

City of Novato
General Plan 2035 Focus Area



NORTH, NORTH REDWOOD BOULEVARD CORRIDOR STUDY

August, 2014



The Issue

Determine appropriate land uses and circulation improvements to achieve appropriate, high-quality, transit-oriented development of properties in the North, North Redwood Boulevard corridor.



**STUDY
AREA**

Background

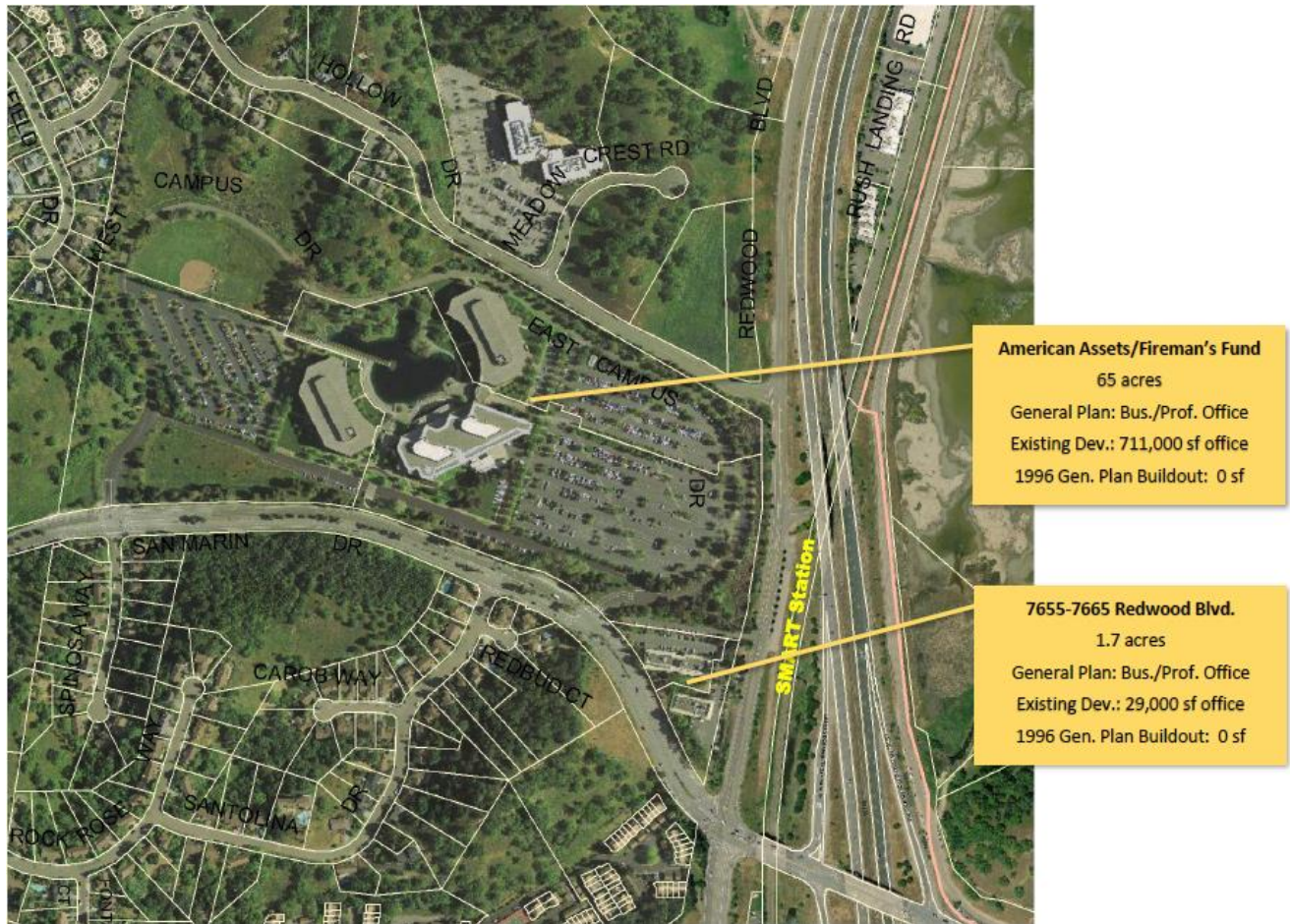
The North, North Redwood Boulevard Corridor, extending north of San Marin Drive to the City's northerly boundary with Olompali State Park. The mile-long corridor contains most of the City's remaining vacant commercially zoned land as well as the new SMART rail station. The centerpiece of development in the area on the eastern slope of Mount Burdell is the world-renowned Buck Institute for Research on Aging. At the southern end of the study area, along San Marin Drive, is the 711,000 square-foot office complex known by its principal tenant, Fireman's

Fund Insurance. The office center is owned by American Assets, which previously proposed redeveloping the site into a mixed-use complex. At the north of the study area is the iconic Birkenstock warehouse, currently vacant, and its companion office building, which is occupied.

