

5 Community Design and Preservation

Introduction

The Community Design and Preservation (CDP) Element of the General Plan analyzes the key characteristics that contribute to San Rafael's identity and image. It provides goals, policies and programs that will guide the city's built form over the next 20 years, positively reinforcing its visual character and relationship to its natural setting, history, and cultural context. The Element also addresses the preservation of San Rafael's historic resources, which are an essential part of its identity and image.

Community Design addresses the desire to create a coherent community image and civic identity. It is aimed at managing future growth to create a beautiful and well-designed city that provides a high quality of life for current residents and future generations. It addresses the relationship between the city's built environment with its natural setting as well as its historic and cultural roots. Over the next 20 years, San Rafael's physical environment will continue to evolve. Some places within San Rafael may experience transformative physical change, while other places will undergo more gradual evolution. The policies in this Element coordinate these changes so that they are intentional, targeted, and positive.

San Rafael will need to respond to new and continued needs for employment, housing, and public space. Community Design policies can ensure that the new development supports other community goals by creating more distinct and memorable places, balancing supporting the preservation of treasured historic and cultural assets, and utilizing design standards and guidelines to shape the form of new and altered buildings.

In addition to visual character and image, the design of the city has important implications for adapting to climate change, reducing carbon emissions, improving public health, and promoting social equity. For example, community design policies can help San Rafael respond to risks from natural hazards such as wildfire with adaptations that ensure public safety while preserving the intimate relationship San Rafael has with its natural setting. Design policies can also support conservation goals such as increased use of renewable energy, more efficient use of water, and more sustainable building construction practices.



Photo Credit: Matthew X. Kiernan/New York Big Apple Images

Organization and Relationship to Other General Plan Elements, Design Standards and Guidelines

The Community Design and Preservation Element begins with a discussion of key characteristics that define the city's visual character, followed by goals, policies and programs that address how this character will be maintained and enhanced in the future. This Element has topics that are related to and overlap with topics in other elements of the General Plan. These are indicated in the table below and should be referenced when making policy decisions:

Table 5-1: Community Design in Other Plan Elements

Community Design Topic	Other General Plan Elements Where Topic is Covered
Single-family home design	Neighborhoods Element
Scale transitions	Neighborhoods Element, Land Use Element
Building elements	Neighborhoods Element
Public art	Arts and Culture Element
Shoreline access and setbacks for creeks and wetlands	Conservation/Climate Change Element
Water efficiency	Conservation/Climate Change Element
Dark skies	Conservation/Climate Change Element
Utility undergrounding	Community Services and Infrastructure Element
Coordination with PG&E on tree maintenance and safety	Community Services and Infrastructure Element
Visual impacts of utility improvements	Community Services and Infrastructure Element

The Community Design policies provide the framework and policy foundation for more prescriptive design standards and guidelines administered by the City of San Rafael through development review. This is best exemplified in Downtown San Rafael, where the Downtown Precise Plan establishes a Form Based Code that reflects the goals and policies of this Element. The ~~ate Downtown~~ Code has form based regulatory standards for six mixed-use zones, building on General Plan policies and prior efforts such as the 2017 Downtown "Good Design" Guidelines. A similar approach can be taken at the North San Rafael Town Center, where design standards ~~could be used will be needed~~ to guide future redevelopment and infill at Northgate Mall and surrounding properties. In southeast San Rafael and the Canal area, future design standards will likewise be shaped by this Element but must further consider the sea level rise adaptation principles in the Safety and Resilience Element. Future design guidelines and standards should use the Community Design and Preservation Element as a foundation, ~~with modifications that~~ ~~but should recognize that other factors must be considered to~~ reflect the context of each location.

Existing Characteristics

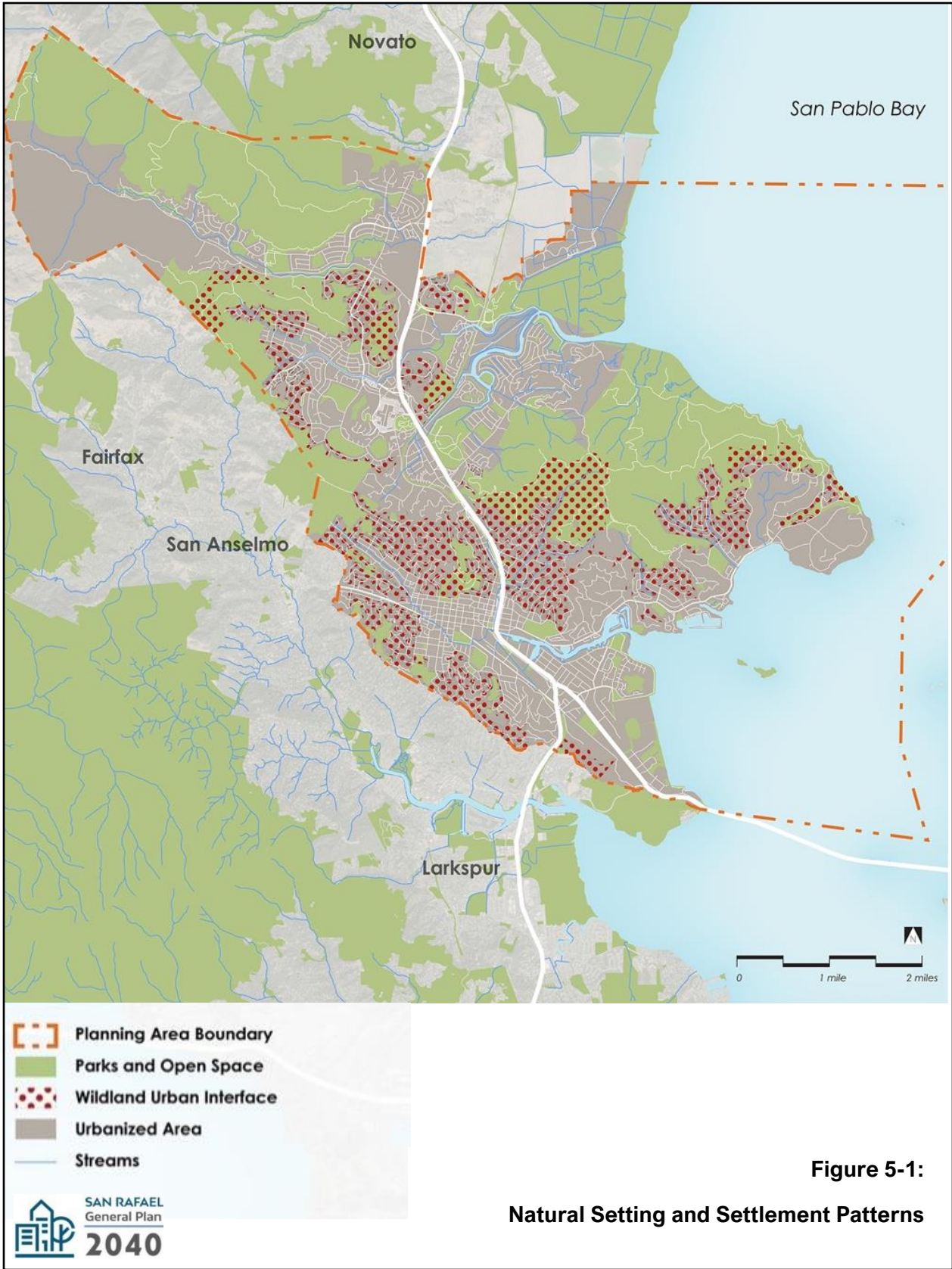
This section identifies the key attributes of community design in San Rafael. These provide the direction for the goals, policies and programs discussed in the next section.

Natural Setting

San Rafael is located in an area of spectacular natural beauty shaped by the Bay and Canal, the hilly terrain, numerous creeks, and ridges. Open space is the single largest land use in the San Rafael Planning Area, and easy access to a wide variety of open spaces improves the quality of life for San Rafael residents. The image of the city is largely defined by a particular combination of natural features, buildings, roads, and infrastructure that is unique to San Rafael. As shown in Figures 5-1 and 5-2, historic settlement patterns in San Rafael reflect this relationship. The most urbanized uses are located on plains and valley floors, separated by hillside neighborhoods and open spaces. Future development should recognize and reinforce this unique natural and built setting.

The prevalence of open space throughout the city also increases the risks from natural hazards such as wildfire. As shown in Figure 5-1, a significant portion of the city lies in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area and is vulnerable to wildfires. This is projected to intensify in the coming years as a result of climate change, including increased periods of drought and more intense heat. While design standards are usually associated with aesthetics, they also play an essential role in mitigating wildfire risk.





Views and Gateways

San Rafael's topography and location next to the Bay provide spectacular views of the hills and ridgelines to the west and the Bay to the east. These views not only include prominent natural features such as Mt Tamalpais and the Marin Islands, but also of prominent buildings and historic landmarks, such as St. Raphael church, the Marin Civic Center, and others. Figure 5-2 highlights some of the most important view corridors in the city. As an integral part of the city's identity, these corridors should be considered and highlighted in future development.

