

## 3. Project Description

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This chapter of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the proposed San Rafael General Plan 2040 (General Plan 2040) and Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan (Downtown Precise Plan), hereinafter referred to as “proposed project,” pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).<sup>1</sup> The proposed project includes potential new development associated with implementation of General Plan 2040 and the Downtown Precise Plan. This includes previously approved projects, the remaining buildout potential in the current Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) 2040 projections, and additional capacity related to policy updates and map changes. The potential buildout of the City of San Rafael is discussed in Section 3.8, 2040 Development Projections, of this chapter.

This Draft EIR has been completed in accordance with CEQA, which requires that State and local public agencies analyze proposed projects to determine potential impacts on the environment and disclose any such impacts.<sup>2</sup> The City of San Rafael (City) is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed project. Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, of this Draft EIR provides a programmatic analysis of the environmental impacts associated with projected development under the proposed project by 2040. Program-level environmental review documents are appropriate when a project consists of a series of actions related to the issuance of rules, regulations, and other planning criteria.<sup>3</sup> The proposed project that is the subject of this EIR consists of long-term plans and zoning changes that will be implemented as policy documents guiding future development activities and City actions. Because this is a program-level EIR, this document does not evaluate the impacts of specific, individual developments that may be allowed under the General Plan. Future projects may require separate environmental review as described in Section 1.4, Tiering Process, in Chapter 1, Introduction, of this Draft EIR.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the location, setting, and characteristics of the EIR Study Area, as well as the project objectives, the principal project components, and required permits and approvals.

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

Every city and county in California is required to have an adopted comprehensive long-range general plan for the physical development of the county or city and, in some cases, land outside the city or county boundaries.<sup>4</sup> It is the community’s overarching policy document that defines a vision for future change and sets the “ground rules” for locating and designing new projects, expanding the local economy, conserving resources, improving public services and safety, and fostering community health. The General

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<sup>1</sup> CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.

<sup>2</sup> CEQA Guidelines Section 15002(a).

<sup>3</sup> CEQA Guidelines Section 15168.

<sup>4</sup> California Government Code Section 65300.

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Plan, which includes a vision, guiding principles, goals, policies, and programs, functions as the City's primary land use regulatory tool. It is San Rafael's constitution for future change and must be used as the basis for all planning-related decisions made by City staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council.

Pursuant to state law, a general plan must contain eight mandated elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, environmental justice, and safety. Typically, general plans cover a time frame or forecast of 15 to 20 years. However, general plan housing elements are required to be updated every eight years to comply with the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), required by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).

The existing San Rafael General Plan 2020 (General Plan 2020) was adopted in 2004 and included a horizon year of 2020. Accordingly, a comprehensive update is necessary to extend the planning horizon. One element of the current General Plan, the Housing Element, was amended in January 2015. Additionally, with the adoption of the California Global Warming Solutions Act (Assembly Bill 32), which requires statewide reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the City adopted the 2009 *Climate Change Action Plan* (CCAP). The CCAP included a list of tasks and measures to reduce the community's GHG emissions by 2020 and 2040. In 2011, the CCAP was added to the General Plan 2020 as the Sustainability Element. The CCAP was most recently updated in May 2019. In addition to the eight General Plan elements required by State law, the General Plan 2020 included eight optional elements, for a total of 16 elements.

All precise plans, master plans, and zoning in the city must be consistent with the General Plan. Similarly, all land-use development approvals and environmental decisions made by the City Council must be consistent with the General Plan. The General Plan itself, however, does not approve or entitle any development project. Property owners have control over when they wish to propose a project, and final development approval decisions are made on a project-by-project basis by City staff, the Design Review Board, the Planning Commission, and/or the City Council.

## 3.2 OVERVIEW

The existing General Plan 2020 involved a major overhaul and modernization of the prior General Plan 2000 that was adopted in 1988. The City determined that General Plan 2020 provided a good foundation for the proposed General Plan 2040. General Plan 2020 went through a comprehensive review process, resulting in a broad range of community goals and policies. Many of the community issues vetted in General Plan 2020 are still relevant, well addressed, and do not require major changes. Therefore, the proposed General Plan 2040 is not a major departure from General Plan 2020 in terms of its underlying vision and fundamental growth concepts. Rather, it builds off the current General Plan 2020 by incorporating the topics that are now required by State law and revises relevant policies and programs to meet those requirements. It also extends the planning horizon forward by 20 years consistent with other regional plans, including *Plan Bay Area 2040*.

Concurrent with General Plan 2040, the City is preparing a Downtown Precise Plan. The proposed Downtown Precise Plan is a critical part of the General Plan, as roughly half of the city's future housing and employment growth is expected to occur in downtown San Rafael, referred to as the Downtown

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Precise Plan Area. Projected growth is discussed in Section 3.8, 2040 Development Projections, below. The proposed Downtown Precise Plan updates the 1993 *Our Vision of Downtown San Rafael and Our Implementation Strategy* (1993 Downtown Vision) and incorporates key recommendations of the 2012 *San Rafael Downtown Station Area Plan*, as well as the 2017 *Downtown Parking and Wayfinding Study* and other more focused projects such as the 2019 *Third Street Rehabilitation Project* and the 2018 *Third and Hetherton Intersection Improvements*. The proposed Downtown Precise Plan addresses urban design, placemaking, historic preservation, transportation, parking, economic development, affordable housing, and antidisplacement strategies.

The City's General Plan Land Use Map is integrated with the City's Zoning Map, which shows the parcel-specific delineation of the Zoning Districts throughout the city and depicts permitted and conditionally permitted uses. A parcel's Zoning District stems directly from its General Plan land use designation, with the Zoning District acting to implement the General Plan by refining the specific uses and development standards for that parcel. The proposed Downtown Precise Plan would include the Downtown Form-Based Code (Downtown Code) that will replace existing zoning regulations for properties in the Downtown Precise Plan Area. The Downtown Code is discussed further in Section 3.7.2.4, Downtown Precise Plan Zoning Amendment.

The proposed General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan, including the goals, policies, and programs, would require map and text amendments to the General Plan Land Use Map and Zoning Map. In conjunction with these amendments, Title 14, Zoning, of the San Rafael Municipal Code (SRMC) would be amended to codify the provisions of the proposed Downtown Code for the Downtown Precise Plan Area.

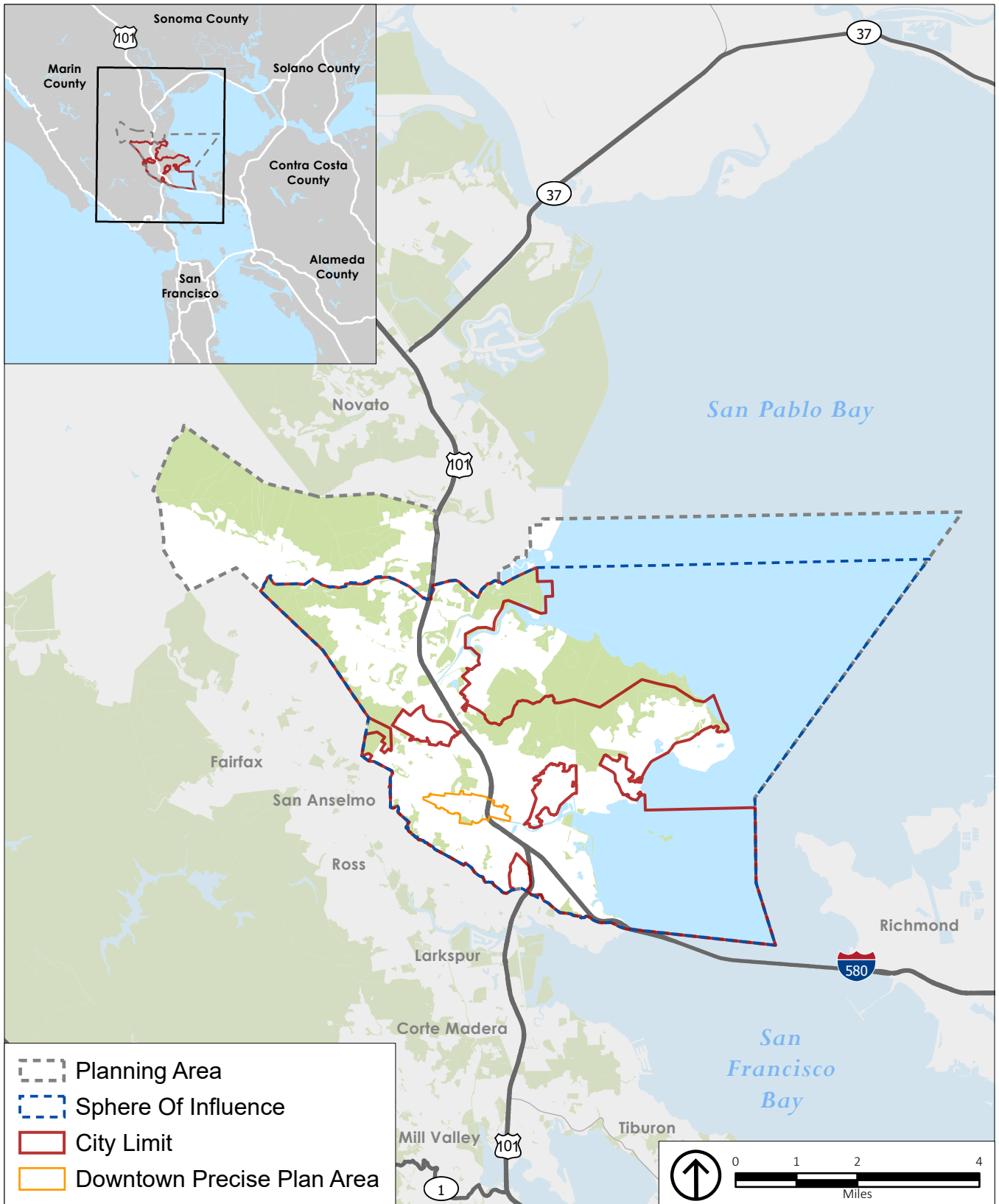
### 3.3 LOCATION AND SETTING

The city of San Rafael is in the eastern part of central Marin County and is the largest city in the county. It is generally bounded by the City of Novato to the north; the San Francisco Bay, which includes San Pablo Bay and San Rafael Bay herein referred to as Bay Waters, and unincorporated Marin County to the east; the City of Larkspur and the Town of Ross to the south; and the City of San Anselmo and unincorporated Marin County to the west. See Figure 3-1. The city is accessed by Interstate 580 (I-580) via the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge and U.S. Highway 101 (US-101), as well as the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) Train, which has stations at the San Rafael Transit Center in downtown and at the Marin Civic Center. San Rafael is known for a range of urban and suburban land uses, including a variety of residential neighborhoods, a downtown area, parks, and business centers. San Rafael's built-out environment is largely consistent with the built-out environments of adjacent communities.

### 3.4 EIR STUDY AREA

The State of California encourages cities to look beyond their borders when undertaking the sort of comprehensive planning required of a general plan. The City only has jurisdiction over land that is within the city limits. However, the City maintains a role in land use decisions in its sphere of influence (SOI) and its planning area. Therefore, the EIR Study Area consists of all land within the City of San Rafael's city limits, SOI, and Planning Area. These areas are described below and shown on Figure 3-2.

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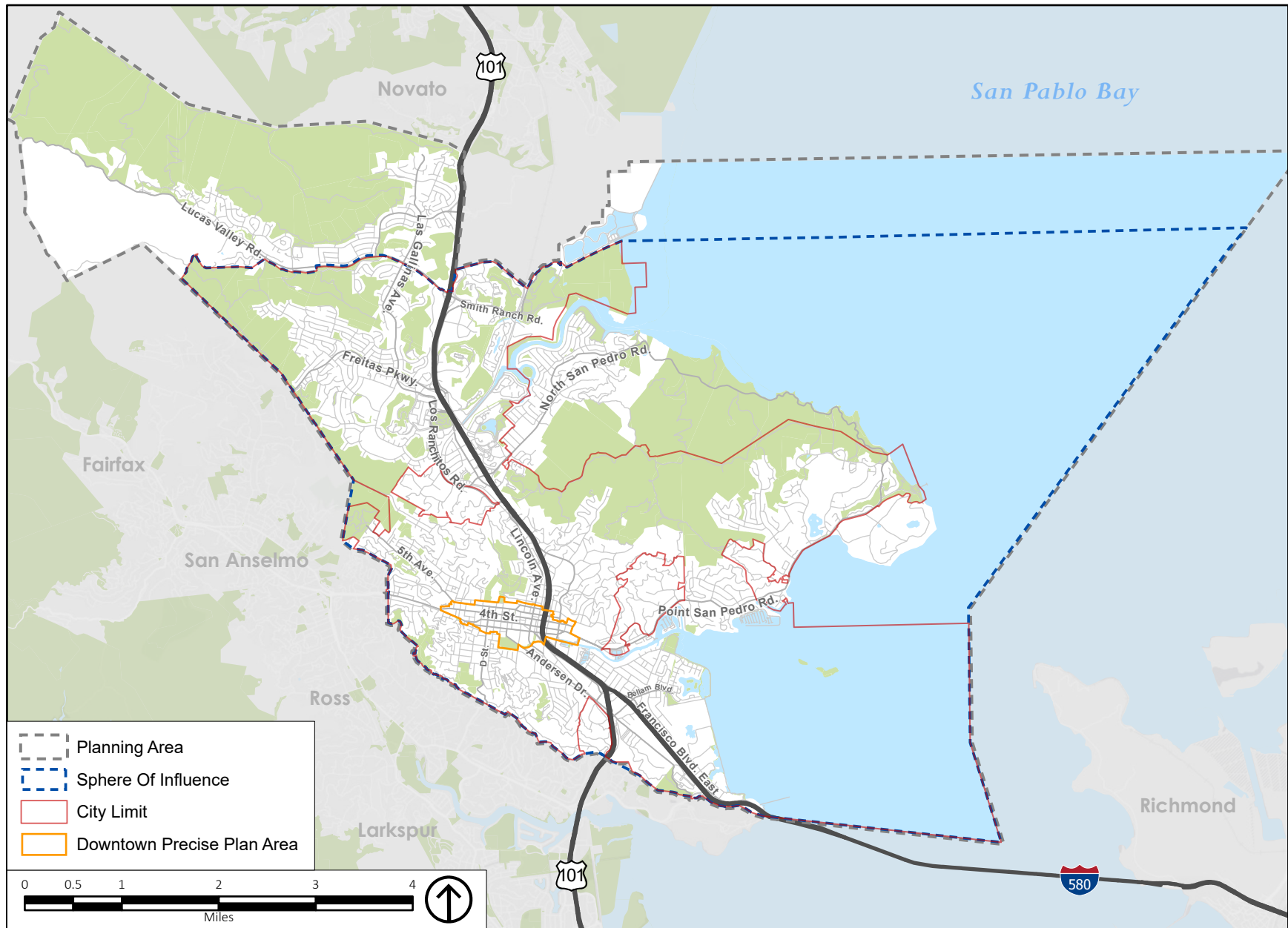


Source: ESRI, 2017; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2019.

