

5 COMMUNITY IDENTITY

This chapter discusses elements of urban design that influence Novato's community character. It briefly summarizes existing plans and policies that make up Novato's regulatory framework for urban design. The chapter then discusses the city's urban context, important elements of urban design and other community design features.

A. Regulatory Framework

A number of policy documents address the City of Novato's community identity and how it is related to urban design. These documents are briefly described below.

1. General Plan Community Identity Chapter

The Community Identity Chapter of Novato's current General Plan briefly discusses the most pertinent aspects of urban design affecting the city. Adopted in 1996, the General Plan recognizes that most of the city is already considered to be built-out. Accordingly, the chapter focuses on reinforcing the character of Novato through sensible and attractive infill development. Important objectives of this chapter include supporting compact development, encouraging development compatible with existing neighborhoods and promoting pedestrian-friendly uses in activity centers such as Downtown Novato.

2. Zoning Ordinance

The Novato Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 19 of the Municipal Code) serves to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents and implements the goals of the Novato General Plan. The Zoning Ordinance has a direct effect on the aesthetic quality of the city because it defines and regulates land uses, density, building height, yard sizes, lighting, landscaping, signage, fences, public art and maintenance.

3. Hillside Ordinance

The Hillside Ordinance (Zoning Code Section 19.26) was adopted to protect views of undeveloped hillsides and ridgelines, which are a key component of the city's identity. It limits grading and development in hillside areas. When development does occur, the Hillside Ordinance requires a detailed design review process to ensure that new buildings are designed to respond appropriately to their hillside setting. For example, new buildings must be designed to blend with the terrain and must not extend above ridgelines. They must be painted in earth tones and screened by landscaping or natural topography. Building pads must be sited to minimize the need for grading or retaining walls and maximize the preservation of existing trees.

4. Novato 2028 Community Strategic Plan

The 2028 Community Strategic Plan is intended to maintain and improve the quality of life for Novato's residents and visitors. It includes strategies that acknowledge the importance of the community's identity, history and its relationship to the natural environment. The primary vision in the Community Strategic Plan is of a "community whose characteristic small-town feeling is retained and enhanced" by preserving a greenbelt around Novato, protecting Downtown and established neighborhoods, and enhancing historical and natural assets, among other strategies. The Community Strategic Plan envisions Novato as a community that values not only the built environment, but also open spaces, hillsides, and waterways.

5. Downtown Novato Specific Plan

Adopted in 1998, this Specific Plan identifies improvements, policies and programs to revitalize Downtown Novato. The Specific Plan addresses elements of community identity such as architecture, site planning, circulation, landscaping, and many other facets of community identity. It includes guidelines assisting property owners and developers in creating projects consistent with the type of character the community would like to preserve.

6. Downtown Novato Design Guidelines

The Downtown Design Guidelines ensure that new construction maintains the highest standards of urban design for Novato's Downtown. It provides general objectives that include designing pedestrian-friendly spaces, preserving historically and culturally significant structures and fostering high quality architectural design, detailing and materials.

7. Hamilton Central Design Concepts and Design Guidelines

Adopted in 1994, the Hamilton Design Guidelines present a framework for community character in the Hamilton Army Airfield area. The document contains criteria to be used by owners, developers and the City to evaluate development and ensure that new development in Hamilton respects the site's heritage and maintains a high-quality sense of place over a long period of time.

The design guidelines cover retail and office uses as well as residential development. Guidelines for non-residential development encourage architecture influenced by Hamilton's historic character, including tower elements, arched colonnades, tile roofs and pale stucco. Landscaping, planters, benches, paving and lighting should be used to make exterior spaces inviting. Parking should be broken into small lots with plenty of shade, and service and storage areas should be screened.

For residential neighborhoods, the guidelines encourage narrow streets lined with street trees, compact lots with small front yards that deemphasize parking, and Spanish Colonial or California Bungalow style architecture, including front porches, recessed second stories, and historical detailing.

8. Hamilton Army Airfield Reuse Plan

The Hamilton Army Airfield Reuse Plan, approved by City Council in 1995, provides a blueprint of community goals for residential and non-residential development in the Hamilton area. In addition to the stand-alone Design Guidelines described above, Section 8 of the Reuse Plan includes goals and policies for urban design. The Reuse Plan emphasizes the need for cohesive architecture and landscaping throughout Hamilton and covers a range of design components, including street trees, building siting, building materials, bus shelters and bicycle racks, parking areas, street furniture, traffic calming, walls and fences.

9. Novato Industrial Park Precise Development and Master Plan

The Precise Development and Master Plan for the Novato Industrial Park was first published in February of 1978. The document sets development standards for the Novato Industrial Park, specifically addressing elements of urban design such as building setbacks, heights and landscaping, and streetscape attributes. The document also spells out other regulations related to signs, barriers, parking and outdoor storage.