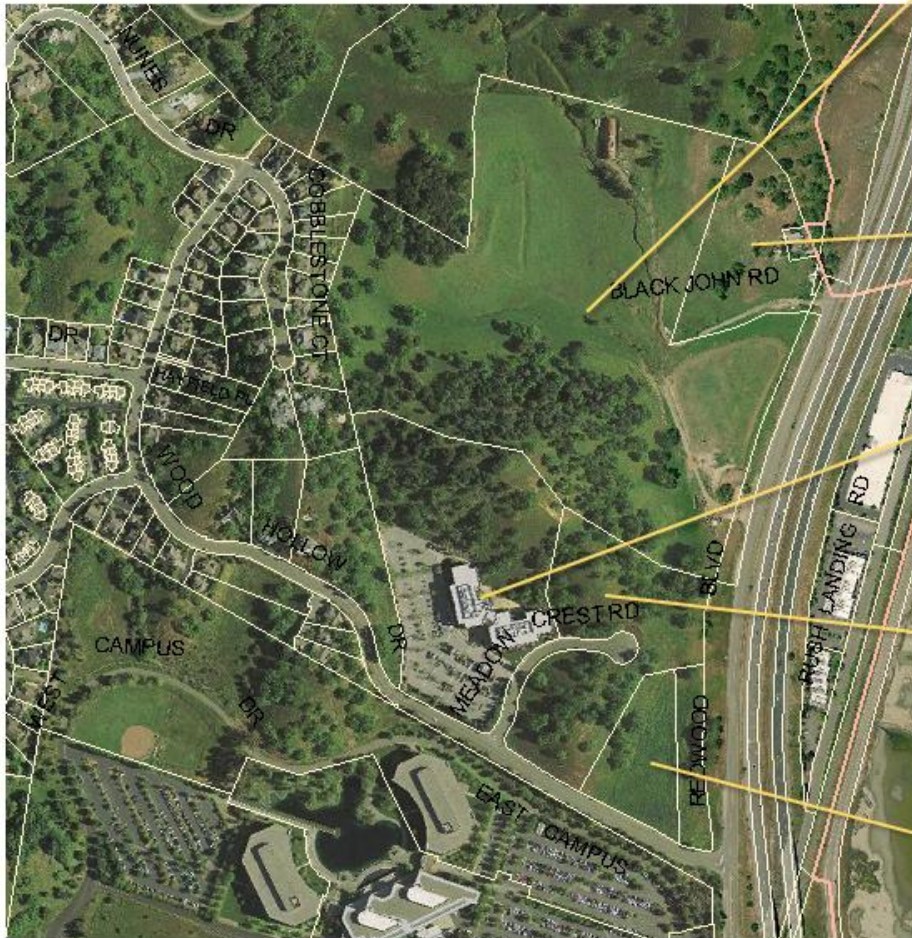
A four-acre portion of the Campus Properties site at Black John Road was designated as a housing opportunity site in the 2007-2014 Housing Element, which allows residential development of up to 92 apartments or condominiums or up to 120 senior housing units.

The study area was divided into three subareas which are shown below, with information provided for each property indicating its size, General Plan land use designation, existing type and amount of development, and the amount of additional development forecast for the property in the City's traffic model for the 1996 General Plan.

SOUTHERN



CENTRAL



Campus Properties – Black John
 40 acres
 General Plan: Bus./Prof. Office
 (AHO on 4 acres)
 Existing Dev.: Vacant
 1996 Gen. Plan Buildout: 272,800 sf office
 + 75,000 sf hotel

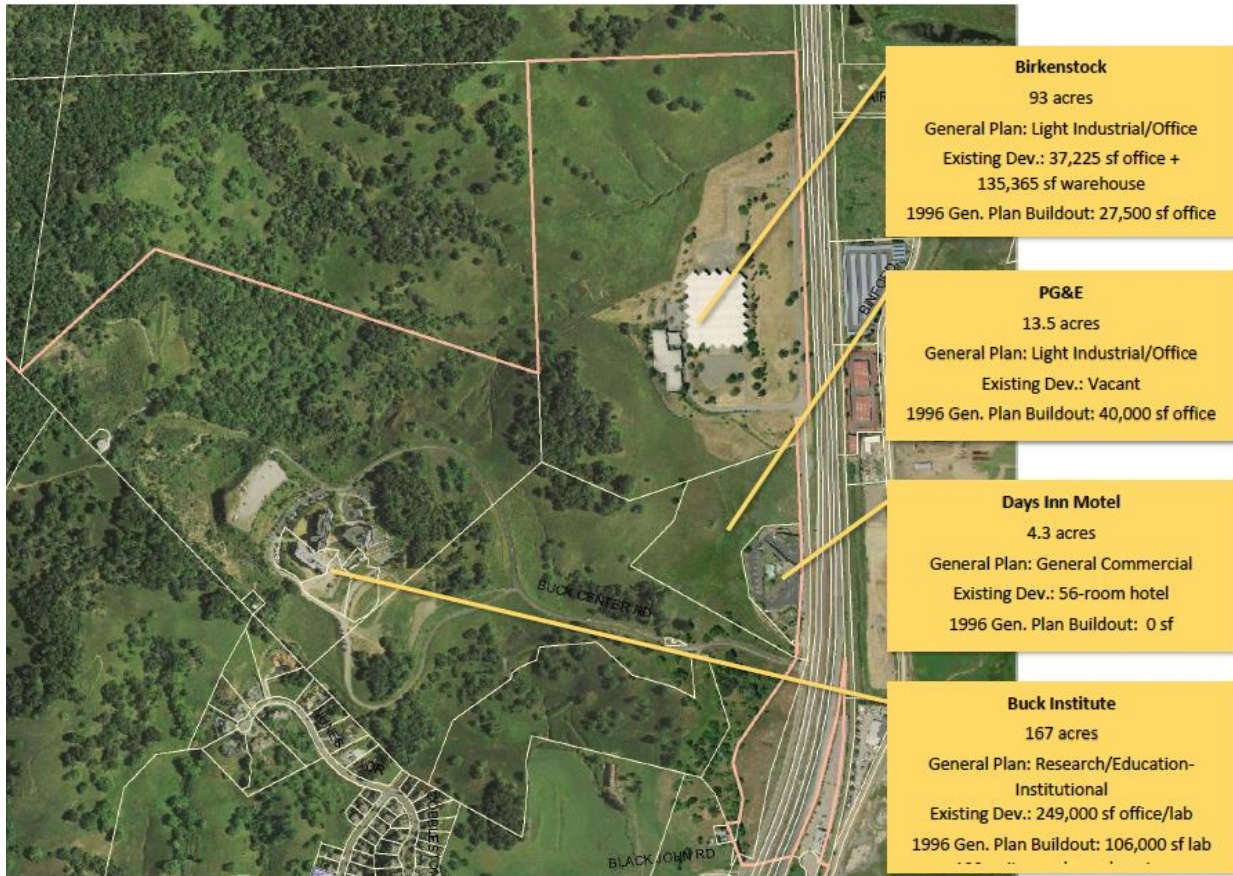
Lands of Wright
 4 acres
 General Plan: Light Industrial/Office
 Existing Dev.: vacant
 1996 Gen. Plan Buildout: 0 sf