Figure 3-1  
Regional and Vicinity Map



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Source: ESRI, 2017; County of Marin, 2009; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2019.

Figure 3-2  
EIR Study Area

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### **3.4.1 PLANNING AREA**

The San Rafael Planning Area is approximately 54 square miles of land and water that encompasses the SOI and the city limits, parts of the San Pablo and San Francisco Bays, and portions of unincorporated Marin County, including the Lucas Valley and Marinwood neighborhoods. The purpose of including these additional areas is to include lands that could cause an impact or be impacted by land use, development, and other changes in San Rafael, including impacts related to biological resources, hydrology, and transportation, among others. Designating a Planning Area does not give the City any regulatory power over the land outside the city limits, but signals to the County and other nearby local and regional authorities that San Rafael recognizes that development within this area may have an impact on the future of the city. Although the San Rafael General Plan and Zoning regulations do not currently apply within the Planning Area, General Plan policies must consider these areas and their relationship to the incorporated areas of San Rafael. See Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, for a description of the cumulative impact scope for this EIR, which may include lands within the Planning Area and beyond, depending on the environmental topic being analyzed.

### **3.4.2 SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**

The San Rafael SOI is approximately 40 square miles in size, including both land and water. The SOI is a boundary that identifies land that the City may potentially annex in the future, and for which urban services, if available, could be provided upon annexation. Under State law, the SOI is established by the Marin County Local Agency Formation Commission with input from the City. The purpose of the SOI is to identify areas where urban development can be best accommodated over the next 5 to 10 years in an orderly and efficient manner. While the City does not have jurisdiction over land within the SOI, designating an SOI sets precedence for ensuring that the City is able to comment on development proposed for lands within the SOI prior to annexation and to begin considering future development of the area. Establishment of this boundary is necessary to determine which governmental agencies can provide services in the most efficient way to the people and property in the area. Unincorporated areas adjacent to the San Rafael city limits fall under the planning, land use, and regulatory jurisdiction of Marin County. The City does not propose to annex any areas within the SOI as part of the proposed project. However, as further described in Chapters 4, Environmental Analysis, and 4.12, Mineral Resources, of this Draft EIR, the San Rafael Rock Quarry and McNear Brickworks, an active quarry in the SOI, could be considered for annexation if it is proposed for development prior to the 2040 horizon. The potential for and timing of annexation of these lands would depend upon the remaining forecast life of the quarry operation, which is currently proposed for an extension to 2044. This extension is outside the proposed 2040 horizon. Other unknown annexations may occur within the 2040 planning horizon and would be analyzed under separate environmental review.

### **3.4.3 CITY LIMITS**

The San Rafael city limits enclose an area of approximately 22 square miles, of which 6 square miles consist of the Bay Waters, and the remaining 16 square miles consist of land. The City has primary authority over land use and other governmental actions within this area. Certain unincorporated areas outside of the city limit may still have a San Rafael mailing address and may share certain services with the

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City. For example, most of the unincorporated neighborhoods such as Country Club, Bayside Acres, California Park, Los Ranchitos, and Marinwood, are not actually within San Rafael's city limit; however, these neighborhoods do fall within San Rafael's Planning Area.

### 3.4.4 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN AREA

Covering approximately 265 acres, the Downtown Precise Plan Area is the economic, cultural, and civic heart of the city. With approximately 2,300 residents and over a million square feet of nonresidential uses, it is a major mixed-use center in the northern Bay Area. As shown on Figure 3-3, the Downtown Precise Plan Area is in southwestern San Rafael and is bisected by US-101. It extends from the Miracle Mile<sup>5</sup> on the west to Montecito Plaza shopping center on the east, with Mission Avenue on the north and First Street and Albert Park on the south. The Downtown Precise Plan Area contains major regional transportation links, including US-101, as well as the Downtown San Rafael SMART Station, which provides service between Sonoma County and Larkspur.

## 3.5 PLANNING PROCESS

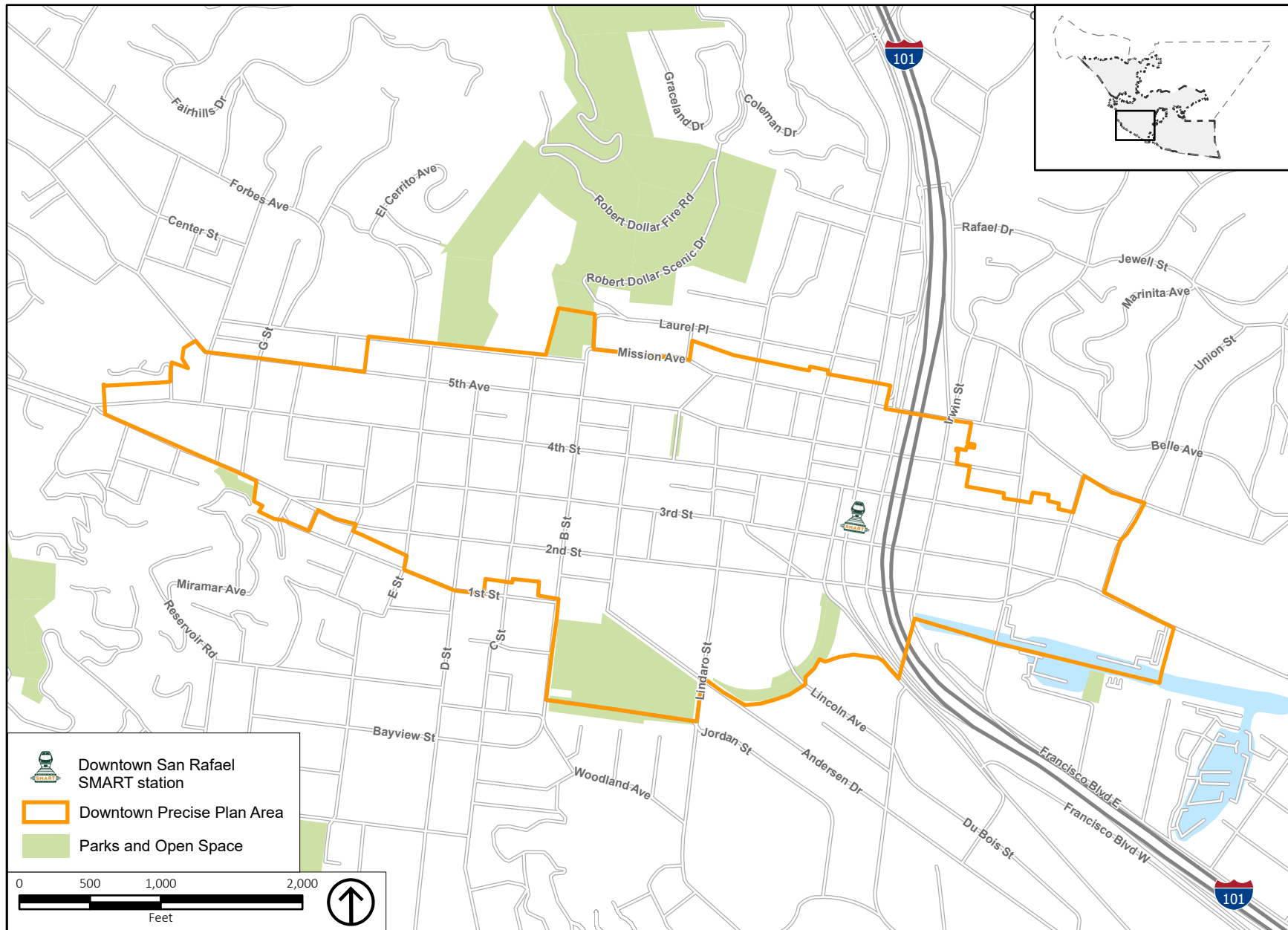
The public outreach and participation process for the proposed General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan began in December 2017 when the City Council appointed a 24-member Steering Committee with 22 alternates to fill committee positions in the event of an absence. The Steering Committee met 25 times throughout the process. The Steering Committee served as a sounding board for City staff on draft policies and programs and was responsible for reviewing and commenting on draft materials and serving as a liaison to the community. Steering Committee meetings generally occurred on the second Wednesday of each month from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The Committee conducted business through four virtual subcommittees during the first two months of the COVID-19 pandemic, and then as a full group again via public Zoom webinars through June 2020. A Downtown Precise Plan subcommittee continued to meet through July and August 2020.

City staff also convened community workshops on the proposed General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan, including formal meetings at community centers and informal "pop-up" workshops at farmers markets and the Downtown Art Walk. The outreach program included surveys, storefront exhibits, youth participation exercises, and attendance at numerous meetings of neighborhood associations, civic organizations, and City boards and commissions. A parallel, Spanish-language, outreach program also was included. A multiday design charrette was held for the Downtown Precise Plan. The City maintains two websites for the proposed project. One website is the [www.sanrafael2040.org](http://www.sanrafael2040.org), and the other is [www.cityofsanrafael.org/2040](http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/2040). Both websites offered opportunities for the public to weigh in on key issues and download information about the project and will continue to be available throughout the environmental review and project approval process. City staff also solicited input from other public agencies, such as the County of Marin, local school districts, the Transportation Authority of Marin, and cities adjacent to San Rafael.

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<sup>5</sup> The Miracle Mile is a historic section of road (Red Hill Avenue) that runs between the cities of San Rafael and San Anselmo.

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Source: ESRI, 2017; County of Marin, 2009; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2019.

Figure 3-3  
Downtown Precise Plan Area

## **3.6 PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The primary purposes of the proposed project are to plan for the growth and conservation of San Rafael over a 20-year time horizon and to achieve a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous future for all residents. Objectives related specifically to growth include focusing growth in the Downtown Precise Plan Area, capitalizing on transit opportunities in and around Priority Development Areas, and streamlining future development that is consistent with the proposed project. This requires extending the buildout horizon to year 2040 and updating goals, policies, and programs so that they meet current State requirements and community priorities. As part of this process, the City drafted 2040 Guiding Principles, which build upon the framework of the vision, guiding principles, and goals of the current General Plan 2020 and reflect the community’s desires for San Rafael’s future. The draft 2040 Guiding Principles, as shown on Figure 3-4, will serve as the project objectives for the EIR.

## **3.7 PROJECT COMPONENTS**

### **3.7.1 GENERAL PLAN 2040**

The proposed project updates the General Plan 2020 goals, policies, and programs to reflect current conditions, issues, resources, and community perspectives. For example, changes are needed to address the evolving state of the city and region and to cover global issues such as climate change and emerging transportation technology. The update also incorporates regional forecasts for 2040 that extend the planning horizon forward by 20 years.

#### **3.7.1.1 GENERAL PLAN 2040 OUTLINE**

The proposed General Plan 2040, like the existing General Plan 2020, includes the eight mandatory elements (denoted with a “\*” in the list below) and five optional elements. The proposed outline for the General Plan 2040 includes 16 chapters (13 of which are “elements”) organized in five sections:

##### **Toward a Thriving City**

1. Introduction
2. Planning Framework
3. Guiding Principles

##### **Our Built Environment**

4. Land Use Element\*
5. Neighborhoods Element
6. Community Design and Preservation Element

##### **Our Natural Environment**

7. Conservation and Climate Change Element\*
8. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element\*
9. Safety and Resilience Element\*
10. Noise Element\*

##### **Connecting the City**

11. Mobility Element\*
12. Community Services and Infrastructure Element
13. Arts, Culture, and Preservation Element

##### **Opportunity for All**

14. Economic Vitality Element
15. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Element\*
16. Housing Element\*

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Source: City San Rafael, 2018.

