

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT TITLE: Environmental Impact Report for the City of San Carlos Focused General Plan Update: Housing, Land Use and Safety Elements and Accompanying Zoning Ordinance Amendments

PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE: The City of San Carlos (City) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed San Carlos Housing, Land Use and Safety Element Updates and accompanying Zoning Ordinance Amendments Project ("Project" or "proposed Project"). The City is requesting input from you or your agency with respect to the scope and content of the environmental information relevant to your agency's or organization's statutory responsibilities or interests in connection with the proposed Project.

The City is preparing the City of San Carlos General Plan Housing, Land Use and Safety Element Updates that were last updated in 2009, with the exception of the Housing Element, which was last updated in 2015. While the Housing and Safety elements are the original focus of the Focused General Plan Update, the Land Use Element will also need to be revised to ensure General Plan consistency, as required by State law. In addition, Zoning Amendments will also be made to implement new policies and land use intensities envisioned in the Housing Element Update to accommodate the provision of additional housing needs as part of San Carlos' Regional Housing Needs Allocation ("RHNA"). The subject EIR will provide an environmental assessment of the updated Housing, Land Use and Safety Elements, and Zoning Ordinance and related Municipal Code updates. The overall purpose of the Housing, Land Use and Safety Element Updates are to create a policy framework that will:

- Facilitate new housing growth within San Carlos in response to the region's need for more affordable and market rate housing, as well as develop housing solutions to meet the City's RHNA, or new housing unit allocation; and
- Provide updated information about natural and man-made hazard risks to the community; provide new information related to wildfire hazard, sea level rise and resiliency planning to the Safety Element; and present policies designed to protect life and property from these hazards

PUBLIC COMMENT INVITED: You are invited to submit written comments and recommendations regarding the scope and content of the EIR that is being prepared. Comments should focus on discussing possible impacts on the physical environment, ways in which potential adverse effects might be minimized, and alternatives to the project in light of the purpose of the environmental review to provide useful and accurate information about such factors. Note that if you challenge this project proposal in court, for topics addressed in the EIR, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised in written correspondence during the review period of the EIR or at the public meeting described in this notice.

COMMENT PERIOD: A 45-day public review period for the Notice of Preparation (NOP) shall begin on December 17, 2021, and end on January 31, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. All comments regarding the EIR must be made in writing and received by this ending date/time.

Written comments and recommendations may be directed to Lisa Porras, Planning Division, City of San Carlos, 600 Elm Street, San Carlos, CA 94070, or sent via email to: LPorras@cityofsancarlos.org. Specify "Housing and Safety Element Update EIR" in the subject line.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING: The Planning Commission will hold the public scoping meeting to provide a forum for submittal of comments on the analysis to be included in the EIR. The meeting will be held on **January 12, 2022, starting at 6:00 p.m.** Meeting details will be available on the City's website http://sancarlosca.iqm2.com/citizens/default.aspx after 5:00p.m. on Thursday, January 6, 2022.

You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

Topic: Special PC Meeting: Environmental Review Scoping Meeting

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88523285187

Or One tap mobile:

US: +16699006833,88523285187# or +13462487799,,88523285187#

Or Telephone:

Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626

6799 or +1 929 436 2866

Webinar ID: 885 2328 5187

International numbers available: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcQosnyGOi

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: call Lisa Porras at (650) 802-4264or e-mail:

LPorras@cityofsancarlos.org

Housing and Environmental Safety Element Update EIR Project Description

PROJECT LOCATION: The City of San Carlos is located in the central-east portion of San Mateo County on the San Francisco Peninsula, approximately halfway between San Francisco and San Jose. San Carlos' city limit extends to the City of Belmont to the northwest, the San Francisco Bay to the northeast, the City of Redwood City to the southeast, and unincorporated San Mateo County to the southwest (Figure 1 - Regional Location).

Freeways and highways offer regional access to San Carlos, including the Bayshore Freeway (US 101) on the east and Junipero Serra Freeway (I 280) to the west. A regional artery, El Camino Real (SR 82) traverses San Carlos in a northwest-southeast direction. A subregional arterial through San Carlos is Alameda de la Pulgas.

