

# Public Workshop Summary Report

Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan - Public Workshop #4

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*Tuesday, December 3, 2013  
Larkspur City Hall  
400 Magnolia Ave.  
Larkspur, CA 94939*





## Acknowledgements

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This workshop would not have been possible without the efforts of the following organizations and individuals:

### **CONSULTANT TEAM**

- BMS Design Group
  - ❖ Barbara Maloney, Principal
  - ❖ Elizabeth Foster, Senior Planner + Urban Designer
  - ❖ Joy Glasier, Landscape Architect

### **THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE/SMART STATION AREA PLAN CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**

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This project is funded in part through a Station Area Planning Grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission with additional funding from the Transportation Authority of Marin, the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District, the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District, the County of Marin, and the City of Larkspur.



## Introduction

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The City of Larkspur received a \$480,000 Station Area Planning Grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in May 2011 to prepare the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan. The grant was augmented by \$120,000 in matching funds from the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD), the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District (SMART), the County of Marin, and the City of Larkspur. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) has partnered with MTC to manage the planning grant program.

The Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan (SAP) will be a Local Area Plan incorporated into the update of the City's General Plan, a planning process which the City is conducting jointly with the SAP process. An environmental impact report (EIR) will also be prepared for the SAP. The Plan Area encompasses the Redwood Highway area, the eastern portion of Greenbrae, and the Larkspur Landing area. The Draft SAP and its associated Draft EIR will be released to the public in mid-February 2014.

Public participation is a key component of the SAP planning process. The workshop summarized in this report (Public Workshop #4) marks the fourth and final workshop held during the approximately 18 month planning process that began in April of 2012. The General Plan Update/SMART Station Area Plan Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) met seven times during this process, the meetings of which were publicly noticed and open to public attendance.

Public Workshop #4 was held on December 3, 2013 at Larkspur City Hall and was intended to present the major land use policies, plans for pedestrian, vehicular, transit, and bicycle circulation, and open space and recreation opportunities proposed by the Draft Station Area Plan prior to its release in mid-December 2013. The workshop consisted of two parts: an open house from 4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. allowing attendees to view informational displays and engage in discussion with city staff and project consultants; and a formal presentation and Q&A session from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Over the course of the evening, a total of almost 100 Larkspur residents and residents of other Marin cities visited either one or both of the workshop sessions.

The open house allowed for dialogues between members of the public, city staff, and project consultants that addressed a range of topics, including: the role and purpose of a General Plan in a jurisdiction's development; vehicle trip generation and intersection-level congestion impacts of the development proposed by the Draft SAP; potential impacts to water and sewer service generated by future development in Larkspur; and many more. The formal presentation provided detailed information to the public, and the following Q&A session allowed attendees the opportunity to ask clarifying questions of staff and consultants and share their thoughts on the concepts and development levels proposed by the Draft SAP. (Note: This workshop was not a public hearing. Formal hearings of the Draft SAP and Draft EIR will begin in April 2014 before the Planning Commission, and then on to the City Council.)

## Outreach Efforts

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The City of Larkspur employed a variety of outreach methods to advertise Public Workshop #4, including the following:

- A direct mailer to every residential postal customer in the City of Larkspur and portions of Greenbrae under Larkspur jurisdiction;
- A personal letter from the Planning and Building Director to all property owners in the station area;
- Calendar listings in the Marin Independent Journal and Twin Cities Times;
- Calendar listing and notices on the City's online calendar, with a subscriber count of 200 community members.

Additionally, several community organizations publicized the event through their own outreach channels, including Marin Deserves Better and Citizen Marin. Approximately 100 community members, including Citizen Advisory Committee members, property owners, Larkspur residents and residents of other Marin cities and towns, interest groups, public agency representatives, and business owners attended either one or both sessions of the workshop.



## Workshop Summary

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### 1) Open House

The open house (4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.) allowed attendees to make their way through multiple exhibits displaying information about the draft Station Area Plan and the planning process. These exhibits included:

- Land Use
  - What is Transit-Oriented Development?
  - Illustrative Land Use Plan
- Access, Circulation, and Parking
  - Integrated Land Use and Transportation Strategy
  - Bicycle and Pedestrian Route Map
  - Larkspur Landing Circle Intersection Improvements
  - Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility
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- Parks and Open Space
  - Existing and Proposed Parks and Open Space
  - Improvements to existing parks
- Neighborhood Design
  - Guiding Design Principles
  - Allowable Building Heights
  - Building Massing and Articulation
  - Sustainability
- Vision
  - A Unique Larkspur Environment
  - Optimize Multi-Modal Transit Options
  - Community Open Space and Waterfront Access
  - Sustainable Development
- Larkspur General Plan
  - General Plan Amendment Process
- Development Review Process
  - Planned Development Zoning District

### 2) Presentation and Q&A Session

Ms. Maloney and Mr. Parisi gave the presentation. The Q&A session was opened.

