



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

DATE:	September 14, 2021
TO:	Reviewing Agencies, Interested Parties and Organizations
FROM:	City of Redwood City, Lead Agency
APPLICANT:	City of Redwood City
SUBJECT:	Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Draft Environmental Impact Report Regarding the Downtown Precise Plan Amendments

The City of Redwood City (City) is considering amendments to its General Plan and Downtown Precise Plan (DTPP) to accommodate additional office and residential development in the plan area, informed by the Gatekeeper Projects (described below), that are collectively referred to as the Downtown Precise Plan Amendments. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City has determined that a program-level Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) will be necessary to evaluate the environmental impacts of the project. The City is soliciting comments from the Redwood City community, the County of San Mateo, adjacent cities, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, and other interested parties, as to the appropriate scope and content of the SEIR.

The SEIR will constitute a substantial revision of the Redwood City Downtown Precise Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR; State Clearinghouse No. 2006052027), a programmatic environmental analysis, certified in 2011 and will analyze proposed amendments to the City's General Plan and to the DTPP, adopted in 2011 and amended in 2012, 2013, and 2016, that would, if adopted, apply to the entire DTPP area.¹

Pursuant to Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines, a SEIR is required if the City, as the CEQA Lead Agency, determines on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record that there have been substantial changes to the project and/or the circumstances under which the project is undertaken, or substantial new information has arisen, and that one or more of the foregoing will result in new or substantially more severe impacts and that thus necessitate major revisions to the prior environmental impact report and/or new mitigation measures or alternatives are now applicable.

In compliance with CEQA, the City will be the Lead Agency and will prepare the SEIR. Attached are a description of the Plan-wide amendments, location map, and preliminary identification of the potential environmental issues to be explored.

¹ Separate General Plan and DTPP amendments related to creation of a Transit District overlay within the DTPP are also being proposed. The Plan-wide amendments are not dependent on those Transit District amendments. A separate SEIR is being prepared for those amendments. The Plan-wide amendments are independently justified and serve the distinct purpose of creating and planning for the DTPP area as a whole.



Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Draft Environmental Impact Report to the DTPP Final EIR for Proposed Plan-wide Amendments


The City is requesting review and consideration of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) and comments and guidance on the scope and content of the program-level SEIR from the Redwood City community, responsible and trustee agencies, interested public agencies, organizations, and the general public (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082). If your agency is a responsible agency as defined by Section 15381 of the CEQA Guidelines, your agency may use the environmental documents prepared by the City when considering permits or approvals for action regarding the Plan-wide amendments. Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but **not later than 30 calendar days** after receipt of this NOP. The 30-day comment period for this NOP is **September 14 to October 14, 2021**. The final date for responses to the NOP to be received by the City of Redwood City is **October 14, 2021, by 5:00 PM**.

Comments and responses to this NOP must be in writing and submitted by the close of business on the last day of the comment period. Please provide a contact name, phone number and email address with your comments. All comments must be sent to:

Anna McGill, Principal Planner
City of Redwood City
1017 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 780-7278 | amcgill@redwoodcity.org

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(c) (Notice of Preparation and Determination of Scope of EIR) and Section 15083 (Early Public Consultation), the Redwood City Planning Commission will also conduct a scoping session for the purpose of soliciting views of the Redwood City community, the County of San Mateo, adjacent cities, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, and other interested parties, as to the appropriate scope and content of the SEIR.

The scoping session will be conducted by the Planning Commission at its September 21, 2021 meeting, which begins at 7:00 PM via teleconference, which can be accessed by visiting www.redwoodcity.org/PC.



Anna McGill, Principal Planner
City of Redwood City

9.14.21

Date



Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Draft Environmental Impact Report to the DTPP Final EIR for Proposed Plan-wide Amendments

Project Title and Applicant

Downtown Precise Plan Amendments by the City of Redwood City (City)

Project Location

See **Figure 1, Project Site Location**, at the end of this Notice of Preparation (NOP). The project site is located within Downtown Redwood City in the City's Downtown Precise Plan (DTPP), generally bounded by Veterans Boulevard, Maple Street, El Camino Real, and Brewster Avenue in Redwood City, San Mateo County, California. The proposed project would extend the northern DTPP boundary to include the following four additional parcels: APNs 052-271-040, -050, -080, and -090.

