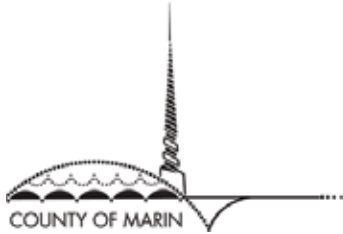




# SANTA VENETIA COMMUNITY PLAN

REVISED DRAFT - August 2016

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



## Adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors

Damon Connolly, District 1  
Katie Rice, District 2  
Kathrin Sears, District 3  
Steve Kinsey, District 4  
Judy Arnold, District 5

## Recommended by the Marin County Planning Commission

Katherine Crecelius, At-Large  
Don Dickenson, At-Large  
David Paoli, District 1  
Margot Biehle, District 2  
John Eller, District 3  
Wade Holland, District 4  
Peter Theran, District 5

## Community Advisory Committee

Giselle Block, Chair  
Bonnie Monte, Co-chair  
Jane Brand  
Russ Greenfield  
Mary Hanley  
Roger Heller  
Tamara Hull  
Gary Robards  
Oscar Segura  
Mark Wallace

## Community Development Agency

Brian Crawford, Director  
Thomas Lai, Assistant Director  
Jack Liebster, Planning Manager  
Christine Gimmler, Senior Planner  
Kristin Drumm, Senior Planner  
Lauren Armstrong, Planner  
Alex Westhoff, Planner

# SANTA VENETIA COMMUNITY PLAN

Adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors, (*insert date*)







“Santa Venetia is a hidden gem in the heart of Marin.”

- Community Workshop Participant

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## List of Acronyms

Bayfront Conservation (BFC) District

County Service Area (CSA)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Federal Housing Authority (FHA)

Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM)

Jewish Community Center (JCC)

Level of Service (LOS)

Marin County Community Development Agency (CDA)

Marin Countywide Plan (CWP)

Marin County Department of Public Works (DPW)

Marin County Open Space District (MCOSED)

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

Ridge and Upland Greenbelt (RUG)

Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART)

US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Santa Venetia Community Plan (Plan) sets forth goals and policies for protecting natural resources, managing environmental hazards, and planning for land use, parks and open space, and transportation. The Plan also provides an overview of community characteristics and relevant County plans and regulations. Residents participated in the development of the Plan, which serves to guide the future of Santa Venetia.



# Executive Summary

The Santa Venetia Community Plan (Plan) is a document that sets forth goals, policies, and community preferences to address specific issues in the community of Santa Venetia. 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 preferences of the community. The Plan is a product of a multi-year public engagement process to address issues and opportunities in the planning area.

The Plan's seven chapters address the following topics: 1) Introduction, 2) Background, 3) Natural Resources, 4) Environmental Hazards, 5) Land Use and Community Character, 6) Parks and Open Space, and 7) Transportation. The Plan discusses a number of factors that have shaped how the community has grown over time. Much of Santa Venetia was once part of a large tidal marsh area and the community continues to be defined by the natural features and open space areas that surround it, including Gallinas Creek to the north, San Pablo Bay to the east, and San Pedro Mountain to the south.

The Natural Resources chapter provides more detailed information about the unique natural setting and valuable habitat areas found in and around Santa Venetia, summarizes key

countywide natural resource protection policies and regulations, and incorporates new policies to emphasize issues of particular interest and relevance to Santa Venetia including protecting wildlife habitat and movement corridors, encouraging the use of native, drought tolerant, and fire resistant plants, discouraging the use of pesticides, herbicides and rodenticides, and maximizing the protection of marsh and wetland areas, particularly along Gallinas Creek.



*Much of Santa Venetia borders tidal marsh.* CDA

The Environmental Hazards chapter focuses on an issue of great concern to community residents, flooding. Low-lying portions of Santa Venetia were generally constructed on bay fill over historic tidal marsh and are vulnerable to flooding. Flood control is a complex issue which is influenced by a variety of federal, regional, and local agencies. The plan describes the requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and provides an overview of ongoing efforts by Flood Control Zone 7, 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. The plan incorporates specific community suggestions related to flood protection that deserve further consideration. 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 Santa Venetia.

The Land Use and Community Character chapter addresses the topics of land use, zoning and development in Santa Venetia. It provides an overview of the Design Review process and the primary design and development guidelines that apply to new development. The plan also incorporates profiles for a number of key properties in the community,

including density considerations, potential site constraints, key applicable Countywide Plan policies, and community preferences. Community plan policies addressing specific issues such as signage, light pollution, neighborhood beautification, business hours, and preferred commercial uses are also included.

The Parks and Open Space chapter describes how parks and open space preserves are planned, managed and funded in Marin County, and includes an overview of the various parks, open space preserves, and State park facilities in and around Santa Venetia. This chapter also identifies community suggestions for consideration during future park planning efforts, particularly related to the “Buck’s Launching” site should the County acquire this property in the future.

The Transportation chapter addresses concerns with traffic circulation, congestion, and speed enforcement, in addition to public transportation, and bicycle and pedestrian access. The plan incorporates policies to maintain the character of North San Pedro Road while reducing traffic congestion and encouraging transportation alternatives such as walking and biking within the community and between Santa Venetia and the planned Civic Center SMART station. The plan also supports Safe Routes to School which encourages students to walk and bike to school, a particularly relevant program given the number of public and private schools in Santa Venetia.

## Summary of Policies

### Natural Resources

#### **NR-1: Movement Corridors**

Encourage the protection of wildlife habitat and movement corridors. Fence types, roads, structures, and outdoor lighting that would significantly inhibit or obstruct wildlife movement, especially access to water, should be avoided.

#### **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 sensitive natural resources of Santa Venetia and the importance of maintaining ecological structure and function, and to educate residents on how to become active stewards of the land. This program may also include efforts to educate residents about 1) use of drought tolerant, native (to Marin County) and fire resistant plants in landscaping areas and 2) the potential negative effects that invasive species (such as French broom) and contaminants (such as pesticides) may have on the ecosystem.

#### **NR-3: Landscaping and Invasive Plant Control**

Encourage the use of drought tolerant, native and fire resistant plants on county-owned and managed properties as well as on private lands. Encourage property owners to remove plants considered invasive (ecologically and

economically harmful) by the Marin County Open Space District, especially in natural resource areas (see Chapter 3 for specific areas) and along major travel corridors (North San Pedro Road). Invasive plant species of particular concern in Santa Venetia are French broom, pampas/jubata grass, acacia tree species, and perennial pepperweed.

#### **NR-4: Pesticides, Insecticides, Herbicides, and Rodenticides**

Discourage the use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides. In particular, avoid application of mosquito adulticides in wetlands of Santa Venetia to limit negative impacts to aquatic wildlife (especially fish) unless all other methods fail to maintain mosquitos at a tolerable level or when emergency measures are needed to limit disease transmission to humans.

#### **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 (such as the Marin County Agricultural Extension office) to determine appropriate best management practices to prevent and treat infestation.

#### **NR-6: Marsh and Wetlands**

Development projects that are proposed adjacent to or drain into Gallinas Creek tidal marsh must avoid adverse impacts on wetlands and Wetland Conservation Areas. Require development at the MacPhails property to avoid tidal marsh of Gallinas Creek and on-

site wetlands through the establishment of Wetland Conservation Areas that encompass the wetland itself and an associated buffer of at least 100-feet. An additional buffer area may be required based on the results of a site assessment.

### **NR-7: Native Tree Replacement**

Support amending Marin County Code Chapter 22.27 (Native Tree Protection and Preservation) to ensure that in-lieu funds collected for tree removal are used for the planting and maintenance of trees on Marin County lands within the community in which they are collected.

## **Land Use and Community Character**

### **LU-1: Future Development**

There is community support for a comprehensive planning approach to future development and redevelopment in Santa Venetia, particularly on large properties or where several individual parcels are assembled for development. This approach should include an applicant-initiated and supported community outreach effort prior to submittal of formal applications and throughout the process.

### **LU-2: Rezoning of Ridge and Upland Greenbelt Properties**

Support implementation of Countywide Plan Program DES-4.e to ensure that properties in Santa Venetia within the designated Ridge and Upland Greenbelt area are rezoned to reflect the lowest end of the Countywide Plan

residential density range.

### **LU-3: Hours of Operation**

Hours of operation for new or expanded commercial and institutional uses should be regulated, when a Use Permit is required, to avoid or minimize noise-related impacts on adjoining residential uses. Where appropriate, delivery schedules should also be considered.

### **LU-4: Neighborhood Beautification**

Support community-based “neighborhood beautification” efforts, such as the Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association’s “Bella Santa Venetia” committee and “Median Crew” or other voluntary efforts to plant trees, improve landscaping, assist with property maintenance, provide signage standards, reduce litter, etc.

### **LU-5: Commercial Businesses**

Independent, local-serving businesses are preferred over chain operations. In particular, local-serving food and beverage-related businesses such as cafes are encouraged.

### **LU-6: Signage**

Development of sign guidelines should be considered to encourage more consistent and visually cohesive signage, particularly for the commercial area at the entry to Santa Venetia (North San Pedro Road/Civic Center Drive intersection).

### **LU-7: Light Pollution**

To protect “dark skies”, exterior lighting (including street lighting) should be the minimum required for safety and should

be designed to prevent glare. Night lighting of recreational facilities or sports fields shall require Use Permit approval.

### **LU-8: Rezone Open Space Properties**

Rezone the following publically owned properties to Open Area (OA) and, where applicable, amend the Countywide Plan land use designation to Open Space (OS) to reflect their use as public open space:

- Santa Venetia Marsh: APN 180-090-03
- Santa Margarita Island: APN 180-021-20 & 21
- “Heron Hill”: APN 180-231-05, 06, 07 & 09 and 180-291-04

This policy should be considered in the context of a broader initiative by the Community Development Agency to rezone publicly-owned open space properties to OA on a countywide basis.

## **Transportation**

### **CIR-1: Traffic Impact Analyses**

Required traffic studies for new development shall evaluate project impacts on both the AM and PM weekday peak hours during the school year.

### **CIR-2: Coordination of School Uses**

Encourage the continued coordination and cooperation of public and private schools in the area to stagger school schedules to minimize traffic congestion.



### **CIR-3: Alternative Transportation**

#### **Modes**

Require new development proposals to identify and consider the implementation of viable transportation demand management measures to encourage the use of alternative transportation modes (including walking, biking, telecommuting and transit).

### **CIR-4: Safe Routes to School**

Support efforts to initiate and maintain Safe Routes to School programs in public and private schools operating in Santa Venetia, to encourage new and enhanced bike and pedestrian facilities in the vicinity of schools. In particular, evaluation of the feasibility of a student “drop off” area within the Civic Center jury parking lot or other appropriate locations should be considered as part of a potential Venetia Valley School Safe Routes to School program.

### **CIR-5: Highway 101/North San Pedro Road Interchange Modifications**

Encourage the City of San Rafael to consider the efficacy and feasibility of providing two continuous westbound lanes on North San Pedro Road between Civic Center Drive and Merrydale Road to alleviate traffic congestion in Santa Venetia.

### **CIR-6: Transit Service and Bicycle/ Pedestrian Access to SMART Station**

Encourage transit providers to determine whether expanded transit service routes and/

or schedules between Santa Venetia and the San Rafael – Civic Center SMART station are warranted once train service is operational. The provision of bicycle and pedestrian improvements/connections between Santa Venetia and the SMART station should also be encouraged.

### **CIR-7: Neighborhood-serving Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes**

Consider bike route alternatives to North San Pedro Road as part of future updates to the Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Support efforts to maintain and improve existing informal pedestrian and bicycle routes that connect local streets within Santa Venetia where feasible.

### **CIR-8: North San Pedro Road**

North San Pedro Road should remain as a two-lane roadway east of Garden/Golf Avenue to maintain existing community character.



*View from Leona Drive toward Civic Center  
Marin County CDA*



Figure 1. Aerial Map of Santa Venetia



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

The Community Plan is a planning document which sets forth goals, objectives, policies, and community preferences to address specific issues in the unincorporated community of Santa Venetia. Community Plans are part of the Marin Countywide Plan. The Community Plan is the product of a multi-year public involvement process to address issues and opportunities in Santa Venetia.



# Chapter I: Introduction

## The Santa Venetia Community Plan

Preparation of the Santa Venetia Community Plan began in early 2013, when Santa Venetia was selected by the Marin County Board of Supervisors as a priority candidate for a new or updated community plan under the County's 2012 Community Plan Update Strategy, a new approach to community planning that focuses on a community's unique characteristics and the efficient use of resources.

The Santa Venetia Community Plan was developed through the ongoing participation of Santa Venetia residents and with the strong support of former Supervisor Susan Adams. In 2011, over 450 residents participated in a community-wide survey, conducted in cooperation with the Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association, which helped to identify issues of concern and inform the planning process. Beginning in May 2013, an advisory committee comprised of nine

community representatives met with staff over the course of three years to discuss the plan and provide direction on the scope, planning process, and draft policies.

Community members also provided direction on key issues and ideas through participation in three community meetings and multiple online topic forums (Open Marin). Finally, staff attended several regular meetings of the Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association to provide updates on the plan and obtain feedback.

The draft plan was initially presented to the community in October 2014. Following revisions based on feedback from the community as well as members of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, the revised plan was considered by the Planning Commission on [insert date] and ultimately

approved by the Board of Supervisors on [insert date].



*Community Plan Advisory Committee members  
Marin County CDA*

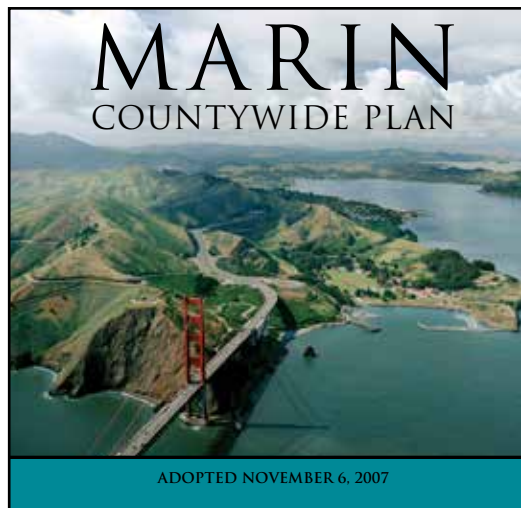


*Community members provided input on the plan at workshops held in August 2013 and June 2014*

*Marin County CDA*

## Relationship to the Countywide Plan

The Marin Countywide Plan (CWP) applies to all unincorporated areas of the County and establishes a framework that guides County decisions on issues such as land use, transportation, and environmental protection. The Countywide Plan, which was first adopted in 1973 and most recently updated in 2007, is organized around the framework of sustainability and contains a wide range of goals, policies, and programs to address natural systems and agriculture, the built environment, and socioeconomic issues.



As a component of the Countywide Plan, the Santa Venetia Community Plan provides additional guidance and policies based on the unique concerns, characteristics, and priorities of the Santa Venetia community.

Specifically, the Community Plan is intended to:

- Highlight what is unique about Santa Venetia
- Identify topics of greatest importance to residents
- Provide direction on how general Countywide Plan policies should be applied in Santa Venetia
- Guide landowners and County decision-makers
- Help to shape present and future development in Santa Venetia

The Santa Venetia Community Plan must be consistent with the goals of the Countywide Plan but is not intended to duplicate Countywide Plan policies at a local level or replicate other County programs, regulations, or guidelines that are already in place. The Community Plan focuses

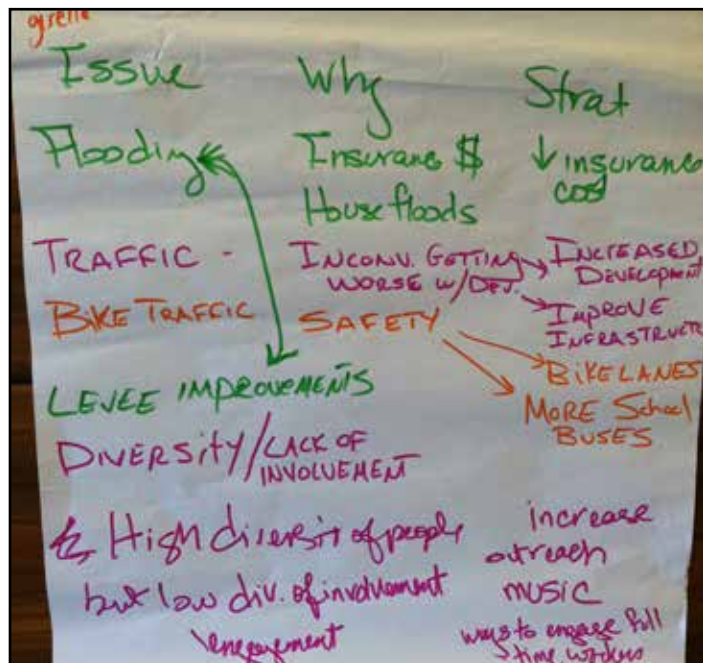
on topics that are regulated by the County. It should be noted that Community Plans may be updated or amended periodically. However, due to resource limitations, they are generally developed with a longer time horizon than the Countywide Plan, which has been updated every decade since its inception in 1973.

Where appropriate, specific policies are identified (See Chapter 5 - Land Use & Community Character and Chapter 7 - Transportation). 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 Watershed Program), the Community Plan identifies concepts that should be considered as part of those efforts (See Chapter 4 - Environmental Hazards and Chapter 6 - Parks & Open Space).

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 appropriate to the regulatory context.

## Community Plan Goals

During preparation of the Community Plan, the following goals, adapted from the Countywide Plan, were selected to form the framework of the Santa Venetia Community Plan. The topics these goals address closely correspond to findings of the 2011 Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association (SVNA) Community Survey, which identified flooding, traffic, development and the protection of parks and open space as important local issues.



Issues identified at the community workshop in August 2013

### Preservation of Open Space and Protection of Sensitive Biological Resources

Preserve and connect open space areas in order to create or enhance wildlife corridors, watershed and baylands protection, riparian corridors, sensitive habitat and trail connections. Identify and protect sensitive biological resources and ensure that impacts from development are avoided or adequately mitigated.

### Safety from Flooding and Inundation Including Adaptation to Climate Change

Protect people and property from risks associated with flooding and inundation and promote resilient human and natural systems in order to ease the impacts of climate change.

### Effective Growth Management and Preservation of Community Character

Manage growth so that infrastructure facilities (e.g. transportation, water, sewer, etc.) remain adequate and the unique character of Santa Venetia is preserved.

### Protection of Scenic Resources

Minimize visual impacts of development and preserve vistas of important natural features.

### Healthy Watersheds

Achieve and maintain proper ecological functioning of watersheds, including sediment transport, groundwater recharge and filtration, biological processes, natural flood mitigation, and high water quality.



# 2

## BACKGROUND

The modern day community of Santa Venetia is located in an area that was once home to Native American settlements, ranching, brickyards and grand development schemes. This section provides information about the history and demographics of Santa Venetia.

# Chapter 2: Background

## The Santa Venetia Community

Santa Venetia is a neighborhood of over 1600 homes centrally located in unincorporated Marin County. The community is located immediately east of Highway 101, the County's primary north-south corridor, and is bordered by the City of San Rafael to the north, south, and west. Santa Venetia is served by a single two-lane arterial, North San Pedro Road, which extends eastward from Highway 101 toward the Bay.

As described in Chapter 3, the community is surrounded by a variety of natural features and open space areas, including Gallinas Creek to the north, San Pablo Bay to the east, and San Pedro Mountain to the southeast. Although primarily residential in character, the community supports several small commercial areas as well as educational and religious uses, located along the North San Pedro Road corridor.

### The Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association

The residents of Santa Venetia are well-served by an active and organized neighborhood group, the Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association (SVNA). Originally founded in 1954 (as the Gallinas Village Improvement Association), the SVNA's mission is:

“To preserve and promote the quality of life in the Santa Venetia community. This is achieved through encouraging healthy social interaction; facilitating the flow of information, and protecting the natural beauty and economic well-being of the community.”

The SVNA was instrumental in advocating for the development of a community plan for Santa Venetia, and its members served on the community plan advisory committee. The group hosts regular meetings and social events for the community, and produces an informative bi-monthly newsletter, The Communicator. For more information about the SVNA's activities and to learn how to join, go to [www.thesvna.org](http://www.thesvna.org)

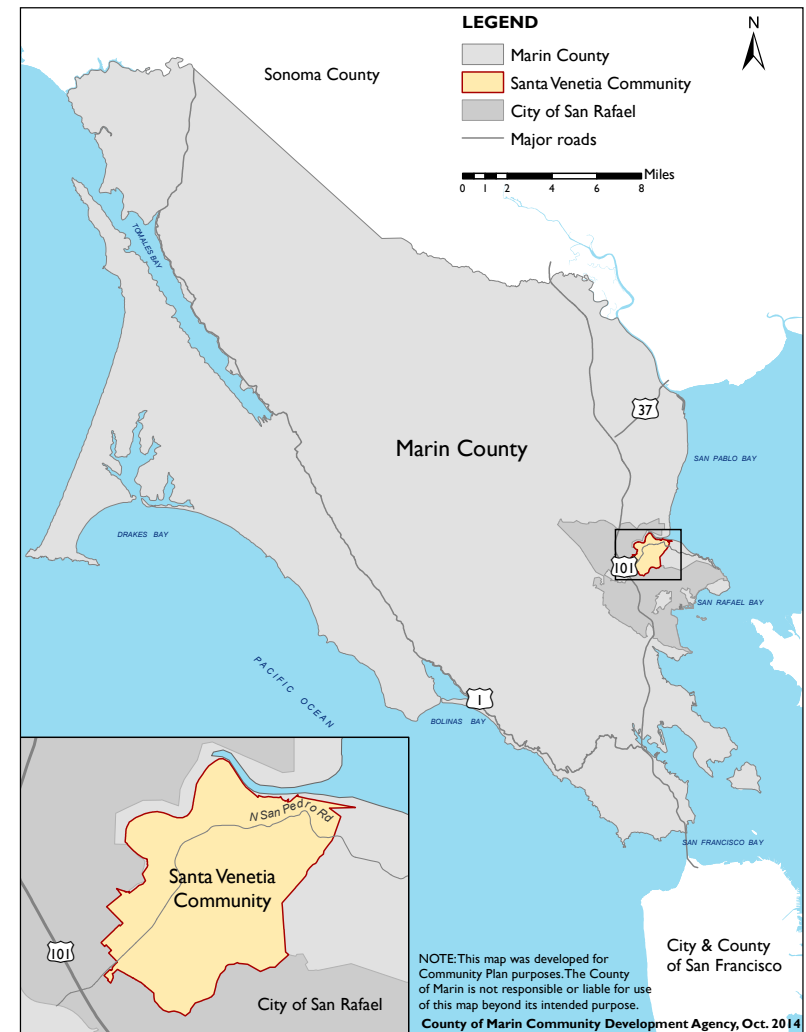


Figure 2. Marin County Location Map

## Planning Context

The planning area is located within the Countywide Plan designated City-Centered and Baylands Corridors. These environmental policy corridors were established in the Countywide Plan as a framework for guiding development primarily to urban and suburban portions of the County where public services are available while reducing development potential on environmentally sensitive areas, including baylands. As shown in Figure 4, the developed portions of Santa Venetia are located almost entirely within the City-Centered Corridor, while surrounding bay and marsh areas adjoining San Pablo Bay and Gallinas Creek fall within the Baylands Corridor.

A significant portion of Santa Venetia is also within the Countywide Plan designated Ridge and Upland Greenbelt (RUG), which typically covers the upper portions of ridges and hills in eastern Marin County. The policies associated with the RUG overlay designation are intended to protect visually prominent hill and ridgeline areas for their value as a buffer between communities as well as an important ecological zone of the watershed.

## Community Context

While Santa Venetia benefits from considerable advantages in terms of its location, climate and natural beauty, the community is influenced by external factors that include the land use and transportation decisions of

non-County agencies including the City of San Rafael, San Rafael City Schools, 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 Community Plan. Rather, Santa Venetia residents must continue to draw upon their considerable organization and engagement to ensure that their voices are heard and needs considered.