PLANNING AREA: The City of San Carlos encompasses approximately eight square miles, nearly all of which are developed with urban land uses. San Carlos' sphere of influence (Planning Area) includes three areas of unincorporated San Mateo County – the Devonshire Area (including two non-adjacent areas: Devonshire Canyon and a nearby 17-acre area adjacent to Club Drive, Cranfield Avenue, and the City of Belmont), Palomar Park, and Pulgas Ridge (formally known as the Hassler Area). The City's Planning Area consists of 10,348 parcels encompassing 3,570 gross acres (Figure 2 - Planning Area).

Gross residential land uses represent the predominant existing land use in San Carlos (1,970 gross acres), which account for more than half (55 percent) of the total land area. Single-family residential uses - generally consisting of one house per lot - make up over 50 percent of the residential category. Multi-family residential uses make up less than five percent of residential uses. Mixed – Use land uses total 8 acres (less than one percent).

Commercial and light industrial land uses total 488 acres (14 percent). Public Facilities and Institutions makes up 311 gross acres (9 percent). Park and open space uses encompass 668 gross acres (19 percent). Parking uses total 20 acres or less than one percent, while vacant land makes up 106 acres and three percent of the Planning Area.

Land Use Category Description:

The following description of land uses is defined in the City's General Plan. Figure 3 shows the existing land uses within the City and Figure 4 presents the existing General Plan Land Use Map. Figure 5 presents the City's existing Zoning Map (see Attachments).

Residential Uses¹

Residential uses comprise the largest land use category, 55 percent of the Planning Area. Residential uses are comprised of single-family, multi-family, and mixed use. Single-family use is generally considered to be one house per lot. Single-family residential use makes up over 50 percent of the entire planning area and is located throughout San Carlos including east of

December 17, 2021 3

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¹The San Carlos Zoning Ordinance Chapter 18.04 sets forth four (4) residential zoning districts with the following densities:

[•] Single Family Low Density development ranges from three units per net acre

[•] Single Family Residential Density allows for residential densities up to six units per net acre

[•] Multi Family Low Density Residential allows for residential densities up to twenty units per net acre

[•] Multi Family Medium Density Residential allows for residential development at up to fifty nine units per net acre

El Camino Real. Multi-family use is generally considered to be more than three housing units on a lot and can include stacked flats and townhomes. Like single-family use, multi-family uses are found throughout the Planning Area.

Residential Densities

<u>Single Family Residential</u> RS-3 and RS-6 Zoning Districts allow up to 3 units to the acre and 6 units to the acre respectively. Of the single-family residential zoning districts, the most predominant is the RS-6 Single FamilyZoning District located throughout San Carlos and west of US 101, as well as a neighborhood of single-family homes to the east of El Camino Real and Old County Road.

<u>Low residential density</u> (defined as up to twenty units per net acre, in accordance with the San Carlos Zoning Ordinance) and occur in various specific locations in the San Carlos hills. Low residential density can occur in the following housing types or building forms --stand-alone or one housing unit on a lot, duplexes, triplexes, stacked flats, townhouses, and rowhouses.

<u>Medium density residential</u> RM-20 and RM-59 Zoning Districts allow for 20 units to the acre and 59 units to the acre, respectively. These zones accommodate stacked flats, townhomes, and rowhouses developed at a scale and form appropriate to neighborhood context and adjacent single-family residential uses. The medium density residential is generally located in the east and central portions of San Carlos—Downtown, Laurel Street, El Camino Real, San Carlos Avenue, and Cherry Street. Smaller areas of medium density residential is found along the Devonshire area's southern edge and along San Carlos' western boundary.

<u>Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)</u> are another residential form found in San Carlos. San Carlos allows ADUs to be established on any lot in any zoning district where a primary single-unit dwelling has been previously established or is proposed to be established in conjunction with construction of a second unit. Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) are a subset of ADUs. JADUs are contained entirely within an existing or proposed single-family residence. Recent State law (2019) allows ADUs to be built in multi-family districts under specified conditions. As of November 2021, San Carlos has permitted 211 ADUs.

