

4.1 LAND USE AND PLANNING

This section describes the land uses and planning environment in the Specific Plan area. The information presented in this section is based on review of the Larkspur General Plan, 1999-2010 (General Plan) (City of Larkspur 1990), the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan (1992), the Zoning Ordinance, and the Larkspur Park Dedication Ordinance. A review of the consistency of the policies and provisions of these plans and ordinances with the Specific Plan was completed; this review is reflected in the discussion of impacts and mitigation measures contained in this section.

4.1.1 EXISTING SETTING

REGIONAL SETTING

The Specific Plan area is located in the City of Larkspur in Marin County, (see Exhibit 2-1). Marin County is developed in three broad corridors extending from north to south. The eastern corridor is heavily developed with residential suburban, office, and retail uses. The central corridor is agricultural, including extensive ranching and dairy operations. The western corridor is primarily open space devoted to recreational uses, especially the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Larkspur is located in the eastern side of the county and consists of well established, built-up neighborhoods. San Quentin State Prison encompasses most of the area that lies between Larkspur's eastern boundary and the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

LOCAL SETTING

The entire Specific Plan area has been disturbed in the past, and a majority of the site has been developed with commercial, recreational, transportation, and civic uses (see Exhibit 2-3). Existing land uses within each of the Subareas in the Specific Plan area are described in Chapter 2, Project Description.

The area surrounding the Specific Plan area is completely developed. The area to the north, across Doherty Drive, includes the Mt. Tamalpais Racquet Club, Hall Middle School, a sewer pumping station, the Twin Cities Police Department headquarters, and Piper Park (Exhibit 2-3). Further to the northeast is the Greenbrae Marina residential development with approximately 190 single-family homes, some of which have direct boating access to San Francisco Bay.

East of the Specific Plan area, across Larkspur Creek, are the Tamalpais Union High School District offices, district service buildings and equipment yard, and Redwood High School (Exhibit 2-3). South of the Specific Plan area, across Larkspur Creek, are the residential neighborhoods of Meadowood and Heather Gardens, with a total of about 193 homes. Several residential neighborhoods are located to the northwest of the Specific Plan area, west of Magnolia Avenue.

Exhibit 4.1-1

REGULATORY SETTING

The Larkspur General Plan provides a comprehensive long-term plan for development within the city. In addition, the City has adopted the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan (1992), which includes Central Larkspur Specific Plan Subareas 1 and 2 within its boundaries; it has also designated the Historic District, which includes all of Subarea 1 except the driveway access to Larkspur Plaza and which extends further to the west and southwest of the Central Larkspur Specific Plan area (Exhibit 4.1-1).

Larkspur General Plan

The General Plan designates the areas encompassed by Specific Plan Subareas 1 and 2 as Downtown. The Downtown land use category allows for commercial uses with the goal of promoting retail sales of convenience goods and personal services, while enhancing the vitality and character of the historic commercial area. Compatible uses include restaurants, retail shops, bookstores, and art galleries. Second-story housing is also allowed and off-street parking is required for new development. The maximum allowed FAR is 1.0.

Portions of the area designated Downtown are located within a historic district, which is contiguous with the area in the Historic Preservation District overlay zone. The overlay zone requires that the Heritage Preservation Board review proposed zoning changes and building, demolition, and grading permits. The historic district was officially recognized by the State of California in 1981 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1982. In order to maintain Downtown's listing on the National Register, a ratio of two contributing structures for every one non-contributing structure must be maintained in the historic district. Contributing structures are structures that are either historically or architecturally significant. Historic significance includes association with the life or activities of a major historic person, organization, or event. Architectural significance can involve many factors, including whether a structure is one of many good examples in the city of a particular architectural style or period.

Inappropriate remodeling can reduce the architectural significance of contributing structures and could ultimately result in the loss of the districts listing on the National Register. In order to remain compatible with the area's historic character, the scale of the buildings, shops, and streets has been kept small, and the area has remained pedestrian oriented.