B. City Context and Identity

1. Regional Setting

Novato, located in north Marin County in the San Francisco Bay Area, is a suburban city framed by undeveloped hillsides and the open water of San Pablo Bay. The city's borders are defined by major geographical features including Mount Burdell to the north, Big Rock Ridge to the west, Indian Valley open space to the southwest, Pacheco Valle and Loma Verde open space to the south, Bel Marin Keys wetlands to the southeast and the bay plains and Petaluma River to the northeast. Much of the urbanized area of Novato occupies a flat northwest-trending valley that follows Novato Creek, Vineyard Creek, Warner Creek and other tributaries flowing southeast from the hills to the Bay. The natural features surrounding the city contribute to Novato's identity and form an important image of the city held by both residents and visitors.

2. Built Form

Most of the development in Novato is residential. Single-family one- and two-story homes represent the majority of residential development. Some multi-family housing is dispersed throughout the city, mainly located along arterial and collector streets.

Downtown, a focal point of the city, is characterized primarily by one and two-story buildings with tree-lined streets and pedestrian amenities. New development downtown includes Millworks, a mixed use development containing Whole Foods Market and 124 residential units, located at the east end of Grant Avenue. Additional commercial development includes neighborhood shopping centers and large regional retail shopping centers along Highway 101.

3. Circulation System

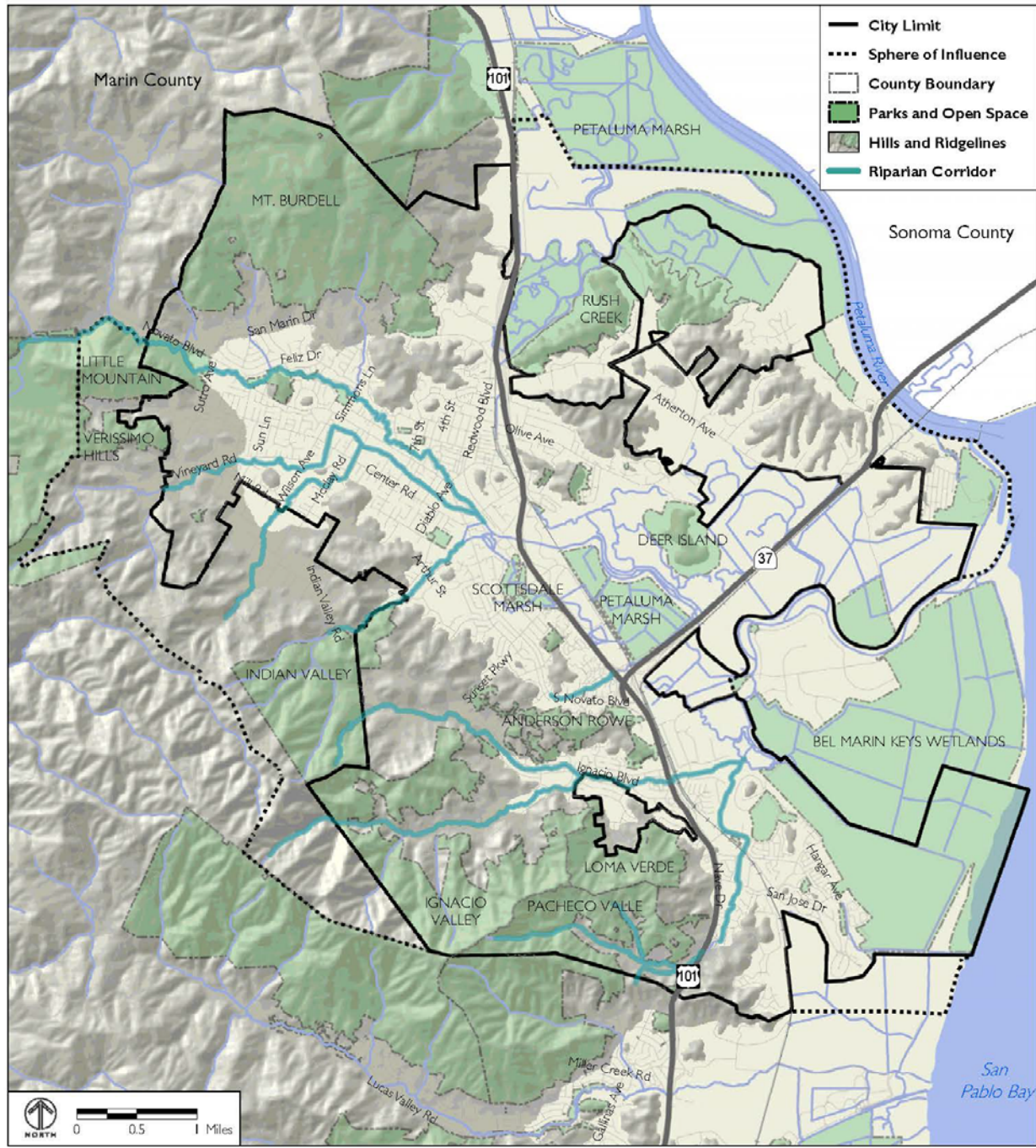
Connectivity in the city, or the facilitation of access between areas, contributes to the quality of life and character of a place. Highway 101 and State Route 37 provide regional access to the city. Highway 101, in particular, is a major north/south regional transportation corridor and the most dominant feature of Novato's circulation system. Although it is the primary route connecting Novato to the region, it is also a barrier to local connectivity, bisecting the city and forcing people over, under or onto the freeway, even for short local trips.

