

Land Use

MAP

OF

EASTLAND, MILLWOOD

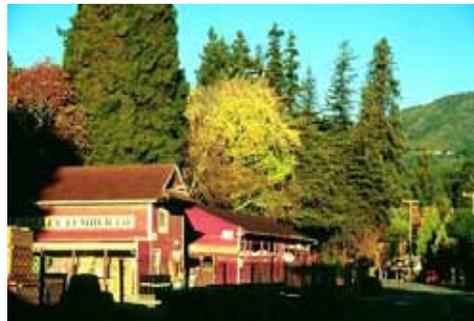
AND

VICINITY,

A SUBDIVISION OF OLD MILL VALLEY

Purpose

Mill Valley’s attractive small-town character and charm are not a secret. In 2005, CNN/Money and *Money* magazine ranked Mill Valley tenth on its list of the “100 Best Places to Live in the United States.” In 2012, *Smithsonian* magazine ranked Mill Valley fourth on its list of “The 20 Best Small Towns in America,” in terms of culture. In 2013, U.S. News and World Report selected Marin County as the healthiest county in America for children. Much of this character can be attributed to historic land use decisions and development patterns that have been strongly influenced by Mill Valley’s natural setting, particularly the canyons and hillsides on and adjacent to Mount Tamalpais and the tidal flats of Richardson Bay. The Land Use Element of the General Plan is intended to identify the distribution of various land uses in the community (through the “Land Use Map”) and provide policies and programs to guide future land use decisions and development patterns to ensure that Mill Valley retains its renowned character and charm.



Click Off (2000)
Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission
Photographer: Margrithe Fliegau

The Land Use Element is one of seven General Plan elements mandated by the California Government Code. The State General Plan Guidelines provide further direction, based on state law, court decisions, and professional best practices, for the contents of the Land Use Element. While the General Plan is required to be internally consistent – that is, as particular topics are addressed from one element to another, the policies and programs support the same

Table 2.1 | State Requirements for Land Use Elements

Land Use Element Content Requirements (Government Code Section 65302(b))	MV2040 General Plan Provisions
Distribution of housing, business, and industry	See Figure 2.4 and Housing Element.
Distribution of open space, including agricultural land	See Figure 2.4.
Distribution of mineral resources	Not applicable to Mill Valley.
Distribution of recreation facilities and opportunities	See Figure 4.1 in Community Vitality Element.
Location of educational facilities	See Figure 4.2 in Community Vitality Element.
Location of public buildings and grounds	See Figure 4.2 in Community Vitality Element.
Location of future solid and liquid waste facilities	Not applicable to Mill Valley.
Identification of areas subject to flooding	See Figure 7.2 in Hazards and Public Safety Element.
Existing Timberland Preserve Zones	Not applicable to Mill Valley.
Water supply	See Natural Environment Element.
Scenic resources	See Natural Environment Element.

direction or outcome, and no one element is to be considered more important or more influential than another – the Land Use Element is often considered to be the heart and soul of the General Plan because of the importance local communities put on land use decisions and the patterns of growth and development. As such, state law and the General Plan Guidelines suggest that the Land Use Element address a wide variety of topics. Table 2.1 identifies all of the topics required by Government Code Section 65302(a) and indicates whether they are relevant to Mill Valley and addressed in this General Plan.

Existing Conditions

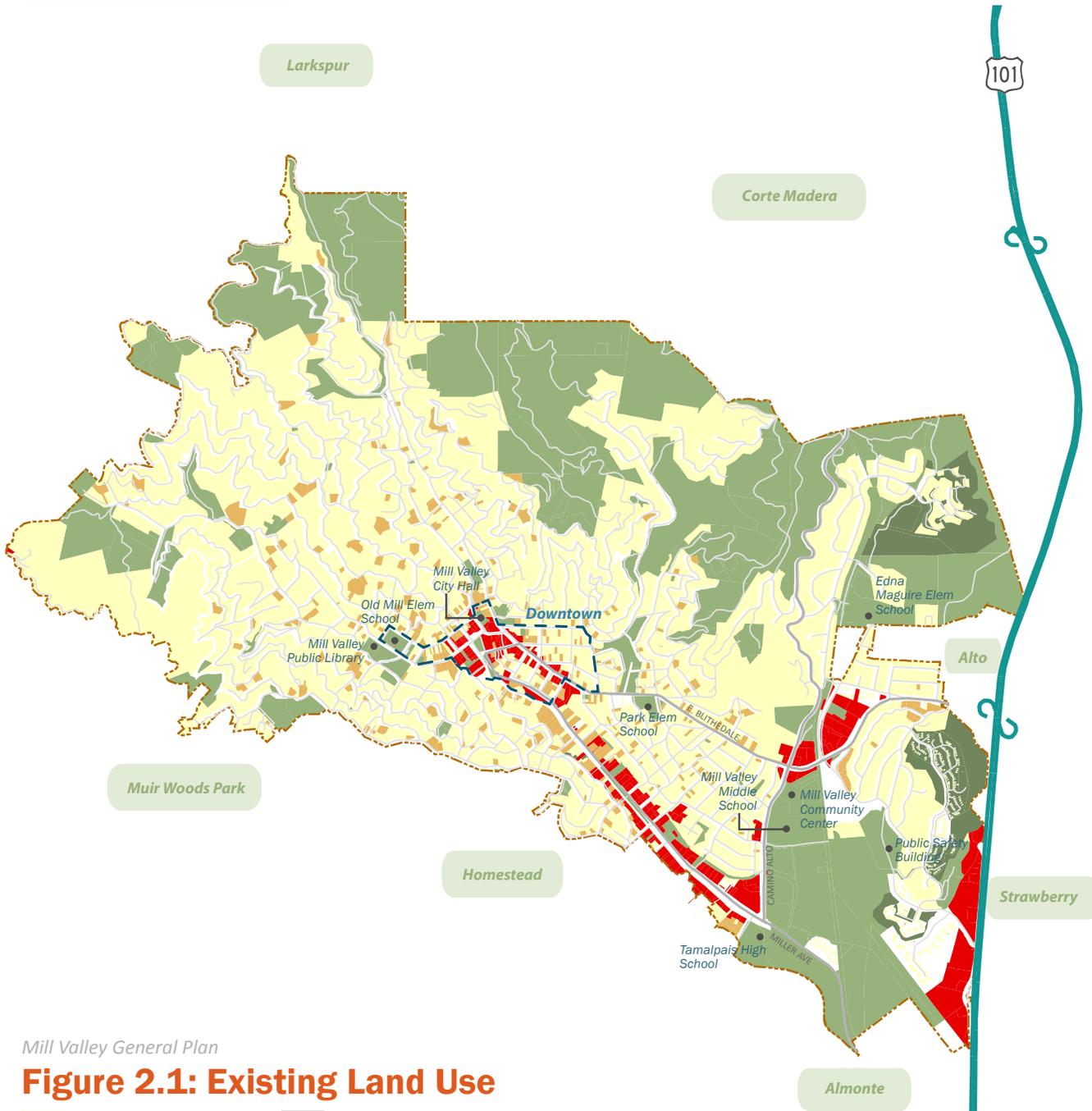
Nestled among the redwoods and sheltered by Mount Tamalpais, Mill Valley provides a sense of refuge from the busy urban environment of the greater Bay Area. Mill Valley is bounded by the hillsides and steep ridges of the coastal mountains and the water of Richardson Bay, which form natural edges to urban growth. Many of the ridgelines that create the dominant visual backdrop for the community are now preserved as permanent open space. Similarly, much of the bayfront land has been preserved as park and open space, providing important habitat as well as visual and physical access to the water. Creeks, marshes, redwood groves, heavily forested and grass-covered hillsides, and chaparral are commonplace. Single-family residential neighborhoods are located in the valleys and on the hillsides, with commercial and more intensive residential uses clustered on the flat low lands. The residential and commercial areas, together with the natural setting, create a small-town community character that is cherished by the area’s residents. (Figure 2.1 illustrates existing land use.)