The General Plan classifies Specific Plan Subarea 3 as Low Density Residential. The Low Density designation allows up to five dwellings per gross acre. One house is allowed on each lot. An attached or detached second unit is also allowed without the requirement to secure a Use Permit. Under this land use category, the minimum allowable lot size is 7,500 square feet in areas where slope gradients are less than 10%. The maximum allowed FAR is 0.4. Based on allowable net density of 5 units per acre for the Low Density Residential designation, the maximum development potential is estimated at 85 units with the potential for higher density allowed for affordable housing. A specific plan is required.

The General Plan establishes a number of land use goals, policies, and programs intended to “preserve and enhance Larkspur’s unique physical and natural setting, and its basically residential character, while accommodating suitable new development” (City of Larkspur 1990, p. 28). While many of the goals and policies apply to the general character of Larkspur, several goals and policies in the Land Use Element of the General Plan apply specifically to the Specific Plan area:

Goal 7: Preserve the character of Old Downtown (especially its historic character) and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy i: Maintain the existing scale of commercial establishments and the pedestrian orientation of the Old Downtown.

Action Program [13]: Prepare a Specific Plan for the Old Downtown that addresses appropriate uses, traffic, parking, economic vitality, building preservation, and design of new development, as well as the link between the Old Downtown, the Larkspur Plaza Shopping Center, and North Magnolia Avenue.

Goal 10: Create a “sense of place,” as focus, along Magnolia Avenue to serve as a town center for Larkspur.

Policy m: Strengthen the tie between the Magnolia Avenue shops and the newer shopping center at the corner of Magnolia Avenue and Doherty Drive.

Action Program [17]: Create a town square at or near the Ward-Magnolia intersection.

A major focus of the Specific Plan should be the block on which the Chevron/Walker property [portion of Specific Plan Subarea 1] is located—a property that may be a good location for a town square. A plaza strategically located on this block can tie together the old Downtown and the Larkspur Plaza shopping center at the corner of Magnolia Avenue and Doherty Drive. A Specific Plan for this block and its surroundings can also address ways to create a transition from the shopping center to the Niven Nursery property.

Policy n: Improve access to Old Downtown, but do not encourage or permit new thoroughfares parallel to Magnolia Avenue, or one-way streets.

Action Program [18]: Create additional non-vehicular (pedestrian and bicycle) access points to Downtown to supplement Magnolia Avenue.

The Downtown Specific Plan should consider, among other things: creating additional non-vehicular access points such as completing the trail link on the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way.

Goal 13: On those lots where development or redevelopment is expected to occur, integrate natural features into new development, to the greatest extent reasonably feasible.

Goal 14: Maintain Larkspur’s small-town character.

Policy r: Establish guidelines for the use and development of properties where change is expected to occur.

Action Program [21]: Encourage a vital and active use of the Chevron/Walker property that will also set aside appropriate public space and maintain the historic value and open space of the adjacent railroad right-of-way.

Action Program [22]: For a change in land use to other than the existing nursery uses, prepare a specific plan for the Niven Nursery property that identifies community desires for future use.

Goal 15: Maintain the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way for public benefit.

Policy t: Preserve the station buildings near Ward Street.

The General Plan also references the land uses in the Specific Plan area in the Land Use Changes section:

9. The [16.8-acre] Niven Nursery property fronting on Doherty Drive is designated Low Density Residential. However, the present wholesale and retail nursery uses on the site are viewed as desirable and will be allowed to remain indefinitely. Therefore, the property will retain its present zoning of L-1 Light Industrial, and the zoning ordinance will be amended to restrict the property to its present use. The property will be rezoned when it is no longer used for a nursery, and a specific plan will be required before the property is redeveloped in any use other than nursery. Some parts of this site may have potential for higher density residential—such as housing that is affordable to seniors and others—and commercial development, but potential problems with traffic, as well as transition to adjacent uses, must be addressed first.
11. The land use designation for the Chevron/Walker property will remain Downtown Commercial, but development proposals will be considered only after a specific plan is completed for the Downtown. A public plaza may be located somewhere in the block. The plaza location decision should be viewed in the larger context of what will be developed in the entire area from the intersection of East Ward Street and Magnolia Avenue north to Doherty Drive encompassing the western edge of the Niven property and the existing shopping center. For that reason, the General Plan designates this a special study area that requires preparation of a specific plan before any further development is allowed.