The city is also served by a surface street system ranging from wide, busy 4-lane streets with medians to narrow, winding 2-lane streets in the hills. A traditional grid street pattern is located Downtown and in older residential areas near Downtown; however, the predominant street pattern in the city is curvilinear. Novato also has a system of bike lanes, paths and routes (as identified in Figure 6-3 of the Circulation and Transportation chapter) throughout the city, mostly west of Highway 101, that connect neighborhoods to schools, parks, shopping centers and Downtown.

4. Natural Features, Parks and Open Space

The views from Novato to the surrounding open spaces and hills are extremely important to Novato residents. These views provide physical orientation and are integral to the city's character and sense of place, so preservation of these views is key to maintaining the city's identity. The open space areas surrounding Novato are shown in Figure 5-1. The open space areas include:

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**FIGURE 5-1
NATURAL FEATURES, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

- ◆ **Mt. Burdell**, over 1,500 feet tall, dominates views of Novato from Highway 101 and most areas north and west of Highway 37. Mt. Burdell is part of an open space managed by the Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space which offers expansive views of Novato from a number of hiking and biking trails.
- ◆ The **Little Mountain and Verissimo Hills** preserves form a backdrop of grassland and heavily forested slopes along Novato's western border, behind the hilly neighborhoods on either side of Novato Boulevard.
- ◆ The steep hills of the **Indian Valley, Ignacio Valley, Loma and Pacheco Valley** Opens Space Preserves, covered in chaparral and oak woodlands, wrap around the Indian Valley Campus of the College of Marin and stretch east toward the Bay, forming part of Novato's southwestern border. Trails along the ridgelines offer stunning views of Novato and the surrounding area.
- ◆ The **Bel Marin Keys and Hamilton Wetlands** form a buffer between the Hamilton Army Airfield and the San Pablo Bay, offering views from areas south of Highway 37 and east of Highway 101 east over the water.
- ◆ The **Rush Creek** preserve, the **Petaluma Marsh** and adjacent wetlands create Novato's northeastern border. The natural open space along Rush Creek east of Highway 101 forms a stark contrast to the urban, industrial character of the creek's surroundings to the west. To the south of the creek, a low ridge descends into tidal wetlands that provide habitat to a wide array of birds and other species.
- ◆ Several islands of open space within Novato, including **Deer Island, Anderson Rowe Open Space** and **Scottsdale Marsh** integrate nature into the city and serve as destinations and informal community gathering spots.

In addition to parks, open space and water features, Figure 5-1 also shows areas of high elevation and riparian corridors. Ridgelines and hillsides contribute to Novato's identity by creating a sense of enclosure for developed areas. These natural features also establish physical boundaries for the community that is more recognizable than the jurisdictional boundaries created by the city limit. Riparian corridors contribute to Novato's identity by bringing undeveloped natural areas directly into urbanized neighborhoods. As shown in Figure 5-1, the riparian corridors are part of a network of greenspace that connects open space on Novato's periphery with developed area closer to the city core.

C. Building Blocks

This section describes the "building blocks" of Novato's urban form. These building blocks are based upon the urban design concept of districts, corridors and neighborhoods.

1. Downtown

Downtown Novato, a special type of district, is the core of the community. Downtown is generally defined by the railroad tracks to the east, De Long Avenue to the south, First Street to the west and San Marin Drive to the north. Downtown extends west along Grant Avenue, the main commercial street, to Seventh Street.

Downtown Novato contains many buildings that were built more than 100 years ago. Many of the older one- and two-story buildings were built between about 1890 and 1930 as banks, hardware stores, blacksmith shops, grocers and saloons to serve hard-working residents. The presence of the Dairymen's Milling Company also serves as a reminder of Novato's agricultural roots.

However, as residential development moved to outlying areas and the orientation of Highway 101 was changed to bypass downtown, the economic and cultural importance of Downtown diminished, leaving aging buildings and vacant lots, particularly in the blocks north of Grant Avenue and east of Redwood Boulevard. Today, there is renewed investment in Downtown as evident in the Grant Avenue streetscape improvements and the Whole Foods Market mixed-use development project. Facades have been restored, particularly along Grant Avenue. First-floor windows, bays, awnings and architectural details create visual appeal for shoppers, while flourishing planters, traditional lampposts, and benches make the sidewalks feel attractive and safe to pedestrians.