Advisory Committee members guided the Plan



Santa Venetia is located primarily in the City-Centered Corridor, with marsh areas in the Baylands Corridor

### 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 land 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 CWP for descriptions of the Coastal and Inland Rural Corridors.*

Figure 3. Countywide Plan Environmental Corridors



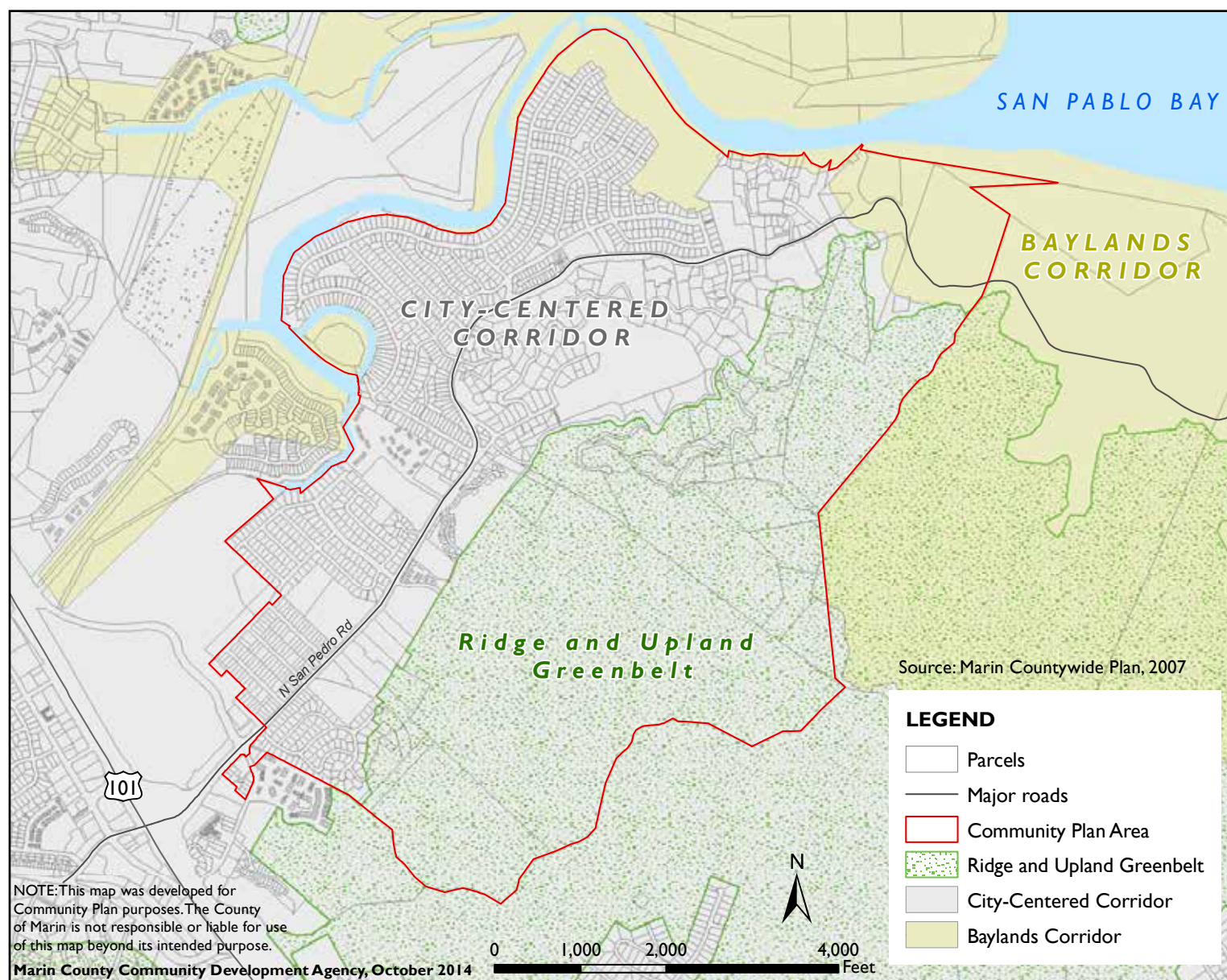


Figure 4. Environmental Corridors and RUG Map

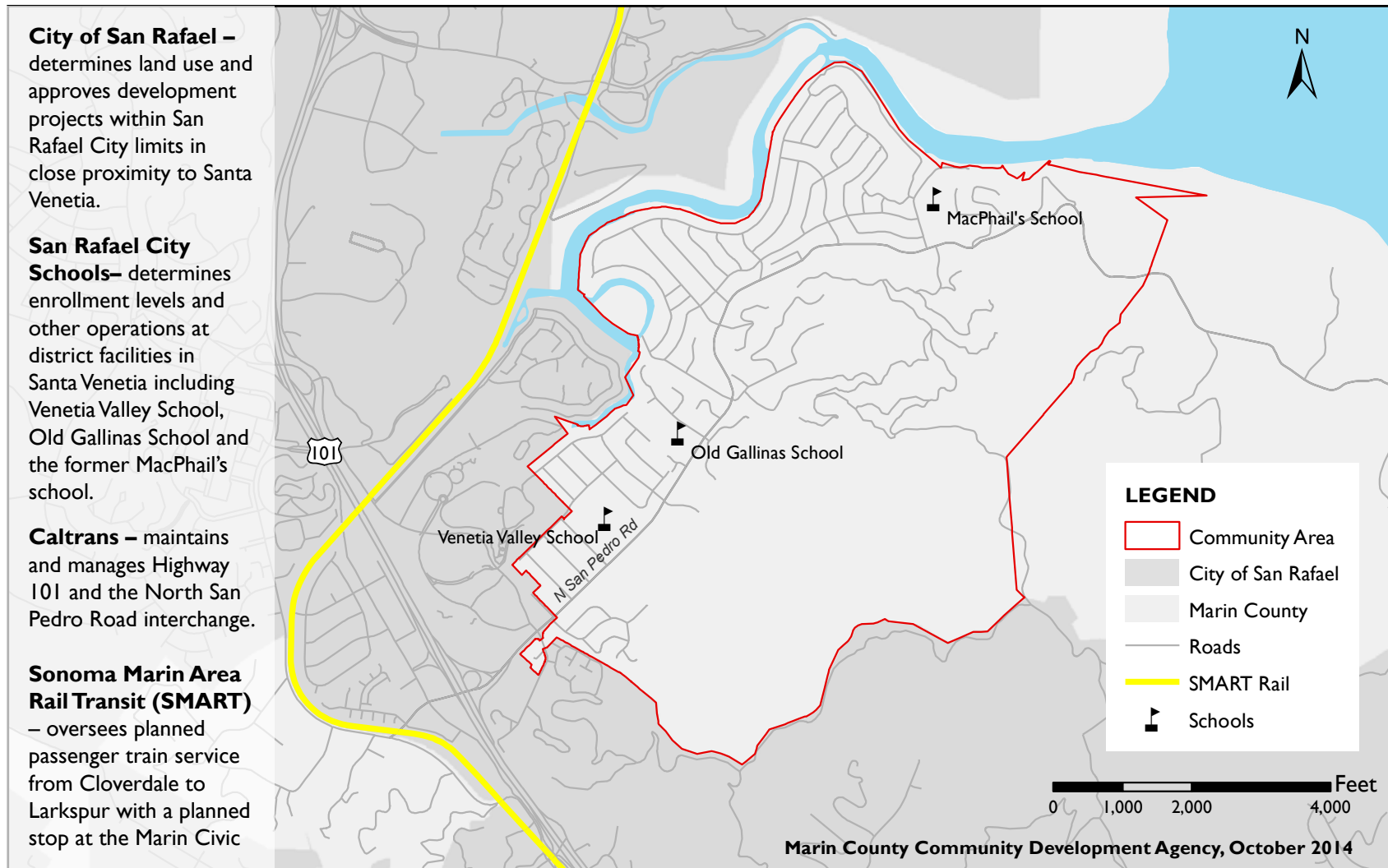


Figure 5. Agency Jurisdictions Map

## Demographics

Two important trends that will influence the needs and character of the community in the future are the increasing populations of older adults and Latinos. Santa Venetia's population is in line with observed increases in median age Countywide as the “baby boomer” generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, continues to age in place. The Santa Venetia community trends are also consistent with countywide and statewide increases in the Latino population – a trend that is expected to see an increase in California's Latino population to 48% by 2030. These two trends highlight the need for future community outreach and planning efforts, as well as communication and services, to meet the accessibility, language and mobility needs of an increasingly diverse County population.

### Quick Stats from Census 2010

**Land Area:** 3.7 square miles

**Population:** 4,292

**Median Age:** 47.7

**Total Households:** 1,655

**Households w/Children Under 18:** 29%

**Householder living alone:** 28%

### Median Age: 1990-2010

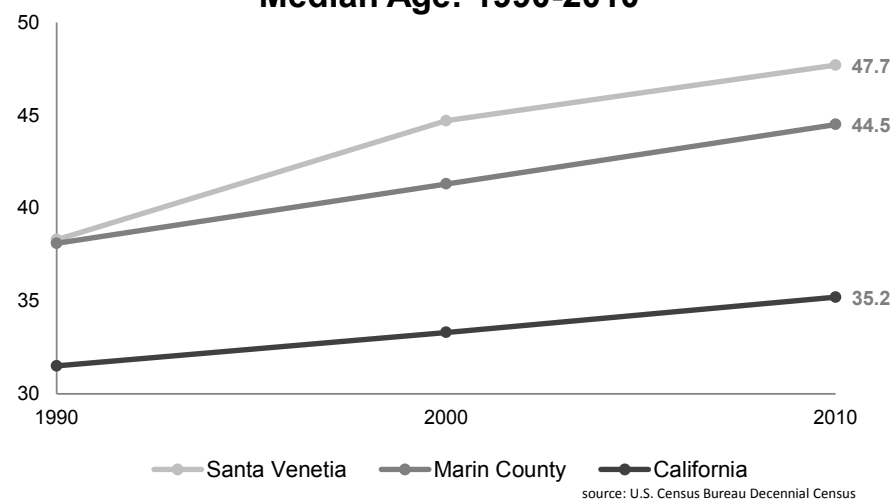


Figure 6. Median Age of Residents 1990 - 2010

### Santa Venetia Age Distribution 1990-2010

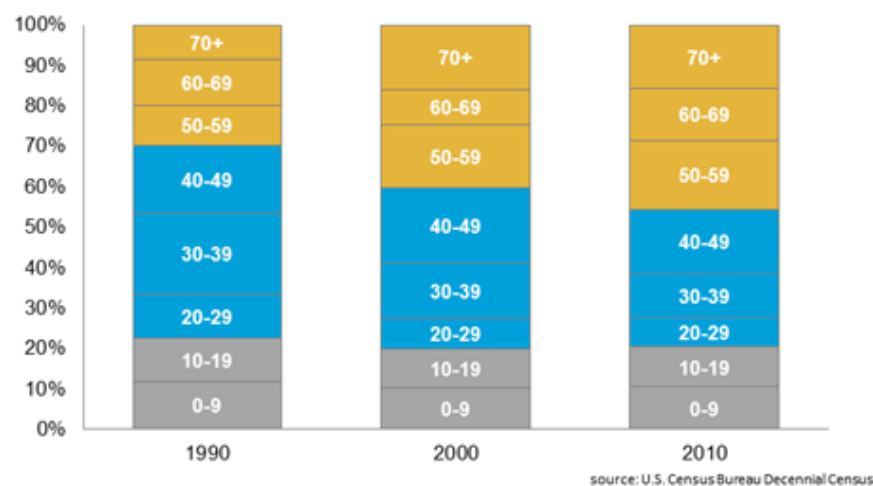
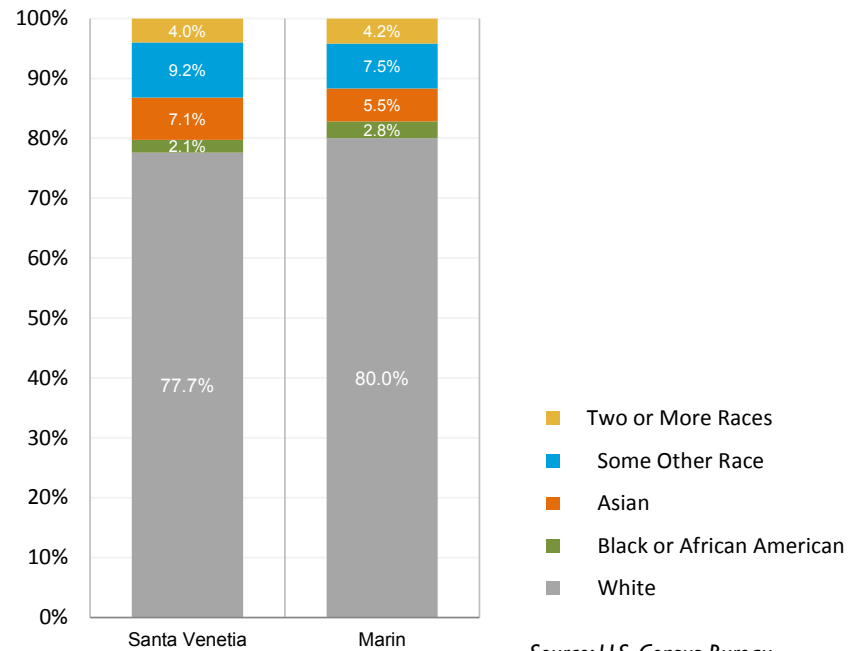


Figure 7. Santa Venetia Age Distribution 1990 - 2010



According to the 2010 census, Santa Venetia is more racially diverse than Marin County as a whole, but still predominantly “White” (77%). Relative to the county average, a higher proportion of Santa Venetia residents identified as “Asian” (7.1%) or “Some Other Race” (9.2%). A lower percentage reported being “Black or African American” (2.1%) and those identifying as “Two or More Races” (4.0%) were roughly on par with the county average.

Santa Venetia’s Hispanic or Latino residents made up 19% of the community’s population in 2010, nearly doubling the percentage from 1990 (10%). The current proportion exceeds Marin County’s average by 3.5%, but falls well below the statewide 37.6%. As mentioned earlier, the Hispanic or Latino population of Santa Venetia is expected to grow along with the upward trend across California.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 8. Racial Characteristics (2010)

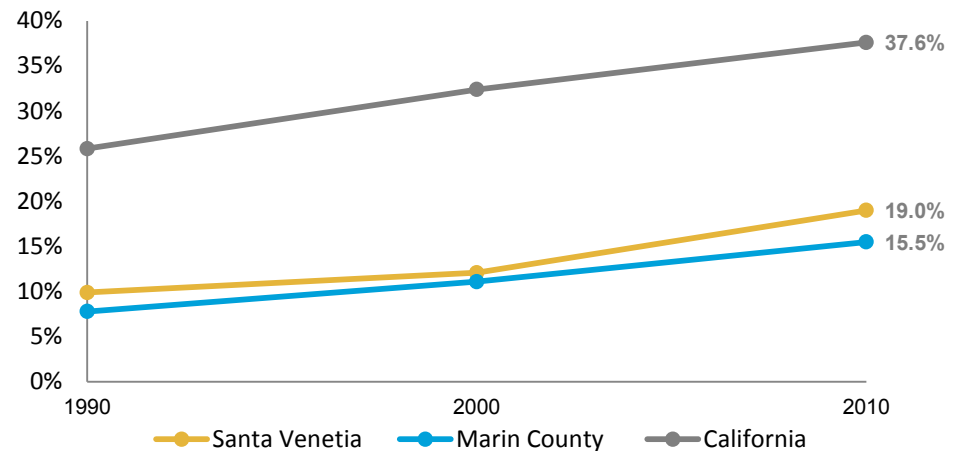


Figure 9. Hispanic or Latino Population 1990 - 2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Housing Occupancy

Over 96% of the homes in Santa Venetia are occupied, consistent with trends seen in the rest of the county and the state. Moreover, 67% of homes in the community are owner-occupied, nearly 10% higher than the county average. A high rate of owner occupancy indicates fewer properties are rented, which means fewer absentee landlords. Owner occupants are more likely to maintain their property and participate in community events, which may enhance their sense of community and quality of life.



Entrance to the Northbridge neighborhood of Santa Venetia

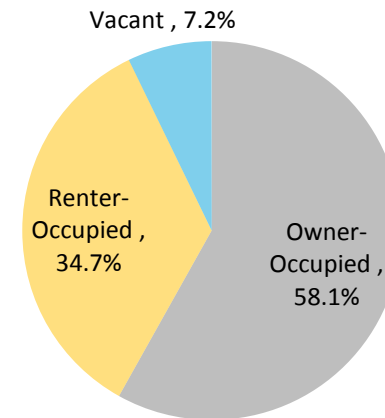


Figure 10. Marin Housing Occupancy 2010

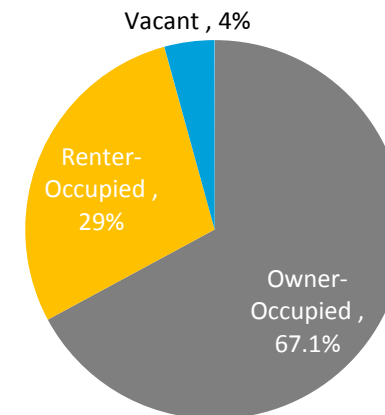


Figure 11. Santa Venetia Housing Occupancy 2010

## History

The community of Santa Venetia is located in an area that was once inhabited by the Coastal Miwok people and was part of a large tidal marsh (See Figure 21, page 30). Following the late 18th century arrival of the Spanish in San Francisco Bay, the Mission San Rafael Archangel was established in San Rafael in 1817. In 1844, the Mexican government granted the 22,000 acre “Rancho San Pedro, Santa Margarita, and Las Gallinas” to Irish immigrant Timothy Murphy. Upon Timothy’s death, his brother Mathew inherited part of the rancho. In the 1850’s, Timothy sold 515 acres encompassing the Santa Venetia area to William McAlester.

Several brick yards and powder works operated in Santa Venetia during the 1870’s, including the Rice & Piper tract. Bricks were shipped to San Francisco – many fell overboard when being loaded on the boats and are still on the bottom of Gallinas Creek. Nearby China Camp Village reached the height of its prosperity as a shrimping village with 500 Chinese residents and annual harvest of 3 million pounds of shrimp in the late 1800’s-early 1900’s. Meriam Stetson’s family moved to the area in 1890, and his 1957 “Santa Venetia and Blithedale History” provides a glimpse of life in those days.

### Santa Venetia in the 1890’s-1950’s

“My parents came to our home place when I was a year and a half old. My father, Edward G. Stetson, had bought 3 adjoining ranches from different owners...In 1894 our neighborhood still lacked modern conveniences. We got our water from wells, and it was pumped by windmill into a tank located near our house. Our house was lighted by candles and kerosene lamps. Our stoves for cooking and heating burned wood from our trees...After the closing of the local school in 1903 there was no school near our ranch until the present one was built in 1951. There were no school buses and the children in the neighborhood had to walk to San Rafael and back...The children did not seem to regard walking as a great hardship though it was not so pleasant when it rained.”

**“Santa Venetia and Blithedale History” by Meriam Stetson, 1957**

*Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Free Library*

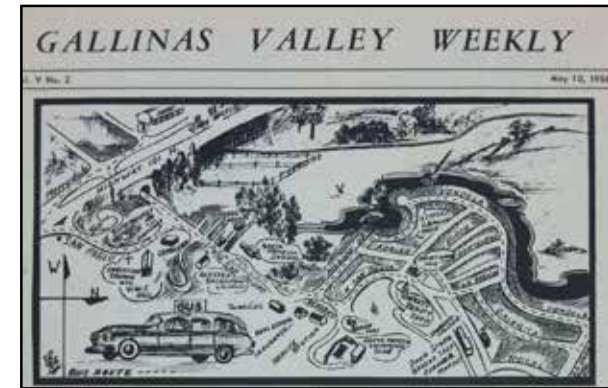


*Mabry McMahon's home in Oxford Valley, 1914*





*McMahon's development scheme for Santa Venetia involved raising the marsh by 6-8 feet from 1908-1914*



*Bus route illustration in the Gallinas Valley Weekly, 1956*

The first subdivision was attempted in Santa Venetia in 1887, when Henry Campbell bought what is now the Golf Links Tract, had it surveyed and published maps of it under the name “Margarita”. He failed to sell any lots, and finally had to rent it for cow pasture and later lease it out for a golf course which remained until 1907. North San Pedro Road was built in 1894, paving the way for further modernization. In 1898 the San Rafael Golf and Country Club opened near the current Civic Center site. It was a grand club house and had a 200,000 gallon salt water pool. An excursion train to Napa Valley made a whistle stop at the golf club until its closing in 1939.

In 1907, William McAlester’s son-in-law Mabry McMahon began marketing Santa Venetia as “The Newport of the West”. His development scheme was to create a community of canals,

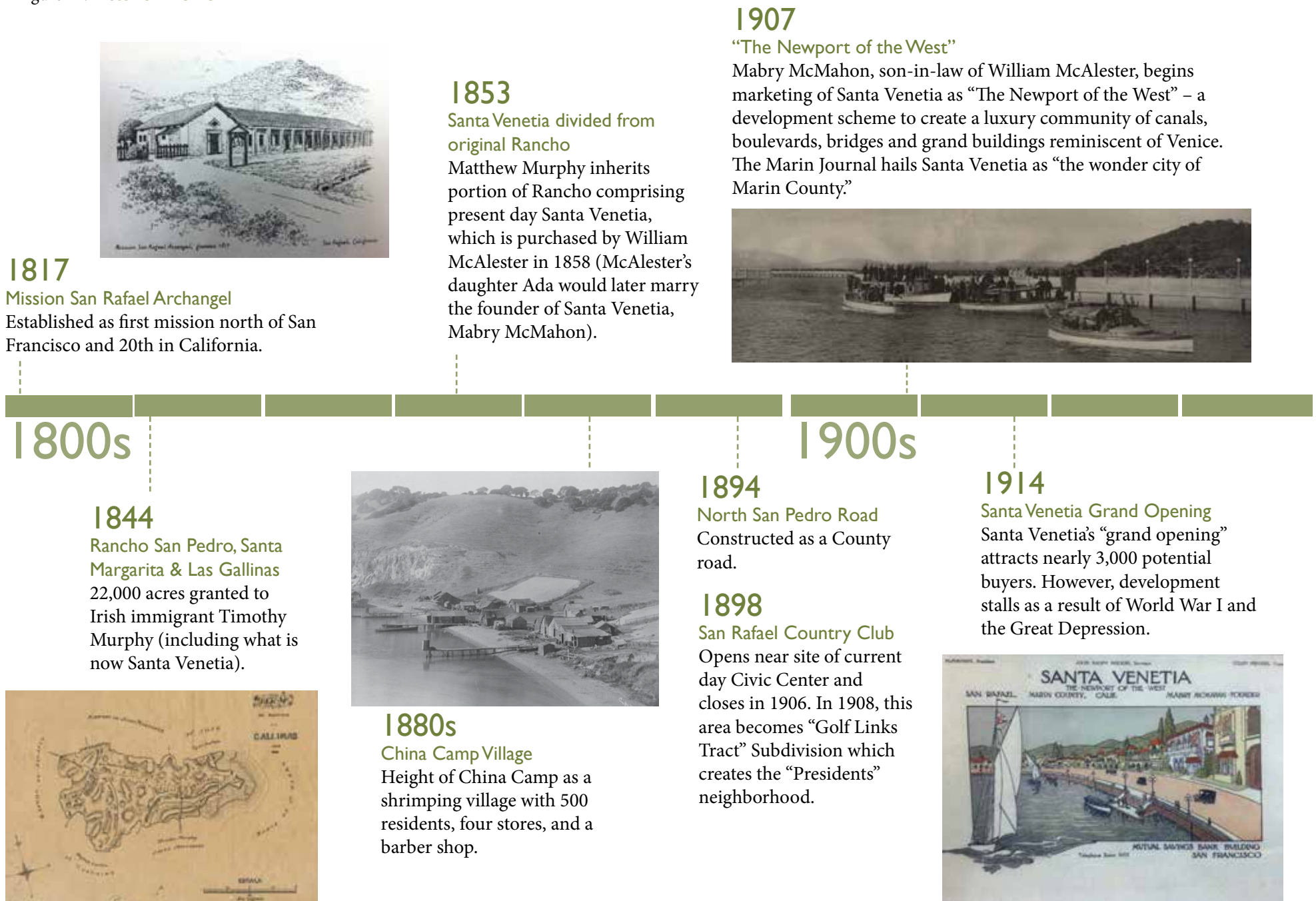
including gondolas, boulevards, bridges and grand buildings reminiscent of Venice. Dredging and filling of the marsh areas commenced in 1911. Earthwork included raising the marsh by 6-8 feet, constructing 3 miles of canals and 6 miles of levees, all at enormous expense. The Marin Journal hailed Santa Venetia as “the wonder city of Marin County”. Santa Venetia’s grand opening was held in 1914, but few homes sold due to a slow real estate market and World War I.

The early to mid-1900s saw further development in the form of various subdivisions, the opening of Tweedies General Store, and the Santa Venetia Airport. Throughout the 1940’s, Federal Housing Authority loans helped to finance military housing and homes for returning veterans and their families after the war. Ten subdivisions were created from

1939 to 1950, including Venetia Meadows, Venetia Harbor, Woodcliff, Portola Gardens and Gallinas Village. In 1942, the Redwood Highway became Highway 101. Gallinas Village, an 8-acre complex of shopping center and single-family homes starting at \$14,000, was built in 1952. Santa Venetia School and MacPhail Elementary School opened to accommodate the new residents in 1951 and 1957, respectively.

In 1961, the Board of Supervisors approved the Las Gallinas Valley Plan. The Frank Lloyd Wright Civic Center was completed on the site of the former Scettrini Ranch in 1969. During the 1970’s, China Camp State Park was established and Santa Margarita Island became part of the Marin County Open Space District with help from residents. In 2014, Santa Venetia celebrated its 100th anniversary.

Figure 12. Historic Timeline



1942

Highway 101  
Redwood Highway becomes Highway 101, dividing the communities of Santa Venetia and Terra Linda.



1954

Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association (SVNA) formed  
Originally named the Gallinas Village Improvement Association.



1977

China Camp State Park  
China Camp becomes a 1,600 acre state park. China Camp Village added to National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

2014

"Heron Hill" Preserve  
16 acre site protected from development by community efforts and funding from an anonymous donor.



2016

Santa Venetia Community Plan adopted!



2000s

1934

Housing "Boom"  
Creation of the Federal Housing Authority (1934) and G.I. Bill (1941) helps finance housing and spurs residential development in Santa Venetia.



1950's

Gallinas/Santa Venetia & MacPhail Schools  
Local schools open in 1951 and 1957, respectively.

1952

Gallinas Village  
Construction begins on "Gallinas Village" including an 8-acre shopping center and single family homes starting at \$14,000.

1956

Marin County Civic Center  
Scettrini dairy ranch purchased for Frank Lloyd Wright Civic Center (construction completed in 1969).



1978

Santa Margarita Island Preserve  
Community efforts lead to acquisition of 4.5 acre island as a County Open Space Preserve.



# 3

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Santa Venetia is surrounded by rich and diverse natural resource areas that provide recreational opportunities to residents as well as habitat for a variety of plants and animals. These natural resource areas are highly valued by the residents of Santa Venetia, and their protection is an important community plan goal.

