

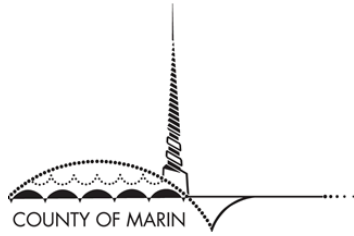
BLACK POINT/GREEN POINT COMMUNITIES PLAN

Planning Commission Recommended Draft

July 27, 2015



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Black Point railroad depot

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Image credits

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List of Acronyms

CDA:	Marin County Community Development Agency
CWP:	Marin Countywide Plan
CoSMoS:	Coastal Storm Modeling System
DPW:	Marin County Department of Public Works
FEMA:	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM:	Flood Insurance Rate Maps
LAFCO:	Local Agency Formation Commission
MCOSD:	Marin County Open Space District
NMWD:	North Marin Water District
NFPD:	Novato Fire Protection District
NSD:	Novato Sanitary District
OCOF:	Our Coast, Our Future
OWTS:	Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems
RUG:	Ridge and Upland Greenbelt
SFRDG:	Single-family Residential Design Guidelines
SLR:	Sea Level Rise
SMART:	Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit
SOI:	Sphere of Influence
USGS:	United States Geological Survey
UGB:	Urban Growth Boundary
USA:	Urban Services Area

Document accessibility

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Photo credit: Cindy Pickett

Executive Summary

The Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan (Plan) is a planning document that sets forth goals, policies, and programs to address specific issues and shape future development in the community. Part of the Marin Countywide Plan, the community plan contains specific policies to carry out community goals and provide guidance to decision makers in the evaluation of development based on the unique concerns, characteristics, and priorities of the community. The Plan is a product of a multi-year public engagement process to address issues and opportunities in the planning area. This Plan serves as an update to the original Black Point Community Plan adopted in 1978.

The Plan's nine chapters address the following topics: 1) Introduction, 2) Background, 3) Natural Resources, 4) Environmental Hazards, 5) Community Character and Land Use, 6) Transportation, 7) Public Facilities and Services, 8) Parks and Recreation, and 9) Public Safety.

The Plan discusses a number of factors that have shaped how the community has grown over time. Because the area is adjacent to the

bay plains and marsh areas, which have limited development opportunities, development has been focused along the hillside areas to preserve the bay plains as scenic vistas and as community separators.

The Natural Resources chapter includes new policies to address the protection of wildlife habitat and movement corridors by: 1) encouraging the use of wildlife friendly fencing and avoiding the placement of structures that block wildlife movement; 2) encouraging the use of drought tolerant, fire resistant, and native plants; 3) discouraging the use of pesticides, herbicides, and rodenticides; and 4) encouraging residents to develop an outreach program to inform their neighbors on the importance of maintaining ecological connectivity and to become active stewards of the land. A new policy also encourages property owners to identify and remove trees afflicted with Sudden Oak Death.

The Environmental Hazards chapter focuses on fire risk, earthquakes, flooding, and sea level rise. The risk of fire is a significant ongoing threat to the community based on the area's vegetation, topography, and climate.

Narrow roads, lack of access, and development patterns also exacerbate the problem. The Plan includes a map of evacuation routes, one of the first community plans to provide such information, as well as a number of "Options for Consideration" or ideas that residents may want to further explore to enhance fire protection and emergency preparedness in the community. Background information and maps describing how the area's topography and geology play a role in ground shaking and liquefaction susceptibility from earthquakes is also provided. Flooding is also a concern, and the Plan provides an overview of ongoing efforts by the Flood Control District, working in conjunction with the Marin County Watershed Program, to minimize flooding in the community and undertake projects that integrate both flood protection and environmental restoration. Finally, this chapter acknowledges community concerns regarding sea level rise and lays out conceptual guidance supporting future work to determine specific impacts and appropriate adaptation strategies for the community.

Chapter 5 addresses the topics of land use and zoning, home size, setbacks, legal nonconforming lots, light pollution (night

skies), and affordable housing. The Plan also includes a new policy encouraging specific land use types in the Village Center area and recommends minimizing light pollution to protect the night sky.

Chapter 6 addresses transportation and related concerns with roads, such as road maintenance, paper streets, speed enforcement, and parking, in addition to public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian access, and equestrian trails. Transportation policies continue to maintain the rural character of the area's streets while allowing improvements for public safety purposes. New policies consider retaining paper streets for public and emergency access, and propose including separate pathways on key neighborhood roads to improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to recreation, open space, and other natural amenities within the community. Existing policies on road improvements in the Gridiron and Crest Road are maintained.

The Public Facilities and Services chapter addresses water supply, wastewater management, and annexations and sphere of influence. The area's two-acre minimum lot size was established in part to protect soils and water quality since the community relies on on-site septic systems for sewage

treatment. The Plan describes how the use of septic systems has helped retain the area's rural character by limiting more intensive development. An existing policy supporting the continued use of septic systems as the primary means of waste disposal is carried forward, as well as an existing policy to maintain the area's unincorporated status.

The Parks and Recreation chapter describes how parks and open space preserves are planned, managed and funded, and includes an overview of the various parks and recreation amenities in and around the planning area. An existing policy to limit intense recreational use or development within the Day Island State Wildlife Area is continued, while a new policy is added to continue to support passive recreation uses within the Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve.

Public safety is an important aspect of quality of life. While the community is considered a safe place to live and crime rates in the county are relatively low, a small number of recent home break-ins and thefts have created heightened awareness and concern regarding safety. The Public Safety chapter identifies a number of potential strategies residents may utilize to reduce the risk of crime in their neighborhood.

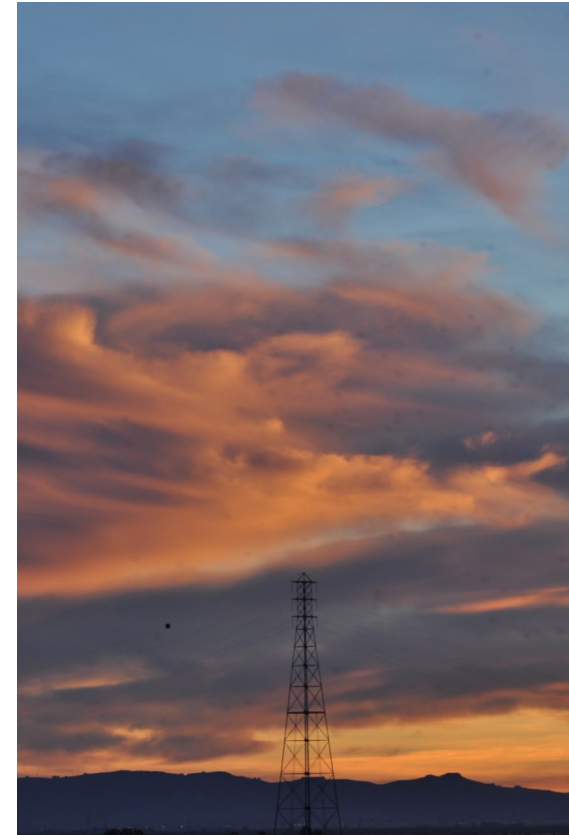


Photo credit: Cindy Pickett

Summary of Policies

The following policies are intended to achieve the goals of the community plan. The Plan policies are found at the end of each chapter, and are summarized below:

Natural Resources

NR-1 Wildlife Habitat and Movement Corridors

Encourage the protection of wildlife habitat and movement corridors, where feasible. Consider wildlife-friendly gardens that provide food, water, cover and a place for wildlife to raise their young, where appropriate, as well as the use of wildlife-friendly fencing. Fence types, roads, structures, and outdoor lighting that would significantly inhibit or obstruct wildlife movement, especially access to water, should be avoided.

[New Policy]

NR-2 Outreach and Education

Community members are encouraged to develop a neighborhood outreach program to inform those living and working within the planning area about living with wildlife and the importance of maintaining ecological connectivity, and to educate residents on how to become active stewards of the land. This program may also include efforts to educate residents about the potential effects that pesticides, insecticides, herbicides and rodenticides may have on the ecosystem.

[New Policy]

NR-3 Landscaping in Wildlife Corridors

Encourage the use of drought tolerant, native and fire resistant plants in landscaping areas adjacent to and within a wildlife

habitat and movement corridor, and discourage the use of invasive, non-native plants that can supplant native plants and reduce habitat integrity.

[New Policy]

NR-4 Pesticides, Insecticides, Herbicides, and Rodenticides

Discourage the use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides. Encourage natural eradication methods to control rodent populations, such as barn owls. Residents are encouraged to install barn owl boxes near garden and yard areas.

[New Policy]

NR-5 Sudden Oak Death

Encourage property owners to identify and remove trees that are afflicted with Sudden Oak Death, and to consult with experts to determine appropriate best management practices to prevent and treat infestation.

[New Policy]

NR-6 Marsh and Wetlands

Development projects located on the marsh and wetlands located west of State Route 37 and south of the Petaluma River must be dependent on an essential transportation or utility project; and must not adversely impact the public trust. There must be no feasible, less environmentally damaging alternative location for the type of development being considered.

[Adapted from Policy 5, p. 50]

Community Character and Land Use

CC-1 Rezone Marin Audubon Properties

Rezone the following properties owned by Marin Audubon Society to Open Area (OA) and, where applicable, amend the Countywide Plan land use designation to Open Space (OS) at the request of the property owner:

Rezone to OA:

- Two large marsh parcels along Atherton Avenue: 153-190-23 and 27.

Rezone to OA and amend the Countywide Plan land use designation to OS:

- Three small parcels along Norton Avenue: 157-081-03 and 04; 157-082-04;
- The Norton Pond parcel: 157-111-32; and
- Five small parcels in the Gridiron area: 157-132-14 and 21; 157-143-02, 11, and 32.

This request should be considered in the context of a broader initiative by the Community Development Agency to rezone publicly owned and select properties on a countywide basis to OA. Additional properties acquired by the Marin Audubon Society in the planning area should be rezoned to Open Area.
[New Policy]

CC-2 Regulate Home Size

[Deleted by Planning Commission on 7/27/2015]

CC-3 Require Minimum Setbacks

[Deleted by Planning Commission on 7/27/2015]

CC-4 The Village Center Zoning

Maintain the existing Village Commercial/Residential District (VCR) zoning to maintain the community's existing small-

scale, historical character. While a variety of uses are allowed under the zoning, the following types of uses are encouraged, such as:

- Plant nurseries;
- Small child day-care/small family day-care homes; theaters and meeting halls (for a community center);
- Residential uses;
- Grocery stores and restaurants (including cafes); second hand stores; antique retail stores; studios for art, dance, music, photography, etc.
- Public parks and playgrounds;
- Community garden; and
- Massage and meditation center.

While the above uses are encouraged, all uses allowed under the VCR zoning are permitted subject to compliance with the Development Code. Further, formula or "chain store" operations that are inconsistent with the village character and scale of the surrounding community are discouraged.

[New Policy]

CC-5 Gridiron Zoning

Retain the existing A2 (Agriculture, Limited) zoning in the Gridiron neighborhood to permit continued residential development on a limited scale.

[Adapted from Program 1, p. 46]

CC-6 Merger of Parcels

Continue to promote the merger of substandard sized parcels to minimum lot area requirements commensurate with on-site (septic tank) waste disposal constraints inherent in the area. (See also the Public Facilities and Services chapter).

[Adopted from Policy 2, p. 46]

CC-7 Minimize Light Pollution

Protect the rural night-time atmosphere of the community by minimizing the amount of exterior building and site lighting to that which is necessary for safety purposes. Street lights are not permitted unless required for safety purposes as determined by the Department of Public Works. Refer to the Single-family Residential Design Guidelines for additional guidance.

[Adapted from the Indian Valley Specific Plan, p. 7]

Transportation**TR-1 Maintain Rural Character of Streets**

In order to maintain the rural character of the community, new streets and roads should be developed at the minimum scale commensurate with anticipated traffic projections and fire protection purposes.

[Adapted from Policy 3, p.81]

TR-2 Gridiron Road Improvements

Require as a condition of approval within the Gridiron area the improvement of interior roadways subject to further analysis by the Department of Public Works. Cul-de-sacs or similar improvements to accommodate fire protection vehicles near the ends of Norton, Holly and Grandview Avenues should be given priority consideration.

[Adapted from Policy 5, p.82]

TR-3 Crest Road

Consider additional access routes between Atherton Avenue and Crest Road, to improve fire protection access and to help redistribute traffic destined for Crest Road and the cul-de-sacs along Crest Road, where feasible.

[Adapted from Policy 8, p. 84]

TR-4 Paper Streets

Consider retaining paper streets for public and emergency access, as well as for wildlife corridors, where feasible.

[New policy]

TR-5 Road Maintenance of Private Streets

The owner of any private right-of-way easement is responsible for its repair and maintenance, consistent with California Civil Code Section 845. Property owners abutting private streets may establish their own road maintenance program or organization to address repair and maintenance concerns. Advice in such matters and sample road maintenance agreements are available from the Land Development Division of the Marin County Department of Public Works.

[New policy]

TR-6 Gridiron Service Road

Retain the service road that extends around the south base of the Gridiron area and the Vince Mulroy Woodland and Wildlife Preserve, and exits at the golf course as an alternative emergency access route for both residents and emergency service vehicles.

[Adapted from Policy 6, p. 82]

TR-7 Crest Road Connection to Laguna Vista Drive

Maintain the connection between Crest Road and Laguna Vista Drive in the northerly component of the planning area to serve only as:

- a. An emergency services roadway for fire protection vehicles; and
- b. An equestrian, bicycle, and pedestrian trail.

Maintain the existing emergency gate to prohibit the connection of these two roadways for normal vehicular access, since such a change could result in additional traffic

impacts on the otherwise rural character of the area.

[Adapted from Policy 7, p. 83]

TR-8 Public Transportation

Consider the establishment of regular commuter bus service from the planning area, linking to existing routes and destinations within Marin County, where feasible. Encourage transit providers to determine whether expanded transit service routes and/or schedules from the planning area to the North Novato Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit station are warranted once train service is operational.

[Adapted from Policy 2, p. 80]

TR-9 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to recreation, open space, and other areas within the community. Consider pathways for bicyclists, pedestrians and other users on key neighborhood roads, including but not limited to, Atherton and Olive Avenues, Crest Road, School Road, and Harbor Drive.

[New policy]

TR-10 Equestrian Trails

Maintain existing equestrian trails. Where feasible, new development should include trails for bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian use.

[Adapted from Policy 9, p. 84]

Parks and Recreation

PK-1 Day Island

Support limiting intense recreational use or development within the Day Island State Wildlife Area.

[Adapted from Policy 7, p. 51]

PK-2 Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve

Support passive recreation uses such as walking, hiking, biking, wildlife observation and nature study within the Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve.

[New Policy]

Public Facilities and Services

PFS-1 Wastewater Disposal

Continue to use Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems as the primary means of waste disposal, where feasible.

[Adapted from Policy 1, p. 41]

PFS-2 Maintain Unincorporated Status

Maintain the community's unincorporated status.

[Adapted from Policy 3, p. 72]



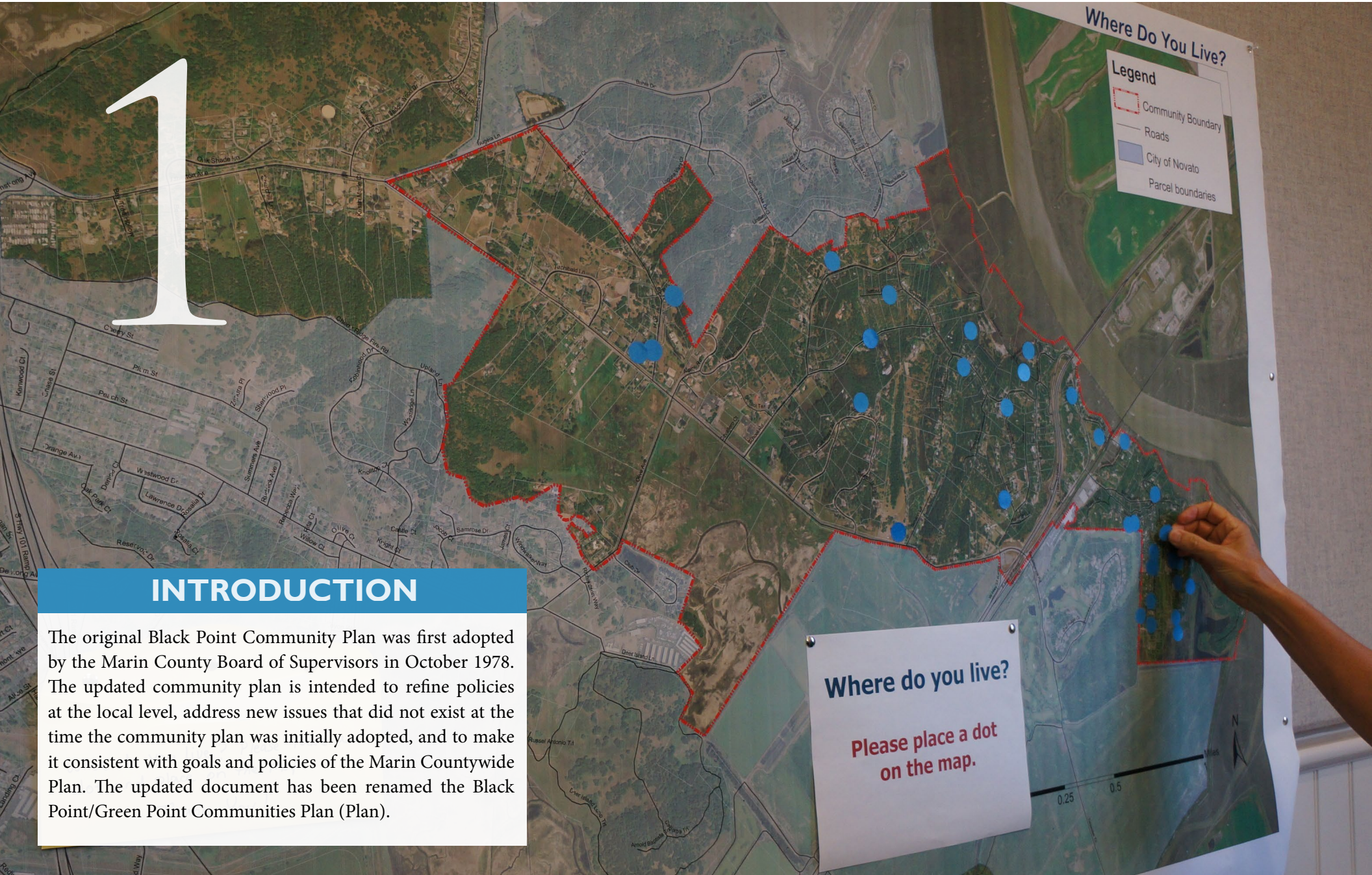
Sunrise over the Petaluma River

Credit: Susanna Mahoney

1

INTRODUCTION

The original Black Point Community Plan was first adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors in October 1978. The updated community plan is intended to refine policies at the local level, address new issues that did not exist at the time the community plan was initially adopted, and to make it consistent with goals and policies of the Marin Countywide Plan. The updated document has been renamed the Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan (Plan).



Where Do You Live?

- Legend**
- Community Boundary
 - Roads
 - City of Novato
 - Parcel boundaries

Where do you live?
Please place a dot
on the map.



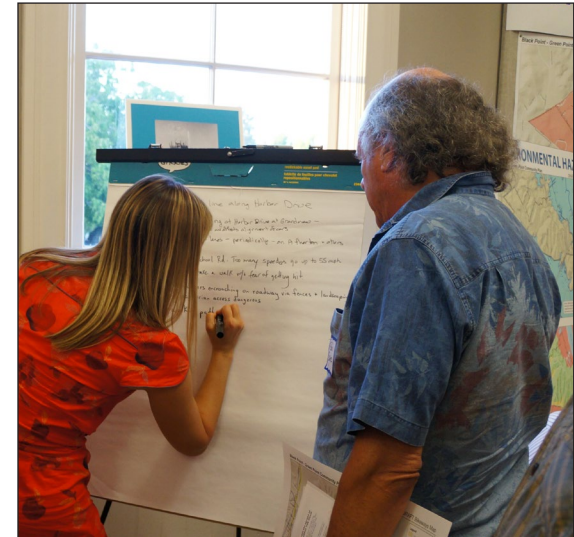
Chapter I: Introduction

The 1978 Black Point Community Plan

Preparation to update the Black Point Community Plan began in early 2013. The Marin County Board of Supervisors selected the Black Point Community Plan as a priority candidate under the County's 2012 Community Plan Update Strategy. The updated approach to community planning focuses on a community's unique characteristics and the efficient use of community resources.

The Black Point Community Plan was initially adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors in October 1978. The update is intended to refine implementation of specific policies at the local level, to address

new issues, and to make the document consistent with the Marin Countywide Plan. The updated community plan continues to maintain the community's semi-rural identity and preserve the natural attributes and features that contribute towards its unique community character and quality of life. No zoning changes are proposed except to rezone certain properties at the request of the property owner, Marin Audubon Society. New issues addressed include wildlife movement and habitat corridors, sudden oak death, sea level rise, dark skies, and other topical areas. In addition, based on community feedback and in recognition that the community has since evolved into distinct areas, the Black Point Community



Participants provide feedback



Community meeting on June 5, 2014



Participant indicates suggested improvements

Plan has been renamed the Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan.

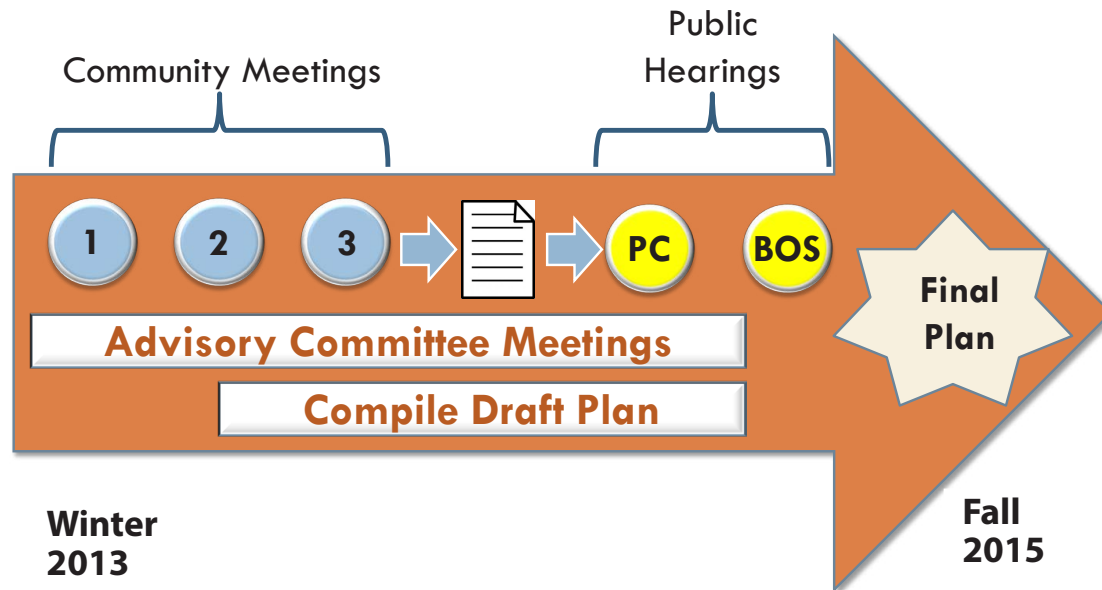
The Black Point Community Plan was updated through ongoing participation of Black Point and Green Point residents. An Advisory Committee of five community representatives first convened in early 2013. The Advisory Committee met regularly with County staff over the course of 26 months—including 24 Advisory Committee meetings to discuss the Plan and provide guidance on the scope, public outreach and engagement, planning process, and policy preparation.

In addition to monthly Advisory Committee meetings, three community-wide public workshops were held to engage residents, enable the sharing of information, ideas and knowledge, and to obtain input and feedback. These workshops were conducted on March 5, 2015, June 5, 2014, and August 28, 2013 (See Figure 1). An initial draft of the community plan was released in early January 2015, and was followed by a public workshop to discuss key issues with the Marin County Planning Commission on January 26, 2015. A revised draft was released in June 2015 and incorporated modifications based on

community and Commission feedback obtained from previous workshops. Residents were also offered opportunities to participate through multiple online topic forums via Open Marin and Survey Monkey. Finally, staff attended meetings of the local Black Point Improvement Club to provide updates on the Plan and obtain feedback.

The Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan was formally considered by the Marin County Planning Commission on July 27, 2015 and approved by the Board of Supervisors on [insert date].

Figure 1. Project Timeline



Relationship to the Marin Countywide Plan

The Marin Countywide Plan (Countywide Plan) applies to all unincorporated areas of the county and establishes an overall policy framework that guides decisions on issues such as land use, transportation, and environmental protection. The Countywide Plan, first adopted in 1973 and most recently updated in 2007, is based on the framework of planning sustainable communities and contains a wide range of goals to address natural systems and agriculture, the built environment, and socioeconomic issues.

The Countywide Plan focuses on the “Three E’s” of sustainability: the environment, the

economy, and social equity. Maximizing the balance of a healthy environment, economic viability, and social equity is important for establishing a sustainable future for the County and for individual communities. The Guiding Principles of the Countywide Plan offer the following overarching sustainability goals:

Environmental Quality

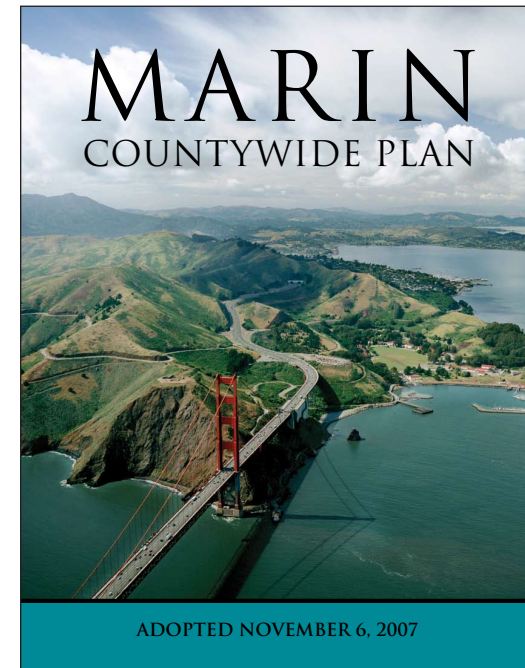
- Link equity, economy, and the environment locally, regionally, and globally;
- Minimize the use of finite resources, and use all resources efficiently and effectively;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming;
- Protect and restore open space, wilderness, and damaged ecosystems, and enhance habitats for biodiversity;
- Protect agricultural lands and work to maintain the County's agricultural heritage, while supporting the production of healthy, fresh, locally grown food; and
- Reduce the use and minimize the release of hazardous materials.

Social Equity

- Protect and expand fair and affordable housing opportunities to meet a diversity of housing needs;
- Cultivate ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity within communities; and
- Support public health, safety, and social justice, and provide equal access to amenities and services.

Economy

- Provide affordable, efficient and effective transportation to better connect jobs, housing, schools, shopping and recreation facilities and which reduces dependence on single occupancy vehicles, conserves resources, improves air quality, and reduces traffic congestion;
- Support locally owned businesses and retain, expand, and attract a diversity of businesses that meet the needs of the residents and strengthen the economic base; and
- Educate and prepare our workforce and all sectors of the community to retain meaningful employment and achieve economic independence.



As a component of the Countywide Plan, the Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan, and all community plans, must be consistent with the provisions of the Countywide Plan. Community plans should also strive to implement these sustainability goals where possible by reinforcing the connections between the wellbeing of community members, cultural richness, economic prosperity, and the environment. To that end, community plans provide additional guidance based on the unique

concerns, characteristics, and priorities of the community. Specifically, the goals, policies and programs of community plans are intended to:

- Highlight what is unique about the community;
- Identify topics of greatest importance to residents;
- Provide direction on how general policies should be applied in the community;
- Provide guidance to landowners, stakeholders, and County decision makers; and
- Help to shape present and future development in the community.

While community plans must be consistent with the goals of the Countywide Plan, they need not duplicate Countywide Plan policies at a local level or replicate other County programs, regulations, or guidelines that are already in place. Community plans focus on topics regulated by the County. It should be noted that community plans may be updated or amended periodically. However, due to resource limitations, they are generally developed with a longer time horizon than the Countywide Plan, which has been updated every decade since its inception in 1973.

Policies for each topic are presented at the end of each chapter. However, in cases where a topic is already subject to an ongoing County planning process or program (e.g. Marin County Parks and Open Space Strategic Plan, Marin County Unincorporated Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, and the Marin County Watershed Program), the Plan identifies concepts that should be considered as part of those programs, such as in the Environmental Hazards and Parks and Recreation chapters.

Finally, to the extent that certain issues are controlled or heavily influenced by government or public agencies other than the County,

the Plan makes reference to those entities and, where appropriate, provides guidance applicable to the regulatory context.

Community Plan Implementation

The Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan will be implemented primarily through the Planning Division’s review of development projects, which are discretionary permits such as Design Reviews, Variances, Use Permits, and Subdivisions. This review is based on criteria in the community plan. In order to approve a development project, findings must be made that the proposal is consistent with the policies and criteria established in the Plan.



Going for a ride

Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Community Plan Goals

Goals reflect core community values and identify what fundamental outcomes are desired. The goals of the Plan are as follows:

••• A Sense of Community

Continue to maintain the planning area as an independent, identifiable, and semi-rural community in unincorporated Marin County.

••• A Preserved Natural Environment

Continue to preserve the natural attributes and features within and around the planning area that contribute to its community character.

••• A High Quality Built Environment

Maintain the community's quality of life by ensuring that infrastructure improvements serve to enhance community safety and do not detract from the semi-rural character.

Effective Growth Management

- Maintain orderly and managed growth and redevelopment in the planning area, as well as in the surrounding unincorporated and incorporated areas, that tend to influence the character of the community.



Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

2

BACKGROUND

The Black Point/Green Point planning area is unique due to its location, setting, and the way in which it has developed. This chapter describes the physical setting, provides context on the relationship to the Marin Countywide Plan's environmental corridors, and includes demographic trends and historical information.

Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Chapter 2: Background

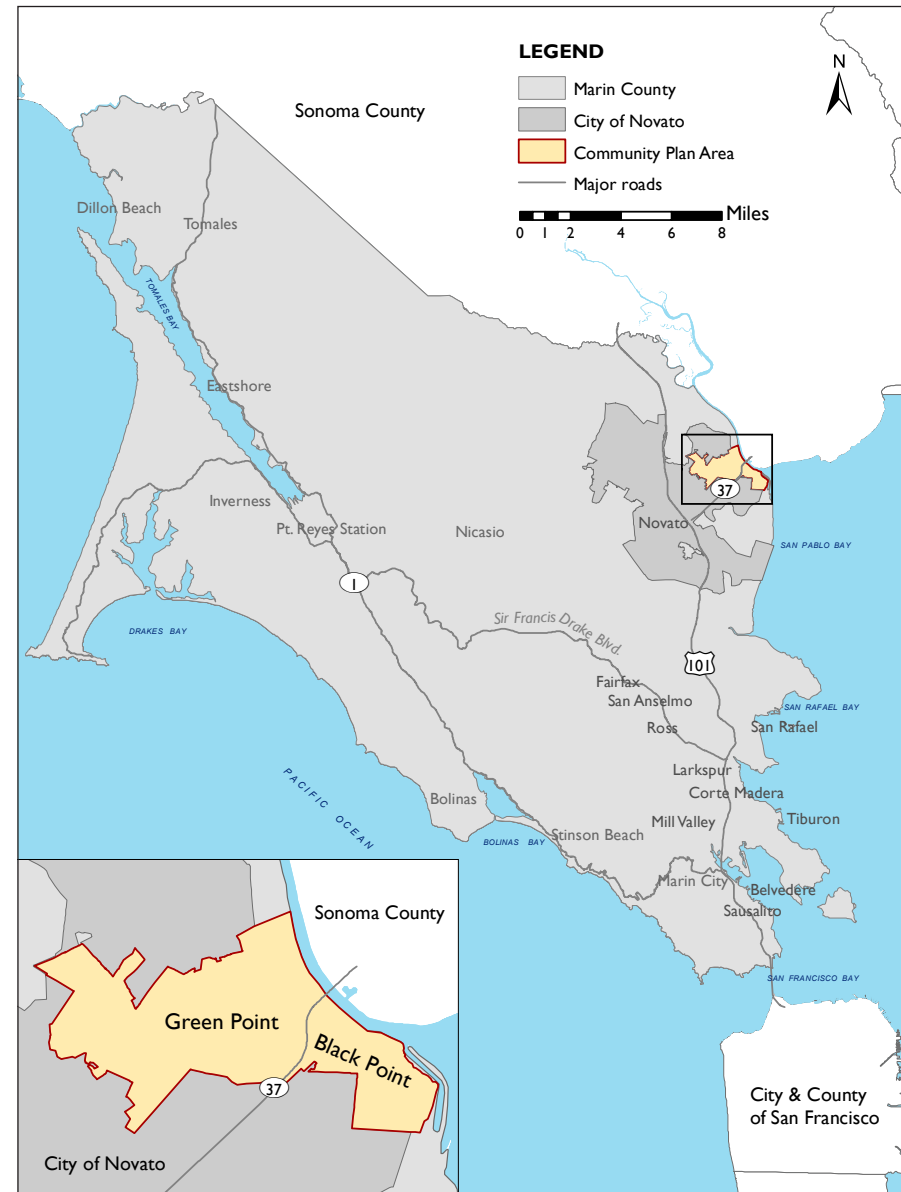
Location

The unincorporated Black Point/Green Point planning area is located approximately 35 miles north of San Francisco in the northeastern edge of the county, abutting the Petaluma River at its entrance to San Pablo Bay and bordering Sonoma County (See Map 1). It is one of a very few riverfront communities in Marin County with the opportunity to enjoy river activities and its amenities. The planning area features low lying tree covered hills surrounded by flat and uninhabited bay plains to its south. The planning area is primarily rural-residential, surrounded by an abundant variety of wildlife and natural vegetation that provide a scenic and serene setting.

Setting

The planning area, encompassing approximately 1,560 acres, is bound on the west by Bahia (located within the City of Novato) and the unincorporated Rush Creek neighborhoods, with the Petaluma River and San Pablo Bay to the north and east. The Bay Club Stonetree Golf Club and subdivision, bay plains, and the Olive Ridge subdivision bound the planning area to the south. Principal access is provided via Atherton Avenue and State Route 37.

Map 1. Location



Neighborhood Areas

Since the planning area was initially subdivided from the original Novato Rancho, it has evolved from a rural countryside settled with ranches and farms, interspersed with small cottages primarily oriented for weekend summer residents, into the semi-rural, quiet, residential bedroom community of today. The “old” Black Point, described in the 1978 Black Point Community Plan as the originally subdivided area, retains many of the area’s vintage cottages, while the largely undeveloped area once called “new” Black Point, also known as Green Point, has since been subdivided and developed into suburban style ranch lots. While the Black Point and Green Point communities have developed distinctive identities over time, they still remain part of one integrated community planning area.

Because the Black Point area was settled first, its homes tend to be older than those in Green Point. Black Point homes are generally smaller since the majority of parcels are less than one acre in size. In contrast, the majority of Green Point parcels are larger than one acre. Most roads in Black Point are privately owned and not County-maintained, while the majority of roads in Green Point are publicly owned and maintained. Access into Black Point is limited to one road while Green Point has several access points. The two areas are also zoned differently,

which means different development regulations and standards may apply. However, despite these differences, all residents share the same goal to maintain the area’s semi-rural identity and preserve its unique natural attributes that make it a desirable place to live.

The Black Point area consists of the hill and canyon area east of State Route 37 and includes both the Gridiron and Village Center neighborhoods. The Gridiron neighborhood is located in the southern portion of the hills and extends southward into the lowlands. The Village Center neighborhood, located adjacent to the Northwestern Pacific Railroad corridor and on Harbor Drive, is a small, commercial zone. The Green Point area, located to the west of State Route 37, includes the hill and ridge areas with homes along Atherton and Olive Avenues and the bay plain marsh areas south of Atherton Avenue. Local neighborhoods within Green Point include the Atherton corridor, Atherton Oaks, H Lane and Alpine/Williams Road, among others. The Petaluma River plain area is also part of Green Point (See Map 2).

Adjacent incorporated neighborhoods, such as Stonetree and Bahia, are not part of the planning area and, thus, are not subject to the Plan’s policies. Nevertheless, they are considered part of the wider community because they share relatively similar issues and characteristics.



Green Point neighborhood on H Ln.

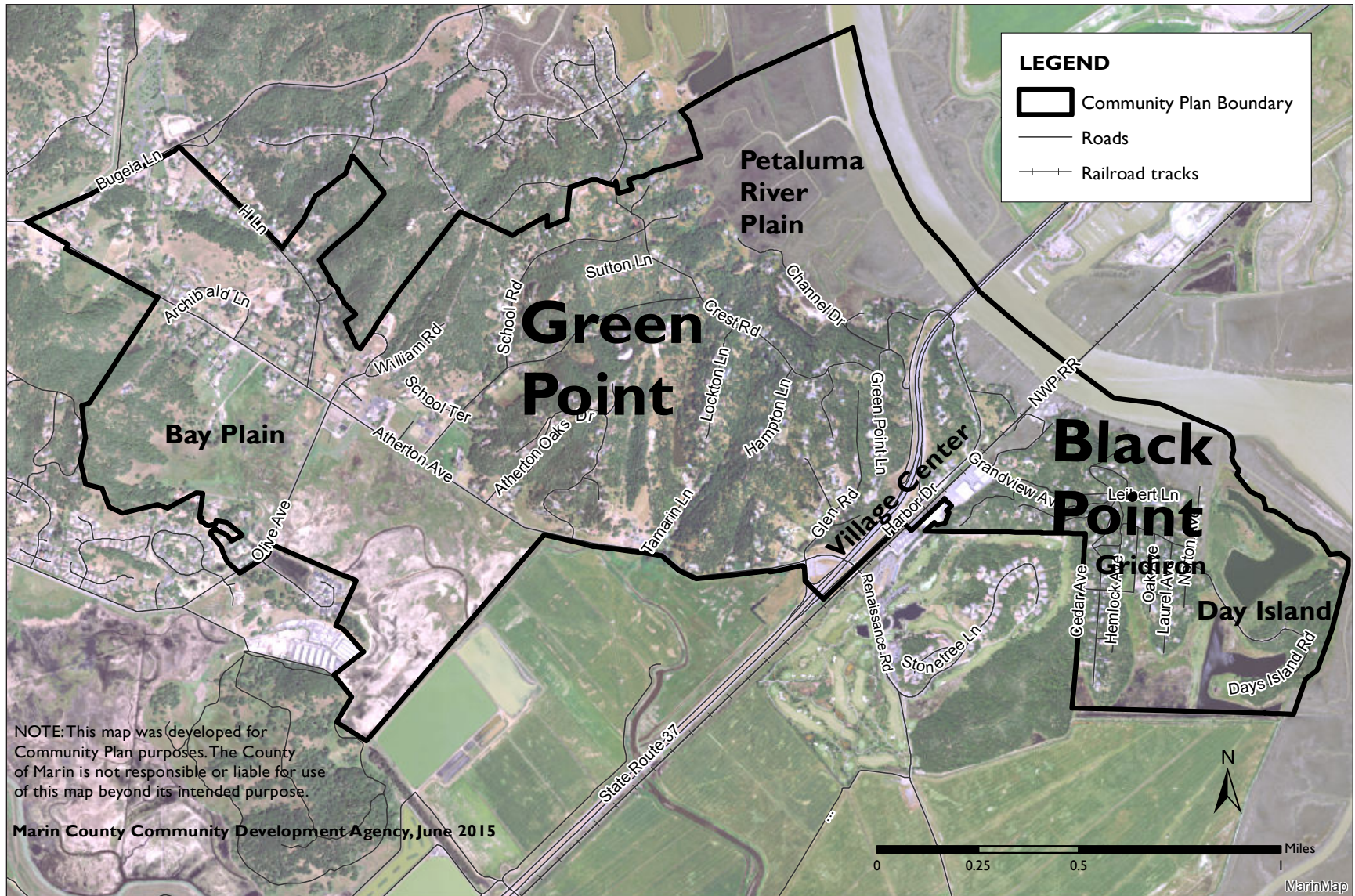


Old barn on Atherton Ave.



Black Point neighborhood from the Petaluma River

Map 2. Neighborhood Areas



Planning Context

The planning area is located within the Countywide Plan designated City-Centered and Baylands Corridors (see Figure 2 and Map 3). These are environmental policy corridors that designate areas suitable for higher density development and public utilities, and areas with less development potential, including the baylands. The hill and upland areas of the planning area fall within the City-Centered Corridor, while most of the surrounding lowland, bay, and marsh areas are within the Baylands Corridor.

Due to the bay plain's natural constraints, and to protect the bay plain as a scenic vista and community separator, a policy decision was made in the 1978 Black Point Community Plan to allow more intensive development along the more stable hillsides, thus omitting the hillside areas from the Ridge and Upland Greenbelt (RUG). The RUG is a Countywide Plan overlay designation intended to protect wooded hillsides for their value as both a buffer between communities and as an important ecological zone of a watershed. The area's scenic value is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3: Natural Resources.

In recognition of the planning area's location adjacent to the Petaluma River and San Pablo bay, and the surrounding bay plain and historic marshlands, protection of the diversity of

the bayland's ecosystem and upland areas are significant community concerns. Some residents desire expansion of the Baylands Corridor within the community to reflect this importance. The Countywide Plan includes a program to study the potential for adding to or omitting parcels from the Baylands Corridor. As such, this Plan does not include a specific program to address modification of the Baylands Corridor.



View toward Green Point from Atherton Avenue



View toward Black Point from the boat launch

Figure 2. Countywide Plan Environmental Corridors

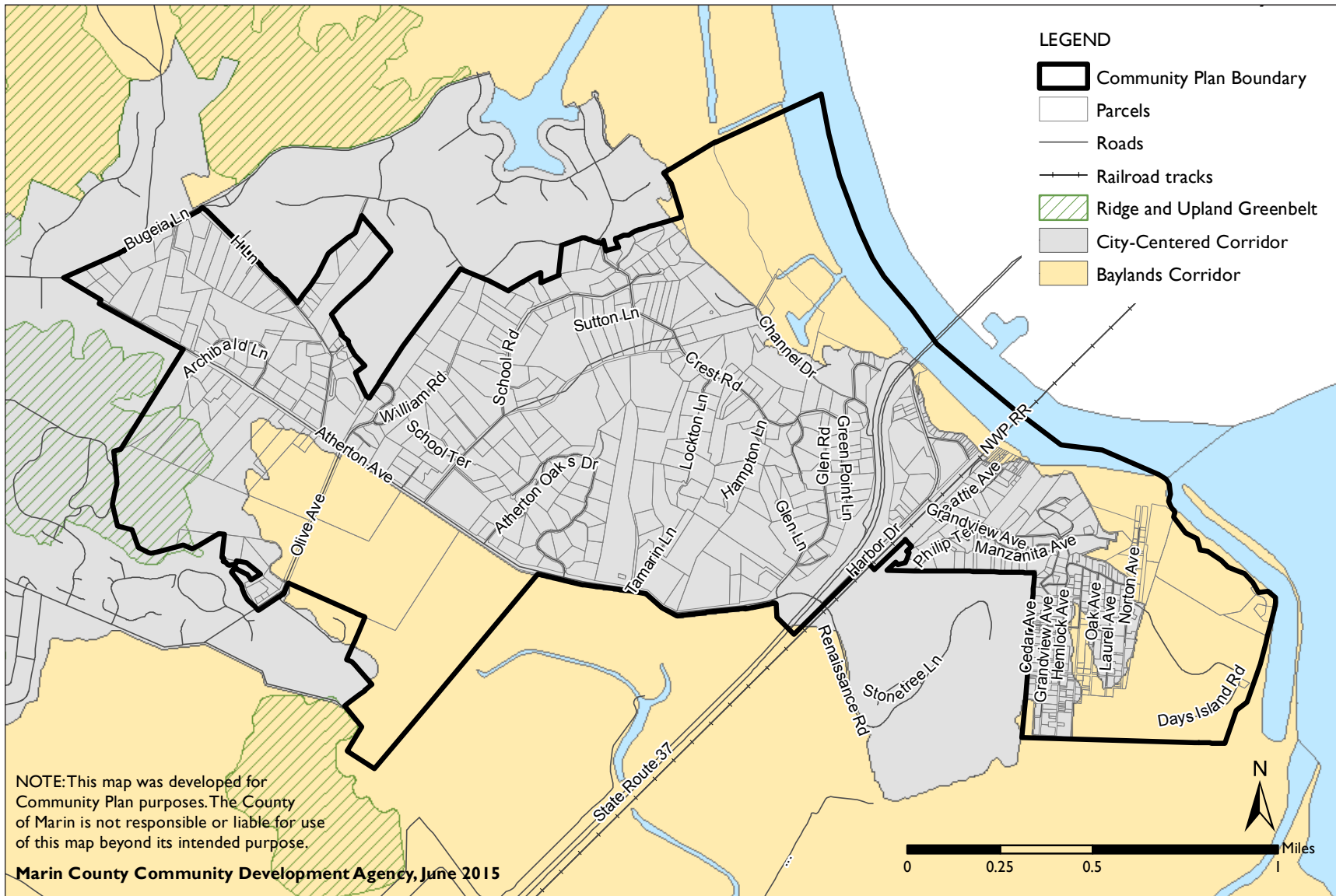
Marin Countywide Plan (2007) Environmental Corridors

Baylands Corridor: encompasses lands along the shoreline of San Francisco, San Pablo, and Richardson bays, provides heightened recognition of the unique environmental characteristics of this area and the need to protect its important resources. The area generally contains marshes, tidelands, and diked lands that were once wetlands or part of the bays, and adjacent, largely undeveloped uplands.

City-Centered Corridor: located along Highway 101, in the eastern part of the county near San Francisco and San Pablo bays, is primarily designated for urban development and for protection of environmental resources.

Refer to the Countywide Plan for descriptions of the Coastal and Inland Rural Corridors.

Map 3. Environmental Corridors



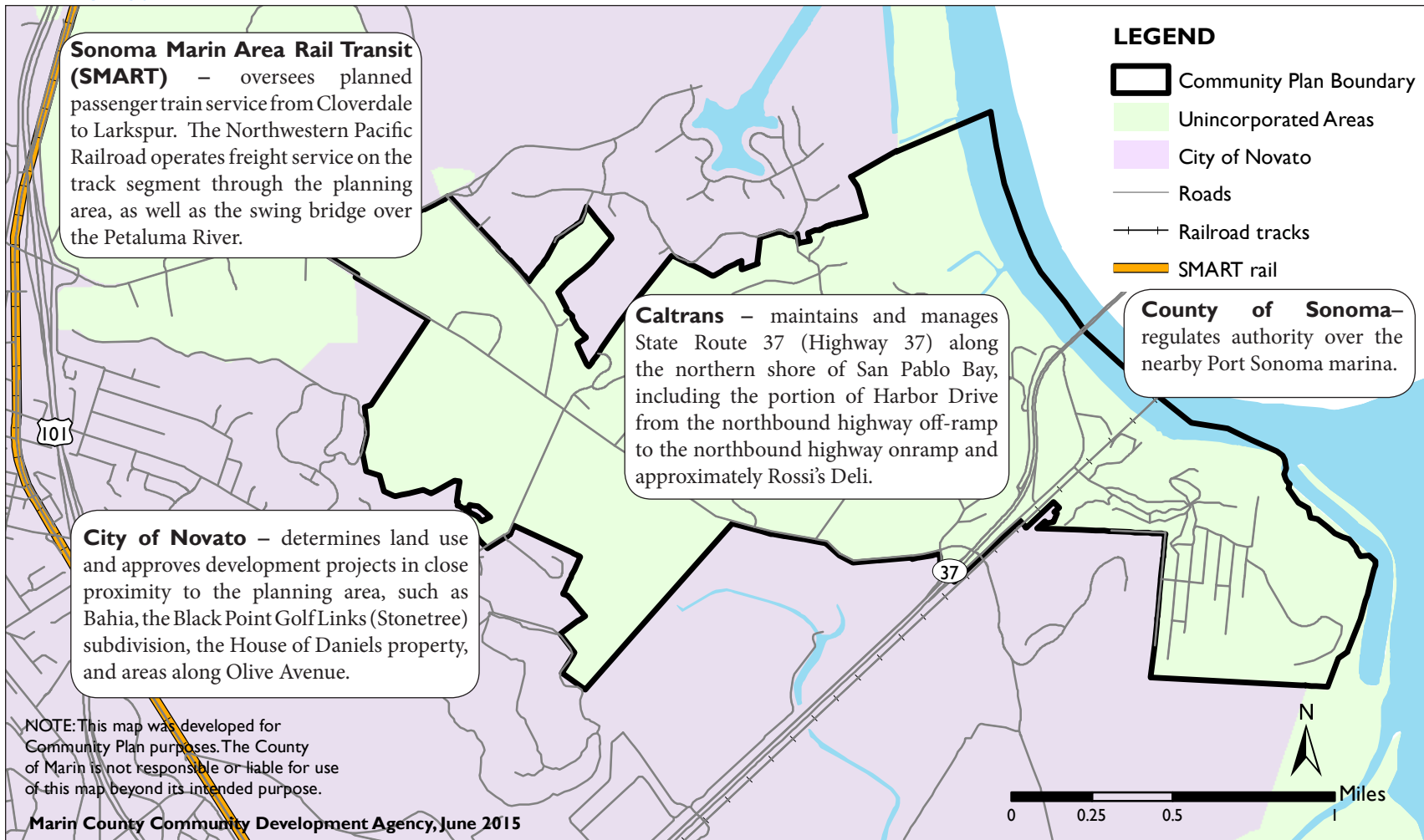
Community Context

While the planning area benefits from considerable advantages in terms of its location, climate and natural beauty, it is also influenced by external factors including the land use and transportation decisions of the

City of Novato, County of Sonoma, Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART), and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). These multiple factors – and their implications – must be considered but cannot

be controlled by the Plan. Residents must continue to organize and remain engaged to ensure their voices are heard and represented.

Map 4. Agency Jurisdictions





1950's Aerial Photo of the Black Point area

Image courtesy of the Marin History Museum

Demographic Background and Trends

Population

According to 2010 Census data, there are approximately 1,306 people living in the planning area. The area's population increased 14 percent, or 163 people, since 2000. In comparison, however, Marin's total population grew a mere 2.1 percent over the same period, and California's population grew by 10% (See Figure 3).

The median age for all residents in the planning area is 53 years, older than the 44.5 median age for the county. Over 56 percent of residents are aged 50 years or older, while only 17 percent are 19 years of age or younger.

Race and Ethnicity

Residents of the planning area are predominantly white (90.7 percent). Seven people (0.5 percent) are African American, 6 (0.5 percent) are Native American, 45 (3.4 percent) are Asian, and 35 (2.7 percent) are from two or more races. Approximately nine percent of residents (112 people) reported being Hispanic or Latino.

Ancestry

The planning area is made up of residents with a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and heritage. Many report having English, German, Irish, and Portuguese backgrounds, while a smaller number have Italian, Norwegian, Dutch, French, and Scottish ancestry.

Educational Attainment

Residents are well-educated, with 100 percent of adults over the age of 25 reporting having graduated from high school. Further, 60 percent of have attained a Bachelor's degree or higher. In 2000, 96 percent of residents were high school graduates and 46 percent received a bachelor's degree or higher.

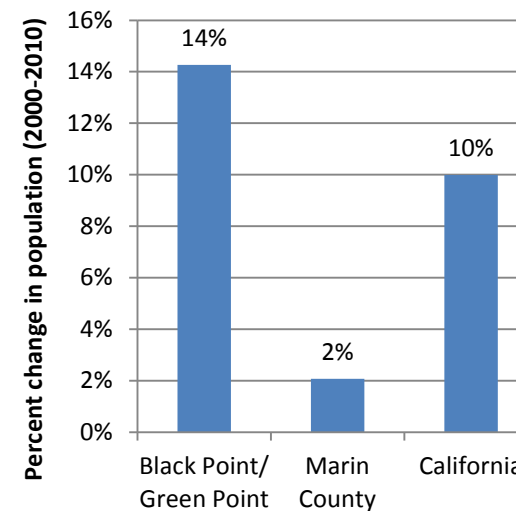
Marital Status

In 2010, over 61 percent of residents over the age of 15 years were married, 24 percent never married, 2.2 percent are separated, 2.8 percent are widowed, and 9.7 percent are divorced.

Employment Status and Occupation

In 2010, almost 69 percent of residents were in the labor force, while 31 percent were not employed. Of those who are employed, 54.5 percent work in management, business, science, and arts; 21.7 percent are in service; 16 percent are in sales and office; 6 percent work in the natural resource, construction, and maintenance fields; and 2 percent work in production, transportation, and material moving. The majority of residents (71 percent) work in the private sector, while 18 percent are self-employed and 11 percent work in the public sector.

Figure 3. Population Growth Rates

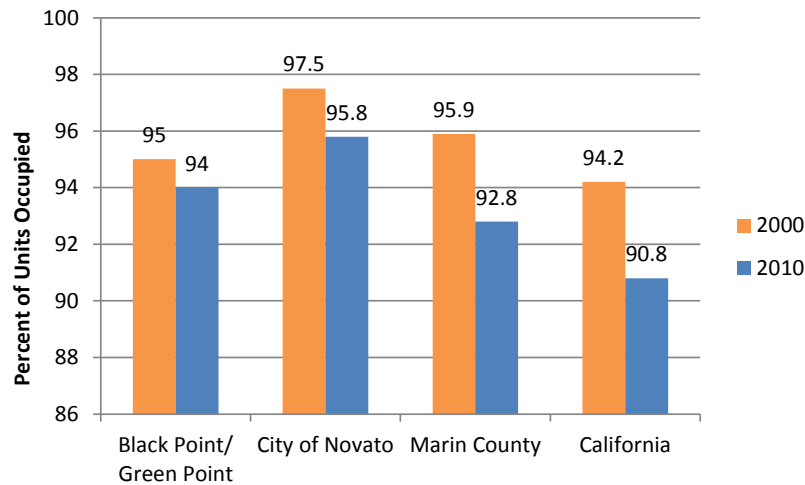


Source: U.S. Census 2010

Housing Occupancy

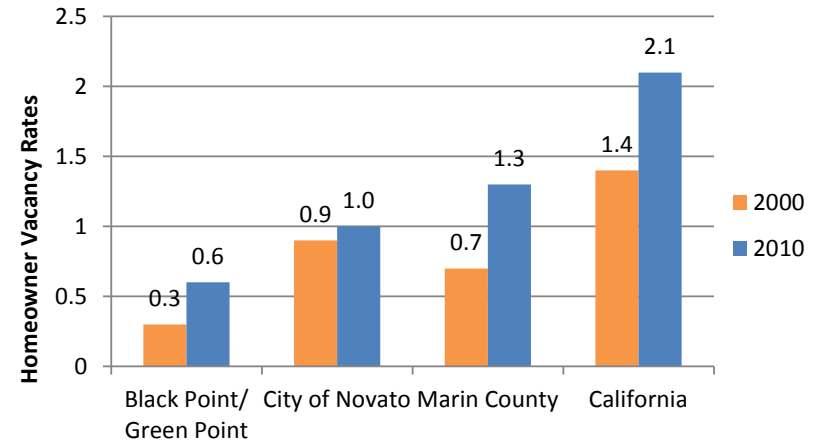
In 2010, over 94 percent of homes in the community were occupied, consistent with trends seen in the rest of the county and the state (See Figure 4). In addition, almost 80 percent of homes are owner occupied, which is significantly larger than comparative figures for the city, county and state. A high rate of owner occupancy indicates fewer properties are rented. Further, homeowner vacancy rates for the community remain very low at less than one percent (See Figure 5). The community’s rental vacancy rate was 4.9 percent in 2010 compared to 3.4 percent in 2000 (See Figure 6). Real estate experts contend that 5 percent is considered normal, and rents tend to adjust up or down until a normal vacancy rate is achieved.

Figure 4. Housing Occupancy Rates



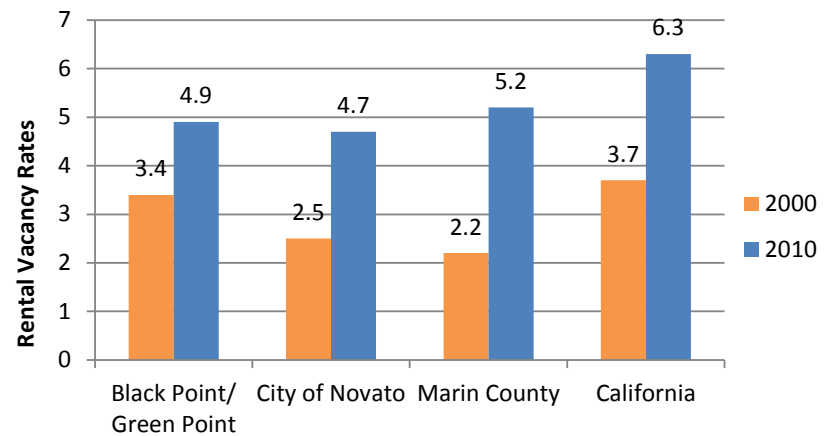
Source: U.S. Census 2010

Figure 5. Homeowner Vacancy Rates



Source: U.S. Census 2010

Figure 6. Rental Vacancy Rates



Source: U.S. Census 2010

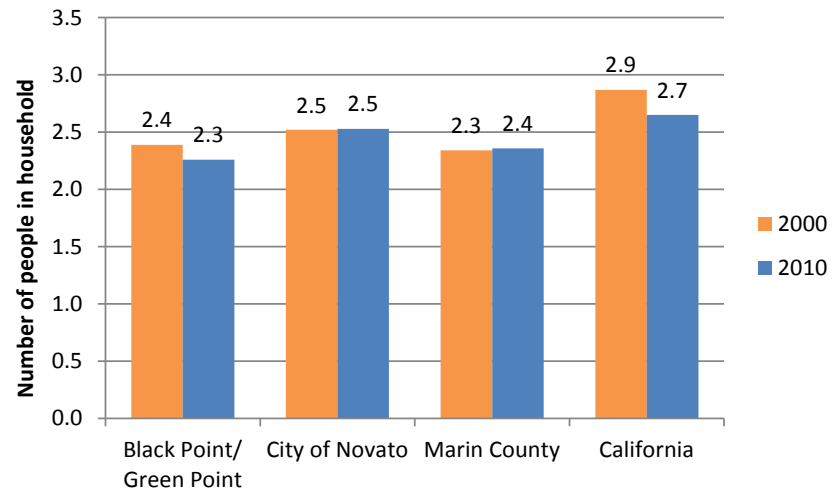
Average Household Size

Average household size has shrunk from 2.39 in 2000 to 2.26 in 2010. In addition, the area's average household size is smaller when compared to Novato, Marin County, and the state (See Figure 7). Overall, average household size has been shrinking as the age of the householder is increasing, which mirrors what is occurring in the state and nation.

Income

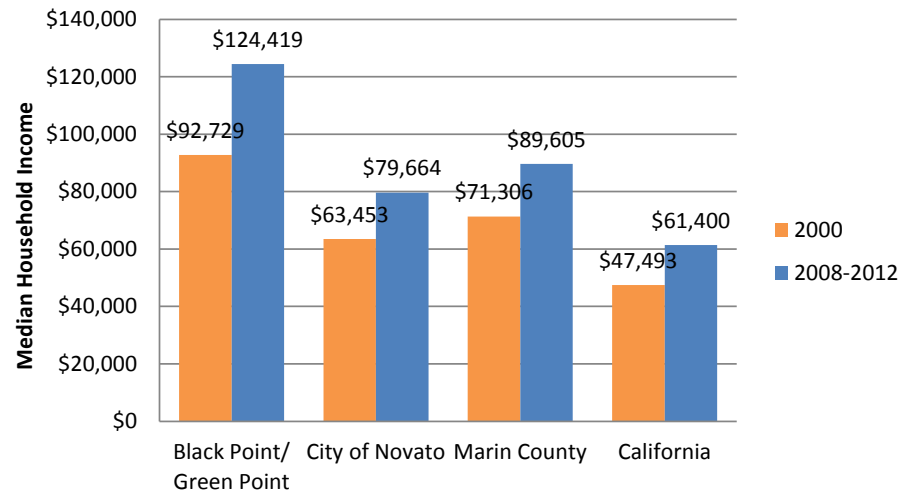
Residents have one of the highest median household incomes at over \$124,000 per year. This is double the median household income for the state, \$45,000 more than the City of Novato and \$35,000 more than Marin County (See Figure 8). Interestingly, the disparity in median earnings between males and females working full-time and year-round is nearly \$50,000, with men earning \$112,321 and females earning \$61,678.

Figure 7. Average Household Size



Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 8. Median Household Income



Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Background and Historical Timeline

The planning area was originally part of the 8,887 acre Rancho de Novato, which was granted by Governor Alvarado to Fernando Feliz in 1839. The Novato Rancho had many owners before the land was mortgaged in 1892. The west half was taken over by the San Francisco Savings Union, while the east half, including the planning area, went to Charles Chase of New York. The Chase interests were taken over by the Home of Farm Company, which auctioned off 5- and 10-acre parcels and lots. This land split led to the subdivision of the area and initiated the trend towards the rural community that exists today.

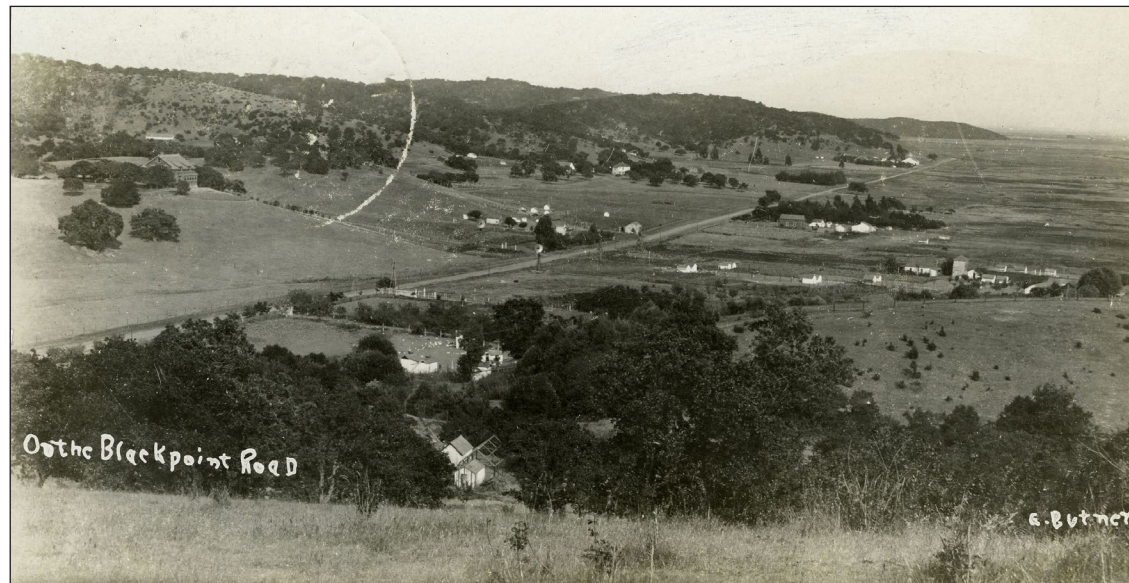
The settling of the area occurred a short period after a man named Day settled on what is now called Day Island in 1850. Settlers from this area moved to the community, and for more than a hundred years it was known for fishing and hunting. Boating also became a popular recreational activity.

In 1850, the community was an important shipping point for livestock, lumber, and cordwood. Many of the area's oak trees were removed from the hills and used for ship building in the 1880's, which is why the giant oak no longer exists in the area.