Downtown includes two subareas outside the commercial core: the Northwest Quadrant and the Redwood Boulevard corridor.

a. Northwest Quadrant

The Northwest Quadrant includes the residential neighborhood north of Grant Avenue and west of Redwood Boulevard. Lots here tend to be small, with homes close together. Single-family homes are intermixed with one- and two-story apartment buildings. Many front yards are landscaped and/or screened from the street by a picket fences, wood fences, or wrought iron fences. Some streets, such as Third Street, are dominated by two-story apartment buildings that are oriented perpendicular to the street and have minimal architectural detailing. Those sites with apartment buildings tend to have less vegetation and more paved area to allow for parking. Streets are highly connected in a grid pattern, but are relatively narrow and typically have cars parked along both sides.

b. Redwood Boulevard

Redwood Boulevard north of De Long Avenue to San Marin Drive is a major corridor cutting through Downtown and linking it with major employment centers at Fireman's Fund and the Buck Center to the north and newer commercial and residential areas to the south. Due to its 175-foot right-of-way, Redwood Boulevard forms a barrier between the east and west ends of Grant Avenue. It also disrupts the character of Downtown, with blocks to the east of the boulevard containing a more traditional mix of historic shops, offices, and older homes, while the west side of Redwood Boulevard is lined with contemporary gas stations, service shops and equipment rental shops with modern, utilitarian designs. A new residential subdivision, known as Atherton Ranch, was approved by the City in 2000 for attached, and detached residential units. This subdivision is west of Redwood Boulevard, and wraps around Pinheiro Circle. A local landmark, the Atherton House, is a renovated Victorian structure that is now used as a small office building at Redwood Boulevard and Ranch Drive. Redwood Boulevard is discussed further as one of Novato's key corridors in Section C.4, below.

2. Neighborhoods

A neighborhood is a residential area, often taking a key part of its identity from a park, school or other activity node that residents use and take pride in. A "neighborhood" in this sense can encompass several individual subdivisions that can share one or more focal points. In Novato, shopping centers, parks and schools tend to function as neighborhood focal points.

From an urban design perspective, neighborhood boundaries are often defined by physical features, such as a ridgeline, creek, major road, or change in type of development, rather than by political boundaries such as a City limit line. The boundaries of broadly defined neighborhood areas are shown in Figure 5-2. They offer a starting point for community discussions about Novato's character and may continue to be refined. They may also be adjusted in the future to reflect ongoing change.

a. Northwest

The Northwest neighborhood area generally extends west from Highway 101 to the eastern city limit and north of Novato Boulevard to the edge of the Mt. Burdell Open Space Preserve. Focal points in the area include San Marin High School, San Ramon Elementary School, San Marin Plaza shopping center, Pioneer Memorial Park, Miwok Park, O'Hair Park and Rolling Hills Country Club. Major environmental elements in the area include Novato Creek and Simmons Creek.

Most of the residential development here resulted from the 1961 San Marin Master Plan. Homes in the area are set back from the street with lawns in the front. Homes located along major arterials, like Novato Boulevard, are typically oriented away from the street, facing the interior of the neighborhood, contributing to a feeling of inclusion for neighbors, but exclusion for those passing through on the busy street. Connectivity between subdivisions is limited due to the curvilinear street pattern and numerous cul-de-sacs.

b. West

The West neighborhood area is framed by Novato Boulevard to the north, McClay Road to the east and the city limit to the west. To the south, the street pattern and building type of this neighborhood extends beyond the city limits to the steep sides of Indian Valley in the unincorporated County. Within this area are the neighborhoods of Pleasant Valley, Wild Horse Canyon, and Indian Valley. Focal points in the neighborhood include Sinaloa Middle School, Pleasant Valley Elementary School, Stafford Lake Park, Miwok Park, Marin Highlands Park, Novato Square Shopping Center, Novato Youth Center, and Indian Valley Golf Course.

Residential development consists mainly of single family one-story and two-story homes. Residential development in the northern portions is denser than development in the south. Homes and lots in the south of the neighborhood tend to be larger, especially along hillsides. The street network is curvilinear, with many streets terminating in cul-de-sacs. Undeveloped hillsides surrounding this neighborhood to the west and south limit connectivity to urban areas and offer a sense of closeness to nature.

c. Southwest

The Southwest neighborhood area extends from the intersection of South Novato Boulevard and Highway 101 southwest to the city limit. The area is largely defined by the surrounding open space including Big Rock Ridge and the Loma Verde Open Space Preserve. Ignacio Creek flows through the neighborhood. It is characterized by "fingers" of homes along creek corridors climbing undeveloped hillsides covered with grasslands and oak woodlands. The curvilinear street pattern is dominated by cul-de-sacs, meaning that Ignacio Boulevard and Alameda Del Prado are essentially the only connections between this neighborhood and the rest of Novato. Focal points of the area include the College of Marin Indian Valley Campus, Enfrente Road Fire Station, Loma Verde Elementary School, Josef Hoog Neighborhood Park, Ignacio Center and Pacheco Plaza shopping centers and the Marin Golf and Country Club. Subareas within the Southwest neighborhood area include Ignacio, Marin Golf and Country Club, Pointe Marin and Pacheco Valle.