# Chapter 3: Natural Resources

Santa Venetia enjoys a unique natural setting within the greater Las Gallinas Creek watershed. To the north and east, the community is bordered by Las Gallinas Creek and its adjoining marsh and wetland areas, which extend eastward toward San Pablo Bay and represent some of the largest remaining tidally influenced habitats in the bay region (Habitat Goals Report, 1999). To the southeast, the oak and bay woodland covered slopes and ridges of San Pedro Mountain remain largely undeveloped open space and form a dramatic visual backdrop for the community. As a result, Santa Venetia is literally surrounded by valuable natural resource areas which provide habitat for a variety of special-status plants and animals as well as more common wildlife.

Of particular interest are the occurrences of wetland-adapted species along the baylands including the state threatened California black rail, and the federal and state endangered Ridgeway's rail (formerly known as the California clapper rail) and salt harvest mouse. Further inland, heron and egret nesting colonies have been documented in mature eucalyptus trees and areas of oak woodland within Santa Venetia.

These natural resource areas are highly valued by the residents of Santa Venetia for their inherent beauty and recreational and ecological value.

The protection of Marin County's natural environment is one of the overarching goals of the Marin Countywide Plan, which contains a comprehensive list of policies and programs intended to protect, restore, and enhance Marin's watersheds, natural habitats, wildlife corridors and open space areas (see Figures 13 and 14). Additional protections have also been incorporated directly into Marin County's Development Code, such as a Native Tree Protection and Preservation Ordinance, and special zoning regulations for properties in sensitive areas such as the

Baylands Corridor (see Figures 4, 15 and 16).

Together, these adopted policies and regulations provide a strong framework for natural resource protection in Marin County. For consistency and clarity, natural resource protection policies should be implemented and applied uniformly throughout the County. Therefore, it is unnecessary to duplicate the County's extensive body of natural resource protection policies within a particular community plan. Instead, this chapter provides a sample of selected policies of particular interest and relevance to Santa Venetia. A complete and unedited list of natural resource policies can be found in the Natural Systems Element of the Marin Countywide Plan.



*Oak and bay woodlands cover most of San Pedro Mountain*



**Marin Countywide Plan (2007)**  
***Natural Resource Protection Goals & Selected Abridged Policies***

**Goal BIO-1: 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.

- Protect sensitive habitat and natural communities through careful review of development.
- Acquire areas containing sensitive resources for permanent protection.
- Protect woodlands, forests and tree resources through implementation of the Native Tree Preservation and Protection Ordinance.
- Support management programs for vegetation and wildlife diseases such as Sudden Oak Death syndrome.
- Promote use of native plant species in landscape plans to improve wildlife habitat.
- Control the spread of invasive exotic plants by prohibiting their use in landscaping and encouraging removal where possible.
- Encourage the use of integrated pest management and organic practices to reduce use of herbicides and insecticides.

**Goal BIO-2: 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.

- Assess the impact of development on native and special-status species and habitat areas and require adequate mitigation to protect sensitive resources.
- Restrict or modify proposed development in areas that contain sensitive biological resources.
- Protect and preserve “ecotones” (natural transitions between habitats) for their importance to wildlife.
- Ensure that important wildlife movement corridors and nursery areas are protected.
- Restrict disturbance in sensitive habitat areas during bird nesting season.
- Consider the need for wildlife movement when designing new or expanded roadways.

**Goal BIO-3: 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.

- Require development to avoid wetland areas through the establishment of Wetland Conservation Areas that encompass the wetland itself and an associated buffer area. Although a larger buffer area may be required, setback criteria in the City-Centered Corridor range from 20 feet (for parcels less than 0.5 acres) to 100 feet (for parcels of more than 2 acres). Within the Baylands Corridor, a minimum setback of 100 feet should be provided regardless of parcel size.
- Where avoidance of wetlands is not possible, require replacement habitat at a minimum ratio of 2:1 for onsite mitigation and 3:1 for off-site mitigation.

Figure 13. Selected CWP Natural Resource Protection Goals & Selected Abridged Policies



### Goal BIO-4: Riparian Conservation

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

- Protect streams and riparian areas through the establishment of Stream Conservation Areas (SCAs) that encompass the stream channel and an associated buffer area. Although a larger buffer area may be required, setback criteria in the City-Centered Corridor range from 20 feet (for parcels less than 0.5 acres) to 100 feet (for parcels of more than 2 acres). Within the Baylands Corridor, a setback of 100 feet from the top of bank or 50 feet from the outer edge of woody riparian vegetation (whichever is greater) is required regardless of parcel size.

- Prohibit projects which adversely impact a stream's hydraulic capacity, degrade water quality, or cause a net loss in habitat acreage, value, or function.
- Retain and restore the hydraulic capacity and natural functions of stream channels and discourage alteration of stream beds or banks.
- Retain native riparian vegetation and remove and replace invasive exotic plants.
- Replace culverted streams with natural drainage channels wherever feasible.

Note: SCA setback requirements do not apply to channels under tidal influence, such as Gallinas Creek.

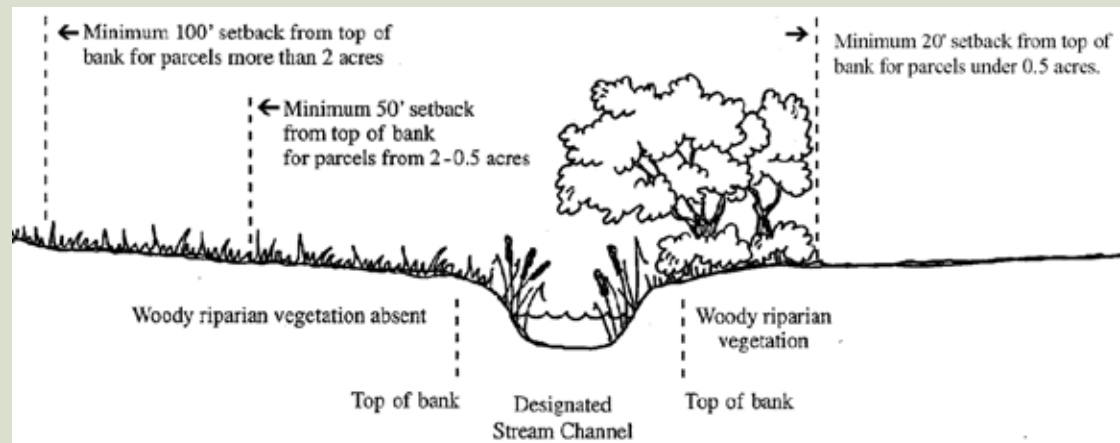


Figure 14. Typical Cross Section of a Stream Conservation Area in the City-Centered Corridor

### Goal BIO-5: 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.

- Ensure that baylands and adjacent uplands are protected through adherence to WCA and SCA setbacks.
- Require tidelands to be left in their natural state.
- Restore diked bay marshlands to enhance their wildlife and aquatic habitat value.
- Protect habitats associated with freshwater streams, marshes, and seasonal wetlands.
- Utilize flood basins to provide seasonal habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds.
- Design public access to avoid or minimize disturbance to wetlands and associated areas.
- Encourage acquisition of large essential baylands for open space and habitat restoration purposes.

## Marin County Development Code

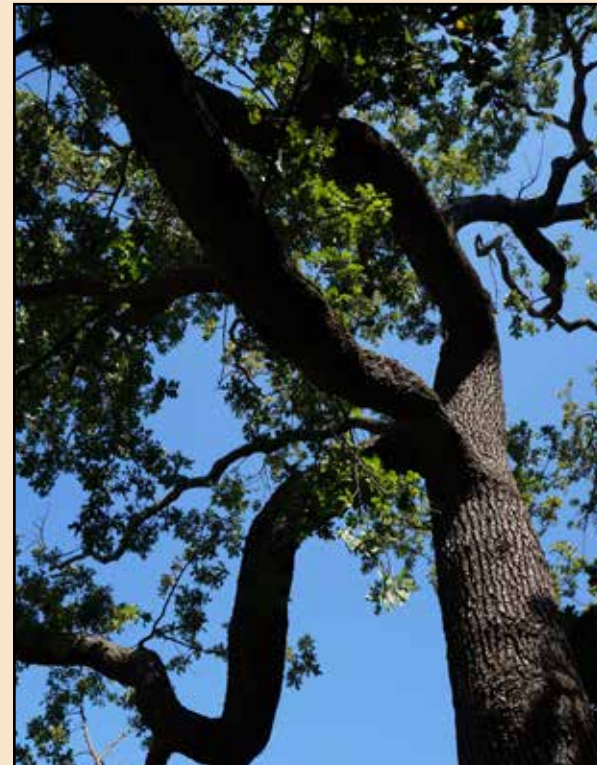
### **Chapter 22.27 Native Tree Protection and Preservation & Chapter 22.62 Tree Removal Permits**

Marin Countywide Plan policies strongly support the protection of large native trees, oak woodlands, and trees which provide habitat or have historical importance.

Throughout the County, the removal of native trees is regulated through the standards and requirements of the Native Tree Preservation and Protection Ordinance, which applies to all properties regardless of zoning. Native and non-native tree removal associated with new development is also regulated through the County's discretionary review process (for example, as part of a Design Review or Subdivision application). Key provisions of the Ordinance are summarized below.

- The Ordinance applies to all protected and heritage trees, which include native trees of a specified diameter size (generally a minimum of 6-inches for oaks and willows, and 10-inches for all others)
- On a vacant (undeveloped) property, the removal of one or more protected or heritage trees requires a Tree Removal Permit.
- On a developed property, up to two protected trees may be removed within a one-year time frame provided they are not located in a Stream Conservation or Wetland Conservation Area and are not large enough to be considered "heritage" specimens.
- Exemptions are provided in certain cases, such as when a tree is:
  - o In very poor health
  - o Infected by pathogens or insects that threaten surrounding trees
  - o A public health, safety, or fire hazard
  - o Causing damage to improvements such as buildings, sidewalks, or public utilities
- Trees approved for removal through a Tree Removal Permit must generally be replaced on-site at a 2:1 ratio. Where on-site replacement is not feasible or appropriate, in-lieu funds are collected which are used for the planting and maintenance of trees on Marin County Parks and Open Space lands.

*(For complete details of Chapters 22.27 and 22.62, please refer to Title 22 of the Marin County Development Code).*



*Mature oak tree in Northbridge neighborhood  
Marin County CDA*

Figure 15. Native Tree Protection and Preservation & Tree Removal Permits

### **Marin County Development Code** **Section 22.14.060 Bayfront Conservation (BFC-) District**

Marin's baylands are comprised of a complex ecosystem of aquatic and upland habitats that are vital to the health of San Francisco Bay. The protection of baylands and adjacent undeveloped uplands has become an increasingly important County policy objective.

In 1994, the Marin Countywide Plan adopted a Bayfront Conservation (BFC-) Zone overlay along the shoreline of San Francisco and San Pablo Bay in recognition of the unique environmental characteristics of the baylands ecosystem. The protection of these important resources was further strengthened when the

2007 update of the Marin Countywide Plan established a new "environmental corridor" known as the Baylands Corridor for those areas subject to the BFC zoning overlay (See Chapter 5, Figure 37).

All development on properties within the Baylands Corridor is subject to the requirements of the BFC zoning overlay. In most cases, before a development application is even filed, an environmental assessment must be completed to precisely map the boundary of tideland, marshland, and shoreline subzones on the property and

determine the site's potential development capability based on physical and policy constraints. In addition, the BFC zoning provisions include a wide range of guidelines that address issues such as habitat protection, access and recreation, building siting and design, aesthetic and scenic quality, and protection from flooding and other hazards.

Together, provisions of the Marin Countywide Plan and BFC zoning overlay combine to form a strong and comprehensive policy and regulatory framework for the protection and preservation of Marin's baylands.



*Tidal marsh near China Camp State Park*

*Marin County CDA*

Figure 16. Bayfront Conservation (BFC-) District



## Natural Resource Areas of Santa Venetia and the Gallinas Creek Watershed

The 5.6 square mile Gallinas Creek watershed is located in the northern part of the city of San Rafael and includes both Santa Venetia and Terra Linda. This watershed has two main drainage areas, one of which originates from tributaries in the San Rafael Hills and San Pedro Ridge and flows through Santa Venetia (South Fork of Gallinas Creek) and ultimately into San Pablo Bay and the larger San Francisco Estuary. A healthy Gallinas Creek watershed provides many benefits to Santa Venetia residents including water purification and protection from flooding and erosion during winter storm events.

Over more than a century, the watershed and its natural resources have been altered through human use and development. However, natural resource areas still exist which retain many features of Santa Venetia's natural history. These resources occur on both public and private lands. Fortunately, a number of these areas have been set aside for the protection of natural resources and for the benefit of the public.

Open space preserves in Santa Venetia owned and managed by the Marin County Open Space District (including the Santa Venetia Marsh Preserve, the Santa Margarita Island Preserve, the San Pedro Mountain Open Space Preserve, and the "Heron Hill" Open Space Preserve - See Figure 17) have protected significant areas of marsh and tideland area in the lower watershed as well as large tracts of native oak and bay woodlands in the upper watershed. A summary of those natural resource areas of particular importance to the Santa Venetia community is provided below, along with a description of some of the ongoing threats to those resources. The specific locations and boundaries of open space preserves are shown in Chapter 6, Figure 44.

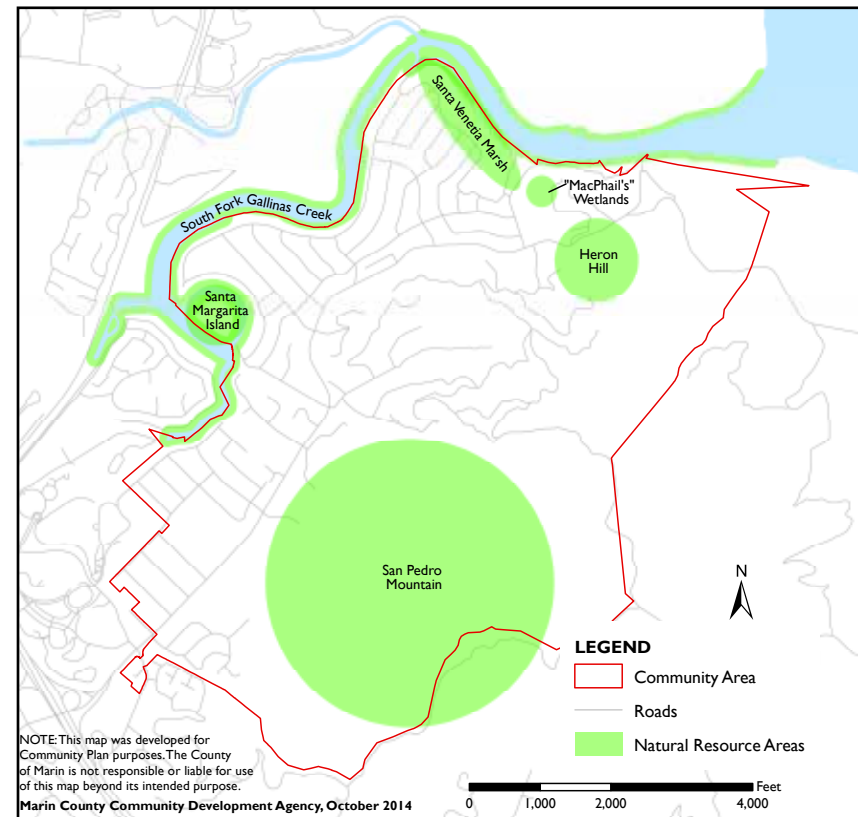


Figure 17. Natural Resource Areas of Santa Venetia

(Mapped for illustrative purposes only)

### What is a watershed?

"A watershed is all of the land that drains to a particular stream, river, or bay. All land, from the wildest preserve to the most densely developed urban neighborhood, is part of a watershed. When watersheds are healthy and functioning well, they provide food and fiber, clean water, and habitat for native plants and animals."

*Marin County Watershed Program*

### *South Fork of Gallinas Creek*

The lower elevations of Santa Venetia were once part of a large network of tidal waterways and salt marsh that occurred throughout the San Francisco Estuary. Nearly 80% of marshlands throughout the San Francisco Estuary, including those of Santa Venetia, were diked and drained for human uses over the last century, including large portions of Santa Venetia (Habitat Goals Report, 1999). The South Fork of Gallinas Creek and its fringing tidal marsh have been highly altered from their original state but continue to support a unique and rich diversity of plants and wildlife, many of which are dependent on these environments for survival, including the federally endangered Ridgeway's rail (formerly the California clapper rail) and salt marsh harvest mouse. Marshlands bordering Gallinas Creek, along with McInnis Marsh, Petaluma River marshlands, and marshes of the adjacent China Camp State Park, are believed to support the largest remaining populations of clapper rails in the northern part of the San Francisco Estuary (Habitat Goals Report 1999, McBroom 2012).



*Gallinas Creek is a tidal waterway*

### *Santa Venetia Marsh Preserve*

The Santa Venetia Marsh Preserve is located along the South Fork of Gallinas Creek at the eastern edge of the Gallinas Creek watershed. This 33 acre preserve features salt marsh surrounded by a levee. As was the case with many tidal wetlands, this marsh was diked and filled early in the 1900's when the surrounding area was being leveled for development. Later the outer levees were breached and tidal action resumed. The salt marsh slowly reappeared as pickleweed and saltgrass moved in thus providing habitat for animals like the California clapper rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse, which now thrive in the dense vegetation within the tidal zone. The surrounding area is now a patchwork of channels, marshland and flood control lands that are inhabited by a diverse array of birds and other animals. The most prominent threats to tidal marsh biota are sea level rise/extreme storm events, habitat degradation (e.g., altered hydrology, contaminants, human disturbance) and predators such as rats and cats.



*Salt marsh harvest mouse*

Photo credit: Judy Irving

### *Santa Margarita Island Preserve*

Santa Margarita Island is a unique open space preserve situated within Gallinas Creek. The 9 acre preserve (including 4.5 acres of upland habitat on the island itself) is surrounded by tidal marshland and has a diverse plant community that resembles a microcosm of what might be found on San Pedro Ridge. The island supports three species of native oaks, as well as madrone and California bay trees, that provide habitat for ferns and other shade-loving species such as the California pipe-vine, which attracts the pipevine swallowtail butterfly. Birdlife, including both waterfowl and shorebirds, is abundant within this preserve. Although the island is permanently protected as open space, surrounding tidal marshland areas are susceptible to sea level rise as well as habitat degradation and predators.



*Santa Margarita Island*

### **San Pedro Mountain Open Space Preserve**

Within Santa Venetia, upper portions of the Gallinas Creek watershed are comprised primarily of large contiguous tracts of native oak and bay woodlands. Much of these woodlands are located within the 358 acre San Pedro Mountain Open Space Preserve. The north-facing slopes of the preserve are heavily forested with a mixture of oaks, bays, and madrones. Further upslope, open patches of grassland provide habitat for native wildflowers and small pockets of redwoods can be found in the upper canyons.



*San Pedro Mountain*

### **“Heron Hill” Open Space Preserve**

Santa Venetia’s newest protected natural resource area is the “Heron Hill” Open Space Preserve, acquired by the County in July, 2014. The 16.5 acre property was initially purchased by an anonymous donor and subsequently donated to the County for the purpose of protecting the land from proposed residential development and preserving a great blue heron breeding site (known as a rookery) as well as oak woodlands and native grasslands on the property. The site supports the only known great blue heron rookery in the Santa Venetia neighborhood. The great blue heron is designated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as a “Special Animal” because of the close association it has with a habitat that is continuing to decline in California. According to the CDFW, tree cutting, water recreation, draining of wetland habitats, building, and highway construction have all contributed to rookery abandonment in recent years. Although protected from residential development, lands within the preserve remain susceptible to fire and invasive species such as French broom.



*“Heron Hill” on the slopes of San Pedro Mountain*

### **“MacPhail’s” Wetlands**

Most of the wetland areas within Santa Venetia consist of tidal marshlands along Gallinas Creek and San Francisco Bay. However, National Wetlands Inventory maps indicate that a property owned by the San Rafael City Schools on Vendola Drive supports a small freshwater wetland. Commonly referred to as “MacPhail’s,” the site was once home to an elementary school and later, a community arts center, but is currently vacant. The site includes several structures, a former recreation field, and along its southern border, an approximately one acre seasonal freshwater wetland, which provides habitat for a diverse array of wildlife and plants. Common threats to freshwater wetlands include pollutants from urban water runoff, invasive species, and disturbance from development.



*Black-Necked Stilt*

Photo credit: Gisele Block



### What can residents do to protect Santa Venetia's natural resources?

The County policies and regulations outlined in this chapter are intended to protect natural resources, particularly in conjunction with new development. However, there are many actions that Santa Venetia residents can take to contribute to the protection of natural resource areas and wildlife. Below are a few suggestions to keep in mind:

- Landscape with native plants that require less water than ornamentals and provide habitat for native species.
- Remove invasive plants such as French broom and pampas grass.
- Avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides.
- Follow drought restrictions and avoid over-watering landscaping.
- Replace areas of turf grass lawn with drought-tolerant vegetation.
- Do not feed wildlife, a practice that generally puts animals and birds at greater risk of predation and disease and encourages unnatural behavior.
- Reduce cat predation on wild birds by keeping cats indoors or under supervision when outdoors.

- Materials that enter a storm drain flow to the nearest creek or the bay so dispose of toxic waste and chemicals properly.
- Wash vehicles at commercial car washes, where water is used more efficiently and “cleaned” before being discharged.
- Pick up and properly dispose of pet waste

- Stay on trails in open space areas and observe posted regulations (leash laws, bike and equestrian restrictions, etc.)

NOTE: Additional information and recommendations can be found at: [www.marinwatersheds.org](http://www.marinwatersheds.org) (see Landowner Resources under “Learn More”).

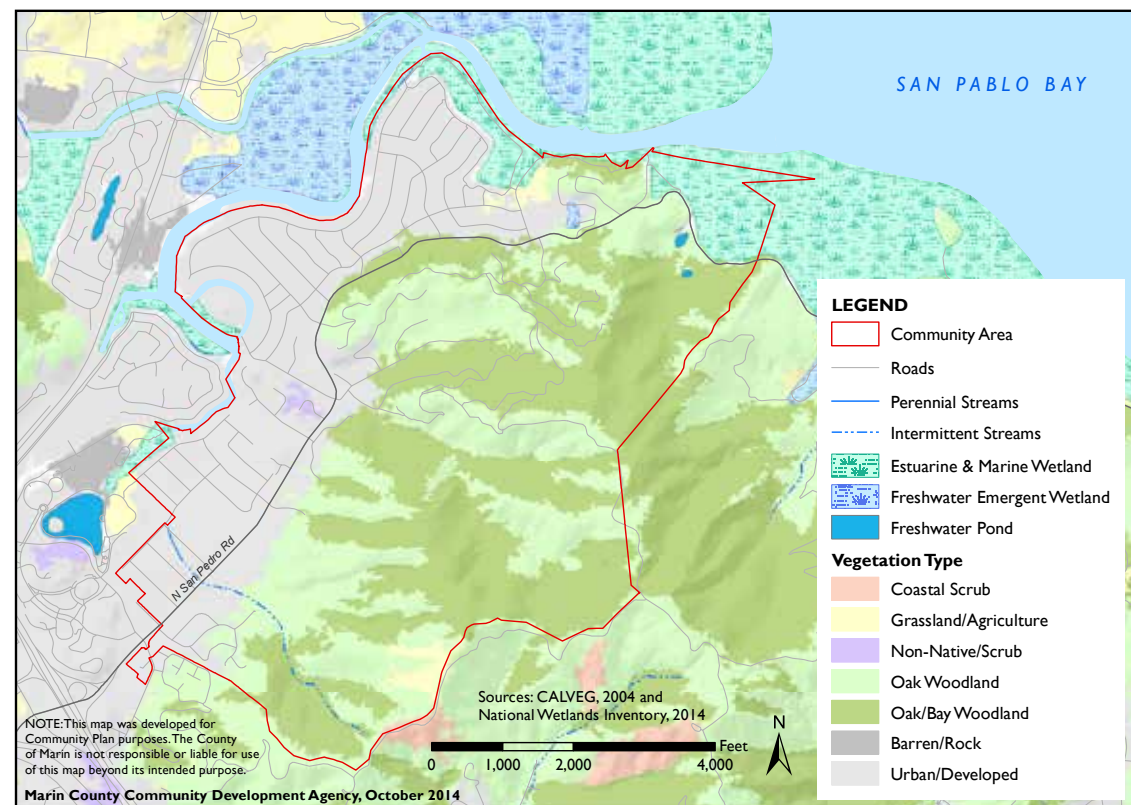


Figure 18. Tips for Protecting Natural Resources

Figure 19. Vegetation Types and Wetlands

## Natural Resources Policies

### **NR-1: Movement Corridors**

Encourage the protection of wildlife habitat and movement corridors. Fence types, roads, structures, and outdoor lighting that would significantly inhibit or obstruct wildlife movement, especially access to water, should be avoided.

### **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 sensitive natural resources of Santa Venetia and the importance of maintaining ecological structure and function, and to educate residents on how to become active stewards of the land. This program may also include efforts to educate residents about 1) use of drought tolerant, native (to Marin County) and fire resistant plants in landscaping areas and 2) the potential negative effects that invasive species (such as French broom) and contaminants (such as pesticides) may have on the ecosystem.

### **NR-3: Landscaping and Invasive Plant Control**

Encourage the use of drought tolerant, native and fire resistant plants on county-owned and managed properties as well as on private lands. Encourage property owners to remove plants considered invasive (ecologically and economically harmful) by the Marin County

Open Space District, especially in natural resource areas (see Chapter 3 for specific areas) and along major travel corridors (North San Pedro Road). Invasive plant species of particular concern in Santa Venetia are French broom, pampas/jubata grass, acacia tree species, and perennial pepperweed.

