

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Purpose

The Central Larkspur Specific Plan provides a framework for developing 22 acres in and adjacent to Downtown Larkspur. The Plan also addresses improvements to a section of Doherty Drive extending approximately one half mile from Magnolia Avenue east to the City limits with the Town of Corte Madera.

The area covered by this Specific Plan is an important focal point in the City of Larkspur. It marks the entrance to the City's historic downtown. It is adjacent to important community facilities including Piper Park, Redwood High School, and Hall Middle School. The Plan area borders on several well-established and attractive residential neighborhoods.

Marginal commercial uses and abandoned horticultural facilities occupy most of the Plan area. Left unattended, these properties will continue to deteriorate and detract from the appearance and vitality of the entire city. However, with careful nurturing, this underutilized area can be a tremendous opportunity for the Larkspur community.

Careful redevelopment within the Plan area will help achieve many of the objectives expressed in the City's General Plan. These include (1) the enhancement of the historic Downtown, (2) development of more affordable and diverse housing choices, and (3) creation of a vibrant "town center" as a focus for community life. It is for these reasons that the Larkspur City Council has singled out the area for special attention and called for the preparation of a Specific Plan to guide its redevelopment.

Organization of the Plan

The Central Larkspur Specific Plan is presented in eight chapters.

- ❖ *Chapter 1* is a general introduction to the Plan, outlining its purpose, organization, origins, scope and authority, how to use the Plan, and the Plan's relationship to other plans and documents.
- ❖ *Chapter 2* summarizes the plan and lists Specific Plan goals that are the basis of the Plan's objectives, policies, guidelines and standards.

- ❖ *Chapter 3* describes existing conditions in the Specific Plan area.
- ❖ *Chapter 4* establishes policies and standards for permitted land uses and intensities of development. These provisions regulate use of the land for urban development and resource conservation purposes. The policies and standards are keyed to the three subareas shown in Figure 3-2.
- ❖ *Chapter 5* identifies on- and off-site improvements for vehicular and nonvehicular travel required to serve the Plan area.
- ❖ *Chapter 6* defines the on- and off-site requirements and standards for water, sewer, and storm-drainage facilities for the Plan area.
- ❖ *Chapter 7* sets standards and guidelines governing all aspects of building and landscape design and construction. This chapter provides functional and aesthetic standards to ensure the long-term viability and desirability of the Plan area.
- ❖ *Chapter 8* specifies how the Plan is to be implemented, including financing methods, permitting procedures and conditions, and revisions to current city regulations and policies.

Plan Development Process

The original impetus for this plan is the Land Use Element of the City of Larkspur's General Plan, which requires adoption of a Specific Plan before the Niven Nursery site can be zoned for residential development (see Section 1.2 below).

In 1997 Niven property owners asked the City to initiate a Specific Plan. The City Council appointed a Citizens' Advisory Committee, which conducted a series of workshops to draft recommended goals for the Niven property.

Based on the Advisory Committee's report, the City Council set final boundaries for the Specific Plan, appointed a Central Larkspur Specific Plan Committee charged with overseeing plan preparation. The Committee had 17 members, representing a cross-section of people in the community concerned with planning for the project area.

The Committee met 24 times, beginning in September 1999 and delivering a recommended plan in June 2001. The Committee considered extensive public comment throughout the plan development process.

The City Council received the CLASP Committee's recommended plan and referred it to the Planning Commission for preparation of an EIR and public hearings. The Planning Commission, in turn, conducted a series of 20 workshops/public hearings, and directed revisions to the Plan before preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). At the beginning of 2005, upon completion of the EIR, the Planning

Commission held two public hearings on the draft Plan and made recommendations to the City Council

The City Council began their consideration of the Planning Commission's recommendations together with the Draft Specific Plan in March of 2005. Between March 2005 and May 2006, the City Council held 13 public hearings and on May 10, 2006 referred their proposed changes to the Plan back to the Planning Commission for recommendation. During July and August of 2006, the Planning Commission held two public hearings and on August 16, 2006, the Commission forwarded its recommendation to the City Council. On September 20, 2006, the City Council approved Resolution No. 48/06 adopting the Specific Plan.

1.2 SCOPE AND AUTHORITY

The City of Larkspur General Plan

The Central Larkspur Specific Plan has been prepared to meet the requirements of General Plan Land Use Element Action Program 22:

Action Program [22]: For a change in land use to other than the existing nursery uses, prepare a Specific Plan for the Niven Nursery property that identifies community desires for future use.

California Government Code

California Government Code Section 65450 authorizes cities to adopt Specific Plans. A specific plan is a tool for the systematic

implementation of the general plan. It establishes a link between implementing policies of the general plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area. To an extent, the range of issues contained in a specific plan is left to the discretion of the decision-making body. However, specific plans must comply with Sections 65450 – 65457 of the Government Code. A specific plan must include a text and diagrams that describe the following in detail:

- ❖ Distribution, location and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.
- ❖ Proposed distribution, location, extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water drainage, solid waste disposal, energy and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.
- ❖ Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, and standards for conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable.
- ❖ A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out the matters listed above.