Also shown in Figure 5-2 are the prominent "gateways" to the city. Highway 101 functions as the city's north-south circulation spine and offers a series of ~~such~~ gateway experiences. I-580 is a particularly important gateway from the east, accented by the dramatic views from the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. Third and Fourth Street ~~also~~ function as important gateway streets to Downtown. ~~as do~~ Freitas Parkway, Lucas Valley Road, and North San Pedro Road are key gateways to North San Rafael. Each of these roads provides vistas and specific horizon points of interest where topography, open space, buildings, landscaping, and signage are noticeable to the visitor. San Rafael's two SMART stations and its Downtown Transit Center also are important gateways. ~~Like the view corridors, these~~ Each gateways helps define the image of the city and should be designed to enhance the sense of arrival and create a welcoming experience.

Waterfront Identity

San Rafael's natural assets include its waterfront, which defines the eastern edge of the city. The waterfront consists of beaches, marinas, parks, trails, wetlands and marshes, as well as the lower reaches of creeks flowing into the Bay. Some are regional attractions such as China Camp State Park and the Jean Starkweather Shoreline Park Trail. The waterfront provides the setting for a variety of recreation activities for the city and the region. One of the most important components of San Rafael's waterfront is the Bay Trail, a 500-mile planned trail network linking all nine Bay Area counties, of which approximately 350 miles have been constructed. Parts of the Bay Trail within San Rafael's boundaries are in place, and other sections still need to be completed.

Like most waterfront cities in the Bay Area, San Rafael is affected by tidal action. Parts of the city are prone to flooding during periods of heavy rainfall, particularly when excessive or prolonged rainfall coincides with high tides or King Tides. Affected areas include several communities along the San Rafael Canal, parts of Downtown, ~~and~~ the Canal neighborhood, Santa Venetia, and other low-lying areas along the forks of Gallinas Creek. Flooding is expected to intensify in the coming decades as a result of sea-level rise. As shown in Figure 5-3, several parts of the city will be impacted by sea level rise. Future development will need to consider strategies for adaptation and resilience.

Editor's Note: Photo to be repositioned after accepting tracked changes



Photo Credit: Frank Johnson

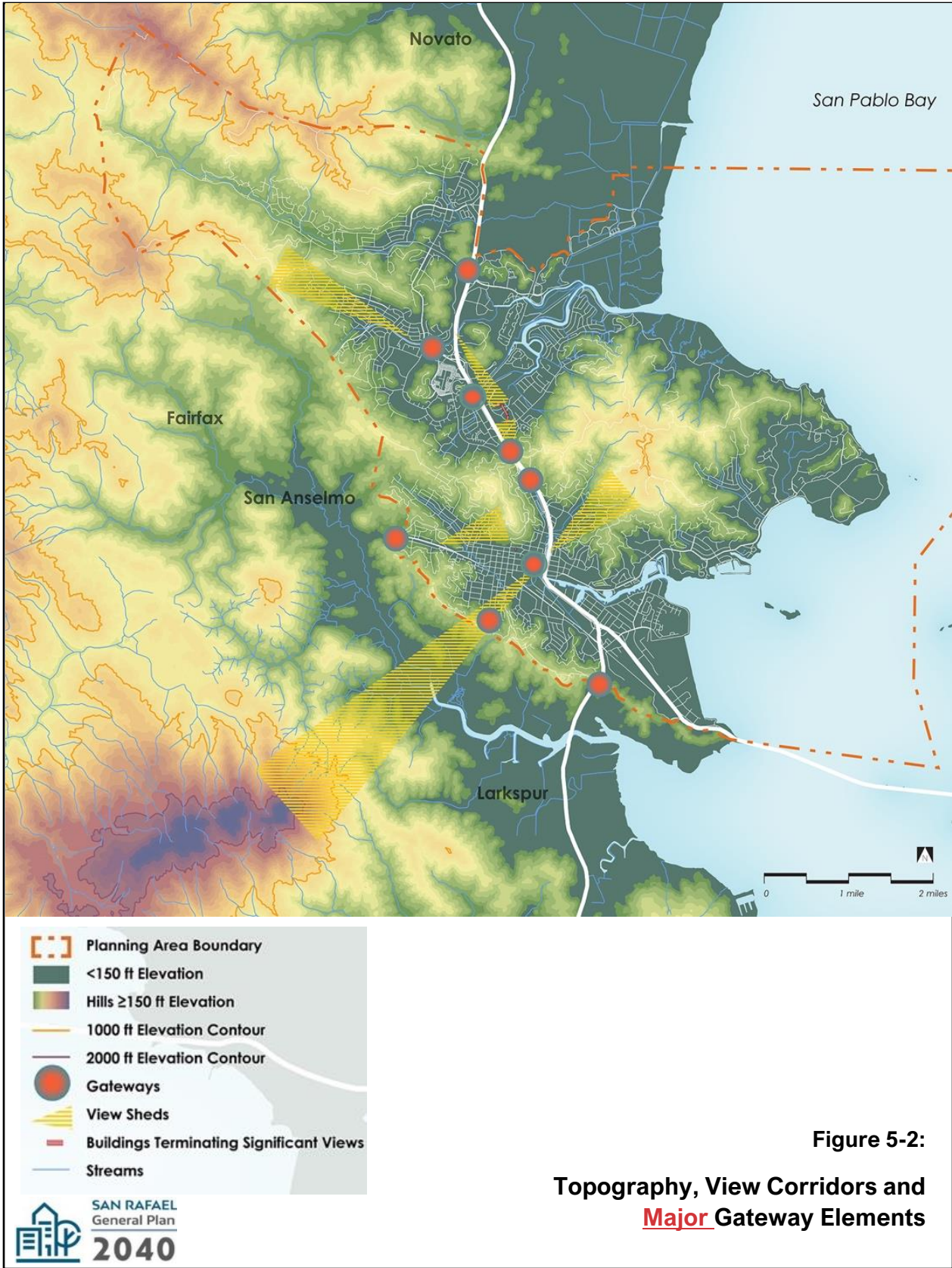


Figure 5-2:
Topography, View Corridors and
Major Gateway Elements



Figure 5-3:

The San Rafael Waterfront

Editor's Note: Photo to be repositioned after accepting tracked changes

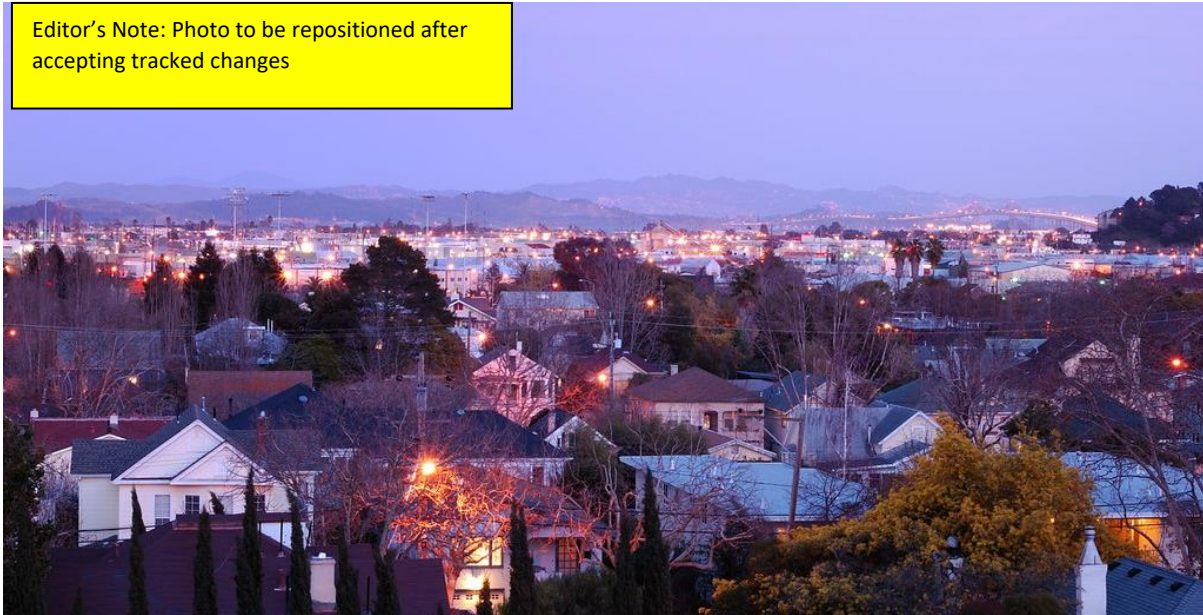


Photo Credit: Jungyul Kim

Neighborhoods

Apart from its natural setting, San Rafael's identity is shaped and enhanced by its neighborhoods (see Figure 4-1). These neighborhoods vary in built character and composition, and in their intensity and mix of uses. Some are completely residential while others have a mix of residential and commercial uses. Some are suburban, some are semi-rural, and some have a more traditional pre-automobile era form. The neighborhoods highlight the history and stages of San Rafael's development, as well as its many cultural influences.

This diversity in San Rafael's neighborhoods contributes to the overall identity of the city and its sense of place. As San Rafael evolves, it should preserve this identity. It should also enhance identity in areas that either lack a strong sense of place today or are missing the features generally associated with a quality neighborhood. In North San Rafael, this includes transformation of Northgate Mall to a "Town Center" that includes housing, public space, and gathering places, as well as retail and office uses. In the Canal area, this includes new street trees, parks and outdoor gathering places, and better-maintained sidewalks and infrastructure. In Downtown, this includes infill development and new public spaces in the SMART station and transit center areas.