### **NR-4: Pesticides, Insecticides, Herbicides, and Rodenticides**

Discourage the use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and rodenticides. In particular, avoid application of mosquito adulticides in wetlands of Santa Venetia to limit negative impacts to aquatic wildlife (especially fish) unless all other methods fail to maintain mosquitos at a tolerable level or when emergency measures are needed to limit disease transmission to humans.

### **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 (such as the Marin County Agricultural Extension office) to determine appropriate best management practices to prevent and treat infestation.

### **NR-6: Marsh and Wetlands**

Development projects that are proposed adjacent to or drain into Gallinas Creek tidal marsh must avoid adverse impacts on wetlands and Wetland Conservation Areas. Require development at the MacPhails

property to avoid tidal marsh of Gallinas Creek and on-site wetlands through the establishment of Wetland Conservation Areas that encompass the wetland itself and an associated buffer of at least 100-feet. An additional buffer area may be required based on the results of a site assessment.

### **NR-7: Native Tree Replacement**

Support amending Marin County Code Chapter 22.27 (Native Tree Protection and Preservation) to ensure that in-lieu funds collected for tree removal are used for the planting and maintenance of trees on Marin County lands within the community in which they are collected.



*Scaup*



*Dodder*



*American Avocet*



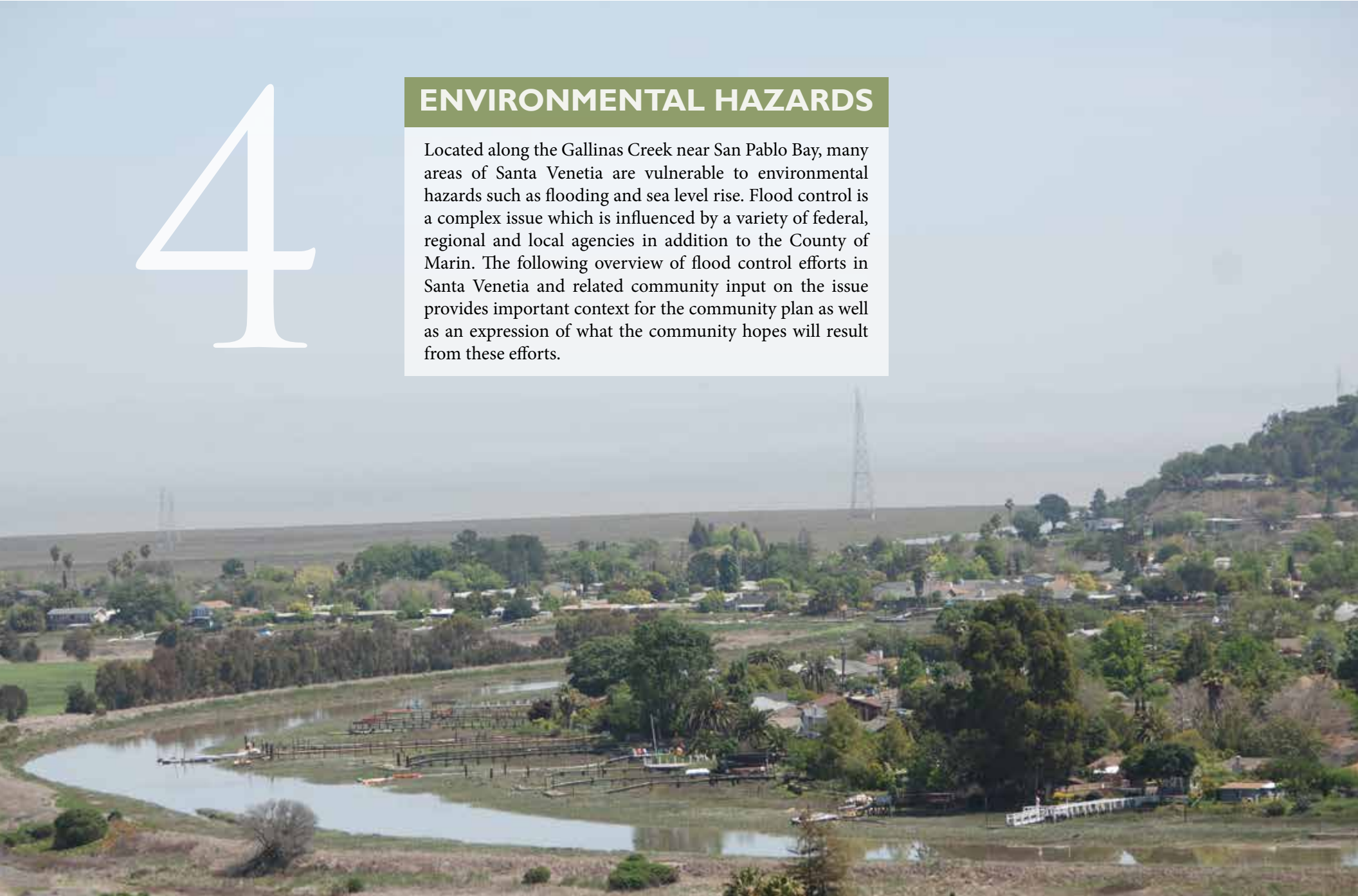
*Pickleweed*



# 4

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Located along the Gallinas Creek near San Pablo Bay, many areas of Santa Venetia are vulnerable to environmental hazards such as flooding and sea level rise. Flood control is a complex issue which is influenced by a variety of federal, regional and local agencies in addition to the County of Marin. The following overview of flood control efforts in Santa Venetia and related community input on the issue provides important context for the community plan as well as an expression of what the community hopes will result from these efforts.



# Chapter 4: Environmental Hazards

## Flood Hazards

In Marin County, flooding tends to occur more frequently in low-lying areas close to the Bay such as Santa Venetia. Community input in the past and during preparation of the community plan confirms that flooding is a major concern among residents. A resident survey conducted in 2011 found that almost a quarter of respondents (104 individuals) identified flooding as the most important issue facing Santa Venetia, and over ten percent (59 individuals) had personally experienced flooding of their home or property.

Protecting people and property from the risks of flooding is an important goal of the Marin Countywide Plan (Figure 20) and the primary mission of several County programs and districts as described below. However, flood control is a complex issue which is influenced by a variety of federal, regional and local agencies in addition to the County of Marin (Figure 22). Due to complexity and technical nature of flood management, detailed direction on this issue is beyond the scope of the community plan. However, the following overview of flood control efforts in Santa Venetia and related community input

on the issue provides important context for the community plan as well as an expression of what the community hopes will result from these efforts.



*Heavy flooding in winter of 1982-83*

Photo credit: Marin County DPW

### **Marin Countywide Plan (2007)** ***Selected Goals, Policies and Programs for Flood Control***

#### **Goal EH-3: Safety from Flooding and Inundation**

**Protect people and property from the risks associated with flooding and inundation.**

- Design and locate structures and improvements to be more resistant to damage from flooding.
- Restrict development in mapped flood hazard areas.
- Implement adopted flood control programs, including repair and maintenance of flood control structures.
- Require detailed studies for development that might impact drainage systems and patterns.
- Develop watershed-specific management and monitoring plans that mitigate flooding while also protecting natural resources and habitat.

Figure 20. Selected CWP Goals, Policies and Programs for Flood Control



## Background

Historically, a significant part of Santa Venetia was a large tidal marsh. Santa Venetia was one of the first developments in Marin County to be constructed on fill over bay mud. Due to the low initial level of the fill and the compressible nature of the underlying bay mud, much of the area sank below sea level after construction was complete. In 1953, an act of 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 Marin County Department of Public Works. Within the Flood Control District, eight separate flood control zones have been created in areas with specific flooding problems. The goal of the Flood Control District is to help protect residents from flooding by constructing, operating, and maintaining flood control improvements such as pump stations and drainage ways.

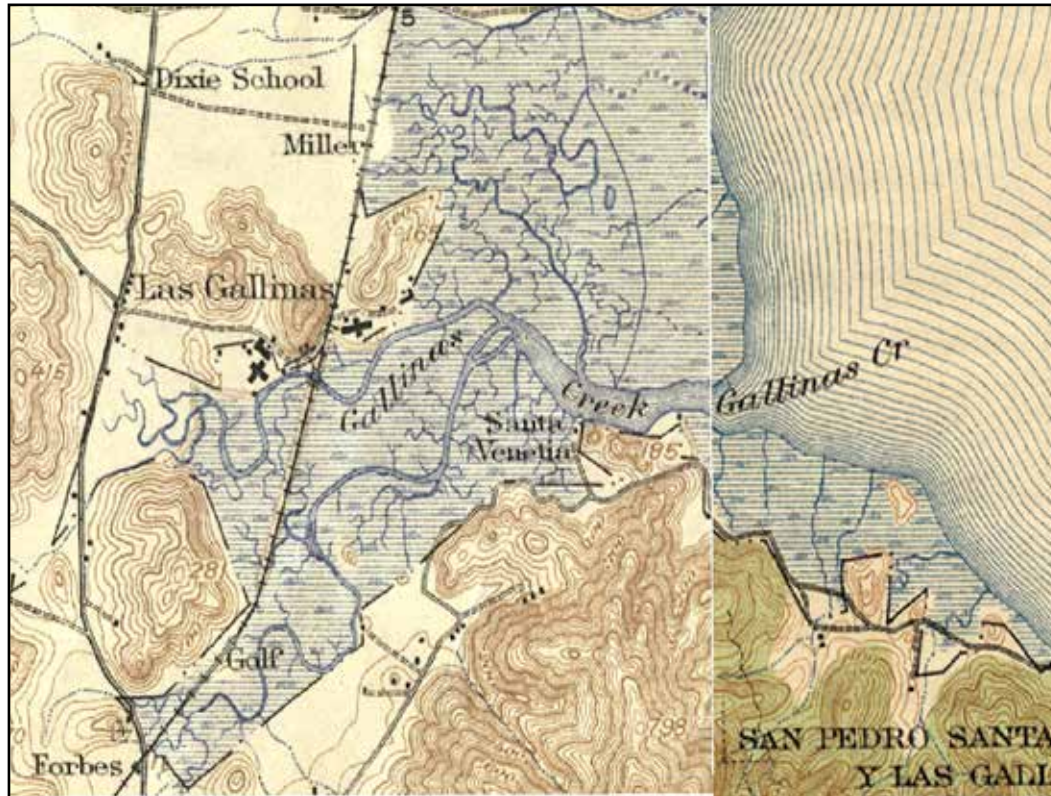


Figure 21. Historic Map of Gallinas Tidal Marsh

Marin County DPW

## Agencies Involved in Flood Control

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**– Prepares and updates flood maps, administers federal flood insurance program and determines flood insurance rates. [www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program](http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program)

**US Army Corps of Engineers** – Carries out federal public works projects related to flood control and coastal protection and restoration, waterway navigation, and public recreation. [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)

**San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board** – Develops and implements water quality regulations for the Bay Area, including drainage and storm water management requirements for development projects. [www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay)

**Marin County Flood Control & Water Conservation District** – County agency, staffed by Department of Public Works, responsible for addressing specific flooding problems in the County's eight flood zones.

**Flood Control Zone 7** – County Flood Control Zone encompassing the community of Santa Venetia. <http://www.marinwatersheds.org/zone-7.html>

**Marin County Watershed Program** – County program, staffed by Department of Public Works, to integrate flood protection and environmental restoration within seven participating watershed areas. [www.marinwatersheds.org](http://www.marinwatersheds.org)

**County Service Area (CSA) #6** – County Service Area formed to raise funds for the dredging and maintenance of the Gallinas Creek channel for navigation and flood protection purposes.

Figure 22. Agencies Involved in Flood Control



## Flood Control Zone 7

Santa Venetia is located within Flood Control Zone 7, which was created in 1962 and now consists of 890 parcels. Flood Control Zone 7 operates and maintains five permanent and three portable storm water pumping stations to remove local storm water runoff, as well as a system of bypass pipes that convey runoff from adjoining hillside areas directly to Las Gallinas Creek. A levee system was also constructed in the 1950's to minimize tidal flooding from the lower portion of Las Gallinas Creek and San Pablo Bay.

Flood Control Zone 7 has an appointed Advisory Board of local residents, supported by Department of Public Works staff, that reviews and advises the Board of Supervisors on projects and budgets. All major actions taken by the Flood Control Zone require authorization by the Board of Supervisors acting as the Flood Control District Board. Funding for Flood Control Zone 7 is provided by property taxes and special taxes and fees, but is limited. Therefore, County staff works closely with the Flood Control Zone 7 Advisory Board to conduct appropriate studies, consider alternatives, establish priorities given project costs and impact, and explore funding options. Flood Control Zone Advisory Board meetings occur on a regular basis (approximately quarterly) and are open to the public.

As part of the community plan process, Department of Public Works staff assisted in developing the following long term flood protection goals to be incorporated into the community plan for Flood Control Zone 7:

- Work toward 100-year flood protection through evaluation, maintenance, and improvements of the existing system of pumps, drains, channels, and levees. Improvement alternatives and evaluation methods should consider requirements for FEMA certification when feasible. The top priority is to ensure funding is adequate to maintain the existing timber-reinforced berm at design elevation.
- Participate in planning to evaluate improvements to the levee to maintain 100-year protection with Sea Level Rise. This planning may be informed by the Marin Bay Waterfront Adaptation Vulnerability Evaluation (BAYWAVE) effort anticipated to conclude in 2017.

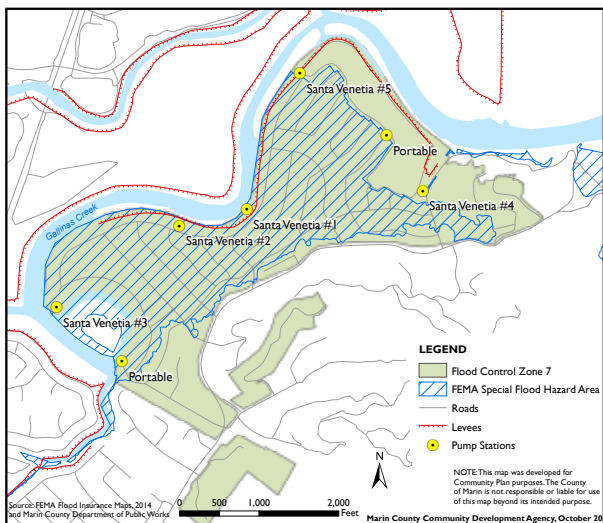


Figure 23. Flood Control Zone 7 and FEMA Flood Risk Map

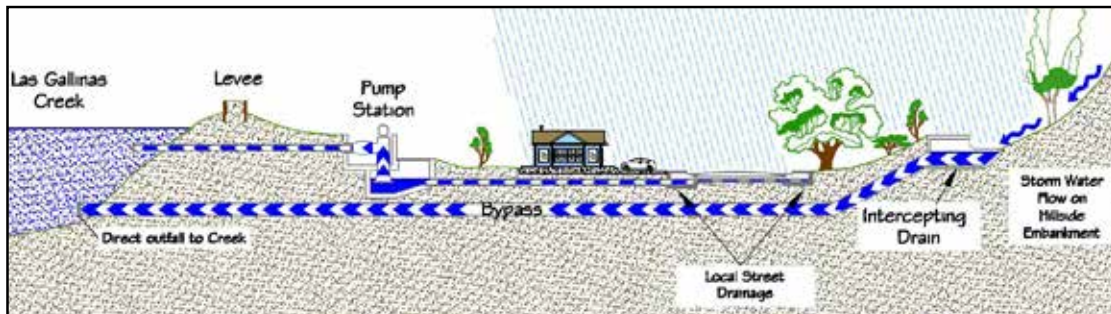


Figure 24. Zone 7 Flood Control Facilities

Marin County DPW

## Marin County Watershed Program

Historically, environmental impacts were not necessarily a primary consideration in the development and implementation of flood control measures. However, in 2008, the Board of Supervisors established an innovative approach to integrating flood protection and environmental restoration known as the Marin County Watershed Program. As part of the Watershed Program, Department of Public Works staff work with a variety of public and private partners, with the goal of both protecting and enhancing the County's seven watershed program areas.

As shown in Figure 25, Santa Venetia is located within the Gallinas Creek Watershed. Within this area, Watershed Program staff work in partnership with Flood Control Zones 6 and 7 and other public agencies and stakeholder committees, including the City of San Rafael and Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District, to look for opportunities to:

- Develop cost effective solutions to reduce flooding damage
- Improve navigational access to Gallinas Creek
- Protect, enhance, and restore creek and wetland habitat
- Improve water quality
- Increase resiliency to sea level rise
- Allow for beneficial reuse of dredged material
- Reduce the ecological impact of flood maintenance activities.

To date, the Watershed Program has undertaken a number of projects and modelling efforts which will be used in conjunction with previous studies to develop and analyze a range of measures to improve the level of flood protection in Santa Venetia. (See Figure 26). The program will also evaluate the feasibility, sequencing, estimated costs and funding strategies of recommended measures, and consider next steps.

Over the long term, the Gallinas Watershed Program is designed to develop a comprehensive and integrated flood protection and habitat restoration plan for the

watershed. It is anticipated that some type of assessment district or other revenue measures will ultimately be required to implement the plan. However, the development of multi-benefit projects will ensure that priority projects are eligible for the broadest range of funding at the State and Federal levels. Perhaps more importantly, the information and analysis developed throughout the process is intended to build future community support and confidence that the program has identified the most practical, sustainable, and cost-effective projects that provide both flood protection benefits and habitat enhancements for the community of Santa Venetia.



Figure 25. Gallinas Creek Watershed Map

Marin County DPW

### ***Santa Venetia Storm Drain Analysis***

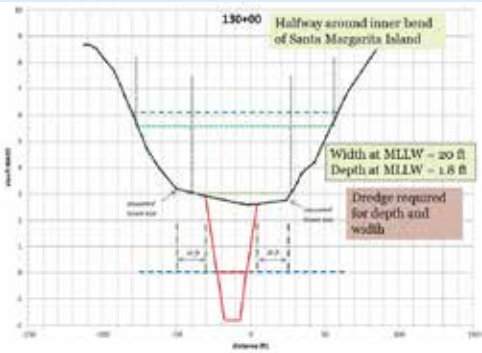
Development of a hydraulic model of the entire Santa Venetia drainage system to inform decisions on future drainage, flood control and storm water pollution control projects within Flood Control Zone 7.



*Storm drain on Vendola Drive*

### ***Gallinas Creek Geomorphic Dredge Assessment***

Study of sedimentation processes in lower Gallinas Creek, including potential dredging alternatives that better utilize natural tidal processes to reduce the extent, frequency, and costs of dredging.



*Cross section of Gallinas Creek  
Marin County DPW*

### ***McInnis Marsh Restoration***

Feasibility study of restoration of up to 200 acres of tidal and transitional marsh with the goal of restoring ecosystem functions, providing critical habitat, allowing for beneficial reuse of dredge spoils and improving resiliency to sea level rise.



*McInnis Marsh north of Gallinas Creek*

Figure 26. Gallinas Watershed Program – Selected Projects



## Gallinas Creek Dredging

Gallinas Creek forms the northern boundary of Santa Venetia. Over 100 properties in the community have frontage on this waterway and water access for boating and recreational purposes is highly valued by Santa Venetia residents. Historically, Gallinas Creek was part of an extensive tidal slough system and provided navigable access upstream. However, the filling of tidal marshes over the years has resulted in increased sedimentation and a loss of depth for boating access.

In the 1960's, the Santa Venetia County Service Area (CSA) #6 was formed to dredge the Gallinas creek channel for navigation and flood protection purposes. Funds for dredging are raised by collecting annual property taxes from nearly 500 parcels in the vicinity of the creek (see Figure 27). The creek has been dredged four times since the CSA was formed (1966, 1973, 1981, and 1994). However, by 2009, the estimated costs for additional dredging (including permitting and disposal costs) greatly exceeded available funds.

Gallinas Creek is an important community asset for both navigation and flood protection. As an element of the Gallinas Watershed Program, Department of Public Works staff, in consultation with the Board of CSA #6, continue to look for feasible and cost effective

alternatives to improve navigation and creek access for Santa Venetia residents. However, these efforts are complicated by factors such as funding limitations, environmental regulatory and permitting requirements, and property boundary disputes within the creek channel.

In the future, the residents of Santa Venetia and property owners within CSA #6 in particular, will provide important input on the development of dredging alternatives that maximize navigation, creek access and flood protection within the constraints of available funding.

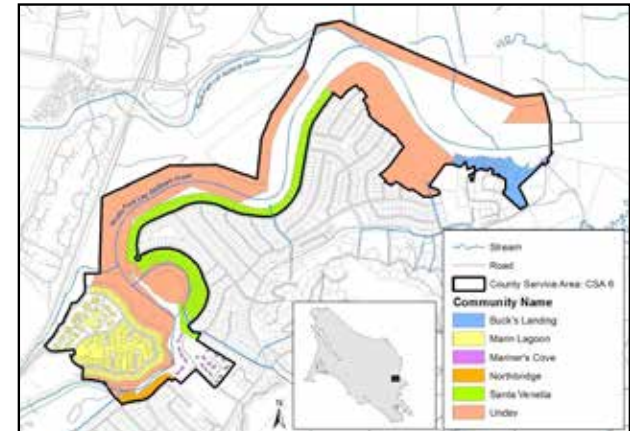


Figure 27. County Service Area # 6  
Marin County DPW

### Boat Docks in Santa Venetia

Many of the properties in Santa Venetia with frontage on Gallinas Creek are developed with boat docks of varying size and age. In recent years, regulations and permitting requirements for the replacement and expansion of existing docks and the construction of new docks have become more complex and costly due to the sensitive nature of the wetland and tideland areas within which docks are located. In addition to the permitting requirements of the Marin County Community Development Agency and Department of Public Works, other state and federal agencies involved in reviewing and permitting new or modified docks include

the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. Property owners considering modifying or replacing an existing dock or constructing a new dock should contact the Marin County Community Development Agency for information about permitting requirements and fees. Additional information on the subject can also be found in the report "Boat Docks in Santa Venetia" prepared by the Gallinas Watershed Council, which is available on the Watershed Council website:

[www.gallinaswatershed.org](http://www.gallinaswatershed.org)

### FEMA and Structures in Flood Zones

Standard homeowners insurance does not cover flooding. In 1968, Congress created the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to provide financial protection for property owners by offering flood insurance to home and business owners in participating NFIP communities. The NFIP is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is also responsible for determining flood insurance rates and preparing flood maps, known as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), that identify the location of high-risk, moderate-to-low risk, and undetermined risk areas. FEMA frequently updates FIRMs to reflect changing conditions and was in the process of issuing revised FIRMs for Marin County during preparation of this community plan.

Under the NFIP program, flood insurance requirements and rates depend on the level of flood risk. Areas that are determined to have at least a one in four chance of flooding during a 30 year period are defined as “high risk”. Federally regulated or insured mortgage lenders are mandated to require flood insurance on properties in areas of high risk. Therefore, property owners in these areas

with a federally insured mortgage must buy flood insurance. The costs of flood insurance are determined by FEMA based on factors such as elevation and building construction. In 2013, Marin County initiated participation in the NFIP’s Community Rating System, a voluntary program intended to reduce flood insurance premiums in communities that demonstrate that they exceed NFIP minimum floodplain management standards. Once approved by FEMA, it is expected that this effort may reduce flood insurance premiums directly to homeowners throughout the County by up to 10 percent by the end of 2015. In addition, property owners can impact the rates they pay by building in compliance with FEMA requirements.

As shown in Figure 23, a significant portion of Santa Venetia is located in a high risk area. This includes most of the properties within Flood Control Zone 7. Within high risk areas, property owners who are building a new structure must comply with FEMA requirements and build such that the finished floor level of the structure is at or above the designated base flood elevation (BFE) for the area in which it is located. Many homes in Santa Venetia were constructed in the

1950’s and 60’s, prior to current building requirements.

However, owners of existing structures may also be able to take advantage of reduced insurance rates if they raise their home to the same elevation required for new construction. Properties within designated high risk areas in Santa Venetia are generally governed by “conventional” zoning (such as R-1 and R-1:B-2), where specific height, setback and floor area ratio limits apply (see Land Use Chapter for more information on zoning). Due to the elevation of existing grade in Santa Venetia’s flood zone in relation to the BFE, most homes (including two-story structures) could be raised to meet FEMA requirements without exceeding the applicable 30 foot height limit. To encourage homeowners to elevate structures, the County has also adopted development code provisions that eliminate the need for floor area ratio (FAR) and yard setback variance approval in cases where an existing home is being raised up to 18 inches above the BFE. More detailed information regarding County and federal building requirements may be obtained from the Community Development Agency.

Figure 28. FEMA and Structures in Flood Zones

## Concepts for consideration

Flood protection is a complicated issue involving multiple jurisdictions and complex technical, financial, and legal considerations. As a result, guidance on specific flood control measures is beyond the scope of a community plan. However, during the plan preparation process, ideas were raised by the community that deserve further consideration. The feasibility and funding sources for these concepts have not been fully determined. Instead, the ideas are offered for further exploration as part of on-going community discussions about the future of flood protection in Santa Venetia.

### Risk Management Funding Pool

Explore the concept of establishing a “risk management pool” or “geologic hazard abatement district” which utilizes funds for infrastructure improvements rather than insurance premiums.

### Funding for Home Elevation

Pursue potential funding sources to assist property owners to elevate homes for compliance with FEMA requirements.

### Threatened Properties

Consider the possibility of using available funds to purchase properties from willing sellers in highly threatened areas where protective measure are not cost-effective.

### Levee Easements

Explore options for securing easements

along the Santa Venetia levee (to allow Flood District maintenance and construction access) including potentially requiring the dedication of easements in conjunction with new construction or major remodels on properties bordering the levee.

### “Adopt-a-Drain” Program

Consider the development of an “Adopt-a-Drain” program where residents can volunteer to assist in the maintenance of one or more storm drains in their neighborhood.