The Land Use Chapter of the General Plan does not currently designate a location for a new park in the Specific Plan area. However, the Community Services and Facilities Chapter of the General Plan does anticipate the development of additional public parks. Parks and

Recreation Goal 1, Policy a, and Action Program [2] call for the creation of additional parks in the City:

Goal 1: Provide park facilities and recreation programs for all age groups.

Policy a: When appropriate, continue to acquire individual lots for mini parks.

Action Program [2]: Identify potential park sites that could be acquired either as a condition of development approval or as park development opportunities may someday arise.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Paths Chapter of the General Plan (Chapter 8) identifies existing and planned trails in the city. According to the Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation Plan, there is an existing bike path on the east side of Magnolia Avenue, a planned bike path along the south side of the Specific Plan area, and a planned bike lane on both sides of Doherty Drive. Several goals and policies in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Paths Chapter of the General Plan apply to the Specific Plan, including the following:

Goal 1: Make it easier to travel around Larkspur by non-motorized transportation modes.

Policy a: Develop a comprehensive and coordinated trails and paths system that serves both recreational and utilitarian travel.

Policy d: Survey the “paper streets” of Larkspur to evaluate their usefulness in an overall path system, and preserve those “paper streets” identified as useful for paths.

Goal 2: Provide safe bicycle and pedestrian routes for all users, to schools, shopping and business areas, recreational facilities, open space preserves, and other communities, and associated amenities.

Policy e: Locate and design pedestrian and bike trails separate from streets and automobile traffic wherever possible. Designate on-street bike lanes where off-road paths are not possible.

Goal 4: Reduce the need for long distance and/or frequent shopping travel by private automobile.

Policy k: Encourage means of travel to and between retail areas other than by private automobiles.

Goal 5: Provide hiking trails and access points for public enjoyment and use of open space areas.

Policy 1: Provide reasonable access to open space areas via trails and entry points that do not adversely impact adjacent residential areas.

Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan

Subareas 1 and 2 of the Specific Plan are currently located within the boundaries of the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan, (Exhibit 4.1-1) but a proposed amendment would remove them from the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan if the Central Larkspur Specific Plan were to be adopted. The Downtown Specific Plan contains a number of goals, objectives, and programs that are intended to guide the future development of the Downtown area. The following objective and program apply specifically to the Specific Plan area:

Objective B.4: Improve the sense of connection between the components of the Downtown, including Larkspur Plaza, the Nazari property, and the retail core of Downtown, the Lark Creek Shoppes, and Larkspur Creek.

Program B.4.b: Allow for the expansion of the Lucky supermarket [now Albertsons supermarket] and development of the Nazari property that will create linkages between these properties and the existing Downtown.

Goals for individual properties in the Downtown Larkspur Specific Plan include two that are relevant to Specific Plan Subareas 1 and 2:

1. Lucky [Albertsons] supermarket. If the Lucky supermarket expands, the addition shall visually support the creation of a plaza around the railroad buildings on the Nazari property. Loading facilities shall be located so that they will not disrupt the connection between Larkspur Plaza and the Nazari property.
2. Nazari property.
 - < Consideration of a public plaza at the corner of Ward and Magnolia.
 - < Creation of an open space that preserves the context of the historic railroad buildings, with a possible view and pedestrian corridor to them from Magnolia Avenue.
 - < Development of a Class I bicycle/pedestrian path, with separation of bicyclists from autos in the former railroad right-of-way.
 - < Placement of storefront and business facades facing Magnolia Avenue and the public open spaces.
 - < Encouragement of pedestrian connections between Magnolia Avenue, Larkspur Plaza, and public open spaces on the site.
 - < Prohibition of through vehicle traffic on the railroad right-of-way.