In conjunction with the building of Donahues Landing on the Petaluma River during the period from 1879 until 1884, the Northwestern Pacific Railroad operated from the area. Eventually, the trains crossed the Petaluma River and continued on into Sonoma County to Glen Ellen. Primary access to the area was provided by either train or ferries until the County acquired a road right of way in 1884

(now Atherton Avenue). Historic accounts tell of crossing from San Francisco by ferry to Sausalito and then traveling to the area by horse and buggy, passing through Novato, and coming across the Old County Road during the early 1900's.

The main post office was located in the community from 1865 until 1891, when it was moved to Novato proper.



"On the Blackpoint Road" postcard

Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Free Library

List of Significant Historical Events

1911	The Black Point railroad bridge, a steelthrough truss swing span, was constructed over the Petaluma River. The motor used to turn the bridge is located on the center span and is accessible only by using a boat to cross from the rail to the center span in the navigation channel.	1990's	Fire Station 62 on Atherton Avenue was constructed.
1926	Novato Fire Protection District formed.	1992	A scene from Radio Flyer was filmed at the location of Rossi's general store and gas station.
1937	Opening of the Golden Gate Bridge.	1997	Voters in the City of Novato adopted an Urban Growth Boundary to constrain the expansion of "urban" development into the rural areas surrounding the City, which excluded the community planning area.
1948	Incorporation of the North Marin Water District (NMWD) (formerly the Novato Water Company).	2002	Lands of the House of Daniels were annexed to the City of Novato to allow a sewer connection for a commercial warehouse and office and to abandon a failing septic system.
1954	Incorporation of the Black Point Improvement Club (BPIC).	2013	The process to update the 1978 Black Point Community Plan began.
1958	Construction of the State Route 37 Bridge over the Petaluma River.	2015	The Marin County Board of Supervisors adopted the updated Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan.
1970 – 80	Development of Green Point.	2017	The Urban Growth Boundary for the City of Novato will expire, unless renewed.
1978	The Marin County Board of Supervisors adopted the Black Point Community Plan.		
1992	The first evacuation drill for the Gridiron area in Black Point was conducted in response to the Oakland Hills fire.		

Other notable events

(Not in sequence or order of importance)

- Natural gas was brought into the area, which replaced propane, improved the quality of life and encouraged the provision of other utilities. Opening of the railroad through the area (early 1900's).
- Bricks were manufactured at the Black Point brick works.
- A quarry located west of Heirloom Storage (formerly House of Daniels) and near the Stone Tree development provided material for the construction of the State Route 37 Petaluma River Bridge.
- Oak trees from the area were used to supply Mare Island with masts and provide San Francisco with firewood.
- In the late 1950's, the Marin County Board of Supervisors rejected a proposal by Donald F. Donohue to develop a drive-in theatre at the intersection of Olive Avenue and Atherton Avenue, where the Green Point Nursery is now located, after a wave of protests by residents.
- A proposed strip mall at Atherton Avenue and State Route 37 was defeated.
- Cliff House Restaurant was located on a hill near the Black Point Bridge.
- In 2008, the House of Daniels changed operations from a distributor of wine and distilled beverages to an heirloom and valuables storage facility, now called Heirloom Storage. Storage for RV parking is also provided.
- Rancho Marin Equestrian Center closed in the mid 1980's.
- In 2003, the Marin Audubon Society purchased two properties consisting of approximately 145 acres of marsh and bay land located near the intersection of Olive and Atherton Avenues (next to the Green Point Nursery).
- In 2013, the Marin County Open Space District acquired the approximately 18-acre parcel of marsh and bay land from the Marin Audubon Society, located at the southwest intersection of Atherton Avenue and Olive Avenue.
- Development of the Atherton Oaks subdivision in Green Point.
- A master plan was approved for the Atherton Acres subdivision in Green Point (1979).
- Freight service resumes along the NWP Railroad (2011).



Historic 1930's homes on Iolanthus Ave.

Photo credits: CDA

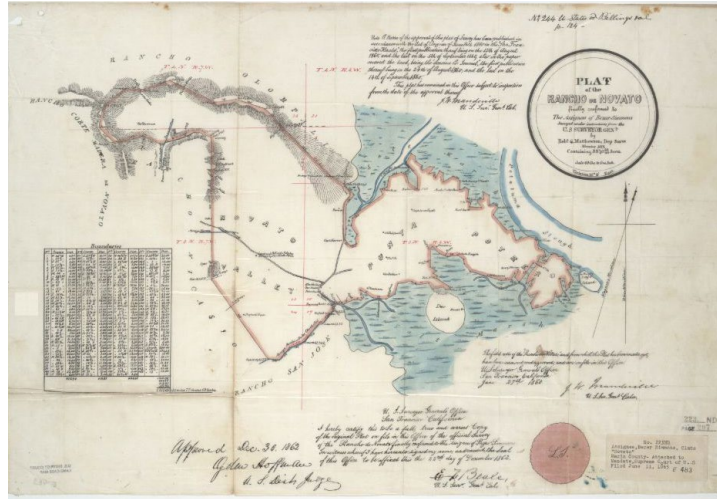


Figure 9. Historic Timeline

1839

Rancho Novato

Governor Juan Alvarado of California granted the 8,887 acre Rancho Novato to Fernando Feliz, who built an adobe structure on the property, then sold it to Yankee speculator Jacob Primer Leese.



1905

Grandview subdivision

The Grandview area was subdivided. The developer changed the area's name to "Grandview" to appeal to more potential land buyers. The name reverted back to "Black Point" in 1944. This subdivision brought city dwellers from San Francisco to the area, and many weekend summer cottages began to appear along with



some smaller structures used as "hunting" refuges. The area was accessible by railroad, and ferries brought building materials to the area along the canal at Norton Avenue.

1800s

1850's

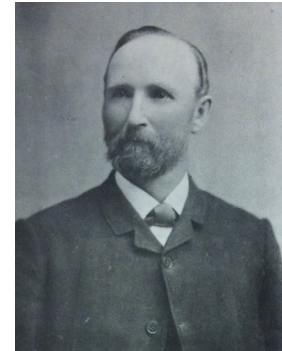
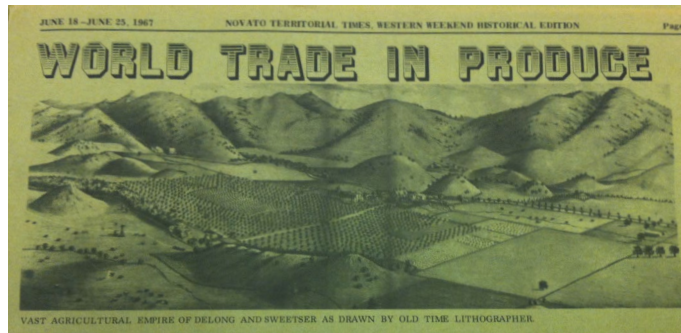
Early settlement

A man named Day was one of the first to settle in the area that is now called Day Island. Black Point was regarded as an important shipping point for livestock, lumber, and cordwood. The area was popular for elk hunting.

1856

Fruit orchards

J.B.Sweetser and Francis C. DeLong purchase Novato Rancho and plant over 20,000 fruit trees - including apple, pear, apricot, cherry, peach and almond trees - to supply the fruit demands of the West.



Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Free Library

1877

John W. Atherton elected Marin County Supervisor

One of many industrious farmers and dairymen arriving in the Novato area during the mid 1800's, Atherton and his family operated 200 acres of dairy farm, vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens about half a mile from the town of Novato.

1900s

1892

Land auction

Ranch land in Black Point was auctioned off in 5- to 10-acre parcels and town lots by Charles Chase of New York.

1947

Schoolhouse closed

The area's only school house, located on School Lane, closed when the district was unified with the Novato School District. 1896 Black Point School District established.

1960

Incorporation

The City of Novato was incorporated.

1962

Boat launch

The Black Point boat launch was constructed. The boat launch was upgraded in 2001.



1976

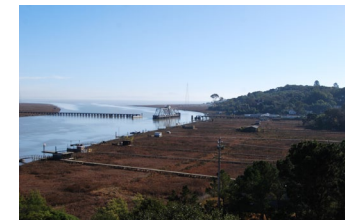
Black Point Inn

Originally constructed in 1901, the Black Point Inn burned down. It was a popular meeting place for locals and city folk. There were 10 hotel rooms upstairs, and a Rosewood bar, restaurant, post office, and a grocery store on the first floor. Its secluded location made it an ideal road house during prohibition.

2009

Vince Mulroy Woodland & Wildlife Preserve

The Marin County Board of Supervisors approved renaming the 64-acre Black Point Nature Preserve to the Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve, which was acquired by the County in 2008.



2015

Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan

The revised Black Point/Green Point Communities Plan was adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors in 2015.

World War II Era

There were few permanent residents outside of those operating the small ranches or those involved with businesses in the area until the World War II period began. Up to this point, Black Point was oriented around weekend summer residents and associated pleasure boating along the Petaluma River, and other recreational activities such as hunting and fishing. More permanent homes were constructed after WWII utilizing individual septic tanks.



1952 Aerial Photos of Black Point area, Marin History Museum



Photo credit: Curt Waltman

1971-1998

Renaissance Pleasure Faire

The Renaissance Pleasure Faire was located in the oak woodlands of Black Point along State Route 37. The 238.5 acre property was sold to Vince Mulroy of the Black Point Partnership when the Pleasure Faire went bankrupt in 1991.

2000s

1998

Voter approval

Novato voters approved the concept of a golf course and homes at the former site of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire.

2002

Stonetree Development

The Stonetree Development of 52 homes and an 18-hole golf course was constructed.



3

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Black Point/Green Point planning area is surrounded by tidal salt marshes, mudflats, oak woodlands, and coastal scrub habitats. These areas are home to wildlife including herons, plovers, barn owls, deer, raccoons, jackrabbits, and foxes. There is a great deal of community interest in preserving the natural environment and protecting the numerous wildlife resources in and around the planning area. The Plan includes policies to protect wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and to prevent the spread of Sudden Oak Death.

Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Chapter 3: Natural Resources

Background

The Black Point/Green Point planning area enjoys a unique natural setting along the banks of the Petaluma River at its entrance to San Pablo Bay. Much of the planning area is located on ridgelines, separated from the developed Novato area by the bay plain to the west and south. From neighboring Sonoma County, it is an important visual entrance to Marin County, offering views of densely vegetated hills rising prominently from the bay plains.

The planning area is surrounded by tidal salt marshes, mudflats, coastal oak woodlands, and coastal scrub habitats, with an abundance of wildlife and scenic views. Expansive views of Mt. Tamalpais, the San Francisco skyline, Mt. Diablo, Mount Saint Helena, the Petaluma River and San Pablo Bay, and other vista points in Sonoma, Napa, and Contra Costa Counties are visible from various vantage points. These views are a valued community asset and natural resource. Residents show significant interest in preserving the natural attributes and features located within and around the planning area.

A number of key marsh and wetland properties, both small and large, are owned by the Marin Audubon Society in the planning area. One such property is the 84-acre former tidal marsh along Atherton Avenue that was purchased in 2000 for restoration and enhancement. A contiguous 60-acre parcel was donated to Marin Audubon Society in 2003. A 19-acre parcel, located at the intersection of Atherton and Olive Avenues was purchased in 2002 and, subsequently, donated to the Marin County Open Space District. Restoration plans include removing fill and restoring a creek and seasonal wetlands. Smaller properties include four parcels along Norton Avenue with tidal marshes, including a portion of Norton Pond, a brackish water pond that provides year-round habitat for migratory waterfowl and wading birds. Five small, noncontiguous parcels are located in the Gridiron neighborhood along Hemlock and Holly Avenues; at some point, there might be enough adjacent parcels to undertake a restoration project in this area.



*Baylands viewed from Black Point
Photo credit: Cindy Pickett*

Marin Countywide Plan

The protection of Marin County's natural environment is one of the overarching goals of the Countywide Plan, which contains a comprehensive list of policies and programs intended to protect, restore, and enhance Marin's watersheds, natural habitats, streams and wetlands, wildlife corridors, and open space areas. Additional protections are also incorporated directly into Marin County's Development Code, such as a Native Tree Preservation Ordinance, and special zoning regulations for properties in sensitive areas such as the Baylands Corridor. A sample of selected policies relevant to the community is provided in Figure 10. A complete list of natural resource policies can be found in the Natural Systems Element of the Countywide Plan.

The Countywide Plan includes a goal to conserve wetlands. In addition to protecting marsh and wetland areas in the Baylands Corridor, Countywide Plan policies require development to avoid wetland areas so that existing wetlands and upland buffers are preserved and opportunities for enhancement are retained. This is accomplished by implementing a Wetlands Conservation Area. The distance of the setback and buffer depends on the

Environmental Corridor in which it is located and the size of the parcel. Additional information is provided in the Biological Resources section of the Countywide Plan.

The following topics are addressed in the Natural Resources chapter:

- Wildlife Habitat and Movement Corridors; and
- Sudden Oak Death.



Tidal marshland

Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Figure 10. Countywide Plan Biological Resources Goals

Marin Countywide Plan (2007) Biological Resources Goals

Enhanced Native Habitat and Biodiversity

Effectively manage and enhance native habitat, maintain viable native plant and animal populations, and provide for improved biodiversity throughout the County.

Protection of Sensitive Biological Resources

Require identification of sensitive biological resources and commitment to adequate protection and mitigation, and monitor development trends and resource preservation efforts.

Wetland Conservation

Require all feasible measures to avoid and minimize potential adverse impacts on existing wetlands and to encourage programs for restoration and enhancement of degraded wetlands.

Riparian Conservation

Protect and, where possible, restore the natural structure and function of riparian systems.

Baylands Conservation

Preserve and enhance the diversity of the baylands ecosystem, including tidal marshes and adjacent uplands, seasonal marshes and wetlands, rocky shorelines, lagoons, agricultural lands, and low-lying grasslands overlying historical marshlands.

Wildlife Habitat and Movement Corridors

Wildlife is abundant in the community, both in the upland and bayland areas. The Petaluma River and surrounding marshlands are part of the largest remaining natural tidal brackish marsh in California, supporting primarily pickleweed, cordgrass, alkali bulrush, and saltgrass. Wetland bird species include Willits, Curlews, Dowitchers, Night Herons, and Black-bellied Plovers. Waterfowl include American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Snowy and Great Egret. Migratory bird species use the area most heavily during the fall and winter months, but many can be found year round. The marsh and upland areas, both along the Petaluma River and in the bay plain, also provide habitat for many raptors, including White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, and Turkey Vulture. The upland habitat in the area supports deer, raccoons, jackrabbits, and foxes, among others (California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2014). Birdwatching, fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing are popular activities in the area.

The presence of wildlife helps to define the natural, rural character of the community. However, development has impacted wildlife by reducing historic range areas

and blocking animal passage. Identifying and protecting wildlife corridors can allow wildlife movement and promote habitat connectivity. Because the area retains much native woodland vegetation, the Countywide Plan promotes acquiring and managing important habitat areas and wildlife corridors to link permanently protected open space lands.

While some regional studies identify and map wildlife movement areas (see right for citation: Critical Linkages: Bay Area & Beyond), specific studies have not been conducted for the planning area. Therefore, the Plan makes general recommendations to protect wildlife and habitat areas by avoiding fence types, roads, structures and outdoor lighting that would significantly obstruct wildlife movement or access to water. The community is encouraged to be proactive and develop a public education program to inform and educate their neighbors about the importance of living with wildlife and maintaining ecological connectivity and, more importantly, become active stewards of the land. Community members can utilize native and drought-tolerant plants and avoid invasive, non-native plants in landscaping within and adjacent to known wildlife and

Critical Linkages: Bay Area & Beyond (2013)

Penrod, K., et al. Produced by Science & Collaboration for Connected Wildlands, Fair Oaks, CA www.Scwildlands.org in collaboration with the Bay Area Open Space Council's Conservation Lands Network www.BaAreaLands.org.



Fawn in the road Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Wildlife-Friendly Fencing

- Is highly visible to ungulates and birds;
- Allows wildlife to jump or crawl under; and
- Provides wildlife access to important habitats and travel corridors.

habitat corridors. Reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides while instead relying on natural eradication methods is also recommended.

The planning area retains much native woodland vegetation. Combined with its proximity to the Petaluma River waterfront, the front and back yards of some of the larger properties may provide important habitat for songbirds, woodpeckers, ground dwelling species, and mammals. Residents are encouraged to view their property as wildlife habitat and establish “wildlife friendly” backyards. Figure 11 provides a sampling of suggested best management practices for property located within or adjacent to wildlife corridors. Specific wildlife friendly fence design options are not provided since new fencing materials and designs are continually developed, while new research on the topic will invariably provide added and improved alternatives.

Figure 11. Tips for Living Within or Adjacent to Wildlife Corridors

Tips for Living Within or Adjacent to Wildlife Corridors

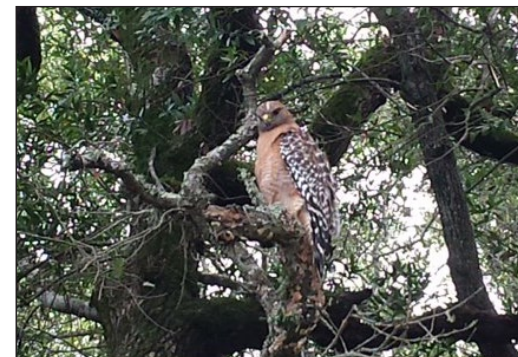
- Landscape with native vegetation.
- Manage fire risk with appropriate alteration of natural vegetation since many bird species and other wildlife feed, nest, and seek cover in low shrubbery or thicket vegetation. For example, it might be appropriate to remove brush near structures while leaving some elsewhere.
- Keep pets indoors, leashed, or in enclosures, especially at night.
- Reduce or restrict the use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides. Become aware of the effects these chemicals have throughout the ecosystem.
- Direct outdoor lighting toward houses and walkways and away from the linkage area.
- Use wildlife-friendly fencing on property and pasture boundaries, and wildlife-proof fencing around gardens and other potential wildlife attractants.
- Discourage the killing of “threat” species such as rattlesnakes.

http://corridordesign.org/dl/docs/corridordesign.org_BMPs_for



Simmons Slough Wildlife Corridor

Credit: CDA



Red-tailed hawk

Credit: Jon Gurish



Wildlife-friendly fencing on H-Lane

Credit: CDA

Sudden Oak Death

Oak woodlands and oak scrub habitat are a valued natural resource within the planning area. These ecosystems are threatened by Sudden Oak Death (SOD), a tree disease caused by the plant pathogen *P. ramorum*. Susceptible trees become infected with the fungus via mobile spores that travel through moist soil or air, often transmitted from infected or dead trees. The most significant host plant is the California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*), whose presence is the greatest predictor of *P. ramorum*. Other common host species include camellia, madrone, manzanita, rhododendron, and bigleaf maple. On many host plants, symptoms are limited to leaf spots and shoot dieback, and are not lethal (California Oak Mortality Task Force).

SOD first appeared in Marin County in 1995 and has since killed millions of oak trees throughout coastal California and Oregon. Infected trees develop cankers that seep dark red sap, and the entire crown often turns completely brown. Falling limbs pose a safety threat, and dead trees increase fuel loads and fire danger. Widespread loss of native oak trees threatens many of the species dependent upon them for survival, and has the potential to drastically alter the landscape and natural diversity of the area. Oak trees are

part of California's cultural heritage and a key characteristic of the Marin landscape. Only a few cases of SOD have been confirmed so far in the area; however, the disease is prevalent in Marin County and can spread quickly.

The Countywide Plan calls for agency programs and proven methods to limit the impacts of SOD syndrome in Marin County. It also specifies that hazardous vegetation affected by SOD syndrome should be managed according to standards set by the California Oak Mortality Task Force.

An abundance of information is available for residents interested in learning more about SOD. The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) in Marin County provides education and outreach resources on the disease. Locally, the Black Point Improvement Club manages a group contract with a local arborist to spray for the prevention of SOD at a reduced rate. This program provides an excellent example of how a community can work together and pool resources to mitigate a problem.

Figure 12. Sudden Oak Death Resources

Sudden Oak Death Resources

University of California Cooperative Extension, Marin County
http://cemar.in.ucanr.edu/Programs/Custom_Program816/

California Oak Mortality Task Force
<http://www.suddenoakdeath.org/>

To report an infected tree in your area, contact the Marin County Agricultural Commissioner's Office at (415) 499-6700 or online at:
<http://www.marincounty.org/depts/ag>



Policies

Natural Resources

NR-1 Wildlife Habitat and Movement Corridors

Encourage the protection of wildlife habitat and movement corridors, where feasible. Consider wildlife-friendly gardens that provide food, water, cover and a place for wildlife to raise their young, where appropriate. Wildlife-friendly fencing is encouraged. Fence types, roads, structures, and outdoor lighting that would significantly inhibit or obstruct wildlife movement, especially access to water, should be avoided.

[New Policy]

NR-2 Outreach and Education

Community members are encouraged to develop a neighborhood outreach program to inform those living and working within the planning area about living with wildlife and the importance of maintaining ecological connectivity, and to educate residents on how to become active stewards of the land. This program may also include efforts to educate residents about the potential effects that pesticides, insecticides, herbicides and rodenticides may have on the ecosystem.

[New Policy]

NR-3 Landscaping in Wildlife Corridors

Encourage the use of drought tolerant, native and fire resistant plants in landscaping areas adjacent to and within a wildlife habitat and movement corridor, and discourage the use of invasive, non-native plants that can supplant native plants and reduce habitat integrity.

[New Policy]

NR-4 Pesticides, Insecticides, Herbicides, and Rodenticides

Discourage the use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides. Encourage natural eradication methods to control rodent populations, such as barn owls. Residents are encouraged to install barn owl boxes near garden and yard areas.

[New Policy]

NR-5 Sudden Oak Death

Encourage property owners to identify and remove trees that are afflicted with Sudden Oak Death, and to consult with experts to determine appropriate best management practices to prevent and treat infestation.

[New Policy]

NR-6 Marsh and Wetlands

Development projects located on the marsh and wetlands located west of State Route 37 and south of the Petaluma River must be dependent on an essential transportation or utility project; and must not adversely impact the public trust. There must be no feasible, less environmentally damaging alternative location for the type of development being considered.

[Adapted from Policy 5, p. 50]



Community members have installed barn owl nesting boxes in their backyards

Photo credits: Rob Jaret

4

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

The primary environmental hazards facing the Black Point/Green Point planning area include wildfires and earthquakes. This chapter addresses those topics as well as flooding and sea level rise. The County of Marin, in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, work with residents to raise awareness and prepare for emergency situations.

Photo credit: Marin County Fire Department



Chapter 4: Environmental Hazards

Background

This chapter is intended to raise awareness in an effort to minimize harm to people and property from seismic activity, flooding, and fire. A goal of the Countywide Plan Environmental Hazards section is to raise awareness and responses about potential environmental hazards.

Emergency preparedness is important for both individuals and the community at large. When people are willing to work together for the good of others, communities are stronger. Residents can strengthen their community through training and getting involved in emergency preparedness. Getting people involved is key to a disaster resilient community. A resilient community is one that can withstand a disaster and get back to normal quickly, even if normal isn't the same as it was before. Those interested in furthering their hazard awareness and obtaining emergency education information should contact Get Ready Marin at www.ReadyMarin.org.

The following topics are addressed in the Environmental Hazards chapter:

- Fire Risk;
- Earthquakes;
- Flooding; and
- Sea Level Rise.

Fire Risk

Fire protection services are provided by the Novato Fire Protection District, which covers an area of 71 square miles. The area is served primarily by Station 62 at 450 Atherton Avenue, which was dedicated on June 8, 1991 and was the first District station to be located east of Highway 101. This location was selected because earthquakes could damage local Highway 101 overpasses, thereby impeding access to the community. The goal of the District is to maintain an overall response time of 8 minutes or less 90 percent of the time.

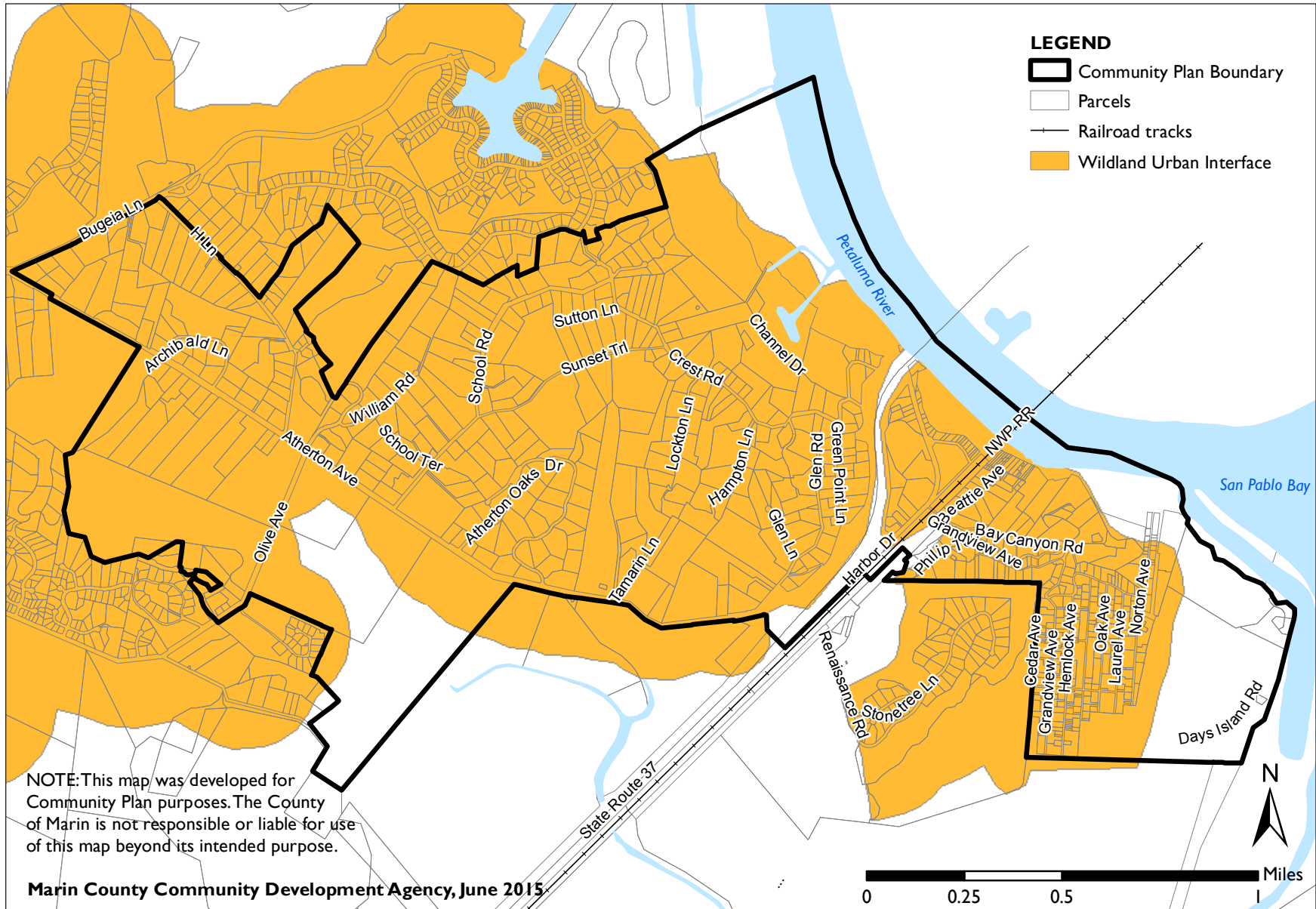
The combination of vegetation, topography, climate and population density create significant potential for fire hazards and create challenges in providing fire protection services. The planning area is considered high risk for wildland fire potential due

to narrow roads, combustible construction materials, limited and difficult access with steep slopes, fire prone vegetation, and fuel loading from the absence of large fires. The presence of Sudden Oak Death has created additional dead fuel loads in the oak woodlands and bay forests that amplifies the threat of wildland fire and crown fire potential. (Refer to Chapter 3: Natural Resources for additional information on Sudden Oak Death). With the historic focus on protecting the natural resources of the bay plain areas from development, residential development within the community was instead directed towards the ridge and hillside areas within the wildland-urban interface zone (as shown in Map 5).

Fire risk potential is based on a variety of factors, including the amount of surrounding fuels (vegetation), slope, and parcel exposure. Based on these factors, the community's ridge and hillside areas have High or Very High fire risk, indicating the greatest potential for large, damaging fires.

Providing fire protection services to the old Gridiron neighborhood is particularly challenging due to the area's steep, narrow and

Map 5. Wildland Urban Interface



minimally improved roads that extend down the ridgelines, ending in cul-de-sacs that could easily entrap emergency responders and equipment.

Wider roads could improve emergency access and maneuvering of vehicles. A goal of this Plan is to maintain the community's quality of life by ensuring that infrastructure serves to enhance the community safety; the Y-shaped turnaround installed at the end of Norton Avenue is an appropriate improvement consistent with this goal. Cul-de-sacs may not be as appropriate.

A goal of the Countywide Plan is to protect people and property from hazards associated with wildland and structural fires. Measures to accomplish this goal include ensuring that adequate fire protection is provided in new development and when modifications are made to existing structures, and to abate the buildup of vegetation around existing structures or on vacant properties that could help fuel fires.

Programs require new development to:

- Comply with all provisions of the California Fire Code (with local amendments);
- Provide defensible space around all buildings and structures;

- Install automatic fire sprinkler systems in all new structures and existing structures undergoing substantial remodeling; and
- Require Class A fire-resistant roofing for any new roof or replacement of more than 50 percent of an existing roof.

These and other standards for fire protection are typically administered through the development review process, including the design of roads, driveways and landscaping. The County may also prohibit new land divisions in very high and high fire hazard areas unless the availability of adequate water for fire suppression is demonstrated and guaranteed; access for firefighting vehicles and equipment is provided from more than one point; necessary fire trails and fuel breaks are provided; fire-resistant materials are used exclusively in construction; and adequate clearances from structures and use of fire-resistant plants in any landscaping are required. In rural areas such as Black Point and Green Point, on-site water storage capacity may be required for each single-family dwelling.

Figure 13. Fire Safety Resources

Fire Safety Resources

Novato Fire Protection District

www.novatofire.org

FIREsafe Marin

www.firesafemarin.org

Ready Marin

www.ReadyMarin.org

Cal Fire

www.fire.ca.gov

Prophytic vs. Fire Resistant Plants

<http://www.novatofire.org/Modules>ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=187>

Got Defensible Space?