Mixed-Use Districts

Other zoning districts in San Carlos that allow residential uses are the seven (7) Mixed-Use zoning districts, which allows residential uses either vertically or horizontally with a nonresidential, ground floor use, typically a commercial use. Mixed-use zoning districts primarily occur along El Camino Real and the downtown and surrounding environs.

Mixed-use development combines two or more types of land use into a building or set of buildings that are physically and functionally integrated and mutually supporting. This can be a combination of residential, commercial, office, institutional, or other land uses. Mixed-use development accommodating 50 or more units per acre occurs along the eastern portion of El Camino Real corridor east of San Carlos Avenue, with the highest allowed density occurring in the Mixed Use – San Carlos Avenue zoning district at 59 units to the acre (Figure 3). Mixed-use districts account for less than one percentof the total land use in San Carlos.

Other Land Uses

Other land uses include light and heavy industrial, general commercial, landmark commercial, neighborhood retail, airport, planned development, parks, and open space.

Commercial development covers six percent, or 226 gross acres of all land uses in the Planning Area. Office commercial uses containing business, professional, and medical services make up 117 gross acres or three percent. Industrial uses comprise 262 gross acres or seven percent of total land area. Industrial uses include large manufacturing businesses, biotechnical and

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biomedical firms, and light and heavy industrial uses. Industrial uses are predominately located east of US 101 and between US 101 and El Camino Real. The San Carlos Airport is located at the City's eastern edge on land owned by San Mateo County.

Vacant Land Uses

Little vacant land exists within San Carlos; as of 2020, only approximately 30 gross acres (see Table 1) or three percent of the Planning Area is vacant. Vacant land is defined as having no building structures constructed on the land. Vacant land does not include parks nor open space, which is "vacant" or open by design. Vacant land can occur in each of the General Plan and Zoning designated areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Housing Element Update

All cities and counties in California are required to meet their fair share of the State's housing needs. The planning process for accomplishing this is typically implemented every eight years through an update of the Housing Element of each jurisdiction's General Plan. Housing Elements are long-range policy documents mandated by the State and further required to be reviewed and certified by the State of California's Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). The City of San Carlos' existing Housing Element Update covers the period of 2015-2023 (5th housing cycle) and included a Regional Housing Needs Allocation assignment of 596 new housing units at different income levels to be constructed during the 2015 through 2023 planning period. As of the end of 2020, the City has constructed approximately 526 units of the current 596-unit RHNA assignment.

All San Mateo County jurisdictions are now undertaking planning for the 6th housing cycle and the RHNA assignments assigned to their jurisdiction for the 2023-2031 planning period. The Housing Element updates must be approved by HCD and adopted by January 31, 2023.

The main components of the Housing Element update are dictated by State law and typically must include:

- A detailed analysis of the City's demographic, economic, and housing characteristics
- A comprehensive analysis of the barriers to producing and preserving housing
- A review of the City's progress in implementing its adopted housing policies and programs
- An identification of goals, objectives, and policies, in addition to a full list of programs that will help the City carry out the plan's vision
- A list of sites that could accommodate new housing, demonstrating the City's ability to meet its target number of new homes established in the RHNA

In addition, Housing Elements will have to address recent changes in state housing law enacted by SB 9 and SB 10 which take effect January 1, 2022.

SB 9 allows property owners to split a single-family lot into two lots, add a second home to their lot or split their lot into two and place duplexes on each. The last option would create four housing units on a property currently limited to a single-family house.

SB 10 would, notwithstanding any local restrictions on adopting zoning ordinances, authorize a local government to adopt an ordinance to zone any parcel for up to 10 units of residential density per parcel, at a height specified in the ordinance, if the parcel is located in a transit-rich area or an urban infill site, as those terms are defined.

State Regional Housing Needs Allocation

California State law (Government Code Section 65584) recognizes that local governments play a vital role in developing affordable housing. In 1969, the state mandated that all California cities, towns, and counties must plan for the housing needs of residents, regardless of income. This state mandate is called the Housing Element and Regional Housing Needs Allocation, or RHNA. As part of RHNA, the State Department of Housing and Community Development ("HCD") determines the total number of new homes the Bay Area needs to plan for, and their affordability levels in order to meet the housing needs of people at all income levels.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), working with the Housing Methodology Committee (HMC), then distributes a share of the region's housing need to each city, town, and county in the region. Each local government must then update the Housing Element of its general plan to show the locations where housing can be built and the policies and strategies necessary to meet the community's housing needs.