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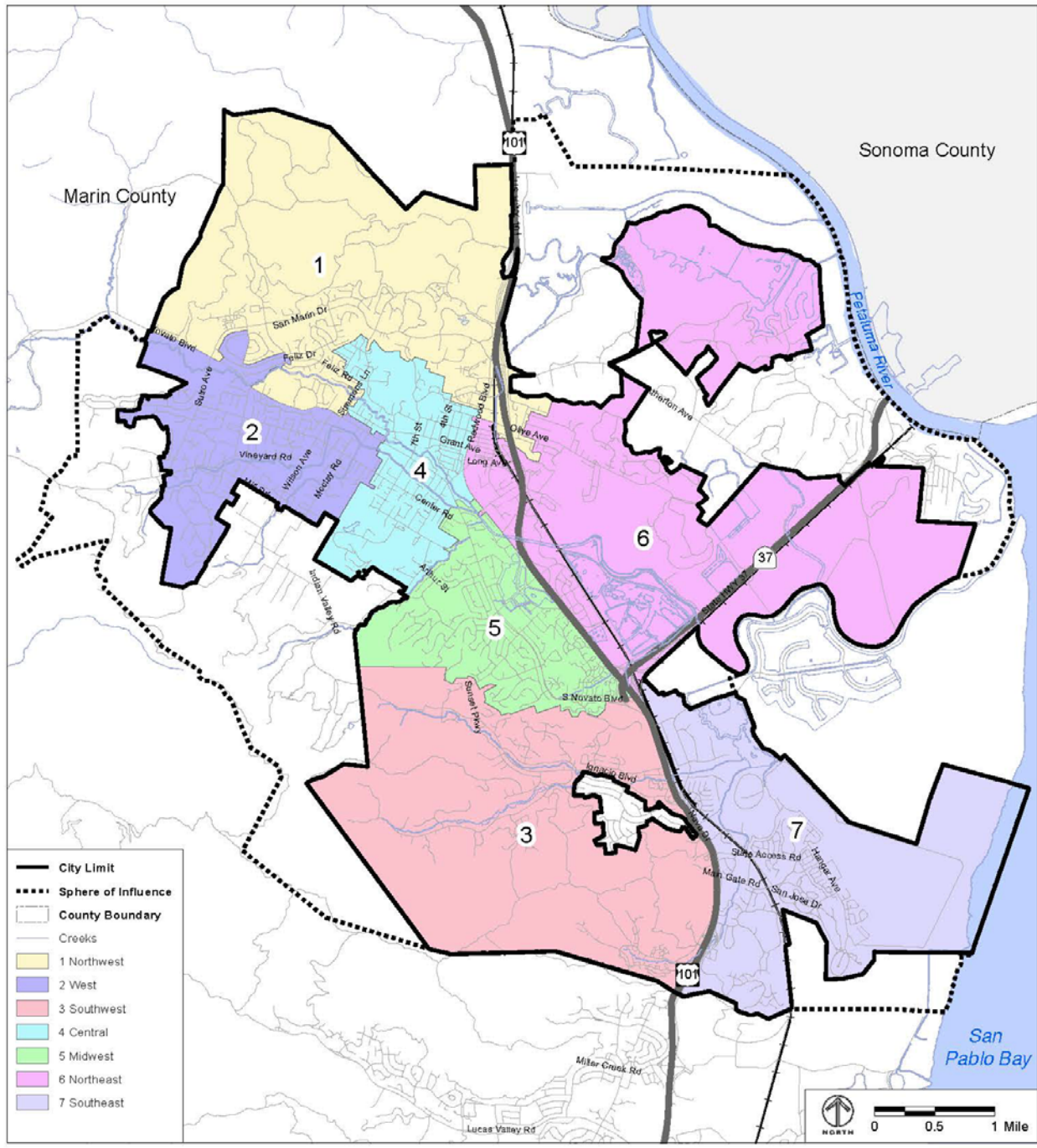


FIGURE 5-2
 NEIGHBORHOODS

The majority of the Southwest neighborhood area consists of one- and two-story single family homes. Most houses have lawns in the front and backyards with ornamental shrubbery and trees. Some two- and three-story apartment buildings are located along Ignacio Boulevard near Pacheco Plaza; these are simple, rectilinear buildings with flat facades, flat roofs and little detailing, but their appearance is softened by mature trees and patios. Along Hector Lane and Alameda del Prado, the apartment buildings are articulated into distinct units with sloped roofs and are screened from the roadway by tall trees and white picket fences.

d. Central

The Central neighborhood area is the residential area that wraps around Downtown. It is defined by San Marin Drive to the north, Highway 101 to the east, Arroyo Avichi Creek and the city limit to the south and McClay Road and Simmons Lane to the west. The area is largely informed by its open space, including the surrounding hillsides and the riparian corridors along Novato and Warner Creeks. There are views of the surrounding hills in the northwest, southwest and east of the area. Major focal points of the area include the Novato Library and surrounding Lee Gerner Park, Lu Sutton Elementary School, Hill Middle School, Margaret Todd Senior Center and Marion and Stafford Grove Parks, as well as the Downtown Novato shopping center and Novato Fair shopping center. Novato Boulevard tends to funnel traffic past this neighborhood and Downtown, creating a barrier.