Highway 101 runs adjacent to the entire eastern edge of the Planning Area, providing a critical link to other Marin County communities, as well as San Francisco to the south and Sonoma County to the north. Access to Mill Valley is provided via three freeway interchanges from Highway 101. The Mill Valley/Stinson Beach exit to the south is the primary access route to coastal recreation areas via Highway 1. The Redwood Highway Frontage Road/Seminary Drive interchange provides access to Hamilton Drive in Mill Valley and the Strawberry Peninsula to the east of Highway 101. The East Blithedale/Tiburon Boulevard exit provides access to the central

JUST THE FACTS

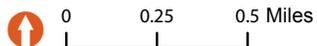
A cross-section of the number of local businesses by type (year 2012)...

- *Eating & Drinking*
(Restaurants, bars, etc.): **48**
- *Personal Appearance*
(Salons, Spas, etc.): **34**
- *Fitness & Wellness*
(Gyms, yoga, nutrition): **22**
- *Banks:* **11**
- *Gas Stations & Automotive Service:* **10**
- *Pet Care & Supplies:* **9**
- *Real Estate:* **8**
- *Grocery Stores:* **5**
- *Hotels & Visitor Lodging:* **4**
- *Theaters & Clubs:* **4**



Mill Valley General Plan

Figure 2.1: Existing Land Use



Source: Marin Map, City of Mill Valley, 2012

Mill Valley neighborhoods and the downtown area. East Blithedale Avenue, Miller Avenue, and Camino Alto are the community's primary arterial roadways.

Residential Areas

The existing residential areas are primarily made up of single-family detached homes with clusters of multi-family units located adjacent to the commercial areas or along arterial streets. Many residential areas are adjacent to neighborhood shopping districts. This provides residents the opportunity to walk to the commercial areas – a rare feature in most suburban communities.

Overall, densities in Mill Valley's single-family residential areas range from one home per ten acres in remote hillside areas to seven homes per acre on flat topography. Existing multi-family densities generally range from six units per acre for duplexes and other attached dwellings to over 30 units per acre for apartment buildings. The following discussion describes the land use character and typical existing densities for each of the residential neighborhoods delineated in Figure 2.2. Existing residential building inten-

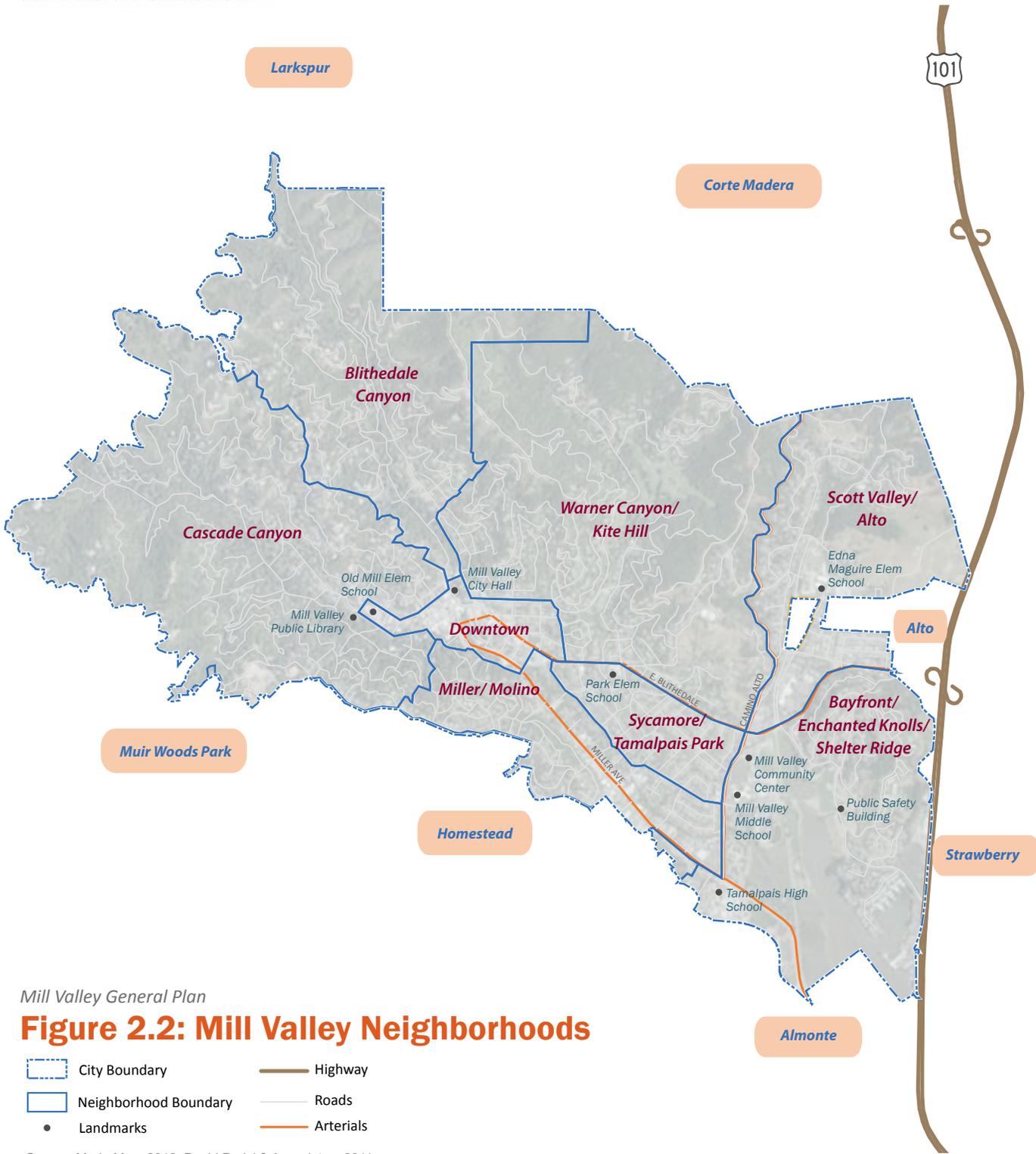


Top: Single family home on East Blithedale
Bottom: Multifamily homes on East Blithedale

Trends in Land Use

#1 Americans value walkability and sense of place.

- More than 75 percent of Americans consider having sidewalks and places to take a walk a top priority when deciding where to live.¹
- Homes in close proximity to multiple destinations, such as stores, libraries, parks, coffee shops, and restaurants, are more valuable than similar homes in neighborhoods where there is less to walk to.²
- In a 2010 survey, only nine percent of households surveyed indicated that their ideal home size was over 3,200 square feet, while more than one-third said their ideal size was less than 2,000 square feet.³

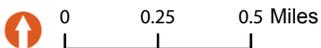


Mill Valley General Plan

Figure 2.2: Mill Valley Neighborhoods

- City Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Landmarks
- Highway
- Roads
- Arterials

Source: Marin Map, 2012; David Parisi & Associates, 2011



sity is largely determined by the zoning, which regulates minimum site area, building setbacks, maximum site coverage, and building heights permitted in each zoning category.