ABAG conducts the RHNA process every eight years as required by state law and local jurisdictions must update their housing elements to reflect the current RHNA assignment on this eight-year cycle. The last completed cycle is from 2015 to 2023 (5th housing cycle). ABAG is undertaking the RHNA process for 2023 to 2031 (6th housing cycle).

The RHNA methodology is required to meet the five statutory objectives summarized below:

- 1. Increase housing supply and mix of housing types, with the goal of improving housing affordability and equity in all cities and counties within the region.
- 2. Promote infill development and socioeconomic equity; protect environmental and agricultural resources; encourage efficient development patterns; and achieve greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- 3. Improve intra-regional jobs-to-housing relationship, including the balance between low-wage jobs and affordable housing units for low-wage workers in each jurisdiction.
- 4. Balance disproportionate household income distributions (more high-income allocation to lower-income areas, and vice-versa)
- 5. Affirmatively further fair housing

RHNA must also be consistent with the growth pattern from the region's long-range plan for transportation, housing, the economy, and the environment, known as Plan Bay Area 2050.

San Carlos RHNA Assignment

The City of San Carlos has been assigned a RHNA goal of 2,735 new housing units for the 2023-2031 planning period. This is broken down into 739 very low-income units, 425 low-income units, 438 moderate income units, and 1,133 above moderate income units. The RHNA assignment represents an increase of 22 percent over the number of existing housing units within the city limits. Because the Housing Element has to plan for or have policies in place to accommodate the RHNA assignment in any given planning period, jurisdictions typically plan for a slightly higher number of housing units than the actual RHNA assignment. This allows for some market variations between what the City is planning and what is developed. The City of San Carlos has determined it will include a buffer equaling 30 percent of the number of affordable housing units or an additional 481 units. Thus, for the purposes of the CEQA document the City is planning for a total of 3,216 units (2,735 RHNA + 481 buffer units).

The updated Housing Element must identify possible sites where future housing can be built, called opportunity sites, and identify the potential number of homes that can be built on these sites. San Carlos anticipates accommodating the new housing by increasing the allowed housing density (units/gross acre) in certain zoning designations and certain areas within the

designations. The areas which may have increased density are shown on Figure 6 – Potential Zoning Code Changes (note: the term 'Zoning Code' is synonymous with 'Zoning Ordinance'). The areas are located near transit and are primarily located along and west of El Camino Real, and along San Carlos Avenue near the downtown area. Figure 7 – San Carlos Tentative 6th Cycle Housing Sites, show parcels under consideration for increased residential density to meet the 6th cycle RHNA assignment.

Safety Element Update

The City will update the 2009 Community Safety and Services Element to meet current state requirements per Government Code Section 65302(g). The existing General Plan includes Public Services with the Community Safety Element to form a single Community Safety and Services Element. The City is proposing to rename the element the Environmental Safety and Public Services Element to reflect the focus on environmental hazards the element must address.

The updated Safety Element will provide goals, objectives, policies, and feasible implementation plans for protecting the community from any unreasonable risks associated with the impacts of geologic hazards, flooding and sea level rise, wildland fires, climate change hazards (extreme weather events, drought, extreme heat events), hazardous materials, airport operations, and general emergency and disaster preparedness.

General Plan (i.e., Land Use Element) and Zoning Code Amendments

Areas of the City are anticipated to be rezoned to allow for fulfilment of the City's RHNA by increasing the density in certain zoning designations. The possible Zoning Ordinance amendments are anticipated to include single-family residential (e.g., in response to SB-9), multifamily residential and mixed-use categories, which would provide for development of some lower-level commercial/retail, office, and potentially live/work uses. The Land Use Element (including the Land Use Map) is anticipated to be updated to ensure consistency between the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance as required by State law.