Figure 3-4  
Draft 2040 General Plan Guiding Principles

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**3.7.1.2 GENERAL PLAN GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

Each element of the proposed General Plan 2040 contains background information and a series of goals, policies, and programs. The following provides a description of goals, policies, and programs and explains the relationship between them:

- A *goal* is a description of what San Rafael wants to achieve—the end state.
- A *policy* is a specific or general statement of principle, positions, or approaches on a particular issue or subject. Use of “must” or “shall” (or verbs like “require”) indicate mandatory requirements, and “should” or “may” (or verbs like “support” or “encourage”) indicate case-by-case flexibility, although parameters can be set for such statements.
- A *program* is an action, procedure, or activity by the City to achieve a specific policy and/or goal.

A comprehensive list of proposed goals, policies, and programs is provided Appendix B, Proposed General Plan Goals, Policies, and Programs, of this Draft EIR. As previously described, the proposed General Plan 2040 builds off the current General Plan 2020 by incorporating similar topics and revising or adding new, goals, policies, and programs that are required by State law. Table 3-1 provides a list of the State laws that are addressed in the General Plan 2040, a summary of the purpose of the law, and the element that addresses the law.

**TABLE 3-1 GENERAL PLAN 2040 UPDATES REQUIRED BY STATE LAW**

<b>Law</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>General Plan 2040 Element</b>
SB 743	Changes the standard method of measuring transportation impacts from level of service to vehicle miles traveled; encourages transit-oriented development; reduces greenhouse gas emissions.	Land Use and Mobility
SB 18 and AB 52	Require consultation with Native American tribes as part of a general plan update and for any subsequent project which could have the potential to impact Native American resources.	Community Design and Preservation
SB 244 and SB 1000	Requires the integration of equity into the General Plan process. SB 244 requires special consideration of lower income unincorporated areas within a city’s planning area, and Senate Bill 1000 requires General Plans to include an element with environmental justice policies.	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
AB 1358	Requires “complete streets” be addressed in a general plan which considers the needs of all modes of travel.	Mobility
AB 32 and SB 375	Addresses GHG reduction largely implemented on the State and regional levels.	Mobility
SB 379	Requires a general plan to address climate resiliency.	Safety
AB 2140	Requires a link between a city’s local hazard mitigation plan and the general plan.	Safety
SB 1241	Requires that certain maps (e.g., high or very-high fire hazard severity zones) be included in the general plan and that California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection review safety elements to ensure policies provide adequate wildfire protection.	Safety
AB 1739	Requires that general plans consider impacts on groundwater and plans for groundwater basins.	Conservation and Climate Change
AB 162	Requires general plans to identify areas subject to flooding using the latest flood hazard information, and to prohibit new housing in areas that are not adequately protected from flooding.	Conservation and Climate Change

Notes: SB = Senate Bill; AB = Assembly Bill

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In addition to requirements of State laws, the goals, policies, and programs in the proposed General Plan 2040 are influenced by community input, best practices, and emerging issues (e.g., sea level rise, autonomous vehicles, and green infrastructure). An overview of major changes to the goals, policies, and programs in each General Plan 2040 element is provided below.

- **Land Use Element.** This element is now organized into three goals rather than two. The third goal and associated policies and programs are from the Neighborhoods Element of General Plan 2020. Growth management policies have been updated to incorporate climate change considerations and transportation policies on vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Policies encouraging innovative and alternative housing types have been added. New policies recognize the needs of older adults. Policies on neighborhood centers have been updated to reflect diminishing demand for retail space and allowances for other uses such as housing.
- **Neighborhoods Element.** This element has been reorganized from General Plan 2020. Whereas General Plan 2020 only listed 30 neighborhoods alphabetically with policies for each, the proposed General Plan 2040 groups neighborhoods into five consolidated planning areas (Downtown, Central San Rafael, North San Rafael, Southeast San Rafael/Canal, and Point San Pedro) and presents neighborhood discussions under each. The neighborhood policies themselves have been comprehensively updated based on input from neighborhood groups and data about the current state of each area. New issues such as sea level rise and equity are covered. Downtown policies (which reflected the 1993 Downtown Vision) have been replaced with policies that reflect the new Downtown Precise Plan.
- **Community Design and Preservation Element.** This element has been reorganized. The element now addresses five primary goals: a beautiful city, a sense of place, an improved public realm, quality construction and design, and protected cultural heritage. Historic preservation policies have been amplified and expanded, and tribal resource protection policies have been added. The policies emphasize protection of natural features, views, and the waterfront; improvements to gateways and corridors; and upgrades to plazas, public spaces, and streetscapes. This element also covers street trees, landscaping, and wayfinding signage more comprehensively than General Plan 2020 did. Principles of good design have been incorporated. Policies reflects recent Senate Bill 35 directives for objective design standards.<sup>6</sup>
- **Conservation and Climate Change Element.** This element has been updated to incorporate new policies related to energy and water conservation, and to weave in policies that were formerly in the Sustainability Element and the Air and Water Quality Element. Wetland and hillside preservation policies have been carried forward from General Plan 2020. Creek policies, urban forestry, and invasive plant removal policies have been strengthened. A light-pollution policy has been added. Policies on water quality and urban runoff have been updated to reflect best practices in green infrastructure and current stormwater management programs. Goals on sustainable energy management and reduced GHG emissions have been added, with policies and targets from the City's

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<sup>6</sup> Senate Bill 35 (SB 35) became effective on January 1, 2018. It enacted Government Code Section 65913.4 to require cities and counties to use a streamlined ministerial review process for qualifying multifamily housing developments that comply with the jurisdiction's objective planning standards, provide specified levels of affordable housing, and meet other specific requirements.



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most recent CCAP incorporated. A “crosswalk” is included showing how climate change is addressed throughout the proposed General Plan 2040.

- **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element.** This element was two separate elements in General Plan 2020—the former Open Space Element and the former Parks and Recreation Element. The two have been combined to allow a more holistic look at the relationship between active and passive parks and their collective role in meeting the needs of San Rafael residents. The now-titled “Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element” introduces and applies a new park classification system, establishes updated levels of service (4.0 acres per 1,000 residents), and expands the policy foundation for park and recreation planning in the city. Policies on recreational programming have been added, with a focus on equitable access for persons of all ages. Much of the open space policy language is carried forward from General Plan 2020, with updates to reflect a greater emphasis on fire safety and open space management rather than land acquisition, which was emphasized in General Plan 2020.
- **Safety and Resilience Element.** This element has been updated and expanded to include key policies and strategies from the local hazard mitigation plan. The Safety and Resilience Element includes broad policies related to resilience as well as focused policies on geologic hazards, flood hazards, and wildfire prevention and response. A new goal and associated policies and programs on sea level rise has been added. Wildfire policies have been updated to reflect recent events and new planning documents such as the Wildfire Prevention and Protection Action Plan. A goal on hazardous materials has been added, with accompanying new policies. A new goal on emergency preparedness has been updated, with new policies included.
- **Noise Element.** This element has been updated, including a noise compatibility table that reflects State Office of Planning and Research guidance. Some of the existing policies have been carried forward, and several new policies have been added, including a vibration policy.
- **Mobility Element.** This element has been comprehensively overhauled to reflect an emphasis on multimodal travel, GHG reduction, and complete streets. The regional leadership goal has been carried forward and augmented with new policies on transportation technology and innovation. The previous goal of “mobility for all users” has been expanded to address efficiency and accessibility. The level of service policy from General Plan 2020 has been updated to “de-couple” level of service from CEQA review. The list of proposed mobility improvements has been updated. A new goal has been added on clean transportation, including new VMT reduction targets, transportation demand management strategies, and low carbon transportation policies. A new goal has been added promoting transit, with policies focusing on collaboration between the City and different service providers (other agencies outside the City’s control). The proposed General Plan 2040 carries forward goals for connectivity, walking and cycling, and parking. Policies have been updated to reflect best practices and recent planning initiatives such as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2018).
- **Community Services and Infrastructure Element.** The former Infrastructure and Governance Elements from General Plan 2020 have been consolidated and expanded into the Community Services and Infrastructure Element in the proposed General Plan 2040, combining updated infrastructure policies with policies on schools and libraries from the now-dissolved Governance Element and with policies that were formerly in the Safety and Resilience Element. Infrastructure policies have been expanded to address telecommunications, energy reliability, and solid waste reduction policies that were

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formerly in the Sustainability Element. A goal on sound municipal financial practices has been expanded to emphasize cost-benefit analysis in decision-making.

- **Arts, Culture, and Preservation Element.** This element from General Plan 2020 has been carried forward and expanded, with a greater focus on social equity, inclusion, economic development, and the needs of the local arts community.
- **Economic Vitality Element.** This element has been reorganized to include an expanded focus on partnerships, relationship building between the City and business community, and the importance of economic diversification and resilience. New policies respond to the changing market for retail space, the role of Downtown, the need for workforce housing, and job training needs among San Rafael residents. The proposed General Plan 2040 includes new policies for major economic sectors, such as office, industrial, hospitality, health care, and government. Policies on the quality of the City’s business areas are mostly carried forward, with an emphasis on creating a supportive environment for business and improving infrastructure and access.
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Element.** This is a new element of the proposed General Plan 2040. It includes six goals, beginning with the goal of authentic and inclusive community participation in government affairs. Some of the policies are carried forward from the former General Plan 2020 Governance Element, and others are new. A second goal is to support healthy communities and environmental justice, with new policies emphasizing access to health care, food, parks and open space, and safe spaces for physical activity in lower-income communities. A new goal on housing stability has been added that addresses the prevention of displacement, provisions of healthy homes, and reduction of overcrowding in lower income areas. A new goal on equitable service delivery emphasizes investment in capital facilities and expanded municipal services in lower income areas, recognizing higher levels of need and more limited access to services. A new goal on education and economic opportunity focuses on removing barriers to learning and career advancement. Finally, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Element includes the goal of being an “age friendly” community, where older adults can enjoy a high quality of life and access to services and secure housing.
- **Housing Element.** This element of General Plan 2020 is unchanged in General Plan 2040, except for minor edits required to maintain internal consistency. As noted earlier, the Housing Element will be comprehensively updated in 2021 in accordance with State requirements.

### 3.7.1.3 GENERAL PLAN LAND USE CATEGORIES

The discussion below describes the changes to the General Plan land use categories that are proposed as part of the proposed General Plan 2040. Collectively, these changes may influence the types and intensities of land uses permitted on different sites in the city.

#### **Residential Density: Change from Gross to Net**

The proposed General Plan 2040 would change how residential density is measured—from “gross” density to “net” density. This shift from gross density to net density is proposed because most of the City’s future development is expected on small infill sites, and so that the General Plan land use designations align with Zoning Districts.

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These two metrics are described as follows:

- **Gross density** is the total number of units per acre in a given area that includes the internal streets, easements, common open spaces, and undevelopable areas. Using gross density as a measurement for residential density is appropriate for cities that are growing outward through the addition of large single-family subdivision tracts that construct new roads and set aside land for public parks, schools, and amenities.
- **Net density** is the total number of units per acre on a given site on which buildings may be constructed and excludes streets, easements, common open spaces, and other undevelopable areas. Using net density for calculating residential density is appropriate for cities like San Rafael, which are largely built out.

Table 3-2 shows a comparison of the gross and net density by land use designation. Although net density is typically 20 to 30 percent higher than gross density, as shown in Table 3-2, the change would not increase the allowable number of units on a given site, and the measurements are roughly equivalent in number of allowed units.

**TABLE 3-2 COMPARISON OF GROSS AND NET DENSITIES FOR GENERAL PLAN RESIDENTIAL LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

<b>Residential Land Use Designations</b>	<b>Gross Density (Units per Gross Acre)</b>	<b>Net Density (Units per Net Acre)</b>	<b>Corresponding Zoning Districts</b>
Hillside Residential Resource	0.1 to 0.5	Less than 0.5	R2a
Hillside Residential	0.5 to 2.0	0.5 to 2.2	R1a, R20
Large Lot Residential	0.5 to 2.0	0.5 to 2.2	R1a, R20
Low Density Residential	2.0 to 6.5	2.2 to 8.7	R10, R7.5, R5
Medium Density Residential	6.5 to 15	8.7 to 21.8	MR5, MR3, MR2.5, MR2
High Density Residential	15 to 32	21.8 to 43.6	HR1.8, HR1.5, HR1

Source: City of San Rafael, 2020.

**Land Use Designation Consolidation**

The proposed General Plan 2040 would consolidate General Plan land use designations to improve consistency between the proposed General Plan and the existing zoning regulations and to streamline General Plan 2040. The proposed General Plan 2040 would reduce the total number of land use designations from 28 in the existing General Plan 2020 to 19 in General Plan 2040.

The proposed consolidation of land use designations is shown in Table 3-3, and a complete list of the 19 land use designations, including the existing (unchanged) and the proposed new land use designations is shown in the following section under subheading “Land Use Designations.” As shown in Table 3-3, no changes to the Zoning Districts are required as a result of the land use designation consolidation except the proposed rezoning associated with the Downtown Precise Plan, which is discussed in Section 3.7.2, Downtown Precise Plan, below.