Place Types

The interplay of San Rafael's built and natural assets create a mosaic of distinct place types. A place type reflects the physical and social characteristics of a place, including related attributes such as the built form (scale and form of its buildings), transportation networks, intensity and mix of uses, etc. By grouping similar places together, place types are an effective tool for envisioning citywide growth and determining the degree of change needed for different areas.

Place types can be walkable, auto-oriented, or transitional in character (i.e., they form a transition or buffer between different areas). As shown in Figure 5-4, place types in San Rafael can be roughly characterized as centers, corridors, neighborhoods, and open spaces. There are also special use districts such as the auto-oriented uses along Highways 101 and 580, and the employment districts of southeast San Rafael and the Northgate Industrial Park. Community design policies and design guidance for different place types can be an effective planning tool to preserve the integrity and character of individual areas, while improving the efficiency of City service delivery and transportation and reducing conflicts between incompatible uses.

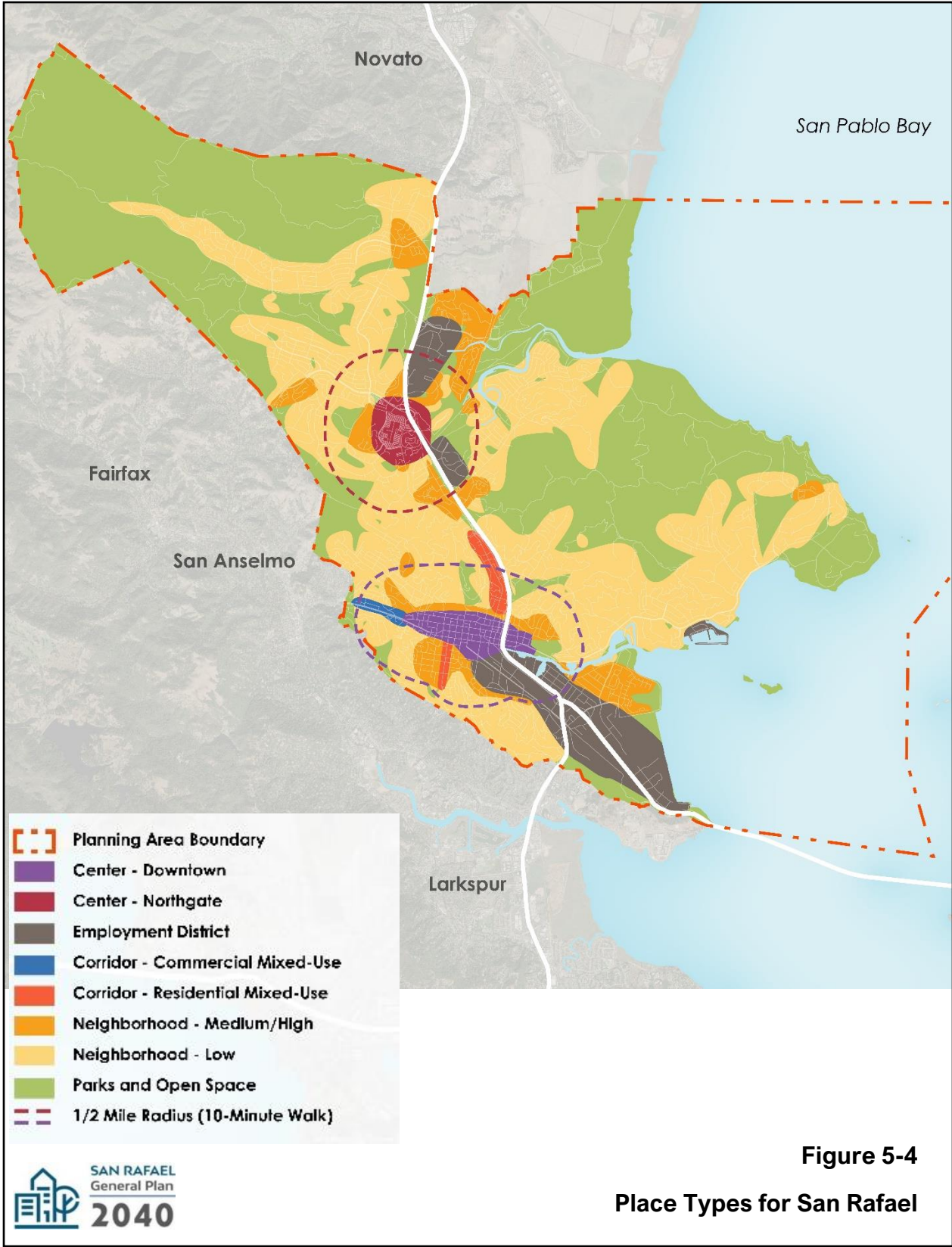




Photo Credit: Florian Kainz

Goals, Policies, and Programs

Goal CDP-1: A Beautiful City

Preserve and strengthen San Rafael's natural and built features to enhance the appearance and livability of the city.

The interplay between San Rafael's built environment and natural context contributes to the city's strong sense of place and identity. The hills, ridgelines, and bays, as well as views to Mount Tamalpais, imprint the natural environment into the image of the city. Looking forward, San Rafael will remain an attractive, interesting, and well-designed city. It respects its natural landscape and waterfront, preserves its legacy of historic buildings, and values its diverse design qualities. San Rafael's distinct features will be protected and enhanced, connecting residents to nature, history, and home.

Policies throughout the General Plan protect the natural features that define San Rafael, including hillsides, ridgelines, wetlands, creeks, trees, and open water. In some instances, development can enhance these features—for example, through creek restoration and shoreline access improvements. In other instances, development can frame or accent views of character-defining features like Mt. Tamalpais. New buildings and landscaping should complement the city's natural form. In effect, buildings function as an element of the city's topography, providing variation and relief. Distinctive structures can serve as visual landmarks, providing orientation and a stronger sense of identity.

Policy CDP-1.1: City Image

Reinforce San Rafael's image by respecting the city's natural features, protecting its historic resources, and strengthening its focal points, gateways, corridors, and neighborhoods.

Policy CDP-1.2: Natural Features

Recognize and protect the key natural features that shape San Rafael's identity, including the Bay, local hills and ridgelines, creeks and wetlands, tree cover, and views of Mt. Tamalpais and other natural landmarks. Height limits and other building standards should respect San Rafael's natural topography and reinforce its sense of place, including the character and boundaries of individual neighborhoods.

Policy CDP-1.3: Hillside Protection

Protect the visual integrity and character of San Rafael's hillsides and ridgelines. Where hillside construction is permitted, structures should be designed to provide slope and foundation stability, erosion control, and adequate emergency access, drainage and parking. Hillside buildings should be sited to protect the natural landscape, avoid excessive tree loss, and preserve scenic vistas from public vantage points.

Program CDP-1.3A: Hillside Residential Design Guidelines. Continue to implement hillside residential design guidelines through the design review process, as well as larger lot size requirements for hillside areas where there are access limitations or natural hazards. Update the design guidelines as needed.

Program CDP-1.3B: Hillside Lot Consolidation. Where feasible, consolidate small, nonconforming hillside lots in areas with slope and emergency vehicle access constraints into larger, conforming parcels. Apply hillside development standards in the event such lots are developed to ensure that construction is compatible with the neighborhood development pattern.

See the Conservation/Climate; Safety/Resilience; and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Elements for additional policies on hillside management, landslide hazard reduction, wildfire prevention, and related topics.

Policy CDP-1.4: Waterfront Identity

Strengthen San Rafael's identity as a waterfront city, providing improved visual and physical access to San Pablo Bay, San Rafael Bay, and the San Rafael Canal.

Program CDP-1.4A: Canalfront Design Plan. Implement the Canalfront Conceptual Design Plan (2009) recommendations. Development near the shoreline should maximize views to the water and public access to the shoreline.

Program CDP-1.4B: Canal Promenade. Pursue development of a continuous pathway or promenade along the Canal waterfront.

See the Conservation/Climate Element for policies on shoreline access, creek and wetland setbacks, and climate adaptation.

Policy CDP-1.5: Views

Respect and enhance to the greatest extent possible, views to the Bay and its islands; wetlands, marinas, and canal waterfront; hillsides and ridgelines; Mt. Tamalpais; Marin Civic Center; and St. Raphael's bell tower; as seen from streets, parks, and public pathways.

Program CDP-1.5A: Evaluating View Impacts. *Consider the impact of proposed development on views, especially views of Mt. Tamalpais and nearby ridgelines. Where feasible, new development should frame views of ridges and mountains and minimize reduction of views, privacy, and solar access.*

Program CDP-1.5B: Guidance on View Protection. *Establish clearer, more objective City guidelines and standards on view protection, privacy, and solar access for new development, additions, and alterations.*

Program CDP-1.5C: Downtown Height Profile. *Develop zoning and design tools that encourage both continuity and variation in building heights, along with improved solar access and interesting roof elements such as domes, cupolas, and corner towers. Views of Downtown should be accented by memorable building elements, rather than a flat profile of buildings of uniform height.*

See also Conservation/Climate Program C-4.5B on solar access

Goal CDP-2: A Sense of Place

Strengthen San Rafael's sense of place.

San Rafael is a collage of uniquely identifiable places—a walkable downtown bustling with shops and restaurants, active and connected neighborhoods, a regional mall, business parks, industrial areas, and more. These different places are stitched together by streets and open spaces, creating a citywide identity unlike anyplace else in Marin County. Design decisions should reinforce the city's identity, protecting qualities that are valued while recognizing opportunities for improvement and positive change.

