

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE CATEGORIES

September 12, 2018

Understanding

the Language of Land Use

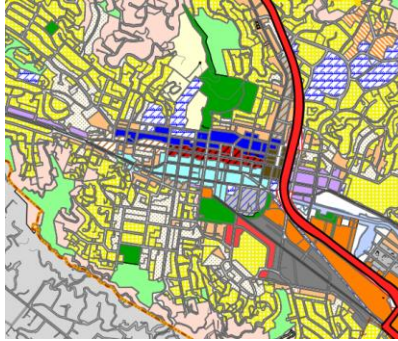
General Plan Map

- 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*



1963



2018

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

• Low Density Residential	• Industrial
• High Density Residential	• Service Commercial/
• Hillside Residential	Special Industrial
• Parks & Recreation	• Professional/Administrative
• Commercial Recreation	• Public Service

• Hillside Resource Residential	• Residential/Office
• Hillside Residential	• Office
• Low Density Residential	• Light Industrial/Office
• Medium Density Residential	• Industrial
• High Density Residential	• Public/Quasi-Public
• Neighborhood Commercial	• Parks/Open Space/
• Downtown Core Commercial	Conservation
• General Commercial	• Ag/ Recreation/ Land Reserve
• Marine Related Commercial	• Mineral Resource
• Retail/Office	

• Hillside Resource Residential	• Commercial	• Office
• Hillside Residential	• Retail/Office	• Light Industrial/Office
• Large Lot Residential	• Residential/Office	• Industrial
• Low Density Residential	• 2 nd /3 rd Mixed Use	• Public/Quasi-Public
• Medium Density Residential	• 4 th St Retail Core	• Parks
• High Density Residential	• 9 th Mission Res/Office	• Open Space
• Neighborhood Commercial	• Hetherington Office	• Conservation
• General Commercial	• Lindero Mixed Use	• Mineral Resource
• Marine Related	• Lindero Office	• Airport/ Recreation
	• West End Village	• Water

- *Better planning through technology?*
- *General Plan now often matches zoning map, especially in mature communities*

Things to Keep in Mind

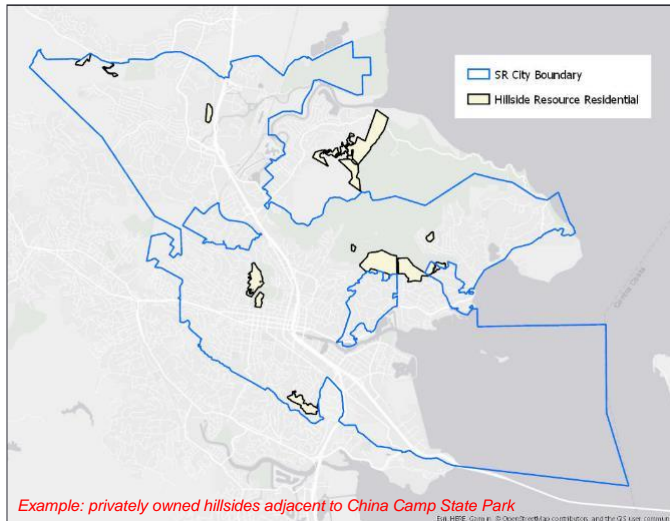
- 2040 General Plan Update provides an opportunity to confirm or modify categories
 - What's working?
 - What could be better?
 - Any opportunities to simplify?
- “Default” condition is that existing designations are carried forward
- Property owners may request Map amendments
- City may suggest amendments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

And now...