- < Coordination of the design of the site with the creation of a northern gateway into the Downtown.
- < Creation of a human-scaled building ensemble composed of elements reflecting the architectural scale of existing buildings in the Downtown.

The Downtown Larkspur Specific Plan designates Subarea 1 as Storefront Downtown, and Subarea 2 as Transitional Downtown. The Storefront Downtown designation allows for retail, restaurant, office, multifamily residential, and hotel/inn land uses. Ground-floor uses facing Magnolia Avenue would generally be required to have retail uses, and building heights would generally be restricted to 25 feet.

The Transitional Downtown category permits retail, restaurant, office, recreational, multifamily residential, and hotel/inn land uses. The building height limit is two stories or 25 feet, whichever is less.

Zoning Ordinance

As mentioned above, Subarea 1 is zoned Storefront Downtown, and Subarea 2 is zoned Transitional Downtown. These zoning designations are consistent with those in the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan, as well as with the proposed Specific Plan land use categories in Subareas 1 and 2.

The Storefront Downtown zone allows the following uses: retail sales, not including gas stations and motor vehicle repair; restaurants; multifamily residential; hotels/inns; offices having a retail service character; banks; community meeting facilities; churches; government offices; movie theaters; instructional services; and group homes. Some additional uses are permitted with a use permit. All proposed new structures are subject to the review and approval of the Planning Commission, and for those parcels in the Combining Heritage Preservation District, review and recommendation by the Heritage Preservation Board.

The Transitional Downtown zone allows the following uses: retail sales of products and services, restaurants, multifamily residential, hotels/inns, offices, banks, community meeting facilities, churches, government offices, movie theaters, instructional services, and group homes. Some additional uses are permitted with a conditional use permit. All proposed new structures are subject to the review and approval of the Planning Commission.

Subarea 3 is zoned L-1 Light Industrial. Permitted uses include wholesale businesses, automobile and boat establishments, building material sales yards, public utility building and service yards, contractor's equipment storage yards, car sales, carpenter and cabinet shops, animal hospitals, bakeries, and dry cleaning establishments. Several additional uses are allowed with a conditional use permit. As a part of the approval process for future planned development projects in Subarea 3, Subarea 3 would be rezoned from L-1 Light Industrial to Planned Development. The Planned Development zone would be consistent with the residential uses and the public park that the Specific Plan designated for Subarea 3.

Park Dedication Ordinance

The Larkspur Park Dedication Ordinance (Municipal Code, Chapter 17.13) requires that 5 acres of land be provided for each 1,000 persons residing in the city (Ord. 896 3 (part), 1998) and that such requirements be satisfied by parkland dedications or the payment of in-lieu fees. Where a park has been designated in the General Plan, the ordinance requires that the developer dedicate land for a local park sufficient in size to serve the present and future needs of the residents in the subdivision and pay Park Improvement Fees. When a residential development is approved in areas where a park has not been designated and is not included in the development, or where subdivision is not involved in a residential development, a fee is nevertheless charged by the City to pay for the cost of purchasing and improving parkland needed to service the new homes. The formula for determining population is 2.45 persons per dwelling unit and 1.48 persons per multifamily dwelling (Section 17.13.040). The Park Dedication Ordinance is applicable to all new residential development in the city, including future development within the Specific Plan area. For example, the 85 residential units proposed in Specific Plan Subarea 3 would generate a need for 0.9 acre of parkland. If residential units were developed in Subareas 1 and 2, this figure would be commensurately higher. The Specific Plan recognizes the need for a park, which could be located onsite. Another option for future residential development projects in the Specific Plan area would be to contribute in-lieu fees to develop a park elsewhere in the city pursuant to the Park Dedication Ordinance. All residential developments would be required to pay Park Improvement Fees.