## Sea Level Rise

The Marin Countywide Plan acknowledges the need to address and adapt to the various aspects of climate change. As a bayfront community, the issue of sea level rise is of particular interest and concern to the residents of Santa Venetia. Over time, sea level rise resulting from climate change is expected to lead to increased erosion, loss of wetlands, more frequent flooding and the permanent or periodic inundation of low-lying areas.

Sea level rise projections vary. However, global models indicate that California may see up to a 55-inch rise in sea level within this century given the expected rise in temperatures around the world. While it is impossible to predict exactly when the average high tides will reach a certain level, the projected ranges in Figure 29 provide official guidance for adaptation



Levee along Gallinas Creek in Santa Venetia  
Marin County CDA

planning in California (National Research Council, 2012). Figure 30 shows areas that may be impacted by scenarios of 10, 20, 40, and 80 inches of sea level rise. 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). The sea level rise model incorporates ground elevation, accounting for the protective effect of existing levees.

Portions of North San Pedro Road near and within China Camp State Park flood during extreme high tides (King Tides) and storms, and flooding will only worsen with rising sea levels. Marshes and low-lying areas along the shore of Gallinas Creek and San Pablo Bay may be permanently inundated



by 10 to 20 inches of sea level rise (shown in red and orange). North San Pedro Road blocks upland migration of the marsh. The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) is monitoring the marsh in an effort to predict whether sedimentation rates will keep pace with rising waters. If not, marsh habitat will likely be drowned, gradually converting to mudflats.

A large portion of Santa Venetia's homes and roads north of Adrian Way may be flooded by 40 inches of sea level rise (shown in yellow), and additional neighborhood areas north of North San Pedro Road may be flooded by 80 inches of sea level rise (shown in green). Disruptions to access roads 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. According to the

NRC projections, these types of impacts may not occur until the later part of this century.

In the near term however, the major concern is "extreme events" where more intense, more frequent, and longer-lasting periods of precipitation and greater wind speeds occur in tandem with extreme high tides to result in unusually severe flooding. In low-lying areas such as Santa Venetia, 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.

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 based on local conditions.

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

Figure 29. **Projected Range of Sea Level Rise**  
National Research Council projections for SF region, 2012



*High tide at the mouth of Gallinas Creek*  
Marin County DPW



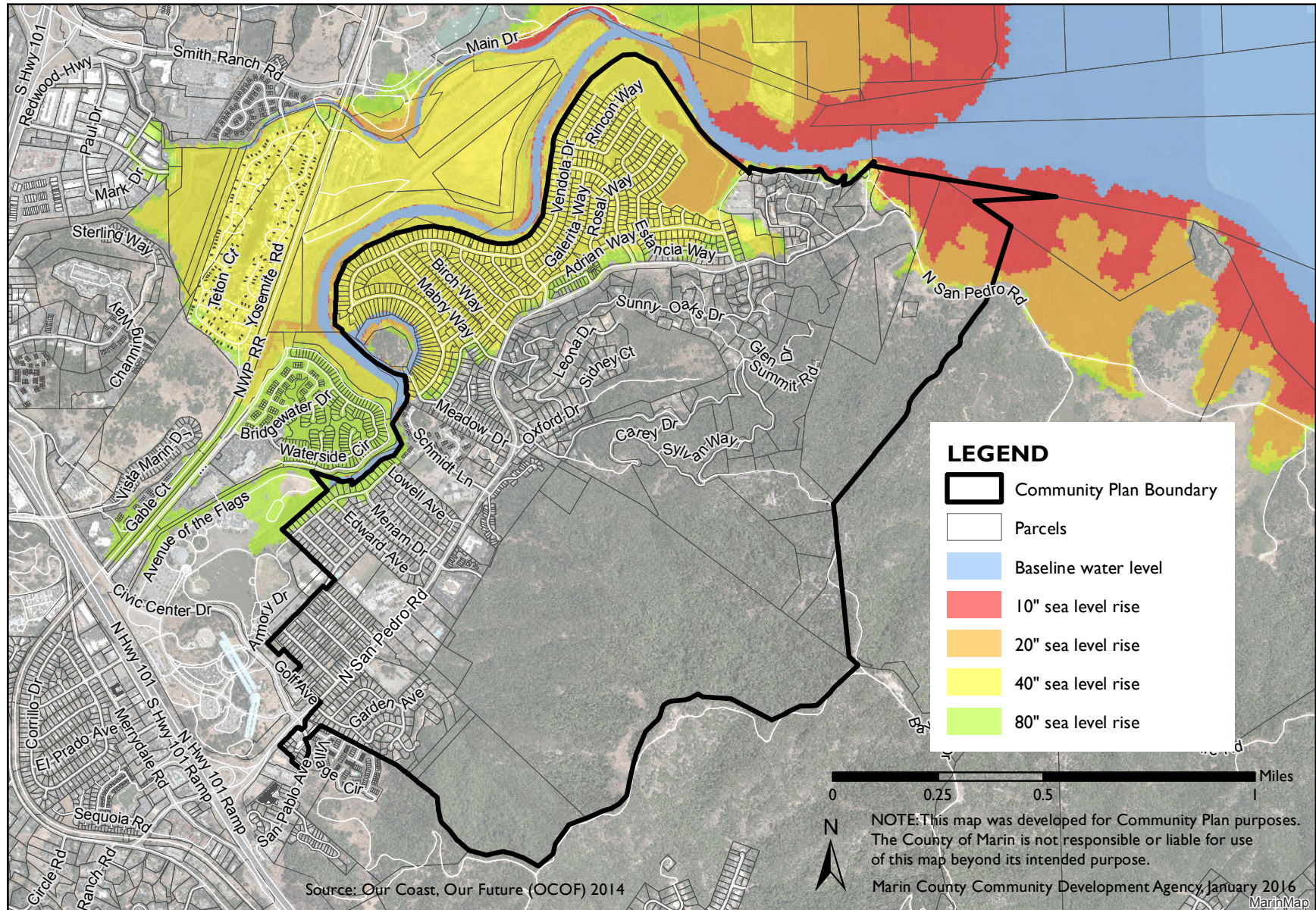


Figure 30. Areas Predicted to Flood from Sea Level Rise



## Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategies

### Coastal armoring

Linear coastal protection 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

Utilizing wetlands to absorb floods, slow erosion, and provide habitat.

### Floodable development

Designing structures to withstand flooding or temporarily retain storm water.

### Managed retreat

Planned abandonment of threatened areas.

Figure 31. Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategies



High tides approach the top of the existing levee in 2006

In general, strategies for addressing sea level rise fall into a number of broad categories, some of which are shown in Figure 31.

Each of these strategies has advantages and disadvantages and may require significant trade-offs. For example, coastal armoring may be effective in certain cases but is typically very expensive and ecologically damaging. Elevating development may decrease the likelihood of flooding in the short term but has implications for the visual character of a neighborhood. Whether a particular approach may be suitable for Santa Venetia would depend on costs, environmental factors, feasibility, and other considerations.

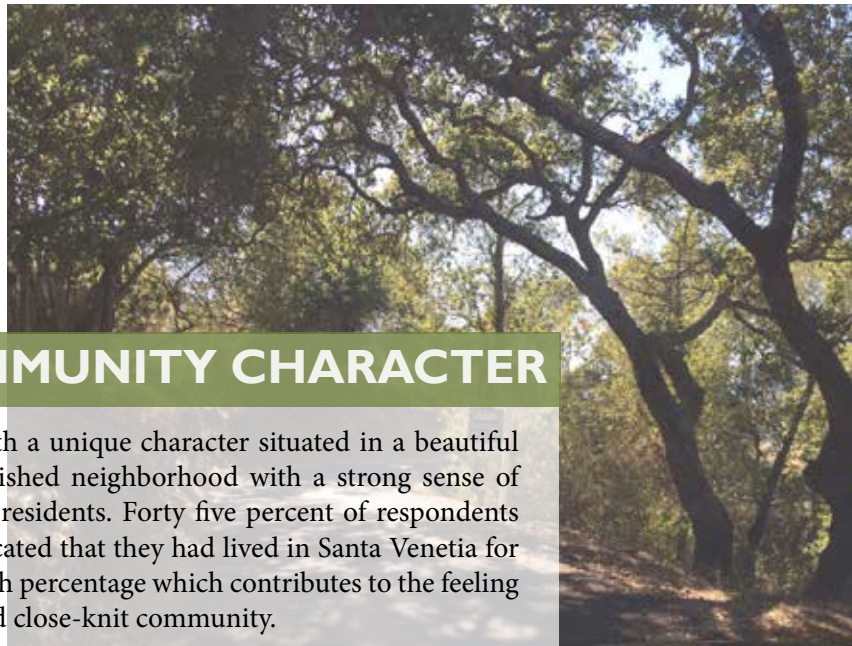
As noted previously, a goal of the Flood Control District and Gallinas Watershed Program is to increase Santa Venetia's resiliency to sea level rise through increased flood protection, which will involve further consideration of the trade-offs associated with additional or improved coastal armoring (i.e., Santa Venetia's existing levee system). Existing and historic marshland areas bordering the community may also offer a good opportunity to utilize the "living shoreline" approach (as is being considered in the McInnis Marsh Restoration project). Other possible approaches such as managed retreat have major implications for factors such as 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. Given the vulnerability of Santa Venetia to flooding and sea level rise in particular, there is strong support among residents for a future analysis and planning effort that builds on the work of the Gallinas Watershed Program and considers the specific implications of sea level rise on the Santa Venetia community including:

- *Assessing local conditions and evaluating potential risks to Santa Venetia's buildings, infrastructure, and natural resources.*
- *Identifying locally relevant adaptation strategies to reduce and manage risks.*
- *Considering the opportunities and constraints associated with each strategy as well as potential costs and feasibility.*





## LAND USE & COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Santa Venetia is a community with a unique character situated in a beautiful natural setting. It is a well-established neighborhood with a strong sense of community and many long term residents. Forty five percent of respondents in a 2011 community survey indicated that they had lived in Santa Venetia for 20 years or more, an unusually high percentage which contributes to the feeling that Santa Venetia is a friendly and close-knit community.

# Chapter 5: Land Use & Community Character

Santa Venetia encompasses several distinct neighborhoods and does not necessarily have a cohesive architectural style. However the various natural features surrounding it form scenic borders that give Santa Venetia a strong sense of place. The entire community also shares a single “entry point” on North San Pedro Road (just east of Civic Center Drive) which further enforces the sense of entering a distinct community. Perhaps more importantly, the community seems to inspire appreciation and pride, as demonstrated by the resident input at community workshops and the community description developed by community plan advisory committee members (see Figure 33).



Figure 32. “What do you love about Santa Venetia?”

## ***Santa Venetia...as described by its residents***

Santa Venetia is loved by its residents for its rural character and its sense of neighborliness. We are home to an ethnically diverse population and a broad mix of ages. Santa Venetia is a relatively affordable community, which makes it attractive to seniors and young families. We are surrounded by a host of natural resources that we treasure: China Camp State Park, the marsh, Santa Margarita Island, San Pedro Mountain, and Lagoon Park at the Civic Center. Some of these open spaces, such as Santa Margarita Island and “Heron Hill” have been preserved through the diligent efforts of neighbors. Wildlife thrives in pockets of the neighborhood, including owls, herons, and coyotes. The marsh is home to the endangered California clapper rail and other shore birds and the occasional otter is sighted in Gallinas Creek. We also value our local family-owned and operated businesses such as the Santa Venetia Market, Rocky’s Quality Meats, and Chalet Basque. Being able to shop and dine locally contributes to our “village” atmosphere. Monthly community meetings and various social events hosted by our active neighborhood group, the Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association (SVNA), give residents a forum for meeting and discussing local issues of interest. Our small but vibrant neighborhood is a close-knit, caring community.

- Santa Venetia Community Plan Advisory Committee

Figure 33. Santa Venetia as Described by its Residents



Land Use

The developed portion of Santa Venetia is predominantly residential in character. The community includes approximately 1,660 dwelling units, of which 90 percent are single family residences. As shown in Figure 35, over half of the land area within the community is designated for residential uses. Many homes in Santa Venetia were developed in the 1940’s and 50’s during the post-World War II “housing boom”, when creation of the Federal Housing Authority (1934) and the G.I. Bill (1941) helped to finance housing and spur residential development. In all, 18 residential subdivisions containing over 750 lots were created between 1939 and 1958, mostly located in the relatively level areas north of North San Pedro Road. Within these subdivisions, homes were generally constructed around the same time and are similar in size and style. In contrast, some of the hillside areas to the south of North San Pedro Road were subdivided in the 1970’s or later. Here, the parcels tend to be larger and

more irregularly shaped, and in some cases, have been developed with larger homes.

Although primarily residential, Santa Venetia does contain three small commercial areas along North San Pedro Road at the Civic Center Drive/San Pablo Road, Oxford Drive, and Mabry Way intersections. Existing businesses include a small market, gas station, convenience store and several eating establishments. The community also supports a relatively large number of educational and religious uses, including three schools, four churches, and the Osher Marin Jewish Community Center, an organization that provides religious, educational and recreational uses on a single campus.

Land use regulation in Santa Venetia, as with the rest of Marin County, is determined primarily by the land use designations specified for each property in the Marin Countywide Plan, as well

as the governing zoning district (see Figures 36 and 37). 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 and development standards 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 above, land use and zoning designations in Santa Venetia are primarily residential, although limited areas are also designated for retail, office, public facilities (such as schools), and even recreational uses. No changes to existing zoning or land use designations are proposed as part of this plan. Detailed descriptions of land use designations and zoning development standards and allowed uses can be found in the Marin Countywide Plan and Development Code (Title 22 of Marin County Code).

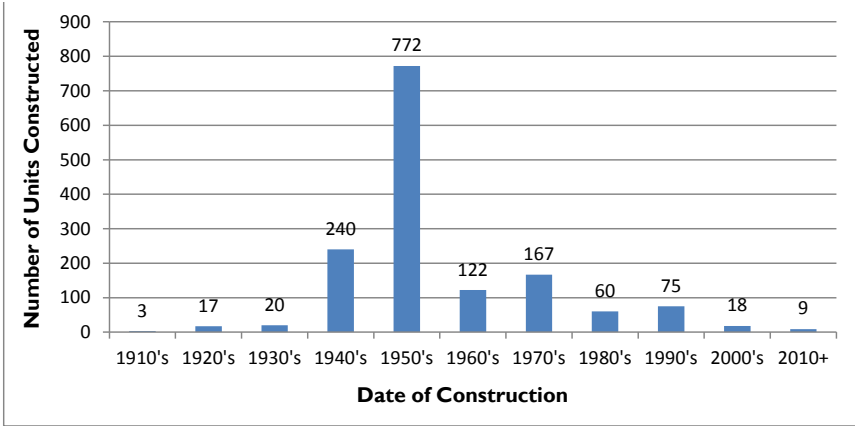


Figure 34. Dates of Home Construction

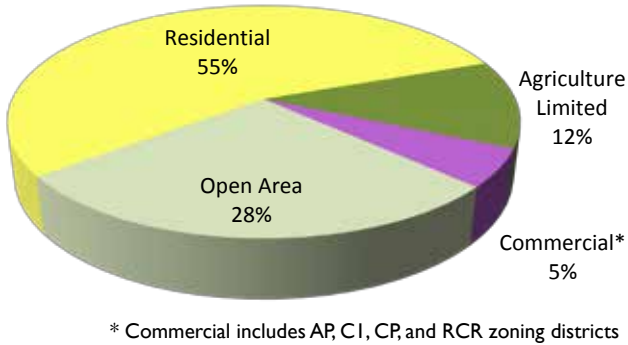


Figure 35. Percent of Land in Various Zoning Categories



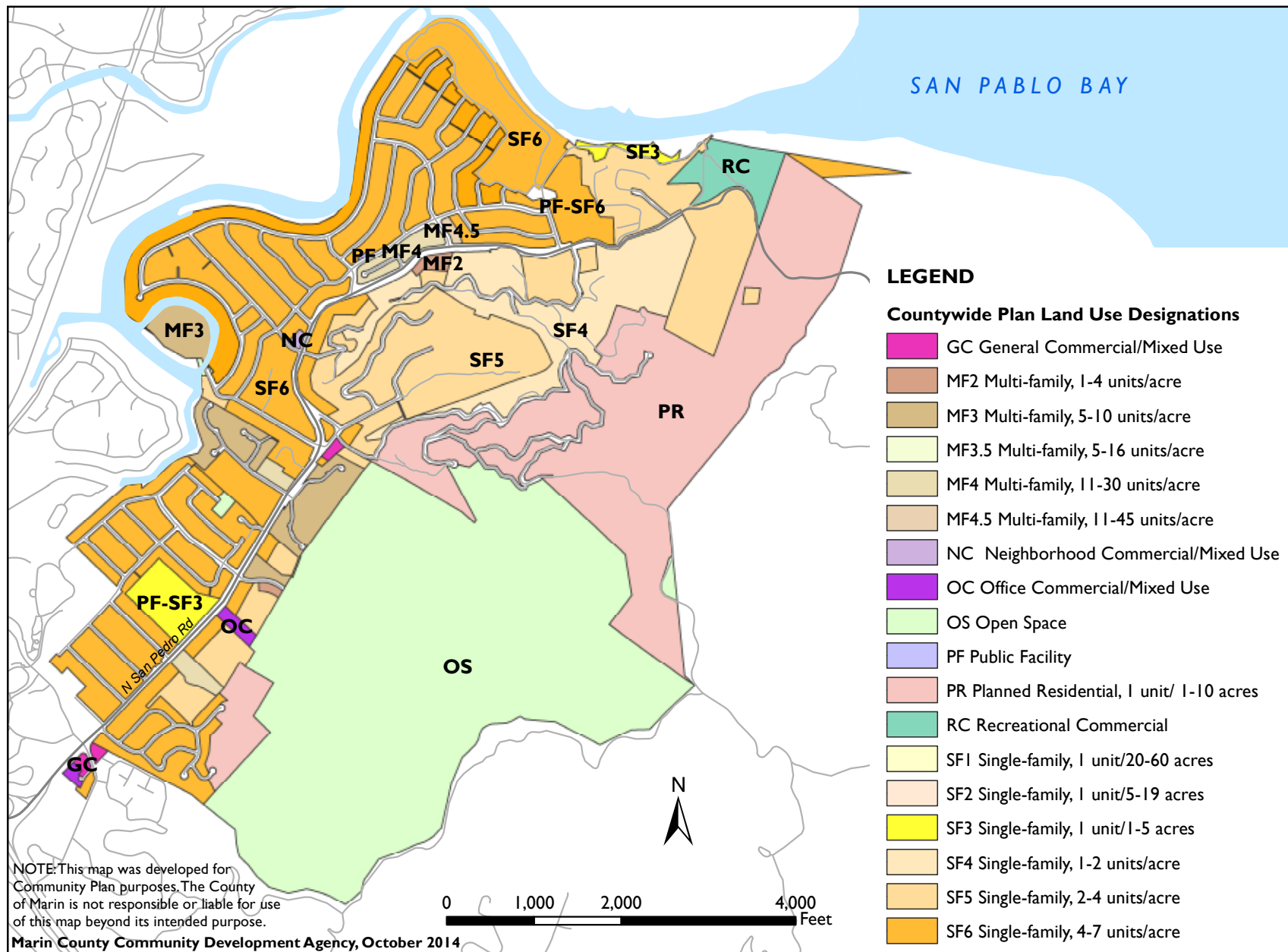


Figure 36. Countywide Plan Land Use Designations

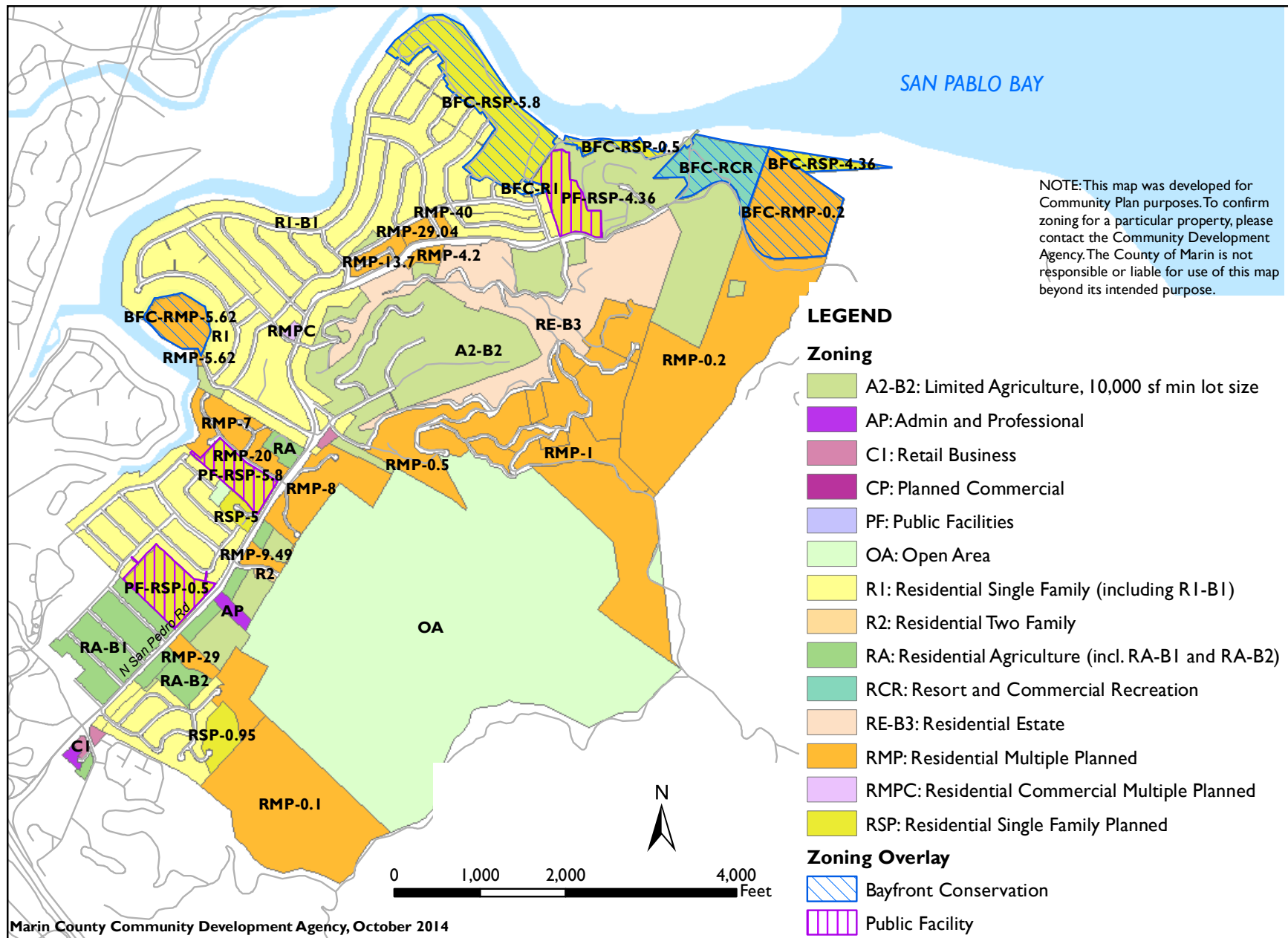


Figure 37. Zoning Map

## Future Development

Much of Santa Venetia was built out by the 1980's and the potential for additional development in the community is limited. One helpful measure for assessing future development potential is a community's inventory of vacant land. Of the approximately 1,600 parcels within Santa Venetia, County Assessor's records indicate that only 57 parcels (approximately 3.5 percent) are currently vacant, which represents less than 10 percent of the community plan area. In addition, many of these properties may be difficult to develop due to legal considerations or constraints related to physical access and/or the availability of water or sewer service, further reducing the extent of potential development.

A review of the vacant land inventory in Santa Venetia identified 13 vacant properties which could potentially be subdivided for residential development. Located throughout the community, they range in size from approximately one to 30 acres. Due to varying zoning requirements, site topography, and environmental constraints, it is difficult to provide an accurate estimate of the number of units that could realistically be proposed on these properties. However, even using conservative assumptions, it is expected that potential subdivision of vacant land would increase the total number of residential units in Santa Venetia by less than five percent. In addition, any proposals to subdivide an existing vacant property would be subject to

County review and public input as part of a subdivision application, environmental review and potentially other discretionary review processes.

## Key Properties

Although Santa Venetia's character and land use pattern has remained fairly constant over the past few decades, there are several properties in the community, both vacant and developed, that have been the subject of heightened community interest and concern over the years, due to their size or potential to affect surrounding neighborhoods. Information regarding the location and development characteristics of three of the most frequently cited sites of community interest is provided below.

### Oxford Valley

*70 Oxford Drive (APN 180-261-08)*

The property known as "Oxford Valley" is a 27.8 acre vacant parcel located at the terminus of Oxford Drive. Formerly the property and residence of Mabry McMahon, Santa Venetia's original developer, the site still contains the foundations of the original McMahon house. The parcel is characterized by moderately sloping wooded hillsides rising from the valley floor and is surrounded by existing low density residential development. Over the years, the site has been the subject of several

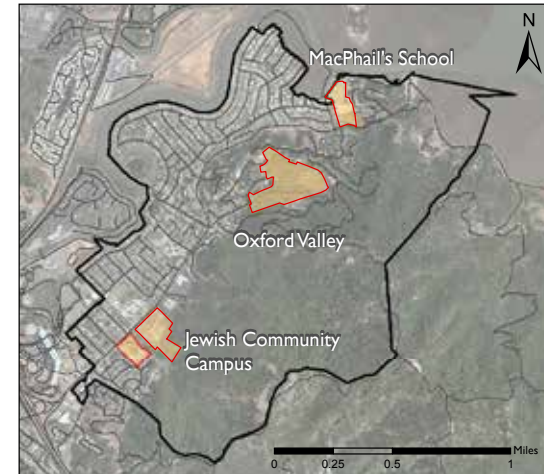


Figure 38. Location of Key Properties

potential development proposals including a residential subdivision, a wildlife care and education center, and a private middle school. Past input from the community regarding potential development of this property has generally focused on protecting trees and natural resources and minimizing visual, noise, light and traffic impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

### Density Considerations:

- Countywide Plan Designation: SF5 (Single Family Residential, 2-4 units per acre)
- Zoning: A-2:B-2 (Limited Agricultural and Residential, 10,000 square foot minimum lot size)



- Hillside Subdivision Design (approximate minimum lot area based on slope):
  - 20% slope - 15,000 square feet (1/3 acre)
  - 30% slope - 30,000 square feet (2/3 acre)
  - >40% slope - 45,000 square feet (1 acre)
- Density on Sensitive Sites: maximum density on property with sensitive habitat (stream conservation and wetland conservation areas) shall be calculated at lowest end of CWP density range (i.e. 2 units per acre).
- Development Code Section 22.82.025 (Density Range): “Residential densities shall be construed as maximums, but not entitlements. For purposes of subdivision, the maximum allowable density shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.”