<http://www.novatofire.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=73>



Firefighters battle flames in Marin County

The Novato Fire District has a strong history of working with the community to provide information and educational programs to increase awareness of fire hazards and reduce fire risk. These free programs include:

- Providing free vegetation fire safety inspection to advise of the best ways to reduce the risk of the loss of a home due to a wildland fire for properties within the wildland-urban interface;
- Providing an annual vegetation management matching grant program (depending on fund availability) for the use of a chipper service and/or fire fuels removal to clear flammable vegetation and create fuel breaks around participating properties. Grants may be used to replace highly flammable vegetation with approved fire resistant plants;
- Providing vegetation management plans advice;
- Providing current emergency text messages from Novato Fire via Nixle (a service that allows government agencies to send messages to local residents via phone, email and web);
- Conducting emergency evacuation drills; and
- Providing numerous resources and links

on the Novato Fire District website at www.novatofire.org

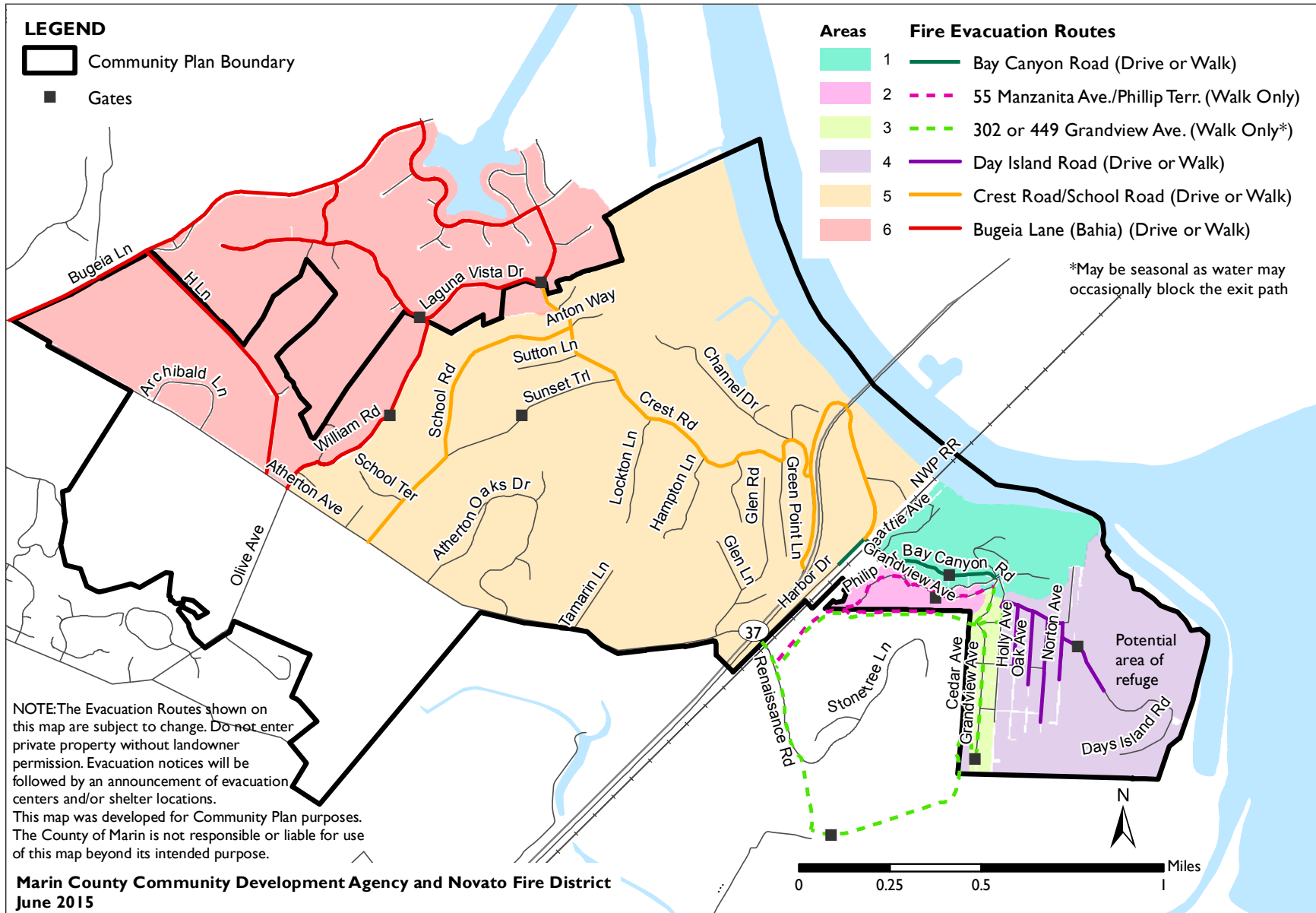
This is one of the first community plans to provide specific emergency evacuation routes. Map 6 shows the fire evacuation routes and staging areas for each neighborhood. Residents are encouraged to evacuate by foot or vehicle depending on location. With Grandview Avenue as the only road in and out of the Gridiron, and limited access via Crest and School Roads in Green Point, emergency evacuation planning is critical. The Novato fire district, in cooperation with the Marin County Sheriff's Office, the Marin Humane Society and the Novato Police Department, have conducted at least four evacuation drills for the Black Point area since 2005. The Bay Club Stonetree Golf Club has also agreed to allow residents to utilize their property for an evacuation route in an emergency. As resources allow, future evacuation drills should be conducted on a community-wide scale.

Other issues remain with regards to fire. Through surveys and input obtained from community meetings during the community plan update process, residents indicated concerns for improved fire safety and emergency access. As discussed in the Transportation chapter, there are three gates within the Black Point area that may

limit access, particularly in the event of an emergency. For example, the gate on Bay Canyon Road, which is a privately owned road, is locked. Meanwhile, overgrown vegetation may block the unlocked gate at the end of Grandview Avenue. The gate to the entrance of Day Island is not locked. In the Green Point neighborhood there are two gates: one locked gate on Crest Road and another on Lockton Lane. The gate on Lockton Lane is generally closed and locked at night only. Except for the Lockton Lane gate, the fire department maintains keys to unlock the gates in the event of a significant emergency.

Residents also indicated the need for more enforcement of vegetation removal and defensible space requirements, especially on vacant lots. Additionally, regular trimming and removal of brush along the paper streets and informal trails is needed to maintain adequate clearance for emergency access. Maintenance of these paper streets and trails is difficult since many are private property and not County-maintained. Finally, residents want to see continuation of the fire district's chipper service provided through the district's neighborhood and homeowner brush removal matching grant funds. This program is dependent on funding availability; residents are required to provide a funding match.

Map 6. Fire Evacuation Routes

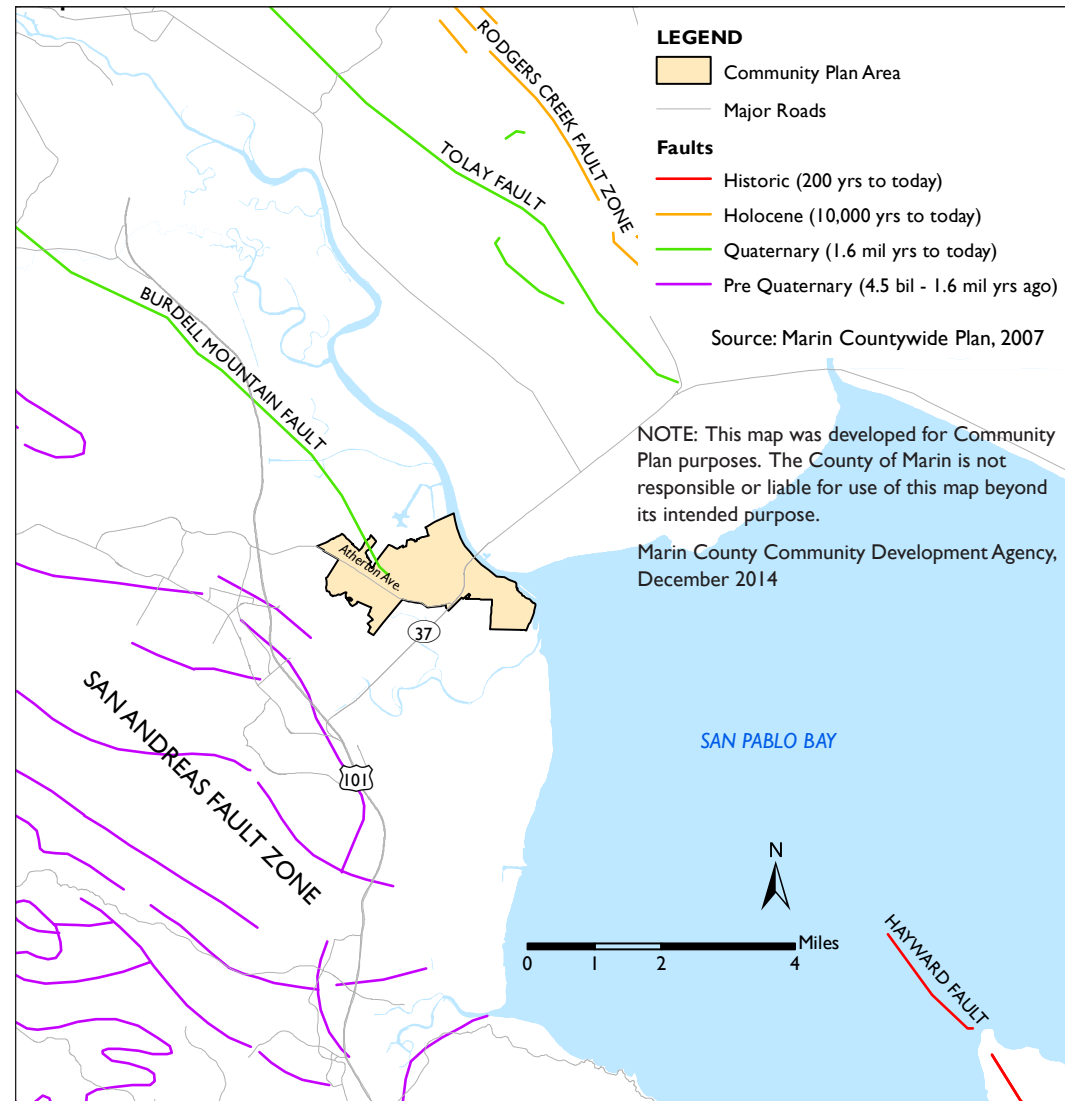


Earthquakes

The community is located some 18 miles east of the San Andreas Fault and approximately four miles west of the Hayward Fault. The Burdell Mountain Fault (considered inactive) intersects the community from the west, while the Rodgers Creek Fault Zone runs from San Pablo Bay to the northern outskirts of Santa Rosa. The Tolay Fault is considered to be the northward extension of the Hayward Fault. Map 7 shows the location of these faults in relation to the community. The San Andreas and Hayward faults are both active faults that have caused great earthquakes during the 150 years or so of historical records. Further, both exhibit abundant evidence of great displacements over millions of years. Statistically, damaging earthquakes are more likely to occur from large displacements on the San Andreas or Hayward Faults. Both pass sufficiently close that great earthquakes generated from either fault within the region should be expected to have severe seismic impacts in the area. The threat of a large earthquake occurring is highly probable and unpredictable; thus community members should take adequate steps to plan and prepare for the possibility.

An unknown factor is the presence of the Burdell Mountain Fault. From Sonoma

Map 7. Fault Hazards



County, this fault travels in a northeasterly direction, skirting the edges of Mt. Burdell and Olompali State Historic Park, then through or beneath the marshlands a half mile or so west of the Green Point hills, its trace concealed by bay mud. Traces of the fault have been found in the vicinity of H Lane in the Green Point area. While there is no conclusive evidence to determine if the fault is potentially active, topographic evidence suggests displacement in relatively recent geologic time.

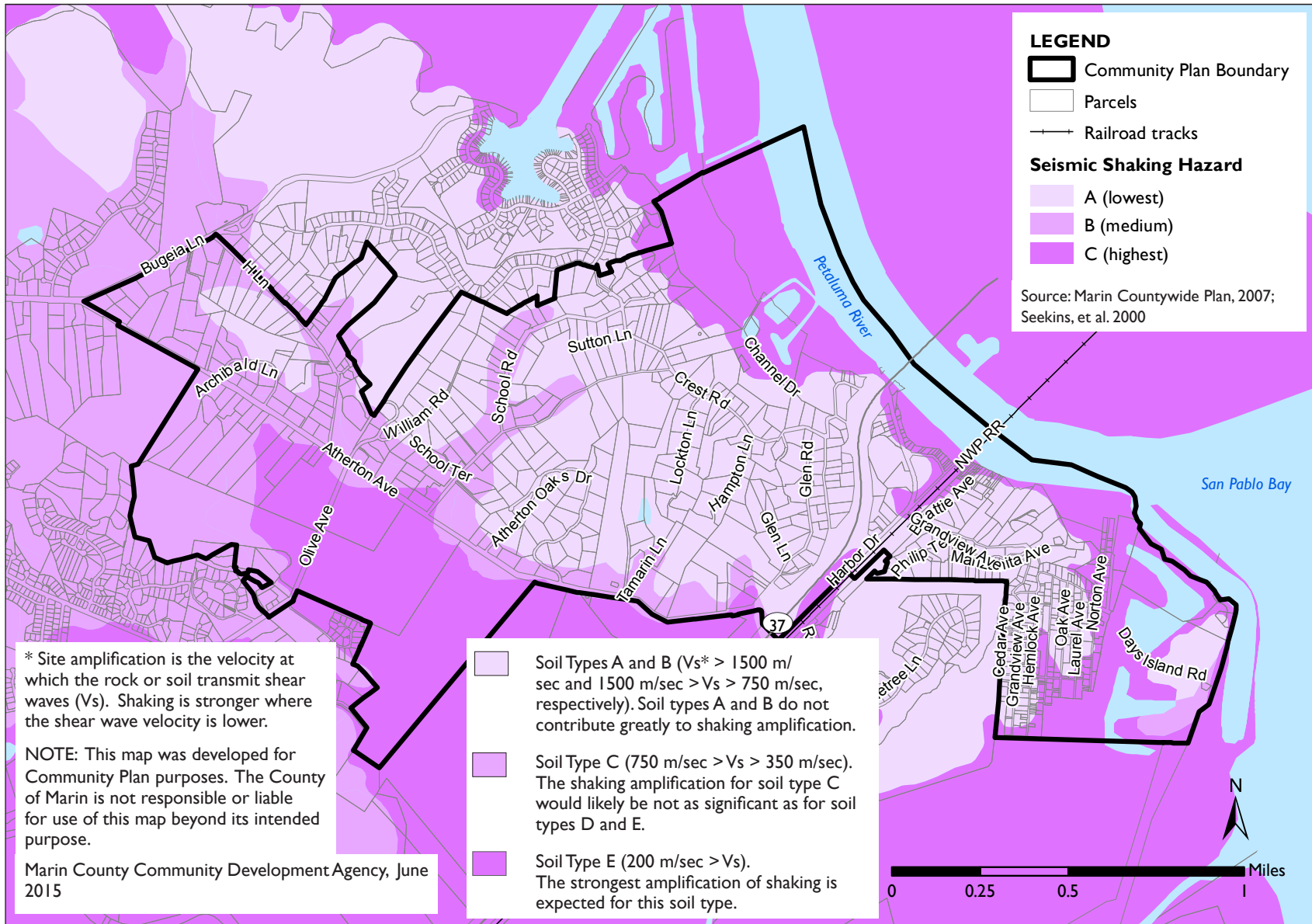
The planning area's ridge and upland areas are composed of ancient conglomerate, a strong, stable rock type made up of well-cemented sand and gravel deposited some 140 million years ago. This material is more resilient to the seismic waves caused by an earthquake than the adjacent bay mud. These flat lands are underlain by weak alluvial deposits of soft, unconsolidated, water saturated clay, silt and vegetative remains (peaty material) accumulated as marshlands in San Francisco Bay within about the last ten thousand years. This soft bay mud is highly compressible and more susceptible to liquefaction and subsidence. Thus, structures located in the bay plain areas may be subjected to more disruptive shaking than those on rock. Sewer and water pipes in bay mud are also susceptible to rupture during strong earthquakes. Map 8 shows the seismic shaking amplification hazards based on soil

types, and Map 9 shows the level of liquefaction susceptibility for the community.

A goal of the Countywide Plan is to protect people and property from risks associated with seismic activity and geologic conditions. Policies and programs in the Countywide Plan Environmental Hazards section accomplish this goal by requiring development to avoid or minimize hazards from earthquakes and unstable ground conditions, to comply with the Alquist-Priolo Act, and designing and constructing all new buildings to be earthquake resistant. While the San Andreas is the only local fault subject to the Alquist-Priolo Act, which prohibits specified types of habitable structures within 50 feet of an active fault trace, appropriate placement and engineering of foundations can minimize impacts to structures from ground shaking and liquefaction. As shown on Map 7, the planning area is not directly located within a boundary of an earthquake fault zone.

The Plan does not recommend any new policies because earthquake safety is addressed in the Countywide Plan. Instead, community members should work together to make the community stronger through increased awareness and training in emergency preparedness. In the event of a large earthquake, residents and businesses may be isolated from basic police, fire and emergency support for several hours to several days.




Map 8. Seismic Shaking Amplification Hazards








Map 9. Liquefaction Susceptibility

* Liquefaction Susceptibility: On the basis of the liquefaction failures that occurred during past earthquakes, it is expected that at least 80 percent of future liquefaction failures will take place in areas judged to have High or Very High susceptibilities. We expect that 20 percent or less of future liquefaction will take place in areas judged to be Moderate and Low, and that less than 1 percent will take place in areas judged Very Low (Knudson et al.,2000).

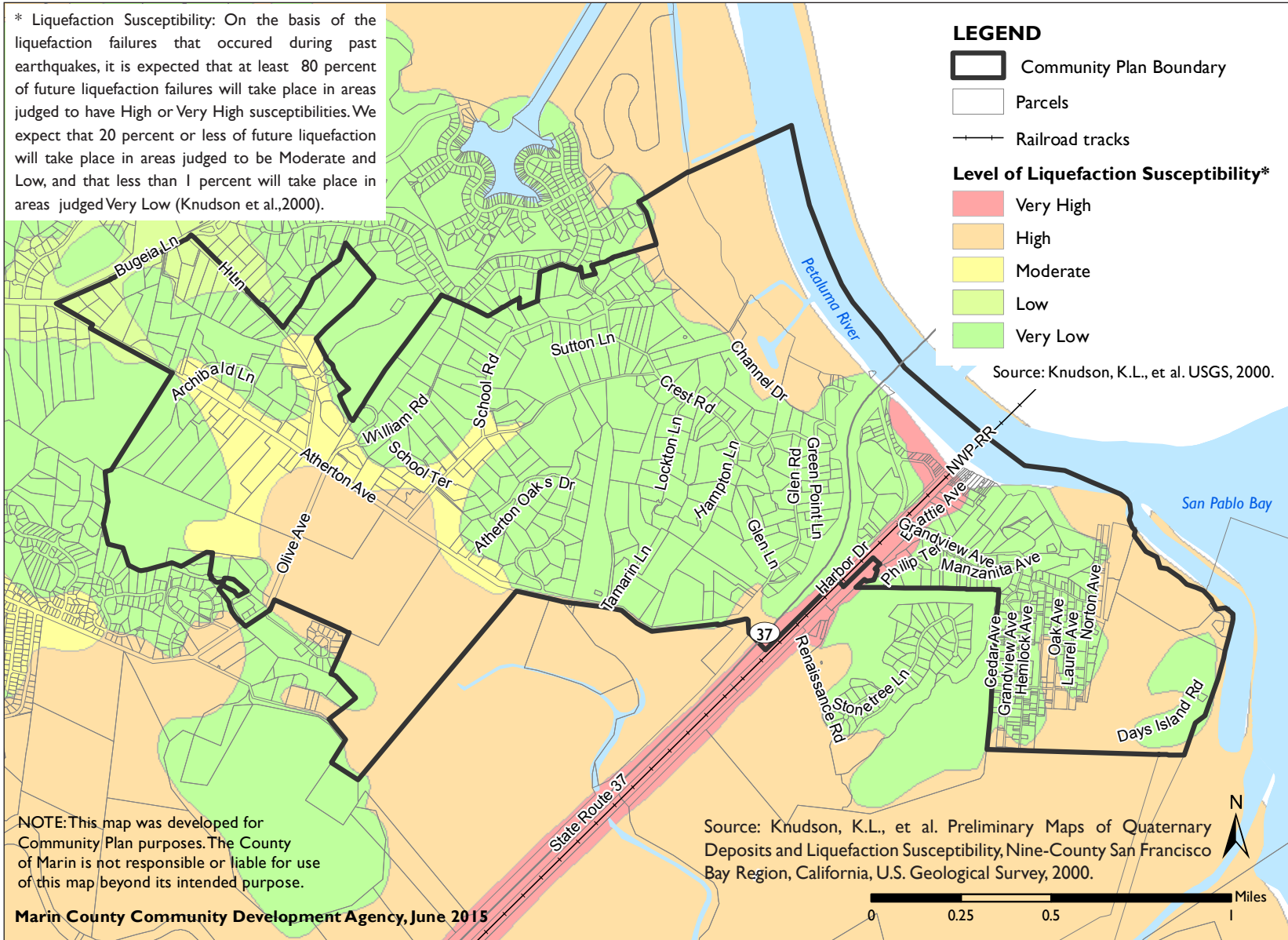
LEGEND

-  Community Plan Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Railroad tracks

Level of Liquefaction Susceptibility*

-  Very High
-  High
-  Moderate
-  Low
-  Very Low

Source: Knudson, K.L., et al. USGS, 2000.



NOTE: This map was developed for Community Plan purposes. The County of Marin is not responsible or liable for use of this map beyond its intended purpose.

Marin County Community Development Agency, June 2015

Source: Knudson, K.L., et al. Preliminary Maps of Quaternary Deposits and Liquefaction Susceptibility, Nine-County San Francisco Bay Region, California, U.S. Geological Survey, 2000.

Flooding

Flooding can originate from storm runoff, tidal activity, tsunamis or storm surge. In Black Point and Green Point, flooding tends to occur more frequently in the low-lying areas close to the bay. This includes the historic bay plain area formerly subject to tidal action, which is below mean sea level, located to the south of Atherton Avenue and east and west of State Route 37. Novato Creek extends through the area and enters San Pablo Bay near the mouth of the Petaluma River. In addition, during flood events, key roads including State Route 37 may become inundated and impede access both into and out of the community. See Map 10 for FEMA floodplain zones.

The lowland marsh areas on the south side of the Petaluma River are subject to intermittent inundation depending on tides and surface runoff from adjacent areas. Access to this area is minimally available via Channel Drive, which often floods during periods of high tide and heavy runoff. The bay plain wetland areas, including the 144 acres owned by Marin Audubon Society and the adjacent diked historic tidelands owned by the Novato Sanitary District, provide an important function as a flood basin. Runoff and rain water pond on these properties until drained off by Marin County Flood Control pumps

on Novato Creek. This minimizes flood potential on Atherton and Olive Avenues. The importance of these lands and how they are managed will increase as sea level rises.

Protecting people and property from flooding risks is an important goal of the Countywide Plan. Regulations require all improvements in the bayfront, floodplain, tidelands, and coastal high hazard zones to be located and designed to be resistant to damage from flooding, tsunamis, seiches, and related water-borne debris. Flood control is a complex issue influenced by various federal, regional and local agencies in addition to the County of Marin. Due to the complex and technical nature of flood management, detailed direction on this issue is beyond the scope of this Plan.

Background

In 1953, the State Legislature established the Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, which is governed by the Board of Supervisors and staffed by the Department of Public Works. Within the District, eight separate flood control “Zones” have been created in areas with specific flooding problems. The goal of the District is to help protect residents from flooding by constructing, operating, and maintaining

flood control improvements such as pump stations and drainage ways.

Flood Control Zone I

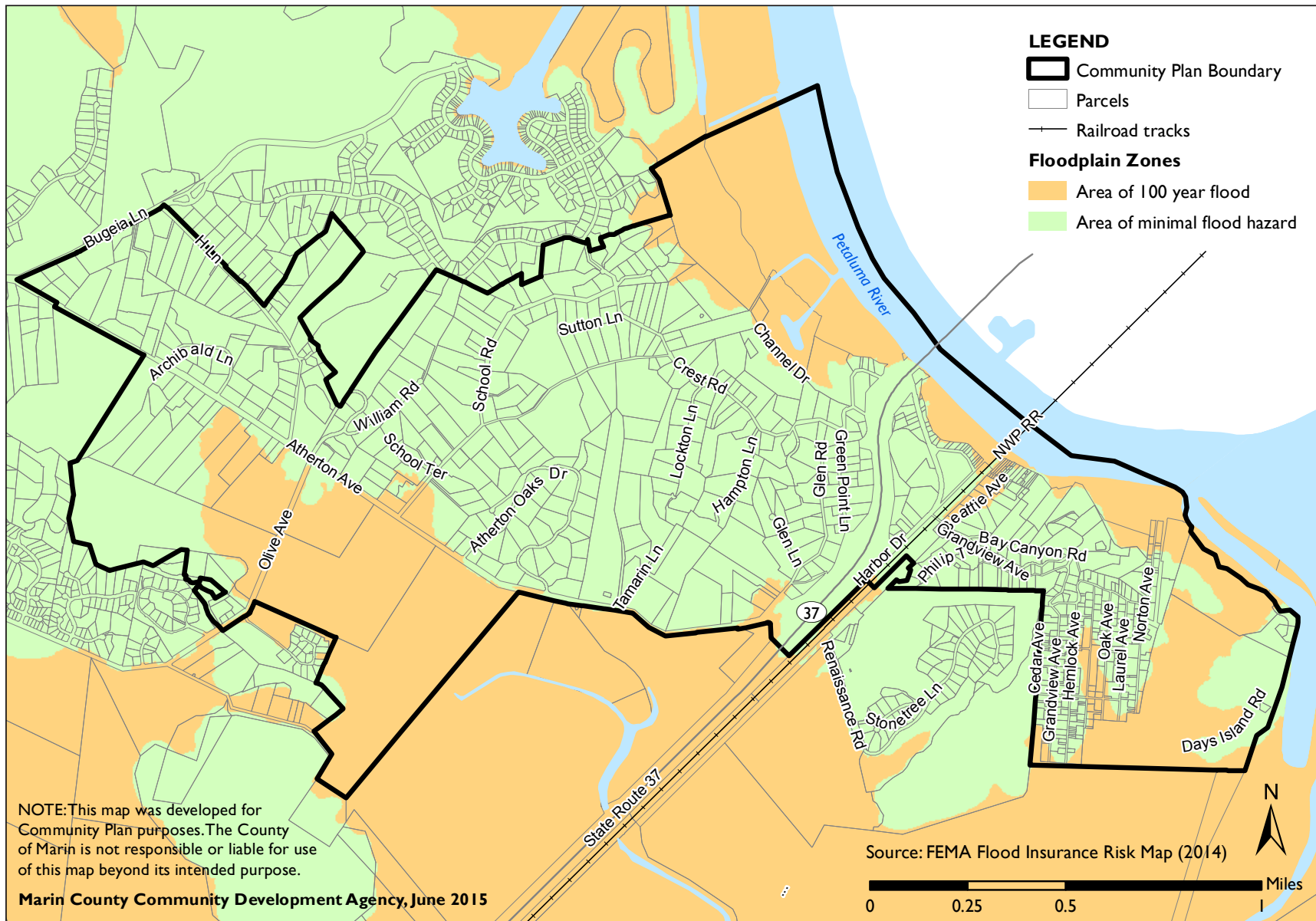
The planning area is located within Zone 1, which encompasses the entire city of Novato and other unincorporated areas--essentially the entire watershed tributary to Novato and Rush Creeks, as shown on Map 11. Zone 1 was formed in the 1960's to address flooding issues in downtown Novato and surrounding areas.

Novato Creek is a substantial perennial stream that extends approximately 17 miles from San Pablo Bay to its headwaters above Stafford Lake. This creek, along with its numerous tributaries including Bowman Creek, Simmons Creek, Warner Creek and Arroyo Avichi, drains an approximately 27,500-acre watershed. Ongoing maintenance includes periodic dredging of lower Novato Creek, Warner Creek and Arroyo Avichi, regular servicing of pump stations, tidegates, levees, and drainages, and an annual vegetation maintenance program.

An advisory board meets as needed to advise staff.

More information on the flood control zone is available online at marinwatersheds.org.

Map 10. Floodplain Zones



Marin County Watershed Program

In 2008, the Board of Supervisors established an innovative approach to integrating flood protection and environmental stewardship and restoration, known as the Marin County Watershed Program. The Watershed Program looks at flooding issues from a broader context and looks to solve problems instead of symptoms of problems. As part of the Watershed Program, Department of Public Works staff work with a variety of public and private partners, including the City of Novato, North Marin Water District, and Novato Sanitary District, which are all part of the Flood Control Zone 1 – Novato Advisory Board, to provide a system-wide analysis of flood protection options and to develop:

- Hydrology and hydraulic models for Novato Creek;
- Stormdrain model for Nave Gardens;
- Historical ecology of the baylands; and
- Conceptual project alternatives.

The Novato Creek Watershed Boundary area is shown in Map 11.

The purpose of the Novato Watershed Program is to identify opportunities to integrate flood protection goals with creek and wetland restoration elements. This process includes evaluating alternatives that

would reduce flood protection maintenance costs and impacts and be resilient to sea level rise. This first phase would produce a unified hydrology and hydraulics model to evaluate alternatives and a Geographic Information Systems based database to identify restoration opportunities. Once the multi-benefit alternatives are identified, it is anticipated a revenue measure would be proposed and/or grant funds sought to fund implementation.

Information on this program and other watershed areas can be obtained at marinwatersheds.org.

Marin County Department of Public Works provides staff support for the watershed program.



*Flooding closed portions of SR 37 on Dec. 11, 2014.
Photo credit: Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal*

In Case of a Flood Emergency

If there is a flooding emergency please call 911. They will route the call to whoever is on call with the County of Marin Flood Control District, Road Crew or City of Novato. If flooding is not imminent, residents may call and leave a message on the DPW main number (415-473-6992) and it will be routed to the appropriate person when offices open.

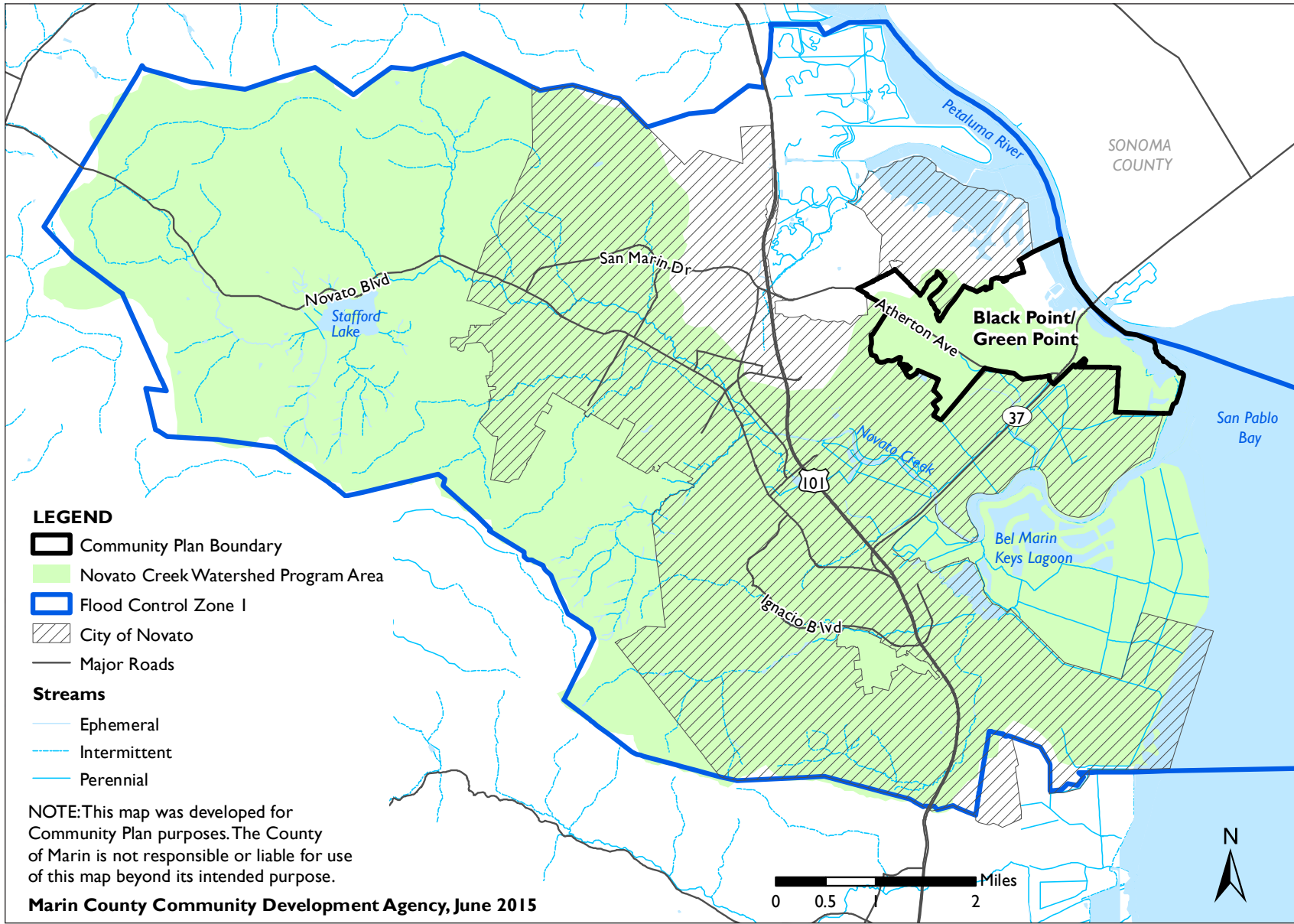
Resources

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
www.FloodSmart.gov



*Gazebo on Harbor Drive flooded.
Photo credit: Glen Harrington*

Map 11. Flood Control Zone I



Sea Level Rise

The Countywide Plan acknowledges the need to address and adapt to the various aspects of climate change. As a bayfront community, portions of the planning area may be subject to greater flooding in the future. Over time, sea level rise resulting from climate change is expected to lead to increased erosion, loss of wetlands, more frequent flooding, and permanent or periodic inundation of low-lying areas. Periodic flooding already occurs in parts of the community during high tide and storm events, giving a preview of the future with rising water levels.