100 Wood Hollow
 13 acres
 General Plan: Bus./Prof. Office
 Existing Dev.: 124,600 sf office
 1996 Gen. Plan Buildout: 0 sf

Oakview Office
 8.4 acres
 General Plan: Bus./Prof. Office
 Existing Dev.: Vacant
 1996 Gen. Plan Buildout: 24,000 sf office

Campus Properties – Wood Hollow
 4.5 acres
 General Plan: Bus./Prof. Office
 Existing Dev.: Vacant
 1996 Gen. Plan Buildout: 39,200 sf office

NORTHERN

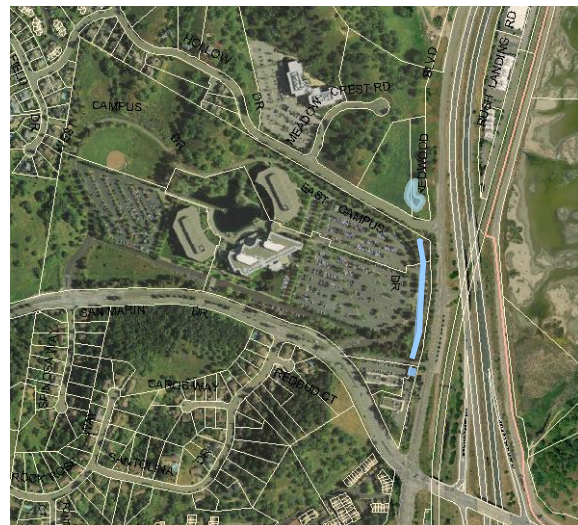


Constraints

Wetlands

There are scattered seasonal wetlands throughout the study area. Some have been confirmed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, others have not be delineated. Wetlands cannot be filled, but can be relocated on site if doubled in size with a long-term management plan.

Off-site wetland mitigation must be at least three times the size of the wetland filled.



PG&E Gas Distribution Pipelines

Two PG&E natural gas distribution lines traverse the study area. The lines range in diameter from 12.75 to 20 inches.



Public Process

To facilitate informed public input into the desired redevelopment of the NRBC two community workshops were held on June 7 and June 14, 2014. Approximately 60 persons attended the first workshop, and about 40 attended the second. The first workshop entailed presentations on the real estate market for office and biotech uses, results of traffic modeling scenarios, options for circulation improvements and design and land use options to best utilize the SMART Station location.

At the second workshop the attendees split into small groups for discussion of preferred land uses for each of the properties with development potential and input on desired circulation improvements in the area. The results of the participant feedback is found on Page XX.



Land Use Scenarios and Traffic Modeling

To provide information on various land use options for future development in the study area and the effects of a variety of improvements to the local street network and freeway ramps, City staff and local transportation consultants W-Trans analyzed several different combinations of future development assumptions and circulation improvements. These alternatives were then run through the City’s computerized traffic model which projects future levels of traffic congestion on city streets and freeway ramps. The results of these modeling efforts are summarized below, and are compared with the “base” assumptions that were used in adopting the City’s current 1996 General Plan.

The land use and circulation improvement scenarios were intended to gain knowledge of the effects on traffic circulation of:

- The build-out assumptions contained in the current 1996 General Plan,
- The effects of the City Council’s direction on future redevelopment of the North Redwood Boulevard Corridor, both with and without a possible home improvement center,
- A significant redevelopment of the American Assets property creating a mix of uses, including housing, a hotel, recreational uses and local-serving retail,
- The difference between office/R&D development of the Campus Properties versus housing development,
- The effects of adding “hook ramps” onto and off of U.S. 101 north of the San Marin/Atherton interchange, and
- The effects of connecting East Campus Drive to Redwood Boulevard at Rush Creek Landing Road.

The following are a summary of the land use changes and circulation improvements assumed in the various model runs:

Alternative	Land Use Assumptions	Circulation Improvements
1996 General Plan Build-Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nothing at American Assets ▪ Office and hotel on Campus Properties ▪ 2 more lab buildings and employee housing at Buck Institute ▪ Small additional office at PG&E and Birkenstock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Widen San Marin railroad overpass by 1 lane ▪ Widen/reconfigure Redwood/San Marin intersection: add 1 addn. lane SB*, EB and WB ▪ Widen Redwood to 2 SB lanes between Wood Hollow and San Marin ▪ Widen freeway NB off ramp to 3 lanes ▪ Signalize Atherton/Binford ▪ Widen SB freeway on ramp and create free right turn for EB San Marin drivers onto freeway ramp ▪ Coordinate signal timing

Alternative	Land Use Assumptions	Circulation Improvements
Alternative 1	Same as 1996 General Plan, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Assets' "Commons at Mt. Burdell" mixed use redevelopment plan Additional 100,000 sq ft of office at Birkenstock 	1996 General Plan improvements above, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widen San Marin railroad overpass by 2 lanes and add second right turn land onto SB freeway on-ramp Modify Redwood/San Marin intersection, widening EB approach for additional through lane and SB right turn pocket Add signal or roundabout at Redwood/Rush Landing Road and connect Rush Landing Road to East Campus Drive Add a SB U.S. 101 off ramp ("hook ramp") onto Redwood Blvd. near Buck Center Add a NB U.S. 101 on ramp ("hook ramp") from Rush Creek Landing Road
Alternative 2	Same as Alternative 1, but <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace office and hotel on Campus Properties with 300 housing units and 100 senior assisted living units 	Same as Alternative 1, but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new U.S. 101 hook ramps and no signal/roundabout accessing American Assets site at Redwood/Rush Landing Road
Alternative 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1996 General Plan updated with City Council direction on North Redwood Boulevard Corridor Study, <u>without</u> a home improvement center 	1996 General Plan improvements above
Alternative 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1996 General Plan updated with City Council direction on North Redwood Boulevard Corridor Study, <u>with</u> a home improvement center 	1996 General Plan improvements above
Alternative 5A	Same as Alternative 3, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Assets mixed use redevelopment plan (less 200,000 sq ft of additional office), Change from office to R&D on Campus Properties, and No further development assumed for Birkenstock 	1996 General Plan improvements above, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect East Campus Drive to Redwood Boulevard at Rush Creek Landing Road and close Redwood north of San Marin to all traffic except westbound right turns Add an additional left turn lane from East Campus Drive onto San Marin
Alternative 5B	Same as Alternative 5A, but <u>with</u> a home improvement center on North Redwood	
Alternative 6A	Same as Alternative 5A, but <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacing office and hotel on Campus Properties to 300 housing units and 100 senior assisted living units 	1996 General Plan improvements above, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect East Campus Drive to Redwood Boulevard at Rush Creek Landing Road, but retain Redwood Boulevard north of San Marin as is
Alternative 6B	Same as Alternative 6A, but <u>with</u> a home improvement center on North Redwood	

* SB = southbound, NB = northbound, WB = westbound, EB = eastbound

The following tables provide a specific breakdown on development assumptions for each developable property in the study area for each of the Alternatives described above.