Cascade and Blithedale Canyons

The characteristics of these two neighborhoods are quite similar – each is characterized by narrow, circuitous roads, the visual prominence of the redwoods and broadleaf evergreens that screen most residential structures from full view, and the sense of containment provided by the canyon walls. Each area also contains a great variety of housing types and styles.

Existing single-family residential densities near the canyon floor average approximately four to seven homes per acre. Low-density single-family development on the surrounding hillsides is generally one to two homes per acre and as low as one home per ten acres in some of the steeper, more remote areas.

Miller/Molino Area

As in Cascade and Blithedale Canyons, the hillside roads in the Miller/Molino area are narrow and circuitous. Here, however, vegetation is somewhat less dense. The slopes immediately above Miller Avenue are covered with redwood and broadleaf evergreens, while the balance of the area is more open. However, introduced vegetation in the latter area is now gradually producing a lush appearance similar to that of the redwood and broadleaf evergreen-dominated area. Since development is located on the northeast-facing slopes, broad views out over the central portion of Mill Valley are provided from both the roadways and residences.

Existing single-family residential density on the hillside areas is generally in the range of four to seven homes per acre, and multi-family densities along Miller Avenue generally range from 10 to 30 units per acre.

Sycamore/Tamalpais Park

The relatively level topography and more conventional lotting pattern of the Sycamore/ Tamalpais Park neighborhood creates a design character quite different from the hillside and canyon areas of Mill Valley. Other design features that distinguish this neighborhood are road layout and a variety of architectural styles and design details and landscaping that lend visual richness to the area.



Mill Valley Record Newspaper Advertisement (1904)
Source: Mill Valley Public Library,
Lucretia Little History Room

Existing single-family residential densities in this area are generally four to seven units per acre.

Warner Canyon/Kite Hill

Two distinctive character areas occur within the Warner Canyon area. In the lower, southern portion, development more closely resembles that of the Sycamore Triangle. That is, residential development is predominantly detached single-family and lots tend to follow the more conventional subdivision pattern of rectangular lots aligned along the adjacent streets. Development along the north side of East Blithedale Avenue contains a mix of low-intensity office and commercial uses and interspersed multi-family developments that, over time, have become integrated into the neighborhood. Existing open space areas and the City golf course farther up the canyon contribute to a more irregular pattern of lots, and lot sizes increase such that, along the ridgelines, lot sizes are as large as ten acres or more. In the main canyon portion, vegetation is less dense than in Cascade and Blithedale Canyons, and introduced plant materials are predominant except along the creek where riparian plant communities occur and along the upper edges of the canyon where broadleaf evergreens are found.

Existing single-family residential densities generally range from an average of one home per ten acres in the hillside areas to seven homes per acre in the flatter areas. Multi-family densities in the area generally range from 9 to over 30 units per acre.

Scott Valley/Alto/Enchanted Knolls/Bayfront/Shelter Ridge

The development pattern and appearance of this area differs from other hill areas to the west because the area was built to contemporary subdivision standards. Development in these neighborhoods ranges from larger-lot custom homes in the Scott Valley area to more traditional residential subdivision development patterns in the Alto and Enchanted Knolls areas to large condominium and apartment developments along the bayfront and above the commercial frontage on Highway 101.

Existing single-family residential densities generally range from one unit per two acres in the upper areas of Scott Valley to seven homes per acre in the flatter areas, and multi-family densities generally range from 8 to 30 units per acre.



Downtown (revised March 2016)

Downtown residential development wraps like a collar around the downtown commercial core. Development varies considerably in size and design, with residential units ranging from multiple small cottages on a single parcel and small and moderately sized apartments and condominiums to single-family homes on both very small and very large lots. The mix of single-family and multi-family residential in this area is approximately equal. Proximity to nearby churches, schools, SLPs, parks, the Downtown Plaza, and commercial activities make this a prime area for easy walkability and embody the small town character that many associate with Mill Valley. The mix of multi-family and single family housing close

Trends in Land Use

#2 Small businesses and towns are loved for a reason.

- *Small businesses employ 50 million people and 90 percent donate money to charity.⁴*
- *Small businesses generate more than \$11 trillion in receipts per year.⁵*
- *Home-based businesses account for 52 percent of all small businesses.⁶*
- *The latest figures show that small businesses create 75 percent of the net new jobs in our economy. Many of these small businesses are focused on health and wellness and celebrating local culture.⁷ For example:*
 - *The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported in 2011 that the sales of “local foods” amounted to \$4.8 billion in 2008 and was predicted to top \$7 billion in 2011/2012.⁸*
 - *Pilates and yoga studios were named the #4 top-growing industries in the U.S. by an April 2012 IBIS World report.⁹*
 - *Locally produced crafts, independent manufacturing, local “flavor,” and nostalgia have influenced further growth and appreciation for local retailers.*
- *The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted in January 2012 that the fastest-growing industries would be professional services, health care, and education, with individual and family health care services and management/ scientific/ technical consulting services growing the most.¹⁰*
- *The National Restaurant Association reported in April 2012 that more than 560,000 restaurant jobs have been added since the start of the employment recovery in March 2010, outpacing the overall economic recovery of recent months.¹¹*
- *Active, local travel (e.g., Blazing Saddles, organized hikes) creates more memorable, engaging, and authentic experiences in which people can be part of the community as opposed to just observing from afar.*
- *Local foods, businesses, and shopping create a unique experience for residents and visitors alike.¹²*

to social and commercial activity is a defining physical and social characteristic of the downtown residential areas, and the intent of the General Plan is to continue to encourage this mix of residential development; retain existing residential units; and encourage new development to be in scale with existing development patterns.

Existing residential densities on scattered sites within the downtown are generally in the range of 12 to 29 units per acre.

Commercial Areas

Mill Valley has four primary commercial areas: Downtown, Lower Miller Avenue, East Blithedale/Alto Center, and Redwood Highway Frontage Road. These commercial areas generally consist of small, local-serving businesses that provide goods and services oriented primarily to the daily shopping, service, and entertainment needs of the area’s residents. They are considered a valuable asset by the community and play a key role in shaping Mill Valley’s small-town character and quality of life. Nearby residents can conveniently walk to shopping opportunities because these areas are generally surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Figure 2.3 shows the location of these commercial areas.

Increasing competition from major shopping centers elsewhere in Marin County, a greatly expanded commercial base in southern Marin County, and the growing popularity of online shopping have significantly affected small, local-serving businesses in Mill Valley by increasing the supply of establishments providing similar goods and services and thus making it more difficult for local businesses to capture a sufficient portion of their respective markets. With rising rents, existing local-serving businesses have trouble maintaining or increasing profits.

A majority of the local-serving businesses in the area are owned and operated by small, independent proprietors. Many are local residents who have a sincere interest in the future of the town and are therefore involved in local organizations and institutions, such as the Mill Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Mill Valley School District, and local service clubs. Their activities help to build a type of community feeling and strength that contributes to the small-town character of Mill Valley.



Top: The Depot on the Plaza
Bottom: Shopper in Downtown Mill Valley



Lower Miller Avenue



Alto Center



Redwood Highway Frontage Road

Downtown

Mill Valley's downtown is characterized by a tight configuration of one- and two-story buildings clustered around Lytton Square and the Depot Plaza. The variety of small businesses, the compatible architectural style of the buildings, and the unique natural setting give downtown the quality of a small village. Downtown Mill Valley is the community's primary shopping, civic, and cultural center. Most downtown businesses are small-scale and oriented to provide a unique shopping and gathering place for local residents and regional visitors.