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**TABLE 3-3 PROPOSED LAND USE DESIGNATION CONSOLIDATION**

General Plan 2020	General Plan 2040	Discussion
<b>Office</b>		
Office	Office Mixed Use	This land use designation would include multiple zoning districts, and the three existing office designations would continue to be used on the City's Zoning Map to distinguish the mix of uses that are appropriate in a given Office Mixed Use area. No rezoning is required.
Office-Retail		
Office-Residential		
<b>Park</b>		
Park	Park, Recreation, and Open Space	This land use designation would allow areas with the same physical characteristics to have the same land use designation. This proposed land use designation would retain the existing Park/Open Space (P/OS) Zoning District. No rezoning is required.
Open Space		
<b>Light Industrial</b>		
Lindaro Mixed Use	Light Industrial-Office	The 13-acre Lindaro Mixed Use land use designation on Lindaro and Jordan Streets would change to the existing Light Industrial-Office land use designation because the Lindaro Mixed Use designation allows the same uses in the Light Industrial-Office designation, except that live-work development is permitted and is not permitted in the other industrial designations (Lindaro Mixed Use or Industrial). The proposed change to the Light Industrial-Office definition states that it includes multiple Zoning Districts, including one intended for the Jordan and Lindaro areas, where live-work is permitted. No rezoning is required.
Light Industrial-Office		
<b>Downtown</b>		
Hetherton Office	Downtown Mixed Use	The proposed Downtown Mixed Use land use designation would apply to all of properties in the Downtown Precise Plan Area except the properties with the Medium Density Residential and High Density Residential land use designations in the vicinity of Latham Street and Hayes Street, and the areas designated as Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.
Lindaro Mixed Use		
Lindaro Office		
Second/Third Mixed Use		The allowable uses and intensities in this land use designation would be established by the Downtown Precise Plan and Downtown Code that is discussed in Section 3.7.2.4, Downtown Precise Plan Zoning Amendment, of this chapter.
Fourth Street Commercial Core		A single color is used for the Downtown Mixed-Use area on the General Plan 2040 Land Use Map (see Figure 3-5). The Downtown Mixed Use designation also would apply to a small number of parcels with other General Plan land use designations, including Hillside Resource Residential, Low-Density Residential, High Density Residential, General Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, Retail Office, Office, Residential Office, Park, Public-Quasi Public, Industrial, and Marine-related. These land use designations will continue to appear on the 2040 Land Use Map in other parts of San Rafael.
Fifth/Mission Residential/Office		
West End Village		

Source: City of San Rafael, 2020.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Land Use Designations

The proposed General Plan 2040 includes the following three new land use designations:

- **Downtown Mixed Use.** The proposed Downtown Mixed Use land use designation corresponds to properties in the Downtown Precise Plan Area. It includes the highest development densities and intensities in the city, and contains a mix of housing, office, retail, service, and public land uses. Development in the Downtown Precise Plan Area is guided by the Downtown Precise Plan and associated Downtown Code, which includes further detail on building form, development intensity, and allowable uses. The maximum floor area ratio (FAR)<sup>7</sup> is based on a sliding scale that varies with height, starting at 3.0 FAR. There is no residential density limit in this land use designation; however, height limits and other development standards define the maximum building envelope on each site with this designation. These standards are discussed in more detail in Section 3.7.2.4 below.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.** This land use designation denotes land that is used for parks, recreation, and open space, including City, County, and State parks; common open space within private development; cemeteries; and areas acquired for resource conservation, hazard reduction, and passive recreation such as hiking. Permitted uses include athletic fields, sports facilities, civic buildings with a primarily recreational or social function, and leisure-oriented uses such as picnic areas, boat slips, and tot lots. Land with this designation is further classified in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element of the General Plan 2040 as “improved” or “natural.”
- **Sea Level Rise Overlay.** The General Plan 2040 land use map also includes a “Sea Level Rise Overlay.” This boundary appears on the Land Use Map as a solid line showing the extent of the area that would be inundated during a 100-year flood when sea levels have risen to 2050 levels forecasted by. Proposed goals, policies, and programs in the General Plan 2040 would provide direction on ways to mitigate future flood hazards in this area.

In addition to the changes listed above, the proposed General Plan 2040 would carry forward the same land use designations from the existing General Plan 2020:

- **Residential.** Hillside Resource Residential, Hillside Residential, Very Low Density Residential, Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, and High Density Residential.
- **Mixed Use.** Community Commercial Mixed Use, Neighborhood Commercial Mixed Use, Office Mixed Use, and Marine Related Mixed Use.
- **Industrial.** General Industrial and Light Industrial/Office.
- **Other.** Public/Quasi-Public, Mineral Resources, Conservation, Airport/Recreation, Water, and Undesignated Areas.

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<sup>7</sup> Standards of building intensity for non-residential uses are stated as maximum floor-area ratios (FAR). FAR is a ratio of the building square footage permitted on a lot to the square footage of the lot. For example, on a site with 10,000 square feet of land area, a FAR of 1.0 will allow 10,000 square feet of building floor area to be built. On the same site, a FAR of 2.0 would allow 20,000 square feet of floor area. This could take the form of a two-story building with 100 percent lot coverage, or a four-story building with 50 percent lot coverage. A FAR of 0.4 would allow 4,000 square feet of floor area on a 10,000 square-foot lot. In some cases, FAR may also be used to regulate residential development, allowing flexibility and recognizing variations in dwelling unit size.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 3.7.1.4 GENERAL PLAN LAND USE MAP AMENDMENTS

The proposed General Plan 2040 would also include revisions to the land use map recommended by City staff that would largely consist of expanding specific land uses, adjusting the map to reflect existing conditions and zoning patterns, and incorporating recently adopted plans. Because these locations are currently developed and the amendments are being made to correct existing errors, these amendments would not result in new development potential at these locations. The following discussion describes the various revisions that are proposed as part of General Plan 2040.

- **Correcting Scrivener’s Errors.** A “scrivener’s error” is a land use map designation that is incorrect. These changes are minor and likely occurred when the General Plan 2020 Land Use Map was transferred from paper files to a digital format.
- **Expanding Mapping of Public/Quasi-Public Land Uses.** General Plan 2020 and General Plan 2040 both have a Public/Quasi-Public land use designation, which includes government or quasi-public buildings and facilities, utilities, and similar facilities owned by public and nonprofit agencies. A few public or quasi-public properties, including public school campuses, were not mapped as Public/Quasi-Public land use designations in General Plan 2020 but would be mapped as such in the proposed General Plan 2040.
- **Expanding Mapping of Park and Open Space Land Uses.** Park and permanent open space acreage in San Rafael have expanded since General Plan 2020. There are also a few existing parks and permanent open spaces that were shown with other designations in General Plan 2020. The proposed General Plan 2040 would include these locations on the General Plan 2040 land use map.
- **Adjusting to Reflect Actual Uses and Densities.** These proposed changes are essentially “housekeeping” amendments that align the proposed General Plan 2040 with existing conditions. The proposed General Plan 2040 provides an opportunity to apply a designation that better reflects the current and future use of these parcels.
- **Adjusting to Reflect Zoning and Parcel Patterns.** These proposed changes reflect areas along the “seam” where different designations abut each other. The amendments adjust the General Plan land use map to reflect the existing uses, parcel patterns, and zoning more accurately.
- **Changing Density to Reflect Site Constraints.** These proposed changes are for two parcels to change from Residential-Low Density to Hillside Residential because of the physical characteristics of the sites.
- **Changing for Consistency with Civic Center Station Area Plan.** These changes are proposed for consistency with the adopted 2013 *Civic Center Station Area Plan*.
- **Formalizing Prior Council Resolutions.** Several General Plan map amendments have been adopted through City Council resolutions between 2004 and 2019. Some of the changes already appear on the City’s official General Plan 2020 land use map and some do not. The proposed General Plan 2040 would show all previously approved amendments.

Appendix C of this Draft EIR, Staff Recommended Land Use Map Changes, provides a detailed description of these General Plan amendments.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

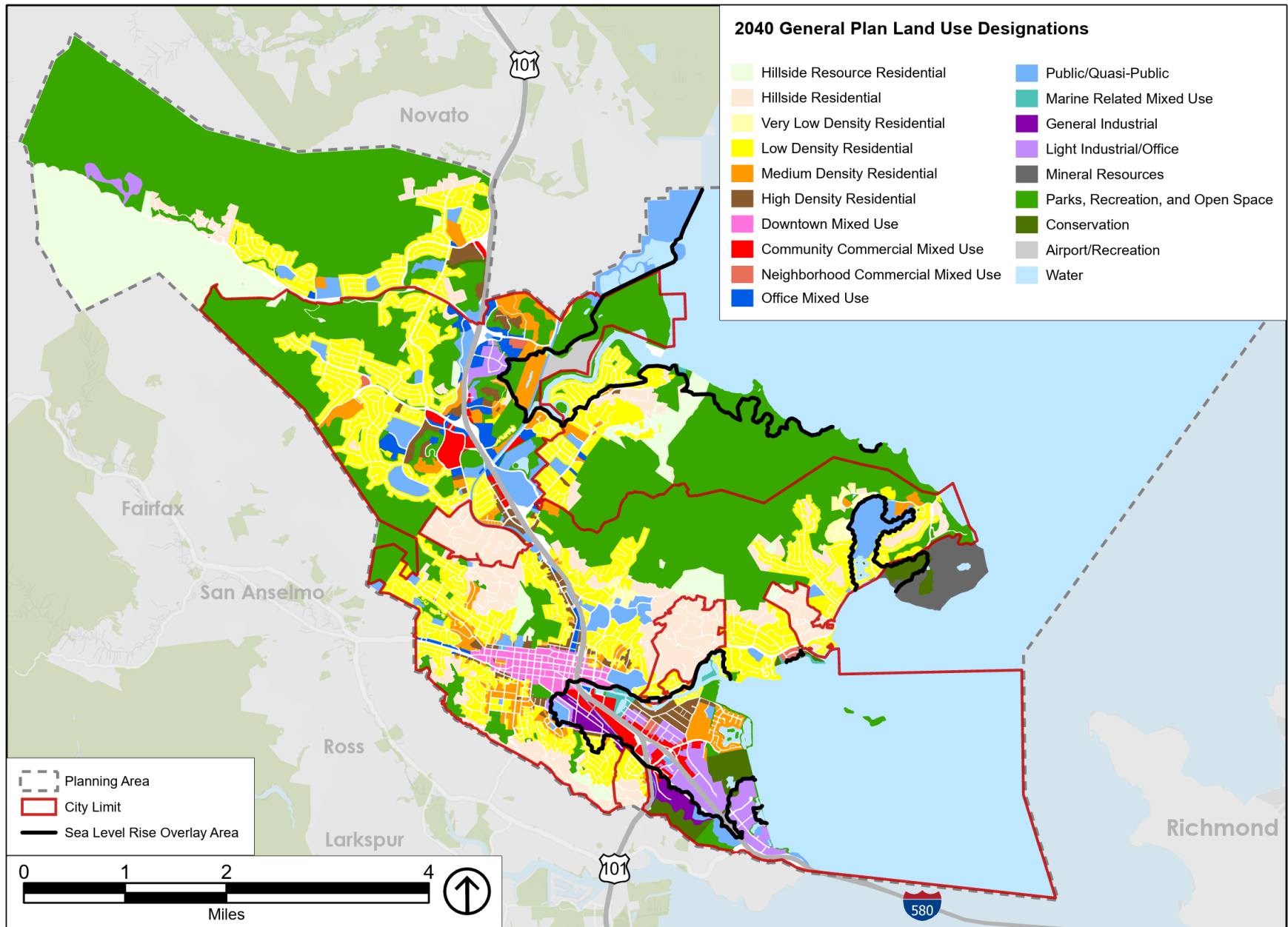
In addition to the amendments described above, which were proposed by City staff, the proposed General Plan 2040 would include amendments formally requested by property owners. The General Plan Update process provided an opportunity for property owners to petition the City for changes to their current General Plan Land Use Map designations. On April 22, 2019, the City of San Rafael issued a “Call for Amendments” notice to a list of property owners who had previously expressed interest in this opportunity. In addition to sending this notice, the City also prepared a pamphlet and press release advertising the opportunity. Application materials were posted to the project website. A 10-week deadline was provided for amendment submittals. During this time, four formal requests were received for General Plan land use map amendment, and two requests for text changes to General Plan narrative and policies. Staff communicated with the applicants following the June 30, 2019, deadline to discuss each request. The amendments were considered by the Planning Commission and City Council at noticed public hearings, with staff recommendations presented at each hearing. Based on these hearings, the following amendments were accepted and are included in the proposed General Plan 2040:

- **3301 Kerner Boulevard and 150 Bellam Boulevard.** This proposed amendment includes two parcels, a 0.91-acre parcel at the corner of Kerner and Bellam Boulevards and a 0.97-acre parcel across the street. The 3301 Kerner site is a three-story, 25,200-square-foot office building constructed in 1983. The site at 150 Bellam includes a restaurant, a travel agency, a recording studio, and several small office tenants. The existing General Plan land use designation on both sites is Light Industrial/Office. The sites are proposed to change to Community Commercial Mixed Use. Office buildings are permitted in both designations, and there would be no change to the status of the existing uses if the proposed amendment is accepted. Community Commercial Mixed Use is more consistent with the character of the Bellam Boulevard corridor than Light Industrial/Office. The Bellam Boulevard corridor is characterized by retail shops, restaurants, and customer-facing services. The proposed new designation would provide the flexibility to convert the sites to housing in the future.
- **86 Culloden Park Road.** This is a 1.89-acre property in the Fair Hills neighborhood and has a split General Plan land use designation. The property consists of two legal parcels with the same owner; the larger 1.19-acre parcel has a Low Density Residential land use designation, and the smaller 0.70-acre parcel has a Hillside Resource Residential designation. The property is also in two Zoning Districts (R-20 and PD 1729). The proposed General Plan 2040 would change the smaller parcel’s land use designation to Residential-Low Density to match the larger one.