Simultaneous with the adoption of the Specific Plan, the General Plan would be amended to designate a public park in Subarea 3.

4.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Implementation of the Specific Plan would have a significant impact related to land use and planning if it were to result in:

- < inconsistency or conflict with the environmental goals, policies, or guidelines of a general plan or Specific Plan;
- < inconsistency or conflict with an ordinance or overlay zone adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect;
- < incompatibility of proposed land uses with existing surrounding land uses;
- < conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use; or
- < any conflict with existing zoning for agriculture, or a Williamson Act contract.

PROPOSED LAND USES

One of the goals of the Specific Plan is to develop the area as an integrated and cohesive mixed-use neighborhood that provides a focal point and activity center for Downtown and serves as a transition to the surrounding community. The Specific Plan promotes a mixed use development with retail, cultural, civic, and residential uses.

Subarea 1

Land use in Subarea 1 would be a combination of existing buildings and new development. Two existing buildings associated with the historic railroad, the former railroad station and the warming house, would remain and would be used in a manner that would contribute to the vitality of adjoining development. Another historic structure, the American Legion hall, would also be retained. The City-owned parking lot at the intersection of East Ward Street and Magnolia Avenue would remain or would be improved. No changes are proposed for Doherty Park. The remaining structures on the site, including the two one-story commercial buildings currently occupied by retail and office uses, would be demolished to accommodate construction of new buildings.

The Specific Plan would allow the new development of a variety of land uses in Subarea 1 including:

- < **Hotel/Inn.** Maximum of 36 guest rooms.
- < **Residential.** Overall FAR of 0.6.
- < **Retail Sales and Offices.** Approximately 58,100 square feet of developable area (if the site is not developed with a hotel and residential uses).
- < **Railroad Plaza.** Limited development would be allowed including a Class I bike path, railroad building plaza, parking, and landscaping. Adequate open space would be provided adjacent to the two preserved historic buildings. Open space would be accessible to the public and designed to accommodate community-oriented activities.
- < **Library or Other Civic Facilities.** A library may be constructed. The amount of library space would be determined by the amount of other space devoted to residential, retail sales, and office use.
- < **Parking.** Parking may be installed along one side of the former railroad right-of-way. Several development scenarios are possible, but each of the alternatives must retain or relocate the existing 28 spaces.
- < **Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes.** A new alignment to the regional bikeway, designed to Class I bike path standards, would be added.

The Specific Plan land use category for Subarea 1 is Storefront Downtown. This is consistent with the General Plan designation of Downtown, and the zoning designation, which is also Storefront Downtown.

Subarea 2

Subarea 2 has several existing land uses that are expected to remain. There is an Albertsons supermarket, and small retail establishments occupy an adjoining commercial building. A gas station at the corner of Magnolia Avenue and Doherty Drive provides needed services to the surrounding area, and 178 parking spaces serve the commercial development.

- < **Retail Sales and Office.** Specific Plan–permitted uses include retail sales, business and personal services, and office. The allowable increase in existing floor space is 4,500 square feet.
- < **Residential.** A maximum of 19 multifamily units would be allowed.

The Specific Plan land use category for Subarea 2 is Transitional Downtown. This is consistent with the General Plan designation of Downtown and with the zoning designation, which is also Transitional Downtown.

Subarea 3

A mix of development would be allowed on Subarea 3 with approval of the Specific Plan. The primary land use would be residential, with supporting facilities. None of the existing structures on the site would be retained.