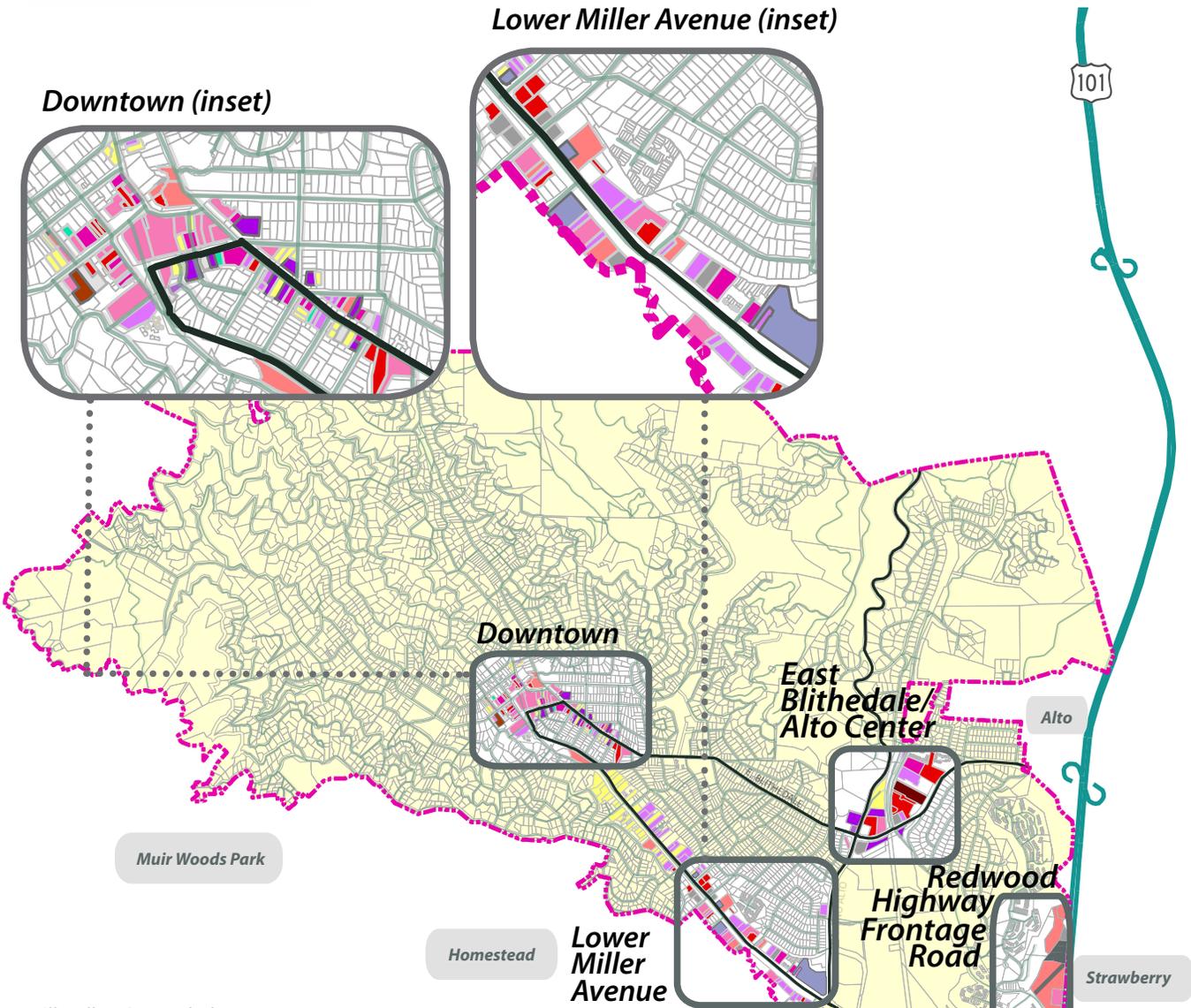
Lower Miller Avenue

Lower Miller Avenue, from Locust Street to Camino Alto, functions as the full-service commercial area for the community. In addition to retail and restaurants, it also provides a range of professional and business office space and service and repair businesses that serve the entire community.

The character of Lower Miller Avenue is different from that of downtown. Buildings have a range of architectural styles and massing due to the difference in lot sizes and configurations and the different eras in which the buildings were built. Parking in the Lower Miller Avenue area is a combination of public "on-street" parking, either in the center median of Miller Avenue or along the curb and, where lots are large enough, private parking lots in front of or behind the buildings. The adoption of the Miller Avenue Streetscape Plan in 2010, which is incorporated into this General Plan by reference, will result in improved access to local businesses through proposed street, sidewalk, bikeway, and public transit improvements, while maintaining the distinctive character of the various "rooms" that characterize Miller Avenue from Almonte Boulevard to downtown Mill Valley.

East Blithedale/Alto Center

East Blithedale/Alto Center, since its development, has served as both a neighborhood shopping center and a location for larger-scale retail businesses that serve a more regional market. Currently, the East Blithedale/Alto Center area includes 204,000 square feet of leasable space. Its location near the East Blithedale/Highway 101 interchange makes it attractive for regional-serving businesses.



Mill Valley General Plan

Figure 2.3: Existing Commercial Land Use

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Automotive/Gas | Miscellaneous/Parking | Parcels |
| Building Materials/Hardware/ Garden | Medical Office | Roads |
| Eating/Drinking | Personal Service | Highway |
| Exercise/Dance Studio | Residential | Arterials |
| Finance/Real Estate | Unknown/Vacant | City Boundary |
| Food/Drug/Liquor | Unknown/Vacant | Commercial Areas |
| General Merchandise | Parcels | |
| General Office | Roads | |
| Hotel | Highway | |
| Miscellaneous | Arterials | |

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: Marin Map, City of Mill Valley, 2012

Redwood Highway Frontage Road

The Redwood Highway Frontage Road area has historically served as a regional-serving office and commercial area. The uses tend to be oriented to the Highway 101 frontage road and include a large amount of professional office space and some regional freeway-oriented commercial uses, such as hotels and car dealerships. This area constitutes most of Mill Valley's frontage on Highway 101.

Land Use Map & Designations

The purpose of the General Plan Land Use Map (Figure 2.4) is to clearly illustrate the relationship between the basic land use poli-

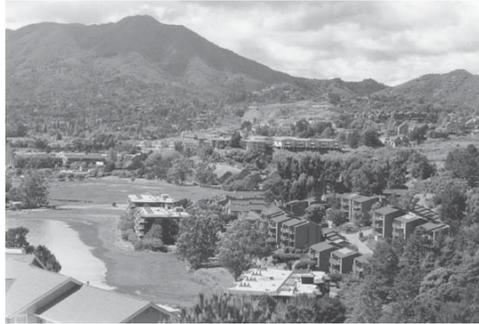
Trends in Land Use

#3 Our definition of "urban" is changing.