As observed in Goal CDP-1, San Rafael's natural features create a strong sense of local identity. However, the city as a whole is eclectic. There is no single defining architectural style, nor is there a single land use or development form that represents the entire city. San Rafael is comprised of different neighborhoods, districts, and centers, each one unique. There is a synergy between these areas that makes the city work and creates its overall sense of place.

Older neighborhoods like Montecito and Gerstle Park are remembered for their bungalows and Victorian homes and their traditional scale. Terra Linda is remembered for low-slung mid-Century homes and curvilinear streets. Some areas are defined by their proximity to water, others by panoramic views and steep, wooded slopes. Likewise, the city's business districts include a traditional Downtown, a suburban Mall, post-war industrial areas, landscaped office parks, and big box stores, among others.

The "place types" on Figure 5-43 provide a framework for thinking about the design of the city and its neighborhoods, corridors, and districts. In most areas, the form of the city will not change. Design changes and infill development in these areas can create a stronger sense of place by respecting the scale of existing development and closing gaps in the fabric of each neighborhood. In a few areas—namely Downtown, the North San Rafael Town Center, and Southeast San Rafael—more transformative changes will occur.



Gateways are particularly important in establishing San Rafael's image. These may be points of entry into the city, or into districts of the city such as Downtown or Terra Linda. In addition to marking the boundary or edge, a gateway is also a chance to express the identity of a community through art, landscape, signage. It can also communicate a sense of pride, history, culture, and even values. San Rafael's gateways include not only include freeways, freeway exits, and major thoroughfares, but also the SMART stations and Transit Center.

Policy CDP-2.1: Neighborhoods, Districts, and Centers

Strengthen San Rafael's identity as a community of unique centers, neighborhoods, corridors, and districts. Design decisions should maintain Downtown as a historic, walkable center; preserve the integrity and character of residential neighborhoods; and improve the appearance and function of mixed use districts such as the North San Rafael Town Center.

Program CDP-2.1A: Place Types. Identify "place types" in the city that establish defining characteristics and provide the basis for objective design standards. Design standards for each place type should support housing production and commercial development that is consistent and compatible with each neighborhood or employment district (see Figure 5-4).

Program CDP-2.1B: Design Guidance. Use precise plans, specific plans, and similar tools to establish a design vision for different parts of the city, and to identify desired improvements.

See also Policy NH-4.2# on the vision for the North San Rafael Town Center

Policy CDP-2.2: Downtown Urban Design

Enhance the design qualities that make Downtown San Rafael a unique and special place, including its traditional street grid, street trees, walkable scale, historic building stock, and varied architecture.

Program CDP-2.2A: Downtown Precise Plan. *Implement the design recommendations and standards of the Downtown Precise Plan, including public improvements.*

Policy CDP-2.3: Neighborhood Identity and Character

Recognize, preserve, and enhance the positive qualities that shape neighborhood identity. Development standards should respect neighborhood context and scale and preserve design elements that contribute to neighborhood livability. Standards should also provide the flexibility for innovative design and new types of construction. Code enforcement and City programs should maintain community standards and the integrity of buildings and landscapes.

Program CDP-2.3A: Code Enforcement. *Maintain code enforcement and nuisance abatement programs to address litter, illegal dumping, unlawful storage, and property maintenance issues.*

Program CDP-2.3B: Educational Materials. *Continue to provide programs and educational materials to inform property owners about property maintenance requirements, and sanitation, health, and safety standards.*

See the Housing Element for policies on residential rehabilitation loans and other issues related to maintenance and repair of the housing stock. See also Program LU-2.12 and Policy H-16 on ADUs, including best practices for integrating ADUs into the fabric of existing homes and neighborhoods. See Policy EDI-3.5 on property maintenance.

Policy CDP-2.4: Corridors

Improve the function and appearance of San Rafael's major transportation corridors and enhance their role in shaping the city's character.

Program CDP-2.4A: Streetscape Guidelines. *Develop general streetscape guidelines for residential arterials, auto-oriented commercial streets, pedestrian streets, and other types of streets in the city. Include site-specific recommendations for individual corridors when needed. Streetscape guidelines should support climate change and "complete streets" goals as well as aesthetic goals.*

Program CDP-2.4B: Right-of-Way Landscaping. *Encourage Caltrans to install and maintain landscaping along Highway 101 and Interstate 580.*

Program CDP-2.4C: Highway 101 Crossings. *Promote public art, restoration of Irwin Creek, better lighting, and other improvements beneath the Downtown Highway 101 viaduct to better connect the east and west sides of the freeway and make the area more hospitable to pedestrians and cyclists. Consider similar improvements in North San Rafael as part of the future PDA planning process, including the Merrydale Promenade connector near the Civic Center Station.*

Policy CDP-2.5: Commercial and Industrial Districts

Recognize and preserve the design elements that contribute to the economic vitality, functionality, and visual quality of San Rafael's commercial and industrial districts. Where feasible, improve the appearance of these areas by making them more walkable, attractive, and visually compatible with the neighborhoods around them.

Program CDP-2.5A: Commercial and Industrial Beautification. Where feasible, develop and implement urban design improvements such as street trees, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and signage, in commercial and industrial areas through the development review process, capital improvement program, and similar means.

Policy CDP-2.6: Gateways

Provide distinctive, attractively designed gateways into the city and its major districts. Gateways should optimally convey a sense of arrival, reinforce a positive image of the city, and help define a unique identity for individual districts.

Program CDP-2.6A: Gateway Improvements. Evaluate each gateway shown on [Figure Exhibit 5-2](#) to develop recommendations for architecture, landscape design, public art, and signage. Prioritize the recommendations and include appropriate improvements in the City's Capital Improvements Program.

Program CDP-2.6B: Neighborhood and District Gateways. Support landscaping, signage, and design improvements at neighborhood and business district entry points. Evaluate opportunities for gateway improvements in private development where appropriate.

See the Arts and Culture Element for policies on public art

San Rafael's Corridors and Gateways

San Rafael's transportation corridors include regional freeways like US 101 and I-580, and local arterials like Freitas Parkway, Pt. San Pedro Road, 2nd/3rd Streets, Lincoln Avenue, Redwood Highway, Bellam Boulevard, and the Miracle Mile. [Corridors also include the SMART rail line and the greenways and promenades that cross the city.](#) The corridors shape impressions of the city and establish San Rafael's aesthetic values. A well-designed corridor should be inviting, attractive, and should appear visually organized. This can be achieved through public improvements such as street trees and lighting, and through the design of buildings, landscaping, and signs along the corridor.

Gateways are the entry points to the city or a specific area. A gateway might be defined with a subtle change in landscaping or a natural feature such as a hill which provides a vantage point. A gateway could also be a noticeable change in land use or a boundary marker. The City has invested in signage, landscaping, and art at key gateways, welcoming visitors and shaping San Rafael's identity.



Goal CDP-3: Attractive Streets and Public Spaces

Create streets, public spaces, and civic buildings that add value to private property, promote environmental sustainability, and contribute to San Rafael's visual quality and identity.

A well-designed public realm contributes to the city's vitality and helps achieve its sustainability, livability, and climate action goals. Streets, parks, plazas, and civic buildings are designed and maintained to convey historic identity and civic pride. They provide common ground that connects and unites the community.

San Rafael's identity is also created by its public spaces, including parks, plazas, streets, highways, and civic buildings. These areas are collectively referred to as the "public realm." They represent a substantial amount of the city's land area and present the greatest opportunity for the City itself to shape perceptions of San Rafael and its aesthetic qualities. The policies under Goal CDP-3 aim to improve the public realm, thereby imparting a positive impression of San Rafael and a more attractive city for residents and businesses. These policies serve a dual purpose, as they also advance other City goals such as sustainability, fire prevention, and greenhouse gas reduction.

The public realm serves other purposes that contribute to the quality of life in San Rafael. Public space provides common ground for community gatherings, recreation, education, art, performance, and civic events. Street rights-of-way provide space for lighting, landscaping, street trees, and drainage facilities, serving functional as well as aesthetic purposes. Over the years, the City of San Rafael has developed guidelines and standards for streets and public space that balance multiple goals and coordinate public and private efforts to keep the city livable.

Policy CDP-3.1: Plazas and Active Public Spaces

Encourage the integration of public space—or private space that is available for public use—in larger-scale commercial, civic, and mixed use development. Such spaces should be designed and operated so that they can be easily maintained, remain safe and attractive, and contribute positively to the community.

Program CDP-3.1A: Activation of Public Space. *Encourage activities such as farmers markets and performances in public spaces to enhance their usefulness and role as community gathering space.*

Program CDP-3.1B: Solar Access for Public Space. *Explore potential sun and shading standards for select public and quasi-public spaces.*

Program CDP-3.1C: Universal Design. *Incorporate the concept of universal design in the design of public space, so that persons of all physical abilities can safely and comfortably use city streets and civic places.*

Program CDP-3.1D: Alleys. *Improve Downtown alleys so they become more functional, economically productive and activated public spaces.*

Program CDP-3.1E: North San Rafael Improvements. *Encourage and incentivize the development of public art, publicly accessible plazas, and other activated spaces in new and redeveloped projects in North San Rafael, especially in the Northgate Mall/North San Rafael Town Center area.*



Photo Credit: Frank Johnson

Policy CDP-3.2: Street Furnishings

Use street furniture and pavement materials to create a more attractive city, particularly in commercial districts. Seating, trash receptacles, streetlights, art, and other street furnishings should be compatible with--and strengthen--the identity of San Rafael's business districts and neighborhoods while supporting "green streets" and low impact development principles.