Denise Beck, Corte Madera, asked the following questions:

- Referring to the City's application for grant funding through the station area planning grant program, Part 3: why does the preferred plan propose such a significant amount of new housing when Part 3 of the grant application lists a goal of 200 housing units? Who directed

the consultant to come up with such high figures? Were ABAG representatives or Steve Kinsey involved?

- Were the City Council members informed that the grant money does not obligate the City to build any of the units identified in the Plan?
- Why wasn't the option of no growth also given?
- Why couldn't the Citizen Advisory Committee create their own land use alternative? The alternatives were formulated by consultants and given to the Committee as pre-determined options, thwarting public input.

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The grant application identified initial goals for the Station Area Plan.
- There was no direct discussion with Mr. Kinsey or representatives of ABAG regarding the outcome of the Plan.
- Mark Shorett of ABAG was a member of the Technical Advisory Committee.
- The consultants were selected through a standard process by the City and other grant funding partner agencies.
- The plan's priorities are to look at land use changes, including housing opportunities, job growth and transportation improvements.
- The Transit Neighborhood place type, through the planning grant program, specifies ranges of housing units to meet the mix of land uses that would support transit.

Susan Kirsch, Mill Valley

- She is a founder of Citizen Marin. She has a statement.
- The City staff and consultants seem like kind people, but they seem to have lost their minds bringing forward plans and proposal for 900 units.
- As she drove here she was caught in traffic.
- She asked the audience how many people have objections to the Plan. (Many people in the audience raised their hands).

Clayton Smith, Mill Valley

- Frequent user of Highway 101.
- He asked the audience how many people found out about this Plan only in the last week (Many people in the audience raised their hands.)
- Given the abuse of public sensibility, isn't it now an appropriate time to extend this process to have at least a year for the public to give input?
- Absence of the actual square footage for the number of 920 housing units.
- David Parisi's presentation lacked logic; does the 10% increase in traffic on Sir Francis Drake account for the exponentiality of each additional vehicle that has a disproportionately negative affect one very other vehicle in that area? Would that 10% increase mean traffic will come to a complete stop?
- How will the project impact the peak hour- will it lengthen it?

Mr. Parisi provided the following response:



- The traffic impact analysis does account for the additional delay for each movement for each intersection associated with project-related vehicle trips. This information will be provided in the EIR.

Richard Hall, San Rafael, asked the following questions:

- Looking at the station area planning grant goals, he is puzzled because he doesn't see any goals related to the issues the area currently faces e.g. the poor levels of service.
- With PDA grants you get about \$600,000 at best every 4 years; how will that money be used to mitigate the problems that currently exists, let alone the congestion from the Plan?
- Has City staff seen the video by San Rafael mayor Gary Phillips in which he says adopting the Plan does obligate the City to build the projected units?
- Has City staff read the LA Times Article "Near the Rails but on the Road" describing a transit-oriented development in which most residents do not take transit.

Mr. Toft provided the following answers:

- The EIR provides mitigation measures for the Plan's impacts; it doesn't solve all the existing traffic problems in the area.
- There are a number of mitigation measures identified, including a vehicle trip cap that would require development in the area be tied to a maximum vehicle trip count.
- Larkspur Landing is in the middle of a number of regional projects and is subject to regionally-generated traffic that has nothing to do with what happens in Larkspur itself.

An unknown woman asked the following questions:

- She is reassured by what was presented tonight, particularly the transportation demand management program.
- Stanford University was required to monitor their traffic through a TDM program and they reduced single-occupant car use from 72% driving alone to campus to 42%.
- How would the TDM program be funded if piecemeal development occurs through this plan?

Mr. Toft provided the following answers:

- If the Plan is adopted, the City would partner with other agencies such as TAM to develop a standardized approach with some oversight.
- It will be harder to create a TDM program with piecemeal development, but could work much better throughout the entire area.
- It would require developer participation and matching funds from other sources.
- There will be increased grant funding available for infrastructure improvements in the future through ABAG.