**3.7.1.5 GENERAL PLAN 2040 LAND USE MAP**

The General Plan land use map demonstrates the location of each land use designation, which is a required component of general plans. The General Plan land use map has been used since the 1960s to illustrate the proposed distribution, location, and extent of housing, businesses, industries, open space, recreation, education, and public buildings within the horizon of each general plan. The General Plan land use map reflects a combination of existing conditions and different or more intense uses in locations where change is desired in the next 20 years. The proposed General Plan 2040 land use map is shown on Figure 3-5.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Source: ESRI, 2017; County of Marin, 2009; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2019.

Figure 3-5  
 Proposed General Plan 2040 Land Use Map



## **3.7.2 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN**

Concurrent with the proposed General Plan 2040, the City prepared the Downtown Precise Plan to guide future Downtown growth through 2040. The Downtown Precise Plan implements the community's vision to create opportunities for reinvestment and future development that is feasible, predictable, and consistent with the community's priorities and aspirations. The Downtown Precise Plan refines existing policies and sets design direction for a variety of topics in coordination with other approved plans and policy documents. The Downtown Precise Plan identifies growth and development opportunities; provides the principles, policies, and strategies to guide investment, and proposes a form-based code to replace the current zoning standards. Once the Downtown Precise Plan is adopted and the San Rafael Zoning Ordinance is amended, the Downtown Precise Plan will serve as the overarching guiding document that provides strategies and recommendations for growth within the Downtown Precise Plan Area. A description of the Downtown Precise Plan is provided below.

### **3.7.2.1 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN ORGANIZATION**

The proposed Downtown Precise Plan is made up of nine chapters, plus a glossary and an appendix. The first three chapters provide the context for the document and describe existing conditions and guiding principles for future development. Chapter 4 provides a design vision for the entire Downtown Precise Plan Area and includes more specific guidance for four sub-areas within the boundary of the Downtown Precise Plan Area. Chapter 5 addresses historic preservation and Chapter 6 addresses circulation. Chapter 7 is an affordable housing and anti-displacement strategy. Chapter 8 covers implementation, including recommended capital projects and economic development strategies. Chapter 9 is the proposed Downtown Code. The appendices include a historic resources inventory, pro formas for prototypical developments,<sup>8</sup> a summary of community outreach efforts, and several reports prepared during the planning process.

### **3.7.2.2 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN PRINCIPLES**

The vision for the Downtown Precise Plan Area is of a vibrant, mixed-use destination with a strong sense of place and history, and one that provides a downtown experience that is varied and rich. The Downtown Precise Plan Area should have a clear hierarchy in its built form and open spaces, reflecting the role and intensity of uses in different parts of downtown. The Downtown Precise Plan Area should provide a setting that invites economic investment while preserving its built heritage and community character.

The design principles to achieve the vision for the Downtown Precise Plan emphasize the following:

- Creating a more distinct identity for each of the four sub-areas that comprise Downtown: West End Village, Downtown Core, Downtown Gateway, and the Montecito Commercial Area.

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<sup>8</sup> A pro forma analysis is a set of calculations that projects the financial return that a proposed real estate development is likely to create. It begins by describing the proposed project in quantifiable terms. It then estimates revenues that are likely to be obtained, the costs that will have to be incurred, and the net financial return that the developer expects to achieve. A pro forma is an analysis that developers use to decide whether to move forward with a project.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

- Focusing Downtown development on key opportunity sites, while addressing constraints associated with small parcels and fragmented property ownership.
- Reinforcing Downtown gateways, especially around the San Rafael Transit Center.
- Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety as well as transit access.
- Creating safe, attractive public spaces, including new plazas and improved parks.
- Improving the resilience of Downtown businesses to economic shifts and changes in market demand.
- Supporting new mixed-use infill development, with an emphasis on high-density housing.
- Preserving and adaptively reusing historic resources while encouraging compatible design on sites adjacent to such resources.
- Improving parking management.
- Avoiding the displacement of lower income households and ensuring that a substantial number of new housing units are affordable.
- Making Downtown more resilient to natural hazards, especially flooding and sea level rise.

### **3.7.2.3 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATION**

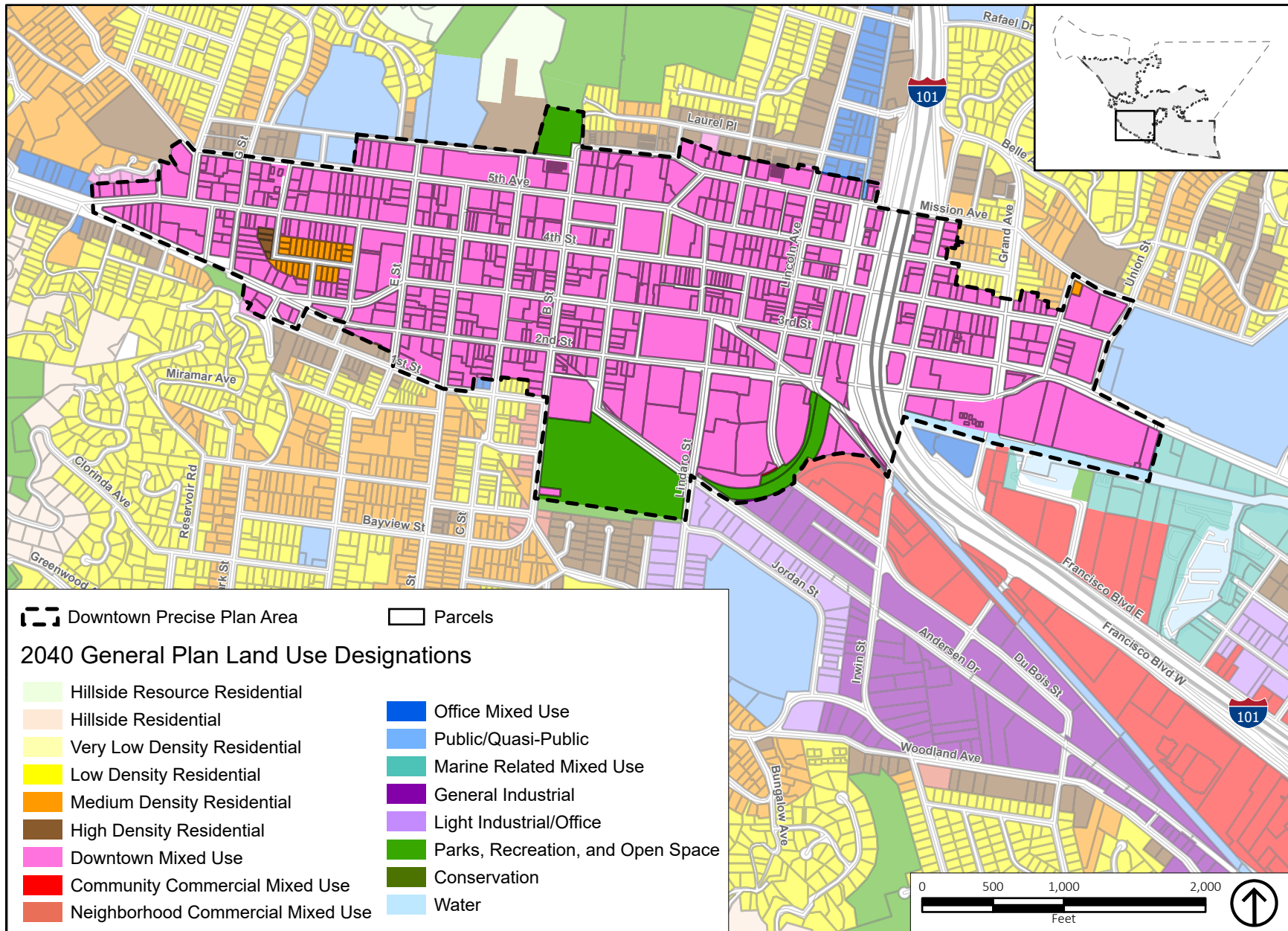
As previously discussed in Section 3.7.1.4, General Plan Land Use Map Amendments, the proposed land use designation for the Downtown Precise Plan Area would be Downtown Mixed Use for all properties in the Downtown Precise Plan Area except the properties with the Medium Density Residential and High Density Residential land use designations in the vicinity of Latham Street and Hayes Street and the areas designated as Parks, Recreation, and Open Space. Figure 3-6 shows the proposed land use designations for the Downtown Precise Plan Area and the surrounding properties.

### **3.7.2.4 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN ZONING AMENDMENT**

#### **Downtown Code**

The proposed Downtown Precise Plan includes the Downtown Code, which would amend SRMC Title 14, Zoning. The proposed Downtown Code would replace existing zoning regulations for all of the properties in the Downtown Precise Plan Area with the exception of a few parcels in the Latham Street area, which would retain their Multifamily Residential District ([Medium Density] 2,500 square feet per dwelling unit [MR2.5]) zoning designation, and the existing open space zoning designations. The Downtown Code consists of new zoning regulations that would be organized into a coordinated set of articles and incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance. Once adopted, should there be any conflict between the existing Zoning Ordinance and the Downtown Precise Plan, the Downtown Precise Plan shall prevail.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Source: ESRI, 2017; County of Marin, 2009; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2019.

Figure 3-6  
 Proposed Downtown Precise Plan Land use Map

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Downtown Code is form-based, which is a type of zoning that focuses on the specific “form and design” of new buildings—unlike the existing use-based code that focuses on the specific “activities and uses” of a new building. However, this does not mean that any type of development is allowed in the Downtown Precise Plan Area. The proposed Downtown Code describes the types of uses that are allowed in each zone, which are listed in Table 2.3.070.A. Uses listed in this table include categories such as automotive, commercial, entertainment, food, lodging, medical offices, offices, public assembly, public and quasi-public, residential, temporary uses, transportation, and services. Uses that are not listed are not allowed unless the Community Development Director determines that the proposed use is similar to a listed use. Otherwise, these uses are either allowed by-right, through Administrative Use Permits, Conditional Use Permits, or through a Zoning Administrator. The proposed Downtown Code is intended to reduce regulatory barriers to development and facilitate development by removing abstract and uncoordinated regulations of the existing use-based Zoning Code.

### Downtown Zones and Sub-zones

Form-based codes are described by “transects” that are designated with the letter “T” and an associated number that organizes the zones from the most natural setting (T1) to the most urban setting (T6). The transects applied to the Downtown Precise Plan are General Urban (T4) and Urban Center (T5).<sup>9</sup> The Downtown Code also includes sub-zones that are slight variations of base zones. The open sub-zone is denoted with a “-O” and is applied to allow more uses than the base zone allows in specific areas but within the same form and character of the base zone; and/or to more easily allow certain uses that are already allowed in the base zone. In addition, in this way, the open sub-zone can provide additional flexibility to lots at or near intersections that function or can function as a neighborhood node of nonresidential uses. The proposed Downtown Code includes the following base zones and sub-zones:

- **T4 Neighborhood (T4N).** The intent of this zone is to establish a walkable neighborhood environment of small-to-medium-footprint, moderate-intensity mixed-use buildings and housing choices, supporting and within short walking distance of neighborhood-serving retail and services. This zone provides a transition in scale between the city’s downtown core and adjacent residential neighborhoods. The sub-zone is T4N-O.
- **T4 Main Street (T4MS).** The intent of this zone is to establish a walkable, vibrant district of medium-to-large-footprint, moderate intensity, mixed-use buildings and housing choices, supporting neighborhood and community-serving ground floor shopping, food, and services, including civic, institutional, maker/craft/artisanal businesses (both indoor and outdoor). The sub-zone is T4MS-O.
- **T5 Neighborhood (T5N).** The intent of this zone is to establish a walkable neighborhood environment of large-footprint, high-intensity mixed-use buildings supporting and within short walking distance of neighborhood shopping, services, and transit. The sub-zone is T5N-O.
- **T5 Main Street (T5MS).** The intent of this zone is to establish a walkable, urban neighborhood environment with large-footprint, high-intensity mixed-use buildings in close proximity to the multimodal transit station, with neighborhood-serving shopping and services. This zone has no sub-zone.

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<sup>9</sup> For additional information visit the Form-Based Codes Institute website at [www.formbasedcodes.org](http://www.formbasedcodes.org).

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

In addition to the intent and sub-zones described above, the proposed Downtown Code identifies standards for each Zone that include topics such as building placement, encroachments, maximum envelopes, adjacency standards, building form, frontages, parking, and signage.

Figure 3-7a and Figure 3-7b show the proposed Zoning Map, which identifies specific urban design requirements, including further height limitations based on location and intended physical character. Figure 3-8 shows the maximum height envelope allowed in different parts of the Downtown Precise Plan Area (accounting for height bonuses). The Downtown Code includes a Limited Height Overlay that reduces the maximum height envelope on individual parcels that contain or are adjacent to historic resources. Table 3-4 summarizes the development standards for each Downtown Zone by maximum building height and building design, which includes the building form, placement, and frontages within each Downtown Zone in the Downtown Precise Plan Area. A comprehensive list of the regulations in the proposed Downtown Precise Plan’s associated Downtown Code is included in Chapter 9 of the proposed Downtown Precise Plan.