SOUTHERN

Site	Existing	1996 GP	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6
American Assets (Fireman's Fund)	711,000 office	0	213,000 office 41,000 retail/rest. 175 room hotel 84,000 health club 8,000 day care 10 acres rec. fields 150 hsg. units	Same as Alt. 1	0	0	13,300 office 41,000 retail/rest. 175 room hotel 84,000 health club 8,000 day care 10 acres rec. fields 150 hsg. units	Same as Alt. 5
7655-7665 Redwood	29,000 office	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

CENTRAL

Site	Existing	1996 GP	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6
Campus Properties (Wood Hollow)	0	39,200 office	39,200 office	100 units assisted senior housing	39,200 office	39,200 office	39,200 office	100 units assisted senior housing
Oakview Office	24,000 office	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
100 Wood Hollow	124,600 office	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campus Properties (Black John)	0	272,800 office; 75,000 hotel	272,800 office; 75,000 hotel	300 housing units	272,800 office; 75,000 hotel	272,800 office; 75,000 hotel	347,800 R&D	300 housing units

NORTHERN

Site	Existing	1996 GP	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6
Buck Institute	249,000 office and lab	106,000 lab; 130 employee housing units	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP
Days Inn Motel	56-room motel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PG&E	0	40,000 office	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP	Same as 1996 GP
Birkenstock	37,225 office; 135,365 warehouse	27,500 office	127,500 office	127,500 office	27,500 office	27,500 office	0	0

Images of the possible Circulation Improvements are included in an appendix to this report.

The following conclusions were drawn by staff and our traffic consultants from the modeling exercise:

Land Use

- Replacing the General Plan Build-Out assumptions with the Council’s direction from the North Redwood Boulevard Corridor Study significantly reduces future trip generation.
- The addition of a Friedman’s-style home improvement store doesn’t have an appreciable effect on Redwood/San Marin intersection operations.
- All future land use scenarios can meet the City’s traffic level-of-service standards (maximum LOS D).
- Redevelopment of the American Assets property is possible within the City’s traffic level-of-service thresholds, but eliminating new office development at American Assets and at Birkenstock significantly reduces future trip generation.
- A change from office to residential on Campus Properties results in a 20-30% traffic reduction.

Circulation

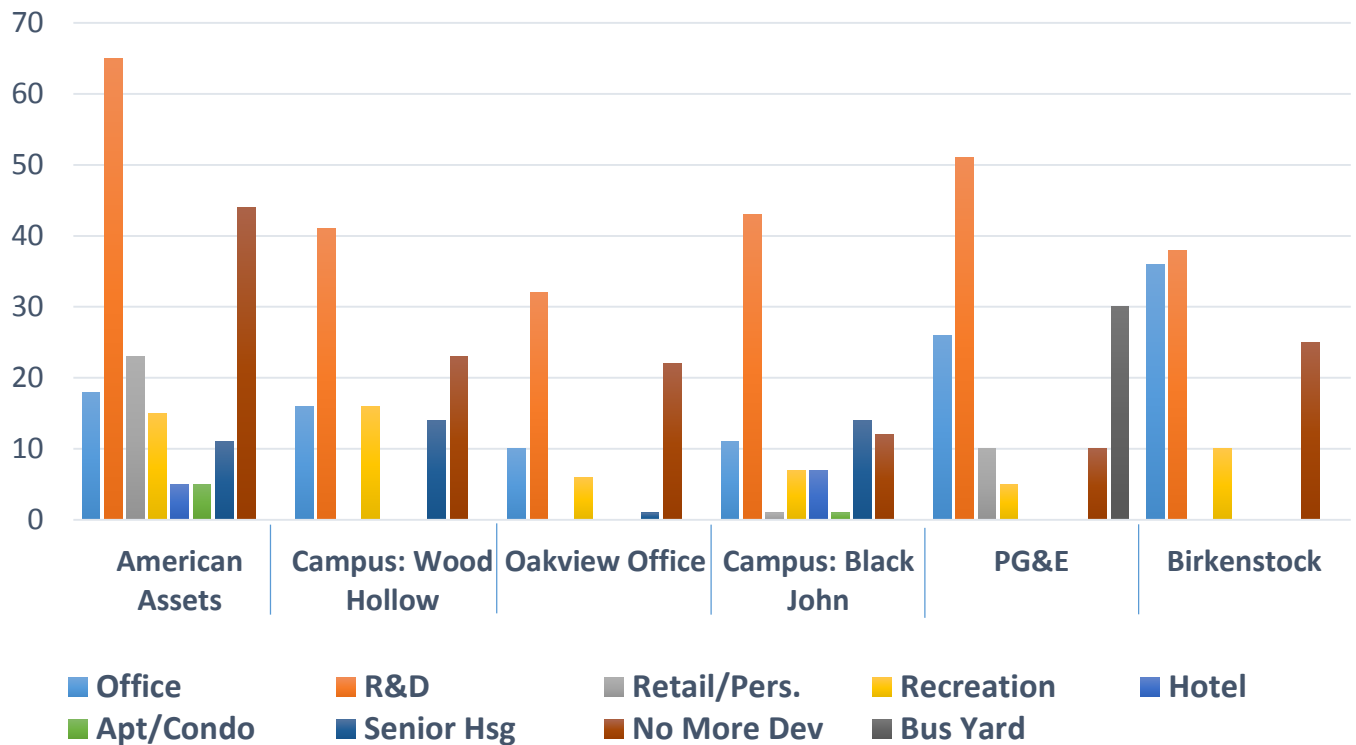
- Widening the freeway overpass doesn’t appear necessary for any of the future land use scenarios.
- There are a number of needed future improvements to Redwood/San Marin intersection, freeway ramps and railroad overpass to accommodate increases in traffic and meet the City’s level-of-service standards.
- In some scenarios (including assumed build-out of the 1996 General Plan) total elimination of peak hour queuing impacts would require further widening of the railroad overcrossing to 9 lanes (2 more than current, and 1 more than previously planned in the 1996 General Plan).