Sea level rise projections vary. However, global models indicate that California may see up to a 66-inch (5.5 feet) rise in sea level within this century, given the expected rise in temperatures around the world¹. While it is impossible to predict exactly when water levels will reach a certain point, the projected ranges in Figure 14 provide guidance for adaptation planning.

A major concern in the near term are “extreme events” where more intense, frequent, and longer-lasting periods of precipitation and greater wind speeds occur in tandem with

¹ National Research Council (NRC). Sea-Level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington: Past, Present, and Future. 2012.

extreme high tides, resulting in unusually severe flooding. In low-lying areas of the community, the temporary but potentially significant impacts of such extreme storm events may occur well before sea level rise itself is noticeable or creates permanently inundated areas within the community. Sea level rise will exacerbate storm flooding as time passes.

Map 12 shows areas that may be impacted by four potential sea level rise scenarios:

10 inches sea level rise with annual storm, 20 inches sea level rise with 20-year storm; 40 inches sea level rise with 100-year storm, and 80 inches sea level rise with 100-year Storm. Data used for mapping sea level rise combined with storm scenarios comes from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS), which is available to the public through an online tool called Our Coast, Our Future (OCOF)². A relatively larger area within the planning area (shown in red and orange) is projected to be inundated by near-to-mid-term sea level rise, with a relatively smaller increase in inundated areas from long-term sea level rise (shown in yellow and green).

² Our Coast, Our Future (OCOF). Access online at: www.data.prbo.org/apps/ocof/

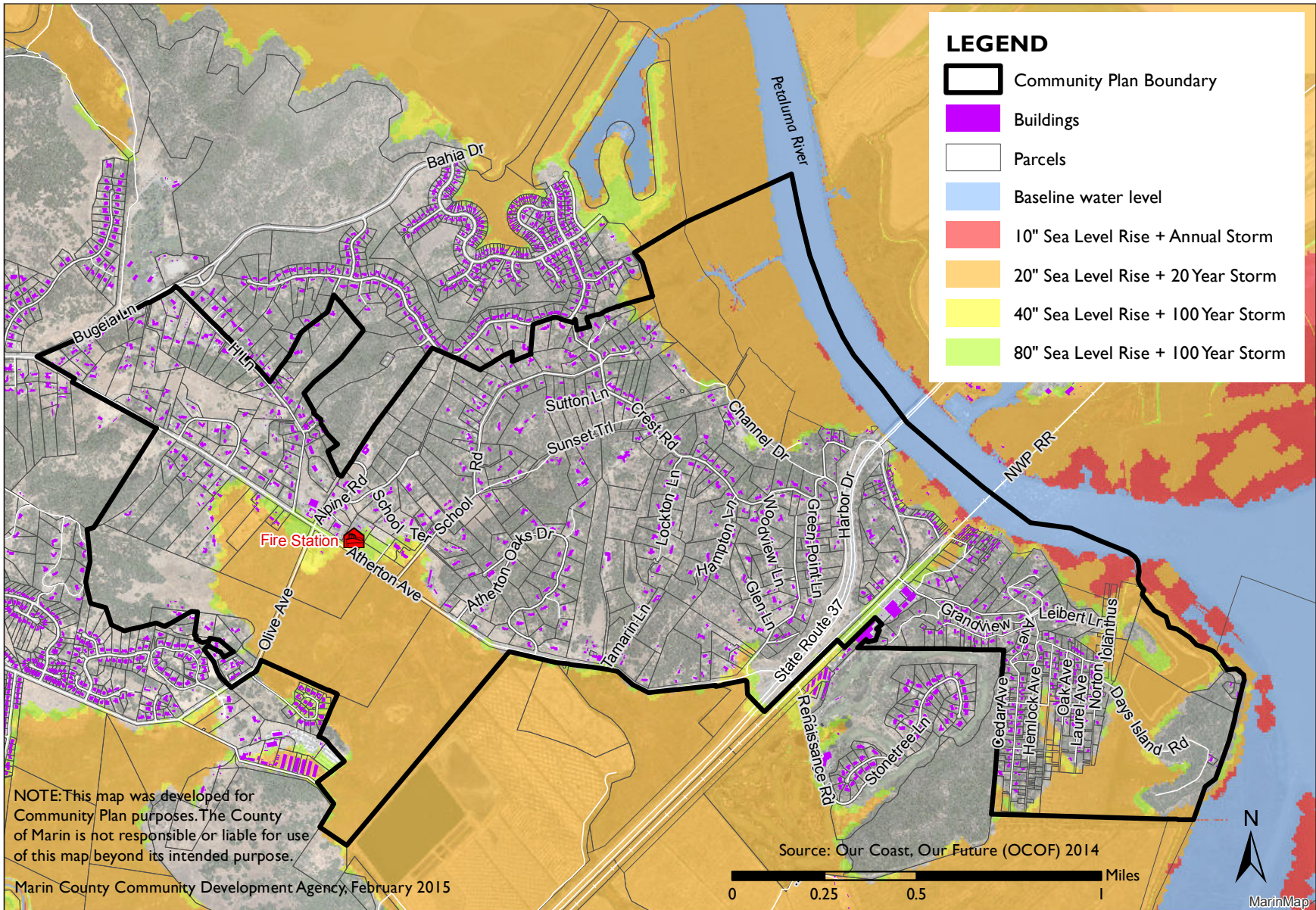
Access in and out of the planning area via low-lying primary access roads State Route 37, Atherton Avenue and Olive Avenue could be impaired in the near-term by more frequent temporary flooding, and eventually by permanent inundation. The limited capacity of alternate routes increases the planning area’s vulnerability when major roadways are flooded. Disruptions to ground transportation could affect commuters and movement of goods through the area, and could cause problems during emergencies if people are unable to evacuate or reach family members.

Infrastructure for water supply, septic systems, gas, electricity and telecommunications could also be impacted by sea level rise. Wells and water distribution systems are vulnerable to saltwater intrusion, elevated groundwater levels, and erosion. Water pipes are subject to erosion and often buried under roads. Septic systems are vulnerable to inundation and erosion, and wastewater could pollute the surrounding environment.

Figure 14. Projected Range of Sea Level Rise

Period	Projected Range of SLR
2030	1.6 - 11.8 in. (4 - 30 cm)
2050	4.7 - 24 in. (18 - 61 cm)
2100	16.6 - 65.8 in. (42 - 167 cm)

Map 12. Sea Level Rise



Structures in the Village Center and other low-lying areas along Atherton Avenue, Beattie Avenue, Iolanthus Avenue, Harbor Drive, and Channel Drive may be exposed, affecting livability, property values, and safety. The earliest threats of flood damage are to non-structural building components and services such as mechanical systems, wells, septic systems and equipment at or below grade. Their dysfunction may make a home unlivable before the building itself is impacted. Eventually, water levels could reach the fire station on Atherton Avenue, impacting emergency response capacity.

Recreational and natural resources will also be affected by sea level rise. Trails will be inundated and eroded, including substantial portions of the proposed Bay Trail route through the planning area. The Petaluma Marsh is among the tidal marshes throughout the Bay whose accretion process is unable to keep up with sea level rise, and whose inward migration is restricted by inland barriers. Marsh areas surrounding the community may convert to mudflat or subtidal habitat by the end of the century without significant intervention and management to prevent marsh accretion. Loss of marsh habitat will affect wildlife and increase flood risk.

From a policy and regulatory standpoint, sea level rise is an issue that should be addressed

on a countywide basis to ensure consistent treatment of residents and their properties. For example, modifications to building or zoning regulations to limit development or require elevated construction in areas threatened by sea level rise should apply uniformly throughout the County. However, the impacts of sea level rise will occur locally and appropriate adaptation strategies will vary from one community to another.

In general, strategies for addressing sea level rise fall into several broad categories, some of which are shown in Figure 15. Each strategy has advantages, disadvantages, and trade-offs. For example, coastal armoring may be effective but is typically very expensive and ecologically damaging. Elevating development may decrease potential damages from flooding in the short term, though not in the long-term and may alter the visual character of a neighborhood. The suitability of any approach for the community would depend on costs, environmental factors, feasibility, and other considerations.

As noted previously, the Novato Flood Protection and Watershed Program process will include evaluating alternatives that reduce maintenance costs and impacts and be resilient to sea level rise. Existing and historic bay plain and marshland areas bordering the community may also offer a good

Figure 15. Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategies

Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategies

Coastal armoring. Physical protections such as levees and seawalls.

Floating development. Structures designed to float permanently or periodically.

Elevated development. Raising the elevation of land or structures above flooding levels.

Living shorelines. Using wetlands to absorb floods, slow erosion, and provide habitat.

Floodable development. Designing structures to withstand flooding or temporarily retain stormwater.

Managed retreat. Planned abandonment.



Marshlands provide important flood protection

opportunity to utilize the “living shoreline” approach. Other possible approaches such as managed retreat have major implications for property values and community character and could only move forward in the future after extensive community input.

A community-specific assessment of sea level rise impacts and appropriate adaptation strategies will require detailed study. Future analysis and planning should build upon the efforts of the Novato Flood Protection and Watershed Program and could include the following:

- Assess local conditions and evaluate potential risks to the community’s buildings, infrastructure, and natural resources;
- Identify locally relevant adaptation strategies to reduce and manage risks; and
- Consider the opportunities and constraints associated with each strategy and potential costs and feasibility.

With the above in mind, the Plan does not recommend specific policies to address sea level rise at this time.

Options for Consideration

During the Plan preparation process community members raised several ideas that deserve further consideration and evaluation.

While these may not become policy requirements in this Plan. These ideas are offered for further exploration as part of ongoing community discussions about the future of fire protection and emergency preparedness in the community.

Fire Risk

- Continue to work with the Novato Fire District to educate residents on fire safety and conduct regular evacuation drills. Where resources allow, conduct evacuation drills on a community-wide basis;
- Work with the fire district and property owners to maintain clearance of brush and vegetation from designated evacuation routes;
- New developments should provide roadside pullouts or wider road sections, where feasible, to allow additional room for emergency vehicles to pass or turn around. These improvements should be consistent with and not detract from the area’s semi-rural character;
- Work with FIRESafe Marin and the Novato Fire District to seek funding for additional “Chipper Days” to remove fuels from the defensible space radius that surrounds homes and to clear vegetation from access roads;

- Work with the Novato Fire District to inform residents about defensible space requirements; and
- Encourage landowners to grant easements across private property for emergency access purposes.

Flooding

- Continue to track progress of the Draft Novato Watershed Program, as part of the Marin County Watershed Program, to identify opportunities to integrate flood protection goals with creek and watershed restoration elements.



*Novato Fire District captain at public meeting
Credit: CDA*

5

COMMUNITY CHARACTER & LAND USE

Maintaining the planning area's natural and rural character is one of the four goals of the Plan. Residents used adjectives such as quiet, peaceful, unique, spacious, rural, and beautiful to describe the community during the Plan update process. Homes in Black Point tend to be smaller and older than the more contemporary homes in Green Point. Of the approximately 610 total housing units in the planning area, 231 are located in Black Point and 379 are in Green Point.

Photo credit: Glen Harrington

Chapter 5: Community Character and Land Use

Background

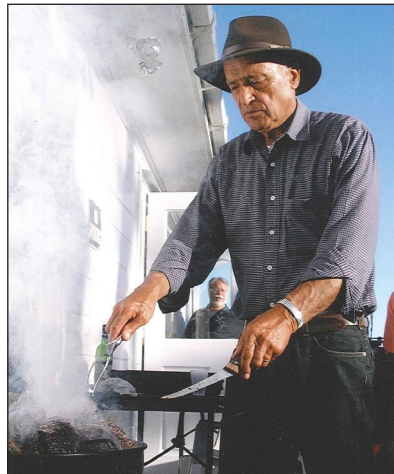
Maintaining the area's natural and rural character is one of the four goals of the Plan. During the update process, participants continuously expressed the desire to protect the area's character. While it is difficult to define a subjective concept like community character, adjectives such as quiet, peaceful, unique, spacious, rural, and beautiful were used to describe the community. Preserving community character may allow residents and visitors to feel a greater sense of place and a closer connection to their community.

The Countywide Plan recognizes this relationship and provides policy guidance to protect community character in the Community Design section (See Figure 16). These and other policies are regulated and implemented through the development review process. Depending on the type of development, other guidance may be provided through planning documents such as community plans and the Single-family Residential Design Guidelines. The community plan may contain customized building and site design standards that reflect the unique character of each area and respond

to local design issues.

Topic areas addressed in the Community Character and Land Use chapter include:

- Land Use and Zoning;
- Home Size;
- Setbacks;
- Legal Nonconforming Lots;
- Light Pollution (Night Skies); and
- Affordable Housing.



Backyard BBQ

Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Figure 16. Countywide Plan Community Design Goals

Marin Countywide Plan (2007) Selected Community Design Goals and Policies

GOAL:

Preservation of Community Character

Perpetuate the unique character of each community, including the essential design characteristics that make it attractive and livable.

POLICY:

Protect Rural Character

Ensure that development in rural areas is consistent with local design and scale, and does not detract from the open character of the landscape.

Land Use and Zoning

The character of the community is traditional single family detached housing. In contrast to the Green Point area, which was mostly developed in the latter half of the century and features more contemporary design, many of the homes in the Black Point area are vintage and were some of the first homes built as summer vacation cottages.

The area's community character features a variety of home styles and ages. Unlike many homogeneous tract home subdivisions, the area was slowly subdivided with individual and small clusters of lots. Figure 17 shows the year structures were built. A small percentage of homes (7 percent) were built prior to 1939, and a small building boom occurred in the post-war period (13 percent). A large proportion of the area's homes were constructed during the 1970's (35 percent) and 1980's (17 percent). Only 16 percent of the housing stock was built after 2000. With the majority of the homes (66 percent) 45 years or older, many homes may require remodeling to meet modern demands.

According to the 2010 Census, there are 596 housing units in the planning area. The 1978 Black Point Community Plan (p. 13) reported approximately 297 single family dwelling units in the planning area, indicating the number of homes doubled over the 32 year

period. A similar comparison to population is not available since data for that period is not readily available. However, the area's population grew 14 percent from 2000 to 2010, relatively consistent with the 18 percent increase seen in housing units during that time. Additional population characteristics are discussed in Chapter 2: Background.

The median value of homes in the area is over one million dollars. Thirty seven percent are valued between \$500,000 and \$999,999 and 60 percent are valued at \$1,000,000 or more (Figure 19). Eighty-six percent of owner-occupied homes have a mortgage, and 14

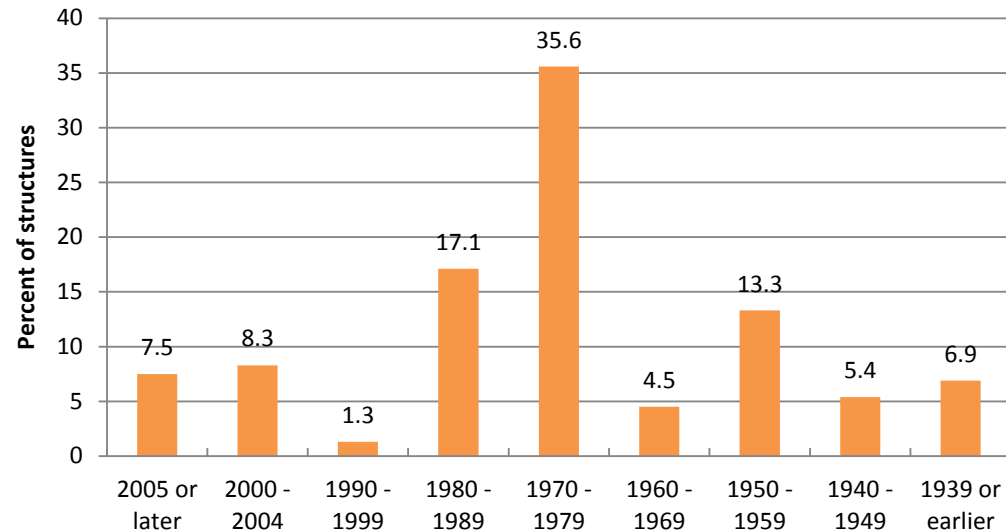
Figure 18. Census Population and Housing

Year	Housing Units	Population
1978	297	---
2000	503	1,143
2010	596	1,306
% change	101%	14%



Historic Black Point home

Figure 17. Year Structure Built



Source: U.S. Census 2010

percent are owned free and clear. Typical for Marin, 87 percent of those with a mortgage have mortgage costs of at least \$2,000 per month. In addition to mortgage costs, the Census provides information on gross rent. The data shows that 15 percent of renters pay less than \$200, 40 percent pay \$750 to \$999, 17 percent pay \$1,000 to \$1,499, and 28 percent pay \$1,500 or more per month. In terms of housing affordability, 72.3 percent pay 35 percent or more of their household income towards rent. The other 27.7 percent pay less than 15 percent of their income towards rent. It is generally advised that rent should be no more than 30 percent of household income. This metric indicates that a high number of renters in the community are paying a disproportionate amount of income towards rent. This, factored in with the cost of transportation, advised to be no more than 15 percent of household income, may reduce disposable income further.

Existing Land Use

Land use regulation for properties in the planning area, as with the rest of Marin County, relies on land use designations specified in the Countywide Plan, and the governing zoning district. Under state law, Countywide Plan land use designations are generalized categories that define a predominant land use type at a range of densities, while zoning

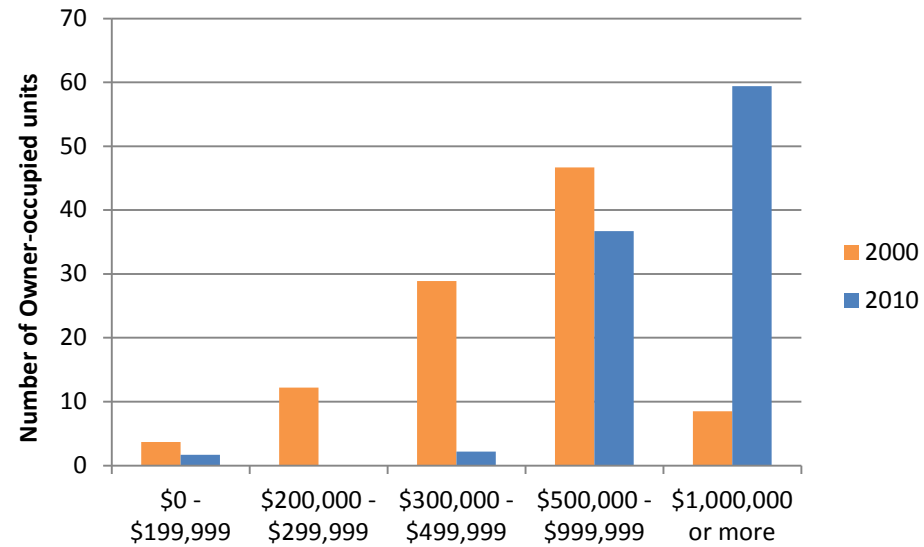
provides more specific regulations related to allowed uses, building size and siting, and lot size. Zoning designations must be consistent with the land use designations identified in the Countywide Plan. As noted previously, land use and zoning designations in the planning area are primarily residential interspersed with some agriculture and a small commercial center, with large swaths of open space.

Figure 20 shows the total acreages and percentages of each Land Use Category, and Map 13 shows the distribution of land use for

the planning area. The Land Use categories are as follows:

Agriculture (AG1 and AG3). Approximately 17 percent of the area is considered agriculture. This includes most of Black Point and the bay plain marsh areas southwest of Atherton Avenue. Both the AG1 and AG3 land use designations allow for agricultural uses, including nonresidential structures necessary for agricultural production. Residential uses are allowed at a density of one dwelling per 1 to 9 acres under AG3 and one dwelling unit per 31 to 60 acres under

Figure 19. Median Home Values of Owner-occupied Units



Source: U.S. Census 2010

AG1. These areas are primarily residential with some agricultural uses generally limited to a nursery and small garden plots.

Rural/Residential (SF3). Over 56 percent of the planning area is designated SF3, Rural/Residential, and is the primary land use designation in Green Point. The Rural/Residential land use category is for single family residential development in areas where public services, such as sewer, are limited and on properties where physical hazards and/or natural resources may restrict development. Densities are allowed within a range of 1 unit per 1 – 5 acres. Additionally, some agricultural uses generally limited to livestock (horses), small garden plots, and kennels are permitted.

Neighborhood Commercial (NC).

Only one percent of the land area, located in the Village Center area, is developed as Neighborhood Commercial. The Neighborhood Commercial/Mixed Use land use category is established to encourage smaller-scale retail and neighborhood serving office and service uses in conjunction with residential development oriented toward pedestrians and located in close proximity to residential neighborhoods. Additional description of the land use in this area is discussed in the Key Development Sites chapter for the Village Center area.

Recreational Commercial (RC). Less than one percent of the land area is designated Recreational Commercial. This designation provides for resorts, lodging facilities, restaurants, and recreational boat marinas. This area includes the Black Point Boat Launch and an adjacent vacant parcel.

Open Space (OS).

The Open Space designation allows for recreation, watershed, and habitat protection and management. Twenty-four percent, or 343 acres, of the planning area is designated as Open Space. This consists of approximately 164 acres of the bay plain area southwest of Atherton Avenue, 125 acres of Day Island, and 54 acres of marsh along the Petaluma River.

Existing Zoning

A description of the zoning and distribution of acreage is shown in Figure 22, and the area's zoning is shown in Map 14. Generally, the majority of the Green Point area is zoned ARP-2, while the Black Point area is zoned A2. ARP-2 has a density of 1 unit per 2 acres, and A2 requires a minimum lot area of 2 acres.

A2 (Agriculture, Limited) District

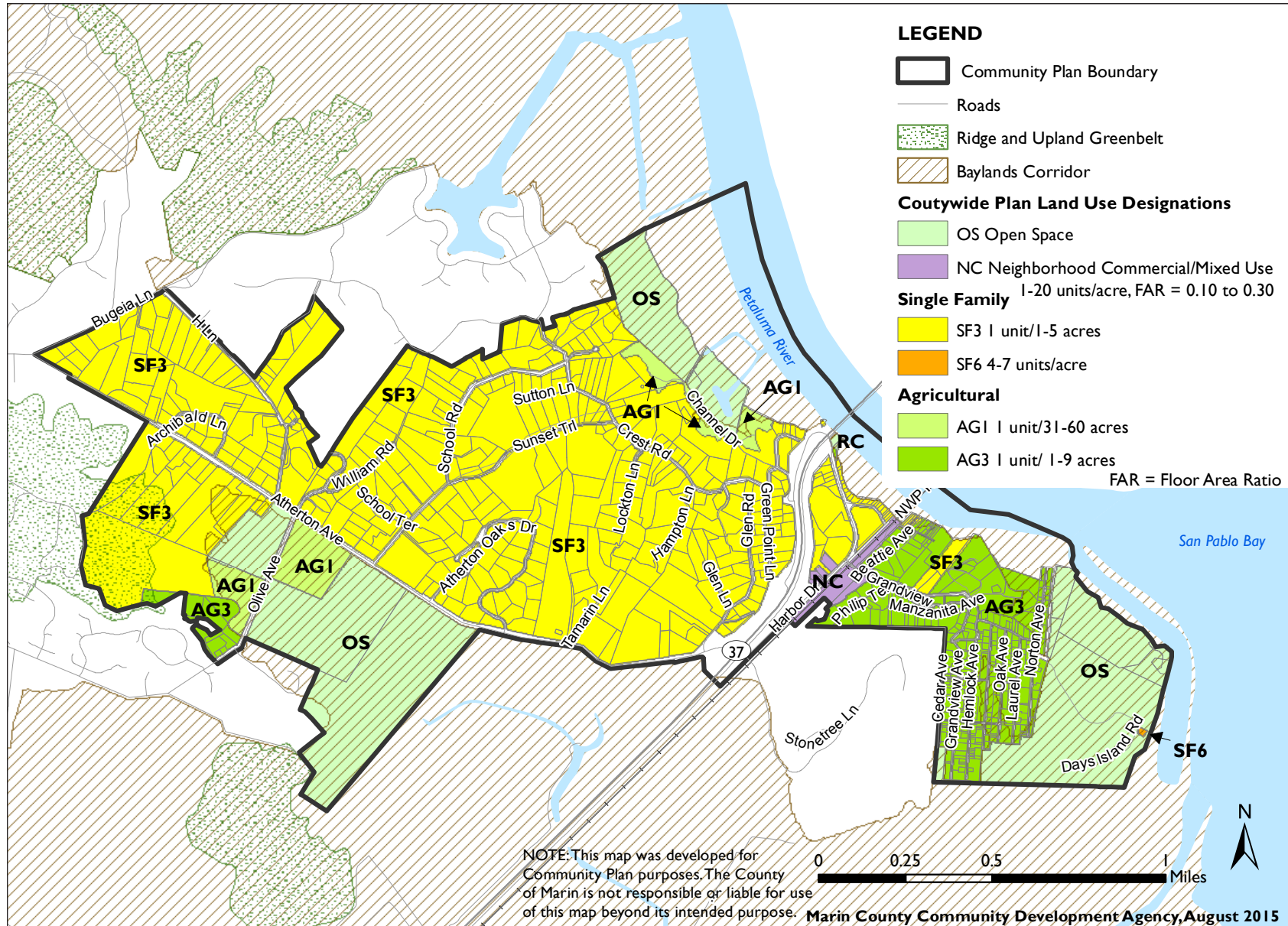
The A2 zoning district identifies areas suitable for commercial agricultural operations, and similar compatible uses. The A2 zoning district is consistent with the Agriculture 3 (AG3) land use category and several residential land use categories of the Countywide Plan.

Figure 20. Existing Land Use Categories

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percent
Agriculture 1 (AG1)	106.5	7.5%
Agriculture 3 (AG3)	142.6	10.1%
Rural/Residential (SF3)	804.1	56.8%
Planned Residential (PR)	5.0	0.4%
Neighborhood Commercial (NC)	14.4	1.0%
Recreational Commercial (RC)	0.7	0.1%
Open Space (OS)	343.1	24.2%
Total	1,416.4	100.0%

Source: Marin County Community Development Agency, October 2014

Map 13. Land Use Policy



ARP (Agriculture, Residential Planned)

The ARP zoning district identifies areas suitable for residential development, with varied housing types designed without the confines of specific yard, height, or lot area requirements, where the amenities resulting from this flexibility in design will benefit the public or other properties in the community. The ARP zoning district is consistent with the Agriculture land use categories of the Countywide Plan.

Refer to Marin County Code Section 22.08 – Agricultural and Resource-Related Districts for additional information.

Planned Development and Build Out

The planning area encompasses approximately 1,431 acres containing 788 parcels. Today, approximately 610 housing units and 53,400 nonresidential square feet exist on these parcels. Of the total housing units, approximately 231 units are in Black Point and 379 are in Green Point. Figure 23 shows the breakdown of existing and potential buildout of housing units within each area. Theoretically an additional 105 housing units in Black Point and 97 units in Green Point, for a total of 202 additional units, including second units could be built. A total of 812 total units are anticipated at build out, representing a 33 percent increase for the entire planning area.

Figure 22. Existing Zoning Distribution

Zoning	Description	Density	Total Acreage	Percent of Total
A2	Agriculture, Limited	---	131.6	9.2%
ARP-1.5	Agriculture, Residential Planned	1 unit per 1.5 acres	17.1	1.2%
ARP-2	Agriculture, Residential Planned	1 unit per 2 acres	870.7	60.8%
ARP-60	Agriculture, Residential Planned	1 unit per 60 acres	149.2	10.4%
RSP-4.36	Residential, Single Family Planned	4.36 units per acre	0.3	0.0%
RCR	Resort and Commercial Recreation	---	0.7	0.0%
VCR	Village Commercial/Residential	1 unit per 2,000 sq ft of lot area	14.1	1.0%
OA	Open Area	---	178.7	12.5%
BFC	Bayfront Conservation Zone District	---	11.7	0.7%
F2	Secondary Floodway District	---	58.5	4.1%
Total			1432.6	100%

Source: Marin County Community Development Agency, as of November 2014

Figure 21. Right to Farm Ordinance

**Marin County Development Code
Chapter 22.03
Right To Farm Ordinance**

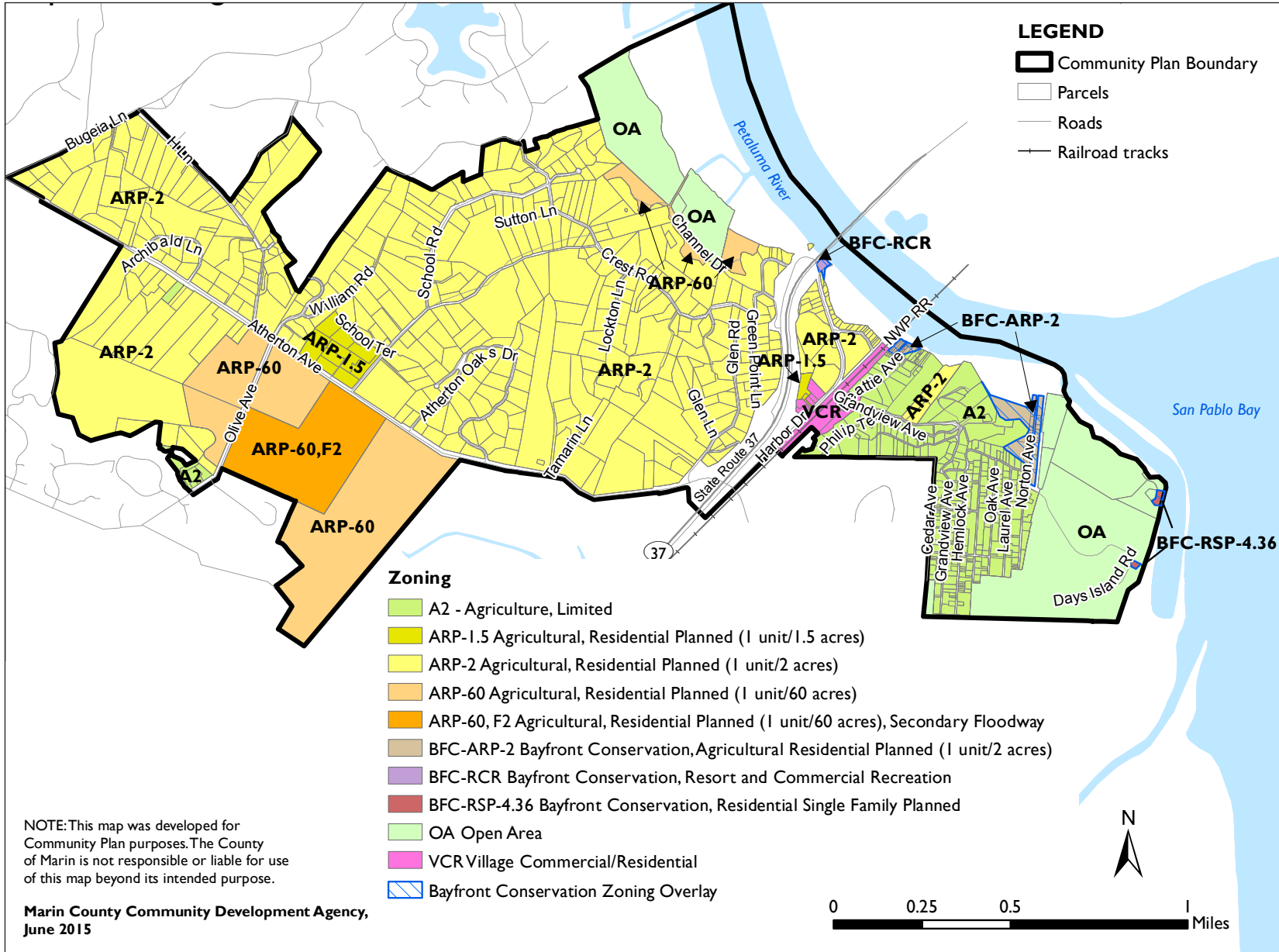
No agricultural activity, operation or facility on agricultural land, conducted or maintained for commercial purposes, and in a manner consistent with customs and standards followed by similar agricultural operations, shall be or become a nuisance, if it was not a nuisance when it began.

