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Notice of Preparation Environmental Impact Report City of San Rafael

Date: March 29, 2019

To: State Clearinghouse
State Responsible Agencies
State Trustee Agencies
Other Public Agencies
Interested Organizations

From: Barry Miller, Consulting Project Manager
City of San Rafael
Community Development Department
1400 Fifth Street
San Rafael, CA 94901

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan

Lead Agency: City of San Rafael Community Development Department

Project Title: General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan

Project Area: City of San Rafael and unincorporated San Rafael Planning Area

Notice is hereby given that the City of San Rafael (City) will prepare an EIR for the San Rafael General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan (proposed project) and will hold a public meeting to receive comments on the scope of the EIR, as detailed below. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15206, the proposed project is considered a project of statewide, regional, or areawide significance. The City, acting as the Lead Agency, determined that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts and that an EIR is required.

The City will prepare an EIR to address the potential environmental impacts associated with the project at a programmatic level consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. The program-level EIR will evaluate the proposed project for potential impacts on the environment and analyze the proposed policies to determine the potential environmental consequences of future change. An evaluation of project alternatives that could reduce significant impacts will be included in the EIR. The proposed project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described below.

The City is requesting comments and guidance on the scope and content of the EIR from interested public agencies, organizations, and individuals. With respect to the views of Responsible and Trustee Agencies as to significant environmental issues, the City needs to know the reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that are germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the 30-day NOP review period at **5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 29, 2019**. If you submit comments on the scope of the EIR, you will automatically be added to the City's distribution list for future notices and information about the environmental review process for proposed project. If you do not wish to submit comments on the scope of the EIR, but would like to be added to the City's mailing list, you can submit your contact information, including email address with a request to be added to the mailing list.

Please send your written comments to Barry Miller, at the address shown above or email to Barry.Miller@cityofsanrafael.org with "*General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan EIR*" as the subject. Public agencies providing comments are asked to include a contact person for the agency.

A Scoping Meeting to accept oral comments will be held before the San Rafael Planning Commission on **Tuesday April 23, 2019 at 7:00 pm.** at City Hall in the Council Chambers (1400 Fifth Street, San Rafael, CA 94901)

PROJECT LOCATION, DESCRIPTION, AND OBJECTIVES

This section describes the location, project description, and overall objective of the proposed project. A copy of this NOP, information about the project, including relevant documents, information on upcoming meetings, and ways you can provide feedback can be viewed: 1) on line at <http://www.sanrafael2040.org>, or 2) City Hall (1400 Fifth Avenue - Planning Division counter, 3rd Floor). The Planning Division counter is open Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Project Location

The project encompasses the San Rafael Planning Area, which includes all land within the city limits, adjacent land in the Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundary, and land beyond the SOI that is commonly perceived as greater San Rafael. Unincorporated areas within the SOI include California Park, Country Club, Bayside Acres, and Los Ranchitos; China Camp State Park; the Santa Venetia area; and the San Rafael Rock Quarry. The Planning Area also includes Marinwood and Lucas Valley (developed and undeveloped portions), although these areas are outside the SOI. The Downtown Precise Plan area encompasses 265 acres located in downtown San Rafael. See Figures 1, 2, and 3 for regional and study area maps.

Project Description and Objectives

Often described as each city's "constitution," general plans are required by State law to guide land use and development, typically within a 20-year horizon. General plans must be periodically updated to respond to new state laws, changing conditions, and emerging issues and opportunities. San Rafael's existing General Plan was prepared in 1999-2003 and was adopted in 2004, with a horizon year of 2020. Since the horizon year is approaching, the City is now updating its plan to extend the planning period to 2040. The San Rafael General Plan 2040 (General Plan 2040) will build off the current General Plan 2020 and provide a framework for land use, transportation, and conservation decisions through the year 2040.

The City is also preparing a Downtown Precise Plan (Precise Plan) concurrently with the General Plan 2040. The Precise Plan is being funded by a grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The intent of the Precise Plan is to facilitate housing production, placemaking, economic vitality, innovative transportation solutions, and community engagement with an emphasis on sustainable, transit-oriented development.

Both the proposed General Plan 2040 and the Downtown Precise Plan will direct future growth within the study area and address the city's vulnerability to environmental challenges such as sea level rise, wildland fires, and other hazards identified in the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and updated Climate Action Plan. Both plans are intended to respond to local and regional housing needs, foster economic growth and local job creation, enhance civic identity and placemaking, and protect sensitive natural resources.