- “Hook ramps” to and from U.S. 101 are helpful, but may not be worth the cost and time to implement through Caltrans.
- Rerouting Redwood Boulevard north of San Marin to East Campus Drive improves the performance of the Redwood/San Marin intersection but results in excessive queuing that would require further widening of the railroad overcrossing to address.
- Creating a minor, low-speed roadway connection between North Redwood and East Campus Drive would enhance multi-modal connectivity including better pedestrian and bicycle access to the SMART station, provide a modest amount of traffic relief and improve emergency response options.

Participant Feedback

The attendees at the June 14, 2014 workshop used a “dot” exercise to indicate those land uses they found acceptable (“could live with”) and to identify a preferred land use for each of the developable properties in the study area. Oral comments or suggestions were also captured. The results of this input is summarized below.

Land Use and Design



Comments:

Southern (American Assets; SMART Station)

- Repurpose existing office space for R&D
- Mixed Use with commercial service/retail uses for local residents and employees
- Modest expansion and parking for additional development

- Transit Oriented Development – small shops near SMART
- Small retail to serve local residents
- Support for previous Commons at Mt. Burdell project
- Additional parking for SMART
- Employee shuttle from SMART
- Housing is too isolated from other areas of the city
- No residential or hotel (9 in agreement)
- Keep it the way it is – concern over traffic increases and impacts on lifestyles in the area

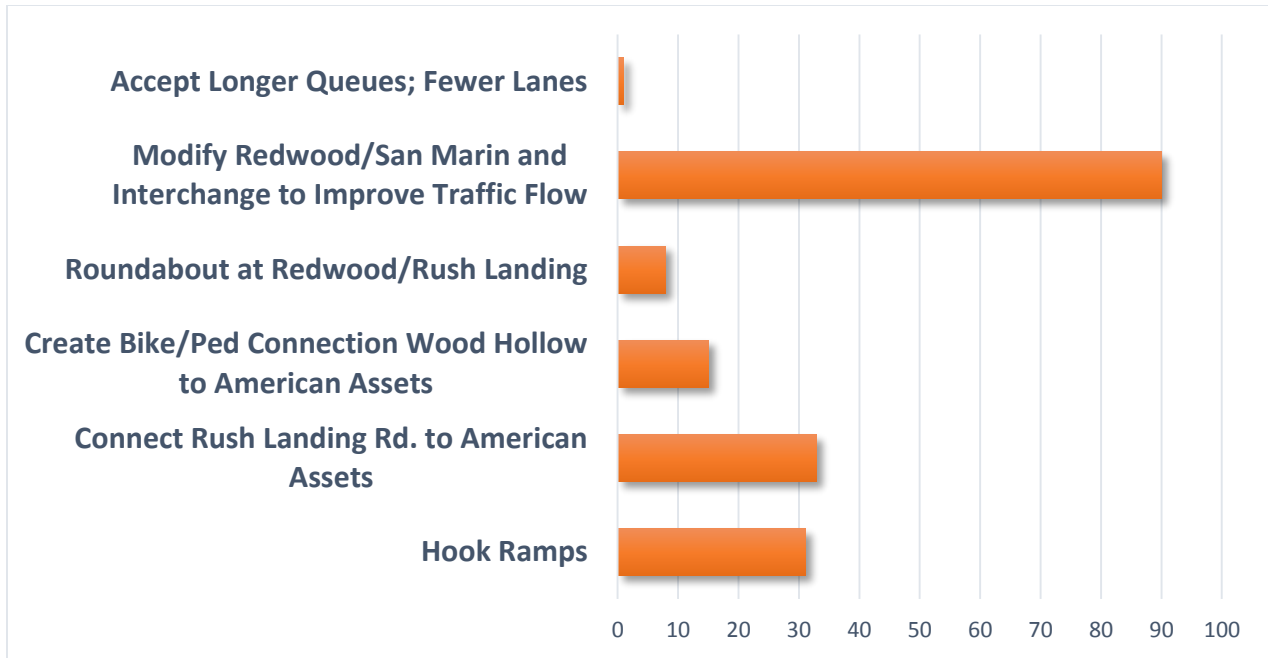
Central (Campus Properties: Wood Hollow and Black John Road; Oakview Offices)

- Some attendees prefer no development on any of these sites
- No high density housing
- Wood Hollow site: could live with office, R&D, recreation, senior housing; have direct access to Redwood, not Wood Hollow; Housing Element EIR concluded this was the “worst site for housing”
- Oakview Office site: could live with office, R&D, senior housing
- Black John site: mixed use, office, residential, no retail
- Support for housing on all three sites
- Other uses: agriculture, museum, single family homes, school (pre-K to university)

Northern (PG&E; Birkenstock)

- No housing
- No hotel
- No large retail
- Support biotech on both sites
- Support recreational use on both sites; small scale recreational use
- Support & opposition for bus yard at PG&E (issue with noise compatibility with motel)
- Support for conversion of Birkenstock warehouse to office use
- Other uses: environmental or tech. museum

Circulation Improvements



Comments:

- Hook ramps only if needed to mitigate more office development; only hook on-ramp to northbound 101
- Widen Redwood Blvd. at SMART station; widen Redwood to two lanes south of Wood Hollow to San Marin Drive; consider two right turn lanes from Wood Hollow onto Redwood
- Bike/pedestrian connection from Wood Hollow to American Assets (if no other changes to Wood Hollow)
- Keep Redwood Blvd. north of San Marin two-way
- Roundabout at Redwood and Rush Landing Rd. only if safe for pedestrians and train riders
- Create pedestrian fly-over bridge from SMART to American Assets
- Plan for SMART parking now
- Access Wood Hollow site from Redwood Blvd., not Wood Hollow

The following is a staff summary of some of the key points contained in the participant feedback, much of which came from residents of the Partridge Knolls neighborhood:

Land Use

- Very little support for additional housing, although some support for senior housing.