- *In 2012, two-thirds of the nation's 51 largest cities experienced twice as much growth within the urban core (three miles from the urban center) as elsewhere in the City, especially among young, well-educated 20- and 30-year-olds.¹³*
- *This is a far cry from the early 1990s, when the 1990 census revealed that nearly half of U.S. population lived in the suburbs, contributing to the ongoing decentralization of American cities and development patterns that had been ongoing for decades.¹⁴*
- *Urbanists in the early 1990s coined terms such as the "Edge City" (Joel Garreau, 1991), and New Urbanism was founded (by Andres Duany in 1993) to remind Americans of the value and benefits of traditional neighborhood patterns.*
- *The current urban trend was documented in 2002, when Richard Florida coined the term the "creative class" to describe the young, well-educated populations, as well as retirees and empty-nesters, that were contributing to the resurgence of American cities.¹⁵*



cities across the US have changed their zoning code to include **Urban Agriculture**



Centennial Documentary Photo Contest
Source: Mill Valley Public Library
Photographer: Tapio Holma

cies and programs of a community and a given parcel of land within that community. In other words, the Land Use Map tells at a glance how a piece of property may be used and how intensively it might be developed. The Land Use Map is not the sole basis for that determination; other General Plan policies, zoning regulations, design guidelines, and other standards may also apply and influence the final size, scope, and appearance of a development project. However, the Land Use Map is the starting point for understanding not only how much development a parcel might accommodate but also how that parcel fits into an overall community-wide view of future growth and development opportunities.

Over the years, the California courts have determined that an effective General Plan Land Use Map must be built upon three universal criteria: use, population density, and building intensity.

“Use” is determined through the creation of broad categories that identify the principal or predominant land use within that category: “residential,” “commercial,” “open space,” and so forth. Land use categories or “designations” can be, and often are, more specific

Trends in Land Use

#4 We want hands-on influence on our cities.

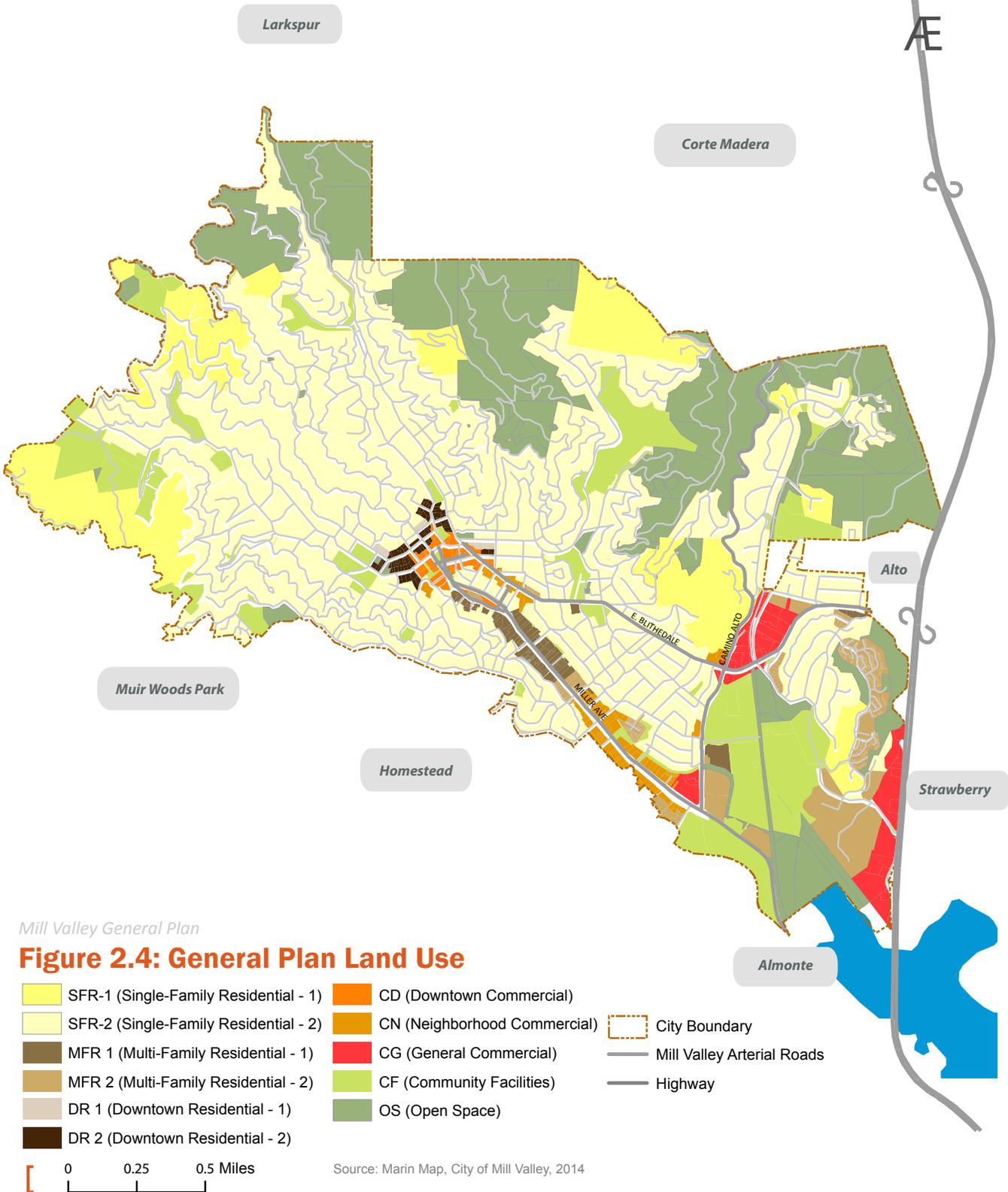
- *The DIY (Do It Yourself) and “Tactical Urbanism” movements are reverberating across American cities, arming everyday people (i.e., non-planners) with the will and the power to enable physical change in the urban environment. Examples include: Park(ing) Day, Bike to Work Day, Pop-up retailers, mobile vendors, temporary streetscapes, and public space interventions.¹⁶*
- *The open-data movement has encouraged the release of many government and policy data sources so that they are available to anyone, resulting in tech-savvy citizens taking initiative to combat social problems and enable change.¹⁷*