Program CDP-3.2A: Right-of-Way Encroachments. Continue to refine City standards for encroachments into the public right of way for features such as sidewalk dining, parklets, awnings, and temporary signage.

Program CDP-3.2B: Arts Partnerships. Explore opportunities to engage the local arts community in the design of public realm improvements, including public art, painting of utility boxes, murals, and similar improvements.

See the Arts and Culture Element for public art policies and the Community Services and Infrastructure Element for Green Streets policies

Policy CDP-3.3: Landscape Design in Public Rights-of-Way

Use landscape design in public rights-of-way to soften the built environment, showcase San Rafael's natural environment, and advance City goals related to walkability, climate change, conservation, and hazard reduction. Landscaping should control heat build-up from pavement, provide shade, reduce air pollution, and improve visual quality.

See the Community Services and Infrastructure Element for policies on Utility Undergrounding

Policy CDP-3.4: Landscape Maintenance

Prioritize landscape maintenance along the city's most heavily traveled roadways and gateways. Control costs by using low-maintenance materials, removing litter, and avoiding deferred maintenance. Operational practices should support the City's commitment to water conservation, fire prevention, and reduced use of toxic materials.

Program CDP-3.4A: Landscape Stewardship. *Encourage partnerships with neighborhoods and civic organizations to maintain and improve the city's landscaped areas.*

Policy CDP-3.5: Street Trees

Encourage the planting and maintenance of street trees to reduce urban heat island effects, sequester carbon, improve air quality, absorb runoff and wind, define neighborhoods, and improve the appearance and character of city streets.

Program CDP-3.5A: Street Tree Master Plan. *Develop a comprehensive citywide Street Tree Master Plan. The Plan should address street tree planting, species selection, maintenance, replacement, diversification, wood utilization, and tree waste recycling and should ensure that trees are appropriate for the planting areas where they are located.*

Program CDP-3.5B: Street Tree Inventory. *Create an inventory of City street trees, using volunteers to the greatest extent feasible.*

San Rafael is a Tree City!

San Rafael is one of 3,400 communities around the United States that has been formally designated a "Tree City USA" – for 36 consecutive years! Maintaining this designation is based on specific criteria relating to urban forestry management.

Trees provide enormous benefits in San Rafael. Their environmental benefits include stormwater reduction, air quality improvements, carbon sequestration, and habitat for birds and other wildlife. Trees also provide shade and cooling, reducing energy bills and making it more comfortable to walk or cycle. As a "Tree City," San Rafael must consider the aesthetic beauty that trees provide, from a single tree to an mature grove.

Trees enhance the character of commercial districts and can attract shoppers. They also add value to residential neighborhoods. Trees absorb noise and provide a buffer from wind. Trees also provide social and psychological benefits. They reduce stress, have a calming effect, and make San Rafael a more livable city!



Program CDP-3.5C: Street Trees for New Development. Require street trees in new developments and major property upgrades.

See the Community Services and Infrastructure Element for policies and programs regarding coordination with PG&E on tree maintenance and safety and Policy C-1.16 on urban forestry.

Program CDP-3.5D: Street Tree Maintenance. Support the long-term health of San Rafael's urban forest through timely, quality street tree maintenance. Seek diversified funding sources for maintenance and replacement.

Program CDP-3.5E: Tree Replacement Due to Sidewalk Damage. Consider replacing trees that have root systems that cause sustained damage to pavement and sidewalks.

See also Policies C-1.16 and C-1.17 on urban forestry and tree protection

Policy CDP-3.6: Tree Replacement

Discourage the removal of healthy trees for safety, or maintenance cost reasons.

Program CDP-3.6A: Mitigation. Implement mitigation requirements for tree removal. If removal of trees in locations other than those shown on the map, rather than a numeric ratio, should be based on mass

CDP-3.6B renumbered as 3.5E

Policy CDP-3.6 and Program CDP-3.6A moved to Conservation/Climate Element. Cross-reference added above.

are removed due to health,

Implement mitigation requirements. If removal of trees in locations other than those shown on the map, rather than a numeric ratio, should be based on mass

Policy CDP-3.67: Wayfinding and Directional Signage

Encourage the use of consistent graphic conventions and logos for City signs, including gateway signs and wayfinding signs.

Program CDP-3.67A: Downtown Wayfinding. Implement the signage recommendations in the 2018 Downtown Parking and Wayfinding Study to direct people to historic and cultural resources, public facilities, parks, shopping areas, parking, and key destinations. Consider wayfinding signage in other parts of the city, such as Northgate, the Point San Pedro area, and the Canal.

Program CDP-3.76B: Interpretive Signage. ~~Encourage the use of~~ Use interpretive signage to provide information about local history, the natural environment, and cultural resources.

Policy CDP-3.87: Greenways

Encourage the development of "greenways" such as the North San Rafael Promenade and the Tamalpais Greenway that improve connectivity, link neighborhoods, restore creeks, and enhance the appearance of the city.

See the Community Services and Infrastructure Element for policies on the visual impacts of utility improvements and the Neighborhoods Element (North San Rafael section) for discussion of the Promenade.

Goal CDP-4: Quality Construction and Design

Encourage quality construction and design that enhances San Rafael's character and creates places of lasting value.

San Rafael has many examples of fine architecture and a few exceptionally memorable buildings. The City embraces creative and distinctive design, while ensuring that the scale, height, and massing of new development respects the surrounding context.

This section of the Community Design and Preservation Element addresses the importance of good design to the city. As buildings and landscapes are constructed and altered, their design quality can determine whether they improve or detract from the quality of life in San Rafael. In most neighborhoods, design guidelines should provide a framework of principles without mandating a specific style or genre. In areas where a specific style is prevalent, guidelines can reinforce that style. In some cases, design *standards* may be used instead of *guidelines* to provide a clearer sense of the City's expectations and improve the predictability of the development process. Even in these instances, standards should support creative architecture and design.

Policy CDP-4.1: Design Guidelines and Standards

Use design guidelines and standards to strengthen the visual and functional qualities of San Rafael's neighborhoods, districts, and centers. Guidelines and standards should ensure that new construction, additions, and alterations are compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods while still allowing for innovative, affordable design.

Program CDP-4.1A: Design Guidelines. *Maintain design guidelines for residential, non-residential, and mixed use construction. Guidelines should define the elements of good design (see text box on Page 5-22) and encourage compatible building patterns, scale, mass, and transitions between areas. Design guidelines should be periodically updated to respond to construction trends, neighborhood feedback, and changes in the way people live, work, and travel.*

Program CDP-4.1B: Objective Design and Development Standards. *Develop and maintain objective (measurable) design standards for new higher density and mixed use housing that meet the requirements of State law and support new housing construction. These standards would be used in lieu of those referenced in Program CDP-4.1A and apply only to proposals for multi-family and mixed use housing meeting specific State-adopted criteria. (see text box on Page 5-21)*

Program CDP-4.1C: Form Based Codes. *Encourage the use of form based codes (FBCs) as an alternative to design guidelines and zoning standards in specific districts of the city such as Downtown. The FBC integrates design and regulatory controls to improve design quality and enhance public space.*

See the Safety and Resilience Element for policies on fire-safe design and construction

Policy CDP-4.2: Public Involvement in Design Review

Provide for public involvement in design review through effective noticing, adequate comment timelines, and clear project review opportunities, while still achieving development streamlining objectives.

Program CDP-4.2A: Improving Design Review Efficiency. *Continue to improve the design review process by:*

- Engaging stakeholders, community members, and the developer early, including consideration of written comments, so that issues can be worked out before initial submittal
- Clarifying requirements for initial submittals, including geotechnical, grading, and survey reports, to improve their quality
- Adjusting notification procedures to encourage earlier and broader participation
- Changing the project review sequence so that Planning Commission feedback is solicited before the Design Review Board
- Periodically evaluating and updating the guidelines, including thresholds for design review.

Program CDP-4.2B: Community Discussions of Good Design. Continue to engage the community in discussions to define “good design” and strategies to improve architecture and public space.

Policy CDP-4.3: Creative Architecture and Design

Encourage creative architecture while respecting the context of each site.

Program CDP-4.3 A: Reinforcing Design Context. Ensure that design guidelines recognize the distinct characteristics of San Rafael neighborhoods. Guidelines should ensure that new development respects the character-defining elements of neighborhoods, including height, scale, materials, and setbacks.

Program CDP-4.3B: Successful Design Portfolio. Establish a portfolio of existing buildings and projects illustrating successful design and make it available on the City’s website.

Program CDP-4.3C: Exceptions. Allow variation from design guidelines and standards for exceptional buildings that contribute public benefits and make a significant contribution to their surroundings.