For additional information refer to Marin County Development Code, Chapter 23.03.



Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Map 14. Zoning



Of the nonresidential square footage, approximately 74 percent (39,509 square feet) is concentrated along a small corridor along Harbor Drive in what is commonly called “The Village Center” area. Refer to the Village Center neighborhood discussion following this section. The remaining 26 percent (13,889 square feet) is distributed throughout the planning area, as shown in Map 15. Total nonresidential square footage at build out is anticipated to be approximately 57,686 square feet. In the Green Point area, no additional nonresidential square footage is anticipated beyond what already exists. An additional 4,288 square feet is anticipated in the Village Center.

The build out figures are a projection of potential development if land vacant in 2015 were fully developed according to the zoning designations shown in Map 13. In some cases, build out figures may be greater than the development that could be realized due to a number of factors, including:

- Environmental constraints;
- Policies or regulations (e.g. parking, setbacks, septic); and
- A landowner may agree to less development than is allowed.

The only proposed change to land use or zoning designations is to property owned

by the Marin Audubon Society. The Marin Audubon Society owns a large number of properties within the planning area and has requested rezoning several properties to Open Area and changing the land use designation to Open Space, as shown in Policy CC-1. These properties are located near the intersection of Olive and Atherton Avenues, around Norton Pond along Norton Avenue, and in the area.

Figure 23. Housing Unit Existing and Potential Buildout*

Neighborhood	Existing Units	Potential Units	Theoretical Buildout Units
Black Point	231	105	336
Green Point	379	97	476
Total	610	202	812

Figure 24. Nonresidential Existing and Potential Buildout*

Neighborhood	Existing SQFT	Potential SQFT	Theoretical Buildout SQFT
Village Center	39,509	4,288	43,797
Other	13,889	0	13,889
Total	53,398	4,288	57,686

Source: Marin County Community Development Agency

*NOTE: Total Buildout is theoretical, where theoretical buildout is the maximum allowed by zoning.

The Village Center Neighborhood

The Village Center neighborhood is a small, locally serving commercial area along Harbor Drive, shown in Map 15. The area along the northwest side of Harbor Drive consists of five parcels containing a small number of single-family residences and commercial uses, including an automotive and maintenance shop and a convenience store and deli. An antique store, now closed, formerly operated out of one of the residential units. On the southeastern side of Harbor Drive and adjacent to the Northwestern Pacific rail line are several large parcels owned by the Northwestern Pacific Railroad and five parcels owned by Kelleher Lumber Company. These five lots combine to form the distribution center for the company. Adjacent to Kelleher Lumber is the former House of Daniels site, now a warehouse and self-storage for RV’s and boats, which was annexed to the City of Novato in 2002.

The zoning for the Village Center is VCR, Village Commercial/Residential. This zoning district is intended to maintain the established historical character of village commercial areas; promote village commercial self-sufficiency; foster opportunities for village commercial growth; maintain a balance between resident-serving and non-resident-serving commercial uses; protect, without

undue controls, established residential, commercial, and light industrial uses; and maintain community scale.

The Village Center could accommodate a limited amount of additional residential and nonresidential development. However, the community's small population and relative proximity to nearby commercial and retail centers in the Novato area may limit the types of businesses and future growth potential. Constraints include lack of parking and reliance on septic systems. Despite these limitations, survey results and feedback from community workshops indicated a strong community desire to accommodate some future growth. Such growth should respect the area's history, be local serving, sensitive to the small scale nature of the existing properties, and consider the area's unique natural and scenic values.

While VCR zoning allows several uses (refer to Marin County Code Chapter 22.12), many may not be an appropriate fit for the location. Survey and resident feedback indicates there is community support to encourage certain uses, such as:

- Plant nurseries;
- Small child day care/small family day-care homes; theatres and meeting halls (for a community center);

- Residential uses;
- Grocery stores and restaurants (including cafes); second hand stores; antique retail stores; studios for art, dance, music, photography, etc.;
- Public parks and playgrounds;
- Community garden; and
- Massage and meditation center.

While the above uses are encouraged, this does not preclude other uses allowed under the VCR zoning from being developed, subject to compliance with the Development Code. Further, formula or "chain store" operations that are inconsistent with the village character and scale of the surrounding community are discouraged. The Plan's recommendation for the Village Center area is described in the Policies section at the end of this chapter.

Home Size

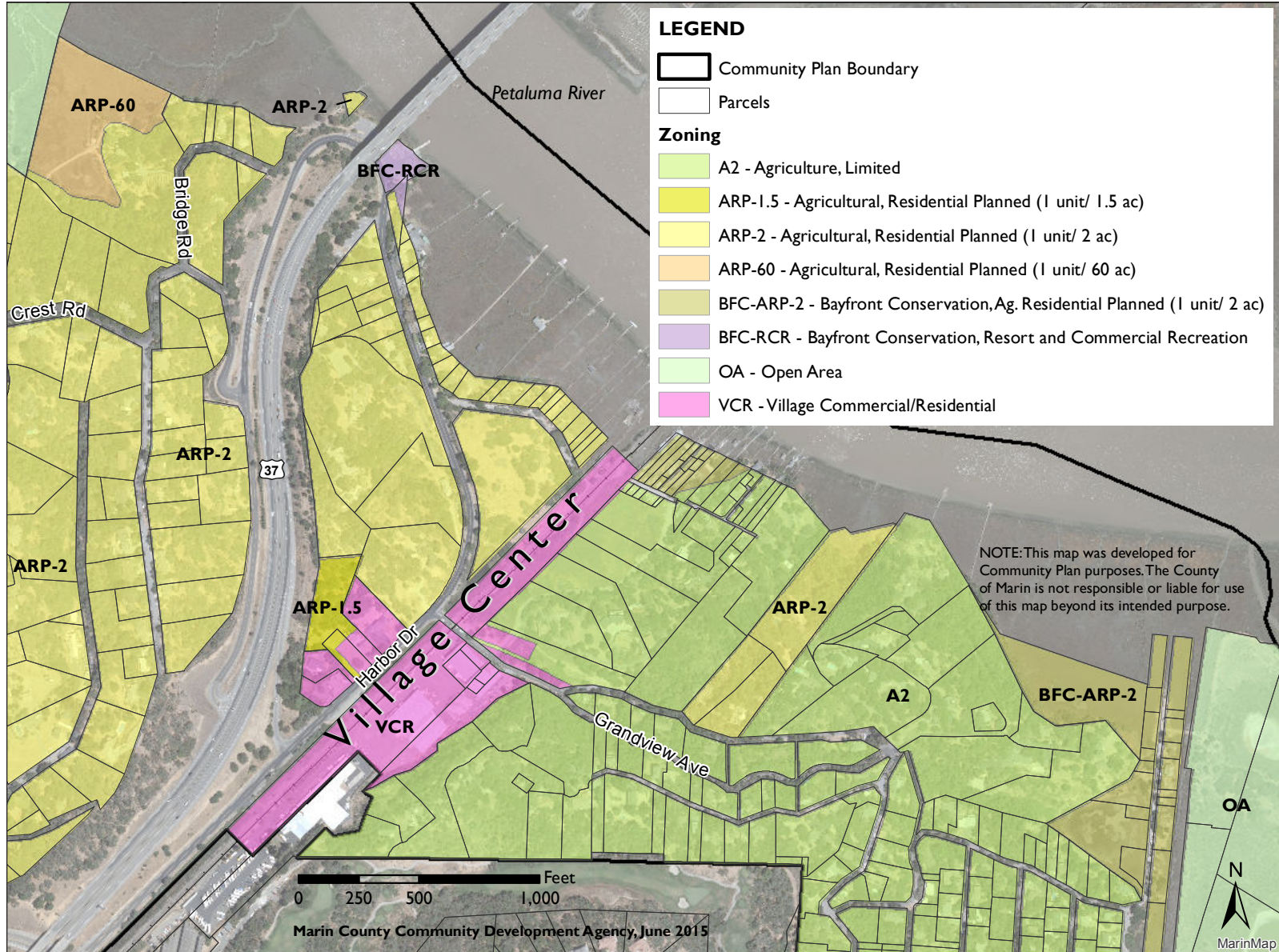
Concerns about home size, particularly in relationship to lot size, were raised as a potential threat to the area's identity and semi-rural community character as new development mixes in with the area's smaller, older, and more traditional homes. Because there is no factual measure or definition to objectively judge community character, it is difficult to determine what it is, especially since there is a wide range of architectural styles, scale, and ages within the area.

Depending on zoning and the type of development, the size of homes is addressed through the Design Review process and through the guidance of the Single-family Residential Design Guidelines. Figure 25 describes what types of new structures or physical improvements would be subject to



Village Center near Rossi's Deli

Map 15. Village Center



Design Review. The Design Review process is a discretionary process that looks at the design and physical improvements of a project to implement the goals of the Countywide Plan. The process is intended to ensure that site planning and building design respects and preserves the natural beauty of the County and its environmental resources, and that exterior appearances, including landscaping and parking, are harmonious with the design, scale, and context of the surrounding properties.

In recognition of the Countywide Plan's goal of protecting community character, the County developed guidelines to address design considerations for both single-family and multi-family residences. Together, the Marin County Single-family and Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines are intended to establish clear and comprehensive standards for evaluating residential projects. A brief summary of the Single-family Residential Design Guidelines is provided in Figure 26.

These guidelines are not intended as absolute standards; rather, they allow for flexibility in design to take into consideration the local climate, building materials and colors, landscaping, unique topographic and hydrologic features, visibility, and any

environmental constraints to identify the most suitable site for development. Since the Design Guidelines are advisory, more formal policy standards may be necessary to regulate the size of homes to protect an area's community character.

Setbacks

Setbacks were also discussed as an important feature of community character. Community input during the Plan update process indicated a desire for setback standards to be more consistent with the surrounding

neighborhood. As previously mentioned, the community includes a diversity of lot sizes, home sizes, architectural styles, and dates of construction. The relationship of residences and their respective setbacks vary significantly throughout the planning area, in part because many of the residences are older and were constructed prior to the initiation of comprehensive design standards.

Setbacks are one of several design components that should be considered when designing projects because they can influence privacy,

Figure 25. [When is Design Review Required?](#)

Design Guidelines and the Design Review Process

Marin County's Single-family and Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines are valuable tools for protecting community character. However, it is important to understand how and when these guidelines are used. In general, design guidelines are applied to development proposals that require Design Review, a discretionary application process that involves County review and public input. Approval of a Design Review application requires a finding that the proposed project complies with all applicable design guidelines.

Design Review requirements vary depending on whether a property is located in a "planned" or "conventional" zoning district. On properties governed by planned district zoning, projects are always subject to Design Review (minor

work may qualify for an exemption). Conversely, development within conventional zoning districts is regulated by specific height, yard setback, and floor area ratio standards and Design Review is generally not required as long as the zoning standards are met. Over time, the Development Code has been amended to "trigger" Design Review for an increasing number of situations regardless of underlying zoning. These triggers are intended to ensure that projects involving large homes or significant expansions are reviewed for consistency with adopted design guidelines regardless of zoning. The Design Review process and associated guidelines outlined above provide opportunities for neighbors to review and comment on proposed development and clear criteria against which projects can be evaluated.

Figure 26. Single-family Residential Design Guidelines

Single-family Residential Design Guidelines (2005)

The Marin County Single-family Residential Design Guidelines were adopted in 2005 in part due to concerns that remodels and new residential construction were changing the character of Marin's communities. In particular, the guidelines are intended to address development involving larger homes and construction in hillside areas. The document includes 26 guidelines relating to site design, building relationships, neighborhood compatibility, and visual bulk factors. Key concepts of the guidelines are summarized below.

Site Design

- Site development to minimize the removal of natural vegetation, including trees.
- Incorporate site design features that avoid or minimize increases in storm water run-off
- Maintain required setbacks from streams and riparian systems.
- Minimize grading and alterations to natural landforms.

Building Relationships

- Incorporate upper floor "stepbacks" to maintain adequate space and light between properties and a sense of openness between properties and the adjacent roadway.

Green and Universal Building Design

- Comply with "green building" requirements related to energy efficiency and conservation.
- Incorporate universal design principles to meet the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities.

Neighborhood Compatibility

- Follow existing street setback patterns where applicable.
- Site and design hillside development to minimize privacy impacts between properties.
- Locate and orient garages to minimize their visibility.
- Minimize the height and extent of solid fencing and retaining walls.
- Utilize landscaping for visual and privacy screening.
- Locate mechanical equipment to avoid or minimize noise intrusion.
- Design, locate, and shield exterior lighting to preserve the visibility of the night sky and prevent off-site glare, particularly in hillside areas.

Reduction of Visual Bulk

- Divide buildings and rooflines into smaller parts to break up visual mass and bulk.
- Avoid excessive cantilevers on downhill elevations.
- Use horizontal and vertical building components to reduce visual bulk; flat building walls over 20 feet in height and over 25 feet in width are discouraged.
- Utilize "stepped" building designs that follow the slope on hillsides.

- Locate buildings away from visually-prominent ridgeline areas.
- Utilize building colors and materials that blend with the natural landscape.

The Single-Family Residential Design Guidelines are available online at: http://www.marincounty.org/~media/files/departments/cd/he/single_family_residential_design_guidelines.pdf

Single-family Residential Design Guidelines

Adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors on July 19, 2005.



Marin County Community Development Agency
July 2005

views, light, solar access, and noise effects on neighboring properties. Standards for setbacks, including front, side, corner side, and rear setbacks, in addition to height and minimum lot area, are provided in Marin County Code Chapters 22.08, 22.10, and 22.16 and are summarized in Figure 27.

Minimum setbacks are required in the A2 zoning district. In the ARP zoning district, setbacks are determined through the Master Plan and/or Design Review process in accordance with Chapters 22.44 (Master Plan and Precise Development Plans) or 22.42 (Design Review). Exceptions to the setback standards in the A2 zoning district may be allowed for parking structures on steep slopes of 20 percent or steeper. Further, setback standards may be waived for substandard lots, common in the Gridiron neighborhood.

In addition to the Development Code, guidance on setbacks is provided in the Single-family Residential Design Guidelines. Relevant guidelines pertaining to setbacks are summarized in Figure 28. The Single-family Residential Design Guidelines recommend that new development and remodel/additions should not be disharmonious with the existing street patterns. In hillside areas with average slopes of 25 percent or more, varied and staggered front setbacks are encouraged to reduce the monotony of repetitive setbacks

and for consistency with the hillside character. Projects are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account site-specific factors such as lot size, bulk and mass, topography, vegetation, and the visibility of the proposed development.

Legal Nonconforming Lots

Many of the existing lots in the old Gridiron neighborhood are considered to be legal nonconforming. This neighborhood was created as a subdivision in 1905 with the lots measuring 25 feet wide by 100 feet deep. Access to the lots was to be provided via 25-foot wide right-of-way roadways. The Gridiron is a “paper” subdivision that did not take into consideration the steepness of terrain (ranging beyond 40 percent slope in many instances) or the lowland floodplains when originally plotted. The area was zoned A2 Agriculture, Limited (7,500 square foot minimum lot area) in 1942.

The 1985 Merger Program

On December 20, 1985 the Marin County Deputy Zoning Administrator approved the merger of approximately 149 lots within the Gridiron area, though several substandard lots that may be eligible for merger remain. In the Gridiron area (zoned A2, Agriculture, Limited), the minimum lot size is two acres. Analysis shows there are approximately 283

Figure 27. Marin County Code Standards: A2 and ARP

	A2	ARP-2
Maximum Residential Density	Not applicable	1 unit per 2 acres
Minimum Lot Size	2 acre minimum lot size	
Minimum Setbacks (ft):		
Front	25 ft.	Determined by Master Plan and/or Design Review
Side	6 ft.	
Corner Side	10 ft.	
Rear	20% of lot depth to 25 ft. maximum	
Maximum Height (ft): Main building	30 ft.	30 ft.
Maximum Height (ft): Detached Accessory Structure	15 ft.	15 ft.

Source: Marin County Development Code, 2014

parcels zoned A2. Of these parcels, more than 250, or 90 percent, are one acre or smaller.

Figure 29 shows the distribution of parcels by size. Figure 30 shows the distribution of ARP zoned parcels by lot size for comparison purposes. Unlike the A2 zoning district, the ARP zoning district does not have a minimum lot size.

Figure 28. Single-family Residential Design Guidelines: Setbacks

Single-family Residential Design Guidelines (2005) Selected Setback Guidelines	
C-1.1 Street Setbacks	
New development and remodel/additions should not be disharmonious with the existing street setback patterns. The relationships of building size, scale, image and location related to the public street are important issues in the design review of new single-family residential development projects. In residential neighborhoods with conventional, uniform lot sizes and frontages, the pattern of buildings consistently set back from both sides of the public street, and the landscaped street space, combine to create an outdoor “room” related to the neighborhood.	monotony of repetitive setbacks. The amount of setback variation will depend upon lot size. Residential development at a density of 2 dwellings per acre or less should vary adjacent setbacks by at least 10 feet; lots one acre or larger should vary adjacent setbacks by larger distances if feasible.
C-1.2 Hillside Street Stepbacks	
On hillside properties with average slopes of 25% or greater, varied and staggered front building setbacks are encouraged. This is consistent with the natural hillside character and will reduce the	C-1.3 Hillside Interior Setbacks. All new hillside residential development should be located so as to minimize interference with privacy between properties and views from adjacent residences. On hillside properties, the walls and roof of the second floor should be set back from the walls and roof of the first floor to increase the space between buildings at the upper levels so as to minimize interference with privacy and views from adjacent properties.

Because the majority of lots in the Gridiron remain substandard, the Plan continues to promote the merger of substandard sized parcels to minimum lot area requirements commensurate with on-site (septic tank) waste disposal constraints inherent in the area. Septic issues are discussed in more detail in the Public Facilities and Services chapter.

Existing Development Regulations

Regulations governing nonconforming lots (and nonconforming structures and uses) are spelled out in the Marin County Development Code, Title 22, Article VII, Chapter 22.112 (see Figure 31). These standards describe when nonconforming uses and structures may continue. For example, a nonconforming use of land may be continued or sold as

Figure 29. Distribution of A2 Zoned Parcels by Lot Size

Parcel Size	Number of Parcels	Percent
< 0.9 acres	255	90.1%
1 to 1.9 acres	16	5.7%
> 2 acres	12	4.2%
TOTAL	283	100%

Figure 30. Distribution of ARP Zoned Parcels by Size

Zoning	Parcel Size	Number of Parcels	Percent
ARP-1.5	< 0.9 ac.	0	0.0%
	1 - 1.9 ac.	9	90.0%
	2-3 ac.	1	10.0%
	Total	10	100%
ARP-2	< 0.9 ac.	178	39.0%
	1 - 1.9 ac.	141	30.9%
	2 - 20 ac.	137	30.0%
	Total	456	100%
ARP-60	6 - 9.9 ac.	4	44.4%
	10 - 87 ac.	5	55.6%
	Total	9	100%

long as the existing use is not enlarged, increased, intensified, or extended to occupy a greater area than it lawfully occupied prior to becoming a nonconforming use. The nonconforming use may not be relocated to another location on the lot, or moved from the inside to an outside location.

Lots that are nonconforming due to substandard lot area are prohibited from

being reduced in lot area if the lot is located in a conventional zoning district. This would include the A2 zoned areas in the Gridiron area.

Nonconforming structures may be allowed to continue being used unless the structure is demolished. However, if the nonconforming structure is demolished by a natural disaster, such as fire, flood, earthquake, or as the result of an emergency, the structure would be allowed to be rebuilt subject to a number of conditions, spelled out in Section 22.112.020(E).

A nonconforming use of land or a nonconforming use of a conforming structure is considered abandoned if the use is discontinued for a continuous period of one year or is moved, and shall lose its nonconforming status.

Additional Information and Resources

Contact the Marin County Community Development Agency for more information.

Light Pollution (Night Skies)

The night sky is an important visual and natural resource. The absence of much artificial, exterior lighting in the community enhances the area's rural and natural character, and affords residents the opportunity to enjoy the night sky. Preventing light pollution to protect the night sky and minimize impacts on the

Figure 31. Marin County Code:
Nonconforming Lots, Structures and Uses

Marin County Development Code Chapter 22.30 – Definitions

Nonconforming Lot. A lot of record that was legally created, but does not conform with this Development Code because the lot is of a size, shape, or configuration no longer allowed in the zoning district that applies to the site, as a result of the adoption of, or amendments to this Development Code.

Nonconforming Structure. A structure that was legally constructed, but does not conform with this Development Code because amendments to this Development Code or the previous Marin County Zoning Ordinance made the structure nonconforming in its size, location on its site, separation from other structures, number of parking spaces provided, or other features.

Nonconforming Use. A use of land, and/or within a structure, that was legally established, but does not conform with this Development Code because the use is no longer allowed in the zoning district that applies to the site, as a result of amendments to this Development Code or the previous Marin County Zoning Ordinance.

area's wildlife was identified as an important issue. Light pollution is generated from installing light fixtures that cast light on an otherwise natural or low-light setting, which may compete with starlight. Sources of light pollution within the community may include exterior building lighting and streetlights. Concern has been

raised regarding the visual impacts from the red, flashing lights installed by the United States Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) last year on top of the large Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) towers that cross through the community. According to the FAA, these lights were installed on all PG&E towers taller than 150 feet within a vicinity or flight path of an airport, in this case, Gness Field. FAA indicates the intensity of these lights cannot be modified below the FAA's standards for safety lighting.

While there are no specific policies in the Countywide Plan that address light pollution, the Marin County Development Code (Section 22.16.030) requires that exterior lighting be allowed for safety purposes only, shall consist of low wattage fixtures, and should be directed downward and shielded to prevent adverse lighting impacts on nearby properties. This section also requires that street lights be of low intensity and profile. In addition, the Single-family Residential Design Guidelines provide additional direction on design solutions to address lighting concerns. Although these guidelines are specific to residential development, they also apply to the commercial development in the planning area. The Plan recommends minimizing light pollution from existing and new development to protect the area's rural character.

Figure 32. Marin County Code: Exterior Lighting

Marin County Development Code

- **Exterior Lighting:** Exterior lighting visible from off-site should be allowed for safety purposes only, shall consist of low-wattage fixtures, and should be directed downward and shielded to prevent adverse lighting impacts on nearby properties, subject to the approval of the Director.

Chapter 22.16.030 - Planned District General Standards

Figure 33. Single-family Residential Design Guidelines: Exterior Lighting

Single-family Residential Design Guidelines (2005) Exterior Lighting Guidelines

C-1.1.1 Exterior Lighting

Site lighting fixtures should be selected or designed to complement the architectural design of the project. Exterior light fixtures should be mounted at low elevations to preserve the nightscape and natural setting of the surrounding area, especially in rural and hillside areas, and to prevent glare that may be visible from off-site locations and adjacent residences.

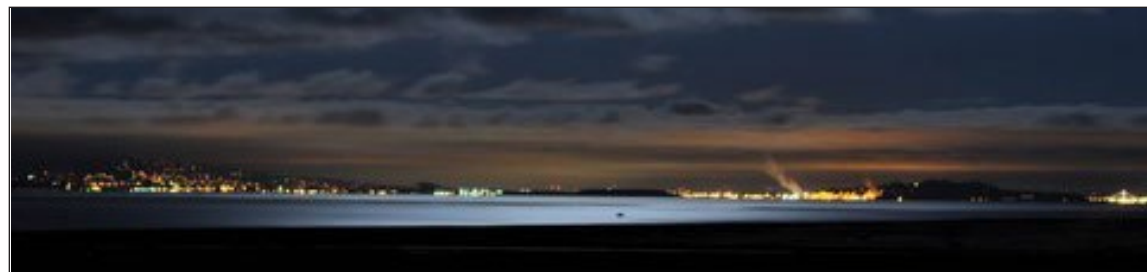
Site lighting in hillside residential development should comply with the following additional requirements:

- Site lighting that is visible from adjacent properties, public roadways, and from other neighborhoods must be indirect or incorporate full shield cut-offs.
- Overhead lighting should be placed at the lowest elevation necessary for safety purposes. The placement of lighting in residential parking areas should avoid

interference with bedroom windows.

Overhead fixtures used for pedestrian areas should provide shielded downlighting and be limited to heights below 8 feet. Lower mounting heights are encouraged.

- Along walkways, low level lighting in the form of bollards or fixtures mounted on short posts is encouraged. Shatterproof coverings are recommended. Posts should be located to avoid hazards for pedestrians or vehicles.
- Exterior flood lighting for security and safety should be located and shielded so as not to shine on adjacent properties. Whenever possible, such lighting should be set on a timer and/or motion detector. Decorative lighting to highlight a structure or landscape feature (e.g. tree, site retaining wall, etc.) could interfere with the hillside silhouette and nightscape and is discouraged.



Night view of San Pablo Bay

Photo credit: Cindy Pickett

Affordable Housing

Marin County offers varied and attractive residential environments due to its unique combination of natural beauty and proximity to San Francisco. Many of the housing problems that exist today, such as low vacancy rates, escalating housing prices and rents, and the overall demand for housing and pressure for growth, are a result of these attractive qualities.

Housing affordability is an issue for all communities in Marin, including Black Point/Green Point. While the area's rural zoning, limited access to public transportation, and lack of a sanitary sewer system limit the amount of housing compared to more urban areas of the county, affordable and low income housing may be encouraged through the addition of second units. As a matter of policy, the County encourages second unit development as a valuable infill and intensification strategy. Second units are allowed in all residential zoning districts as a permitted use subject to non-discretionary review, including in the ARP-2 and A2 zoning districts, the area's predominant zoning. All new development, including second units, would be evaluated to ensure consistency with site and environmental constraints.

The Marin County Housing Element, adopted on December 9, 2014, proposes one site on

Tamarin Lane in the Green Point area. The Tamarin Lane site is listed in the Available Land Inventory. The 6.4 acre site received planning entitlements in 2007 for three lots, two of which must have second units, per conditions of approval. However, the project applicant has not recorded the Parcel Map and secured a building permit for the approved work to vest the project.

Figure 34 shows Selected Housing Policies from the Countywide Plan. Please refer to the Countywide Plan Housing Element for policies and programs regarding affordable housing.



Annual community picnic

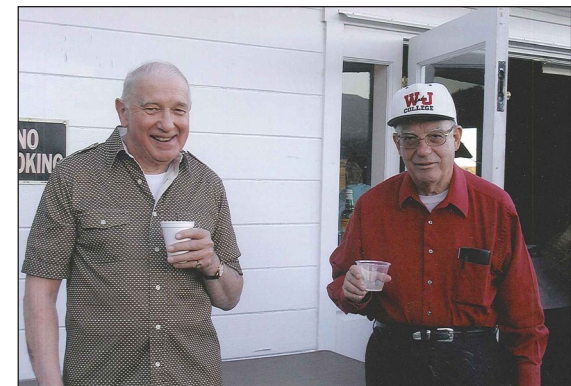
Figure 34. Countywide Plan Selected Housing Policies

Marin Countywide Plan (2007) Selected Housing Policies

Provide a Mix of Housing. The range of housing types, sizes, and prices should accommodate workers employed in Marin County. This includes rental units affordable to lower-wage earners and housing that meets the needs of families, seniors, disabled persons, and homeless individuals and families.

Marin County Housing Element Goals (2014)

- Use land efficiently to meet housing needs.
- Support a mix of housing types, densities, affordability levels and designs.
- Ensure leadership and institutional capacity.



Local residents. Photo credits: Susanna Mahoney

Policies

Community Character and Land Use

CC-1 Rezone Marin Audubon Properties

Rezone the following properties owned by Marin Audubon Society to Open Area (OA) and, where applicable, amend the Countywide Plan land use designation to Open Space (OS) at the request of the property owner:

Rezone to OA:

- Two large marsh parcels along Atherton Avenue: 153-190-23 and 27.

Rezone to OA and amend the Countywide Plan land use designation to OS:

- Three small parcels along Norton Avenue: 157-081-03 and 04; 157-082-04;
- The Norton Pond parcel: 157-111-32; and
- Five small parcels in the Gridiron area: 157-132-14 and 21; 157-143-02, 11, and 32.

This request should be considered in the context of a broader initiative by the Community Development Agency to rezone publicly owned and select properties on a countywide basis to OA. Additional properties acquired by the Marin Audubon Society in the planning area should be rezoned to Open Area. *[New Policy]*

CC-2 Regulate Home Size

~~[Deleted by Planning Commission on 7/27/2015]~~

CC-3 Require Minimum Setbacks

~~[Deleted by Planning Commission on 7/27/2015]~~

CC-4 The Village Center Zoning

Maintain the existing Village Commercial/Residential District (VCR) zoning to maintain the community's existing small-scale, historical character. While a variety of uses are allowed under the zoning, the following types of uses are encouraged, such as:

- Plant nurseries;
- Small child day-care/small family day-care homes; theaters and meeting halls (for a community center);
- Residential uses;
- Grocery stores and restaurants (including cafes); second hand stores; antique retail stores; studios for art, dance, music, photography, etc.;
- Public parks and playgrounds;
- Community garden; and
- Massage and meditation center.

While the above uses are encouraged, all uses allowed under the VCR zoning are permitted subject to compliance with the Development Code. Further, formula or "chain store" operations that are inconsistent with the village character and scale of the surrounding community are discouraged. *[New Policy]*

CC-5 Gridiron Zoning

Retain the existing A2 (Agriculture, Limited) zoning in the Gridiron neighborhood to permit continued residential development on a limited scale.

[Adapted from Program 1, p. 46]

CC-6 Merger of Parcels

Continue to promote the merger of substandard sized parcels to minimum lot area requirements commensurate with on-site (septic tank) waste disposal constraints inherent in the area. (See also the Public Facilities and Services chapter).