The possible zoning density increases include some areas within the following zones:

Mixed Use Neighborhood (MU-N), Mixed Use-North Boulevard (MU-NB), Mixed Use-South Boulevard (MU-SB), Mixed-Use San Carlos Avenue (MU-SC), Mixed-Use Downtown Core, Mixed-Use Downtown (MU-D) and Multifamily Medium Density (RM-59). Densities will range from 40 dwelling units per gross acre to 120 dwelling units per gross acre. Note, building heights are anticipated to be limited to four-stories for the MU-N and six-stories in all other zones. New residential buildings are anticipated to be lower than 6-stories as they approach single family residential designated areas due to the City's 'transitional standards' currently in place.

In addition to the proposed density increases, the City may also revise required Development Standards for residential and mixed use zoning districts such as setbacks, FAR, parking, landscaping, public open space, and other development related requirements.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The Focused General Plan Update: Housing, Land Use and Safety Element and accompanying Zoning Ordinance Amendments Project establishes the objectives listed below for the long-term growth and enhancement of the community.

- 1. Promote the preservation and improvement of the quality of existing housing and neighborhoods.
- 2. Encourage housing development located close to transit, Downtown and along El Camino Real with high quality, higher density, multi-family housing.
- 3. Assist in the development of new housing that is affordable at all income levels.

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- 4. Remove and/or mitigate potential governmental constraints to the provision of adequate, affordable housing.
- 5. Provide adequate housing for special needs populations.
- 6. Eliminate discrimination in the provision of housing.
- 7. Limit priority sites for new housing units to residentially-zoned properties along and to the west of the El Camino Real corridor in the Downtown area.
- 8. Reduce the potential loss of life, injury, and property damage due to seismic and geologic hazards.
- 9. Reduce hazards associated with flooding or inundation from inland flooding and Sea Level Rise
- 10. Protect lives and property from risks associated with fire-related emergencies. (wildfire)
- 11. Protect the community from the harmful effects of hazardous materials.
- 12. Plan for and protect the community from the effects of climate change such as severe weather including extreme heat events.
- 13. Minimize risks associated with operations at the San Carlos Airport.
- 14. Continue effective emergency response procedures to ensure public safety in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

PROGRAMMATIC EIR:

The City of San Carlos has determined that the proposed Project will require preparation of a Program EIR pursuant to the California Environmental QualityAct (CEQA). The Program EIR will evaluate the environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the project and will recommend mitigation measures to avoid or reduce significant impacts, where applicable. The Program EIR also is intended to help the City review future project proposals pursuant to section 15168 (Program EIR) of the CEQA Guidelines. The following environmental topics will be evaluated in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning

- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Transportation and Circulation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Cumulative Impacts
- Alternatives

OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES WHOSE REVIEW OR APPROVAL IS REQUIRED:

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- California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) will approve the Housing Element update prior to its adoption.
- California Geological Survey of the Department of Conservation will review the Environmental Safety and Public Services Element Update prior to its adoption.
- State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection will review the Environmental Safety and Public Services Element Update prior to its adoption.
- AB 52/SB 18 Tribal Consultation

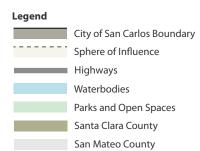
Attachments:

- Figure 1: Regional Location
- Figure 2: San Carlos Planning Area Map
- Figure 3: Existing Land Uses
- Figure 4: General Plan Land Use Map
- Figure 5: Zoning Map
- Figure 6: Potential Zoning Code Changes
- Figure 7: San Carlos Tentative 6th Cycle Housing Sites