South of Novato Boulevard, housing types are mixed and include detached single family homes, apartment buildings and condominiums. The majority of the area is made up of single-family units laid out on grid-like block patterns with typically suburban patterns of big front yards and ample street trees on most streets. Numerous cul-de-sacs cut off circulation to major streets, resulting in courts that feel private.

The northern part of the Central neighborhood area, north of Novato Boulevard and northwest of Downtown, is characterized by low density single-family houses. Most are one-story and all have front yards, side setbacks, backyards, driveways and a garage. Architectural style and form varies. Moving northwest towards the slopes of Mt. Burdell, the development pattern resembles typical suburban subdivisions with curved streets and cul-de-sacs. Most homes are very similar in size, color, shape and architecture.

e. Midwest

The Midwest neighborhood area extends south from Arroyo Avichi Creek to the Anderson Rowe Open Space area and is between Highway 101 on the east and the College of Marin campus on the west. Focal points of the area include Novato High School, Scottsdale Marsh, the College of Marin Indian Valley Campus, San Jose Middle School, Lynwood and Rancho Elementary Schools, Arroyo Avichi Park, the Redwood Boulevard Fire Station and the Nave shopping center.

The mix of housing types in the Midwest neighborhood area includes single family houses, condominiums, townhouses and apartments. Hillside development in the west of the area mainly consists of large residential estates separated by areas of open space and screened by mature vegetation. The majority of development in the flatlands of the area includes well-maintained one- and two-story single family homes on smaller lots. Homes are situated on a curvilinear street pattern, orienting residences around large loops away from major arterials and collectors. The major thoroughfare is South Novato Boulevard, which provides north/south access along the eastern edge of the neighborhood.

f. Northeast

The Northeast neighborhood area is bounded by the Petaluma River and the city limit to the north and east, open space and grazing land to the south and Highway 101 to the west. The area is largely rural and isolated from the rest of Novato by the hills of the Rush Creek Open Space Preserve and Highway 101. Major focal points in the area include Deer Island, Olive Elementary School, Atherton Avenue Fire Station and the Black Point Boat Launch Park.

Although the Northeast neighborhood area includes residential areas along both Atherton Avenue and Olive Avenue, these two subareas share only a single connection to each other at the eastern end of Olive Avenue. They are different in character and feeling. In the northern subarea, along streets like Crest Road, School Road and Laguna Vista Drive, significant open space and native vegetation remains intact. Streets curve in response to the topography. Homes and lots are larger, and houses are separated from each other by trees and terrain. Many homes stand out from the natural setting with landscaped yards, including swimming pools and tennis courts. The Bahia Park development, located at the end of Bahia Drive, includes single-family homes situated around Bay wetlands. Many of the residences in the Bahia area have access to open space as part of the Rush Creek Preserve and Petaluma Marsh.

Development closest to Highway 101, on either side of Olive Avenue, is denser with homes on smaller lots, adjacent to one another. Multiple-family housing in the area includes a mobile home park, located at the intersection of Armstrong and Atherton Avenues, and townhomes, located at Armstrong Avenue and Cherry Street. Olive Avenue has a wide right-of-way without a median, street trees or other amenities that would offer respite for pedestrians and create a walkable environment.

g. Southeast

Bel Marin Keys

The Bel Marin Keys neighborhood is a distinct neighborhood east of Highway 101 and south of State Route 37. Bel Marin Keys is located outside the city limits in unincorporated Marin County and is entirely surrounded by farmland that isolates it from nearby development. It consists of approximately 720 homes oriented around either man-made lagoons or Novato Creek. The Bahia Park development is also a focal point. Initially built in the 1960s, the residences are single-family one- and two-story homes. Landscaping is mostly turf and ornamental. All of the homes have access to the water via small docks at the rear of the house. Bel Marin Keys Boulevard is the only access route to the neighborhood, with neighborhood streets branching off to the north and south of the street. The street system is poorly connected since all local streets terminate in cul-de-sacs. Large electric transmission towers dominate the center median of Bel Marin Keys Boulevard and continue past the terminus of the street into adjacent farmland.