Jill Knott asked the following questions:

- She is a mom and drives around throughout the day dropping off kids.
- There is a real impact on the smaller roads, such as Magnolia Ave which is a nightmare when people get off the highway.

- Did the studies account for overflow of traffic and other congestion impacts onto local roads?
- She encourages the Plan to look at those impacts.
- Has the Plan looked at impacts to the schools? Elementary and middle schools in the area are at capacity.
- What about fire and police services? Where is that money coming from?

Mr. Parisi and Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The intersections studied are along Sir Francis Drake, but she is correct that other local roads in the system do get impacted by traffic on arterials.
- The EIR does analyze impacts to schools.
- There will be additional students, but because of the type of housing it's a lesser student generation rate than traditional suburban type development.
- School impact fees are levied to all development by school districts to cover the costs of improvements associated with new student generation.
- Students in the Larkspur Landing area are in the San Rafael city school districts; this was identified as a concern by the CAC that there should be some realignment of school districts to unify the Larkspur community.
- There will be added property taxes from new development that will go into the general fund to account for increased demand for services.

Sharon Rushton asked the following questions:

- Is City staff familiar with the many studies that show residents living in proximity to major roads are at much greater risk of development serious illness from air and noise pollution e.g. lung impairment, cardiac disease, miscarriage?
- How are future residents going to be protected?
- Studies by MTC demonstrate that despite billions of dollars spent on transit in the past several decades per capita transit ridership has declined by 36% since 1982. How can City staff say the dwelling units in the station area plan will generate fewer vehicle trips than typical suburban situation?
- Senate Bill 743 excludes generation of traffic from CEQA review in transit priority areas. How can traffic impacts of future development be mitigated if it is not required?

Mr. Toft and Mr. Goynes provided the following response:

- The EIR analyzes air quality impacts on future residents.
- Each new development would have to do a hazard assessment, depending on how close it is to pollutant sources.
- Most development proposed is not adjacent to Highway 101 itself.
- The SMART trains themselves will be a "cleaner" diesel engine than standard diesel.
- The best local example in the area of a mixed use site is the existing Larkspur Landing area. They have counted trips coming in and out of the site. If you were to use standard trip generation rates for the land uses in the area, they would be 20-25% higher than they are today. That tells us that currently the area is generating 20-25% fewer trips than a typical

suburban site. In the future, with increased transit service and ped/bike access, and higher densities at the site, that trend will continue.

- SB 743 does allow cities to opt to streamline CEQA review for certain types of projects in transit priority areas. The Plan does not propose to do that. It is not a mandate. It is the purview of the City Council to determine the scope of environmental review for a project. Additionally, the City can impose conditions to development approvals to mitigate traffic impacts.

An unknown man provided the following questions:

- Where will the proposed units be built?
- Is the Plan saying that the property owners could tear down existing development and build housing there instead?

Ms. Maloney provided the following response:

- The property owner could take land that is currently surface parking and build above the lot; existing development could remain.

Peter Orth, Corte Madera, asked the following questions:

- The goal of encouraging transit service by increasing the population seems backwards. Did he misunderstand? That concept?
- Why are we doing this?
- Why do the community's representatives think that the community wants more development? He doesn't think that's the case.

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The station area has great opportunities for housing and jobs near transit and a more vital neighborhood. That is the purpose of the Plan.
- The grant was provided to study opportunities for development that would support transit.

Pascale asked the following questions:

- Has the City secured a firm commitment from transit agencies obligating their cooperation in the Plan's proposals?
- She is a bus and ferry rider every day, and there has been a splintering between TAM and Golden Gate Transit; the services are currently spotty, inefficient, and more expensive.

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- There are no firm commitments of feeder services.
- The amount of cars coming to the ferry terminal could potentially be reduced with a feeder service which could alleviate congestion and avoid the need to build a parking structure.
- The City will have to work with these agencies and get more firm commitments as the Plan moves forward.
- Developing more housing and jobs in the area presents the opportunities for greater services in the area.

- SMART is fully committed to getting the train to Larkspur; beyond that, GGBHTD is also working to reduce parking demand at the ferry and expand their service.

Robert Miltner, Larkspur asked the following questions:

- He's been here since 1970. He asked City staff to identify themselves and the consultants.
- He asked where each staff member and consultant lived.
- He hears this term "We" and he wants to know who "we" are. It doesn't sound like they are local.
- There are many large developments under construction now, including Rose Lane and the WinCup site, and we don't know what those developments will do to Larkspur.
- It is a nice community of older people, and has always been a transit hub.
- He thinks they are about to get sold down the river.
- Everyone should vote against the Plan.

