

# CITY OF LARKSPUR, CALIFORNIA GENERAL PLAN

## CHAPTER 8, BICYCLE and PEDESTRIAN TRAILS and PATHS CONTENTS

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### **Chapter 8. Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Paths**

A network of hiking and biking trails is available to Larkspur residents. These trails provide a non-vehicular circulation system in the city and link residents with open space and neighboring communities.

Many links in the system are not secured, however. As land is developed for residential and other uses, there is danger that existing, informal trails could be closed to the public. Still other trails, which offer the opportunity to link parts of the trails system, remain undeveloped.

The principal purpose of this chapter is to plan and secure a complete and citywide system of trails and paths that will link sections of Larkspur to one another and to neighboring communities and open space areas. This chapter identifies trails of citywide significance that need to be preserved and provides basic tools for implementing a complete system. The chapter has been coordinated with the Marin Countywide Trails Plan by the Larkspur Park and Recreation Commission. It is not intended to serve as a guide for trail users. Precise plans for trails and paths will be developed in an updated Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan.

#### **Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

Larkspur is well served by bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Although some of the older neighborhoods do not have sidewalks, newer developments do. About 3 percent of Larkspur residents walk to work.

Bicycle paths in Larkspur are oriented mainly to serve students (including elementary, middle, and high school, and College of Marin students), and for recreation. A few residents - the 1980 census indicates less than 1 percent - bicycle to work. There is also considerable recreational travel by adult bicyclists through Larkspur, especially on weekends.

Figure 8-2, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation Plan at the end of this chapter, shows the location of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Larkspur

and indicates which connections are still to be secured.

In general, multi-purpose paths - accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians - have worked well in Larkspur. Following are two examples of such paths:

One parallels Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, from the eastern Larkspur City Limit, westward on an extra-wide sidewalk, past the ferry terminal, under the Greenbrae interchange with Highway 101, and behind Drake's Landing and Bon Air Shopping Center to an end at the western terminus of South Eliseo. This path has two spurs across Corte Madera Creek parallel to Highway 101.

The second path follows the old Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way east of Magnolia from William Avenue, northward through the Downtown area to Doherty Drive. The path crosses Doherty Drive in the crosswalk, and continues along a dedicated path on Magnolia Avenue north of the intersection, along the new Creekside development. The dedicated path disappears near Bon Air Road, and signs advise bicyclists to walk their bikes over the bridge across Corte Madera Creek. There, the path splits in two - one fork follows the creek to the College of Marin and the Town of Ross, and the other takes a more northerly tack to Bacich School. On the west side of Corte Madera Creek, the bike trail shares a narrow sidewalk with pedestrians through the North Magnolia area.

All the bicycle trails are open to pedestrians. There are several hiking-only trails in Larkspur as well. These are mostly in the hills that lead up to the Corte Madera ("North") Ridge. Another pedestrian-only facility runs along the Bay shore in Remillard Park.

Many of the designated bicycle facilities in Larkspur are actually sidewalks signed as bike paths. In some cases, they are only three or four feet wide, far too narrow for a shared facility. Examples of these are on North Magnolia Avenue, and on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, between Eliseo Street and Wolfe Grade. It would be physically difficult and costly to acquire land or easements and build better paths in these areas. Therefore, many of the existing links will probably have to remain as connectors in the city's system of paths and trails. Bicycles should therefore continue to be allowed on sidewalks, except Downtown, between Doherty Drive and William Avenue, where an alternate path is available along the former NWP right-of-way.

In addition to these paths and trails, there are several "paper streets" in Larkspur that continue to provide pedestrian access in some of the hilly neighborhoods. These streets were platted - without regard for terrain - as part of an early survey of Larkspur. They remain as paths and staircases, but are not well maintained. Another survey is needed to evaluate their usefulness in the overall path system.

The Bay Trail runs through the City of Larkspur along the east and west sides of Highway 101 from Corte Madera to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to the Richmond Bridge. This proposed 400-mile trail system will provide pedestrian and bicycle paths



is prohibited. Bikes must be walked on the sidewalk. The intersection with Magnolia Avenue and Bon Air Road also is confusing for bikes.