Project Description

Project Background

Since the adoption of the City's General Plan in 2010, the City has experienced substantial growth and development due to a variety of factors. A strong economy and the adoption of the DTPP in 2011 streamlined project analysis and public review by setting overall development caps (Maximum Allowable Development) for office, residential, retail, and hotel development. The caps for office space and residential uses are almost met, so any project proposing to exceed these caps must request both a General Plan amendment and a DTPP amendment to increase the caps. Given the large number of projects requesting such amendments, the City Council used a "Gatekeeper" process to evaluate pending amendment requests. The City Council analyzed a variety of projects against its Strategic Plan and Priorities and authorized six projects within the DTPP area to formally submit applications to initiate the General Plan and DTPP amendment process and obtain any necessary discretionary approvals. Those individual "Gatekeeper Projects" are located at: 1) 651 El Camino Real, 2) 901-999 El Camino Real, 3) 2300 Broadway, 4) 603 Jefferson/750 Bradford, 5) 1900 Broadway, and 6) 601 Allerton Street.

Applications for the individual Gatekeeper Projects are in various stages of detailed planning, revision, and submission and none have been deemed complete. One of the Gatekeeper Projects is seeking an amendment to its initiated project which, if adopted by the City Council, would result in further increases to the office caps. The City Council's conceptual review of the Gatekeeper Projects did not constitute their approval, nor has the City made any commitment to approve any or all of these projects. Pursuant to the Redwood City Municipal Code Chapter 18, Article XI (Adoption and Amendment of General Plan), the Gatekeeper process resulted in initiation of the proceedings to amend the General Plan, DTPP, and Zoning Ordinance. As a result, City staff was directed by the City Council to review and recommend an appropriate maximum allowable development cap under the General Plan and DTPP.

In light of this direction, as explained in the SEIR Scope below, this SEIR is a programmatic EIR analyzing the comprehensive effort to increase the maximum allowable development caps (in both the General Plan and DTPP) to potentially accommodate the Gatekeeper Projects collectively. This SEIR will not analyze any of the Gatekeeper Projects individually or at a project-specific level as the City's actions proposed here relate to only policy and plan amendments, not individual project approvals. The Gatekeeper Projects will proceed independently at the discretion of the applicants and will undergo environmental review



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(potentially tiering from this broader, programmatic SEIR) if and when complete applications are submitted and processed, in the manner provided for in CEQA Guidelines 15168.

Current Project

Currently, less than 5,000 square feet (sq. ft.) of office space remains in the office development cap, while about 500 dwelling units remain in the residential development cap. The project includes amending the office and residential maximum allowable development caps in both the General Plan and DTPP to accommodate the potential collective development of the six Gatekeeper Projects, along with a 10 percent buffer for both office square footage and residential units beyond the totals proposed by the Gatekeeper Projects; this buffer would allow for other potential future development in the DTPP area. Consistent with current practice, a portion of the residential development cap would be set aside for affordable housing. Table 1 below describes the proposed cap increases.

TABLE 1
PROPOSED INCREASES IN DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN DEVELOPMENT CAPS

Land Use	Increase in Development Cap ^{a,b}
Office	1,167,000 square feet
Residential (Market Rate)	486 units
Residential (Affordable)	553 units

NOTES:

^a The increase in development capacity is informed by the Gatekeeper projects (939,000 sq. ft. of office space and 673 residential units, the additional development capacity for the proposed boundary extensions (122,000 sq. ft. office and 271 units) and a 10% contingency in development capacity (106,000 sq. ft. office and 94 units).

^b The Project also includes approximately 30,000 sq. ft. of retail space, but this would replace existing retail space and would neither add retail beyond existing conditions nor increase the DTPP retail development cap. Also included would be approximately 19,500 sq. ft. of space for a replacement American Legion hall (11,500 sq. ft.) and a new teen center (8,000 sq. ft.), both of which are Civic Uses under the DTPP for which the Plan includes no development caps.