Peter Hensen, Corte Madera, asked the following questions:

- The area is beautiful- uncluttered and spacious. We should be careful about what is done in the area.
- He went to the Greenbrae Boardwalk and spoke to residents who had not heard of this process.
- Why don't the mailers or advertisement information say the Plan is proposing 900 units of housing? It is buried and people don't know it's going on.
- Why doesn't the City poll the people of Marin County on this Plan?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The City has engaged with its own citizens throughout this process and will continue to do so.

Greg Ball, Larkspur, asked the following questions:

- The train station should be at the ferry terminal.
- There should be direct access from Highway 101 to 580 to get traffic off of East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

Michael Bilton, Greenbrae, asked the following questions:

- Can the needed infrastructure improvements occur before new development is initiated? E.g., moving the train station to the ferry and constructing a Highway 101- 580 connector?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The Council can consider phasing when it reviews the Plan.

Dan Calmucci, representative of the Carpenters' Union of Marin, asked the following questions:

- Has the Plan looked at local hire policies to ensure that out of the area workers are not used in construction of development proposed by the Plan?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The EIR does not consider those impacts.

Nancy Weninger, Larkspur asked the following questions:

- She was a member of the CAC.
- As a Larkspur citizen she reads the IJ and reads the City's website and is well aware of what is going on in the City. She's surprised by the amount of people who haven't heard about this process because it has been well publicized.
- Is it fair to require this project, which will have a minimal impact on traffic, to make the traffic congestion problems go away?
- Is it possible that had Marin not developed in a suburban sprawl manner and maintained the original TOD principles the County was developed in, would they not have the congestion problems they have today?
- If 50 years ago, the people of Marin County decided they liked everything just the way it was and did not want any additional development or population, where would we all be today?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- There must be a nexus between a project's impacts and any fees levied on the developer.

Larry Way, Larkspur, asked the following questions:

- The analysis was performed by a model by experts, but it seems the Plan's goals have not been spelled out explicitly, nor how they would be accomplished without undesirable impacts.

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- City staff tried to clearly explain the Plan's goals, which are to explore opportunities for a greater mix of land uses to support transit ridership and neighborhood services without significantly impacting traffic.

Rob Martin asked the following questions:

- Is there grant funding tied to traffic mitigation measures?
- Does this group [addressing City staff and consultants] really believe this is something Larkspur should do?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The regional projects are not directly connected to the Plan, such as the 101-580 connector proposal.
- The Plan identifies projects the City will advocate for and work with other agencies to support.
- The Plan itself does not commit funding to any mitigation measures.
- The City could decide to apply for a priority development area which could provide additional grant funding availability.

- The majority of community members and the CAC were supportive of additional development in the station area, with consideration of a mix of uses and adoption of urban design guidelines, though all voiced concern with existing and future traffic congestion.

Frank Egger, Fairfax, provided the following statement:

- He is a member of the Ross Valley Sanitary District Board.
- RVSD has turned over a new leaf and is now working more closely with sister agencies.
- It will cost about \$5 million to remediate the soil contamination that exists at the District's property at 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle.
- How will the Plan deal with the property? Why designate the site for housing when it is known to be contaminated?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- He acknowledged Mr. Egger's comments.

Jean Severinghaus, Greenbrae Boardwalk, asked the following questions:

- She supports additional residential development in the neighborhood.
- She uses transit and bicycle and pedestrian paths in the neighborhood and finds it a very convenient way to travel.
- She encourages maintain the beauty and walkability of this area.
- She encourages the City to develop a culture of excitement about the arrival of the SMART train.
- There should be adequate bike parking at the Larkspur station to encourage Sonoma County train riders to use the ferry.

John Berg, Corte Madera, asked the following questions:

- Is there an assumption in the Plan that new residents in the station area would be taking the train north for work? Is that justifying the amount of development proposed?
- Is City staff aware there was a grocery store in that area that failed? What is the justification for another one?

Mr. Goynes and Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The SMART EIR analyzed train ridership for each station in each direction. It found approximately 400 daily riders from Larkspur (both directions).
- It forecasted 20-30 people going north at peak hours. The forecasts did not anticipate development in the station area as proposed by the Plan. Those numbers could potentially increase based on the Plan's proposals.
- If the development proposed by the Plan is constructed, there could potentially be a stronger customer base for a grocery store the area that didn't exist before.