*A quick walk (sprint)
through our **28** land use
categories*



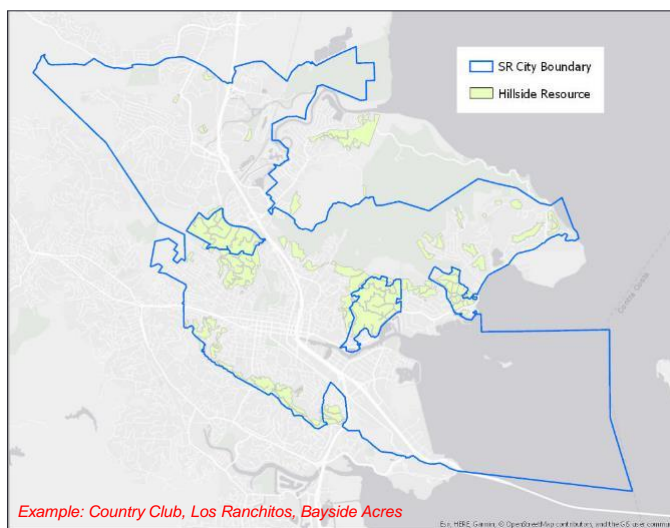
Hillside Resource Residential



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

Max 0.5 units/ acre

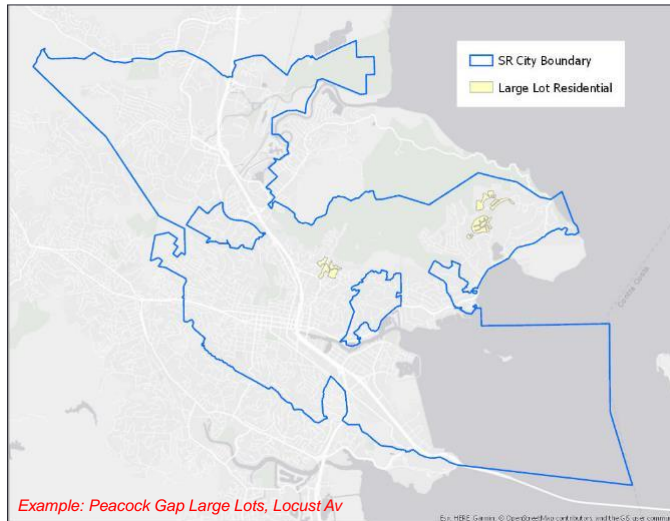
Hillside Residential



Moderate to steep lands—often previously subdivided in County

0.5 – 2.0 units/ acre

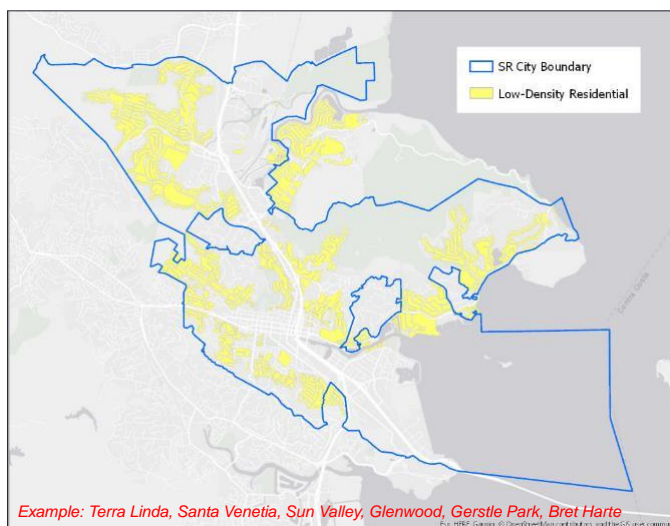
Large Lot Residential



Flat or gently sloping large single family lots

**0.5 – 2.0
units/ acre**

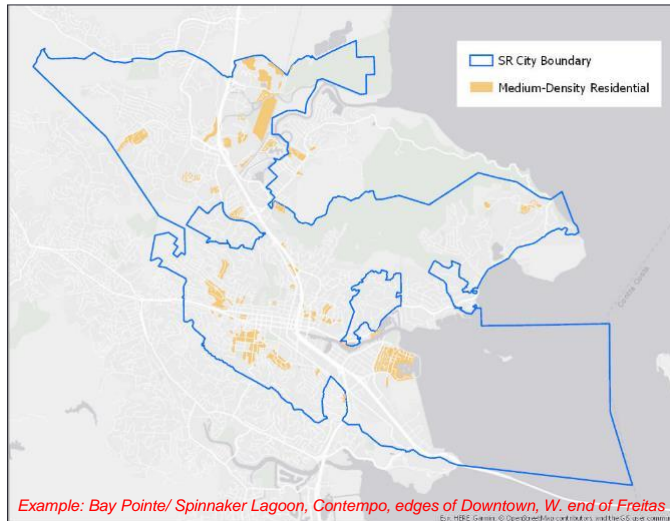
Low Density Residential