#### **Potential Site Development Constraints:**

- Streams
- Wetlands and seeps
- Oak woodlands
- Purple needlegrass (California native grasslands)
- Archaeological sensitivity (designated as “high”)
- Steep slopes (exceeding 40 percent)

#### **Community preferences:**

- Any new roads or access improvements should follow the least environmentally

damaging route, with particular emphasis on avoiding grading on steep slopes, Stream Conservation Areas and tree removal.

- The main stream corridor traversing Oxford Valley is valued by residents as a unique wildlife corridor in Santa Venetia that provides access to water for a variety of animal species and should be avoided. The fencing off of stream and wetland areas on the property is discouraged.
- The site may contain cultural resources which should be avoided.

### **Key Countywide Plan Policies**

**Streams** – Locate development to comply with required Stream Conservation Area setbacks (100 feet from the top of bank) and preserve and enhance natural creek channels on the property (BIO-4.1).

**Wetlands** – Require development to protect wetlands and adjacent upland habitat by providing a minimum development setback of 100 feet (see BIO-3.1).

**Oak Woodlands** – Maximize protection of oak woodlands and large native trees (see BIO-1.3).

**Special-status Species** – Protect sensitive biological resources including special-status animal and plant species through careful environmental review of proposed development (see BIO-1.1).

**Geologic Hazards** – Restrict development in areas identified as having geologic hazards, including any unstable slopes or portions of the property exceeding 40 percent slopes (see EH-2.1).

**Storm Water Drainage** – In conjunction with development, require preparation of a stormwater drainage and flood protection plan encompassing the entire site (see EH-3.f and WR-2.3). The effect of upstream development (such as increased impervious surfaces and altered drainage patterns) on the potential for flooding low-lying areas should be considered (see EH-3.p).

**Archeological Resources** – Protect known archeological resources and ensure that any resources discovered during construction are protected (see HAR-1.1 and 1.3).

**Traffic** – Require any proposed development to meet Countywide Plan traffic standards; any needed transportation improvements shall be in place before or concurrent with new development (see TR-1.1 and 1.5).

**Community Character** – New development shall respect environmental constraints and the character of the surrounding neighborhood and avoid tree-cutting and grading (see DES-4.1 and DES-4.c).

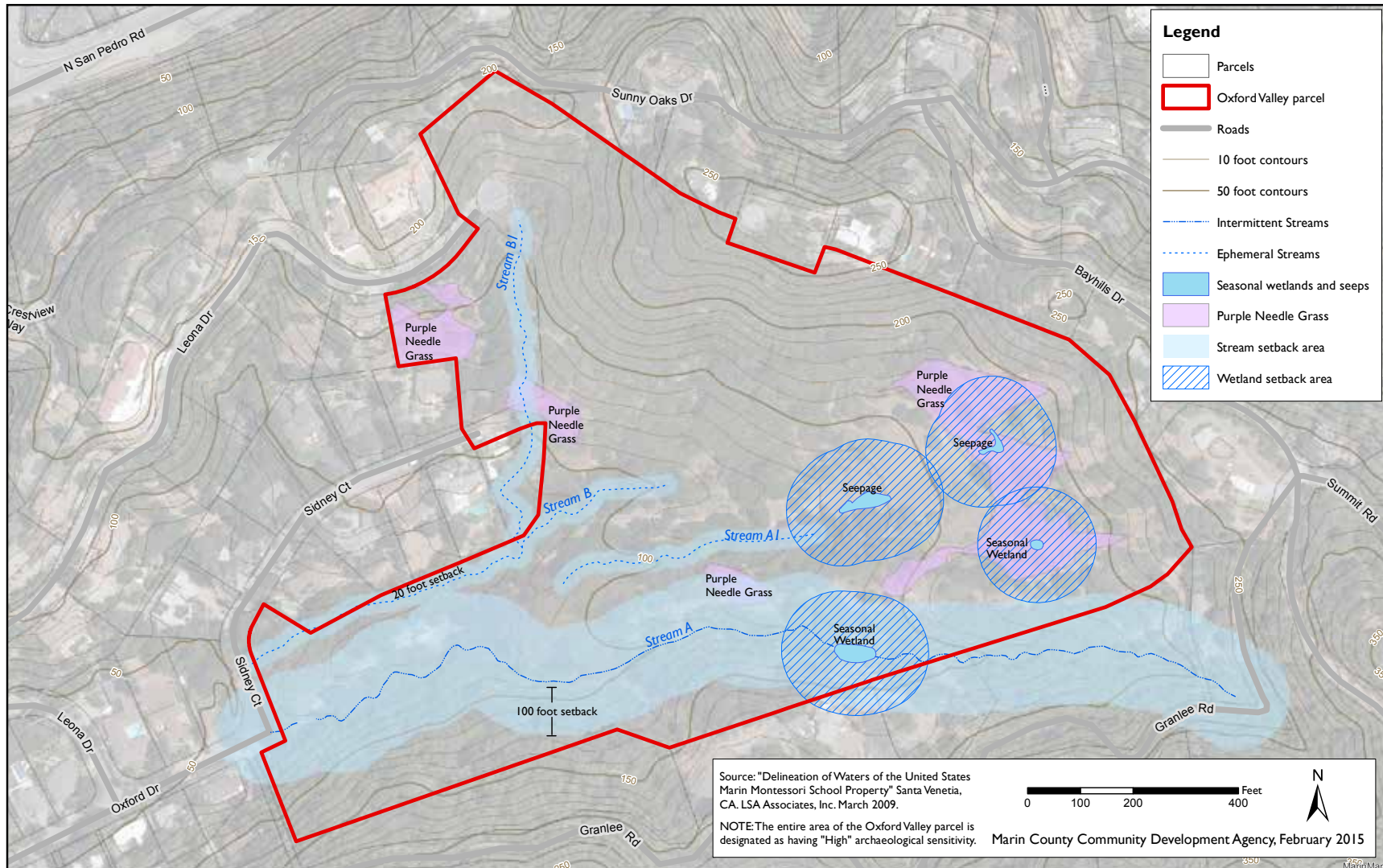


Figure 39. Oxford Valley Constraints

### **Marin Jewish Community Campus**

*170, 180 & 200 North San Pedro Road  
(APNs 180-281-12, 20, 21, 25, 34, 35 and 179-321-36,37)*

The Marin Jewish Community Campus (MJCC) is a non-profit community organization which incorporates the Congregation Rodef Sholom, the Brandeis Hillel Day School, and the Osher Marin JCC recreational/educational facility on an approximately 19 acre campus. The use has existed on the site, in some form, since the early 1960's but was expanded several times since then, most notably in the late 1980's, when most of the structures currently on the site were constructed. Residents have expressed concerns regarding traffic and parking impacts associated with the JCC, which can be exacerbated by its location directly opposite Venetia Valley School. Recently, the MJCC began working in coordination with the San Rafael School District as part of a voluntary effort to reduce traffic congestion by staggering start times at Venetia Valley and Brandeis Hillel Day School. Based on resident feedback, these efforts have improved traffic conditions in the area. Accordingly, the community plan includes a policy to encourage the continuation of this and similar efforts by organizations such as the MJCC as well as public and private schools to voluntarily cooperate on joint efforts to reduce their traffic and parking impacts on the surrounding community.

During preparation of the community plan, representatives from the MJCC indicated that they are in the process of developing a comprehensive long term plan for the campus. As described below, the MJCC properties are currently governed by a diverse mix of Countywide Plan designations and zoning districts which are not consistent with existing uses on the site. Accordingly, MJCC representatives requested that the community plan include language supporting the future rezoning of the properties to a "planned district" to facilitate future campus planning. The MJCC is a unique asset in Santa Venetia which is valued by community residents. However, there was a consensus among community plan advisory committee members that it would be more appropriate to consider the desirability of rezoning the property at the time specific development is proposed. Thus, the community plan does not explicitly recommend nor oppose the suggested rezoning. However, it does include a policy recommending consideration of a comprehensive planning approach to all future development and redevelopment in Santa Venetia, particularly on larger and multi-parcel properties such as the MJCC, including an applicant-initiated community outreach component.

### **Density Considerations:**

- Countywide Plan Designation: (multiple designations apply):
  - SF5 (Single Family Residential, 2-4 units per acre)
  - SF6 (Single Family Residential, 4-7 units per acre)
  - OC (Office Commercial/Mixed Use)
  - PR/RUG overlay (Planned Residential, 1 unit per 1-10 acres with Ridge and Upland Greenbelt Overlay)
- Zoning (multiple districts apply):
  - A-2:B-2 (Limited Agriculture, 10,000 sqft. minimum lot size)
  - R-A (Residential, Agricultural, 7,500 sqft. minimum lot size)
  - R-A: B-1 (Residential, Agricultural, 6,000 sqft. minimum lot size)
  - R-A: B-2 (Residential, Agricultural, 10,000 sqft. minimum lot size)
  - AP (Administrative and Professional Office)
  - RMP-1 (Residential Multi-family Planned District, 1 unit per acre)
- Requirements in RUG (Ridge and Upland Greenbelt) Overlay:
  - Density for residential subdivisions within the RUG are calculated at



the lowest end of the applicable Countywide Plan designation range (i.e. 1 unit per 10 acres).

- No development within 300 feet horizontally and 100 feet vertically of visually prominent ridgelines (whichever is more restrictive) and a height limit of 18 feet if no suitable building sites exist outside of the ridge area.

#### Potential Site Development Constraints:

- Oak woodlands
- Steep slopes (upper portions of property)
- Stream setbacks
- Archeological sensitivity

#### Community preferences:

- Minimize traffic impacts on the community to the maximum extent possible. As part of long term campus planning, the MJCC should consider creative traffic and parking demand management measures to reduce traffic congestion in the neighborhood, particularly during the “am peak” hour.
- Upper hillside portions of the MJCC site should remain as undeveloped open space
- New or modified exterior lighting on the campus should be designed to minimize impacts on surrounding properties.

### Key Countywide Plan Policies

**Traffic standards** – Require any proposed development to meet Countywide Plan traffic standards (see TR-1.e)

**Transportation Improvements** – Require new development to pay for or improve its fair share of transportation system impacts. Any needed transportation improvements shall be in place before or concurrent with new development (see TR-1.4 and 1.5).

**Alternative Transportation Modes** – Provide opportunities for alternative modes of travel (bicycles, transit, walking) in conjunction with new development (see TR-1.1).

**Oak Woodlands** – Maximize protection of oak woodlands and large native trees (see BIO-1.3).

**Geologic Hazards** – Restrict development in areas identified as having geologic hazards, including any unstable slopes or portions of the property exceeding 40 percent slopes (see EH-2.1).

**Community Character** – The mass and scale of new structures shall respect environmental constraints and the character of the surrounding neighborhood (see DES-4.c).

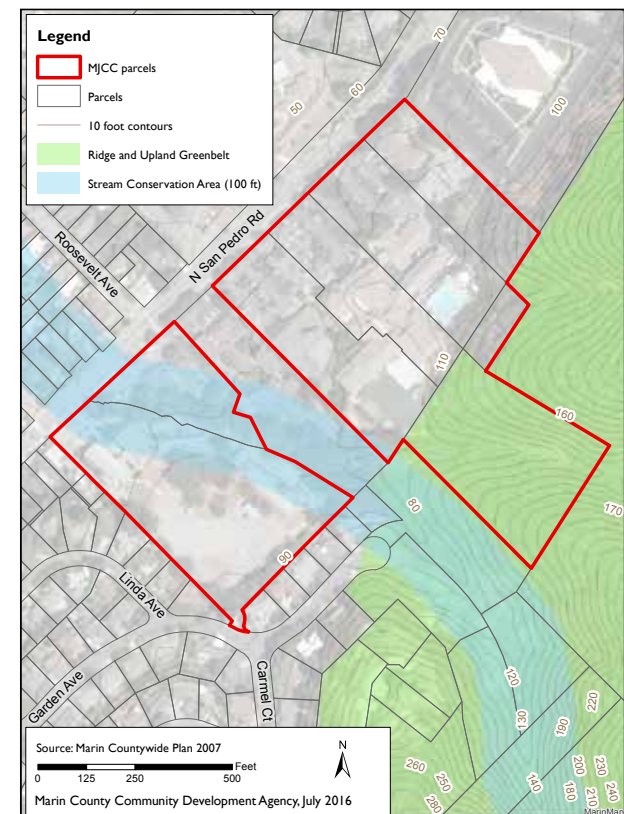


Figure 40. Marin Jewish Community Campus Constraints

**Streams** – Locate development to comply with required Stream Conservation Area setbacks and preserve and enhance natural creek channels on the property (see BIO-4.1).

### MacPhail School Site

1565 Vendola Drive  
(APN 180-151-18 and 180-161-09 & 10)

The MacPhail school site is owned by the San Rafael Elementary School District. The approximately 9.5 acre property was once home to an elementary school and later housed a community arts center, but is not currently in use. The property borders Gallinas Creek to the north and is surrounded by residential neighborhoods to the east, west, and south. Since closure of the facility as an arts center in the early 2000's, the community has supported limiting further development of the site and protecting existing natural features, particularly due to the property's proximity to wetland and tidal marsh areas. It is important to note that under state law, San Rafael City Schools is not subject to County land use regulations as long as the site is used by the school district for educational purposes. However, the County should pursue future opportunities to work cooperatively with San Rafael City Schools to achieve community goals for the site related to recreation and natural resource protection. In addition, community preferences for future development of the site are identified below.

#### Density Considerations:

- Countywide Plan Designation: PF-SF6 (Low Density Residential/Public Facility, 4-7 units per acre)
- Zoning: PF-RSP-4.36 (Public Facility,

Residential Single Family Planned District, 4.36 unit per acre)

- Density on Sensitive Sites: maximum density on property with sensitive habitat (stream conservation and wetland conservation areas) shall be calculated at lowest end of CWP density range (i.e. 4 units per acre).
- Development Code Section 22.82.025 (Density Range): "Residential densities shall be construed as maximums, but not entitlements. For purposes of subdivision, the maximum allowable density shall be determined on a case-by-case basis."

#### Potential Site Development Constraints:

- Wetland (WCA) areas
- Sensitive species
- FEMA flood zone
- Archeological sensitivity

#### Community preferences:

- Support potential future use of the site by an environmentally and/or educationally oriented organization or institution that can take advantage of the site's proximity to marshlands and the bay.
- A mix of uses is preferred over residential-only development.
- Maintain and improve community access

to recreational fields and preserve access across the property to the levy path

### Key Countywide Plan Policies

- **Wetlands** – Require development to protect wetlands and adjacent upland habitat by providing a minimum development setback of 100 feet (see BIO-3.1).
- **Special-status Species** – Protect sensitive biological resources including special-status animal and plant species through careful environmental review of proposed development (see BIO-1.1).
- **Flood Hazards** – Regulate development in flood and inundation areas to ensure that it is resistant to damage from flooding (see EH-3.a)
- **Storm Water Drainage** – In conjunction with development, require preparation of a storm water drainage and flood protection plan encompassing the entire site (see EH-3.f and WR-2.3).
- **Onsite Rainwater Retention** – Encourage the use of on-site rainwater capture, storage, and infiltration for irrigation and other non-potable uses (see PFS-2.m).
- **Archeological Resources** – Protect known archeological resources and ensure that any resources discovered during construction are protected (see HAR-1.1 and 1.3).

- **Traffic** – Require any proposed development to meet Countywide Plan traffic standards; any needed transportation improvements shall be in place before or concurrent with new development (see TR-1.1 and 1.5).
- **Visual Quality** – New development shall protect scenic quality and views of the natural environment, including the bay (see DES-4.1).

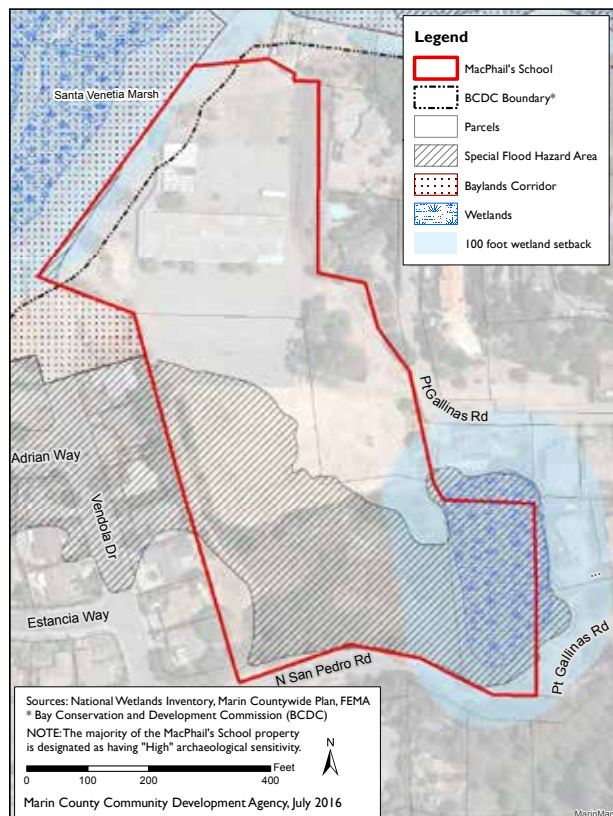


Figure 41. MacPhail School Site Constraints

### Azari Property

294 and 296 North San Pedro Road  
(APN 180-183-05 and -06)

The Azari property includes two privately-owned parcels located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Oxford Drive and Granlee Road. The approximately 0.4 acre former gas station site is now developed with an automotive repair shop, a commercial building and a residential dwelling. Surrounding uses include single family residences to the north and west, a retail commercial development (7-Eleven) to the south, and a church (San Rafael Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses) to the east. The property is governed by a commercial Countywide Plan land use designation (General Commercial/Mixed Use) and zoning district (C1) which are intended primarily for retail businesses together with related compatible uses including residential, with a maximum combined floor area ratio of 35 percent. During preparation of the community plan, a preliminary proposal was submitted for development of twelve live-work units on the site. However, as designed, the proposal significantly exceeded the maximum allowed floor area for a mixed use project. Community feedback in response to this proposal indicates that residents are generally not opposed to redevelopment of the property, but want to ensure that the scale of development is compatible with the neighborhood, that structures maintain

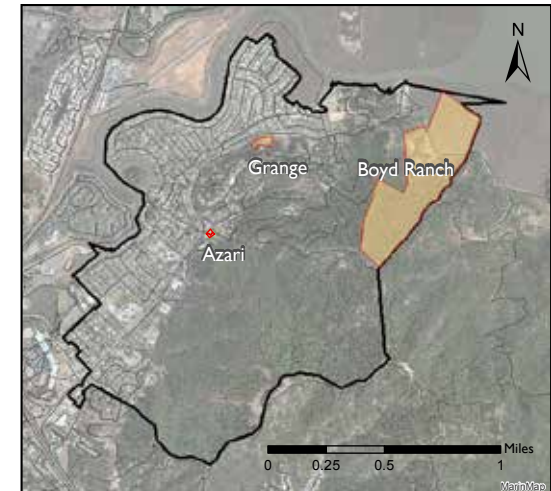


Figure 42. Additional Sites of Community Interest

appropriate setbacks to surrounding property lines, and that adequate on-site parking is provided. In addition, the safety of access to and from the property should be carefully considered given the somewhat unusual configuration of the North San Pedro Road/Oxford Drive intersection.

### Grange Property

North San Pedro Road  
(APN 180-203-16, -20, and -21)

The Grange property includes three privately-owned parcels on the south side of North San Pedro Road in the vicinity of Labrea Way and Adrian Terrace. The approximately 1.5 acre undeveloped site is surrounded by low density residential uses and is characterized by extremely steeply slopes exceeding 70 percent.



The parcels are governed by Multi-family Residential Planned District zoning which designates a maximum potential residential density of up to 4.2 units per acre (RMP-4.2). However, development of this property would be significantly constrained by the site's steep topography and extensive oak woodland vegetation. In addition, it appears that the eastern portion of the property is traversed by an intermittent stream. During preparation of the community plan, preferences expressed by the community include ensuring that development avoids the steepest portions of the site and that adequate sight-distance is provided for access points entering and exiting onto North San Pedro Road.

### **Boyd Ranch**

*680 North San Pedro Road  
(APN 186-010-02, -03, & -19)*

The Boyd Ranch includes almost 100 acres of upland and marshland area adjacent to China Camp State Park at the eastern edge of Santa Venetia. This historic ranch property contains two residences and several ranch buildings and supports a variety of natural features including streams, extensive oak woodlands, wetland areas and tidal marsh baylands. Almost 90 percent of the property is governed by a low density residential Countywide Plan land use designation (Planned Residential, one unit per 1-10 acres) and zoning (Residential Multifamily Planned

District, one unit per 5 acres). In addition, the Ridge and Upland Greenbelt (RUG) overlay and Baylands Corridor designation applicable to much of the ranch would generally limit any further development to the lowest end of the Countywide Plan density range (1 unit per 10 acres). Overall, the community acknowledges and appreciates the current owner's excellent stewardship of this historic property and would be supportive of efforts to preserve the ranch in its largely undeveloped condition, particularly given its unique position between China Camp State Park and the recently acquired Heron Hill Open Space Preserve immediately to the west.

### **Single-family and Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines**

The protection of community character is an important Marin Countywide Plan goal. Specifically, Countywide Plan policies state that new development should be compatible with neighborhood design and scale and should respect a site's natural setting. To promote good design, the County has developed guidelines that address design considerations relevant to both single-family residences and multi-family development. Together, the Marin County Single-family and Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines are intended to establish clear and comprehensive standards for the evaluation of residential projects throughout Marin County. Copies

of both the Single-family and Multi-family Residential Guidelines can be viewed online at the Community Development Agency website.

### **Ridge and Upland Greenbelt Requirements**

Marin is known for its rolling hills and open ridgelines. The Marin Countywide Plan seeks to protect these visually prominent ridge areas with policies that strongly discourage building along ridgelines, particularly in defined Ridge and Upland Greenbelt (RUG) areas. Ridgeline protection requirements are also incorporated into the development standards of the planned zoning districts that govern many hillside areas. As shown in Figure 4 on page 7, (RUG boundary) and Figure 37 (Zoning Map) much of the hillside residential areas of Santa Venetia are located within a designated Ridge and Upland Greenbelt Area or are governed by planned district zoning. In combination, these policies and zoning standards provide strong protections for the visual character of Santa Venetia's ridgeline areas.

In general, development proposed on or near visually prominent ridgelines must be clustered below the ridgeline on the least visually prominent portion of the site. More specifically, new structures should not be sited within 300 feet horizontally, or 100 feet vertically, of visually prominent ridgelines, whichever is more restrictive, unless no other suitable locations are available on the property. Where the size or topography of the site does not allow

## Single-family Residential Design Guidelines

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

## Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines

The Marin County Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines were adopted in 2013 to promote a greater diversity of housing opportunities in Marin while respecting the community's visual and design characteristics. The document contains an extensive series of guidelines addressing design factors such as building proportion, scale, relationship to the public realm, outdoor space, lighting and landscaping. Additional "context-sensitive" guidelines provide more specific criteria for projects based on community character (for example, a residential neighborhood versus a rural town). Finally, criteria for parking placement, street improvements, and pathways are also addressed. Together, these guidelines are intended to address community concerns about the compatibility of multi-family and mixed-use proposals with adjacent neighborhoods. Due to the limited amount of land within Santa Venetia zoned for multi-family residential development, details regarding the Multi-family Residential Design Guidelines have not been included in the community plan.



### 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 the 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. For example, a proposal to build a house over 4,000 square feet in size now requires Design Review approval even when construction otherwise meets all applicable zoning requirements.

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. In the past, residents of Santa Venetia have expressed concerns regarding the development of new or expanded residences in more visible hillside areas. Although it may not be possible to prevent new development in the community, the Design Review process and associated guidelines outlined above provide expanded opportunities for neighbors to review and comment on proposed development and clear criteria against which projects can be evaluated. (See also "Ridge and Upland Greenbelt Requirements" for additional regulations regarding ridgeline development).

placement of a structure outside this restricted area, development must be located where it will be least visible from adjacent properties and view corridors, and a height limit of 18 feet generally applies.

Another important restriction within designated RUG zones relates to density. Within the RUG, Countywide Plan policies require that the maximum residential density allowed for subdivisions must be calculated at the lowest end of the Countywide Plan density range. In the hillside areas of Santa Venetia, this translates to a maximum density of one unit per ten acres in most cases, which

significantly reduces the extent of potential future subdivisions within Santa Venetia's RUG zone. To clarify this requirement, the Community Plan recommends that properties within the RUG be rezoned to reflect the lowest end of the land use density range as required by the Countywide Plan (See Policy LU-2).