Environmental Review

The San Rafael General Plan 2040 and Downtown Precise Plan program EIR will determine whether implementation of the proposed project may result in environmental impacts that require mitigation measures to offset potential impacts. By incorporating implementation provisions (goals, policies, and programs) that focus on reducing environmental impacts, the proposed project can be made largely "self-mitigating," which reduces the need for separate EIR mitigation measures, improves the efficiency of implementation, and increases the likelihood that development within the study area will be environmentally sustainable. In accordance with CEQA, the cumulative impacts discussion will be based on review of other plans shaping development outside of the study area. CEQA requires that an EIR evaluate alternatives to a project that could reasonably attain the project objectives while reducing any significant impact of the project, as well as considering the "No Project" Alternative (i.e., what could happen if the project were not approved).

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The EIR will address the proposed project's potential impacts to the following environmental topics:

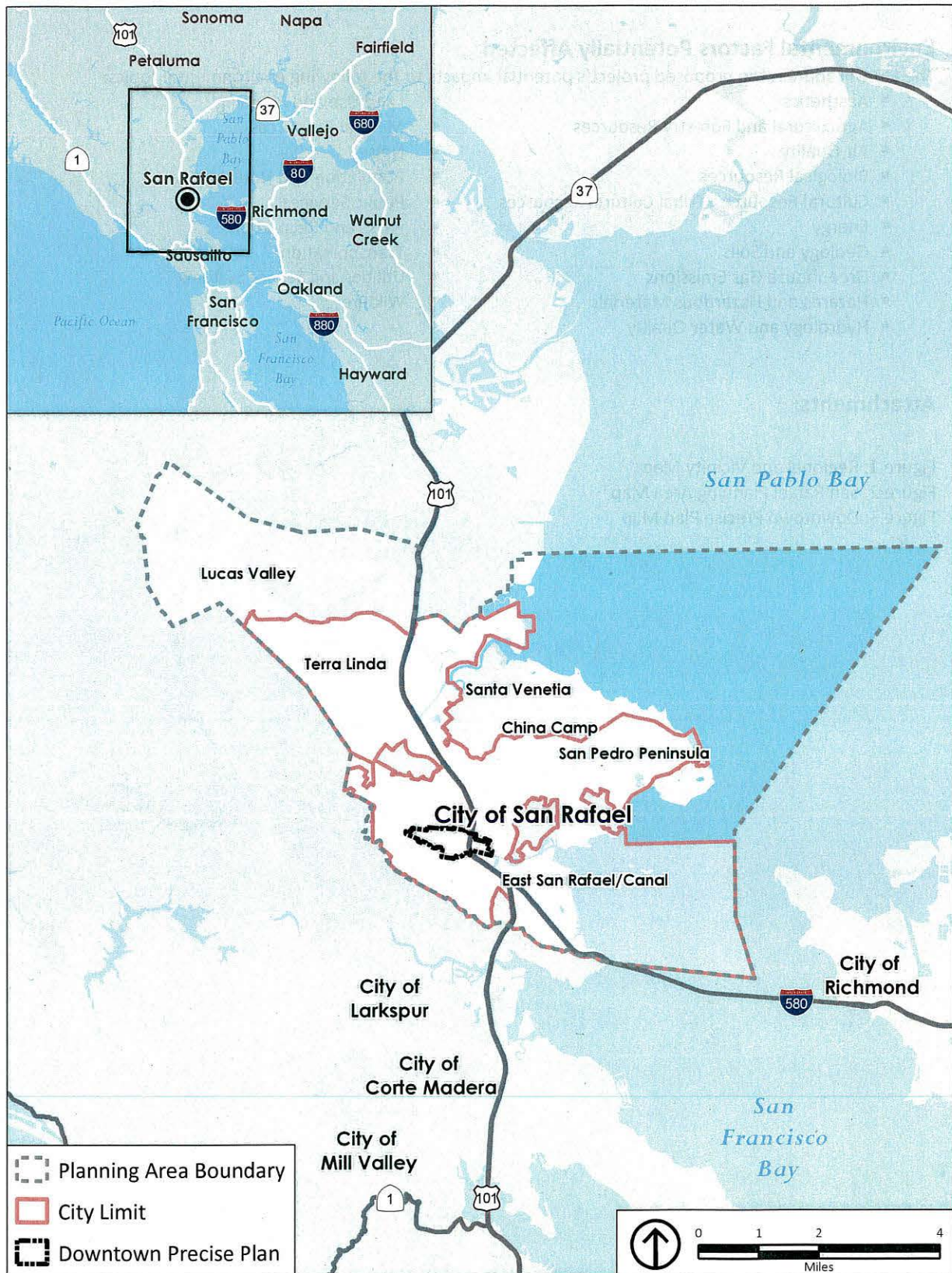
- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources/Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

