

# Pacifica General Plan Land Use Alternatives and Key Policy Issues May 2011



Prepared for the  
City of Pacifica by

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# CONTENTS

- 1 SUMMARY ..... 1-1**
  - 1.1 Purpose of the Alternatives and Evaluation Phase ..... 1-2
  - 1.2 Planning Context ..... 1-2
  - 1.3 Key Policy Choices and Land Use Alternatives ..... 1-9
  - 1.4 Summary of Community Preferences ..... 1-10
  
- 2 RESIDENTIAL AND FUTURE RESIDENTIAL AREAS ..... 2-1**
  - 2.1 Land Use Classifications and Development Types ..... 2-2
  - 2.2 Proposed General Plan Approach ..... 2-4
  - 2.3 Focus Areas ..... 2-6
  - 2.4 Community Preferences ..... 2-8
  
- 3 COMMERCIAL AREAS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ..... 3-1**
  - 3.1 Land Use Classifications and Development Types ..... 3-2
  - 3.2 Three Alternative Concepts ..... 3-4
  - 3.3 Focus Areas ..... 3-10
  - 3.4 Community Preferences ..... 3-12
  
- 4 SUSTAINABILITY AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT ..... 4-1**
  - 4.1 Key Policies for Sustainable Development ..... 4-2
  - 4.2 Adapting to Potential Sea Level Rise ..... 4-7
  - 4.3 Community Response ..... 4-11
  
- 5 PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES ..... 5-1**
  - 5.1 Park Types and Standards ..... 5-2
  - 5.2 Proposed Open Space and Trails Plan ..... 5-3
  - 5.3 Community Response ..... 5-9
  
- 6 NEXT STEPS ..... 6-1**
  
- 7 APPENDICES ..... A-1**
  - Appendix A – Community Forum 3 Worksheet ..... A-1
  - Appendix B – Worksheet Comments ..... A-5
  - Appendix C – Table Discussion Notes ..... A-25
  - Appendix D – Additional Responses ..... A-31

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: Existing Land Use .....	1-3
Figure 1-2: Sites Identified in Housing Element .....	1-5
Figure 1-3: Vacant and Underutilized Sites.....	1-7
Figure 2-1: Existing and Future Residential Areas.....	2-5
Figure 3-1: Alternative A: Strong Center at Quarry Site.....	3-5
Figure 3-2: Alternative B: Multi-Centered, West Sharp Park Emphasis.....	3-7
Figure 3-3: Alternative C: Conservation and Redevelopment.....	3-9
Figure 4-1: Critical and Sensitive Habitat.....	4-3
Figure 4-2: Flooding and Coastal Erosion Hazards .....	4-6
Figure 5-1: Access to Parks .....	5-4
Figure 5-2: Potential Expansion of Public Open Space.....	5-5
Figure 5-3: Proposed Open Space & Trails Plan.....	5-7

# LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1: Projected Growth in Pacifica.....	1-4
Table 1-2: Housing Need in Pacifica, 1999-2014 .....	1-6
Table 1-3: Summary of Development Capacity and Projected Demand.....	1-8
Table 1-4: Level of Agreement With Proposed Approach to Residential Areas.....	1-10
Table 1-5: Preferences for Proposed Alternatives for Commercial Areas.....	1-11
Table 1-6: Level of Agreement With Proposed Approaches to Coastal Development .....	1-12
Table 2-1: Level of Agreement With Proposed Approach to Residential Areas .....	2-9
Table 3-1: Preferences for Proposed Alternatives for Commercial Areas.....	3-13
Table 4-1: Level of Agreement With Proposed Approaches to Coastal Development.....	4-11
Table 5-1: Park Acreage and Standards .....	5-2

# 1

## SUMMARY



The City of Pacifica is undertaking a comprehensive update of its General Plan, the guiding document for development and public improvements over a 20-year period. It is a plan that will provide guidance as people propose projects, and help the City make informed decisions. The plan will provide a vision and policies for land use, economic development, environmental protection, and infrastructure investment through 2030. The General Plan update process began with two community workshops in the spring of 2009, and extensive research on existing conditions culminating in the *Existing Conditions and Key Issues* report in July 2010.

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE ALTERNATIVES AND EVALUATION PHASE

In this phase, alternative land use scenarios are evaluated and approaches to key policy issues are considered, based on community priorities expressed in the preceding workshops and on findings of the background research. This report presents land use scenarios that highlight issues related to commercial development, future residential development, and land conservation. It presents approaches to sustainable development, adaptation to sea level rise, open space preservation, and development of the parks and trails system.