- < **Residential.** Residential density would be limited to 85 residential units and would include a total of 58 single-family detached and cottage homes, and 27 multifamily units. The multifamily units would be low- to moderate-income housing units.
- < **Open Space.** An open-space buffer would be provided along Larkspur Creek with an adjacent bikeway/footpath. A landscaped buffer would be provided between Larkspur Plaza in Subarea 2 and proposed residential development in Subarea 3. Public park space would also be provided somewhere in the subarea, consistent with the Larkspur Municipal Code, and with the proposed General Plan amendment discussed below. The precise location and size of the park would be determined as part of the development review process.
- < **Community-Serving Facilities.** Offices, lounge areas, meeting rooms, and indoor and outdoor recreation facilities could be provided, primarily for the use of the residents of Subarea 3.

The Specific Plan land use category is Mixed Residential. The current zoning is L1 Light Industrial. The General Plan land use designation for Subarea 3 is Low Density Residential.

General Plan Amendment

The General Plan Land Use Chapter and the Community Services and Facilities Chapter do not designate a public park in Subarea 3, although Community Services and Facilities Chapter Action Program [2] anticipates that additional park land will be acquired and developed within

the city. In order to assure consistency between the General Plan and the Specific Plan, the General Plan would be amended to designate a planned public park in Subarea 3. The full text of the proposed General Plan amendment is shown in Appendix B, General Plan Amendments. The Land Use Chapter text would be amended to designate a planned park on the Niven Nursery site. General Plan Figure 8.2, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation Plan would be amended to designate planned Class 1 Bike Paths on the south side of Doherty Drive and on Larkspur Plaza Drive.

PROJECT-LEVEL IMPACTS

Impact
4.1-1

Potential Inconsistency with Policies of Larkspur General Plan. *Development proposed under the Specific Plan is generally consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan. This impact is considered **less than significant**.*

Development proposed under the Specific Plan is generally consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan. Subareas 1 and 2 are designated as Downtown in the General Plan, which allows for commercial uses and promotes retail sales. Maintaining the historic character of the area is also emphasized. Second-story housing is permitted, and the maximum FAR is 1.0. Allowed land uses in the Specific Plan for Subareas 1 and 2 include hotels/inns, multifamily residential units, retail sales, offices, cultural/civic uses, and parking, all uses allowed under the General Plan. The Specific Plan FAR would be 0.6 to 0.8 for Subarea 1 and 0.4 to 0.6 for Subarea 2.

The General Plan designates Subarea 3 as Low Density Residential, which allows for up to five dwellings per gross acre. The Specific Plan proposes a maximum of 85 residential units, which equates to five dwelling units per acre, a density consistent with the General Plan. The General Plan also requires that a specific plan be prepared for any development in the Chevron/Walker property and the Niven Nursery property. The Specific Plan would satisfy the requirement for preparation of a specific plan for those areas.

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation Plan in the General Plan identifies bike routes in the city, including those within or adjacent to the Specific Plan boundary. The Specific Plan includes the provision of a Class I bike path in the former railroad right-of-way in Subarea 1. Also, a bikeway would be provided along the west side of Larkspur Creek. While the Class 2 bike path proposed under the Specific Plan along Larkspur Plaza Drive and the Class 1 paths proposed on the south side of Doherty Drive and west of Larkspur Creek are not identified in the Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation Diagram (General Plan Figure 8-2), they are consistent with Policies a, d, e, k, and l in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Paths chapter of the General Plan. The proposed changes to Figure 8-2 would make the proposed bike paths fully consistent with the General Plan.

The proposed designation of a public park site in Subarea 3 is consistent with Goal 1, Policy a, and Action Program [2], and the proposed amendment to the Land Use Chapter and the Community Facilities and Services Chapter of the General Plan. This consistency results from designating a public park location in Subarea 3 in the General Plan amendment and Specific

Plan policies for Subarea 3. Given that the proposed Specific Plan is consistent with the goals and policies in the General Plan, this impact is considered less than significant.