Single family neighborhoods

**2.0 - 6.5
units/ acre**

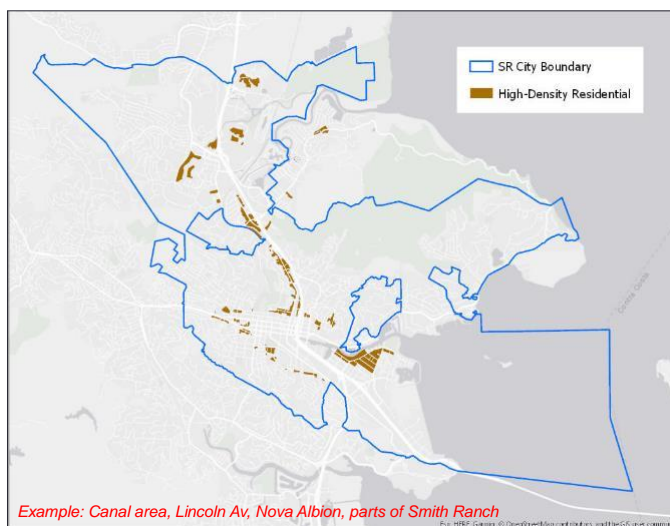
Medium Density Residential



Duplex, garden
apartments,
small lots

**6.5 – 15.0
units/ acre**

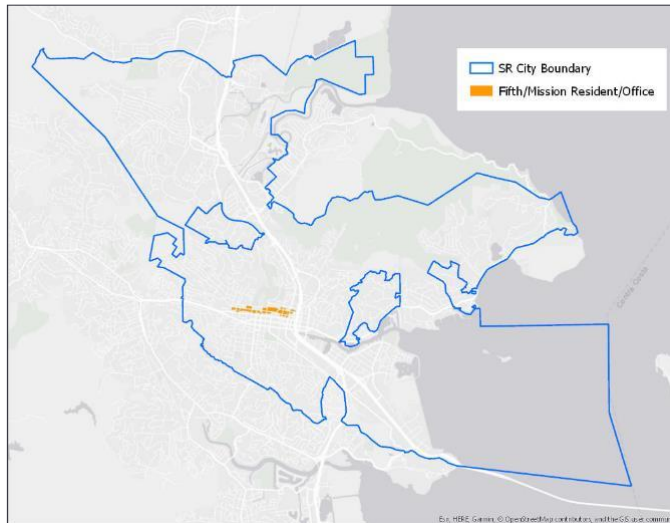
High Density Residential



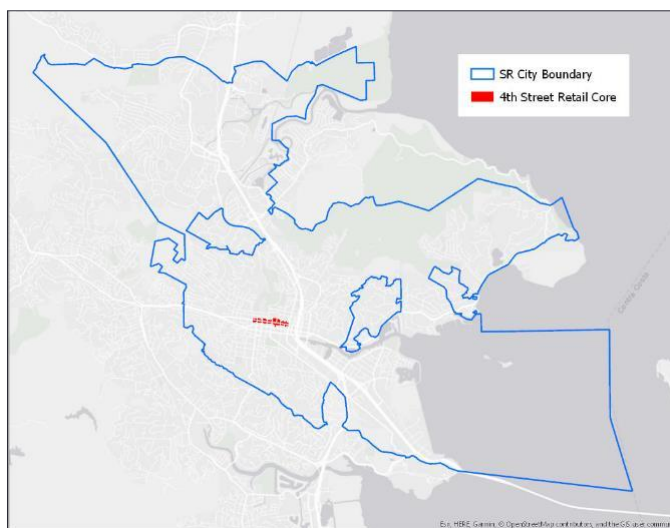
Apartments
and
condominiums

**15 - 32
units/ acre**

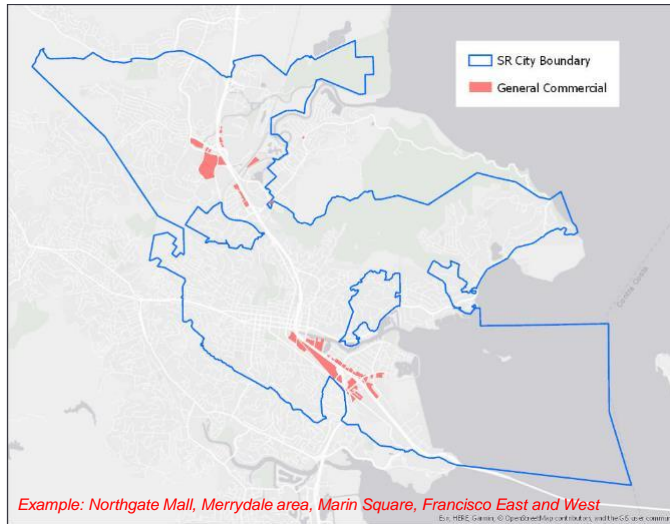
Fifth/Mission Residential/Office



Fourth Street Retail Core



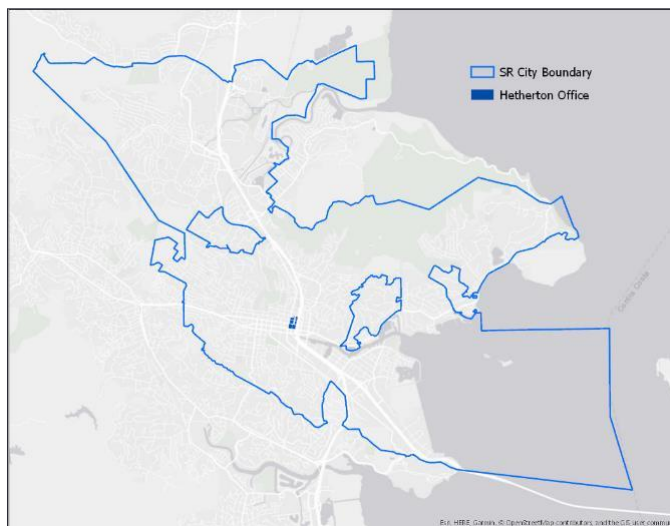
General Commercial



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