**TABLE 3-4 DOWNTOWN CODE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS SUMMARY**

Zones		Maximum Building Heights		Building Design		
Base <sup>a</sup>	Sub-zone <sup>b</sup>	Stories <sup>c</sup>	Height <sup>c</sup>	Form	Placement	Frontages
T4N	T4N-O	3 stories (base) 4 stories (bonus)	40 feet (base) 50 feet (bonus)	Primarily house-form (detached)	Small front/side setbacks	Residential and shopfront
T4MS	T4MS-O	4 stories (base) 6 stories (bonus)	50 feet (base) 70 feet (bonus)	Primarily block-form (attached)	Small to no front/side setbacks	Predominantly shopfront
T5N	T5N-O	4 stories (base) 6 stories (bonus)	50 feet (base) 70 feet (bonus)	Primarily block-form (mainly attached)	Small to no front/side setbacks	Residential and shopfront
T5MS	None	6 stories (base) 8 stories (bonus)	70 feet (base) 90 feet (bonus)	Primarily block-form (attached)	Small to no front setbacks, no side setbacks	Predominantly shopfront

Notes:

<sup>a</sup>. T4N = T4 Neighborhood, T4MS = T4 Main Street, T5N = T5 Neighborhood, and T5MS = T5 Main Street.

<sup>b</sup>. The open sub-zone is applied to allow more uses than the base zone allows but within the same form and character of the base zone; and/or to more easily allow certain uses that are already allowed in the base zone.

<sup>c</sup>. The “base” allowance reflects the maximum allowable height for structures in this zone. In the case that a height bonus is applied to proposed development, the “bonus” citation states the maximum allowed number of stories and feet in height. The building height bonuses are only permitted if the additional square footage is dedicated as affordable housing.

Source: Public Review Draft Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan, 2020.

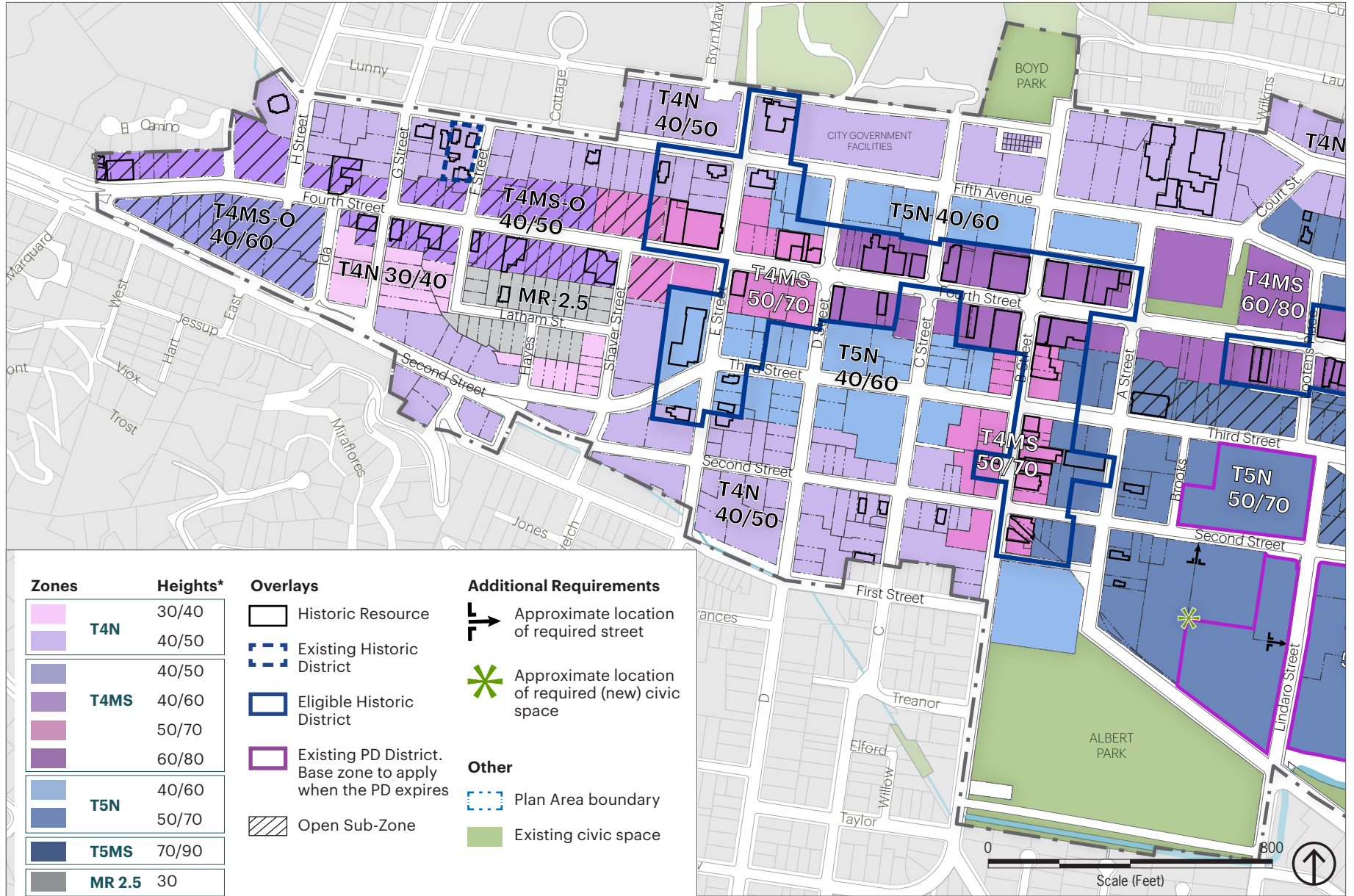
**3.7.2.5 DOWNTOWN SUB-AREAS**

As noted in the previous section, the Downtown Precise Plan would establish four sub-areas to recognize the existing character and development styles that define different portions of the Downtown Precise Plan Area. By distinguishing the four sub-areas, the Downtown Precise Plan’s development approach places a sharper focus on the special features and needs of each sub-area.

From west to east, the four sub-areas, shown on Figure 3-9, are referred to as the West End Village, Downtown Core, Downtown Gateway, and Montecito Commercial Area. Table 3-5 shows the growth potential for each sub-area.



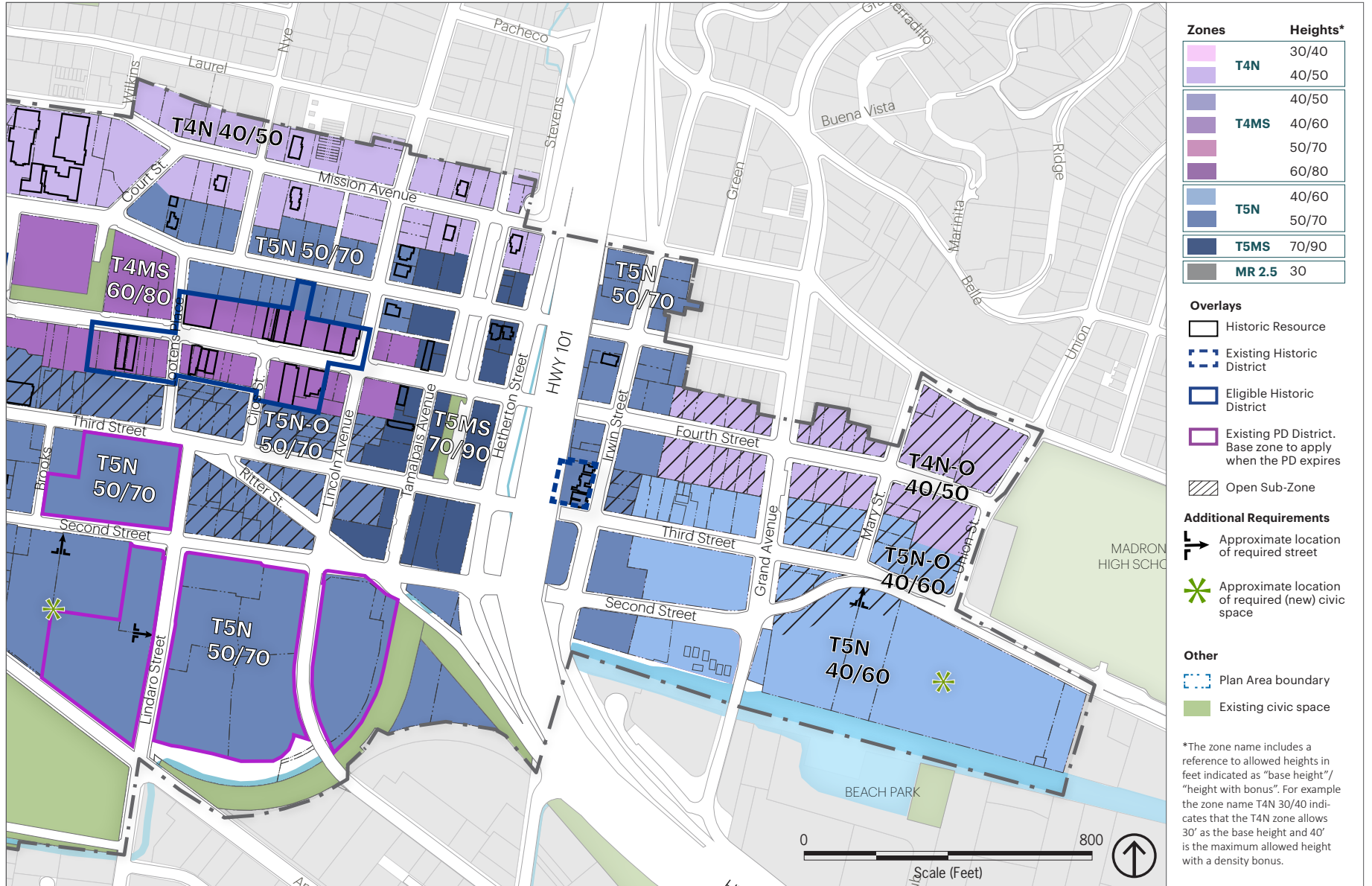
PROJECT DESCRIPTION



\*The zone name includes a reference to allowed heights in feet indicated as "base height"/ "height with bonus". For example the zone name T4N 30/40 indicates that the T4N zone allows 30' as the base height and 40' is the maximum allowed height with a density bonus.

Figure 3-7a  
Proposed Downtown Zoning Map

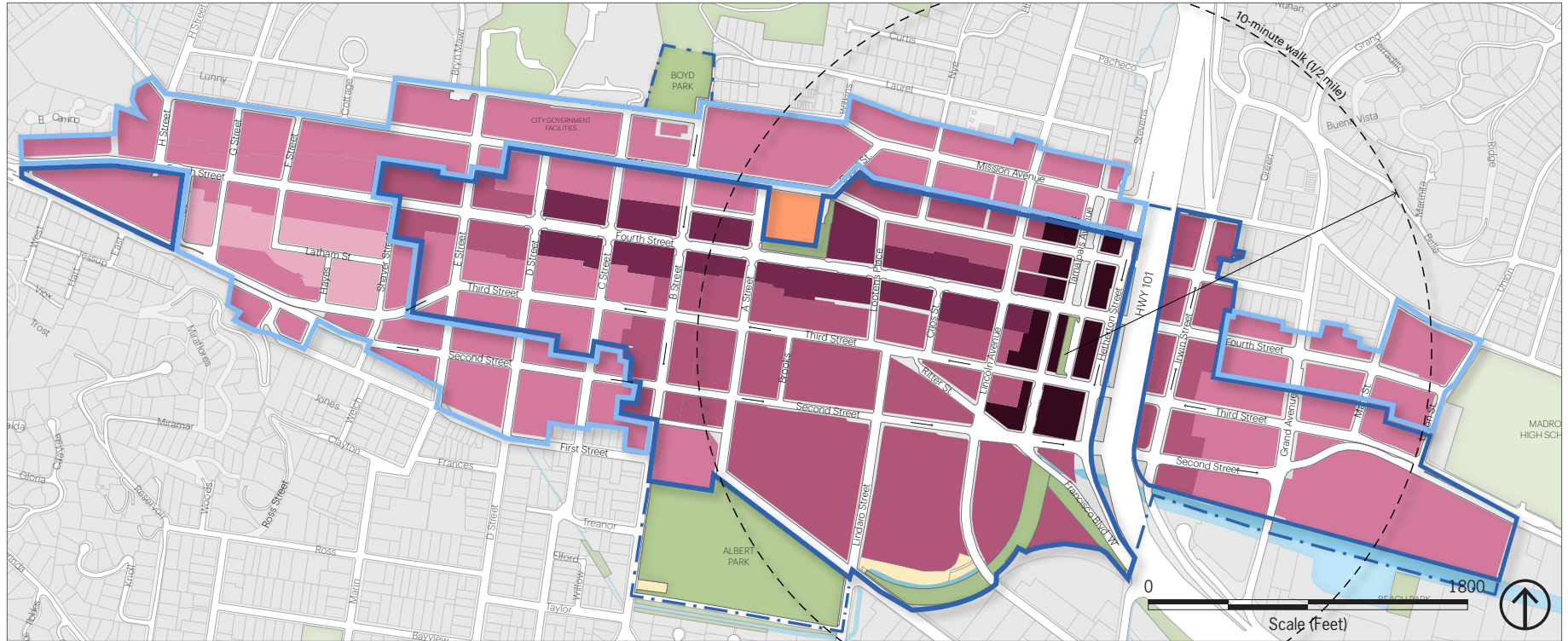
PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Source: Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan, 2020.