Impact
4.1-2

Potential Inconsistency with the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan. *The project would apply new policies and guidelines to Subareas 1 and 2, which are currently within the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan boundaries. While one of the design guidelines in the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan may be considered to be inconsistent with the policies in the Specific Plan, both plans would achieve the objective of having pedestrian-scale design in Subareas 1 and 2 that reflects Downtown’s historic design character. This impact is considered **less than significant**.*

The Land Use Chapter Action Program [13] in the General Plan requires the preparation of a specific plan for the Old Downtown, and such a specific plan must address appropriate uses, traffic, parking, economic vitality, building preservation, and design of new development, as well as the link between the Old Downtown, the Larkspur Plaza Shopping Center, and North Magnolia Avenue. The Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan was developed and adopted to satisfy this General Plan requirement. The requirements and recommendations in the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan are considered to be the City’s vision for the Old Downtown. As such, any future development and planning effort within the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan area must be consistent with the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan.

Specific Plan Subareas 1 and 2 are currently located within the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan boundaries. While the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan boundaries would be altered as a part of the proposed action so that Subareas 1 and 2 would no longer be within the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan boundaries, the Specific Plan is intended to achieve the same vision for the Old Downtown within Subareas 1 and 2 as described in the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan.

The land uses proposed under the Central Larkspur Specific Plan are consistent with those identified in the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan. An assessment of the consistency between policies in the Central Larkspur Specific Plan and the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan concluded that the policies are consistent, except for Storefront Downtown guideline (2) of the Downtown Specific Plan, which requires that buildings in the Storefront Downtown designation “follow the pattern of bays found in the neighborhood.” The Central Larkspur Specific Plan does not explicitly require bays in Subarea 2, the portion of the project area designated Storefront Downtown in both specific plans. However, the land use and design policies in the Central Larkspur Specific Plan mirror the Downtown Specific Plan in all other respects, and the two plans provide essentially the same standards for achieving pedestrian-scale design in Subareas 1 and 2 that would reflect Downtown’s historic design character. Because existing buildings in Downtown do not all have bays, future buildings without bays would not be considered to be inconsistent with the visual character of Downtown. Thus the deletion of the requirement for bays would not diminish the effectiveness of these policies and standards in achieving the objective.

The Heritage Preservation Board’s review of proposed zoning changes and building, demolition, and grading permits for development within the Downtown Historic District and the contiguous Historic Preservation District Overlay zone is another planning process that would ensure applicable future development would fit the City’s vision for Old Downtown. The southern portion of Subarea 1 (south of Post Street) is located within the Downtown Historic District. Two existing buildings associated with the historic railroad, the former railroad station and warming house, would remain and would be used in a manner that would contribute to the vitality of adjoining development. Another historic structure, the American Legion hall, constructed prior to 1909, would also be retained. The railroad right-of-way’s status as “contributing” to Larkspur’s historic district would be maintained. Under the Specific Plan, all development in the southern portion of Subarea 1, including a hotel, office, second-story residential, etc., would occur consistent with the restrictions of the historic district, and adequate open space would be required to provide an appropriate setting for the historic railroad buildings. As such, development pursuant to the Specific Plan would be consistent with the Downtown Historic District.

Because the Specific Plan is generally consistent with the land use designations and policies of the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan and because the future development within the Downtown Historic District is subject to Heritage Preservation Board’s review, this impact is considered less than significant.

Impact
4.1-3

Potential Incompatibility of Future Development Projects with Onsite and Surrounding Land Uses. *The area surrounding the Specific Plan area is almost fully built out, and there are existing land uses in the Specific Plan area that would be retained. Development of the Specific Plan area with retail, residential, open space, civic uses, hotel/inn, or other such uses, would be consistent with existing surrounding and onsite land uses as set forth in the General Plan and the specific plans. This impact is considered less than significant.*

The Specific Plan area is located within and adjacent to the Larkspur Downtown area and is surrounded by urban development. Existing residential development is located to the south, west, northwest, and northeast. A community park is located to the north, and schools are located to the north and east. This area is almost fully built out. Development of the Specific Plan area with retail, residential, open space, civic uses, hotel/inn, or other such uses, would be consistent with existing surrounding and onsite land uses as set forth in the General Plan. The General Plan and the existing and proposed specific plans contain land use designations, as well as development policies and programs, to ensure that future development projects would be compatible with existing land uses. This impact is considered less than significant.