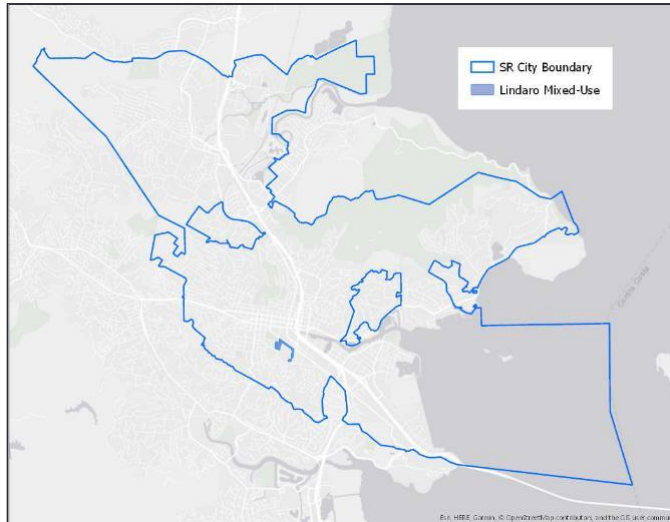
**15 - 32
units/ acre**

Hetherton Office



Offices with ground floor retail and services

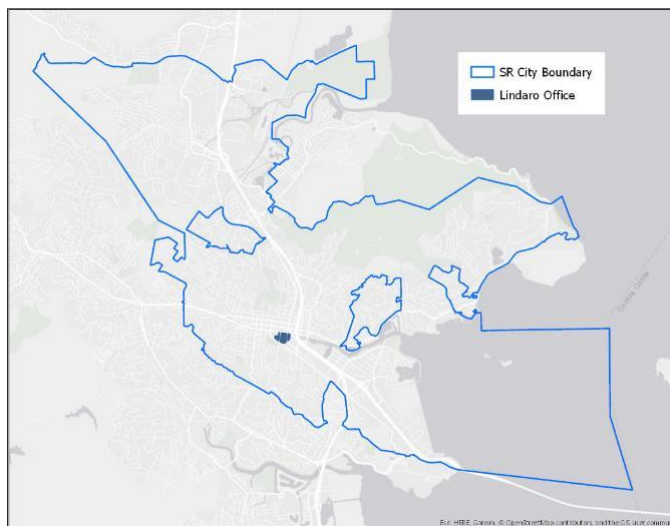
Lindaro Mixed Use



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

**6.5 – 15.0
units/ acre**

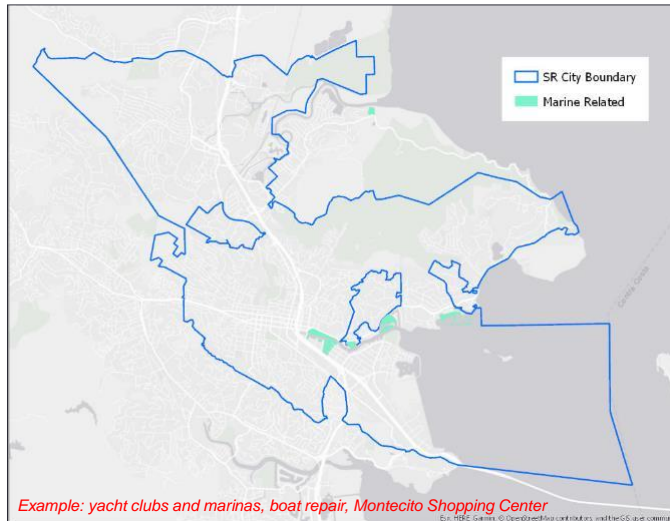
Lindaro Office



Office, hotel,
cultural,
entertainment,
residential

**15 - 32
units/ acre**

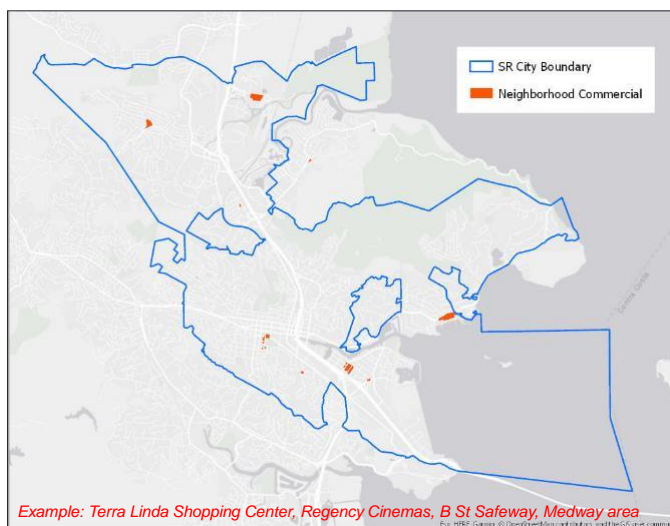
Marine Related



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

**6.5- 15.0
units/ acre**