- Generally, support for as little new development as possible due to concerns over traffic impacts, and some support for no development (i.e., public purchase) of remaining vacant properties.
- American Assets: Preference for R&D replacing existing office space, some local-serving retail, but generally no or minimal additional development.
- Campus Properties – Wood Hollow: Preference for office or R&D, or for no development/public purchase.
- Oakview Office (currently entitled for 24,000 sq. ft. of office): Preference for office or R&D, or for no development/public purchase.
- Campus Properties – Black John Road: Strong preference for R&D or office.
- PG&E: Preference for office, R&D or a bus yard.
- Birkenstock: Preference for office or R&D reutilizing the vacant warehouse square footage, or for no further development.

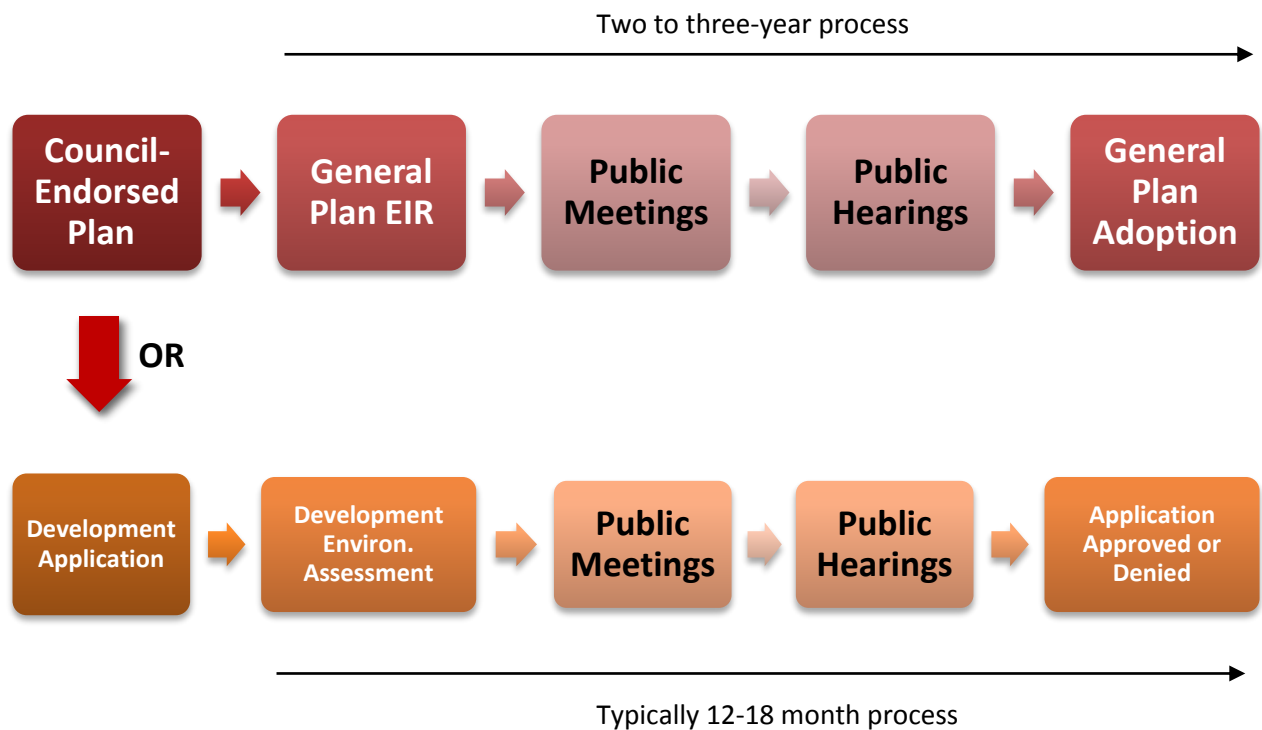
Circulation

- Strong support for making improvements to the San Marin/Redwood intersection and freeway ramps to improve traffic circulation.
- Support for widening southbound Redwood Boulevard between Wood Hollow and San Marin.
- Concern over potential spill-over parking effects of the new SMART station.
- Support for a connection between Rush Landing Road and East Campus Drive, particularly to improve pedestrian and bicycle access by office employees to the SMART station.
- Support for requiring access to the Campus Properties Wood Hollow site from Redwood Boulevard and not from Wood Hollow.

In addition to feedback from the workshop, the land use and circulation options were posted on Open Novato, requesting that viewers provide input into their preferences. The results can be seen at: <http://www.ci.novato.ca.us/index.aspx?page=1987>.

Next Steps

The North, North Redwood Boulevard Corridor Study is being conducted as part of the larger update of the 1996 General Plan. Completion of the Draft General Plan and its associated EIR will likely take two to three years, so property owners in the Study Area may choose to file applications for new development and associated environmental review in advance of the adoption of the new General Plan and should be assisted in proposing projects likely to be successful by knowing the public input and City Council direction provided by this Study. These applications, in advance of the City initiated zoning changes, will likely take the form of individual property rezonings or General Plan redesignations, which adds a legislative action by the City Council (with recommendations from the Planning Commission, Design Review Commission and Economic Development Advisory Commission) along with the typical design review.