Figure 3-7b  
Proposed Downtown Zoning Map

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Source: Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan, 2020.

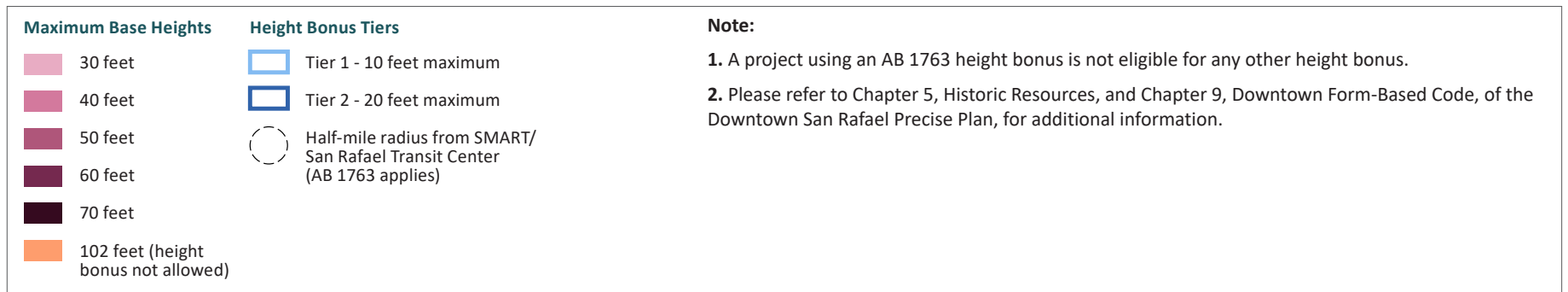
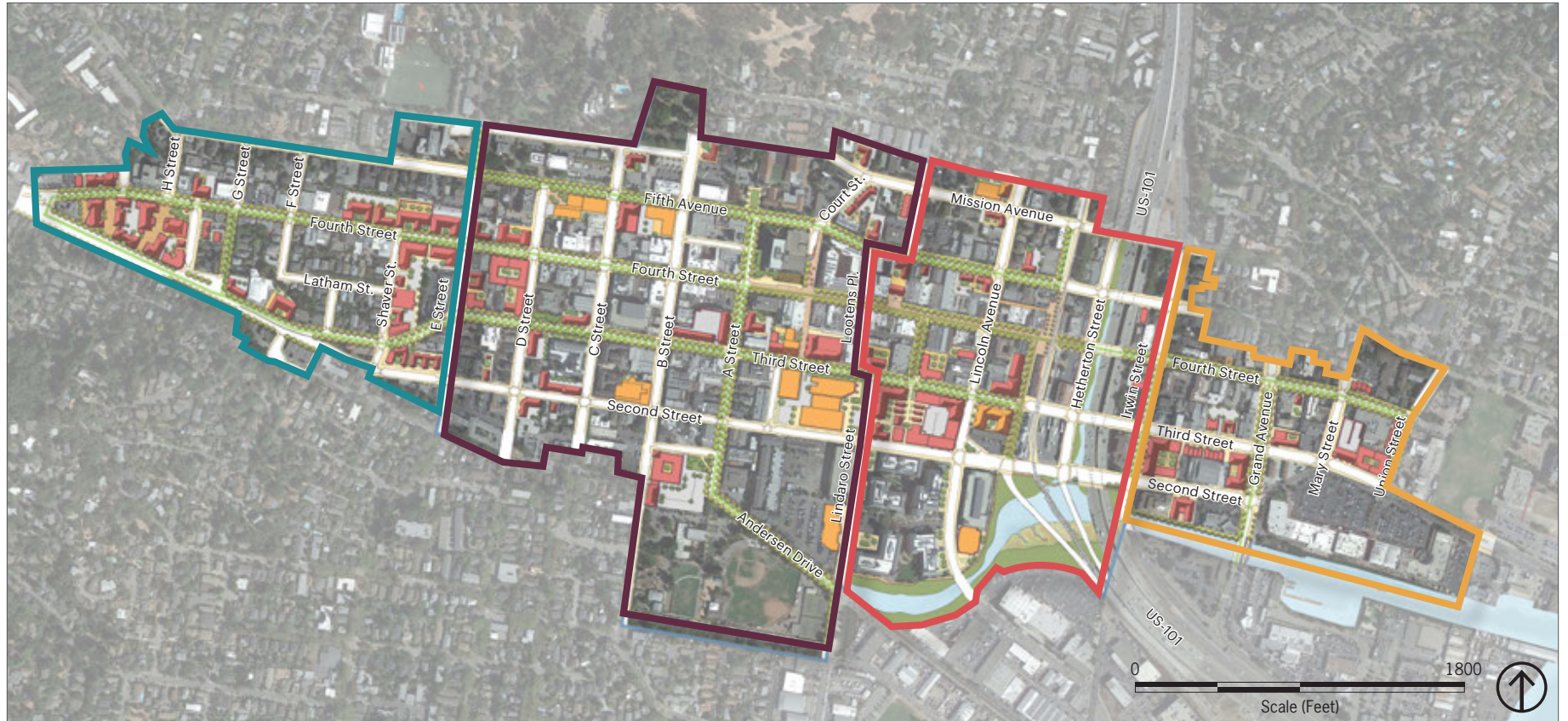








Figure 3-8  
Proposed Downtown Building Height Limits



PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Source: Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan, 2020.

- |   |                      |   |  |
|---|----------------------|---|--|
|  | Downtown Gateway     |  | Potential infill opportunity sites*    |
|  | Downtown Core        |  | Buildings entitled/ under construction |
|  | West End Village     |   |  |
|  | Montecito Commercial |   |  |

\* Potential infill projects shown here are conceptual and for illustrative purposes only

Figure 3-9  
Downtown Sub-Areas

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**TABLE 3-5 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BY SUB-AREA**

Downtown Sub-area	Residential		Non-Residential		General Plan Land Use	Zones/ Sub-zone	Maximum Height Limits
	Units <sup>a</sup>	Population <sup>b</sup>	Square Feet <sup>c</sup>	Jobs <sup>c</sup>			
<b>West End Village <sup>d</sup></b>	360	612	70,000	200	Downtown Mixed Use, Medium and High Density Residential	T4N, T4MS-O, MR 2.5	Six stories (70 feet)
<b>Downtown Core <sup>e</sup></b>	620	1,054	373,000	1,040	Downtown Mixed Use	T4N, T4MS, T5N, T5N-O	Six stories (70 feet)
<b>Downtown Gateway <sup>f</sup></b>	830	1,411	210,000	640	Downtown Mixed Use	T4N, T4MS, T5N, T5N-O, T5MS	Eight stories (90 feet)
<b>Montecito Commercial Area <sup>g</sup></b>	390	663	45,000	140	Downtown Mixed Use	T4N-O, T5N, T5N-O,	Six stories (70 feet)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,200 <sup>h</sup></b>	<b>3,740</b>	<b>698,000</b>	<b>2,020</b>			

Notes:

- <sup>a</sup>. An average residential unit size of 1,000 square feet (gross area) is applied in the Downtown Precise Plan Area.
  - <sup>b</sup>. An average population of 1.7 persons per household is applied in the Downtown Precise Plan Area.
  - <sup>c</sup>. Jobs are calculated by applying a rate of 1 job per 350 square feet of built-up area (gross area), with exceptions as needed for approved projects.
  - <sup>d</sup>. Includes several small, approved infill projects (Shaver Street, Fifth Avenue/ G Street).
  - <sup>e</sup>. Includes 930 Tamalpais, 67 approved units (Eden Housing), 41 units under const (815 B Street); BioMarin, 999 Third Street (207,000 square feet); 755 Lindero Corporate Center (72,000 square feet); AC Marriott (140 rooms); Public Safety Center (44,000 square feet).
  - <sup>f</sup>. Includes 77 approved assisted-living units at 800 Mission and 120 units at 703 Third Street.
  - <sup>g</sup>. Numbers for the Montecito Commercial Area sub-area do not consider the potential redevelopment of Montecito Plaza.
  - <sup>h</sup>. The 2,200 units correspond to 2,100 households (5 percent vacancy rate).
- Source: Public Review Draft Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan, 2020.

The vision and overall buildout intent for each sub-area is described as follows:

- **West End Village.** The West End Village sub-area on the western edge of the Downtown Precise Plan Area has an eclectic feel with a mix of historic homes, newer mixed-use development, and shops along Fourth Street. The West End Village sub-area also has the Victorian Village on Fifth Avenue, one of San Rafael's three historic districts. The West End Village is envisioned as an eclectic downtown neighborhood with a variety of housing choices, small shops, parks, and plazas. Improvements in the West End Village sub-area include the creation of a western gateway at the Second and Fourth Street intersection, addition of neighborhood-scale public space, improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and new residential development. Potential future development in this sub-area would occur at lower densities than the Downtown Core and Downtown Gateway sub-areas. Improvements to streetscapes and the addition of small plazas or parks are proposed to enhance the public right-of-way and bolster a sense of place unique to the neighborhood.
- **Downtown Core.** The Downtown Core sub-area currently forms the heart of the Downtown Precise Plan Area, largely centered around Fourth Street. This sub-area provides access to stores, offices, restaurants, art galleries, museums, and cultural institutions. The Downtown Core sub-area is envisioned to remain the retail, dining, cultural, and entertainment center of San Rafael, offering a diverse set of uses and an authentic, memorable "downtown experience." Improvements in the Downtown Core sub-area include strengthening multimodal travel, increasing safety for bicycles and pedestrians, and protecting historic resources. Improvements to public spaces, including Albert Park

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

and Court Street Plaza, are proposed. A number of large projects are already in the pipeline in this sub-area, and several more are in conceptual stages.

- **Downtown Gateway.** The Downtown Gateway sub-area includes several regional transportation hubs, including the Downtown San Rafael SMART Station and the San Rafael Transit Center. This sub-area also includes the north- and southbound on- and off-ramps to US-101 and is a significant gateway to the Downtown Precise Plan Area and central Marin County. The Downtown Gateway sub-area is envisioned as a vibrant, mixed-use gateway that can support new residential mixed-use development, employment opportunities, and civic spaces. Planned improvements in this sub-area include new mixed-use development, reinforcing gateway character, creating public plazas, and improving the safety of bikes and pedestrians. Substantial redevelopment is anticipated in the Downtown Gateway sub-area due to its regional transportation links. The Downtown Precise Plan recommends the promotion of more affordable housing in potential mixed-use development near the SMART station. The text provides flexibility with respect to the San Rafael Transit Center since the final site of the facility has yet to be determined.
- **Montecito Commercial Area.** The Montecito Commercial Area on the eastern end of the Downtown Precise Plan Area is primarily a retail/service district with a few office and residential buildings. It is envisioned as transforming over time as large retail uses are replaced or augmented by mixed-use projects that include residential uses above ground-floor commercial space. The neighborhood will be better connected to the other Downtown sub-areas via improvements to the area under Highway 101 and along Irwin Creek. It will also be better connected to the San Rafael Canal waterfront through a shoreline paseo and water-oriented development. The Downtown Precise Plan includes a “vignette” that reimagines the 11-acre Montecito Shopping Center as a mixed-use project, but this is envisioned as a longer-term project and is not included in the development program.

### 3.7.2.6 DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

#### Conceptual Priority Improvement Projects

The Downtown Precise Plan would be implemented by facilitating infill development; carrying out short-term pilot and tactical urbanism<sup>10</sup> projects, such as pedestrian plazas and parklets; and investing in capital improvements at key locations. Conceptual priority projects would occur at nodes where they can stimulate private investment and contribute to the Downtown Precise Plan Area's continued role as a mixed-use and cultural destination for the region. The Downtown Precise Plan identifies conceptual priority street and transportation infrastructure improvement projects and conceptual open space improvement projects.

#### Economic Development Strategies and Actions

The proposed Downtown Precise Plan includes economic development strategies and actions. These aim to support existing businesses, streamline permitting, reduce regulatory barriers, attract new businesses,

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<sup>10</sup> Tactical urbanism includes low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighborhoods and city gathering places.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

and market the Downtown Precise Plan Area as a great place to visit. The strategies also seek to maintain the Downtown Precise Plan Area's contribution to the fiscal well-being of the City through partnerships with the private sector, financial strategies, and engaging the business community.

The proposed Downtown Precise Plan also includes strategies to aggregate small parcels and reduce development costs. This includes reduced fees, parking requirements, and development incentives on merged lots as well as tax programs such as Mills Act contracts.<sup>11</sup> It also offers ideas to assist local retailers and other small businesses.

### **Affordable Housing and Anti-displacement Strategies**

The City of San Rafael currently implements several citywide programs to support the production of affordable housing and to protect existing tenants from displacement. The Downtown Precise Plan proposes an extension of these policies in the strategies for housing production and tenant protection. It also proposes new strategies such as tenant relocation provisions, a one-for-one replacement program for affordable housing units, and incentives to extend affordability controls.