SOURCE: City of Redwood City, 2021

The proposed DTPP Plan-wide Amendments would extend the northern DTPP boundary approximately 0.1 mile northward between El Camino Real and the Caltrain tracks to include the following four additional parcels shown on Figure 1: APNs 052-271-040, -050, -080, and -090.

In addition to adjustments to DTPP maximum allowable development caps and boundaries, the proposed DTPP amendments include adjustments to parking ratios, circulation, and other development standards. The revisions to the Development Standards would include, but not be limited to, revising parking ratios, and allowing Contemporary design in the list of architectural styles permitted in the Historic Downtown. Certain design-related Development Regulations may also be converted from mandatory Standards to advisory Guidelines to provide for potential flexibility, such as build-to-corner requirements, height stepdown requirements, and side setback requirements.



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The proposed increase in the office and residential development caps, boundary extension, and revised DTPP development standards reflect the City Council's vision for the future of Downtown consistent with its initiation of the General Plan and DTPP amendments related to the Gatekeeper Projects and accommodate the desired additional growth based on numerous study sessions and public meetings that have taken place since 2017. The proposed amendments would establish the programs and policies necessary to further the goal of meeting the existing and projected residential and office needs in the Downtown.

The City is aware of a potential land swap that would result in the potential reconfiguration of California Street and Winklebleck Street to realign the street grid and provide better roadway connectivity for all roadway users (i.e., vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians), which is generally consistent with the DTPP standards and circulation network, evaluated in the Final EIR for the DTPP, certified in 2011. Should this occur, it would result in project changes to an initiated Gatekeeper Project, including increased office space and changes to existing open space. The office increase would entail an additional 100,000 sq. ft. of office use to the development caps (for a total of 1,157,000 sq. ft.). The open space change would entail channelizing a 200-foot section of open creek (Arroyo Ojo, a small creek that is otherwise completely culverted within downtown Redwood City) and providing a replacement public open space that otherwise meets the DTPP purpose and goals.

SEIR Scope

The City has determined, pursuant to CEQA, that the DTPP Plan-wide amendments will require the preparation of a Subsequent EIR (SEIR) to substantially revise the Redwood City Downtown Precise Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (DTPP Final EIR), a programmatic environmental analysis certified in 2011. A SEIR is warranted because there is reasonable potential that the Plan amendments may result in new or more substantially more severe significant environmental effects than those identified in the certified DTPP Final EIR for one or more of the following CEQA topics:

- Land Use and Planning
- Population and Housing
- Aesthetics and Shadows
- Cultural and Historic Resources (including Paleontological and Tribal Cultural Resources)
- Public Services (including Recreation)
- Transportation
- Utilities and Infrastructure (including Hydrology and Water Quality)
- Noise and Vibration
- Air Quality
- Climate Change (Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Energy and Sea Level Rise)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials



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- Biological Resources
- Geology and Soils

The SEIR will also address:

Cumulative Impacts. Consistent with the format for the DTPP Final EIR, a separate cumulative impacts section will be provided in the SEIR. The cumulative analysis will assess where cumulative impacts are significant compared to baseline conditions, and when the DTPP Plan-wide amendments' incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. The cumulative impact analysis in the SEIR will use the same approach as the DTPP Final EIR cumulative impact analysis, which relied on a combined projections/list-based approach. The cumulative impacts section will also consider the separate General Plan and DTPP amendments related to the proposed Transit District, a subarea of the DTPP, that constitute a separate project, for which a separate SEIR is being prepared. Additionally, the City is currently updating its General Plan Housing Element, and the cumulative analysis will consider those updates.

Alternatives. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the SEIR will also identify and conduct a comparative evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives to the DTPP Plan-wide amendments. The alternatives assessment in the SEIR will tier from the alternatives analysis in the DTPP Final EIR and will consider alternatives to the Plan-wide amendments proposed to accommodate the planned growth, including the CEQA-required no-project and environmentally superior alternatives.