- Pedestrians and cyclists traveling along South Eliseo Drive and Corte Madera Creek between the Bon Air multi-purpose path and Bon Air Road must use the sidewalk - where available - or the road.
- Except for the shared sidewalk access described above, there is no comfortable way to get to the neighborhoods in Greenbrae along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.
- The NWP-rail-corridor bike path in the southbound direction across Doherty Drive is not signed. It is not clear where the bicycle facility continues. Similar signing problems occur at the south end of the NWP bike path, where there are shared roadway connections with William and Magnolia Avenues.
- The sidewalk bike paths along north Magnolia Avenue are too narrow for their intended use. Alternatives should be investigated.
- Pedestrians crossing Doherty Drive, especially when school begins and ends, find it difficult because of the steady volume of traffic. School crossing-guards ease this situation somewhat.
- Doherty Drive, north of the Redwood High School buildings, is narrow and therefore difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel. Although there are signs routing pedestrians and bicyclists through the Redwood High School parking lot, the pathways have never been clearly defined or marked.

In addition to the constraints in the bicycle and pedestrian circulation system listed above, there are areas where improvements would help to link parts of Larkspur, other communities, and open space areas. Some of those which have been identified are:

- Access to San Rafael could be improved (1) at Andersen Drive and East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard; (2) along the railroad right-of-way adjacent to Highway 101; and (3) along Wolfe Grade.
- Access to the town Corte Madera is not well developed.
- Access points to trails in the North Ridge and King Mountain are not well marked. If more access points were identified, hikers would not make an undue impact on any one neighborhood or residence.
- Access to Tubb Lake and the Southern Heights (San Rafael) Ridge has not been secured.

## ***TRAILS AND PATHS GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS***

### **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.

*Action Program [1]: Require the submittal of a trails and paths plan for all new development or redevelopment.*

Policy b: Fill gaps in the existing path system.

*Action Program [2]: Implement the Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation Plan shown on Figure 8-2.*

Figure 8-2 is to be used by the City in reviewing new development and redevelopment proposals to ensure that the Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation Plan is implemented. Any regional plans for trails and paths, and all development and redevelopment proposals, will be referred to the City's Park and Recreation Commission as may be necessary to confirm or modify alignments and details. Specific improvements would include, but not be limited to:

- Explore widening Bon Air Bridge to allow bicyclists to ride across.
- Explore a pedestrian/bicycle bridge to link the areas north and south of Corte Madera Creek between the existing bridges at Bon Air Road and Highway 101.

Corte Madera Creek is a natural boundary that separates the north and south portions of Larkspur. There are only three ways to cross in and around Larkspur: College Avenue, Bon Air Road, and U.S. 101. The separation between parts of Larkspur is most acute for bicyclists and pedestrians, who are most sensitive to roundabout routing. It is important to assure that Larkspur cooperates with its neighbors in planning new local circulation routes.

Policy c: Inventory and upgrade signing and access to trails and paths.

*Action Programs 3-6 below propose new signs where needs have been identified. The inventory proposed in Policy "c" will identify additional needs and actions.*

*Action Program [3]: Sign Magnolia Avenue as an on-street bicycle route from College to Bon Air Road (on the west side) and from College to Dartmouth/Skylark (on the east side).*

*Action Program [4]: Sign the sidewalk from Dartmouth/Skylark to Bon Air Road on the northbound side as a bike path.*

This sidewalk path is less constrained than sidewalks at other locations, and should be able to handle the two uses.

*Action Program [5]: Sign South Eliseo Drive as an on-street bike route.*

*Action Program [6]: Improve signs along William Avenue from Magnolia Avenue to the Community Fields path at Redwood High School.*

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.

*Action Program [7]: When possible and appropriate, upgrade and improve*

*the "paper streets" of Larkspur for use by the public as trails or paths.*

**Goal 2: Provide safe bicycle and pedestrian routes for all users, to schools, shopping and business areas, recreation 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.

*Action Program [8]: Require new development or redevelopment to provide appropriate sidewalks or paths.*

*Action Program [9]: Require, by ordinance, bike racks in commercial and park and recreation areas, and outside schools and other public buildings.*

*Action Program [10]: Install signs to mark the location of water fountains and public toilets near bicycle facilities.*

The signs will assist bicyclists and pedestrians unfamiliar with particular routes.