### Noise

Santa Venetia is considered by many to be a quiet community. However, during preparation of the Community Plan, some residents expressed concerns regarding the impacts of intermittent "noise pollution" on the neighborhood. The

Countywide Plan establishes "allowable noise levels" for various types of land uses which are used primarily for purposes of planning and siting new development. However, the County has also adopted a noise ordinance which regulates typical noise sources as well as construction noise. Specifically, Chapter 6.70 of Marin County Code prohibits "loud and unnecessary noises" (such as amplified music) between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Noise generated by construction activities is limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and is prohibited on Sundays and holidays. There are further restrictions on



the operation of particularly loud construction-related equipment (such as backhoes and jackhammers), which may be operated only on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The County's noise regulations are enforced by the County Sheriff's office.

It can be challenging to control the type of intermittent noises typically associated with residential uses. However, commercial businesses or other types of uses that are subject to a discretionary County permit (such as a Use Permit) can be reviewed for potential noise effects. To address these cases, the plan recommends a policy to ensure that the hours and operating characteristics of new or expanded uses are regulated to avoid or minimize noise related impacts on adjoining residential uses. In particular, the policy notes that delivery schedules should be reviewed, since noise produced by late-night or very early morning deliveries has been a concern in some cases.

Finally, some residents have suggested that leaf blowers and similar noise-generating equipment should be banned in Santa Venetia. To avoid confusion and ensure consistent enforcement, it is preferable that noise restrictions apply on a countywide basis, rather than to one individual community. If there is widespread support for this suggestion, community members from Santa Venetia could join with residents from other areas in recommending that the Board of Supervisors consider countywide restrictions on the use of leaf-blowers and similar equipment, both to reduce unnecessary noise pollution as well as for purposes of greenhouse gas reduction.

## Land Use & Community Character

### LU-1: Future Development

There is community support for a comprehensive planning approach to future development and redevelopment in Santa Venetia, particularly on large properties or where several individual parcels are assembled for development. This approach should include an applicant-initiated and supported community outreach effort prior to submittal of formal applications and throughout the process.

### LU-2: Rezoning of Ridge and Upland Greenbelt Properties

Support implementation of Countywide Plan Program DES-4.e to ensure that properties in Santa Venetia within the designated Ridge and Upland Greenbelt area are rezoned to reflect the lowest end of the Countywide Plan residential density range.

### LU-3: Hours of Operation

Hours of operation for new or expanded commercial and institutional uses should be regulated, when a Use Permit is required, to avoid or minimize noise-related impacts on adjoining residential uses. Where appropriate, delivery schedules should also be considered.

### LU-4: Neighborhood Beautification

Support community-based "neighborhood beautification" efforts, such as the Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association's "Bella Santa Venetia" committee and "Median Crew" or other voluntary efforts to plant trees, improve landscaping, assist with property maintenance, provide signage standards, reduce litter, etc.

### LU-5: Commercial Businesses

Independent, local-serving businesses are preferred over chain operations. In particular, local-serving food and beverage-related businesses such as cafes are encouraged.

### LU-6: Signage

Development of sign guidelines should be considered to encourage more consistent and visually cohesive signage, particularly for the commercial area at the entry to Santa Venetia (North San Pedro Road/Civic Center Drive intersection).

### LU-7: Light Pollution

To protect "darks skies", exterior lighting (including street lighting) should be the minimum required for safety and should be designed to prevent glare. Night lighting of recreational facilities or sports fields shall require Use Permit approval.

### LU-8: Rezone Open Space Properties

Rezone the following publically owned properties to Open Area (OA) and, where applicable, amend the Countywide Plan land use designation to Open Space (OS) to reflect their use as public open space:

- Santa Venetia Marsh: APN 180-090-03
- Santa Margarita Island: APN 180-021-20 & 21
- "Heron Hill": APN 180-231-05, 06, 07 & 09 and 180-291-04

This policy should be considered in the context of a broader initiative by CDA to rezone publicly-owned open space properties to OA on a countywide basis.



## 6

## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Santa Venetia's parks and open spaces provide recreational opportunities, public gathering places, and the opportunity to connect with nature. The community benefits from having access to a wide variety of parks and open space areas, all of which are highly valued and well used by residents. These spaces range from small pocket parks in the heart of residential neighborhoods, to bayfront walking paths along the Santa Venetia Marsh Preserve, to the wooded slopes of San Pedro Mountain. This chapter provides an overview of these resources and their major features.

**Candy's Park**  
Open Sunrise to Sunset  
A Cooperative Project by the County of St.  
Luis, Golden Valley, Sanitary District #1,  
County Service Area 18



# Chapter 6: Parks & Open Space

Marin County has a long history of acquiring and protecting open space and park lands for the benefit of the public. Accordingly, Marin Countywide Plan policies strongly support providing a high-quality park and recreation system and ensuring that open space resources

are protected for future generations. A sample of selected policies of particular interest and relevance to Santa Venetia is provided in Figure 43. A complete list of Parks and Open Space policies can be found in the Marin Countywide Plan.



*Buck's Launching*

## **Marin Countywide Plan (2007) Selected Park and Open Space Goals & Policy/Program Highlights**

**Goal PK-1: A High-Quality Parks and Recreation System.** Provide park and recreation facilities and programs to meet the various needs of all county residents.

- Develop park and recreational facilities to provide for active recreation and passive enjoyment while also protecting natural resources.
- Consider community desires in the planning and development of new parks.
- Identify strategies to protect park resources from the effects of climate change.
- Use the County Parks Master Plan to assess current facilities, determine appropriate locations for new facilities,

and explore funding options.

- Explore options with local agencies and schools to determine if recreational facilities such as school fields may be made available to County residents.

## **Goal OS-2: Preservation of Open Space for the Benefit of the Environment and Marin Residents.**

Close the gaps in the pattern of protected public open space and private lands 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.

- Focus efforts toward open space acquisition and protection on ridglands, baylands, and environmentally sensitive lands within the City-Centered Corridor.

- Utilize a variety of tools to preserve open space including fee acquisition, easement acquisition, gifts, and county land use regulations.
- Continue to acquire or otherwise preserve additional open space countywide.

*(Note: Targeted greenbelts and community separators near Santa Venetia include the San Pedro Peninsula Hills, which has largely been acquired by the State, the Open Space District, and the City of San Rafael).*

- Balance shoreline protection and access to water edge lowlands when pursuing acquisition of additional marsh and other shoreline open space areas.

*(Note: Targeted water edge lowlands in the vicinity of Santa Venetia include the San Pedro Peninsula shoreline from McNear's Beach north to Gallinas Creek except areas already acquired as part of China Camp State Park).*

Figure 43. Selected CWP Park and Open Space Goals & Policy/Program Highlights



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 the County Parks Department, which includes both the Parks and Landscape Division and the Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD). Each division fulfills different community needs. While parks accommodate "active" recreation with facilities such as play grounds and sport fields, open space preserves are intended primarily for natural resource preservation and "passive" recreation, such as hiking and nature study. Most of the parks and open space preserves in Santa Venetia are managed and maintained by the County and MCOSD. Other agencies responsible for parklands adjoining Santa Venetia include the City of San Rafael (Harry Barbier City Park) and the State of California (China Camp State Park).

## Planning and Funding for Parks and Open Space

As described previously, the Marin 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 and Open Space Strategic Plan (updated in 2008) which incorporates a detailed plan for both park lands (Marin County Parks Master Plan) and

open space preserves (Marin County Land Conservation Plan). Together, these documents are used by Marin County Parks to guide decisions related to the planning, funding, and management of existing and future parks and open space preserves in Santa Venetia and throughout the County.

Funding for parks and open space comes from a variety of sources, including the County's general fund, user fees, and special tax assessments such as Measure A, a quarter-cent sales tax approved in 2012, which is expected to generate over six million dollars per year over a nine year period. Since passage of the Quimby Act in 1975 (Government Code Section 66477), the County has also been able to acquire parkland through dedication or payment of in-lieu fees during subdivision review. Revenues generated through the Quimby Act are typically aggregated and, if possible, used for park projects in the same general area in which they are collected, but cannot be used for park operation or maintenance. In Santa Venetia, funding for maintenance, operation, and improvements to neighborhood parks (including Pueblo, Candy's, Castro, and Adrian Rosal Parks) is also generated from annual tax revenues in County Service Area (CSA) #18. CSA #18 was formed in 1973 to fund local park and recreation facilities and services. The boundaries of CSA #18 include all of Santa Venetia as well as portions of the City of San Rafael to the north and east of Santa Venetia.

To ensure that communities have an adequate supply of park space, the Quimby Act established a standard of three to five acres of parkland (developed for active recreation) per 1,000 residents. Although Santa Venetia is located in close proximity to almost 2,000 acres of open space lands within San Pedro Mountain Preserve and China Camp State Park alone, these areas do not provide for active recreation within the meaning of the Quimby Act. The Countywide Plan and Parks Master Plan recognize that the greater Las Gallinas planning area falls over 80 acres short of meeting the Quimby Act standard of 5 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents. Accordingly, the County continues to look for opportunities to reduce the community's parkland deficit while maintaining and improving existing parks in Santa Venetia.

During preparation of this plan, MCOSD acquired a new open space area as a result of months of work by community members and funding from an anonymous local donor. The 16-acre property, known locally as "Heron Hill" is located on North San Pedro Road in close proximity to China Camp State Park. The site was approved for a ten-unit residential development in 2013, but will now be permanently protected and managed by MCOSD as a valuable addition to the San Pedro Mountain Preserve and to the existing network of open space preserves in Santa Venetia (see Figure 44).

## Parks and Open Space Concepts

During preparation of the community plan, residents suggested a number of ideas related to park and open space in Santa Venetia. Although the feasibility and funding sources for these concepts have not been determined, they should be considered during future park planning efforts.

### Community Open Space

Support community efforts to raise funds to purchase and protect land for open space preservation.

### Existing Recreational Assets

Support preservation of existing recreational assets in the community such as the Kregel Tennis Courts, Northbridge Swim Club, Santa Venetia Swim Club, and existing ball and play fields.

### Water Access

Pursue opportunities to provide new or expanded public access to Las Gallinas Creek and San Pablo Bay (for example, kayak or small boat launches).

### Recreational Fields

Explore the possibility of making existing recreational fields (such as school fields) available to community residents when not in use. Where space allows, new recreational fields should also be considered if there is neighborhood support.

### Community Center

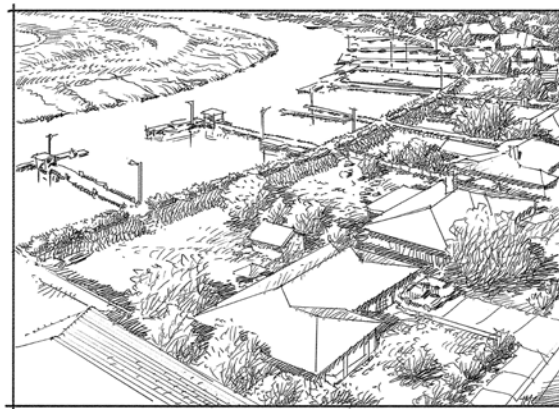
Support community efforts to explore the level of interest and funding options for a Santa Venetia community center.

### Restroom Facilities

Consider additional restroom facilities in neighborhood parks, provided that safety, cost, and maintenance issues can be addressed.

### Buck's Launching

There is strong community support for the County's efforts to acquire Buck's Launching. Should the property be acquired by County Parks and Open Space, the ideas below should be considered as part of future planning efforts for the property. Due to the environmental sensitivity of the site, public access and the desire for recreational facilities should be balanced with the need to protect the site's sensitive resources and habitat value.



*Artistic rendering of homes along Gallinas Creek*

- Provide a landing spot for Bay Water Trail (including restrooms and possibly food concessionaire)
- Incorporate small boat and bike rentals
- Maintain facilities for small boat storage (both motorized and non-motorized)
- Incorporate trail connections to China Camp if feasible
- Consider improvements to address dangerous road conditions in the area (curvy, narrow road)
- Consider providing parking facilities for China Camp (to minimize parking in neighborhoods)
- Post rules of the waterways in visible locations for boaters (speed limits, etc)
- Incorporate an educational component (signage, kiosks, etc.) regarding natural resources in the area, sensitive habitat, sea level rise, and other issues

### Santa Margarita Island

Santa Margarita Island was originally part of Mabry McMahan grand plan to create a development reminiscent of the City of Venice, Italy. Purportedly, the island was to be developed with a grand hotel. After several failed development attempts, the 4.5 acre island was acquired by the County Open Space District and the existing bridge, originally constructed to serve the hotel, provides access to the island for open space users. The preserve contains woodlands and grasslands surrounded by tidal marshland.



### “Heron Hill” Open Space Preserve

Santa Venetia’s newest open space preserve was acquired by the County in July, 2014, as a result of months of work by community members and funding from an anonymous local donor. The 16 acre property, referred to locally as “Heron Hill” is located on North San Pedro Road, in close proximity to China Camp State Park.

### San Pedro Mountain Preserve

The forested slopes of San Pedro Ridge form an impressive visual backdrop for the community of Santa Venetia. This 358-acre preserve includes extensive areas of oak and bay woodlands as well as open grasslands which provide excellent views across Santa Venetia toward San Pablo Bay. The preserve is traversed by several trails and fire roads that connect to China Camp State Park to the east and Henry Barbier Park (owned by the City of San Rafael) to the south.

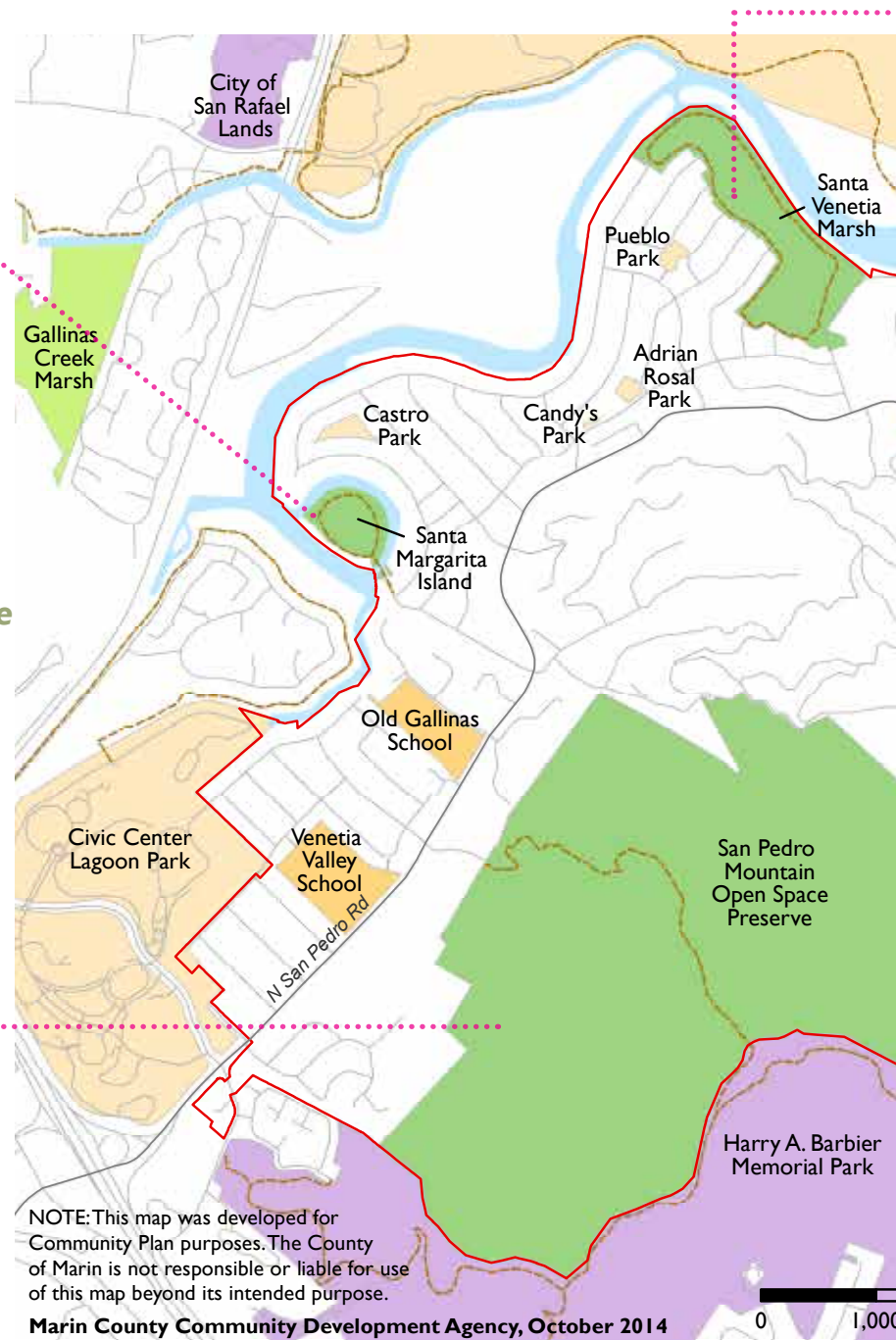


Figure 44. Open Space Preserves and State Parks in and around Santa Venetia





### Santa Venetia Marsh Preserve

The 33 acre Santa Venetia Marsh Preserve is a portion of the Las Gallinas Creek delta and features salt marsh surrounded by a levy. The Santa Venetia marsh was diked in the early 1900's. However, the outer levees were later breached and tidal action resumed, allowing the salt marsh to slowly reappear. Today, pickleweed and saltgrass provides habitat for sensitive species such as the Ridgeway rail (formerly the California clapper rail), salt marsh harvest mouse, and a diverse array of wildlife. The level trail atop the levee is a popular path for local residents and one of the favorite neighborhood locations for walking or jogging.



### China Camp State Park

China Camp State Park encompasses over 1,600 acres along the shore of San Pablo Bay. The park includes extensive intertidal salt marsh and meadow and oak woodland habitats which are home to deer, coyote, fox, bats, numerous birds, and the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse and Ridgeway rail. In the late 1800's, a Chinese shrimp-fishing village with a population of nearly 500 people thrived on the site. Today, a museum



at China Camp Village provides information and exhibits on this early Chinese settlement. The park provides 30 walk-in camping sites, several bayfront picnic areas, and dozens of miles of hiking and biking trails. One of four state parks in Marin County, China Camp State Park is a recreational destination that attracts users from throughout the Bay Area, while also serving as Santa Venetia's unique open space "back yard."

### Castro Park

Formerly a Little League baseball field, Castro Field Park is a unique 1.5 acre park which is completely enclosed by surrounding residences. Access is provided from Vendola Drive and Mabry Way via easements between lots. The park was renovated in 2001 and includes a play area suitable for children, turf volleyball court, picnic tables with BBQs, and an open turf area.

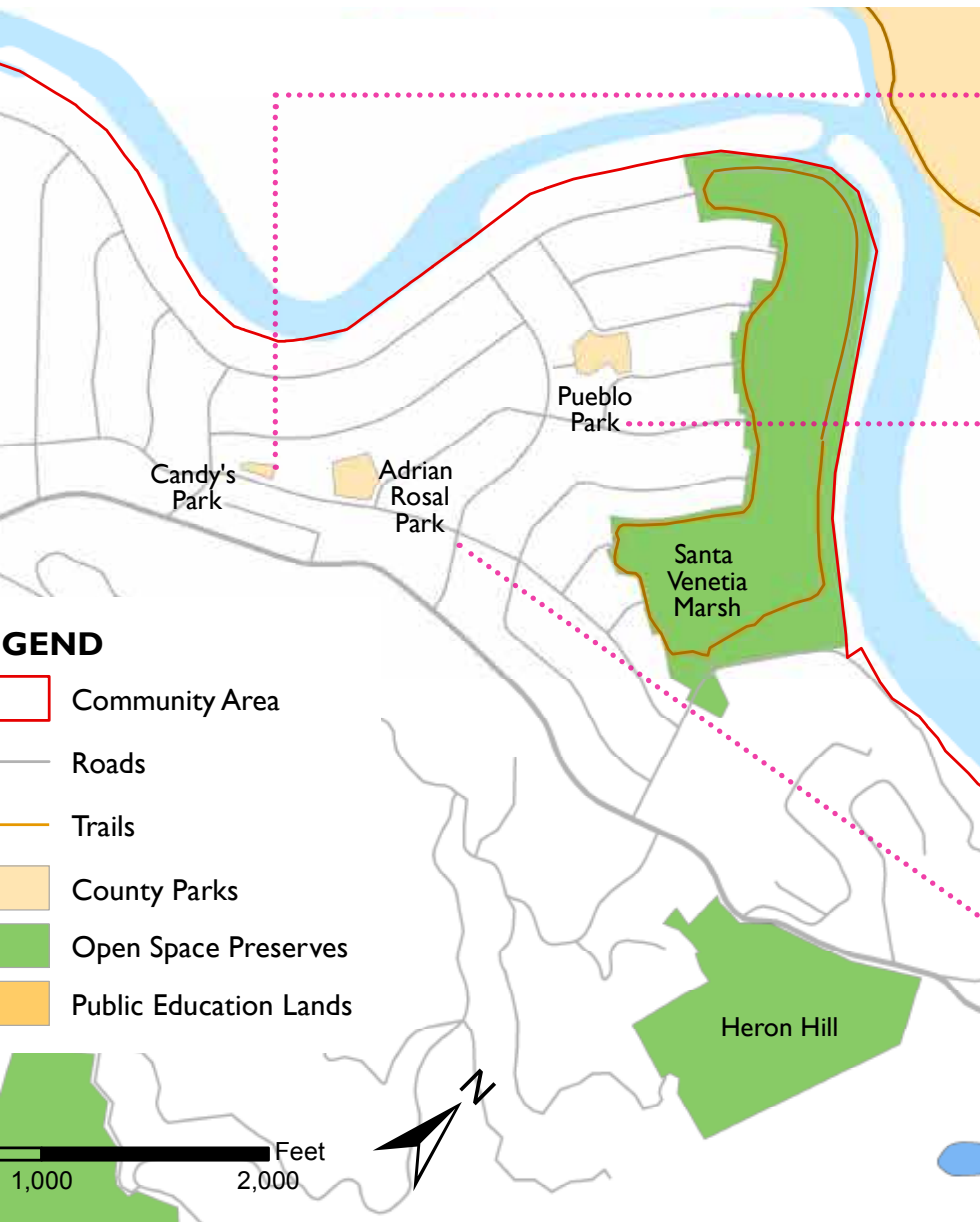


### Civic Center Lagoon Park

Although not within the boundaries of Santa Venetia, Lagoon Park on the Marin County Civic Center campus adjoins the community's western boundary and is well used by neighborhood residents. Approximately 10 acres in size, the park surrounds a man-made lagoon which is a popular destination for walking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. The park includes a large playground, renovated in 2008, with a climbing structure and sand and water play areas. Picnic tables and benches are located throughout the park. For one week each summer, Lagoon Park is home to the Marin County Fair. Other uses include petanque courts and the "Field of Dogs", a portion of the campus leased from the County on an interim basis since 1998 for use as a dog park.



Figure 45. Santa Venetia Neighborhood Parks



### Candy's Park

Candy's Park is a pocket park (0.1 acres) located on Adrian Way very close to Adrian Rosal Park. It includes a small gated playground for young children, a climbing structure, tot swing, and picnic area. Recent improvements to Candy's Park were completed with the help of community volunteers.



### Pueblo Park

Pueblo Park is a small but popular 2 acre park situated between Descanso Way and Hacienda Way. Facilities include a tennis court, half basketball court, large multi-purpose turf area, small picnic area, and playground, installed in 2010. Volunteers helped to select and install the new playground equipment, which includes swings, a large play structure with slides, a variety of tot features, and a playhouse.



### Adrian Rosal Park

Adrian Rosal Park is a mini park (.70 acre) located at the corner of Adrian Way and Rosal Way, surrounded by residential development. Existing facilities include a turf area, small picnic area, drinking fountain, and a barbeque.