Table 2.2 | General Plan Land Use Categories

MV2040 General Plan Land Use Category			Corresponding Mill Valley Zoning District(s)
Title	Density Range ^{1,2}	Description	
Single-Family Residential – 1 (SFR-1)	1 DU/10 acres to 1 DU/1.5 acres	Very low-density, large lot and estate residential development	RSP-1.5A; RSP-2A; RSP-2.5A; RSP-3A; RSP-4A; RS-5; RSP-5A; RSP-10A; RS-10A
Single-Family Residential – 2 (SFR-2)	1 DU/acre to 7 DU/acre	Low- to medium-density single-family residential	RS-43; RSP-30; RSP-1A; RS-30; RS-20; RS-15; RS-10; RS-7.5; RS-6; RSP-5, RP; Single Family homes in the RM3.5 zoned area between Sunnyside and Millwood
Multi-Family Residential – 1 (MFR-1)	8 DU/acre to 15 DU/acre	Medium-density multi-family and attached single-family residential	RM-5.5; RM-5.0; RM-4.0; RM-3.5; RM-3.0
Multi-Family Residential – 2 (MFR-2)	17 DU/acre to 29 DU/acre	Higher-density multi-family and attached single-family residential	RM-2.5; RM-2.0; RM-1.5; PA (on Miller Avenue and Corte Madera Avenue)
Downtown Residential - 1 (DR-1)	8 DU/acre (minimum) to 16 DU/acre; 1 DU allowed on any vacant parcel or any parcel currently developed with a single-family residence	A mix of medium density multi-family and single-family residential near the downtown. Single-family residential allowed on vacant lots and lots currently developed with a single-family residential use. Single-family residences are not allowed on lots currently developed with multi-family units. Multi-family residential allowed on any lot in accordance with minimum and maximum densities.	RM2.5; RM3.0 transition areas between Downtown Residential and Single Family Residential
Downtown Residential - 2 (DR-2)	12 DU/acre (minimum) to 29 DU/acre; 1 DU allowed on any vacant parcel or any parcel currently developed with a single-family residence	A mix of medium density multi-family and single-family residential near downtown. Single-family residential allowed on vacant lots and lots currently used as single-family residential use. Single-family residences are not allowed on lots currently developed with multi-family units.; Multi-family residential allowed on any lot in accordance with minimum and maximum densities.	RM-1.5; RM2.5 zones adjacent to Downtown
Downtown Commercial (CD)	17 DU/acre (minimum) to 29 DU/acre for mixed use developments with residential component	Lytton Square/Town Center area from 1989 General Plan, plus Mill Valley Lumber properties between inbound and outbound Miller Avenue; small-scale, local-serving restaurants, commercial uses, and entertainment uses; and residential units above or behind the ground floor	C-N (this designation anticipates the creation of the proposed new “Downtown Commercial” zoning district); PA (on Camino Alto and East Blithedale)
Neighborhood Commercial (CN)	17 DU/acre (minimum) to 29 DU/acre for mixed use developments with residential component	Lower Miller Avenue area from 1989 General Plan, plus P-A zoned areas on East Blithedale Avenue and Camino Alto; personal, business, and medical services; local-serving retail; and residential units above or behind the ground floor	C-N (this designation also anticipates the creation of the proposed new “Limited Commercial” zone on East Blithedale Avenue)
General Commercial (CG)	17 DU/acre (minimum) to 29 DU/acre for mixed use developments with residential component	East Blithedale/Alto Center and Redwood Highway Frontage areas from 1989 General Plan; Safeway Center (Camino Alto); local and regional commercial and office	C-G
Open Space (OS)	N/A	All designated public and private open space	O-A
Community Facilities (CF)	N/A	All City facilities including City golf course, parks, City Hall, Community Center, Public Safety Building, etc.; public schools and private schools	C-F; O-A; C-R

¹ “DU” denotes “dwelling unit.” Density calculations (dwelling units per acre) for specific development proposals are rounded up to the nearest whole number if the calculation results in more than 0.50 of a unit; rounded down to the nearest whole number if less than 0.50 of a unit. N/A denotes “not applicable.”

² Density of a given development project may be approved at less than the stated minimum based on findings supported by evidence in the record set forth in Land Use Element Program LU 1-3.





Tam High from the Air (1929). Camino Alto is seen directly in front of Tam High and Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks run through the center of the picture in front of the gymnasium.
Source: Mill Valley Public Library, Lucretia Little History Room



Click Off (2008)
Shelter Bay
Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission

– for example, “Single-Family Residential” or “Neighborhood Commercial” – but they are not intended to be as specific as zoning districts that may, for example, further differentiate among single-family residential uses based on minimum lot size.

“Population density” is determined by factors such as the natural environment, proximity to major roads or services, and historical development patterns. Typically, population density tends to be higher closer to core services and facilities (shopping, schools, transit, major roadways, etc.) than in places where circumstances (including past land use decisions) may limit the type and intensity of development.

Finally, “building intensity” determines how much or how big a particular development might be. For residential development, a typical measure of building intensity is “dwelling units per acre (du/ac)” or “density.” In non-residential land use categories (commercial, open space, etc.), intensity is often determined by use and then further regulated through the Zoning Ordinance. The development review process in Mill Valley, particularly for single-family residential development, is based much more on another measure of building intensity known as “Floor Area Ratio (FAR),” which is a measure of the relationship between the size of a proposed structure or structures (in square feet) and the size of the parcel on which it is located. Density is strictly a measurement of numbers of units per acre regardless of their floor area, so one of the principal benefits of using density as a measure of building intensity in the General Plan is that residential or commercial sites available for development or redevelopment over time are used more efficiently. The minimum and maximum densities described in Table 2.2 are intended to ensure that under applicable development standards and guidelines, the number of units that can be developed on a given site will not result in a project with fewer, larger units and will be appropriate to the type and scale of development established by the General Plan land use designation.

The MV2040 General Plan Land Use Map (Figure 2.4) identifies nine land use categories based largely on existing development patterns and zoning. Table 2.2 identifies the nine categories and describes the allowed uses, development intensity, and corresponding zoning.



Alto intersection, October 1955, before the East Blithedale overpass was built. East Blithedale branches off toward the right and Tiburon Boulevard branches off to the left. The Strawberry Shopping Center is now located in the upper left hand corner and Enchanted Knolls neighborhood is now located in the lower right-hand corner. In the upper right is Shelter Ridge. Contour lines on hills at right are cow trails on dairy ranch grazing land. The homes to the left are part of Sutton Manor and were built by several private contractors as residential homes and tract houses before and after World War II.

Source: Mill Valley Public Library, Lucretia Little History Room

Land Use Goals, Policies & Programs

LAND-1 | Community Character

Protect and enhance the natural beauty and small-town character of Mill Valley.

LU.1 Residential Development

Residential development shall be compatible with, integrated into, and subordinate to its natural setting.

LU.1-1 Regularly evaluate and update residential development standards, construction management oversight, and single-family and multi-family design guidelines to ensure that new development and residential remodels are compatible with their natural surroundings and character of the adjoining neighborhood.

LU.1-2 New residential development or remodels should avoid a design approach or architectural features that exaggerate height, bulk or mass and create incompatibilities in relation to neighboring properties, distant public views from across a canyon or other parts of the City, or views from the public right-of-way.



Single family remodel in progress

LU.1-3 The residential density (dwelling units per acre) of a new or redeveloped residential development project or residential development as part of a mixed-use project may be reduced to below the minimum density established by this General Plan where there is adequate evidence in the record that the physical characteristics of the site (including but not limited to lot size, slope, habitat value, soil conditions, flood hazard, etc.) or other conditions identified through the environmental review process clearly indicate that the minimum density cannot be met without appropriate mitigation or is determined to be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the community.

LU.1-4 As part of the five-year General Plan review and update called for in the General Plan Administration Element, use the latest demographic and economic data available to assess the extent of the impact of the “demographic shift” in Mill Valley from older “empty nesters” to younger families with school-age children and the rate of residential development, including the availability of new and existing residential units, on traffic volumes, demand for recreational and other public services, school facilities, and any other related effects. The assessment shall also include recommendations to amend existing General Plan goals, policies, and programs or add new goals, policies, or programs to address identified impacts as necessary, consistent with the overall goals and community values of the General Plan.

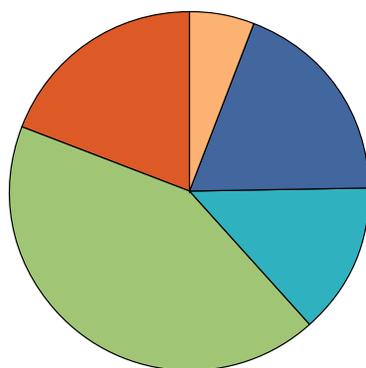
Trends in Land Use

#5 Older and younger generations

- Mill Valley's median age has increased from 41 in 2000 to 47 in 2010, which is significantly older than California's median population age of 35.
- Almost 19% of Mill Valley is 65 years or older, compared to just over 11% for the State.
- Mill Valley also has a substantial young population with almost 25% of the community 18 years or younger.
- School-age population (5-18 years) has continued to increase from 13% in 1990 to 18% in 2010.