See also Housing Policy H-2

Objective Design Standards

For many years, cities and counties have relied on discretionary review process when considering most multi-family development projects. Projects were often approved, denied, or re-designed based on subjective criteria, such as whether they “reflected the look and feel” of the community. California’s housing shortage has been attributed at least in part to vague criteria that create lengthy approval processes and add to the cost of construction. Recent state housing laws now require “objective standards” for new multi-family development, as well as streamlined review and approval processes for projects that meet certain criteria. Senate Bill 35 defined objective standards as “standards that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant and the public official prior to submittal.”



Photo Credit: Frank Johnson



Principles of Good Design

In November 2017, the City created a working group of local architects to develop “criteria for good design” in Downtown San Rafael. The group delivered their recommendations to the City Council in February 2018. The recommendations were specifically focused on pedestrian-oriented streets in settings such as Downtown San Rafael, but they are transferable to other locations in the city where pedestrian-oriented development will be encouraged in the future. The principles shown below can also apply to the North San Rafael Town Center, the Medway commercial district, and other areas where a more walkable environment is desired.

Design principles for new construction and renovation projects include:

- Use higher ground floor ceiling heights to support more active and interesting spaces at street level
- Relate the design of the building facade, including aspects such as cornice lines, windows, and door placement, to the facade elements of nearby buildings
- Avoid long, monotonous walls without windows
- Articulate buildings into smaller components to reduce their perceived mass
- Encourage continuity of design, materials, color, form, and architectural details
- Allow variable setbacks to create space for pedestrian amenities and landscaping.
- Incorporate pedestrian-scale signage that is complementary to the building design
- Screen mechanical equipment
- Use large display windows on the ground floor to create visual interest for pedestrians

Policy CDP-4.4: Single Family Home Design

Encourage the design of new homes, additions, and alterations that integrate well with their surroundings and support the livability of neighborhoods. Residential additions and alterations should respect the proportions, styles, and materials of the house and adjacent properties.

See also Housing Program H-2A

Policy CDP-4.5: Higher Density Design

Encourage high-quality architecture and landscape design in new higher-density housing and mixed use projects. Such projects should be designed to be compatible with nearby buildings and respect the character-defining features of the surrounding neighborhood or district.

See Programs CDP-4.1A through C on design guidelines and standards. See the Land Use and Mobility Elements for policies on parking in higher-density housing areas.

Policy CDP-4.6: Open Space in Multi-Family Housing

Require private outdoor areas such as decks and patios, as well as common open space areas, in new multi-family development and mixed use housing. Common open space may include recreation facilities, gathering places, and site amenities such as picnic and play areas.

Program CDP-4.6A: On-Site Recreational Areas. *Continue requirements for on-site recreational areas as specified in the zoning ordinance.*

Policy CDP-4.7: Larger-Scale Buildings

Design larger scale buildings to reduce their perceived mass. Encourage the incorporation of architectural elements such as towers, arcades, courtyards, and awnings to create visual interest, provide protection from the elements, and enhance orientation.

Program CDP-4.7A: Signature Buildings. *Allow for “signature” buildings that create a positive impression of San Rafael. Memorable, innovative architecture should be encouraged through the placement of building forms and features, selection of materials, and unique treatment of corner sites, and similar measures. Innovative climate-adaptive measures such as vertical gardens, roof-gardens, living building design and onsite water reuse also should be encouraged.*

Policy CDP-4.8: Scale Transitions

Require sensitive scale and height transitions between larger and smaller structures. In areas where taller buildings are allowed, they should be designed to minimize shadows, loss of privacy, and dramatic contrasts with adjacent low-scale structures. Exceptions may be made where taller buildings are also permitted on the adjoining site.

Program CDP-4.8A: Building Stepbacks. *Use tools such as stepbacks and daylight planes to improve height transitions where taller buildings are constructed near lower-scale buildings. The perceived height and bulk of new buildings can be reduced through measures such as stepping back the upper floors, articulating the building elevation, and using varied exterior building materials and colors.*

Policy CDP-4.9: Parking and Driveways

Encourage parking and circulation design that supports pedestrian movement and ensures the safety of all travelers, including locating parking to the side or rear of buildings, limiting driveway cuts and widths, and minimizing large expanses of pavement. Parking should be screened from the street by landscaping and should provide easy access to building entrances.

Policy CDP-4.10: Landscape Design

Encourage privately owned and maintained landscaping that contributes to neighborhood quality, complements building forms and materials, improves stormwater management and drainage, and enhances the streetscape. Natural elements such as plants should be an integral part of site development and should enhance the built environment.

Program CDP-4.10A: Zoning Regulations. Periodically evaluate the landscape provisions in the Zoning Ordinance to respond to climate change, hazards, water availability, shading needs, and other issues. Zoning should support the City's goal of having a strongly landscaped character.

See the Conservation Element for additional policies on water-efficiency and the use of trees and native plants for urban cooling and habitat enhancement.

Program CDP-4.10B: Industrial Landscape Design. Ensure that landscape guidelines for new industrial and general commercial development provide effective buffering, while also supporting water conservation, water quality, and fire hazard reduction goals.

Program CDP-4.10C: Parking Lot Landscaping Requirements. Review City standards for parking lot landscaping to ensure that they adequately address visual screening, environmental quality, and climate-related issues. Standards should allow for solar shade structures within parking areas.

See the Conservation/Climate Element for landscape policies related to urban runoff and water quality

Policy CDP-4.11: Lighting

Encourage lighting for safety and security while preventing excessive light spillover and glare. Lighting should complement building and landscape design.

See Conservation/Climate Element Policy C-1.19 for additional guidance on dark skies.

Program CDP-4.11A: Lighting Plans. Continue to require lighting plans for projects proposing exterior lighting. The design review process should be used to evaluate lighting for safety, consistency with dark sky objectives, and potential mitigation to reduce negative impacts on nearby properties.

Policy CDP-4.12: Commercial Signage

Encourage commercial signage that provides the visual identification necessary for business success, while enhancing the building, streetscape, and surrounding area.

Program CDP-4.12A: Sign Regulations. Periodically update the City's sign regulations to reflect new technologies, materials, and design trends, and to ensure that regulations comply with all applicable state and federal laws.



Goal CDP-5: **Protection of Cultural Heritage**

Protect and maintain San Rafael's historic and archaeological resources as visible reminders of the city's cultural heritage.

*As a mission city established over 200 years ago, San Rafael values its history and the people, places, and buildings that have shaped it. **Historic preservation can provide** a strong sense of place and civic identity, **bolster** the city's economy, and **support** local sustainability goals.*

Historic Resources

Historic buildings and sites are an important part of San Rafael's identity and add to the character of the city. As the oldest city in Marin County, historic resources provide an essential link to the city's identity **and are an important community value**. The City has adopted regulations to protect specific properties that have been designated as local landmarks. Additional efforts are needed to encourage and incentivize the adaptive reuse of older buildings, raise awareness of San Rafael history, and update historic resource inventories.

In **1976**, the City completed the *San Rafael Historical/Architectural Survey* identifying and rating the architectural and historical significance of selected buildings and areas. Approximately 300 structures were evaluated and listed using methods established by the California Office of Historic Preservation. Fifteen of these sites—plus a historic sign—have been formally designated as local historic landmarks (see Figure 5-5). There are also three locally designated historic districts, including the Victorian Village (1623-27 Fifth

Avenue) and French Quarter (901-911 Irwin Street) in the Downtown area, and 1811-1817 Grand Avenue (west side of 101), north of Downtown.

Several additional sites have not been formally listed by the City of San Rafael but are on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Marin County Civic Center.⁵ There are also National Register sites outside the city and in the San Rafael Planning Area, including China Camp, the Miller Creek School Indian Mound, and the Dixie Schoolhouse. Within the city itself, high concentrations of older buildings exist in Downtown, Forbes Addition, Gerstle Park, Montecito-Happy Valley, and Dominican.

In 2019, as part of the Downtown Precise Plan effort, an updated Historical/Architectural Survey was completed for the Downtown area. A total of 572 properties were evaluated and nearly 180 met the criteria for being potentially historic. These properties were further evaluated and rated. There were 42 buildings identified as eligible historic resources, 50 identified as contributing resources, and 31 identified as needing further evaluation. Another 36 individual historic resources were identified and two areas were identified as meeting State historic district criteria. The Downtown Precise Plan includes recommendations to conserve these resources while enhancing their economic potential and contribution to Downtown's authenticity. Historic preservation is not just about saving old buildings—it is also an important economic development strategy and a way to attract visitors, build civic pride, and celebrate the city's legacy.