[Adopted from Policy 2, p. 46]

CC-7 Minimize Light Pollution

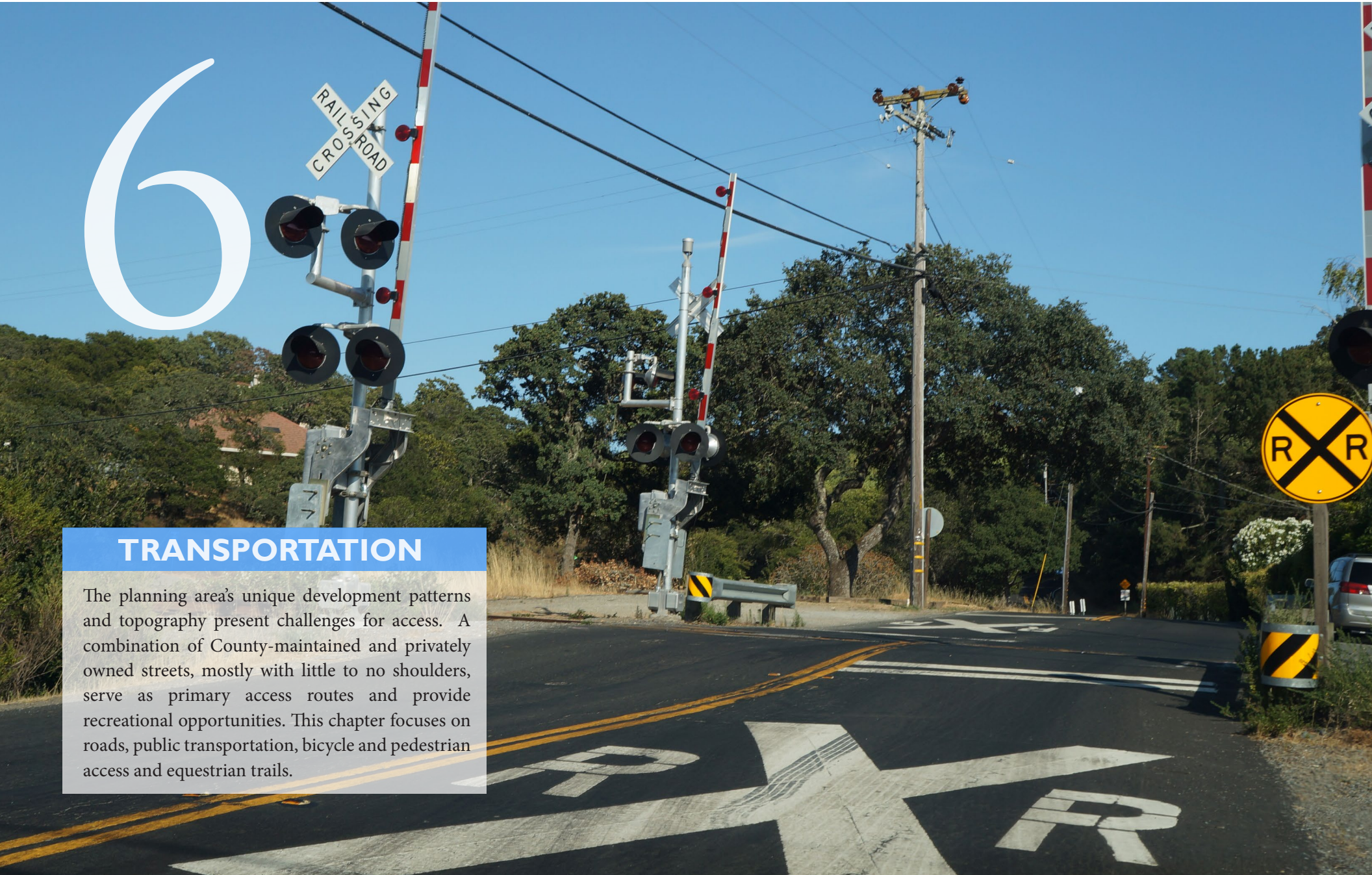
Protect the rural night-time atmosphere of the community by minimizing the amount of exterior building and site lighting to that which is necessary for safety purposes. Street lights are not permitted unless required for safety purposes as determined by the Department of Public Works. Refer to the Single-family Residential Design Guidelines for additional guidance.

[Adapted from the Indian Valley Specific Plan, p. 7]

6

TRANSPORTATION

The planning area's unique development patterns and topography present challenges for access. A combination of County-maintained and privately owned streets, mostly with little to no shoulders, serve as primary access routes and provide recreational opportunities. This chapter focuses on roads, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian access and equestrian trails.



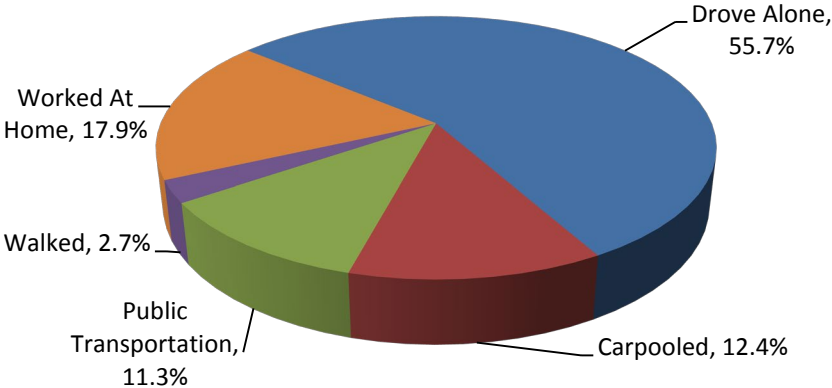
Chapter 6: Transportation

Background

Similar to the rest of Marin County, Black Point/Green Point residents travel primarily by automobile. Estimates show that over 90 percent of trips originating in Marin are made in automobiles, and the number of daily trips per household has increased steadily over the past 25 years, a trend that is expected to continue. According to the 2000 U.S. Census and 2007-2011 American Community Survey, the number of residents who commuted to work by driving alone increased from 56 percent in 2000 to 69 percent by 2011. The Countywide Plan acknowledges that measures used to address this issue in the past, such as road widening, can no longer keep up with demand. Instead, the Plan supports creating an efficient and effective transportation system that manages congestion and increases mobility by providing residents with a variety of transportation options. The following topics are addressed in the Transportation chapter:

- Roads (including road maintenance, paper streets, speed enforcement, and parking);
- Public Transportation;
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Access; and
- Equestrian Trails.

Figure 35. Modes of Commuting to Work from the Planning Area



Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Bike route signage



Crest Road

Roads

Primary access to the planning area is provided by State Route 37 and Atherton Avenue. State Route 37 is a four-lane highway that runs northeast from its junction at U.S. Route 101 (US 101), and bisects the planning area as it passes over the Petaluma River into Sonoma County. Atherton Avenue is a two-lane arterial road that traverses the area in an east-west direction. The remaining public roads within the planning area are identified as either collector or minor roads, while many of the other roads are unclassified and are not the responsibility of the county to maintain.

The trail network consists of officially maintained trails and bike routes, paper streets, fire roads, and unofficial footpaths through private lands and along community thoroughfares. Due to the community's somewhat remote location and small population, public transit service to the area has always been limited. There is currently only one bus route that runs within proximity to the planning area, stopping at a point beyond the southern edge of the planning area boundary. Public transportation is discussed in more detail below.

The North Coast Railroad Authority operates general freight rail service on a section of an existing railroad line that travels in a northeasterly direction from southern Novato,

through the heart of the Village Center area, and over the Petaluma River to Schellville in Napa and Lombard in American Canyon. Freight includes aggregate materials, lumber, grain, and potentially solid waste in enclosed containers. The swing railroad bridge across the Petaluma River is normally kept in the open position until approaching trains necessitate its closure by a bridge tender. This permits unimpeded use of the river for watercraft and prevents unsafe trespassing on the bridge itself.



Swing railroad bridge across the Petaluma River
Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Figure 36. Countywide Plan Transportation Goals

Marin Countywide Plan (2007) Transportation Element Goals

Safe and Efficient Movement of People and Goods.

Provide a range of transportation options that meet the needs of residents, businesses, and travelers.

Increased Bicycle and Pedestrian Access.

Expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities and access in and between neighborhoods, employment centers, shopping areas, schools, and recreational sites.

Adequate and Affordable Public Transportation.

Provide efficient, affordable public transportation service countywide that meets the needs of everyone, including the elderly, disabled, and transit dependent.

Protection of Environmental Resources.

Minimize environmental disruption and energy use related to transportation.

Road maintenance

Many roads in the planning area are winding and rural with a scenic quality enjoyed by motorists, however this same quality can often create challenges for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians. Many of the roads are narrow and lack shoulders or sidewalks. Roads in the Gridiron are extremely narrow and circuitous. Furthermore, Grandview Avenue provides the only access both into and out of the Gridiron. In the Green Point area, however, most roads are generally straighter and wider, having been designed and built to prevailing County road improvement standards.

Many streets were originally mapped without regard to topographic conditions. Few of the private roads within the community meet current County road standards. Consequently, the County has not accepted these roads, which means those roads are not County-maintained. County-maintained roads are shown in Figure 37.

While it may be possible to bring some roads up to current standards, such improvements could be costly. The County may consider accepting the roads once they were brought up to current standards. However, the County will need to consider the cost of taking such roads into the County-maintained road

system. Since including additional roads into the system increases the overall maintenance costs without additional revenue, it has been County policy not to take additional roads into the County system. All County-maintained roads are public.

The maintenance and repair of private rights-of-way is the responsibility of each landowner owning the easement. Landowners utilizing such easements may enter into a private road maintenance agreement. For example, the California Civil Code, Section 845, requires the cost of maintenance for privately owned rights-of-way road to be shared equitable by the landowners benefiting from those roads. In the absence of an agreement, the cost shall be shared proportionately to the use made of the easement by each owner. This is enforced through civil action.

Figure 37. County-maintained Roads

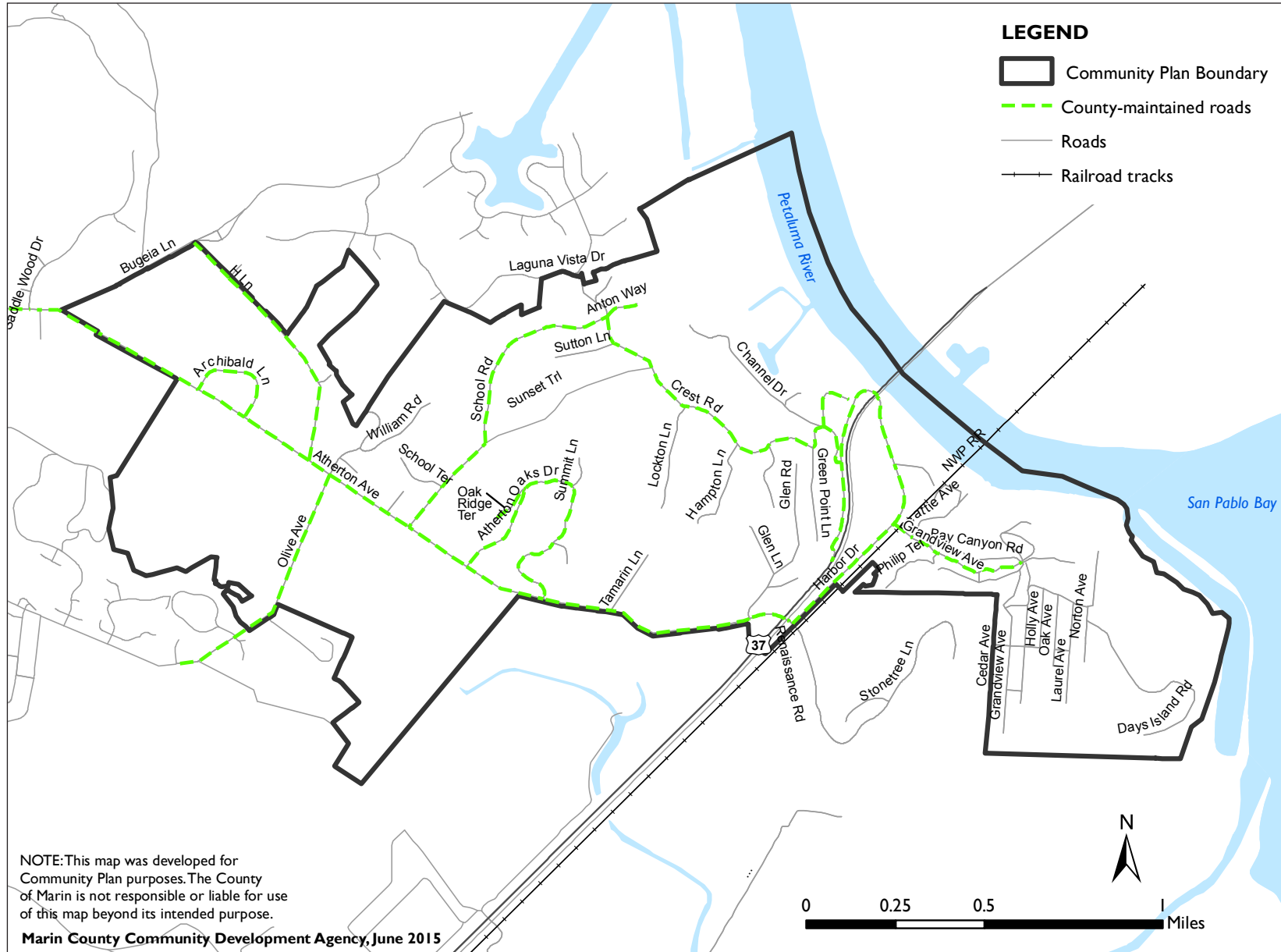
County-maintained Roads

Anton Way (to cul de sac)
 Archibald Lane
 Atherton Avenue
 Atherton Oaks Drive
 Bridge Road
 Crest Road (to Guisela Court)
 Grandview Avenue (from Harbor Drive to the top of Bay Canyon Road)
 H Lane
 Harbor Drive
 Oak Ridge Terrace
 Olive Avenue (between Atherton Avenue and Rose Court)
 School Road



School Rd. and Crest Rd. are County-maintained

Map 16. County-maintained Roads



Paper streets

Many paper streets exist within the planning area. These paper streets were created when subdivisions were plotted and recorded prior to the adoption of the first county subdivision ordinance, resulting in legal lots of record. However, portions of these subdivisions were not physically developed or improved. In numerous instances the designated streets were mapped without regard to topography, soil conditions, potential or actual slides, presence of drainage ways, or other safety concerns. These streets have not been graded and paved, and utilities such as electric power, water mains, and fire hydrants were never installed. Further, the County does not maintain paper streets since they are not used as roadways. However, public access is allowed. Maintenance of trees and other conditions on paper streets are usually the responsibility of the abutting property owners.

While paper streets may eventually be developed to provide access to lots that are currently vacant, in the interim they are considered a valuable community asset in their undeveloped state. Paper streets can act as property separators, provide emergency access, serve as pedestrian and equestrian pathways, provide connections to open space and recreation areas, and serve as wildlife habitat and movement corridors.

The community has expressed interest in retaining paper streets for local and emergency access purposes, in the event a paper street is considered for abandonment, where feasible. When a street is proposed for abandonment, the application process requires a review to determine whether there are any present or future public needs for the easement. The Plan recommends retaining paper streets for public and emergency access.

Figure 38. Marin County Code: Paper Streets

Marin County Code, Title 22, Article VIII
Chapter 22.30 - Definitions
Paper Street. Any street, road, or public vehicular access, or portion thereof, shown on a subdivision map recorded prior to April 3, 1953, which is undeveloped and/or unimproved, excluding "driveways", as defined.

Informal Survey of Paper Streets
Green Point Area Paper Streets
1. Crest Road from Guisela Way to Laguna Vista Drive.
2. Glen Road northward from the approximate location of 52 Glen Road to end.
3. Sunset Trail from the approximate location of 325 Sunset Trail to Crest Road.
Black Point Area Paper Streets
1. Havenwood Road from Harbor Drive and parallel to the NCRA railroad right of way.
2. Cedar Avenue from the approximate location of 318 Grandview Avenue south to the end.
3. Grandview Avenue from 449 Grandview Avenue south to end.
4. Hemlock Avenue (formerly Mistletoe Avenue) from Iolanthus Ave south to the end.
5. Bayview Avenue between Holly Ave. and Grandview Avenue.
6. San Rafael Street from Cedar Avenue to Laurel Avenue (except from Grandview Avenue to 202 San Rafael Street).
7. Holly Avenue from the approximate location of 323 Holly Avenue south to end.
8. Oak Avenue from the approximate location of 345 Oak Avenue south to end.
9. Laurel Avenue from the approximate location of 410 Laurel Avenue south to end.
10. Norton Avenue from the approximate location of 330 Norton Avenue south to end.
DISCLAIMER: This data is informational only and may not be a complete or accurate representation of all the paper streets in the community. This is only an informal survey conducted as of the writing of this community plan. Additional research may be needed to verify the reliability and accuracy of this information.

Speed Enforcement

Community members have periodically expressed concerns about the safety of pedestrians and wildlife from speeding vehicles within the community and have requested increased enforcement and other measures to reduce speeding. Speed limits on County roadways are enforced by the California Highway Patrol, and complaints regarding frequent speeding can also be submitted to the County Department of Public Works (DPW) for further investigation. If persistent speeding is found to occur, a number of options may be considered. On local neighborhood streets, traffic calming may be considered if 67 percent of residents approve, with additional support required by the local fire department. Residents on private streets are responsible for installation, maintenance, and assuming liability. Other measures such as signage, striping, radar trailer deployment, speed feedback signs, speed enforcement, or flashing signs may be considered.

Parking

On-street parking on many of the community's narrow and winding residential streets has caused some concern for emergency access and other safety issues. Vehicles parked on the shoulder reduce the effective width of the roadway to one travel



Bridge Road is one of many narrow residential streets

lane. County regulations require a minimum distance of at least six feet be maintained to the centerline or to the center of the improved main traveled portion of any roadway. It is also unlawful to park a vehicle on a street for a period over seventy-two consecutive hours. Enforcing parking regulations and having sufficient off-street residential parking are key solutions to this problem. Residents should encourage neighbors to utilize garages and driveways to park vehicles in areas with limited on-street parking.

Parking enforcement is conducted by the Marin County Sheriff's Office. All other non-emergency traffic concerns should be reported to the California Highway Patrol.

Public Transportation

Countywide Plan policies support the use and expansion of public transportation options throughout the County. Decisions regarding the routes, service frequency, and passenger fares are determined by Marin Transit, which provides local transit service within Marin County, and Golden Gate Transit, which provides regional fixed-route bus service in San Francisco, Marin, and Sonoma counties. Due to the community's relatively small population and location, public transportation service to or within the planning area is not provided. Route 154, provided by Marin Transit, is the closest route available. This route follows Atherton Avenue from US 101 to Olive Avenue. While no stops are along this route within the planning area boundary, two stops are within walking or bicycling distance. These are located at the intersections of San Marin Drive and Redwood Boulevard and Olive Avenue and Lea Drive. A Park & Ride lot with 60 parking spaces is located where Atherton Avenue meets State Route 37. This location is a helpful connection point for carpooling commuters. Bus service is not provided to this Park & Ride.

Some residents have informally opined that use of public transportation is low because service is virtually nonexistent within the community, and reason that usage would

increase if opportunities and access were available. A shuttle service linking the community to the future site of the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) station in North Novato, located at Redwood Boulevard at Atherton Avenue, was suggested and should be considered. The Plan recommends considering establishing regular transit or commuter bus service from the planning area to San Francisco that links to existing local routes and destinations, where feasible. Linkages to the North Novato SMART station are also encouraged.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Access

Biking and walking are popular recreation activities within the planning area. A survey of residents at community plan workshops indicate that favorite bicycle and walking destinations in the community include Day Island, the Black Point Boat Launch, Rush Creek Open Space Preserve, and local roads within the neighborhoods. Many residents also walk and bike on Atherton Avenue and other neighborhood streets, but cite concerns about lack of sidewalks, trails and paths and have concerns with overall safety from speeding vehicles and driver awareness of pedestrians.

Although often a recreational activity, bicycling and walking can also be a mode of travel that replaces a vehicular trip, and

therefore can help to reduce traffic congestion and assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The planning area has the benefit of being located within a four-mile radius from downtown Novato, providing opportunities to increase the number of residents who ride bicycles for everyday transportation. This is consistent with the goal of the Marin County Unincorporated Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to make the bicycle an integral part of daily life, particularly for trips of less than five miles. This is also significant given the future location of the SMART station in North Novato, near US 101 and a large concentration of jobs.

As noted previously, the Countywide Plan policies strongly support bicycle and pedestrian circulation for recreational purposes and as alternative modes of transportation. More specific guidance on bicycle and pedestrian improvements is provided by the Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. This plan contains detailed goals, policies, and objectives related to bike and pedestrian facilities and programs, identifies a series of specific recommended improvements, explains local, state, and federal design guidelines for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and outlines an implementation strategy that addresses feasibility, estimated costs, and funding opportunities. The County's current Bicycle

and Pedestrian Master Plan was adopted in 2008, and efforts are underway to update this document in 2015. The update process will include a series of public workshops that will give residents additional opportunities to provide input on recommended bikeway and walkway improvements in the community.

Existing Conditions

As in most older communities, bicycle facilities in Marin—including the planning area—range from existing popular paths to serious gaps in connections between communities and activity nodes. The same can be said of pedestrian conditions. While many walk within the community, pedestrians must still negotiate streets with no sidewalks or shoulders.

Bicycles are allowed on all paved public roadways in Marin (except where specifically prohibited). Atherton Avenue, considered part of the County's primary bikeway network, includes a Class II bicycle lane along its entire length. Figure 39 shows the three major classes of bicycle facilities used in the County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Bicycles are also allowed on State Route 37, also part of the primary bikeway network, since it is the major access route for those travelling to Sonoma and Napa Valleys. Destinations from these facilities include the small, local commercial area on Harbor

Avenue, Bay Club Stone Tree Golf Club, the Black Point Boat Launch, and Rush Creek Open Space Preserve.

Recent additions to the bikeway system include a half mile, Class II bikeway to close the gap on Olive Avenue from Richardson's Way to the intersection of Atherton Avenue. Another is an extension of signage for Route 50 on Harbor Drive, from Atherton Avenue to the boat launch.



Atherton Ave. bike lane completed in 2013

Planned Facilities

Proposed facilities focus on connecting existing segments of the bikeway system in order to create a comprehensive, complete network. Planned improvements include the extension of the Bay Trail along State Route 37. The Bay Trail is a planned recreational corridor that, when complete, will encircle San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with a

continuous 500-mile network of bicycling and hiking trails. The proposed Bay Trail route through the planning area would establish a vital connection between existing trails in Bel Marin Keys and the Port Sonoma Marina in Sonoma County. However, some expressed concern that it is not appropriate to route the Bay Trail through the Gridiron neighborhood due to narrow, privately-owned roads that may not be ADA compliant without making costly improvements.

During the update process, a number of bicycle and pedestrian improvements were identified by residents through surveys, community workshops, and the advisory committee. The majority of responses indicated that sidewalks or separate paths were needed on many of the neighborhood roads, particularly along busier roads such as Atherton and Olive Avenues, and along Harbor Drive to the Black Point Boat Launch.

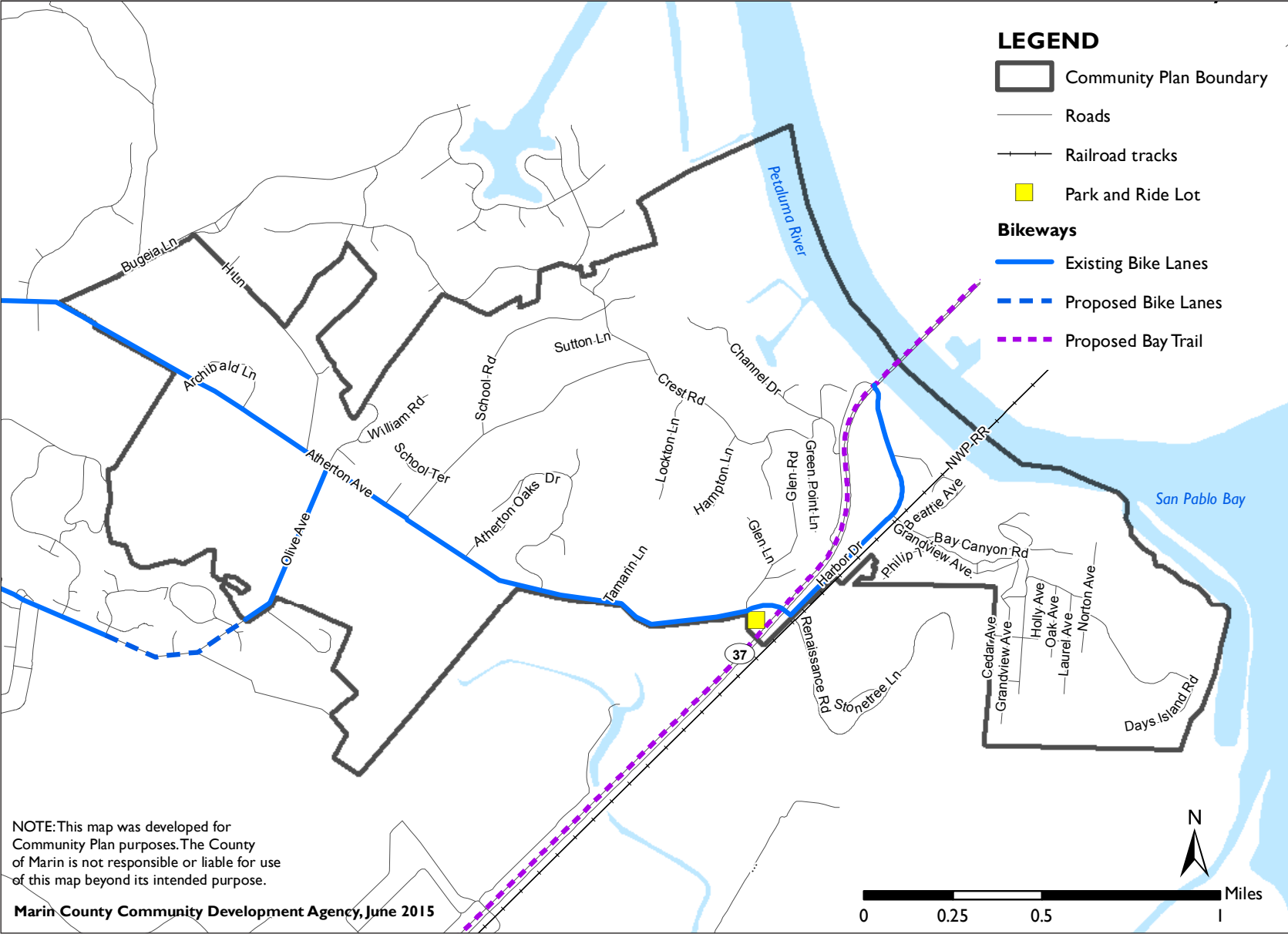
Periodic sweeping of the existing bike lane and shoulder along Atherton Avenue was also suggested. Routine maintenance of bikeways such as sweeping, debris removal, trimming vegetation and minor spot repairs to the pathway surface is managed through the Marin County Department of Public Works road maintenance programs.

Improvements were also suggested with

regards to accessibility. There are three gates within the Black Point area that may limit access for those pushing children in strollers or using a wheelchair. These gates are located on Bay Canyon Road, at the end of Grandview Avenue, and at the entrance to Day Island Road. In the Green Point area gates are located at the end of Crest Road and on Lockton Lane. As discussed in the Environmental Hazards chapter, the gates may limit emergency access. Alternative designs that limit vehicle passage while allowing access for pedestrian and bicyclists are available. Because some of the gates are privately owned, such as on Lockton Lane and Bayview Avenue, residents are advised to work with the corresponding gate owners to develop an appropriate solution since these particular gates are not publicly maintained.

Community feedback also indicated mechanisms, such as signage, were needed to increase driver awareness of the potential for bicyclists and pedestrians using the roadway. "Share the Road" or other advisory signs at key locations, such as along Crest and Grandview Avenues, may be appropriate. In sum, community members suggested a number of potential circulation improvements. These improvements will need to be further evaluated to determine their feasibility and potential impacts, including:

Map 17. Existing and Proposed Bikeways



- Retain paper streets for public and emergency access, and wildlife corridors;
- Consider speed bumps or signage to reduce speeding;
- Consider separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians on key neighborhood roads, including but not limited to: Atherton and Olive Avenues, Crest Road, School Road, and Harbor Drive;
- Provide regular sweeping of the existing bike lane on Atherton Avenue, including the proposed bike lane on Olive Avenue when constructed;
- Community members work with landowners to develop appropriate solutions to improve accessibility at the three locked gates; and
- Consider signage at key locations to increase driver awareness of the potential for bicyclists and pedestrians on the road.

Equestrian Trails

Several ranches with horses (along with cows, chickens and sheep) are within the planning area. There is general interest in continuing efforts to provide equestrian trails. Establishing any trail system will need to involve the willingness of concerned and affected property owners to grant equestrian

rights of way to one another. Because most of the roadways are along narrow and steep ridgelines, the ability to secure additional right of way to accommodate an equestrian trail may be difficult. The subdivision of undeveloped lands into standard residential sites further prevents the establishment of integrated open space areas where equestrian activities could otherwise occur. The Plan recommends maintaining existing equestrian trails, and to consider equestrian trails in new development proposals, where appropriate and feasible.

Locked Gates



Bay Canyon Road



End of Grandview Avenue



Day Island Road

Figure 39. Bikeway Classifications

**Marin County Unincorporated Area
Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2008)
Bikeway Classifications**

Class I Bikeway – commonly referred to as a bike path, provides for bicycle travel or shared bike and pedestrian use on a paved right-of-way that is completely separated from any street or highway.

Class II Bikeway – referred to as a bike lane, provides a striped and stenciled lane for one-way travel on a street or highway.

Class III Bikeway – referred to as a bike route, provides for shared use with motor vehicle traffic and is identified by signage and in some cases, “sharrows” (Shared Roadway Bicycle Marking stencils).

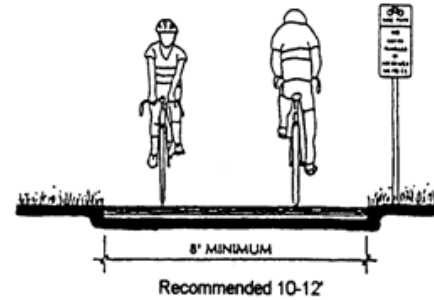
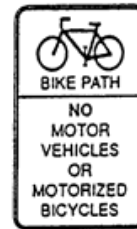
Multipurpose Trail – If a pathway is to be used primarily for recreational use and will not be constructed with transportation funding, it may be constructed to reflect local conditions and needs and not necessarily meet Caltrans standards.

Class III/Shoulders – In many areas separate bicycle lanes are not feasible. For this reason, the designation “Class III/Shoulders” has been developed to capture existing and proposed shoulder conditions along certain roads.

Source: Caltrans Highway Design Manual

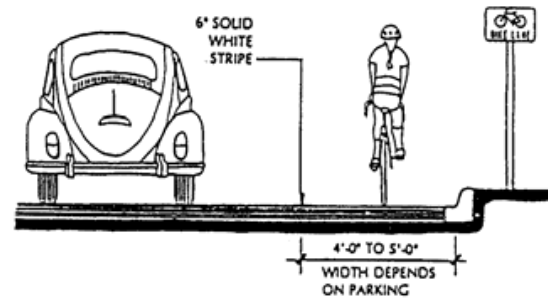
Figure 40. Bikeway Classification Diagram

BIKE PATH



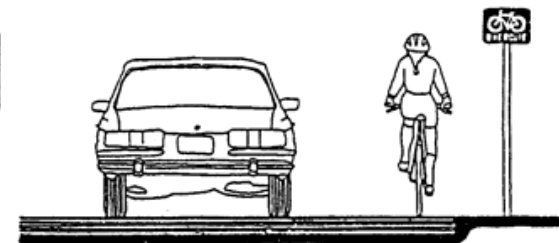
Class I

BIKE LANE



Class II

BIKE ROUTE



Class III

Source: Caltrans Highway Design Manual

Policies

Transportation

TR-1 Maintain Rural Character of Streets

In order to maintain the rural character of the community, new streets and roads should be developed at the minimum scale commensurate with anticipated traffic projections and fire protection purposes.

[Adapted from Policy 3, p.81]

TR-2 Gridiron Road Improvements

Require as a condition of approval within the Gridiron area the improvement of interior roadways subject to further analysis by the Department of Public Works. Improvements to accommodate fire protection vehicles near the ends of Norton, Holly and Grandview Avenues should be given priority consideration.

[Adapted from Policy 5, p.82]

TR-3 Crest Road

Consider additional access routes between Atherton Avenue and Crest Road, to improve fire protection access and to help redistribute traffic destined for Crest Road and the cul-de-sacs along Crest Road.

[Adapted from Policy 8, p. 84]

TR-4 Paper Streets

Retain paper streets, as feasible, for public and emergency access, as well as for wildlife corridors.

[New policy]

TR-5 Road Maintenance of Private Streets

The owner of any private right-of-way easement is responsible for its repair and maintenance, consistent with California

Civil Code Section 845. Property owners abutting private streets may establish their own road maintenance program or organization to address repair and maintenance concerns. Advice in such matters and sample road maintenance agreements are available from the Land Development Division of the Marin County Department of Public Works.

[New policy]

TR-6 Gridiron Service Road

Retain the service road that extends around the south base of the Gridiron area and the Vince Mulroy Woodland and Wildlife Preserve, and exits at the golf course as an alternative emergency access route for both residents and emergency service vehicles.