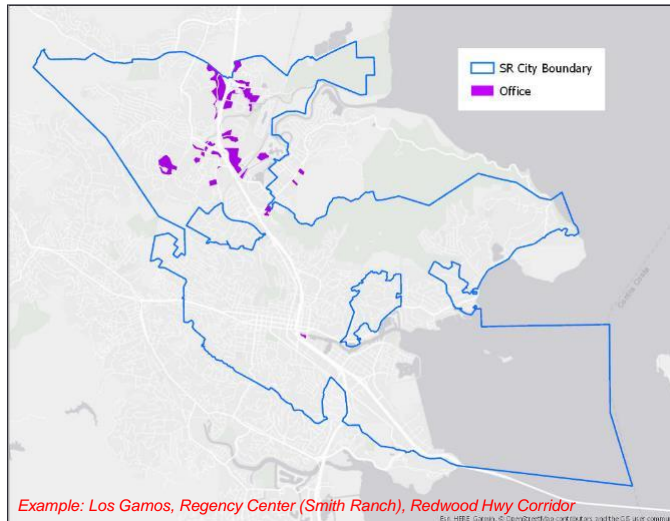
Neighborhood Commercial



Neighborhood-serving retail and service uses

**6.5- 15.0
units/ acre**

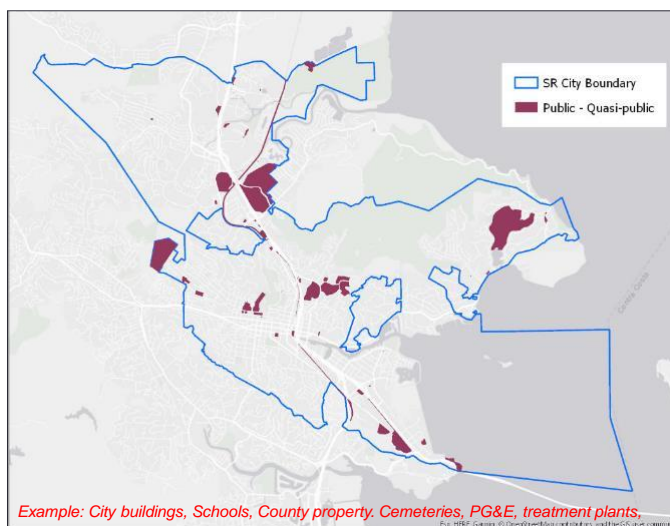
Office



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

**15 – 32
units/ acre**

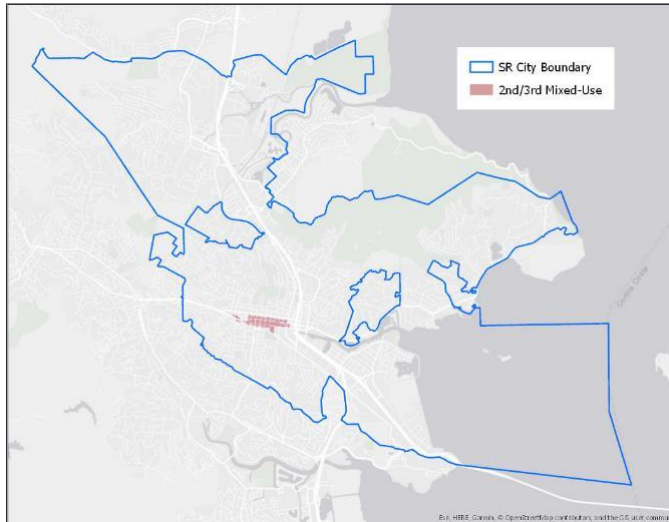
Public/ Quasi-Public



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

**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**

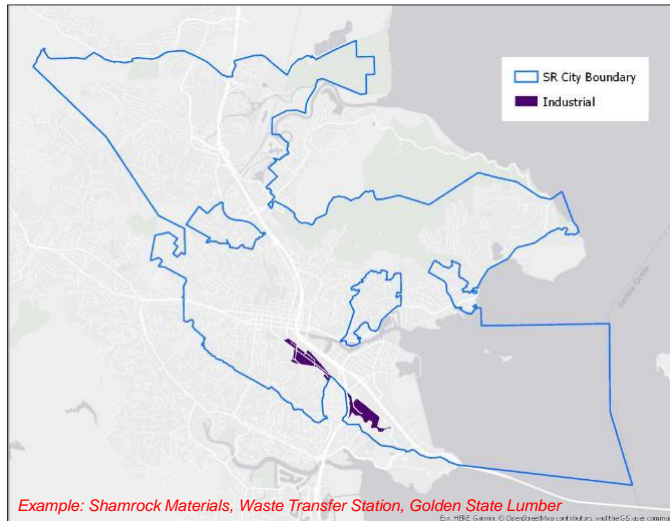
West End Village



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

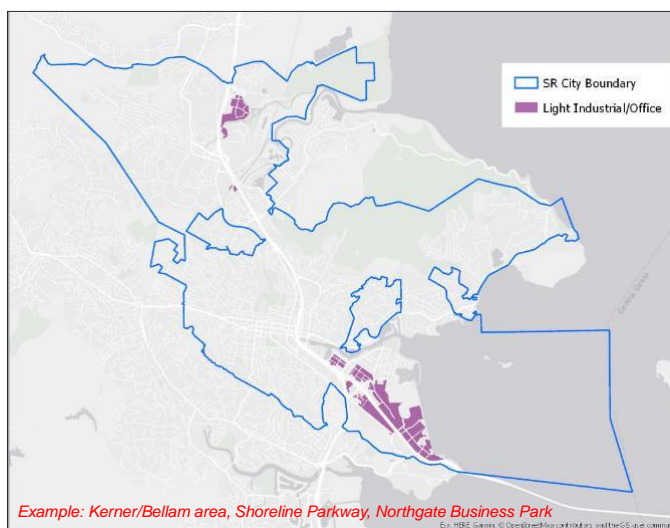