San Carlos General Plan



Regional Location



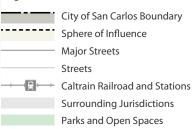


San Carlos General Plan

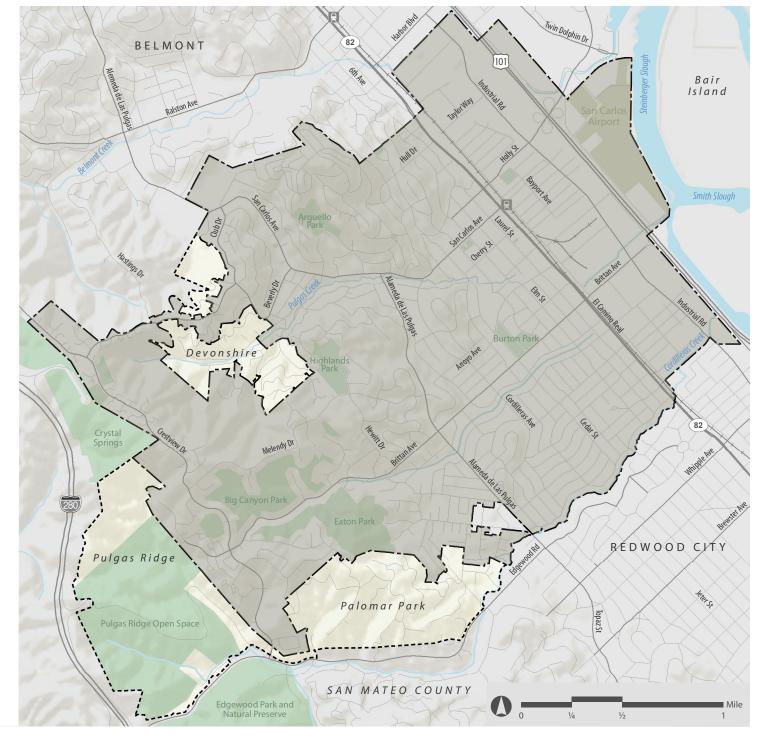


Planning Area

Legend



Waterbodies
San Carlos Airport



San Carlos General Plan



Existing Land Uses

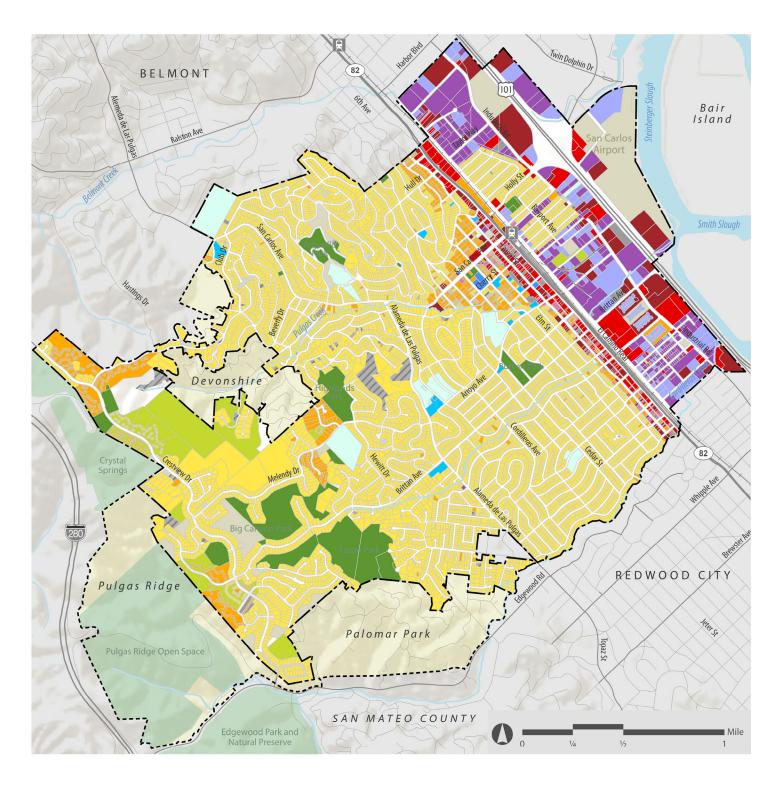
Existing Land Uses



Base Map Features



August 2020



San Carlos General Plan



Existing General Plan

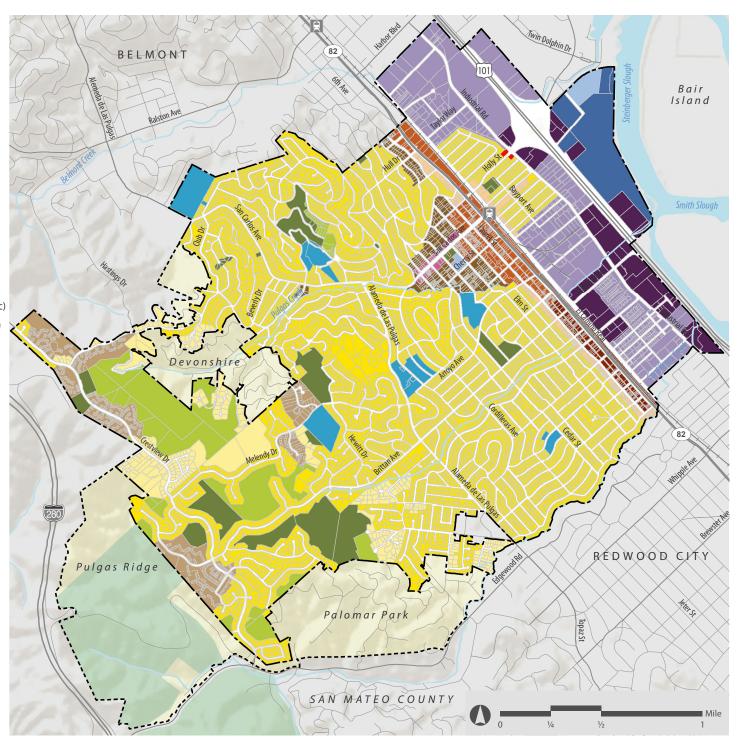
Existing General Plan Designations

- Single-Family, Low Density (3 DUs/Ac)
- Single-Family (6 DUs/Ac)
- Multi-Family, Low Density (10-20 DUs/Ac)
- Multi-Family, Medium Density (21-59 DUs/Ac)
- Mixed Use, Low Density (10-20 DUs/Ac)
- Mixed Use, Medium Density (21-50 DUs/Ac)
- Mixed Use, Medium High Density (21-59 DUs/Ac)
- Neighborhood Retail/Mixed Use (21-50 DUs/Ac)
- Neighborhood Retail
- Planned Industrial
- General Commercial Industrial
- Public
- Park
- Open Space
- Open Space Schools
- Airport