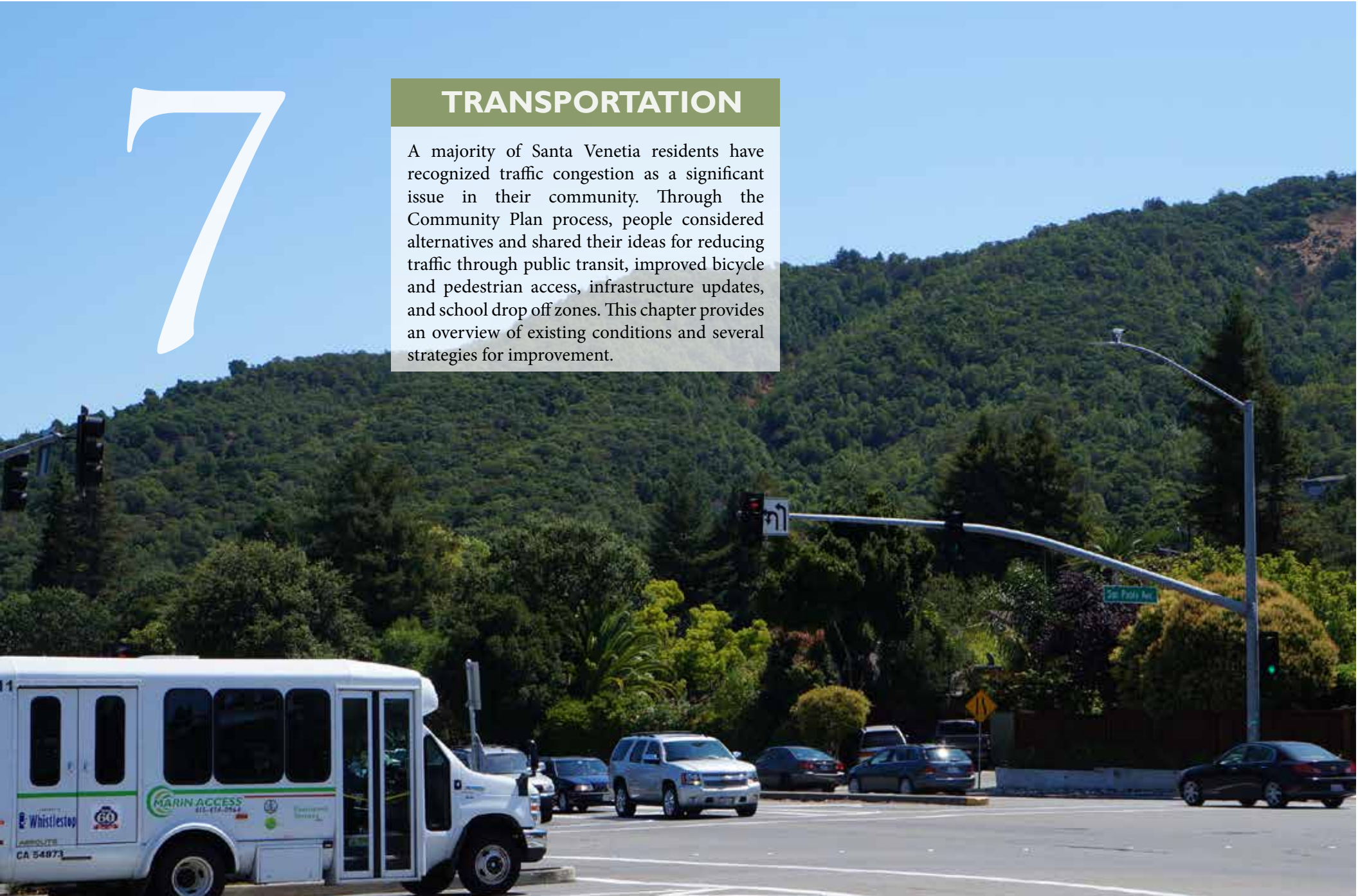




# 7

## TRANSPORTATION

A majority of Santa Venetia residents have recognized traffic congestion as a significant issue in their community. Through the Community Plan process, people considered alternatives and shared their ideas for reducing traffic through public transit, improved bicycle and pedestrian access, infrastructure updates, and school drop off zones. This chapter provides an overview of existing conditions and several strategies for improvement.



# Chapter 7: Transportation

Traffic congestion is an on-going concern in Santa Venetia as it is elsewhere in Marin County. It is estimated 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. The Marin 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 creation of an efficient and effective multimodal transportation system that manages congestion and increases mobility by providing residents with a variety of transportation options. As shown in Figure 46, these policies are intended to ensure that travel by foot, bicycle, and transit are increasingly viable and attractive alternatives to the automobile.



North San Pedro Road

## Marin Countywide Plan (2007) Selected Circulation Policies and Programs (abbreviated)

### Traffic Circulation

- Uphold peak-hour vehicle Level of Service standard LOS D or better for urban and suburban arterials
- Monitor traffic impacts of development and identify mitigation measures to maintain the adopted LOS
- Require new development to pay for its fair share of transportation improvements
- Restrict development to the lowest end of the applicable density or floor area ratio range where the LOS will be exceeded

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation

- Promote adequate bicycle and pedestrian links including bicycle and pedestrian friendly streetscape improvements

- Require new development to provide appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Where feasible, stripe and sign appropriate roadway segments as bike lanes and bike routes
- Support Safe Routes to School plans as a means to identify potential bicycle and pedestrian transportation improvements

### Public Transportation

- Encourage expansion and improvement of local bus and ferry services
- Fund paratransit service and integrate it with fixed-route service to meet the needs of those dependent on transit
- Support the creation of shuttles or similar services to collect public transit riders

Figure 46. Selected CWP Circulation Policies and Programs



## Traffic Circulation

Santa Venetia is conveniently located in central Marin close to Highway 101. Primary access to the community is provided by a single two-lane arterial, North San Pedro Road, which extends eastward through Santa Venetia from Highway 101. As a result, circulation through the neighborhood is constrained and traffic congestion is focused along the North San Pedro Road corridor. This is especially evident in the vicinity of the North San Pedro Road/Civic Center Drive intersection, which forms the western entry point to Santa Venetia. While the community is primarily residential, several educational and recreational facilities draw traffic from outside the neighborhood. This results in congestion along North San Pedro Road, particularly during the morning rush hour when commute traffic combines with traffic associated with schools and other public facilities.

A 2011 survey of residents identified traffic congestion as the most important issue facing the community. However, constraints limit what can be done to address this concern. Traditional solutions to maintaining traffic flows, such as road widening, tend to be prohibitively expensive and environmentally damaging. In Santa Venetia, widening North San Pedro Road would also eliminate valued on-street parking and alter the existing character of the roadway. The timing of signal lights at the North San Pedro Road/Civic Center Drive intersection have been adjusted periodically to improve traffic flow, but signal timing alone cannot solve the problem. Finally,

the primary access point to the community, the North San Pedro Road/Highway 101 interchange in San Rafael is outside the County's jurisdiction. Therefore interchange modifications with the potential to improve traffic flow in Santa Venetia would require the cooperation and approval of other agencies, including Caltrans and the City of San Rafael.

As noted in Figure 46, the Marin Countywide Plan and current County guidelines establish a "Level of Service" (LOS) standard of "D" or better for arterials and collector roads such as North San Pedro. LOS D indicates that drivers may experience what is deemed as a "tolerable delay" of 25 to 40 seconds at signalized intersections and 35 to 55 seconds at stop sign controlled intersections. To maintain this standard, the traffic impacts of development projects are determined by professionally prepared traffic studies. If necessary, mitigation measures are identified to ensure that the adopted LOS is not exceeded. In cases where the LOS standard will be exceeded, the County may restrict development to the lowest end of the applicable density or floor area ratio range.

Generally, a project such as the construction of a new single family residence will not have a perceptible impact on traffic. However, new development, regardless of size, is responsible for its fair share of the costs of needed transportation improvements through the payment of "public transportation facilities fees" (Marin County Code Title 15.07).



*Children at play in Santa Venetia*



These fees are established by the Board of Supervisors based on the number of new trips a project is expected to generate, and are collected at the time development permits are issued. Fees must be used in the area within which they are collected for facilities and improvements intended to benefit that area, such as traffic signals to manage traffic flow or additional lanes to improve capacity. Santa Venetia is located within the “Northgate Activity Center Plan Area” which also encompasses portions of Terra Linda, Marinwood, and Lucas Valley. Recent projects within the Northgate Activity Center Plan Area benefitting Santa Venetia have included improvements to reconfigure the intersection of Civic Center Drive at North San Pedro Road and numerous pedestrian path of travel improvements (such as installation of curb ramps) throughout Santa Venetia.

As noted above, the traffic impacts of a particular development are identified through preparation of a professionally prepared traffic study. The Marin County guidelines for the preparation of such studies have focused on analysis of project impacts during the evening rush hour period, known as the “pm peak” hour, when traffic congestion is generally at its worst. However, in Santa Venetia, there is general consensus that the most severe traffic congestion occurs in the morning during the school year, when commuters driving to work are on the road at the same time that students are being dropped off at local schools.

Accordingly, the community plan includes a policy to ensure that traffic studies also address the “am peak” hour during the school year. In addition, the plan recommends policies to reduce congestion by encouraging schools to stagger their schedules to minimize congestion and promoting the use of alternative modes of transportation. See Policies CIR-1, CIR-2, and CIR-3, page 71)



*25 mph is the limit in much of Santa Venetia*

## Speeding Concerns

The posted speed limit along most of North San Pedro Road and other neighborhood streets in Santa Venetia is 25 miles per hour (mph). Community members have periodically expressed concerns about speeding vehicles, both along North San Pedro and on local streets. Speed limits on County roadways are enforced by the California Highway Patrol with assistance from the County Sheriff's Department. Complaints regarding recurrent speed limit violations can also be submitted to the County Department of Public Works (DPW), Traffic Operations staff for further investigation. If persistent speeding is found to occur, a number of options may be considered. On local streets, traffic calming may be appropriate if the majority of residents in the area support their installation. On arterial streets such as North San Pedro, speed humps are not permitted due to high volume of traffic, arterial road classification, and their impact on access for emergency vehicles. However, other measures such as signage, striping, radar trailer deployment, speed feedback signs, speed enforcement or flashing signs may be considered.

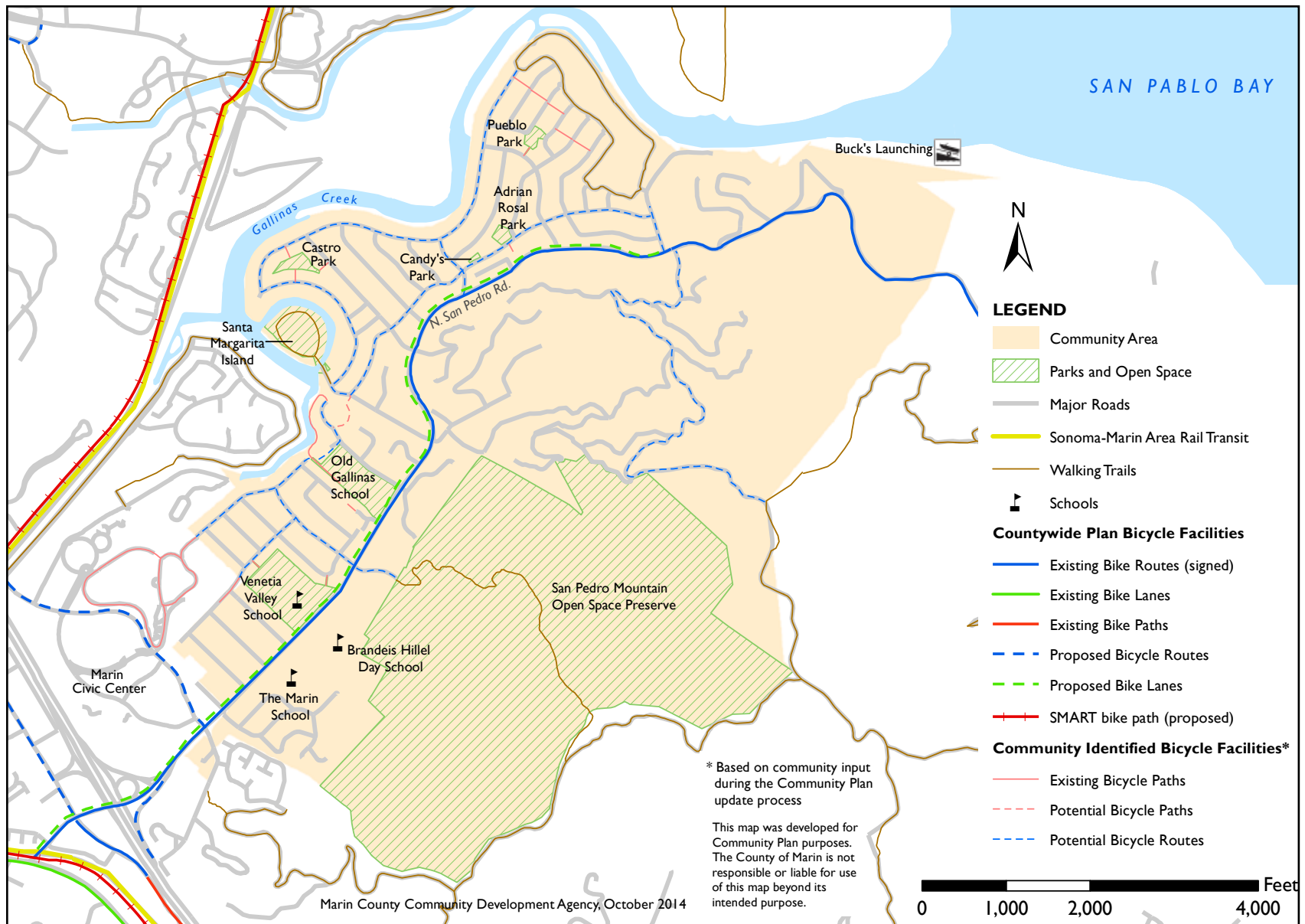


Figure 47. Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation

## Bicyclist and Pedestrian Circulation

Biking and walking are popular activities in Santa Venetia. A survey of residents at community plan workshops indicate that favorite bicycle and walking destinations in Santa Venetia include the Santa Venetia Marsh levees, China Camp State Park, Santa Margarita Island, and the Civic Center Campus. Many residents also walk and bike on North San Pedro Road and other neighborhood streets, but cite concerns about discontinuous sidewalks or conflicts with traffic along busier roadways. 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 air pollution. Santa Venetia has many of the attributes needed for a bicycle and walk friendly community: a relatively compact size, significant areas of level topography, and a central location close to schools, shops, and services such as the Civic Center post office, library, and farmer's market. Perhaps more importantly, many residents of Santa Venetia are interested in maintaining and improving the community's network of bike and walking routes.

The Marin Countywide Plan policies strongly support bicycle and pedestrian circulation for recreational purposes and as alternative modes of transportation (see Figure 46). More specific guidance on bicycle and pedestrian improvements is provided by the

Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The Master 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 Santa Venetia.

North San Pedro Road is the central transportation corridor through Santa Venetia for both vehicles and bicycles and is identified as part of the County's primary bikeway network in the Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. This roadway is also the designated route of the San Francisco Bay Trail, a planned recreational corridor intended to encircle San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with a continuous 500 mile network of bicycle and hiking trails. Although the portion of North San Pedro Road within Santa Venetia is currently categorized as a Class III bikeway (bike route signage only, see

Figure 48), both the Marin Countywide Plan and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan propose that North San Pedro be improved to Class II standards (dedicated on-street bike lanes) from Highway 101 to Vendola Drive. Although installation of bike lanes would eliminate areas of existing on-street parking along North San Pedro, it would also increase safety and provide improved access for bicyclists both within the neighborhood and between Santa Venetia and other communities (See Policy CIR-7, page 71).



Although North San Pedro Road is often used by bikers and walkers, there is community support for the establishment of alternative routes that could provide options for biking and walking through the neighborhood on streets with lower traffic volumes and speeds. Santa Venetia's existing street pattern makes it difficult to traverse the community from east to west without using North San Pedro Road. However, in certain locations, informal "shortcuts" exist which allow access between neighborhood streets. In some cases, these occur within five to ten foot wide pedestrian lanes created as part of Santa Venetia's original subdivisions. In other cases, the pathways are located along informal routes that are unmarked, may not meet current design standards for bike or multi-use pathways, and may even cross private property. Despite the constraints, there is community interest in preserving and improving these informal routes where design, funding, and legal issues can be addressed. These routes, as well as other potential bikeways suggested by the community are shown in Figure 47 in relation to existing and proposed bicycle facilities designated in the Marin Countywide Plan.

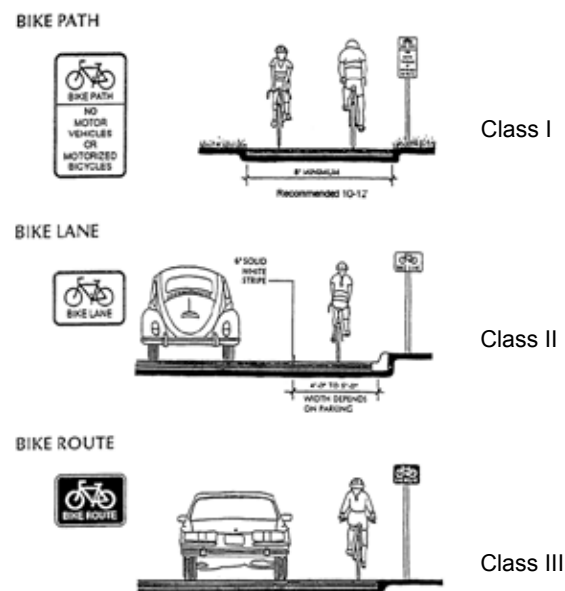


Figure 48. Class I, II, and III Bicycle Facilities

### Bikeway Classifications

(as defined by Caltrans Highway Design Manual)

**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)

**Multi-Use Pathways** – term used in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to refer to existing paved pathways that do not conform to established Caltrans design standards but are currently used for transportation and recreational purposes.

*Source: Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*

### Safe Routes to School

Local studies have shown that roughly a quarter of morning traffic in Marin can be attributed to parents driving children to school. The Safe Routes to School program was developed to reduce local congestion by increasing the number of students who walk and bike to school. The program began in 2000 as a local grassroots effort and subsequently spread across the country. Since 2005, Marin County's Safe Routes to School program has been administered by the Transportation Authority of Marin and currently operates in more than fifty schools throughout the County. Safe Routes to School has several components, including a crossing guard program, an education program to teach bike and pedestrian safety skills and promote walking and biking contests and events, and Safe Pathways, a program that provides funding for the engineering and construction of pathway and sidewalk improvements. Currently, the Safe Pathways program distributes approximately 2.5 million dollars in funding to projects throughout Marin County every two years.

Santa Venetia is home to several schools that contribute to congestion along North San Pedro Road, particularly during morning commute hours. Therefore, efforts to reduce

the percentage of children being driven to school would be particularly beneficial in Santa Venetia. The Marin Safe Routes to School program is open to all schools, both public and private, and relies heavily on the participation of volunteers. To participate, a school forms a Safe Routes to School committee which can include parents, teachers, students, and neighbors. The committee gathers information to identify how students arrive at school, the routes that are used, and what obstacles to biking and walking might exist in the area. This information is then used to develop a plan of recommended improvements for a focused area surrounding the school. Once a plan is developed, the committee can begin working with traffic operations staff at the County Department of Public Works to implement the needed improvements.

Public school districts are not subject to local regulation. However, in 2012, the planning approach used by the Safe Routes to School program was incorporated into state laws regarding traffic control in school areas (California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices). As such, the program became an important tool that enables Department of Public Works staff to prioritize potential pathway and walkway

improvements and ensure that recommended measures have the support of the school, parents, and local neighbors. Although none of the existing schools in Santa Venetia had an active Safe Routes to School program at the time this plan was prepared, this program may be an effective means of pursuing implementation of bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the community.

During preparation of the community plan, residents offered ideas that could potentially be implemented through a Safe Routes to School program. For example, community members suggested creating a school "drop off" site in the Marin Civic Center Jury Parking lot which could help to divert school traffic from North San Pedro Road if a safe path of travel could be provided to Venetia Valley School. Other suggestions included traffic calming measures in the vicinity of schools, improved sidewalks, and additional or improved bike routes and paths. Although Safe Routes to School projects generally target improvements around schools, they ultimately benefit the entire community by enhancing safety, reducing local congestion, and encouraging residents of all ages to walk and bike in the neighborhood (See Policy CIR-4, page 71).

## Public Transportation

Marin Countywide Plan policies support the use and expansion of public transportation options throughout the County. However, due to Santa Venetia's relatively small population, public transportation service within the community has been somewhat limited. Marin Transit currently operates local bus service, known as the Santa Venetia Shuttle (#233), on a route that extends from Vendola Drive to the San Rafael Transit Center with stops along North San Pedro Road, the Marin Civic Center, and Dominican University. The service operates on an hourly basis from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. According to a recent report, the Santa Venetia Shuttle is one of the top performing routes in Marin Transit's shuttle program with respect to ridership and requests have been received for later service on both weekdays and weekends (Marin Transit, 2013 Service Changes Review). Santa Venetia is also located in close proximity to a number of Golden Gate Transit lines, including regional commuter service along Highway 101 and several local bus lines that serve the Civic Center campus. Decisions regarding bus and shuttle routes, service frequency and passenger fares are determined by Marin Transit and Golden Gate Transit.

Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) is a passenger rail project that will extend

along a 70 mile corridor, generally paralleling Highway 101, between Cloverdale and Larkspur. There are fourteen planned stations along the route, including a "San Rafael – Civic Center" station located on the west side of Civic Center Drive, just east of Merrydale Road. Although not located within the Santa Venetia Community Plan area, the project will bring the SMART train within walking distance (1/2 mile) of Santa Venetia and will significantly increase transit options for community residents. Accordingly, the Community Plan recommends that bus transit providers reconsider their service routes and schedules once the SMART train is operational to determine if more frequent or expanded service between Santa Venetia and the station is warranted and can be provided (See Policy CIR-6).



*Bus transit on Civic Center Drive*



## Transportation Policies

### **CIR-1: Traffic Impact Analyses**

Required traffic studies for new development shall evaluate project impacts on both the AM and PM weekday peak hours during the school year.

### **CIR-2: Coordination of School Uses**

Encourage the continued coordination and cooperation of public and private schools in the area to stagger school schedules to minimize traffic congestion.

### **CIR-3: Alternative Transportation Modes**

Require new development proposals to identify and consider the implementation of viable transportation demand management measures to encourage the use of alternative transportation modes (including walking, biking, telecommuting and transit).

### **CIR-4: Safe Routes to School**

Support efforts to initiate and maintain Safe Routes to School programs in public and private schools operating in Santa Venetia, to encourage new and enhanced bike and pedestrian facilities in the vicinity of schools. In particular, evaluation of the feasibility of a student “drop off” area within the Civic Center jury parking lot or other appropriate locations should be considered as part of a

potential Venetia Valley School Safe Routes to School program.

### **CIR-5: Highway 101/North San Pedro Road Interchange Modifications**

Encourage the City of San Rafael to consider the efficacy and feasibility of providing two continuous westbound lanes on North San Pedro Road between Civic Center Drive and Merrydale Road to alleviate traffic congestion in Santa Venetia.

### **CIR-6: Transit Service and Bicycle/Pedestrian Access to SMART Station**

Encourage transit providers to determine whether expanded transit service routes and/or schedules between Santa Venetia and the San Rafael – Civic Center SMART station are warranted once train service is operational. The provision of bicycle and pedestrian improvements/connections between Santa Venetia and the SMART station should also be encouraged.

### **CIR-7: Neighborhood-serving Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes**

Consider bike route alternatives to North San Pedro Road as part of future updates to the Marin County Unincorporated Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Support efforts to maintain and improve existing informal

pedestrian and bicycle routes that connect local streets within Santa Venetia where feasible.

### **CIR-8: North San Pedro Road**

North San Pedro Road should remain as a two-lane roadway east of Garden/Golf Avenue to maintain existing community character.



Great Blue Heron

Credit: Gisele Block

## Resources and Useful Websites

### Local Government

County of Marin – [www.marincounty.org](http://www.marincounty.org)  
 Marin County Community Development Agency –  
[www.marincounty.org/depts/cd](http://www.marincounty.org/depts/cd)  
 City of San Rafael – [www.cityofsanrafael.org](http://www.cityofsanrafael.org)

### Community Organizations

Santa Venetia Neighborhood Association – [www.thesvna.org](http://www.thesvna.org)

### Community Services

Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District – [www.lgvsd.org](http://www.lgvsd.org)  
 Marin Municipal Water District – [www.marinwater.org](http://www.marinwater.org)  
 Marin County Fire Department – [www.marincountyfire.org](http://www.marincountyfire.org)  
 Marin Sanitary Service – [www.marinsanitary.com](http://www.marinsanitary.com)  
 Pacific Gas and Electric – [www.pge.com](http://www.pge.com)  
 San Rafael City Schools – [www.srscs.org](http://www.srscs.org)

### Parks & Open Space

Marin County Parks and Open Space – [www.marincountyparks.org](http://www.marincountyparks.org)  
 China Camp State Park – [www.parks.ca.gov/chinacamp/](http://www.parks.ca.gov/chinacamp/)  
 Friends of China Camp – [www.friendsofchinacamp.org](http://www.friendsofchinacamp.org)  
 Marin Center – [www.marincenter.org](http://www.marincenter.org)

### Natural Resources

California Department of Fish and Wildlife – [www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov)  
 California Native Plant Society – [www.cnpsmarin.org](http://www.cnpsmarin.org)  
 California Invasive Plant Council – [www.cal-ipc.org](http://www.cal-ipc.org)  
 Wildcare – [www.wildcaremarin.org](http://www.wildcaremarin.org)

### Flooding

Flood Control Zone 7 – [www.marinwatersheds.org/zone-7.html](http://www.marinwatersheds.org/zone-7.html)  
 Marin County Watershed Program – [www.marinwatersheds.org](http://www.marinwatersheds.org)

Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program  
 (MCSTOPPP) – [www.mcstoppp.org](http://www.mcstoppp.org)  
 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
 FEMA National Flood Insurance Program – [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov)  
 US Army Corps of Engineers – [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)  
 San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board –  
[www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay)

### Gallinas Creek Dredging

County Service Area (CSA) #6 –  
<https://apps.marincounty.org/bosboardsandcomm/>  
 Gallinas Watershed Council – [www.gallinaswatershed.org](http://www.gallinaswatershed.org)

### Sea Level Rise and Climate Change

Bay Conservation and Development Commission – [www.bcdc.ca.gov](http://www.bcdc.ca.gov)  
 Adapting to Rising Tides project – [www.adaptingtorisingtides.org](http://www.adaptingtorisingtides.org)  
 Cal-Adapt Sea Level Rise Mapping – [www.cal-adapt.org](http://www.cal-adapt.org)  
 North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative – [www.northbayclimate.org](http://www.northbayclimate.org)  
 California Climate Commons – <http://climate.calcommons.org/>

### Transportation

Marin County Department of Public Works, Traffic Operations –  
[www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/transportation/traffic](http://www.marincounty.org/depts/pw/divisions/transportation/traffic)  
 Walk Bike Marin – [www.walkbikemarin.org](http://www.walkbikemarin.org)  
 Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit – [www.sonomamarintrain.org](http://www.sonomamarintrain.org)  
 Marin Transit – [www.marintransit.org](http://www.marintransit.org)  
 Golden Gate Transit – [www.goldengatetransit.org](http://www.goldengatetransit.org)  
 Safe Routes to Schools – [www.saferoutestoschools.org](http://www.saferoutestoschools.org)  
 California Highway Patrol – [www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov)  
 Caltrans – [www.dot.ca.gov](http://www.dot.ca.gov)