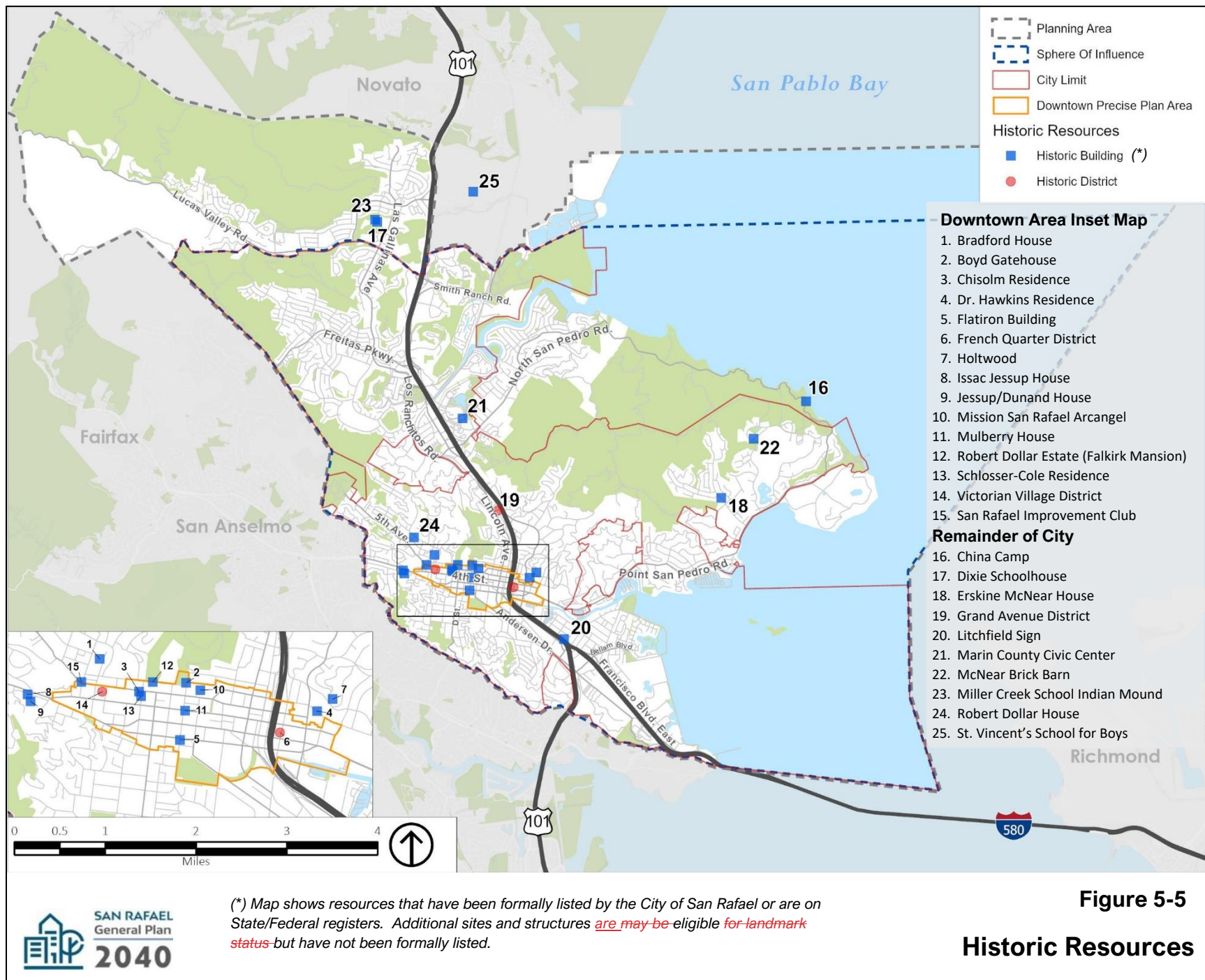
City policy has been to protect and build upon San Rafael's historic character. The City adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1978, establishing guidelines for remodeling or demolishing locally designated historic buildings and structures within locally designated districts. The ordinance is implemented by the Design Review Board and Planning Commission. In addition, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) typically requires that demolition of a historic resource or significant modifications to the exterior that reduce historic value is preceded by preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Changes to historic resources usually require evaluation by a qualified architectural historian.

The number of eligible historic resources in San Rafael has grown substantially since the 1978+1986 survey. Structures are deemed potentially worthy of preservation when they become 50 years old or greater, meaning that buildings constructed after 1930 between 1936 and 1970 were largely excluded from earlier inventories. Given that this was the period of San Rafael's most rapid growth, there are likely many uncatalogued resources. There are also many structures built before the 1930s+1936 that may also warrant further study. The policies below include a recommendation to expand the City's historic resources inventory and better define San Rafael's historic context, ensuring that these resources are well managed in the future.

Archaeological Resources

"Archaeological resources" are the material remains of past human life and behavior. They include the deposits and remains left by local Native Americans and other early inhabitants. These sites are primarily located at the base of the hills on the perimeter of the San Pedro Peninsula and in the Miller Creek area of unincorporated North San Rafael. A portion of the Miller Creek School site served as a central village in the Gallinas Valley for at least 3,000 years.

The City of San Rafael protects known archeological resources to the maximum extent feasible. The Community Development Department maintains an archaeological sensitivity database based on parcels and proximity to potentially sensitive sites. Data includes parcels that have been examined for archaeological remains, known archaeological sites, National, State, and local landmark locations, recognized historic building locations, and the archaeological sensitivity zones established by the data. Much of this data is confidential to avoid trespassing and vandalism. Although archaeological sites are not mapped on Figure 5-5, development applications are reviewed to determine their proximity to such resources.



If an archeological site is uncovered during construction, activity is ~~stopped~~ ~~halted~~ and an examination is made by a qualified archeologist in consultation with Native American organizations. Work can resume when appropriate mitigation measures are implemented. The City has adopted an Ordinance with procedures and requirements for archaeological resource protection.

Policy CDP-5.1 Historic Buildings and Areas

Preserve buildings and areas with special and recognized historic, architectural or aesthetic value, including but not limited to those on the San Rafael Historical/Architectural Survey. New development and redevelopment should respect architecturally and historically significant buildings and areas.

Program CDP-5.1A: Preservation Ordinance. *Continue to implement the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Ordinance should be modified to include updated procedures to mitigate impacts from the demolition, destruction, or alteration of historic resources, reviewed at least once every 10 years to ensure that its criteria, classifications, and procedures provide the most effective measures to assess proposed changes to historic properties and are consistent with Secretary of the Interior standards.*

Program CDP-5.1B: Oversight Responsibilities. *Create a more formal means of oversight for review of planning and building applications affecting historic resources. This could include a contract with an architectural historian, or an advisory committee convened as needed to advise the Planning Commission ~~and Design Review Board~~ on matters and policies related to preservation or the modification of historic structures. If an oversight body is created, it should represent diverse perspectives and interests.*

Program CDP-5.1C: Certified Local Government (CLG) Designation. *Contact the National Park Service State Office and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to review the necessary steps for San Rafael to become a designated CLG. The designation allows for streamlining, greater local control over preservation decisions, funding opportunities, and technical assistance.*

Policy CDP-5.2 Inventorying Historic Resources

Maintain and periodically update inventories of local historic resources, using methods that are consistent with state and federal criteria. ~~Balance these criteria to~~ reflect local values ~~and avoid, and do not~~ unreasonably constrain ~~ts on~~ property rights ~~and interests~~. Historic resources may include sites associated with important historic events or people, archaeological resources, and landscape elements, in addition to older buildings.

Program CDP-5.2A: Context Statement. *Prepare a citywide historic context statement to provide the framework for evaluating a property's historic significance and integrity.*

Program CDP-5.2B: Inventory Update. *~~Continue to Regularly~~ update the City's Historical/Architecture Survey, which is an inventory of buildings of architectural value, historic buildings and/or districts and historic elements such as signs, monuments, and gates. A priority should be placed on neighborhoods with large concentrations of older structures, as well as areas most likely to experience development pressure in the future. [Inset: Historic Surveys Over the Years]*

Program CDP-5.2C: Criteria for Designation. *Review and adjust the criteria for designation of historic resources so they align with those of state and federal preservation agencies.*

Program CDP-5.2D: Additional Landmarking.

Based on updated historic preservation data, identify additional structures or sites for local and/or state landmark status and/or potential nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The process for local landmark designation, including applications, fees, and approval, should be updated and clarified.

Policy CDP-5.3: Districts

Encourage the formation of historic or architectural conservation districts in areas where important historic resources are concentrated and where there is property owner and community support for such designations. Such districts should provide for preservation, restoration, and greater awareness of the resources they contain, while providing financial and property tax incentives for property owners.

Program CDP-5.3A: Downtown Districts.

Consider the designation of an additional historic districts in Downtown San Rafael based on the 2019 Downtown Precise Plan field survey of Downtown properties.

Program CDP-5.3B: Conservation Districts.

Consider the use of Conservation Districts as an alternative to historic districts or the designation of individual landmarks (see text box).

Program CDP-5.3C: Eichler Mid-Century Neighborhoods. Recognize the Eichler, Kenney, and Alliance subdivisions of North San Rafael as a defining part of San Rafael's architectural heritage. Continue to take steps to preserve the characteristic features of these Eichler homes and neighborhoods, including height and roofline modifications.

Policy CDP-5.4: Preservation Incentives

Create innovative incentives that encourage stewardship of San Rafael's historic resources. Incentives should be enacted before (or concurrently with) placing additional restrictions on historic properties, to ensure that preservation makes economic sense.

Program CDP-5.4A: Zoning and Development Incentives. Support the use of transfer of development rights and façade easements to encourage preservation of historic buildings.

Program CDP-5.4B: Local Financial Incentives. Pursue the following financial incentives to support historic preservation activities:

- (a) dDevelopment of a local Mills Act program to allow contracts with the owners of historic properties meeting criteria to be defined by the City. The contracts allow for reduced



Conservation Districts

Conservation Districts generally cover larger areas than historic districts but have less intensive oversight. Properties in such districts are identified as contributing or non-contributing, depending on the characteristics and context of the area. Contributing properties would be subject to additional consideration when alterations, additions, or demolition is proposed. Although no Conservation Districts are proposed in General Plan 2040, this is a tool that could be considered in the future to conserve areas with large numbers of older structures.