A successful General Plan reflects the goals and values of the community. Public input is sought at key stages of the update process, ensuring that community members can take an active role in shaping the city's future. The land use alternatives and policy approaches discussed here were the subject of the third community forum, held at Pacifica's Ingrid B. Lacy Middle School on January 29, 2011.

The meeting featured presentations by the consulting team followed by small-group discussion periods. The feedback we received both on individual worksheets and from small-group discussion notes is summarized in each section of this report, with complete notes included in the Appendix. The ideas covered here, and the community feedback, will be presented at public workshops with the Planning Commission and City Council.

## 1.2 PLANNING CONTEXT

Pacifica is a city of 40,000 located along six miles of coastline directly south of San Francisco. The Planning Area covers 8,742 acres, including the City and a small amount of land outside of City limits but within the Sphere of Influence. The Planning Area is generally bounded by Daly City to the north, Skyline Boulevard to the east, Montara Mountain to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Pacifica is characterized by a balance of developed and undeveloped land, of hillsides and valleys, and is strongly imprinted by its environment. Pacifica grew quickly in the 1950s and '60s, but has grown very slowly since. Current projections are for the population to reach approximately 43,000 by the year 2030.

Figure 1-1 shows existing land uses in the Planning Area. Nearly half (47 percent) of the Planning Area, or 3,600 acres, is protected open space, under the auspices of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the City and County of San Francisco, San Mateo County, and the City of Pacifica. The Planning Area also has 1,200 acres of open spaces that is privately owned and potentially developable, as well as 360 acres of agricultural land. Altogether, two thirds of the Planning Area's land is not urbanized.



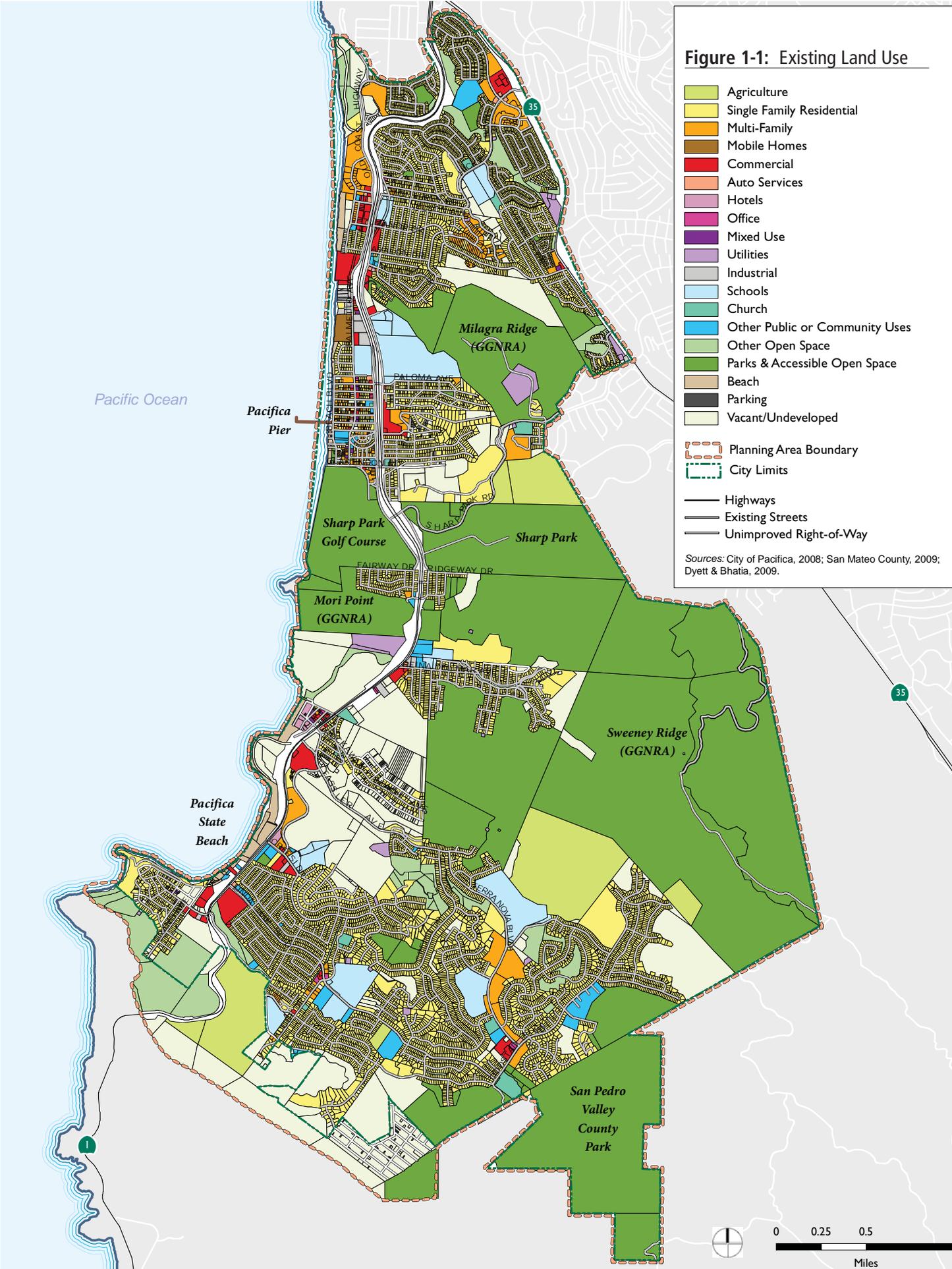
*The land use alternatives and policy approaches discussed here were the subject of the third community forum, held in January 2011.*