Policy f: Freeway improvements should include protected crossings for pedestrians and bicycles.

**Goal 3: Coordinate existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian routes with the circulation plans of neighboring communities and the County.**

Policy g: Develop and maintain hiking trails linking Larkspur with trails and open space areas in Marin County and nearby cities.

*Action Program [11]: Cooperate with Corte Madera to use the abandoned railroad right-of-way to develop a path from Alexander Avenue to Village Square and from William Avenue to Industrial Way, while protecting the habitat value of the Redwood High School marsh.*

*Action Program [12]: Coordinate equestrian paths with the Marin Countywide Trails Plan.*

*Action Program [13]: Secure the abandoned railroad right-of-way west of Highway 101 and along William and Holcomb Avenues for bicycle and pedestrian paths.*

*Action Program [14]: Improve the path on the NWP right-of-way from William east and south to the Corte Madera city limit.*

Policy h: Pursue the potential temporary use of the NWP right-of-way east of Highway 101 for use as a pedestrian and/or bicyclist trail until its use as a transit-way.

Policy i: Secure better trail access to San Rafael.

Trail connections are needed between Tubb Lake and the Southern Heights Ridge; at Andersen Drive and East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard; and along Wolfe Grade.

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

This goal is consistent with those in other chapters of the Plan which call for providing neighborhood-serving businesses and keeping the Downtown at a scale that will encourage people to walk or bike to the shops. Most of the policies and programs that would result in attaining this goal are contained in the Land Use chapter. Other policies are:

Policy j: Encourage neighborhood and local consumer services that can be reached by walking and bicycling.

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

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

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

*Action Program [15]: Develop guidelines and standards for paths and access.*

*Action Program [16]: Secure multiple public access points prior to development of areas adjacent to trails and open space lands (e.g., Big and Little King, Tubb Lake/Miwok Park, San Rafael/Southern Heights Ridge).*

This concept is important because of the difficulties experienced in clarifying trail access in already established neighborhoods when trails became public (as in Madrone Canyon).

Policy m: Reduce theft, noise, and parking intrusion associated with trails in neighborhoods.

*Action Program [17]: Use planting and lighting to discourage parties and similar gatherings at trail entrances.*

Policy n: Encourage persons using the hiking trails to walk to trail access points instead of using their automobiles.

*Action Program [18]: Allow parking at trail access points only where there is sufficient land area.*

*Action Program [19]: At trail entrances, provide appropriate gates designed to preclude entry by motorized vehicles (and in some cases, by equestrians).*

**Goal 6: Provide paths that encourage broad public use.**

Policy o: When developing trails and paths, consider the access needs of a variety of users, including school-age children, the elderly, and the handicapped.

Policy p: Develop and adopt design standards to reduce trail user conflicts and protect adjacent environmental resources.

The minimum paved width of most paths should be eight feet. Where more than modest use is anticipated, the paved section should be 10 feet, and an unpaved shoulder 18 inches wide should be provided along each side of the path for joggers.

Policy q: Coordinate with Marin County and its Countywide Trails Plan in developing a policy for mountain bike use of trails and open space areas.

**Goal 7: Reduce the number and severity of transportation-related accidents.**

The need for safe circulation must be recognized as a priority, even at the expense of circulation efficiency.

Policy r: Provide bicyclists and pedestrians with safe facilities for circulation.

Policy s: Place higher priority on safety as opposed to efficient traffic flow and speed.

Policy t: Identify streets that create a safety problem for pedestrians and bicyclists.

*Action Program [20]: Provide opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross Magnolia Avenue safely, such as additional all-way stop-controlled intersections, actuated traffic signals, or other means.*

*Action Program [21]: Continue bicycle education programs in schools.*

*Action Program [22]: Selectively install bicycle/pedestrian safety messages along paths to advise of rules of the road, need for courtesy, and spot hazards.*

*Action Program [23]: Improve the bike route along Doherty Drive.*

Visibility, connections, and signage should be improved on this important route.

*Action Program [24]: Improve the transition from the sidewalk bike path on Magnolia Avenue, north of Doherty Drive, to the path on the NWP right-of-way.*

*Action Program [25]: By ordinance, prohibit motor vehicles (except for*

*public safety vehicles) on bike paths and pedestrian trails.*