin Sanitary Service hillside land.

No housing.

Water

Major navigable bodies of water, applicable to the bay and canal.
Putting it All Together

ISSUES

- Net Vs Gross Density
- Height and FAR Maps
- Number of Mixed Use Categories
- Where should housing be allowed?
- Definition of Downtown
- Parks, Open Space, and Conservation
Net Vs Gross Density

- Density is the number of units allowed per acre of land
- Gross Density:
  - Includes roads, utilities, on-site parks, etc.
- Net Density
  - Excludes roads, utilities, on-site parks, etc.
- Net density is usually 20-30% higher than Gross, but the number of units permitted is the same.

Net vs Gross Density

Using **gross density** is appropriate where development is occurring on never-developed land.

Using **net density** is appropriate for infill sites, where internal streets and public set-asides are not required.
Net vs Gross Density

22 units
5.0 gross acres
4.4 units/ gross acre

22 units
3.85 net acres
5.7 units/ net acre

Why does this matter?

- Switching to net density allows the General Plan to align with existing zoning categories
- Provides more certainty to neighborhoods, residents, and developers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Gross Density</th>
<th>Net Density</th>
<th>Existing Zoning Districts</th>
<th>Lot Area per Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hillside Resource</td>
<td>0.1 to 0.5</td>
<td>Less than 0.5</td>
<td>R2a</td>
<td>2 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillside</td>
<td>0.5 to 2</td>
<td>0.5 to 2.2</td>
<td>R1a, R20</td>
<td>20,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Lot</td>
<td>0.5 to 2</td>
<td>0.5 to 2.2</td>
<td>R1a, R20</td>
<td>20,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Density</td>
<td>2 to 6.5</td>
<td>2.2 to 8.7</td>
<td>R10, R7.5, R5</td>
<td>5,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Density</td>
<td>6.5 to 15</td>
<td>8.7 to 21.8</td>
<td>MR5, MR3, MR2.5, DR, MR2</td>
<td>2,000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Density</td>
<td>15 to 32</td>
<td>21.8 to 43.6</td>
<td>HR1.8, HR1.5, HR1</td>
<td>1,000 SF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Height and Floor Area Ratio Limits

- State law requires each land use category to include a measure of allowable building intensity
- The “usual” metrics are Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or height
- San Rafael uses both

1.0 FAR

Height and Floor Area Ratio Limits

- GP 2020 does not include FAR or height standards in the definitions—relies on Maps and policies to set the maximums
Height and Floor Area Ratio Limits

- Do they respond to current trends?
- Are they responsive to traffic conditions?
- Does the “map” approach work?
- Should an FAR standard for residential uses be considered in Downtown in lieu of density?
- Note that policies in the General Plan provide further guidance on “exceptions” to the rules (e.g., hotels, mini-storage, etc.)

13 Mixed Use Categories

COMMERCIAL CATEGORIES
- General Commercial
- Marine Related
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Office
- Residential/Office
- Retail/Office

DOWNTOWN CATEGORIES
- Fifth/Mission Residential/Office
- Fourth Street Retail Core
- Hetherton Office
- Lindaro Mixed Use
- Lindaro Office
- Second/Third Mixed Use
- West End Village

- General Plan is not “general” when it comes to commercial uses
- Categories nearly match zoning
- Downtown has seven different mixed use categories
- Three permutations of office
- Can we consolidate—and rely on zoning to distinguish desired uses?
- Housing is allowed in all of these areas, though different permitting processes may apply
Can Downtown Categories be Merged?

**DOWNTOWN CATEGORIES**
- Fifth/Mission Residential/Office
- Fourth Street Retail Core
- Hetherton Office
- Lindaro Mixed Use
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**DOWNTOWN MIXED USE**

But what’s the boundary of Downtown?

Parks, Open Space, and Conservation

Presently treated as three categories:

- **PARKS**
  - Parks owned and operated by public agencies, but excluding designated City and County open space

- **OPEN SPACE**
  - Designated City and County Open Space, and ag or other unbuidable lands

- **CONSERVATION**
  - Environmentally sensitive lands (mostly privately owned wetlands)

Potentially reorganize these categories to distinguish land for active and passive recreation? Are "open space" and "conservation" sufficiently distinguished or can they be one category? Why are cemeteries and golf courses not open space?
### Proposed New Categories