**Figure 1-1: Existing Land Use**

- Agriculture
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family
- Mobile Homes
- Commercial
- Auto Services
- Hotels
- Office
- Mixed Use
- Utilities
- Industrial
- Schools
- Church
- Other Public or Community Uses
- Other Open Space
- Parks & Accessible Open Space
- Beach
- Parking
- Vacant/Undeveloped

- Planning Area Boundary
- City Limits
- Highways
- Existing Streets
- Unimproved Right-of-Way

Sources: City of Pacifica, 2008; San Mateo County, 2009; Dyett & Bhatia, 2009.



Pacifica has a variety of distinct neighborhoods in the valleys between ridges, along the coast, and in the upland areas bordering Daly City. Over 90 percent of the 2,084 acres of developed land in Pacifica are residential, and 90 percent of this land is occupied by single-family housing. Single-family houses comprise three-quarters of the City’s housing stock.

Pacifica’s commercial land is distributed throughout the City at neighborhood shopping centers and in small commercial districts. Because it first grew as a series of separate communities, Pacifica lacks a clear center. Retail businesses currently capture only half of the local spending power. More commercial development could be beneficial in terms of creating activity centers and increasing public revenue.

## Development Trends and Growth Prospects

### Growth Projections

Pacifica’s population was estimated at 40,000 in 2009. Based on projections from 2007 by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), population growth is likely to be in the range of 1,000 to 1,500 people per decade, continuing a slow rate of growth that dates to the 1970s. For the General Plan update, we are projecting the need for 1,300 new housing units by 2030 to accommodate population growth.

More immediately, the City must meet the need for 311 new housing units by 2014, with more than half of these units for very or extremely low-income households. Meeting the housing needs of the whole community is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

**TABLE 1-1: PROJECTED GROWTH IN PACIFICA**

<b>Pacifica</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Population	38,800	42,100	3,300	9%
Households	14,190	15,480	1,290	9%
Employed Residents	18,600	24,170	5,570	30%
Jobs	6,190	7,790	1,600	26%