**15 - 32
units/ acre**

Industrial



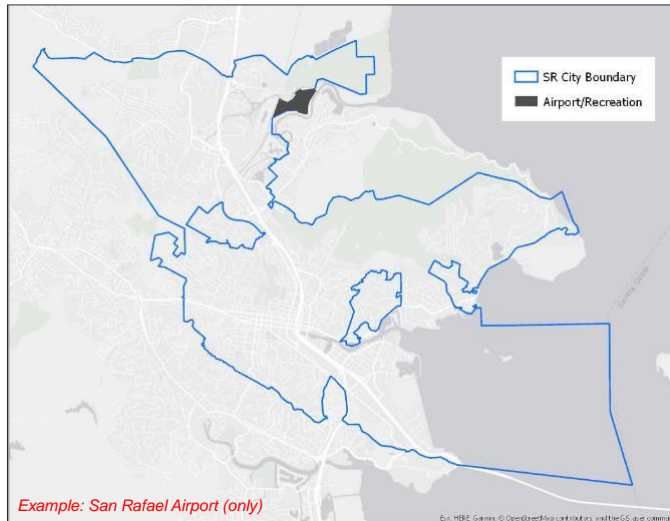
Motor vehicle services, storage, contractor yards, sand and gravel, manufacturing, recycling, truck terminals, ancillary offices and services, etc.

Light Industrial/ Office



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

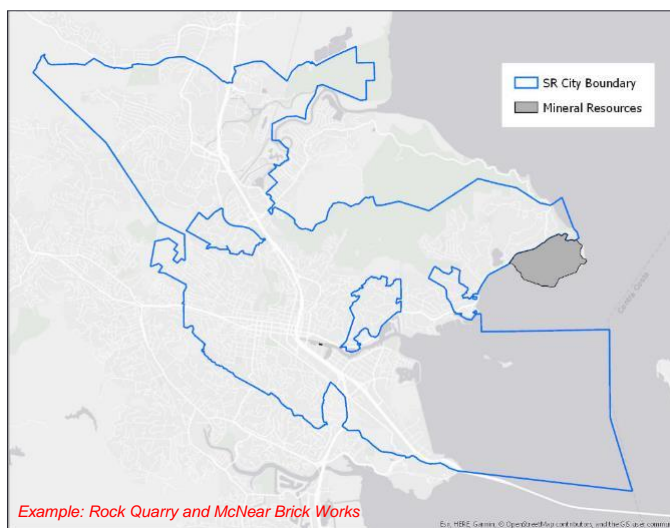
Airport/ Recreation



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



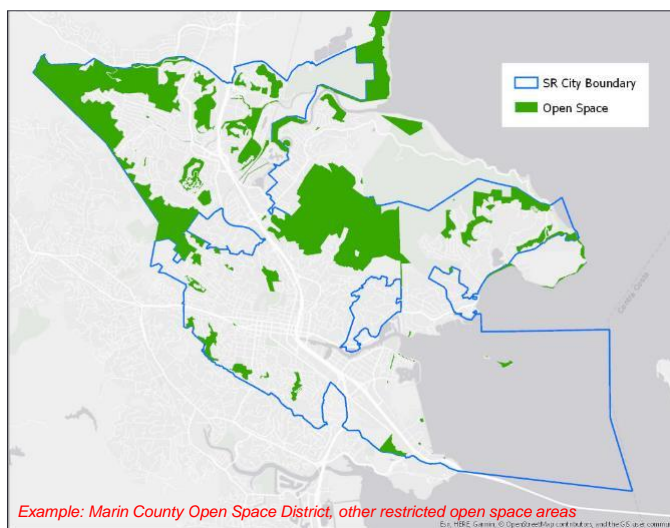
Quarry and brick yard uses, utilizing mineral resources of regional significance