### **Historic Resource Management**

#### *Historic Preservation Ordinance*

The Downtown Precise Plan includes specific recommendations to be considered to strengthen the San Rafael Historic Preservation Ordinance so that it more effectively protects historic resources. This includes preparation of a full Historic Context statement for the Downtown Precise Plan Area, and revised provisions for the review of alterations to historic structures.

#### *Historic Districts*

The Downtown Precise Plan describes methods to conserve historic resources that are considered important visual and character-defining resources to maintain the existing fabric. These methods would protect the scale and character of distinct areas and serve as a tool to ensure future infill development complements the traditional neighborhood character, fabric, and setting.

#### *Historic Resources Actions*

The Downtown Precise Plan includes a set of actions to be considered in the future to advance historic preservation goals. These include creation of additional incentives, a clearer process for local designations, more regular inventory updates, streamlining planning procedures, and developing educational materials.

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<sup>11</sup> The Mills Act is a state law allowing cities to enter into contracts with the owners of historic structures. Such contracts require a reduction of property taxes in exchange for the continued preservation of the property.

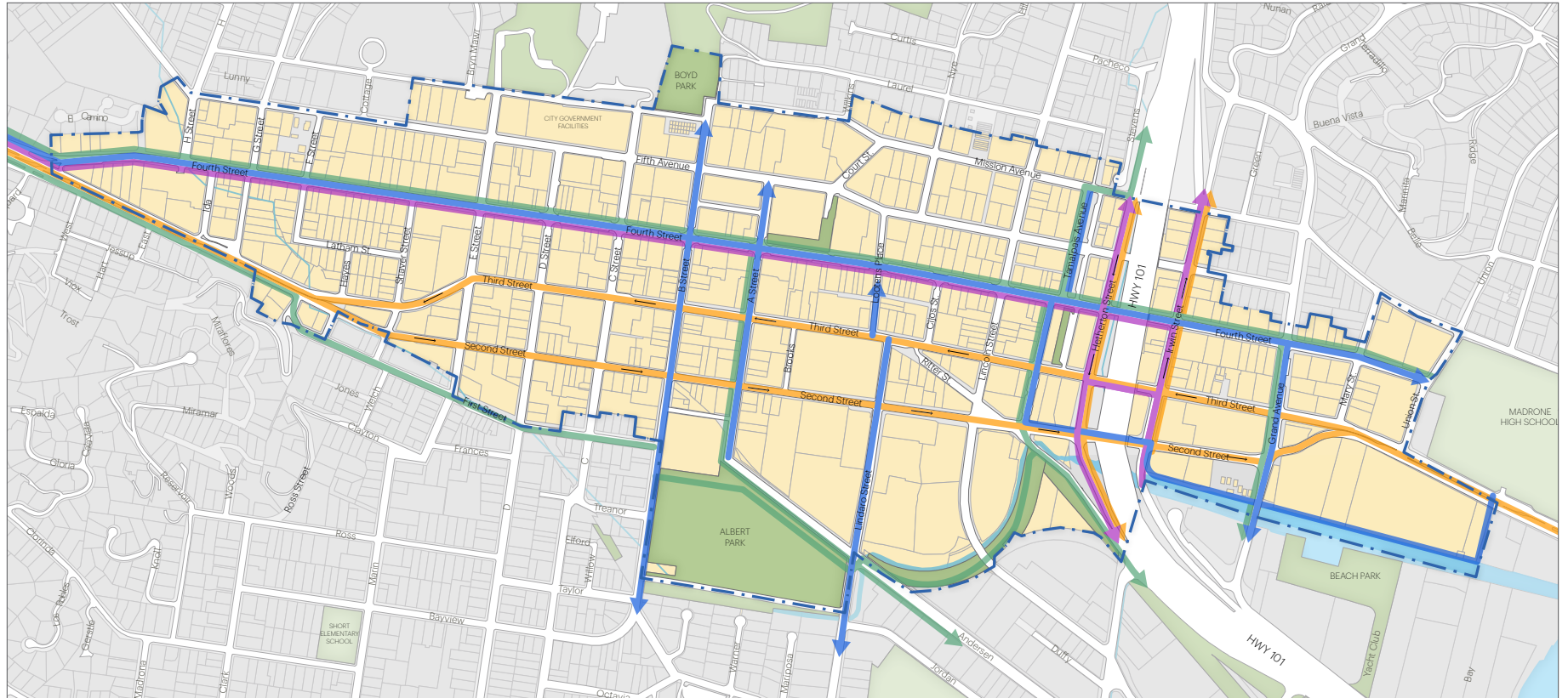
## **Transportation and Parking**

The Downtown Precise Plan proposes changes to the transportation network that would improve access in and around the Downtown Precise Plan Area for all modes of transportation, improve the safety of intersecting transportation modes, and support an appropriate amount of parking. The proposed Downtown Precise Plan includes strategies and improvements for the street design and operations, pedestrian network, bicycle network, vehicular network, and transit network. Figure 3-10 shows the proposed multimodal transportation network in the Downtown Precise Plan Area. The figure shows that individual streets have clearly defined modal priorities; this will influence future transportation planning and design decisions. The Downtown Precise Plan also includes management strategies for ride-hailing, self-driving vehicles, and micromobility (e.g., bikes, e-bikes, and e-scooters), parking, vehicle travel reduction, and wayfinding. Key elements of the transportation program include:

- Street design and operation principles such as universal design, recognition that streets are public spaces, minimizing conflicts between modes, accommodating goods movement, meeting emergency response needs, and protecting natural systems.
- Strategies to improve and maintain the pedestrian environment include widening sidewalks where feasible and designing them to create different functional zones, upgrading crosswalks, avoiding driveway crossings, improving lighting, and adding wayfinding signage. Specific enhancements are proposed along Fourth Street, along Tamalpais Avenue, at the gateway intersection of Second Street and Fourth Street, and on the cross-streets under US-101.
- Strategies to enhance the bikeway network include new bicycle lanes, upgraded bicycle crossings, reduced driveway cuts, better buffering of bicycles from vehicle traffic and parking lanes, increased bicycle parking, and a bike share program. Bike lane improvements are proposed on Tamalpais Avenue (Mission Avenue to Second Street), Fifth Avenue, Grand Avenue (Second Street to Fourth Street), Second Street (Marquard Avenue to Miramar Avenue), A Street, First Street, and in Albert Park.
- Strategies to improve vehicular traffic flow including intersection improvements, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, new gateway elements, and technology upgrades to traffic signals. Specific improvements include upgrading the US-101 on and off ramps; converting B Street to two-way traffic; converting a segment of Francisco Boulevard West to one-way traffic; and realigning the Second Street/Fourth Street/Marquard Avenue intersection.
- Strategies to improve transit include identifying transit priority corridors (potentially including transit-only lanes) and technology improvements, enhancing transit stop amenities, and exploring the feasibility of a Downtown shuttle.
- Specific street reconfigurations to balance the needs of multiple travel modes are proposed along Fourth Street, Tamalpais Avenue, B Street, and D Street. Conceptual cross-sections are included in the Downtown Precise Plan, showing addition of bike lanes and removal of on-street parking spaces in some instances.
- Strategies to make it easy and possible to find parking through adoption of performance metrics to inform adjustments to parking rates and regulations.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Source: San Rafael Downtown Precise Plan, 2020.








-  Plan Area boundary
-  Pedestrian priority network
-  Bicycle priority network
-  Transit priority network
-  Vehicular priority network

Figure 3-10  
Multimodal Network Plan in the Downtown Precise Plan Area

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Downtown Precise Plan also includes recommendations for vehicle trip reduction (e.g., TDM programs), parking, and curbside management. Some of these recommendations are carried forward from the 2017 *City of San Rafael Downtown Parking and Wayfinding Study*. In general, the emphasis is on maximizing the use of existing parking rather than increasing parking supply. The Downtown Precise Plan supports the dedication of parking that is available for public use within new, privately constructed parking garages. It also supports concepts such as shared parking, dynamic pricing, stacked parking to use space more efficiently, and the use of technology to provide real-time information on where spaces are available. A curbside management strategy is recommended to respond to emerging issues related to delivery vehicles, ridesharing and Transportation Network Company vehicles, and shared vehicles. The Downtown Code reduces off-street parking requirements for new development, recognizing the availability of other travel modes and potential burden of high parking requirements on development.

### Utility Infrastructure Improvements

The Downtown Precise Plan includes several infrastructure improvements which are either planned or under consideration, and the Downtown Precise Plan ultimately recommends their implementation. Such improvements include replacement of water supply pipes, construction and maintenance of capital facilities, and replacement of gas pipelines. Recommendations made in the Downtown Precise Plan largely follow that of existing plans.

### Adaptation to Climate Change Recommendations

The Downtown Precise Plan recognizes that adaptation to climate change and future sea-level rise are important considerations that are necessary to guide new development as well as infrastructure upgrades over the 20-year buildout horizon of the Downtown Precise Plan.

## 3.8 2040 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTIONS

This EIR analyzes the potential for growth between 2020 and 2040, which represents a 20-year buildout horizon. Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(3)(A), when a project consists of the revision of a plan or policy, the project's impacts are assessed against existing conditions, and future conditions under the existing plan are treated as the "No Project" alternative. The 2040 horizon year is generally consistent with other key planning documents, including *Plan Bay Area 2040*, which is the Bay Area's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy.<sup>12</sup> *Plan Bay Area 2040* is the long-range integrated transportation and land-use/housing strategy through 2040 for the San Francisco Bay Area pursuant to Senate Bill 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), 2013. *Plan Bay Area, Strategy for a Sustainable Region*. March (adopted July 18).

<sup>13</sup> The Act to amend Sections 65080, 65400, 65583, 65584.01, 65584.02, 65584.04, 65587, and 65588 of, and to add Sections 14522.1, 14522.2, and 65080.01 to, the Government Code, and to amend Section 21061.3 of, to add Section 21159.28 to, and to add Chapter 4.2 (commencing with Section 21155) to Division 13 of, the Public Resources Code, relating to environmental quality.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Under Section 15064(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, “In evaluating the significance of the environmental effect of a project, the lead agency shall consider direct physical changes in the environment which may be caused by the project and reasonably foreseeable indirect physical changes in the environment which may be caused by the project.” The projections represent the City’s estimation of “reasonably foreseeable” development that could occur over the next 20 years under the General Plan and are used as the basis for the EIR’s environmental assessment. See Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, of this Draft EIR, for a description of environmental analysis scenarios for this EIR. The projections do not presume that every parcel is developed to the maximum level allowed under the General Plan. Rather, they recognize regional demographic and economic forecasts, and the probable share of regional growth that would be captured by San Rafael given its policies and land use regulations. Horizon year (2040) projections within the EIR Study Area are shown in Table 3-6 by total projections, and those specific to the Downtown Precise Plan Area are shown in Table 3-7.

**TABLE 3-6 PROPOSED 2040 BUILDOUT PROJECTIONS IN THE EIR STUDY AREA**

Category	Existing Conditions (2020)	Projected Growth by Area (2020-2040)		Net Change (2020–2040)	Buildout Estimates (2040)
		City	Unincorporated		
Households	28,132	3,860	390	4,250	32,382
Residential Units	29,529	4,050	410	4,460	33,989
Total Population	75,751	8,010	900	8,910	84,661
Employees	44,200	4,050	65	4,115	48,315

Source: City of San Rafael, 2020.

**TABLE 3-7 PROPOSED 2040 BUILDOUT PROJECTIONS IN THE DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN AREA**

Category	Existing Conditions (2020)	Net Change (2020–2040)	Buildout Estimates (2040)
Households	1,496	2,100	3,596
Residential Units	1,571	2,200	3,771
Total Population	2,315	3,570	5,885
Employees	11,000	2,020	13,020

Source: City of San Rafael, 2020.

## 3.9 INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR

This Draft EIR is intended to review potential environmental impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the proposed project and determine corresponding mitigation measures, as necessary. This Draft EIR is a program-level EIR and does not evaluate the impacts of specific, individual developments that may be allowed in the future under the proposed project. Each future project will conduct additional environmental review, as required by CEQA, to secure any necessary discretionary development permits. As part of this process, subsequent projects will be reviewed by the City for consistency with the General Plan and this Draft EIR.



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Projects successive to this Draft EIR include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Approval and funding of major public projects and capital improvements.
- Issuance of permits and other approvals necessary for implementation of the proposed project.
- Property rezoning consistent with the proposed General Plan.
- Development plan approvals, such as tentative maps, variances, conditional use permits, planned developments, and other land use permits.
- Permit issuances and other approvals necessary for public and private development projects.
- Development agreement processes and approvals.

The 2040 population and employment forecasts in this Draft EIR will serve as parameters for environmental analysis for future development projects within San Rafael. In the event that proposed development in the city would exceed the buildout projections used in this Draft EIR, the Director of Community Development shall require environmental review for any subsequent development to address growth impacts that would occur as a result of development exceeding the General Plan projections and related Draft EIR assumptions. This does not preclude the City, as lead agency, from determining that an EIR would be required for any development under the relevant provisions of CEQA (e.g., Section 21166 and related guidelines).

### 3.10 REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS

The proposed project would require adoption by the San Rafael City Council. The Planning Commission and other decision-making bodies will review the proposed project and make recommendations to the City Council. While other agencies may be consulted during the General Plan Update process, their approval is not required for General Plan Update adoption. However, subsequent development under the General Plan Update may require approval of State, federal, responsible, and trustee agencies that may rely on the programmatic EIR for decisions in their areas of permitting.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

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