[Adapted from Policy 6, p. 82]

TR-7 Crest Road Connection to Laguna Vista Drive

Maintain the connection between Crest Road and Laguna Vista Drive in the northerly component of the Planning Area to serve as:

- a. An emergency services roadway for fire protection vehicles; and
- b. An equestrian, bicycle, and pedestrian trail.

Maintain the existing emergency gate to prohibit the connection of these two roadways for normal vehicular access, since such a change could result in additional traffic impacts on the otherwise rural character of the area.

[Adapted from Policy 7, p. 83]

TR-8 Public Transportation

Consider the establishment of regular commuter bus service from the planning area, linking to existing routes and destinations within Marin County, where feasible. Encourage transit providers to determine whether expanded transit service routes and/or schedules from the planning area to the North Novato Sonoma-Marina Area Rail Transit station are warranted once train service is operational.

[Adapted from Policy 2, p. 80]

TR-9 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to recreation, open space, and other natural areas within the community. Consider pathways for bicyclists, pedestrians and other users on key neighborhood roads, including but not limited to, Atherton and Olive Avenues, Crest Road, School Road, and Harbor Drive.

[New policy]

TR-10 Equestrian Trails

Maintain existing equestrian trails. Where feasible, new development should include trails for bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian use.

[Adapted from Policy 9, p. 84]



Ranch on Atherton Avenue



Cyclists on Harbor Drive

7

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Public services are essential to support existing communities. This includes water supply, on-site sewage disposal or sewer systems, transportation, including transit and road access, and annexations and spheres of influence. Transportation related services are discussed in the Transportation chapter.

Chapter 7: Public Facilities and Services

Background

A goal of the Countywide Plan is to coordinate planning with other jurisdictions and special districts. Policies in the Countywide Plan discourage development requiring urban levels of service from locating outside of urban service areas. Instead, development should be focused in infill areas where services such as water, sewer, police, and fire protection can be provided more efficiently. This is important since the planning area is a semi-rural, unincorporated area flanked by the City of Novato to the west and south, Sonoma County to the north, and served by various special districts, as discussed below.

The following topics are addressed in the Public Facilities and Services chapter:

- Water Supply;
- Wastewater Management; and
- Annexations and Sphere of Influence.

Water Supply

Domestic water to the planning area is supplied by the North Marin Water District (NMWD), which serves all of Novato and the surrounding unincorporated areas, including portions of West Marin. The NMWD obtains

80 percent of its water from the Russian River and 20 percent from Stafford Lake. The district is working to expand the use of recycled water for landscape irrigation, reduce dependence on imported water from the Russian River, and reduce wastewater discharge into San Pablo Bay. The Deer Island Recycled Water Facility opened in 2007 to provide recycled water to be used on landscaping at the Bay Club Stone Tree Golf Course and other areas. The NMWD has also initiated a number of conservation programs to reduce water demand. More information is available on these and other programs at the NMWD website at nmwd.com.

While water for domestic services is provided by the NMWD, less than a handful of properties rely on private wells for domestic water use. A small number also use private wells for irrigation purposes.

Wastewater Management

Sewage disposal is required for any home or structure inhabited by people. Sewage disposal needs of the community are provided through the use of onsite



The Bay Club Stone Tree Golf Club uses recycled water from the Deer Island Recycled Water Facility

wastewater treatment systems (OWTS)—commonly referred to as septic systems—since the area is not served by a public sewer system. There are two categories of OWTS: standard and alternative technology systems. The Community Development Agency’s Environmental Health Services division regulates these systems.

Lack of sanitary sewers is one factor preventing more dense development within the community more common within the incorporated towns and cities along the Highway 101 corridor. Septic tank provisions

are based on the number of bedrooms and square footage of a residence, the location of a septic tank on the property, the size and capacity of drainfields, and topography, soils, and slope. Many contend that this factor alone will facilitate the retention of the rural character of the planning area. There is concern that extending sewer service to the area will encourage more intense development, which would compromise the area's existing rural and natural environment.

When properly designed, constructed, and maintained, septic systems are highly reliable over a reasonable life period. Property owners must ensure their individual sewage disposal system is functioning properly. Historically, there were past instances of septic tank drainfield failures along the waterfront of the Petaluma River and some failures in the bedrock areas, primarily due to the general impermeability of the area's hardpan layer and saturated soils. This had raised concern that faulty septic systems may have contaminated local waterways and threatened the public's health. Since that time, however, more stringent septic regulations have been adopted by the County. Moreover, many of the area's existing septic systems have also been upgraded and or replaced. Inspections of septic systems may be triggered by a complaint, a homeowner initiated upgrade, or a building permit adding a bedroom. The

County is pursuing a number of potential initiatives to revise County septic regulations to streamline the regulatory process, prioritize monitoring of on-site wastewater systems, and providing incentives for homeowners to repair their systems. In addition, a new graywater program was implemented.

The Novato Sanitary District extended public sewer service to the former House of Daniels property in 2002 to abate a threat to public health and safety stemming from a failing septic system on the property. The property was concurrently annexed to the City of Novato. While residents have informally expressed interest in limiting the expansion of public sewer to the community, under certain circumstances a property may be required to connect when repairing or modifying an existing system. Marin County regulations require connection to a public sewer system if the nearest sewer is within 400 lineal feet of a parcel. This requirement may be waived if the connection to a public sewer is found to be physically or legally impossible. In this instance, property owners may file for a permit for an individual OWTS of sewage disposal. Extending sewer services to the area, however, may be prohibitively expensive for a property owner, since much of the area is already built out and the cost of infrastructure is sensitive to distance.

Figure 41. Marin County Code: Sewage Systems

**Regulations for Design,
Construction, and Repair of
Individual Sewage Disposal Systems**
*Pursuant to Marin County Code Chapter
18.06 (Adopted May 6, 2008)*

Alternative System: Any individual onsite treatment system that includes supplemental treatment unit in addition to or in place of a standard septic tank and/or does not include standard leaching trenches for effluent disposal.

Conventional (Standard) System: Sewage from the structure flows by gravity into a septic tank. Effluent is then discharged to the soil via gravity or mechanized delivery (pumps or dosing siphons).

The Plan continues to recommend OWTS as the primary means of waste disposal for the planning area. These and other recommendations are found in the Policies section at the end of this chapter.

The siting and design of OWTS requires consideration of Countywide Plan policies, in particular Biological Resource and Water Resource policies, to protect stream and wetland areas and water quality. A survey may or may not be required to locate a drainfield, and other regulations may also apply. Contact Marin County Environmental Health Services for additional information.

Figure 42. Wastewater Resources

Wastewater Resources

Marin County Regulations

www.marincounty.org/ehs

- Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) Application
- Standard Septic Systems Regulations (Adopted May 2008)
- Alternative Septic Systems Regulations (Adopted May 2008)
- Marin County Regulations Code Ch. (Titles) 18.06 and Ch. 18.07
- Graywater Systems (Notification Form)

State of California Regulations

www.waterboards.ca.gov/

- AB 885 “Water Quality Control Policy for Siting, Design, Operation, and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems” Regulations and Environmental Impact Report on Statewide Regulations.
- AB 885 Onsite Wastewater System Policy FAQ www.marincounty.org/ehs

Other

- Graywater Systems <http://www.marincounty.org/depts/cd/divisions/environmental-health-services/graywater-systems>

Annexations and Sphere of Influence

The planning area is an island of unincorporated territory, surrounded by the City of Novato on one side and San Pablo Bay on the other. One of the goals of the 1978 Black Point Community Plan, and one that continues to resonate with residents, is to maintain the planning area as an independent and unincorporated village. The Plan carries forward this goal, in addition to language supporting efforts to maintain the planning area’s unincorporated status.

In 2002 the Marin Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) amended the sphere of influence of the City of Novato to remove publicly owned open space, the Indian Valley, and the planning area from the City’s sphere. This action was largely in response to the City’s adoption of an urban growth boundary (UGB) coterminous with the City’s boundary. Except for narrowly defined circumstances, the adoption of the City’s UGB made annexations of territory to the City unlikely. The annexation of the House of Daniels property in 2002 is one such exception to allow a sewer connection and to abandon a failing septic system.

Novato voters approved the UGB in 1997 to constrain the expansion of urban development

(e.g., development requiring sewer and water utilities) into the rural areas surrounding the incorporated city limits. The UGB can be amended by a vote of Novato residents. However, annexations are allowed under the following circumstances:

- To provide low and very low income housing;
- To avoid an unconstitutional taking of private property;
- To promote the public health, safety, and welfare by developing public schools or parks; or
- To address a significant threat to the public health, safety, or welfare.

This voter approved initiative will expire in 2017 unless extended or amended.

Marin’s LAFCO has responsibility for reviewing, approving, or disapproving changes in boundaries of all jurisdictions within county boundaries, including annexations, detachments, new formations, and incorporations. In addition, the agency performs Municipal Service Reviews and establishes a sphere of influence (SOI) for each city – its probable boundary and service area. Within each SOI is an urban service area where development can best be accommodated over the next 5 to 10 years. Development proposals

in urban service areas are reviewed by both the affected city or town and the County, and unincorporated land within an urban service area may be annexed to a city at the time of development. The 1996 Novato General Plan recommends continued implementation of the policies of the Black Point Community Plan excluding those areas in the Urban Services Area (USA) as defined by LAFCO, which specifies residential densities from 1 unit per acre to 1 unit per five acres.

As described above in the Wastewater Management section, residents expressed

Figure 43. Marin LAFCO and Sphere of Influence

Marin LAFCO

www.lafco.marin.org

The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) was created by the California Legislature in 1963 to discourage urban sprawl and encourage the orderly formation and development of local government agencies.

What is a Sphere of Influence?

A sphere of influence is defined as "...a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency as determined by the commission." Adopted spheres of influence are a key factor used by LAFCO in consideration of boundary proposals. The Commission may only approve proposals that are consistent with the adopted spheres of influence.

concern that the extension of sewer services would change the area's rural character by encouraging growth. While the planning area is currently outside of the Novato Sanitary District's (NSD) service boundary, it is included within NSD's SOI. A 2002 Municipal Service Review of the Novato area spheres of influence stated that the planning area is included in the NSD SOI on an interim basis in order to allow Marin LAFCO to respond to environmental health problems known to exist in the area.

A follow up Municipal Services Review in 2007 maintained the district's existing SOI since NSD has the treatment capacity to provide service to all areas within its SOI. In addition, the report stated that LAFCO may consider approval of annexations of property to the NSD in cases where connection to a sewer is needed to provide service to parcels that cannot feasibly support septic systems. It also stated that extensions of sewer service could be considered either to replace existing septic facilities or to new development, and would remain an option until the NSD SOI is again reviewed. In 2016, the Marin LAFCO is anticipated to undertake a 5-year review of both the City of Novato and the NSD SOI boundaries.

The Plan continues to promote the use of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems as

the primary means of waste disposal and to maintain the area's unincorporated status. Furthermore, the extension of sewer service to the area is not anticipated.

Renewable Energy

Marin Countywide Plan policies support the use of local renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, small hydro, biogas, and tidal as a means of reducing energy use. Examples of renewable energy systems include solar thermal, photovoltaics (solar electric), wind energy conversion systems (WECS), geothermal (earth heating), hydroelectric under 30kW, tidal power, and biodiesel. All renewable energy systems would be subject to consistency with Countywide Plan policies and compliance with Development Code and other regulations.

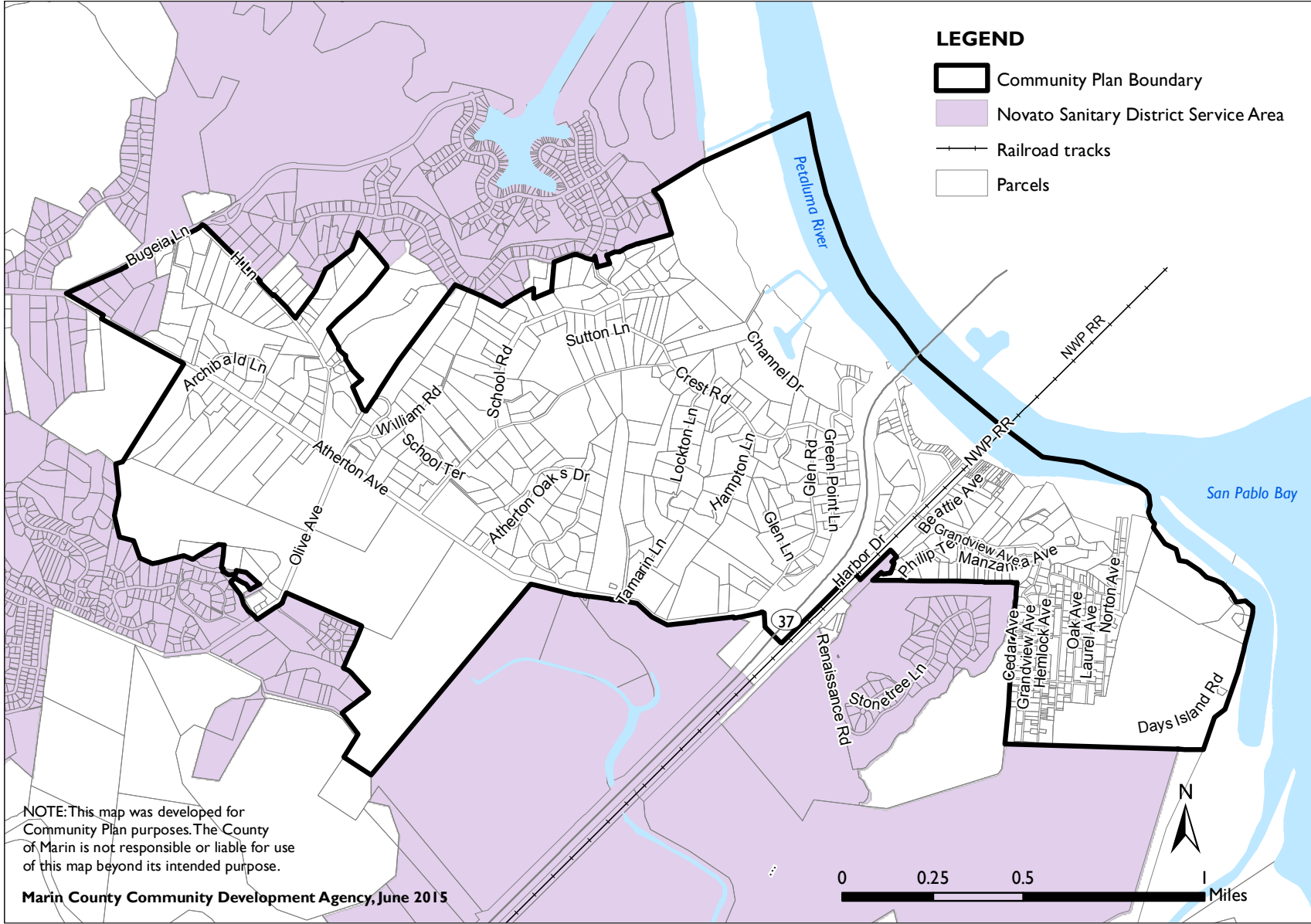
Standards for the development and operation of WECS are available in Marin County Code Section 22.32.180 – Wind Energy Conversion Systems.



Home solar panels

Credit: Marin County Energy Program

Map 18. Novato Sanitary District



Policies

Public Facilities and Services

PFS-1 Wastewater Disposal

Continue to use Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems as the primary means of waste disposal, where feasible.

[Adapted from Policy 1, p. 41]

PFS-2 Maintain Unincorporated Status

Maintain the community's unincorporated status.

[Adapted from Policy 3, p. 72]



Docks along the Petaluma River

Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

8

PARKS AND RECREATION

The planning area's natural surroundings and open spaces provide opportunities to connect with nature and enjoy recreational activities like hiking, jogging and biking. Many residents chose to live in the area because of the area's natural beauty, air quality, micro climate, wildlife, and abundance of trees. Trails in and around the planning area provide opportunities for recreation and access to nature, though limited connections are available between residential and recreational areas. Expanses of open marsh along the Petaluma River and San Pablo Bay provide wildlife habitat and offer recreational opportunities. The Petaluma River itself is a community asset and is a popular recreation destination for boating, kayaking, fishing, birdwatching, wildlife viewing and other activities.

Chapter 8: Parks and Recreation

Background

Marin County's park lands and open space preserves both offer recreational opportunities in beautiful outdoor settings. However, they are each part of a separate system within Marin County Parks and each fulfills different community needs. Parks such as the Black Point Boat Launch are designed and developed to accommodate "active" recreation with facilities such as restrooms and developed picnic areas, while open space preserves are managed primarily for natural resource preservation and "passive" recreation, such as hiking.

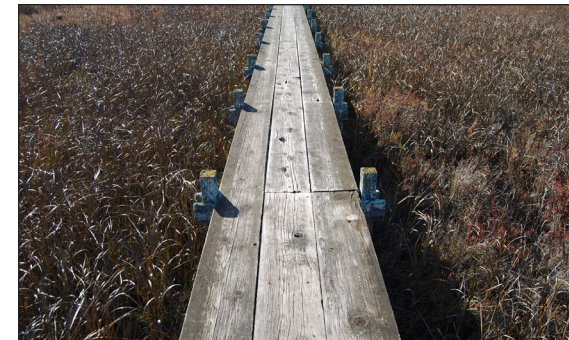
Marin Countywide Plan

Marin County has a long history of acquiring and protecting open space and park lands for the benefit of the public. Accordingly, Countywide Plan goals strongly support providing a high-quality park and recreation system and ensuring that open space resources are protected for future generations. This is particularly relevant where land acquisition or other methods of preservation would create or enhance community separators, wildlife corridors, watershed and baylands protection, riparian corridors, sensitive habitat, or trail

connections. Selected policies of particular interest and relevance to the planning area are provided in Figure 44. A complete list of Open Space and Parks and Recreation policies can be found in the Countywide Plan.

While the Countywide Plan provides a general framework for the County's park and public open space system, more specific guidance related to parks and open space planning and management is provided by the Marin County Parks Strategic Plan, last updated in 2008, which incorporates a detailed plan for both park lands and open space preserves. Together, these documents are utilized by the Marin County Parks to guide decisions related to the planning, funding, and management of existing and future parks and open space preserves and throughout the County.

A number of open space areas and wildlife preserves are within or adjacent to the planning area. Day Island State Wildlife Area is located on San Pablo Bay, and the Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve (formerly the Black Point Preserve) is situated between the golf course and the Gridiron. Green Point State Wildlife Area is



Boardwalk through Petaluma marsh

a marsh along the Petaluma River, located north of Channel Drive in Green Point. The Black Point Boat Launch offers scenic views of the Petaluma River and waterfront areas, and is equipped with picnic tables and restrooms. Other well-used recreational areas just outside the planning area boundary include the Rush Creek and Deer Island Open Space Preserves. Residents also enjoy walking and jogging on neighborhood streets such as Crest and School Roads and Grandview and Iolanthus Avenues, among others. A brief overview of these resources and their major features are described below.

Figure 44. Countywide Plan Selected Open Space and Parks Policies

Marin Countywide Plan (2007)
Selected Open Space and Parks and Recreation Policies and Programs

Parks

Consider User Needs, Impacts, and Costs. Plan and develop any needed new park and recreation facilities and programs to meet the desires of the community and protect environmental resources.

Prepare an Acquisition Plan. For each proposed new park site, complete an acquisition plan that addresses user needs, access modes, alternative sites, environmental impacts, and financing options.

Meet Special Group Needs. Ensure that parks are designed to meet the needs of youths, seniors, and people with disabilities, and annually review special programs targeting those groups, revising them as appropriate.

Open Space

Continue to acquire or otherwise preserve additional open space countywide. Targeted greenbelts and community separators in the Baylands and City-Centered corridors include Pinheiro Ridge. Pinheiro Ridge functions as a ridge and upland greenbelt/community separator between the community along Atherton Avenue and the lands including and surrounding Gness Field.

Shoreline Protection and Access to Water Edge Lowlands. Consider tideland ecosystem health, habitat protection, and passive and active recreation in pursuing acquisition of additional marsh and other bay margin open space areas.

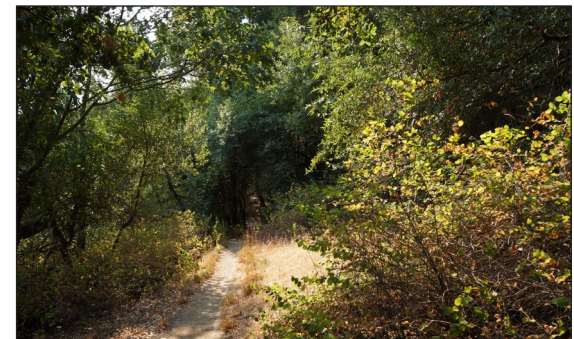
Targeted water edge lowlands in the Baylands and City-Centered corridors include the following:

- **San Pablo Bayfront, Gallinas Creek to Novato Creek** should be kept open to preserve the tidelands.
- **Novato Creek to Black Point** is an important tidal marsh that contains habitat for endangered and migratory species, and a valuable flood ponding area. Large areas have been acquired.
- **Petaluma River** marshes, riverbank areas, and other lowlands should be preserved in cooperation with Sonoma County. The Audubon Society, the State, and the Open Space District have acquired significant wetland areas between Rush Creek and Basalt Creek.



Marsh grass

Credit: Susanna Mahoney



Deer Island

Credit: CDA

Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve

This 64-acre wildlife preserve, owned by Marin County Parks, is a densely wooded forest area that was once part of a larger 238 acre parcel that was the location of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire. The other 174 acres was subdivided and developed into the 53 luxury Stonetree estates and golf course in the late 1990's and early 2000s. The preserve provides valuable upland habitat adjacent to the flood plains and wetlands. This area was formerly known as the Black Point Nature Preserve.

Day Island State Wildlife Area

The 128-acre Day Island State Wildlife Area is part of the 4,191-acre Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area, managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Petaluma River Unit is the largest remaining natural tidal brackish marsh in California, supporting primarily pickleweed, cordgrass, alkali bulrush, and saltgrass. Migratory bird species use the area most heavily during the fall and winter months, but many can be found year round. Wetland bird species include Willits, Curlews, Dowitchers, Night Herons, and Black-bellied Plovers. The Marin County Open Space District was instrumental in participating in the purchase of Day Island. Two residential units are located within Day Island State Wildlife Area: one is privately owned while the other is publicly owned for use by Department of Fish and Wildlife staff.



*Vince Mulroy Woodland and Wildlife Preserve
Photo credit: Rob Jaret*

Green Point State Wildlife Area

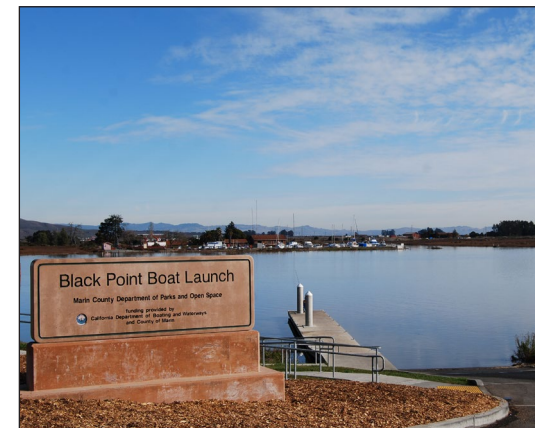
The Green Point State Wildlife Area, also managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, is part of the Petaluma Marsh Wildlife Area and consists of 55 acres along the Petaluma River.

Black Point Boat Launch

The Black Point Boat Launch is a very popular two acre site managed by Marin County Parks, with a single-lane ramp and dock for motorized and non-motorized boat launching at the mouth of the Petaluma River. Facilities include permanent bathrooms, fish cleaning stations, and picnic tables. The restrooms, dock, parking, and picnic tables are ADA accessible. The site is a popular location to fish for sturgeon and striped bass, enjoy a picnic, and bird watch. Dogs are allowed on leash and must not enter wetland areas because of sensitive habitat and wildlife species.

Deer Island Open Space Preserve

Located outside the planning area off of Olive Avenue in the bay planes, the Deer Island Open Space Preserve, managed by Marin County Parks, is a popular recreational area for the community. This 154 acre preserve rises above the eastern edge of Novato from an area that was once part of the extensive wetlands in the Petaluma River Delta. Many users walk or jog the relatively level loop trail as a morning or evening exercise routine. This small preserve is just a few minutes from Highway 101 and State Route 37 but it is peaceful and quiet. Remnants of the property's dairy farming days are visible around the preserve. Weathered outbuildings still stand near the entrance, including a small farmhouse that serves as the offices of the Marin County Parks Environmental Education Program.



Black Point Boat Launch Credit: County Parks

Rush Creek Open Space Preserve

Perhaps the most popular asset of the 522-acre Rush Creek Open Space Preserve is the adjacent wetlands, where thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl congregate each fall and winter. The broad, level Pinheiro Fire Road follows the south edge of the preserve and offers unimpeded views of a huge expanse of tidal wetland to the north. The low ridges are covered with mixed broadleaf forests, including the largest stand of blue oaks in the county. In 2003, Marin County Parks acquired this 200-acre ridge parcel after the Marin Audubon Society spearheaded a major fundraising effort. Vantage points from the eastern end of this preserve provide visitors views across the Petaluma River delta to Sonoma County and beyond. This preserve is managed by Marin County Parks and is located just outside of the planning area boundary.

Rush Creek Park

Rush Creek Park is a 20-acre park managed by Marin County Parks. Hike up the trail from Saddle Wood Drive to picnic tables and views of the adjacent marsh.

Simmons Slough Wildlife Corridor

The 84-acre Simmons Slough Wildlife Corridor, purchased by Marin Audubon Society with contributions from the Marin County Open Space District, Marin

Baylands Advocates Fund, and the Coastal Conservancy, provides wetland habitat for resident and migratory birds and other wildlife. The onsite wetlands are used by Great Blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, American Widgeon, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Canvasback and other migratory species. During the summer months, when the seasonal wetlands are dry, foraging habitat for raptors such as Red-tailed Hawk and White-shouldered Kite is provided.



Rush Creek Open Space Preserve

Credit: CDA



Fishing off the Black Point Boat Launch

Photo credit: Susanna Mahoney

Options for Consideration

Residents suggested several ideas in public workshops, surveys, and advisory committee meetings during the Plan update process, to improve park and recreation opportunities in the community, including:

- Develop a multi-use trail for all ages and user groups, including pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, equestrians, and bicyclists that link to other areas in the community. Examples include expanding the trail from the Rush Creek Open Space Preserve along Atherton Avenue east to School Road, and to include a trail along Olive Avenue to the Deer Island Open Space Preserve;
- Purchase the vacant, privately owned 28-acre parcel located behind June Lane and Bahia Hill for open space;
- Develop a playground at the Black Point Boat Launch;
- Provide parking at the entrance to Day Island since parking in the area is limited, or consider allowing vehicle access; and
- Provide pathways along key local roads, such as Crest Road and Bay Canyon, for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Many of the suggested ideas may overlap with similar input described in the Transportation

chapter. In addition, further analysis to evaluate the feasibility, impacts and costs of providing such improvements, and relationship to existing County priorities will need to be conducted. These improvements would require significant community support as well as consistency with other plans and regulations. The Plan recommends carrying forward an existing policy to support limiting intense recreational use or development within the Day Island State Wildlife Area and a new policy to support passive recreation uses within the Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve.



Deer Island trail

Credit: CDA



Entrance to Day Island State Wildlife Area

Credit: CDA

Policies

PK-1 Day Island

Support limiting intense recreational use or development within the Day Island State Wildlife Area.

[Adapted from Policy 7, p. 51]

PK-2 Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve

Support passive recreation uses such as walking, hiking, biking, wildlife observation and nature study within the Vince Mulroy Memorial Woodland and Wildlife Preserve.

[New Policy]



Morning fog

Credit: Susanna Mahoney



PUBLIC SAFETY

Crime in Marin County is relatively low for almost all types of crime. While the community is considered to be a very safe place to live, there has been some concern regarding crime and safety given a small number of home break-ins and thefts occurring in recent years. This chapter provides a brief overview of neighborhood safety and law enforcement resources and identifies a number of potential strategies that residents may utilize to reduce the risk of crime in their neighborhood.

Downed power pole on Atherton Avenue, February 2007

Photo credit: Marin Independent Journal

Chapter 9: Public Safety

Background

Crime rates in Marin County are significantly lower than the statewide and national averages. Both violent crime and property crime have fallen to a 10-year low in Marin County's unincorporated areas, according to the California Department of Justice's annual report on crime statistics. Statistics for the planning area are not available.

This chapter provides a brief overview of neighborhood safety and identifies a number of potential strategies that residents may utilize to reduce the risk of crime in their neighborhood, such as home and landscape design to encourage more "eyes on the street", as well as suggestions for improving neighborhood safety through community involvement. Fire risk, sea level rise, and emergency preparedness are addressed in the Environmental Hazards chapter.

Marin Countywide Plan

The Countywide Plan seeks to improve public safety levels by encouraging residents to participate in community policing. Despite the relatively low and dropping rates for almost all types of crime in Marin, crime

prevention in the county needs to be more widespread. The Countywide Plan includes a number of programs to achieve the goals of safe neighborhoods and decreased crime. Figure 45 provides a summary of selected public safety programs in the Countywide Plan.



Figure 45. Countywide Plan Selected Public Safety Programs

Marin Countywide Plan (2007)

Selected Public Safety Programs

Educate the Public about Community Enforcement Techniques. Work with criminal justice agencies and community groups to support programs that offer information about community policing.

Involve Businesses in Neighborhood Watch. Support efforts to strengthen and expand neighborhood watch programs, and ensuring that businesses participate in these programs.

Ensure Adequate Lighting. Upgrade street lighting in urbanized areas where specified by

community plans to fulfill neighborhood safety needs, provided that unnecessary light and glare are avoided.

Clean Up Neighborhoods. Work with law enforcement agencies and community groups to promote cleanup, graffiti removal, and other neighborhood beautification efforts.

Review Structure Designs. Involve law enforcement agencies in review of the design of new and rehabilitated buildings, including lighting and landscaping, to identify ways to increase resident safety.


Neighborhood Safety and Law Enforcement

In 2013 and 2014, cases of home break-ins have led residents to seek action against property crime, including the installation of security cameras on private property.

The planning area is served by the Marin County Sheriff's Patrol Division. The Patrol Division performs general law enforcement services provided by uniformed deputies in marked patrol units. Sheriff's deputies are available to give crime prevention advice, conduct residential or commercial security inspections, and speak on child safety issues. Generally, residents are urged to lock doors and windows when they are away from home, and to lock cars and avoid leaving valuable items inside. Being aware of the neighborhood and reporting suspicious activity and vehicles can help prevent crime.

Figure 46. Online Crime Tracking Tool

Online Crime Tracking Tool
<https://www.crimereports.com/>



CrimeReports™

Communication is key to addressing neighborhood crime. It is crucial that residents report any suspicious activity so that law enforcement agencies have the most accurate information possible. And, it's important that residents know about crimes in their neighborhood. The Marin County Sheriff's office has implemented an online tool called CrimeReports, where residents can view local crime data in near real-time status.



Community meeting sign
Credit: CDA

Options for Consideration

During the Plan preparation process, a number of ideas were raised by the community that may deserve further consideration and evaluation but may not rise to the level of additional policy requirements in this Plan. The feasibility and funding sources for these concepts have not been determined. Instead, the ideas are offered for further exploration as part of on-going community discussions regarding public safety in the community. These ideas include:

- Encourage “eyes on the street” by using site design and building orientation to reduce the likelihood of crime through the strategic placement of windows, entries, outdoor private and shared spaces, play areas, and walkways. Design and locate features to provide clear site lines;
- Improve visibility through the use of windows and other openings on otherwise blank walls;
- Provide adequate outdoor lighting in order to see and be seen, provided that unnecessary light and glare are avoided to minimize light pollution;
- Avoid visual barriers such as solid high fences and tall hedges;
- Landscaping should take into consideration the growth and final height of plants to

ensure that the original designed sight lines do not get obscured over time;

- Provide signs and information;
- Organize and join a neighborhood watch program to watch out for criminal and suspicious behavior and report it to local law enforcement; and
- Consider installing security cameras.



Fence in the Gridiron

Credit: CDA

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