Mill Valley Demographics

(2010 Census, Total Population of 13,903)



Source: US Census data (2010)

LU.1-5 The preservation of existing housing stock is encouraged to maintain the diversity of housing in the community. Therefore, the consolidation of existing multi-family dwellings to reduce the number of dwelling units is discouraged. (Added March 2016)

LU.2 Commercial Development

Provide commercial services in a convenient, safe, and attractive environment that complements the small-town character of Mill Valley, supports local business development and growth, and strengthens the sense of community.

LU.2-1 Within the context of Mill Valley’s unique community character, allow the market to dictate the success or failure of particular types of businesses, rather than setting numerical or other regulatory limits that express an official preference for one type of use over another.



Local business store fronts in Mill Valley (left and right)

LAND-2 | Downtown

Maintain downtown Mill Valley as one of the social, commercial, intellectual, cultural, and entertainment centers of the community.

LU.3 Community Gathering Space

Sustain a diverse array of functions—shopping, dining, services, community events, entertainment, and recreation—that will continue to attract locals and visitors to the downtown area.

LU.3-1 Establish a streamlined special events policy and process that allows for a wider range of events and sponsors on the Plaza and throughout downtown and expands the hours and activities that are permissible.

LU.3-2 Encourage a complete and well-integrated mix of uses (including retail, food and drink establishments, services, arts and cultural venues, and residential uses) that will create an attractive, vibrant, and walkable downtown experience that does not detract from the essential character and charm of downtown.



Left: Mill Valley Market, in its current location since 1954

Right: Formal permitted use of the Plaza. Comedy in the Plaza (top) sponsored by the Arts Commission and Wine and Food Festival (bottom, picture by Gary Ferber) sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

LAND-3 | Commercial Areas

Maintain and enhance the City's principal commercial areas (Downtown, Miller Avenue, Highway 101, East Blithedale/Alto Center).

LU.4 Good Neighbor Policy

Address potential conflicts between businesses and residents in or adjacent to commercial areas by recognizing the need for responsible business operations and practices; by acknowledging that residents who enjoy the value and convenience of living in or near commercial areas may also experience noise, odors, parking constraints, and other issues not typically found in traditional residential areas; and by recognizing that the resolution of any conflict with adjacent residents should take into account reasonable concerns and consider the importance of maintaining a vibrant commercial area.

LU.4-1 Establish specific, project-related good neighbor conditions of approval as part of granting Conditional Use Permits (CUPs). For those uses that may not be subject to a CUP, establish good neighbor policies by resolution of the City Council.

LU.4-2 Encourage neighbors to use neutral mediation services to resolve potential conflicts among neighbors for matters that may involve the City but do not relate to enforceable City regulations or conditions of approval.

LU.4-3 Strengthen the City's code enforcement program and annually report to the community on the progress toward resolving outstanding code violations.

LU.4-4 Establish clear and consistent "good neighbor" practices (e.g., for noise, litter, waste disposal, customer conduct, etc.) for all businesses operating adjacent to established residential uses and make sure that property owners, business owners, and residents acknowledge those practices and the operational commitment they represent.

LU.5 Coordinated Strategy

Create and implement a commercial development strategy for the City's principal commercial areas that makes the most of their distinctive locations, amenities, and uses and results in a complete and complementary range of goods and services in the community.

LU.5-1 Establish regulatory and aesthetic standards to ensure attractive, pleasant, safe, clean, and accessible commercial areas and adjacent public realm by:

- Updating the City's sign regulations to make them consistent with changes in state and federal law and related case law, to ensure that they recognize and regulate new sign technologies where necessary, and to reflect changes in community values;
- Updating the City's zoning and regulations and development standards to maintain the distinctive mix of commercial uses, building setbacks, building heights, and other development characteristics of the principal commercial areas;

- Adopting commercial design guidelines using the guidelines in the 1989 General Plan (See Appendix D) for the four principal commercial areas as a starting point;
- Establishing and implementing commercial development and public improvement standards (e.g., for sidewalks, street lights and furniture, landscaping, parking and circulation, traffic signals, etc.); and
- Encouraging public/private partnerships for long-term maintenance and improvements beyond public standards.

LU.5-2 Establish a coordinated network of pedestrian and bicycle amenities and safety improvements, including sidewalks, bike lanes, seating areas, trash receptacles, and bike parking, that will link local businesses and customers. 🌿

LU.5-3 Encourage a complete and well-integrated mix of uses along Miller Avenue that will create an attractive, vibrant, and walkable experience and gathering spaces consistent with the adopted Miller Avenue Streetscape Plan, and that continues to provide a range of goods and services that meet “everyday” local needs (e.g., auto repair, medical services, recreation and fitness, etc.).

LU.5-4 Encourage property owners in the East Blithedale/Alto Center commercial area to improve and modernize existing facilities so as to provide safe and efficient multi-modal access and circulation and attract major community-serving tenants. 🌿

LU.5-5 Work with the property owners along the highly visible Highway 101 commercial area to enhance its appearance and connection to Mill Valley and to continue to attract local and regional office and business uses.



Pedestrian Crossing at Miller Avenue at LaGoma

LAND-4 | Historic & Archaeological Resources

Identify, preserve, and protect potential and listed historic and archeological resources Citywide.

LU.6 Resources Inventory

Work with the Mill Valley Historical Society to develop and implement a comprehensive inventory of potential historic and archeological resources.

LU.6-1 Create a Mill Valley Historic Resources Inventory that includes a community-wide survey of property types and historic, architectural, or cultural contributions and an evaluation of the integrity and significance of these resources.

LU.6-2 Make the inventory available to the public, City staff, and decision-makers and incorporate historic preservation considerations into the City's decision-making process.

LU.7 Protection of Historic and Cultural Resources

Protect the historical and cultural value, architectural appearance, aesthetics, and unique character of historic and cultural resources.

LU.7-1 Adopt and implement a historic and cultural preservation ordinance that could include regulations and procedures to address:

- Standards and process for review of proposed additions and/or deletions to potential or listed resources;
- The creation of a Historic Preservation Advisory Commission that includes the representation of both historic and cultural resource interests;



The Outdoor Art Club (One West Blithedale). This building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The building was designed in 1904 by the internationally known American architect Bernard Maybeck and is recognized for its unusual roof truss system and Maybeck's creative use of natural materials.

- Establishment of a process for consultation on and the recovery and treatment of cultural resources before commencing construction activities in areas where cultural resources may be present; and
- Definition of owner responsibilities for care and maintenance of designated historic properties to prevent demolition by neglect.

LU.7-2 Establish regulations to postpone the demolition of potential or listed historic or cultural resources while other alternatives are considered.

LU.7-3 Establish development guidelines and standards that are consistent with the character and significance of designated historic districts, landmarks, or neighborhoods.

LU.7-4 Require reasonable efforts to salvage architectural elements that would otherwise be destroyed.

LU.8 Education and Appreciation

Promote education about and greater appreciation of historic preservation and efforts to protect historic and cultural resources.

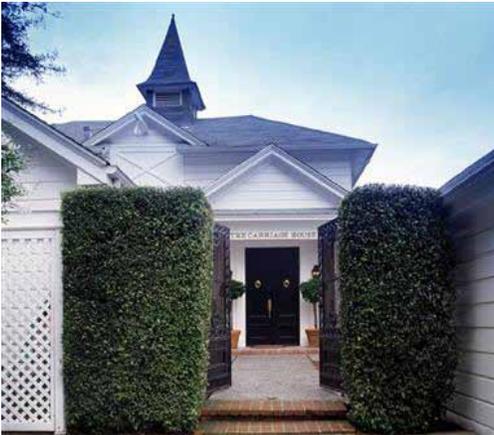
LU.8-1 Seek private funding and grants in support of historic and cultural preservation.