Staff Recommended Vision Statement

“The North, North Redwood Boulevard Corridor provides an opportunity for the City to address its economic development objective of creating new high-wage jobs through development and redevelopment of properties located between the scenic slopes of Mount Burdell and U.S. 101. The corridor should generally be developed with high-quality office and research and development uses and supporting uses such as local-serving retail and recreational uses. New development should maximize the use of the new SMART railway station in terms of site design, on and off-site bicycle and pedestrian access and through innovative employee trip reduction measures. Circulation improvements must be made to the San Marin/Redwood Boulevard intersection and freeway ramps to assure that the City’s traffic level-of-service standards are met at all times and that new development, in conjunction with the City’s traffic impact fees, pays for needed traffic improvements commensurate with their impacts and timing of development.”

Staff Recommended Use and Design Guidelines

<i>Property</i>	<i>Land Use and Design Criteria</i>
American Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow conversion of existing office space to research and development. ▪ Allow addition of up to 30,000 square feet of small locally-serving retail/personal service space in a location near the new SMART station. ▪ Consider a mixed use redevelopment if proposed by the property owner to benefit from proximity to the new SMART station, but do not assume such development in the EIR prepared for the new General Plan.
Campus Properties – Wood Hollow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retain existing land use designation and zoning of the site for Business/Professional Office. ▪ Take vehicular access to the site from Redwood Boulevard. ▪ Respect existing wetlands and oak trees in project design. ▪ Take into account slope stability and the presence of gas transmission pipelines in project design and siting of buildings.
Oakview Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retain existing land use designation and zoning of the site for Business/Professional Office. ▪ Respect existing oak trees in project design.
Campus Properties – Black John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retain existing land use designation and zoning of the site for Business/Professional Office. ▪ Respect existing wetlands and oak trees in project design. ▪ Take into account slope stability and the presence of gas transmission pipelines in project design and siting of buildings.
Lands of Wright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redesignate and rezone the site from Light Industrial/Office to Business/Professional Office.
PG&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redesignate and rezone the site from Light Industrial/Office to Business/Professional Office. ▪ Allow a bus storage facility if appropriately screened from off-site views and if noise impacts on the adjacent motel are mitigated.

Birkenstock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redesignate and rezone the site from Light Industrial/Office to Business/Professional Office. ▪ Allow reuse of the existing warehouse structure for office or research and development use.
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Staff Recommended Circulation Improvements

Circulation Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement identified improvements to the San Marin Drive/Redwood Boulevard intersection, freeway ramps and Atherton Avenue/Binford Road intersection to assure continued traffic operations which meet the City's level-of-service standards. [Note: The Draft General Plan will include a list of anticipated roadway improvements, including those listed in Alternative 2 above.] ▪ Evaluate the need for an additional southbound lane on Redwood Boulevard between Wood Hollow Drive and San Marin Drive. ▪ In conjunction with redevelopment of the American Assets site connect East Campus Drive to the Rush Creek Landing Road/Redwood Boulevard intersection, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities to promote access by office employees to the SMART station and to create a location for the retail/personal service uses described above. Respect existing wetlands in making the roadway connection. ▪ Improve bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities along the corridor through City investments or in conjunction with private development. ▪ Require new development to prepare and implement an employee trip reduction plan. ▪ Develop a funding plan for required roadway improvements in the area, determining if an additional area impact fee is necessary for full funding.
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General Plan Designations

<i>Property</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Current General Plan Designations</i>			<i>Draft General Plan Designations</i>
		<i>General Plan*</i>	<i>FAR</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>General Plan*</i>
American Assets	65	BPO	0.4	35-42'	BPO
Campus Properties – Wood Hollow	4.5	BPO	0.4	35-42'	BPO
Oakview Office	8.4	BPO	0.4	35-42'	BPO
Campus Properties – Black John	36	BPO	0.4	35-42'	BPO
	4	BPO with AHO zoning	0.4		BPO with AHO zoning
Lands of Wright	4	LIO	0.4	35-42'	BPO
Buck Institute	167	LIO	335,000 sq. ft. maximum	4 stories	REI
PG&E	13.5	LIO	0.4	35-42'	PBO, with bus storage yard added as an allowable use with a Use Permit
Birkenstock	93	LIO	0.4	35 - 42'	BPO

* BPO = Business and Professional Office; LIO = Light Industrial/Office; REI = Research/Education-Institutional

Development Forecasts (for analysis in the General Plan EIR)

<i>Property</i>	<i>Estimated Likely Near-Term Development Potential</i>
American Assets	30,000 sq. ft. neighborhood retail
Campus Properties – Wood Hollow	40,000 sq. ft. office/R&D
Oakview Office	24,000 sq. ft. office
Campus Properties – Black John + Lands of Wright	350,000 sq. ft. office/R&D 120 senior living units
Buck Institute	130,000 sq. ft. lab space 130 employee housing units
PG&E	40,000 sq. ft. office/R&D
Birkenstock	Convert 135,365 sq. ft. warehouse to office
TOTAL	669,365 sq. ft. office/R&D 114 senior living units 130 employee housing units 30,000 sq. ft. neighborhood retail Less 135,365 sq. ft. warehouse

APPENDIX 1: JUNE 14, 2014 PARTICIPANT SURVEY FORM

PREFERRED LAND USES

At the 6/14 workshop, participants were given green dots to place on each land use that they believe would be acceptable (“could live with”) for each property and a gold dot to indicate their preferred land use type, again for each property. Note that “No More Development” isn’t an option for vacant sites (unless there is public acquisition).

For computation of results, the green (acceptable/could live with) dots were counted as one point and each gold dot was counted as five points.