Hamilton

Redevelopment of the former Hamilton Army Airfield in the southeast section of Novato created the larger Hamilton neighborhood. This area is to the east of Highway 101, with Nave Drive, which parallels the freeway, as one of the main streets into this neighborhood. Bolling Circle, Hamilton Parkway, State Access Road, and Main Gate provide additional entry into Hamilton. Its more comprehensive development has allowed a range of residential (whether it's the new single family, multi-family, or existing US Coast guard housing), commercial (Hamilton Marketplace), educational (Hamilton School), recreational (Skate Park), open space (trails and a wetlands restoration project) and religious uses within this section of the city. Unity in Marin is a religious institution that has broad appeal, with a multi-cultural congregation that serves residents throughout Marin County. Many businesses have located in the former Hangar buildings, ranging from small independently owned business, to the South Novato Library, active hangars used by the US Coast Guard, and the

Marin Community Foundation, a large philanthropic non-profit organization. One of two new Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) stations will be in Hamilton, and may be accessed from the north by Hamilton Parkway and from Main Gate at the south.

The rich architectural heritage is what unifies and best identifies Hamilton. From the classic Spanish architecture of the Administration Building to the Base Office Quarters (BOQ) and Hospital buildings, the rich, distinctive Spanish architecture - of red tile roofs and cream buildings, with deep architectural embellishments around the windows and columns - resonates throughout Hamilton. These architectural themes have been recreated in the new residences and a new Hangar building, and reinforce the character of Hamilton.

3. Retail and Employment Districts

Seven districts help to define the structure of Novato. Districts may contain, or have the potential to contain, a mix of land uses that include a relatively high percentage of retail, office and job-generating uses, or they may contain only job-generating uses. Districts can also include some residential uses, especially as part of a mixed-use building. Districts are connected to each other and other building blocks via transportation corridors, including arterial streets and pedestrian paths. Typically, districts serve not only local residents, but also visitors, shoppers and workers from beyond the city limits.

a. Vintage Oaks

The Vintage Oaks District includes both the Vintage Oaks Shopping Center and two office park areas located along Rowland Way on either side of Novato Creek.

The Vintage Oaks Shopping Center, located at Highway 101 and Rowland Boulevard, is a regional shopping destination for Marin and Sonoma County residents attracted by stores such as Target, Costco, Macy's Home, Ross and DSW. Two new restaurants are in Vintage Oaks: In-N-Out Burger, and Hopmonk Tavern. Access to the shopping center is auto-oriented with easy freeway access and ample parking. In general, the stores are oriented around large parking lots that separate the storefronts from Vintage Way. There is some landscaping along Vintage way, and small trees and shrubs scattered throughout the parking lot. The buildings are single-story, but have the height of standard two- or three-story buildings. Their height, in combination with very wide facades, gives them a bulky appearance, which is alleviated by breaking individual storefronts into bays with pitched roofs, and providing a covered walkway along the front of the building. Some of the buildings feature red paint and white trim to suggest a barn-like theme, a nod to Marin's agricultural history. The shopping center faces Highway 101, with each building turning its back to the Bay wetlands immediately to the east across the Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks.

North of Rowland Boulevard is a gas station with a convenience store and restaurants at the intersection of Rowland Boulevard and Rowland Way. Farther north along Rowland Way, office buildings are scattered along either side of the wide, curving street. These are modern, three- to four-story buildings with smooth, stark facades of concrete and glass. Each building is located in the center of a large parking lot with scattered planting strips and tree wells. Pedestrian access in this area is challenging since each building is separated by an expansive parking lot and the 5-lane width of Rowland Way.

b. Bel Marin Keys Industrial Park

The Bel Marin Keys Industrial Park district is located east of Highway 101 south of the city limits, north of Pacheco Creek and west of Pacheco Pond. The district contains two distinct subareas: a mix of light industrial, commercial and office uses along Bel Marin Keys Drive and Commercial Drive to the north and east. Los Robles mobile home park is just south of the district, along Roblar Drive.

Bel Marin Keys Boulevard provides direct access to the industrial park area from Highway 101 and is the main thoroughfare. Connectivity is limited in the area as most of the local streets in the area terminate in cul-de-sacs. Buildings are mostly one-story and cover most of the lot. Architectural styles are very diverse, from imposing, symmetrical office buildings with smooth glass and concrete exteriors, to wood-sided buildings with deep eaves and human-scale windows and doors. Most of the buildings have a relatively plain, utilitarian design and each generally has its own parking lot. Most streets have sidewalks. Some buildings are close to the street, while others are set deeply back into larger parking lots. In general, loading and trash areas are hidden from the street, and landscaped areas of varying sizes are common.

c. Hamilton

The Hamilton district is located on the former Hamilton Army Airfield in southeast Novato, which has been undergoing redevelopment since the mid-1990s. Hamilton's identity is based on its military past and 1930s Spanish-style architecture, which have been preserved in the revitalization of the district. This continuity with the past use of the area establishes a unified theme and a strong sense of place for the district.