Impact
4.1-4

Potential Conversion of Farmland to Nonagricultural Use, Conflict with Existing Zoning for Agriculture, or Conflict with a Williamson Act Contract. *No conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use, would occur, and development of the site would not result in conversion of land that is currently in agricultural use. Development of the Specific Plan area would not conflict with existing zoning provisions intended to promote or retain agricultural uses. No portion of the Specific Plan area is currently under a Williamson Act contract. This impact is considered less than significant.*

The Larkspur area has experienced an urban level of development and is almost fully built out. No agricultural operations occur in the vicinity of the Specific Plan area. Although the Niven Nursery (Subarea 3) has supported horticultural operations since the early 1920s, the site is no longer used for agricultural production. There is also no identified Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance within the Specific Plan boundary. Therefore, there would be no conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses as a result of implementation of the Specific Plan, and development of the site would not result in conversion of land that is currently in agricultural use.

The Specific Plan area is currently zoned Storefront Downtown (Subarea 1), Transitional Downtown (Subarea 2), and Light Industrial (Subarea 3). Development of the Specific Plan area as proposed would not conflict with existing zoning provisions intended to promote or retain agricultural uses. No portion of the Specific Plan area is currently under a Williamson Act contract. Development permitted under the Specific Plan would not result in the termination of a Williamson Act contract and would not jeopardize agricultural operations on any land currently under a Williamson Act contract. This impact is considered less than significant.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Larkspur and the surrounding area are predominantly built out with a mixture of residential and commercial uses, and little developable land remains. Development in the city would be required to conform to General Plan policies, zoning ordinances, and other planning guidelines and would thus conform to the land use pattern in the city. The commercial, residential, and public uses that would be permitted in the Specific Plan area would be similar to existing land use types in the Specific Plan area and would be required by Specific Plan policies to conform to the existing land use pattern and architectural character. There are no agricultural operations in the Specific Plan area and its vicinity; thus, the Specific Plan would not result in a cumulative farmland conversion impact. As such, no significant cumulative land use impacts are expected.

All development projects within the jurisdiction of the City would be required to be consistent with the General Plan, other plans, and the City's ordinances, including the zoning and subdivision ordinances. Past projects within the City's jurisdiction have also had to be consistent with the City's plans and ordinances. The proposed Specific Plan would be generally consistent with the City's General Plan and Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan, and the zoning would be modified to be consistent with existing plans and the Specific Plan. As such, impacts such as land use incompatibility are not expected to result from the Specific Plan. Because the Specific Plan would not lead to the conversion of farmland, it would not contribute to any cumulative farmland conversion impact. Therefore, no contribution to significant cumulative land use impacts would result from implementation of the Specific Plan.

4.1.3 MITIGATION MEASURES

PROJECT-LEVEL MITIGATION MEASURES

No mitigation measures are required for the following less-than-significant impacts.

- 4.1-1: Potential Inconsistency with Policies of Larkspur General Plan
- 4.1-2: Potential Inconsistency with the Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan
- 4.1-3: Potential Incompatibility of Future Development Projects with Onsite and Surrounding Land Uses
- 4.1-4: Potential Conversion of Farmland to Nonagricultural Use, Conflict with Existing Zoning for Agriculture, or Conflict with a Williamson Act Contract

CUMULATIVE MITIGATION MEASURES

The project would not contribute to cumulative land use impacts; therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

4.1.4 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

No significant project or cumulative impacts on land use and planning would result from implementation of the Specific Plan.