LU.8-2 Promote the benefits of owning a historic property.

LU.8-3 Promote heritage education in local schools.

LU.8-4 Establish an awards program for local historic and cultural preservation efforts.

LU.8-5 Establish guided or self-guided tours of local historic and cultural resources, districts, and neighborhoods.



The Carriage House, 230 Miller Avenue, originally built in 1895. On the left, a photograph from 1974.

LAND-5 | Sphere of Influence & Annexation

Maintain a Sphere of Influence for Mill Valley that supports the efficient provision of services and a logical City boundary (see Figure 2.5).

LU.9 Coordination with LAFCO

Work with the Marin County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and other affected agencies to resolve issues related to the efficient provision of services or related boundary issues.

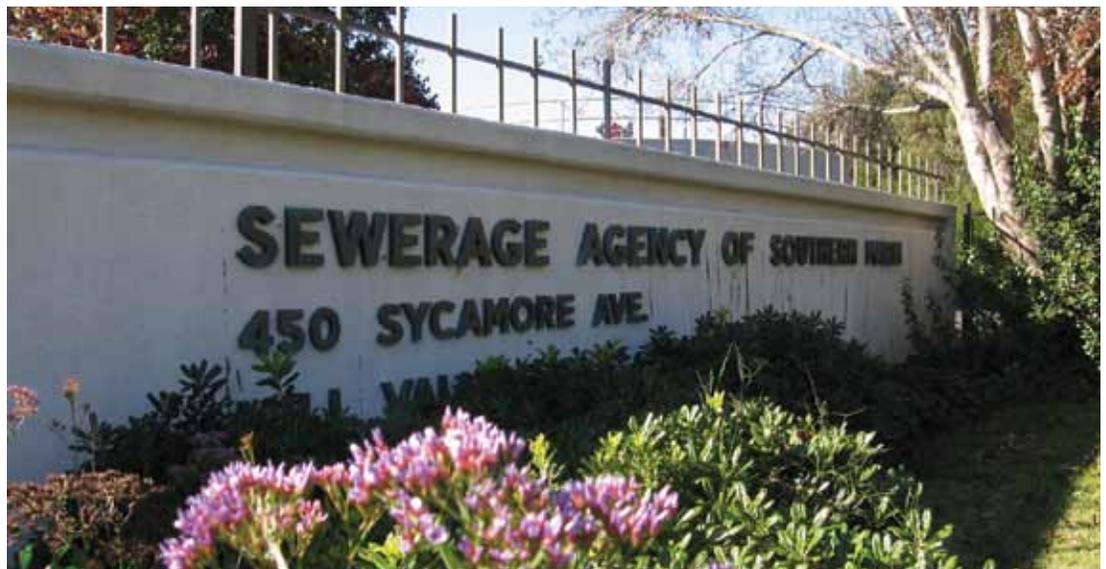
LU.9-1 Consider amending the City's boundaries in those circumstances where annexation is requested by residents, improves the efficiency of services, and is fiscally responsible (see Figure 2.5).

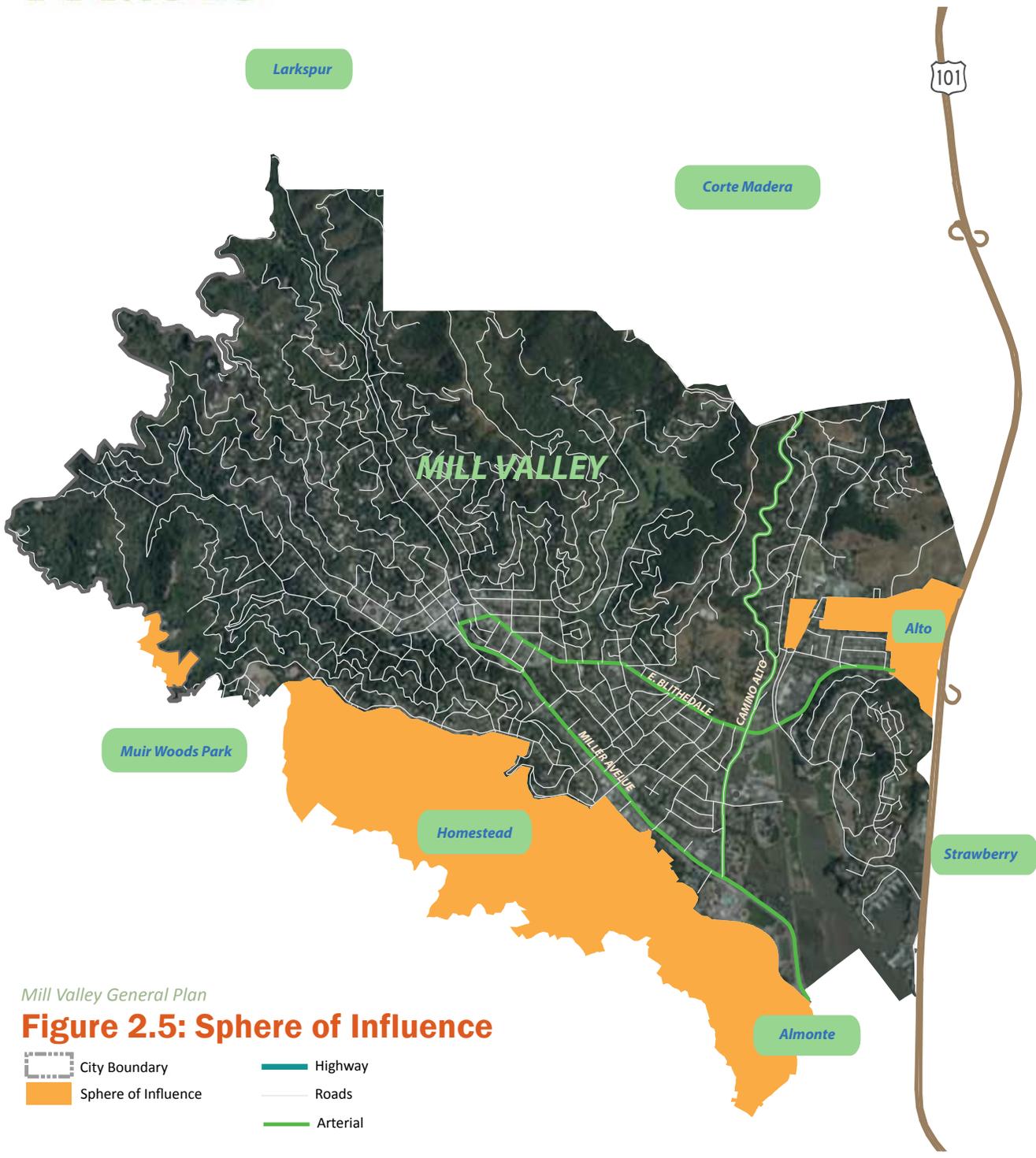
LU.10 Provision of Services

Discourage the provision of City services outside of the boundaries of the City.

LU.10-1 Requests for City services to properties outside of the City's boundaries shall be denied unless there are clear and compelling public health or safety reasons for those services.

LU.10-2 In those instances where the City agrees to extend public services beyond the City's boundaries, ensure that the full cost of the extension, including any and all legal, administrative, maintenance, and construction costs, will be borne by the applicant(s) and/or property owner(s).





Mill Valley General Plan

Figure 2.5: Sphere of Influence

- City Boundary
- Sphere of Influence
- Highway
- Roads
- Arterial

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: Marin Map, 2012