One focal point of the district is the complex of hangars, built in the 1930s, that have been renovated into offices. The hangars are immediately recognizable from their rounded sides and roofs, tall windows and bright red accents. Other focal points include Hospital Hill, the Hamilton Amphitheater, Officer's Club, Hamilton Swimming Pool, Arts Center and Gymnasium. The parks scattered throughout the district, and the hilly topography in the south and west, also add definition to the area. The eastern border is framed by the Bel Marin Keys wetlands and the San Pablo Bay and vegetated knolls are located along portions of the northern, western and southern edges.

d. College of Marin, Indian Valley Campus

The College of Marin, Indian Valley Campus, is nestled between the hills of the Indian Valley and Ignacio Valley Open Space areas. The campus, located at the western terminus of Ignacio Boulevard, is nestled into its site at the base of the Indian Valley hills and has a linear layout that mirrors the ridgeline. Low-slung one- to two-story buildings are clustered together in small groups linked by covered walkways and surrounded by oak woodlands and grasslands that extend outward from the campus into the hills. The campus is connected to adjacent open space areas by hiking trails.

e. Fireman's Fund

The Fireman's Fund office campus is located off Highway 101 along San Marin Drive. Buildings are separated from the street by large parking lots and landscaping. The campus consists of three four-story buildings oriented around a curved man-made water feature. The exteriors of the buildings, built in the early 1980s, are angular and geometric, wrapped by stark horizontal bands of alternating glass and concrete. The buildings offer little human-scale architectural detailing. Parking lots comprise approximately two-thirds of the total surface area of the campus. Landscaping consists of ornamental shrubs and trees, conifers and turf.

f. Buck Institute for Research on Aging

The Buck Institute for Research on Aging employs approximately 272 people to research age-related diseases. Designed by the famous architect I.M. Pei, the buildings are starkly visible on the eastern slope of Mt. Burdell, serving as a prominent landmark north of the city and west of Highway 101. This district includes a complex of three three- to four-story buildings with smooth, light-colored stone exteriors dotted with regularly-spaced windows and capped by jutting angular sky windows. The surface parking lot stretches in a gentle arc around the western side of the complex.

4. Corridors

Corridors are typically linear districts. They usually contain a relatively high percentage of commercial and job-generating land uses, as well as mixed-use buildings with residential units. Their development pattern is distributed along an important street or transit line.

a. Redwood Boulevard (North)

Redwood Boulevard, between De Long Avenue and San Marin Drive, is a four-lane commercial and light industrial corridor that traverses Downtown as it connects the key intersections of Grant Avenue, Diablo Avenue and De Long Avenue to residential areas and major employment centers in northern Novato, Fireman's Fund and the Buck Center. In general, buildings along Redwood Boulevard are one story on the western side and are built to the sidewalk, covering approximately half the parcel. Parking lots separate most structures, creating gaps between active uses. A landscaped median is present throughout the corridor except in the northern segment between Escallonia Drive and San Marin Drive. Due to the street's right-of-way of 175 feet, the pedestrian environment is not well established, particularly due to the wide crosswalks.

b. Redwood Boulevard (South)

The northern end of this corridor, at the intersection with De Long Avenue, is dominated by the Novato Fair Shopping Center to the west, with bulky retail outlets oriented around a vast parking lot, and two large, multi-story office buildings to the east, which tower over the roadway due to their placement on a small hillside. As Redwood Boulevard heads south towards Scottsdale Marsh, development becomes progressively sparser, including a mixture of office buildings, car dealerships and commercial/retail uses, as well as a fire station. These buildings are primarily single-story and utilitarian, each isolated in its own parking lot.

c. Novato Boulevard

Novato Boulevard, between Boulevard Terrace and Raposa Vista, is a busy four-lane corridor with a mix of uses including commercial, office and residential. One-, two- and three-story office buildings are predominant throughout the corridor. Office buildings are set back from the street with landscaping or parking lots between the building and the street. The Novato Square Shopping Center, located at the west end of the corridor, consists of large, one-story commercial buildings configured in a "L" shape around a large parking lot. One- and two-story single family homes and apartment buildings are interspersed throughout the corridor. Typically, the front of the house is oriented towards the local street with the sides of the houses fronting the corridor.

5. Gateways and Connections

A gateway consists of a landmark or other element, such as a vista, that defines an arrival point to a city or neighborhood. Gateways contribute to the identity of an area by providing people with unique reference points to orient them-

selves. Most of the gateways are located along Highway 101. Other significant gateways are at the intersection of State Route 37 and Highway 101, as well as entry points along the western city limits at Novato Boulevard and Vineyard Road.

The Downtown Specific Plan identifies future gateway opportunities Downtown at the intersections of Redwood Boulevard at De Long Avenue, Redwood Boulevard at Olive Avenue, and Seventh Street at Grant Avenue.

Connections are areas that link portions of a city that are impeded by barriers such as highways, major streets and natural features. Highway 101 is a major barrier between west and east Novato.