The Specific Plan must also include a statement of the relationship of the Specific Plan to the General Plan.

A Specific Plan must be prepared, adopted and amended in the same manner as a General Plan, except that a Specific Plan may be adopted by resolution or by ordinance and may be amended as often as deemed necessary by the City Council.

No local public works project may be approved, no tentative map, final map or parcel map may be approved, and no zoning ordinance may be adopted or amended within an area covered by a Specific Plan unless it is consistent with the adopted Specific Plan.

1.3 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Chapters 4 through 8 contain the binding policies, standards and guidelines of the Specific Plan. These requirements are described in text, tables, maps and diagrams. They are used to define permitted uses and the locations and intensities thereof; the location, right-of-way dimensions, and design standards for streets, non-vehicular trails or routes, and utilities; the location, height, construction and design of buildings; and requirements for open space areas.

Maps, charts, and graphics

The following maps and charts are adopted as policies in this Specific Plan:

- A. Figure 2-1 Central Larkspur Specific Plan boundaries.
- B. Table 4.1, Land Use Allowances
- C. Figure 4-1 Land Use Map

The development allowances for the individual properties comprising the Plan area, assuming compliance with all other applicable standards and guidelines, are contained in Chapter 4, Table 4.1.

All other tables, maps and graphic illustrations, unless otherwise specified in the Plan, are illustrative or provide basic information, and are not adopted as statements of policy. Appendices are informational only, and are not adopted as statements of policy, except for Appendix A. Appendix A is a statement of facts that supports the determination in Section 1.4 that the Central Larkspur Specific Plan is consistent with the City's General Plan.

Definitions

Desired future conditions are stated in the form of *goals*, *objectives*, *policies*, *guidelines* and *standards*, which are the essence of the Specific Plan. These terms are defined below, printed with the numbering system used in Chapters 2 through 8 of the plan.

Goals 1: A general, overall and ultimate purpose, aim, or end toward which the City will direct effort.

Objective 1: A specific statement of a desired future condition toward which the City will expend effort in the context of achieving a broader goal.

Policy 1.1: A specific statement of principle or guiding actions that implies a clear commitment but is not necessarily mandatory (the word "shall" makes a policy mandatory). A policy is a general direction that the City elects to follow in order to accomplish its goals and objectives.

Guideline 1.1 A: A statement of policy direction around which specific details will later be established.

Standard 1.1 A: A rule or measure establishing levels of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied.

The following conventions are used in this plan to designate the extent to which a statement is mandatory or optional:

- ❖ “May” refers to that which is permissible.
- ❖ “Shall” means that which is obligatory or necessary.
- ❖ “Should” signifies a directive to be honored if at all possible.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND CODES

General Plan

Because a Specific Plan is intended to help implement the policies and goals of a city or county's General Plan, it must be consistent with that General Plan. Section 65454 of the California Government Code specifically provides that a Specific Plan may only be adopted or amended if it is consistent with a jurisdiction's General Plan.

Appendix A contains a detailed analysis of the relationship of the Specific Plan to the General Plan, including consistency between both plans and a comparison of goals, objectives, and policies, to support the conclusion that the Specific Plan is consistent with the General Plan except as noted below.

The Central Larkspur Specific Plan is consistent with the City's General Plan, except for Land Use Policy 26 of the Specific Plan, which calls for a public park in Subarea 3. The Specific Plan is inconsistent in that the General Plan does not designate a public park in the Subarea 3. Specific Plan Land Use Policy 5 requires that the City amend the General Plan to correct this inconsistency simultaneously with adoption of the Specific Plan. Also, Transportation Policies 20 and 22 call for new bikeway alignments that are not reflected in the current General Plan. Appendix B is a General Plan amendment that would resolve these inconsistencies.

Larkspur Downtown Specific Plan

The Specific Plan area is divided into three Subareas (Figure 2-2, page 4-3). Subareas 1 and 2 are within the Downtown Specific Plan boundaries adopted by the City Council in 1992. Land Use Policy 5 requires that the City amend the Downtown Specific Plan to delete these subareas from its boundaries to avoid confusion. The two Specific Plans are consistent and mutually supporting in all other respects. See Appendix A for a comparison of Downtown Specific Plan and Central Larkspur Specific Plan policies.

Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances

The City of Larkspur Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances will remain in effect within the Central Larkspur Specific Plan boundaries. Subareas 1 and 2 will retain the zoning in place at the time of plan adoption. Subarea 3 will be rezoned to PD, Planned Development District. The Preliminary and Precise Development Plans required by the PD district will be required to comply with the goals, policies, objectives and guidelines of the Specific Plan. Regulatory issues not

covered in this Specific Plan will be addressed in the Preliminary and Precise Plans or are addressed in the Zoning Ordinance. Subdivision tentative maps, final maps and improvement plans in the area will be required to be consistent with the Specific Plan.