Further, CEQA Guidelines section 15165 provides:

"Where individual projects are...to be undertaken and where the total undertaking comprises a project with significant environmental effect, the lead agency shall prepare a single program EIR for the ultimate project."

As described above, the DTPP Plan-wide amendments include increasing the office and residential maximum allowable development caps in the DTPP area to accommodate additional development capacity, extending the DTPP boundary; modifying certain DTPP development standards; and, potentially, a land swap that would realign a portion of the street grid, increase the amount of office space, channelize a short section of creek, and realign open space. Therefore, the City has determined that a program-level SEIR would be appropriate. Like the programmatic DTPP Final EIR certified in 2011, this program SEIR will analyze General Plan and DTPP amendments that would, if adopted, govern future development in the DTPP. Future specific development proposals, such as the Gatekeeper Projects, will be examined in light of the program SEIR to determine whether additional environmental review is required. The City anticipates using a checklist or similar device to determine whether the environmental effects of future development proposals are within the scope of the program EIR, as described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)(2) or further review is required.



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SEIR Purpose

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (subsequent or otherwise) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental impacts of a proposed project that an agency (in this case, the City of Redwood City) may implement or approve. The SEIR process is intended to: (1) provide information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment; (2) examine methods (e.g., project-specific mitigations, uniformly applied development regulations) for avoiding or reducing significant impacts; and (3) consider alternatives to the proposed project.

In accordance with CEQA, the SEIR will include the following:

- A summary of the project, its potential significant environmental impacts, and mitigations required to avoid or reduce those significant impacts;
- A project description, with a focus on changes in the approved DTPP;
- A description of the existing environmental setting, potential environmental impacts, and mitigations for the project, with a focus on changes in impacts compared to those identified in the certified DTPP Final EIR;
- Alternatives to the proposed project, including an explanation of alternatives from the DTPP Final EIR that are no longer under consideration; and
- Other environmental consequences of the project, including
 - (1) growth-inducing effects
 - (2) significant unavoidable impacts
 - (3) irreversible environmental changes
 - (4) cumulative impacts, and
 - (5) effects found not to be significant.

As discussed above, like the DTPP Final EIR certified in 2011, the SEIR will be a program EIR pursuant to Section 15168 of the State CEQA Guidelines of the program EIR, as described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)(2) or further review is required.

Required Approvals

City of Redwood City Discretionary Approvals. Implementation of the DTPP Plan-wide amendments would require the following discretionary approvals by the City of Redwood City:

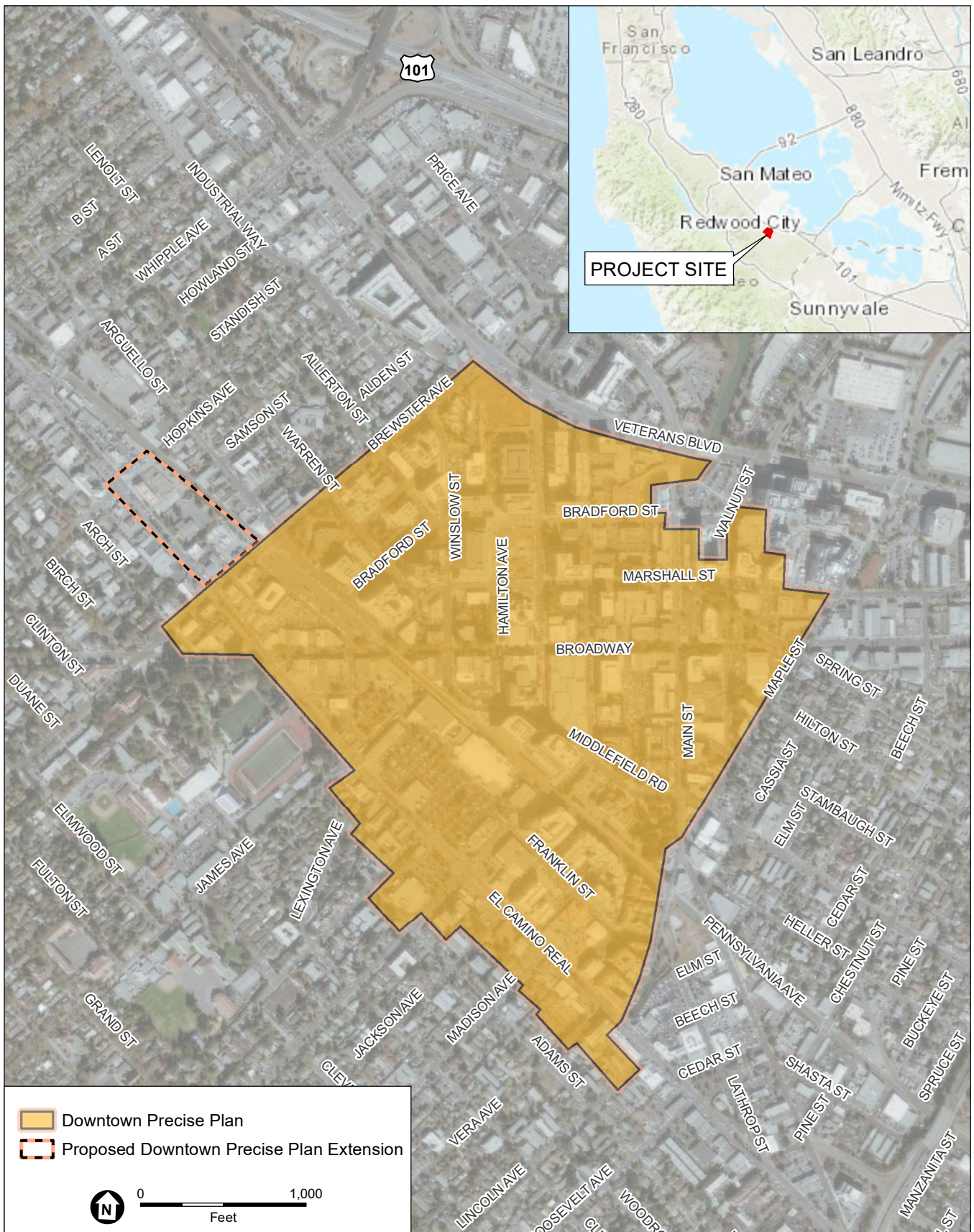
- Certification of the Final SEIR
- Adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting Program



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- Adoption of General Plan amendments, including revisions to the Downtown maximum allowable development caps for office and residential development therein, to implement the DTPP Plan-wide amendments
- Adoption of DTPP amendments, including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:
 - Amendment of the maximum allowable development cap for office and residential development to accommodate the growth described in Table 1 above
 - Inclusion of a separate allowance (cap) for small office development
 - Revisions to the DTPP New Streets (Circulation) Regulations and associated revisions to DTPP maps
 - Revisions to the DTPP maps to accommodate potential future relocation of the Caltrain station to the north side of Broadway and expansion of the station to four tracks as part of Caltrain's 2040 Service Vision plan (the station relocation would be a separate project).
 - Revisions to the DTPP to include the addition of utility and infrastructure requirements.
 - Revisions to certain of the DTPP Parking Regulations
 - Conversion of certain design-related Development Regulations from mandatory Standards to advisory Guidelines, from which the City, at its discretion, may grant exceptions; these changes could include, but not necessarily be limited to, build-to-corner requirements, height stepdown requirements, and side setback requirements
 - Potential addition to the DTPP's list of permitted architectural styles to include Contemporary design in the Historic Downtown
- Potential approval of an associated Zoning Map amendment to reflect the amended DTPP

Other Government Agency Approvals. In general, amendment of the General Plan and DTPP to implement the DTPP Plan-wide amendments is not anticipated to require review and/or approval from other jurisdictional agencies, with the potential exception of circulation improvements. However, if the land exchange involving 901-999 El Camino Real proceeds, approval could be required from the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and/or the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife.



SOURCE: ESRI Imagery; City of Redwood City, 2021

DTPP Planwide Amendments SEIR

Figure 1
Project Site Location