No housing

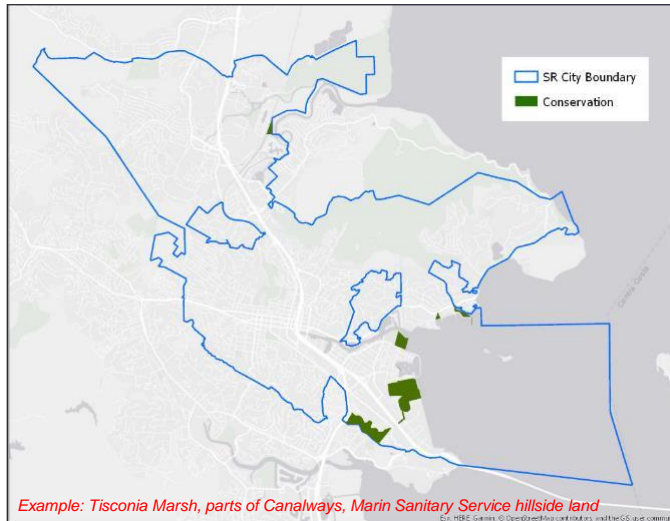
Parks



Open Space



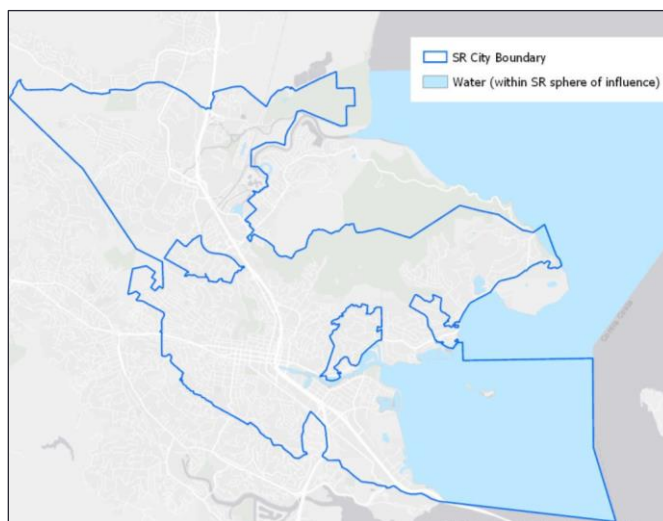
Conservation



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

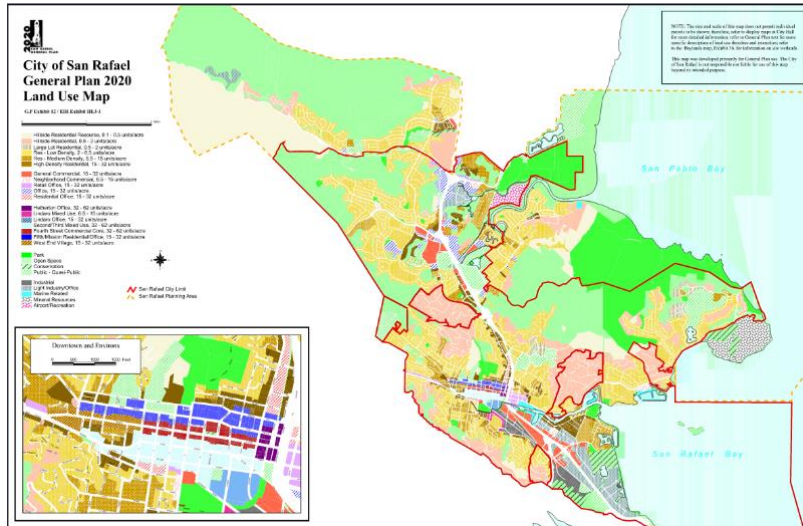
No housing

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

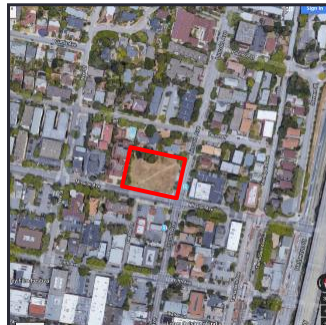
- Density is the number of units allowed per acre of land
- Gross Density:
 - Includes roads, utilities, on-site parks, etc.
- Net Density
 - Excludes roads, utilities, on-site parks, etc.
- Net density is usually 20-30% higher than Gross, but the number of units permitted is the same.

Net vs Gross Density

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



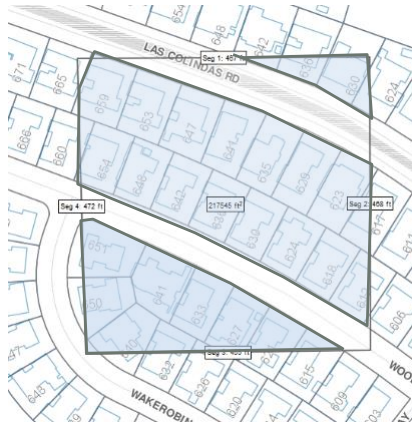
Using **net density** is appropriate for infill sites, where internal streets and public set-asides are not required



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

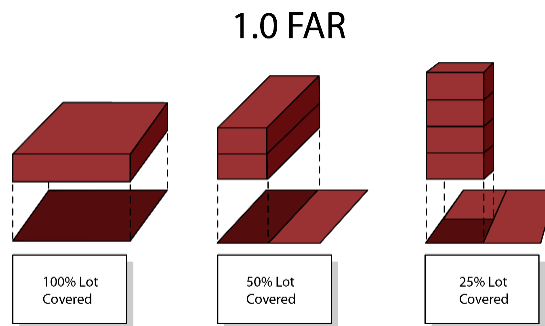
Why does this matter?