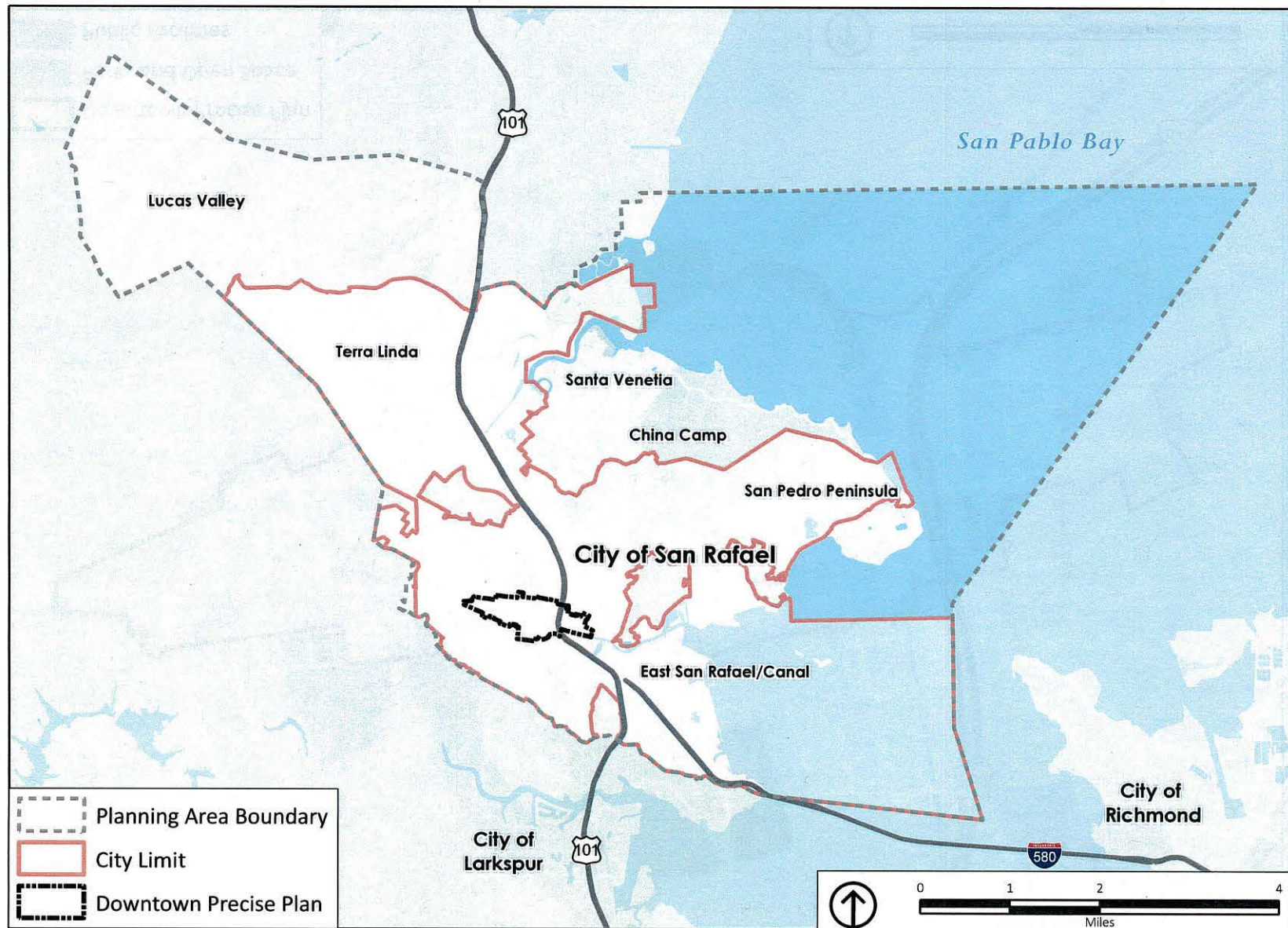
Attachments:

Figure 1: Regional and Vicinity Map

Figure 2: San Rafael Planning Area Map

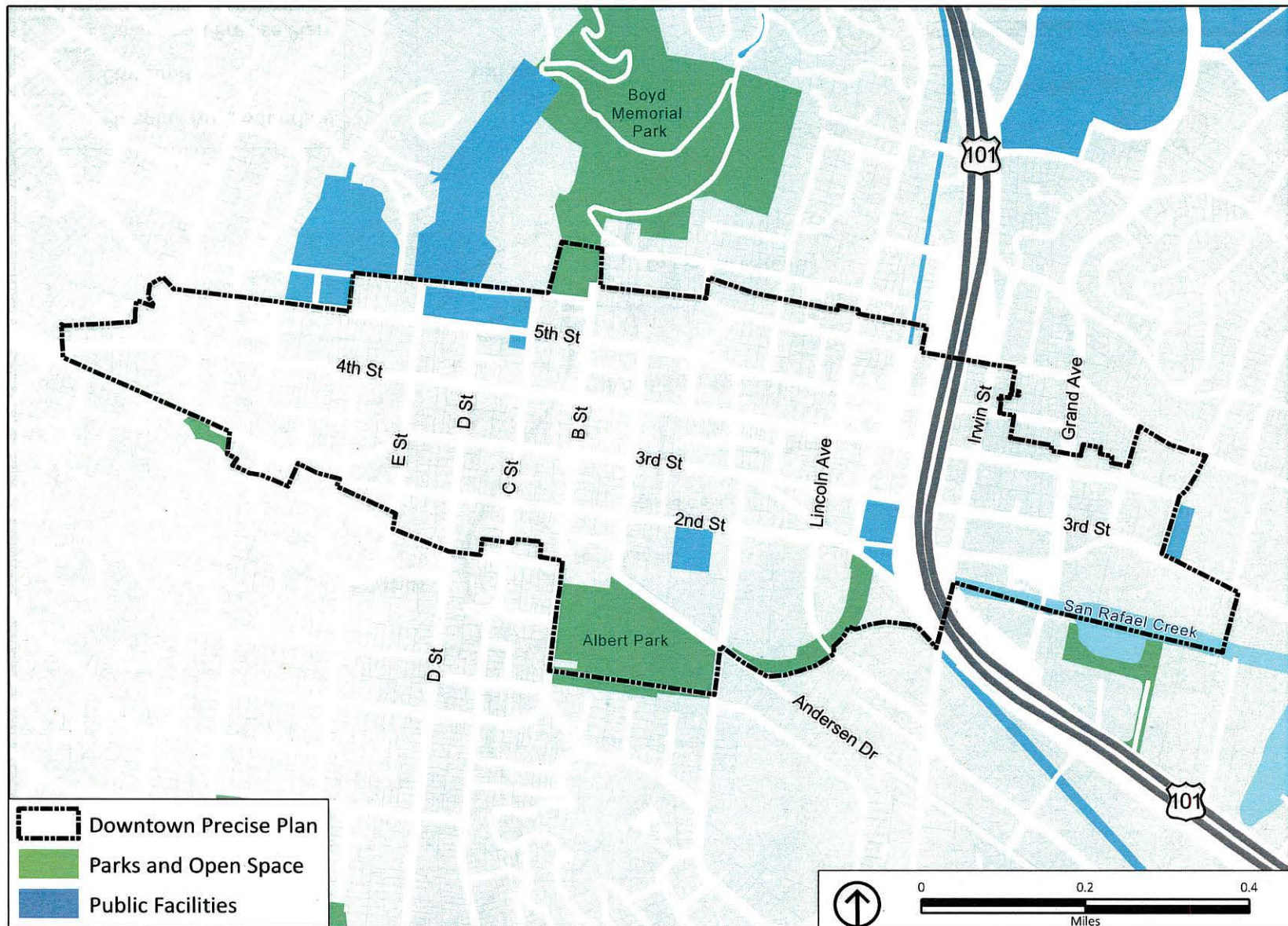
Figure 3: Downtown Precise Plan Map





Source: ESRI, 2017; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2019.

Figure 2
San Rafael Planning Area Boundary Map



Source: ESRI, 2017; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2019.

Figure 3
Downtown Precise Plan Map