**Existing**
- Residential
  - Hillside Resource Residential
  - Hillside Residential
  - Large Lot Residential
  - Low Density Residential
  - Medium Density Residential
  - High Density Residential
- Mixed Use
  - Fifth/Mission Residential
  - Fourth Street Retail Core
  - Hetherton Office
  - Lindaro Mixed Use
  - Lindaro Office
  - Second/Third Mixed Use
  - West End Village
  - Office
  - Residential/Office
  - Retail/Office
  - General Commercial
  - Neighborhood Commercial
  - Marine-Related

**Proposed**
- Residential
  - No change, but switching from gross density to net density
  - Hillside Resource Residential
  - Hillside Residential
  - Large Lot Residential
  - Low Density Residential
  - Medium Density Residential
  - High Density Residential
- Mixed Use
  - Downtown Mixed Use
  - Office Mixed Use
  - Community Commercial Mixed Use
  - Neighborhood Commercial Mixed Use
  - Marine Mixed Use

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### Proposed New Categories

**Existing**
- Industrial
  - Industrial
  - Light Industrial/Office
- Other
  - Public/Quasi Public
  - Airport/Recreation
  - Mineral Resources
  - Parks
  - Open Space
  - Conservation
- Water

**Proposed**
- Industrial
  - Industrial
  - Light Industrial/Office
- Other
  - Public/Quasi Public
  - Airport/Recreation
  - Mineral Resources
  - Parks and Improved Open Space
  - Resource Conservation Areas
- Water
Another quick spin

Hillside Resource Residential

- 2 acres of lot area per dwelling
- Private land with geologic, seismic, wildfire, visual, and access constraints
Hillside Residential

- 20,000 sq feet of lot area per dwelling (0.5 units/net ac)
- Previously subdivided hillside neighborhoods with limited capacity for development—mostly unincorporated

Very Low Density Residential

- 20,000 sq feet lot area per dwelling (0.5 units/net ac)
- Similar to Hillside Residential in lot pattern but on flatter terrain
Low Density Residential

- Single family neighborhoods
- Min 5,000 square feet of lot area per dwelling (8.7 units/net acre)
- Multiple zoning districts apply

Medium Density Residential

- Patio homes, small lot subdivisions, townhomes, mobile home parks, 2-4 plexes, etc. – min. 2,000 sf lot area/unit (21.8 units/net acre)
- Multiple zoning districts apply
High Density Residential

- Apartments and condominiums – min. 1,000 sf lot area/unit (43.6 units/net acre)

Downtown Mixed Use

- Mix of housing, office, retail, services, civic, cultural, and recreational uses—Precise Plan to be used to distinguish subareas
- Max 72.6 units/ net ac (600 sq ft lot area/unit) and FAR 2.0
Community Commercial Mixed Use

- General retail and service uses, restaurants, auto sales, hotels/motels, offices
- Multi-family housing and mixed use are permitted

Neighborhood Commercial Mixed Use

- Neighborhood-oriented retail and service uses
- Multi-family housing and mixed use are permitted but at lower densities than in Community Commercial
Office Mixed Use

- Office is the prevailing use but other uses are allowed, consistent with General Plan policies
- Some areas may have more residential mixed in, others more retail

Marine Commercial Mixed Use

- Water-dependent businesses such as boat building, repair, marinas
- Other water-oriented or marine-oriented uses, including retail, restaurants, and hotels
Light Industrial/ Office

- Low-impact production, distribution, and repair activities
- Offices are allowed—housing is not
- Limited allowances for retail

General Industrial

- More impactful production, distribution, and repair activities
- Manufacturing, warehousing, recyclers, sand and gravel
- Very limited ancillary office and retail – no housing
**Public/ Quasi-Public**

- Land and facilities operated by public or quasi-public agencies
- City and County buildings, schools, post offices, universities, utilities
- Housing is allowed, subject to provisions of GP and zoning

**Parks and Improved Open Space**

- City, County, and State Parks improved for recreation or other open space activities
- Proposing to add cemeteries and golf courses
Resource Conservation Areas

- Public and privately owned open space managed to preserve environmental value and provide for limited recreation

Mineral Resources

- Established quarry and brick yard uses that use resources of regional significance
Airport/ Recreation

- Uses per the covenant agreed to by the City, County, and property owner

Water

- The navigable waters of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays and the San Rafael Canal
Now what?

• Questions/ clarifications
• Feedback on the existing or proposed categories
• Feedback on the policy issues raised during the presentation
  • Switching to net density
  • Merging Downtown categories
  • Merging the Office categories
  • Categories where housing is allowed/ disallowed
  • Parks, Open Space, and Conservation categories

Congratulations!

You are now a LAND USE EXPERT!