Base Map Features



August 2020



San Carlos General Plan

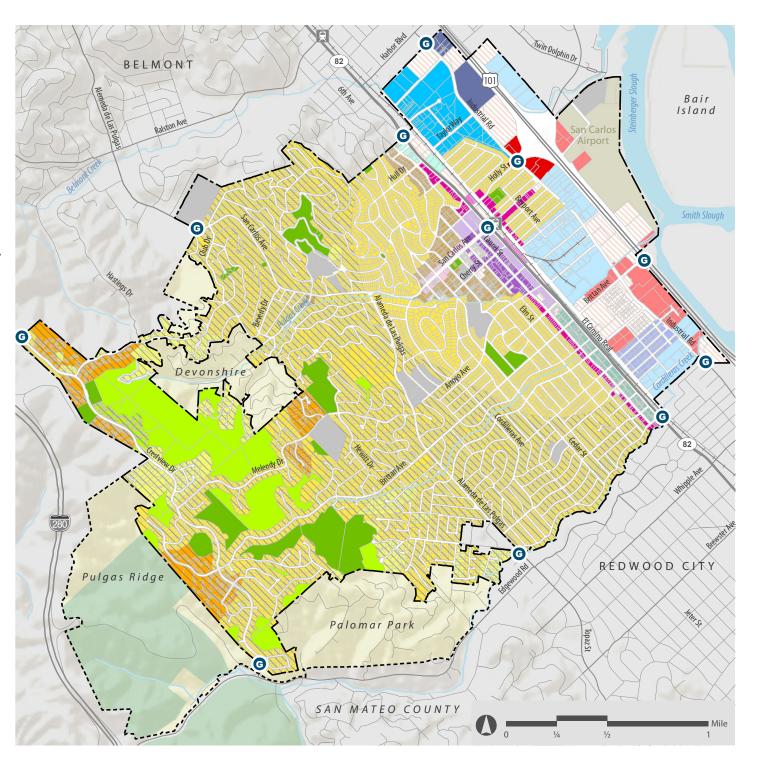


Zoning

Existing Zoning Designations

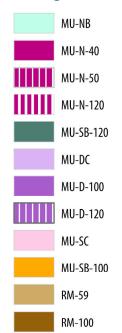


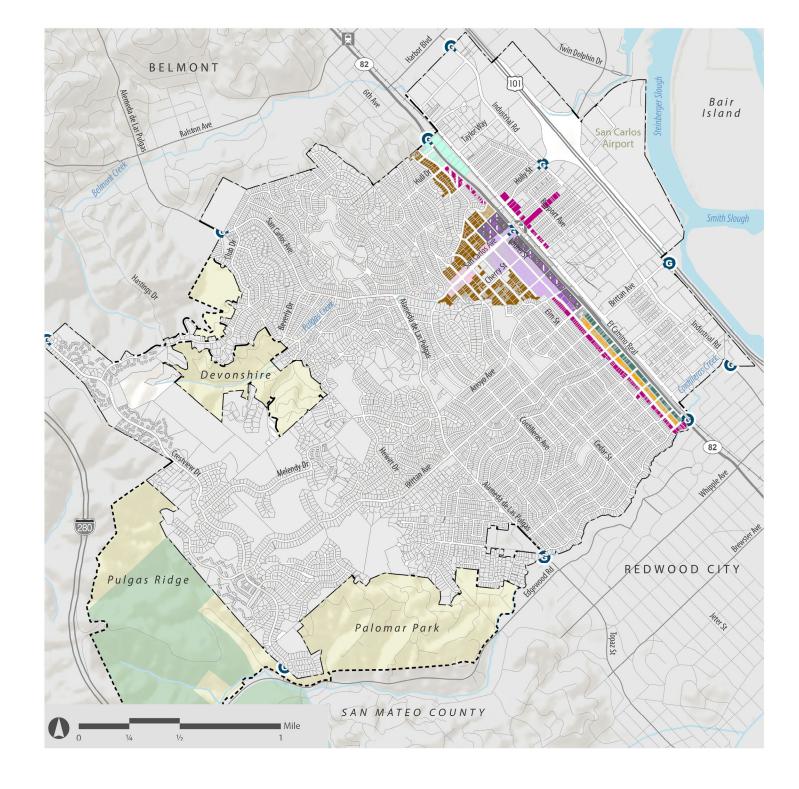




Potential Zoning Code Changes

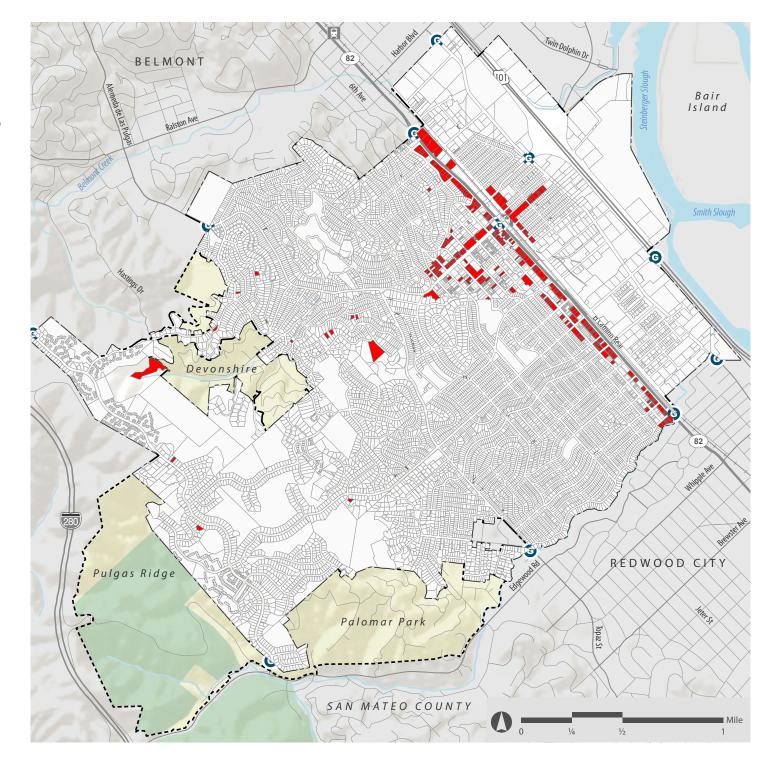
Zoning





December 2021

San Carlos Tentative 6th Cycle Housing Sites



Tentative 6th Cycle Housing Sites

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