	Office	R&D	Retail/Pers. Services	Recreation	Hotel	Apts./Condos	Senior Hsg.	Other Uses	No More Dev.
<i>Southern</i>									
American Assets	18	65	23	15	5	5	11	Additional SMART parking	44
<i>Central</i>									
Campus: Wood Hollow	16	41	0	16	0	0	14	Agricultural Open Space	Vacant site 23
Oakview Office site	10	32	0	6	0	0	1		Vacant site 22
Campus: Black John	11	43	1	7	7	1	14	Agricultural	Vacant site 12
<i>Northern</i>									
PG&E	26	51	10	5	0	0	0	Bus yard: 30	Vacant site 10
Birkenstock	36	38	0	10	0	0	0		25

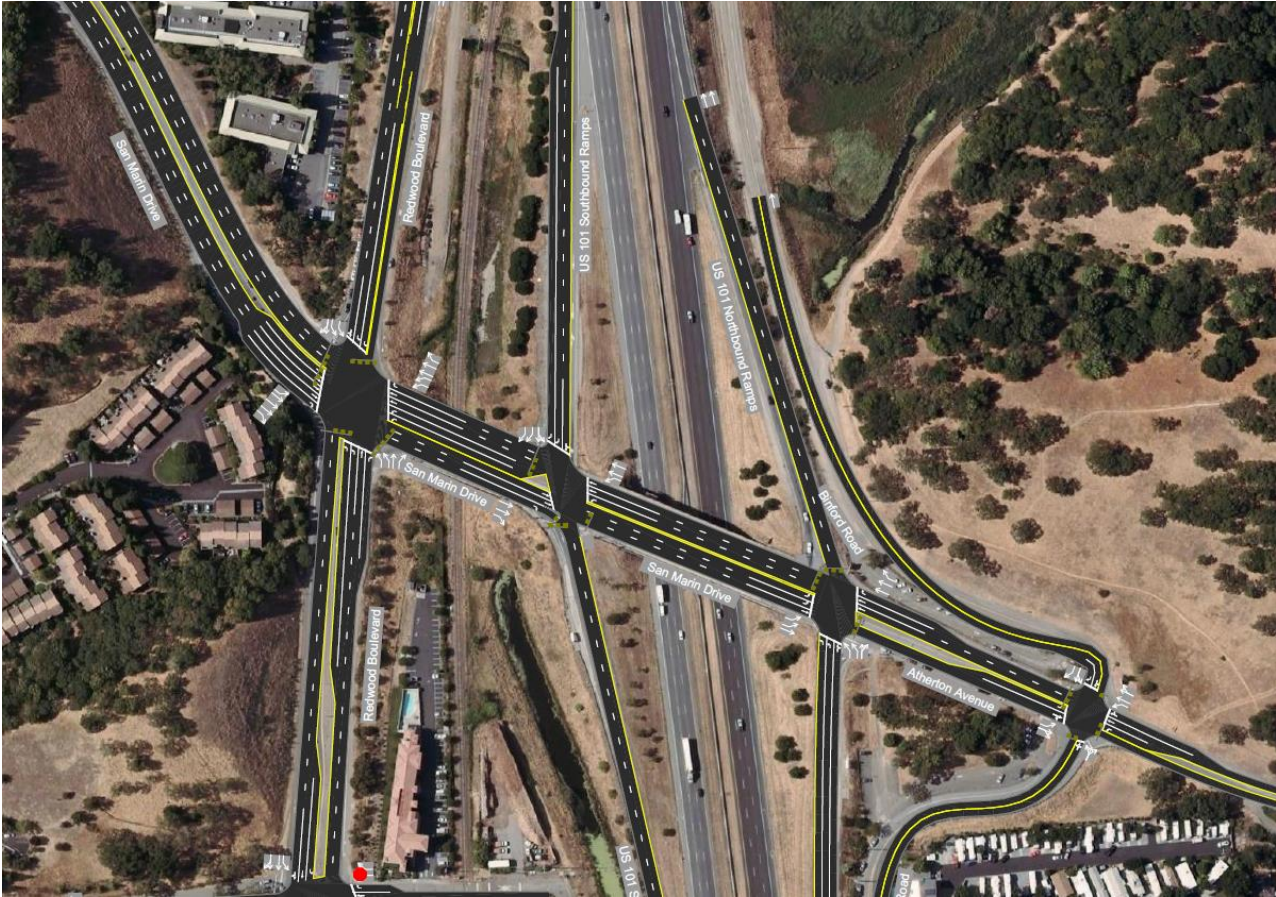
PREFERRED CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS

At the 6/14 workshop, participants were given green dots to place on each circulation improvement that they believe would be worth examining and a gold dot to indicate their preferred improvement. Again, one point was given for each green dot and five points for each gold dot.

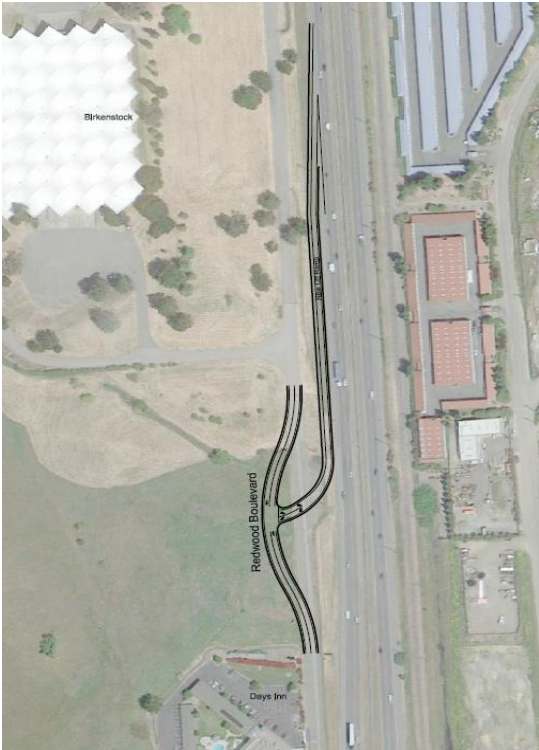
Hook Ramps on & off US 101	31
Connect Rush Landing Rd. into American Assets	34
Create Ped./Bike Connection between Wood Hollow and Fireman's Fund	15
Roundabout at Redwood/Rush Landing Rd.	8
Modify Redwood/San Marin intersection and U.S. 101 interchange to improve traffic flow	90
Accepting longer queues if it means adding fewer lanes	1

APPENDIX 2: DIAGRAMS OF POSSIBLE CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS

1996 General Plan Assumed Traffic Improvements to San Marin Drive/Redwood Blvd. intersection and interchange



“Hook Ramp” off ramp from southbound U.S. 101 onto Redwood Boulevard



“Hook Ramp” on ramp onto northbound U.S. 101 from Rush Landing Road



Possible connection of East Campus Drive to Redwood Boulevard/Rush Landing Road intersection