Laurie Ocheltree, Larkspur, asked the following questions:

- She often can't ride the ferry due to the lack of parking at the ferry terminal and overflow parking lot. She often has to turn around and get on the highway south.

- When were the traffic studies conducted? Are they available to the public? The congestion has increased even in the past six months.
- Were impacts to schools considered?
- Is there a legal deadline for something to be done in that area? Could consideration of this Plan be tabled for the time being?
- Does the Plan propose rezoning?

Mr. Parisi and Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The traffic counts were taken in 2011 and 2012, with some supplemental data from 2006 from prior studies.
- This data will be included in the EIR.
- The EIR also analyzes impacts to schools.
- There is no statute or mandate saying that any construction needs to occur by a deadline, but the planning process has a deadline through the grant program.
- The Plan does not propose rezoning, but does propose some new land use designations.

Caroline Leonard, who works in Corte Madera, asked the following questions:

- Is City staff aware the California Department of Finance growth projections does not match the growth projected by ABAG in Plan Bay Area?
- Is City staff aware that Napa and Sonoma are all 20 units per acre not 30 and the newest project at WinCup is more than 40 units per acre? Why is Marin being designated as urban?
- Is City staff aware the San Rafael Public Works Director who is a traffic engineer stopped counting how many trips are generated in the City past LOS F?
- Is the public aware they can fund their own traffic studies?
- Is City staff aware that the word standard is no longer transit-oriented development and the new trend is spoke and wheel such as in Japan and China? Why is TOD being proposed?
- Is City staff aware of studies that show asthma rates are doubled when you live near major roadways?
- Is City staff aware of the exemption approved by the Board of Supervisors to exempt sewage, water supply, or setbacks for 100% affordable housing? The City could be sued for not complying.

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- All Marin cities were active in the Plan Bay Area process and the City itself provided comments to ABAG during the preparation of Plan Bay Area about the discrepancy. The Larkspur Station Area Plan is not required by Plan Bay Area or fulfilling the Regional Housing Needs Allocation.
- He acknowledged her comments and asked her to send information on her comments.

An unknown man from Larkspur asked the following question:

- Are we proposing a massive transit system or just trying to respond and adapt to it in the most intelligent and desirable way possible?

- He moved to Larkspur from San Francisco with his family 40 years ago, and he wants it to stay the pleasant low density community it always has been. Is there any way the community can say “No we are not going to participate”?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The Plan is not proposing a transit system.
- The Plan evaluates opportunities for land use changes in the station area. The existing traffic congestion in the area is a challenge, but the Plan is looking at how Larkspur can improve this part of the City.

Peggy Cross, Larkspur, asked the following questions:

- Could developers come in to the Marin Mart and tear down the existing shops and build housing if the property owner allowed them?
- Is the entire area going to be zoned for housing only? She encourages moderation; 900 units are too many.

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The Plan does not encourage that. It encourages retaining the retail on the site in addition to new housing development.
- The proposed 900 units proposed by the Plan is part of a mix of land uses, including almost all of the existing uses in the area.
- The development of every site will be looked at closely to make sure the best mix of uses exists.

Peter Haubold, Larkspur, asked the following questions:

- Recently passed a \$28 million bond measure for the LCM school district and will be another bond measure next year; has City staff looked at the impacts to the schools a 900 unit development would have?
- Is there a vote for this project?
- Can people sign up for notifications?

Mr. Toft provided the following response:

- The units proposed by the Plan are almost entirely within the San Rafael city schools district. The EIR analyzes impacts to schools.
- The Plan will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council will ultimately act on it. The hearings will be at the Planning Commission in February 2014 and public meetings will continue through the summer.
- People may sign up for e-notifications on the City website.



## Workshop Themes and Take-Aways

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The following themes of community concerns and values relating to the Station Area Plan emerged from the workshop:

- Many speakers stated that new development of any kind was not desirable in the Station Area.
- Many speakers stated their concern with existing traffic congestion on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard during peak travel times and the potential of new land use development to exacerbate this congestion.
- Many speakers stated their concern with impacts of potential new development on a variety of services, including police, fire, utilities, and schools.
- Many speakers stated the preferred land use scenario, as presented, was not consistent with Larkspur's small town character.

These comments, largely in opposition to the land use changes proposed by the draft SAP, will be passed on to the City's decision-making bodies as they review the draft SAP and draft SAP EIR, beginning with the Planning Commission in April 2014. The Draft SAP will be released to the public simultaneously with the Draft SAP Environmental Impact Report in February 2014.