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

Category	Gross Density	Net Density	Existing Zoning Districts	Lot Area per Unit
Hillside Resource	0.1 to 0.5	Less than 0.5	R2a	2 acres
Hillside	0.5 to 2	0.5 to 2.2	R1a, R20	20,000 SF
Large Lot	0.5 to 2	0.5 to 2.2	R1a, R20	20,000 SF
Low Density	2 to 6.5	2.2 to 8.7	R10, R7.5, R5	5,000 SF
Medium Density	6.5 to 15	8.7 to 21.8	MR5, MR3, MR2.5, DR, MR2	2,000 SF
High Density	15 to 32	21.8 to 43.6	HR1.8, HR1.5, HR1	1,000 SF

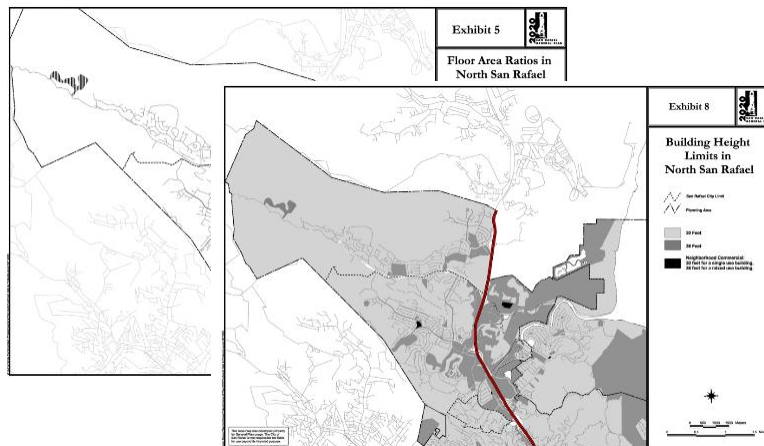
Height and Floor Area Ratio Limits

- 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



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

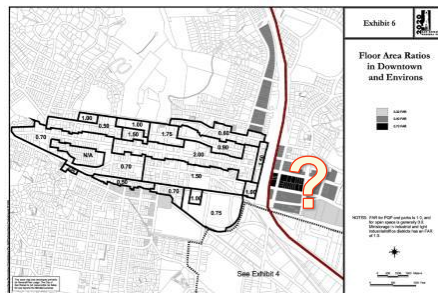
- General Commercial
- Marine Related
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Office
- Residential/Office
- Retail/Office

DOWNTOWN CATEGORIES

- Fifth/Mission Residential/Office
- Fourth Street Retail Core
- Hetherton Office
- Lindero Mixed Use
- Lindero 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?



But what's the boundary of Downtown?

Parks, Open Space, and Conservation

Presently treated as three categories:



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



Designated City and County Open Space, and ag or other unbuildable lands



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
 - Hillside Resource Residential
 - Hillside Residential
 - Large Lot Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - High Density Residential

No change, but switching from gross density to net density

Mixed Use

- Downtown Mixed Use
- Office Mixed Use
- Community Commercial Mixed Use
- Neighborhood Commercial Mixed Use
- Marine Mixed Use

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

PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN 2040 CATEGORIES

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



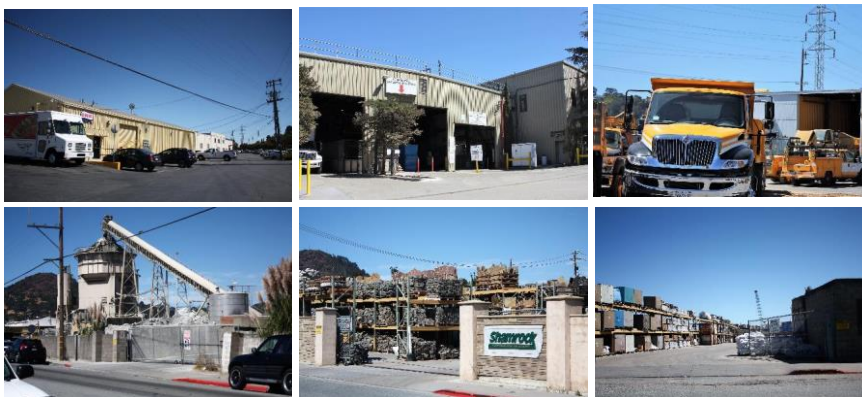
Light Industrial/ Office

- 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!