Photo Credit: Matthew X Kiernon Big Apple Images

Photo Credit: Matthew X Kiernan Big Apple Images



Is it “Historic”---or Just Old?

Not every old building is considered “historic”. State and federal standards establish specific criteria for historic buildings. At least one of the following characteristics must apply:

- It is associated with significant events in history.
- It is associated with the lives of people significant to the past
- It embodies distinctive characteristics, construction techniques, or other factors that make it a unique structure with historical value.
- It yields important information about a certain time period.

The Falkirk Mansion, pictured above, does indeed meet these criteria and has been designated as a historic resource by the City. It is also on the National Register of Historic Places.

property taxes in exchange for an agreement to maintain the historic integrity and visibility of the structure.

- ~~(b) In addition, enact r~~Reductions or waivers of local permitting fees for qualifying historic preservation projects.
- ~~(c) Creation of a historic preservation mitigation fund for developments that may impact historic resources, with the proceeds used to support preservation activities.~~
- ~~(d) Arrangements with the commercial brokerage community to bank and transfer development rights from historic properties to receiving sites (not yet identified)~~
- ~~(b)(e) Establishment of a nonprofit trust whose function is to restore, maintain, and lease publicly owned historic buildings (such as Falkirk Mansion and the Boyd Gatehouse).~~

Program CDP-5.4C: Non-Local Financial Incentives

Support financial assistance for preservation through state and federal grants and loans, tax credits, National Trust Preservation funds, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, and similar programs.

Policy CDP-5.5: Adaptive Reuse

Encourage the adaptation and reuse of historic and older buildings as a way to preserve San Rafael’s heritage, especially where the original use of the building is no longer viable.

Program CDP-5.5A: California Historic Building Code. Use the State historic building code to relieve historic buildings from modern code requirements, thus making it easier to reuse the building. Explore other incentivizes or code changes that allow interior spaces in older buildings to be more easily and affordably updated.

Program CDP-5.5B: Zoning. Investigate zoning exceptions for historic structures, such as reduced on-site parking, setback, and driveway width requirements. The range of permitted or conditionally permitted uses in historic structures should be expanded to make them more viable for reuse.

Policy CDP-5.6: Protecting the Integrity of Historic Properties

Ensure that modifications to designated historic properties, including additions, alterations, and new structures, are visually compatible with the property's contributing features, as defined by the San Rafael Municipal Code.

Program CD-5.6A: Certificates of Appropriateness. Continue existing requirements for "Certificates of Appropriateness" (COA) for alterations to designated historic resources. Criteria for COAs should be consistent with State and federal Secretary of the Interior standards.

Program CDP-5.6B: Design Guidelines. Address historic preservation in the City's design guidelines, including successful examples of (a) adaptive reuse, alterations, and other changes; and (b) new infill development in the context of an older neighborhood, including examples of contemporary architecture. Infill development in older areas does not need to mimic historic development but should acknowledge and respect its context.

Program CDP-5.6C: Landscapes and Natural Features. Consider landscapes, gardens, mature trees, and natural features as contextually relevant when defining historic value. Encourage the preservation of such features when they are determined to be significant.

Policy CDP-5.7: Maintenance of Historic Properties

Strongly support the maintenance of historic properties and avoid their deterioration to the point where rehabilitation is no longer feasible (e.g., "demolition by neglect").

Program CDP-5.7A: Incentives. Support property owner efforts to maintain and restore historic properties through fee reductions, tax credits, and Code exceptions.

Policy CDP-5.8: Preservation Advocacy

Encourage local preservation efforts by community organizations. Provide technical support to such groups and encourage their participation in City-sponsored preservation activities.

Program CDP-5.8A: Public Recognition. Support programs that publicly recognize property owners who have done an exceptional job preserving an historic property

Program CDP-5.8B: Volunteers. Engage volunteers in historic surveys and similar activities to the greatest extent feasible, with professional assistance as needed.

Program CDP-5.8C: Public Events and Social Media. Encourage organizations such as the Marin History Museum and San Rafael Heritage to produce events, publications, social media, and exhibits about the historic resources that exist in San Rafael.

Policy CDP-5.9: Preservation Education

Encourage historic preservation activities and programs that heighten awareness of historic resources and the ways that architecture and landscape define the city's character.

Program CDP-5.9A: Preservation Reference Materials. Support the efforts of local organizations to maintain and expand collections of historic photographs, artifacts, books, media, oral histories, and other resources, and to make these materials available through on-line archives.

Program CDP-5.9B: Plaques and Markers. Support efforts to install plaques and markers recognizing historic locations and the locations of important historic events in San Rafael.

Program CDP-5.9C: School Programs. Support local school efforts to incorporate San Rafael history lessons, events, and field trips into their curriculum and programs.

Policy CDP-5.10: Economic Benefits of Preservation

Leverage San Rafael's historic resources to create jobs, attract visitors, and generate local revenue. Recognize the value of preservation in placemaking, including branding and marketing areas such as Downtown San Rafael.

Program CDP-5.10A: Walking Tours, Trails, and Historic Festivals. Encourage walking tours, historic trails, mobile apps, and history fairs and programs that attract visitors. Partner with the Marin Convention and Visitors Bureau, [Marin History Museum](#), [San Rafael Heritage](#), and other organizations to promote events celebrating San Rafael history.

Program CDP-5.10B: Marin County Civic Center. Work with the County of Marin to encourage and support preservation of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Civic Center complex and grounds as a nationally important historic architectural site and major destination for regional, national, and international visitors.

Program CDP-5.10C: Mission San Rafael. Promote San Rafael's historic origin as a "mission city," and Mission San Rafael Arcangel as a destination of historic interest.

See also Policy EV-3.3 on authenticity as an economic development strategy

Photo Credit: Scott Stewart-Johnson



Remembering China Camp

One of San Rafael's most important historic resources is China Camp, located on the north shore of the San Pedro Peninsula. A Chinese shrimp-fishing village, home to more than 500 Chinese immigrants, thrived on the site in the 1880s. Some of the original structures, including this shrimp-drying room, remain today and provide an important reminder of the many cultures that have San Rafael's heritage.

Policy CDP-5.11: Sustainability

Recognize the potential sustainability benefits of historic preservation, including reduced resource consumption, reduced landfilled waste, reduced energy use, and the need for fewer raw materials.

Program CDP-5.11A: Energy Retrofits. *Encourage the use of energy efficiency incentives to assist in the rehabilitation of older buildings, keeping in mind the importance of maintaining historic integrity.*

Policy CDP-5.12: Inclusive Approach to Preservation

Ensure that preservation efforts are culturally inclusive and recognize the contributions of all racial and ethnic communities to the city's history and development. Sites and structures that are culturally important to specific ethnic communities, including those associated with events and people, should be part of local preservation efforts.

Program CDP-5.12A: Community Heritage Programming. *Engage representatives of the different ethnic communities, as well as preservation organizations and San Rafael schools, universities, and colleges to document and preserve the history of each community in San Rafael, including sites and structures of historic importance. Support educational curriculum that raises awareness of the city's cultural heritage and includes non-Eurocentric perspectives.*

Policy CDP-5.13: Protection of Archaeological Resources.

Protect significant archaeological resources by:

- a) Consulting the City's archaeological resource data base prior to issuing demolition or construction permits in known sensitive areas.
- b) Providing information and direction to property owners to make them aware of these resources and the procedures to be followed if they are discovered on-site.
- c) Identifying, when possible, archaeological resources and potential impacts on such resources.
- d) Implementing measures to preserve and protect archaeological resources, including fines and penalties for violations.

Program CDP-5.13A: Archeological Resources Ordinance. *Continue to implement the existing Modify the City's Archeological Resources Ordinance to include construction best management practices to follow if a potentially significant archaeological resources is encountered during ground disturbing activities. and the City's Archeological Resources data base.*

Program CDP-5.13B: Human Remains. *When permitting ground-disturbing activities, require that any human remains encountered are treated in accordance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, Public Resources Code 5097.98, and the California Code of Regulations Section 15064(e), which prescribe the mandated procedures of conduct in such cases.*

Policy CDP-5.14: Tribal Cultural Resources

Coordinate with representatives of the Native American community to protect historic Native American resources and raise awareness of San Rafael's Native American heritage.

Program CDP-5.14A: AB 52 Compliance. *Implement the requirements of Assembly Bill 52 by providing opportunities for meaningful input from Native American representatives in the development review process.*

Program CDP-5.14B: Protection of Tribal Resources. *Incorporate standard approval conditions in future development projects that ensure that Native American resources are protected during construction. In the event tribal resources are discovered, earth-disturbing work must be temporarily suspended pending evaluation by a qualified archaeologist and an appropriate Native American representative. Where appropriate, a mitigation plan shall be developed in accordance with state guidelines and tribal input.*

Policy CDP-5.15: Paleontological Resource Protection

Prohibit the damage or destruction of paleontological resources, including prehistorically significant fossils, ruins, monuments, or objects of antiquity, that could potentially be caused by future development.

Program CDP-5.15A: Paleontological Resource Mitigation Protocol. *Prepare and adopt a list of protocols in accordance with Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards that protect or mitigate impacts to paleontological resources, including requiring grading and construction projects to cease activity when a paleontological resource is discovered so it can be safely removed.*