*Source: Association of Bay Area Governments, 2008.*

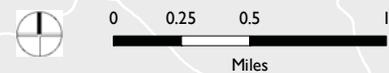
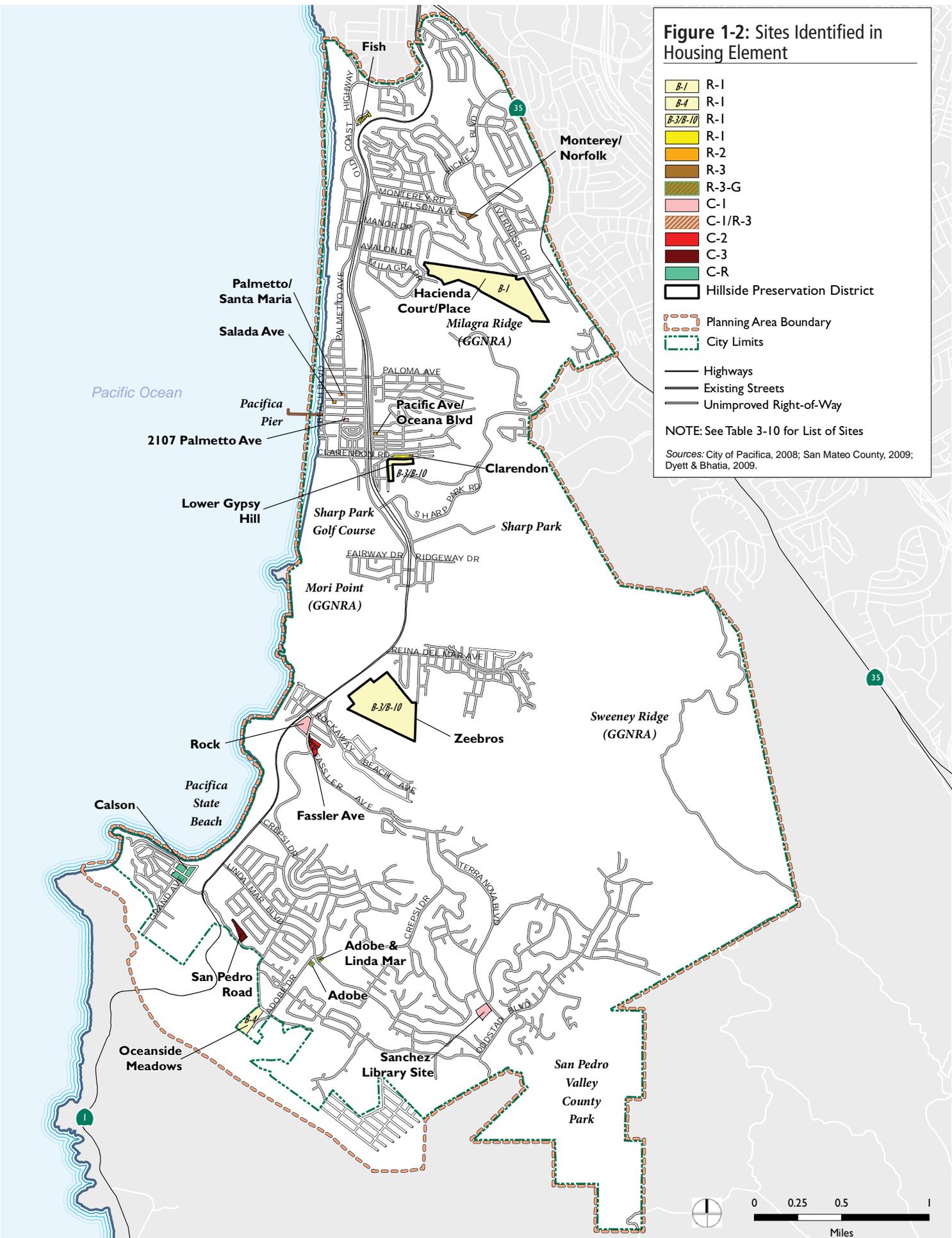
**Figure 1-2: Sites Identified in Housing Element**

	B-1	R-1
	B-4	R-1
	B-3/B-10	R-1
		R-1
		R-2
		R-3
		R-3-G
		C-1
		C-1/R-3
		C-2
		C-3
		C-R
		Hillside Preservation District

- Planning Area Boundary
- City Limits
- Highways
- Existing Streets
- Unimproved Right-of-Way

NOTE: See Table 3-10 for List of Sites

Sources: City of Pacifica, 2008; San Mateo County, 2009; Dyett & Bhatia, 2009.



### Housing Needs

In order to ensure the availability of decent affordable housing for all income groups, the State requires each Council of Governments to periodically distribute state-identified housing needs for its region (this is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation, or RHNA).

Each jurisdiction is required by State law to incorporate its housing need numbers into an updated version of its General Plan Housing Element. Pacifica’s new Housing Element must meet the remaining housing need from both the 2007-2014 and the 1999-2006 periods, by income level. Table 1-2 shows that altogether, there is a remaining need for 29 housing units for Extremely Low Income households, 141 units for Very Low Income Households, 72 for Lower Income Households, and 69 for Moderate Income Households, for a total of 311 new units by 2014.

The Draft Housing Element for 2007-2014 concludes that the City contains adequate, buildable sites to accommodate the remaining need for 311 units, and identifies sites which could fulfill housing needs if developed with an appropriate mix of housing affordable at each income level. These sites are shown in Figure 1-2.

### Market Potential

Pacifica is a mainly residential community with a low commercial profile. The city has three times as many employed residents as local jobs. Its retail establishments capture just half of household, employee, and business expenditures. Market analysis conducted for the General Plan update concluded that while there will be limited demand for new grocery-anchored shopping centers or “destination retail” during the next 20 years, Pacifica has potential for unique local-serving retail, tourism-based retail, and boutique hotels, as well as for a luxury resort. New visitor-oriented development could add up to \$1.5 million in transient occupancy tax and sales tax annually.

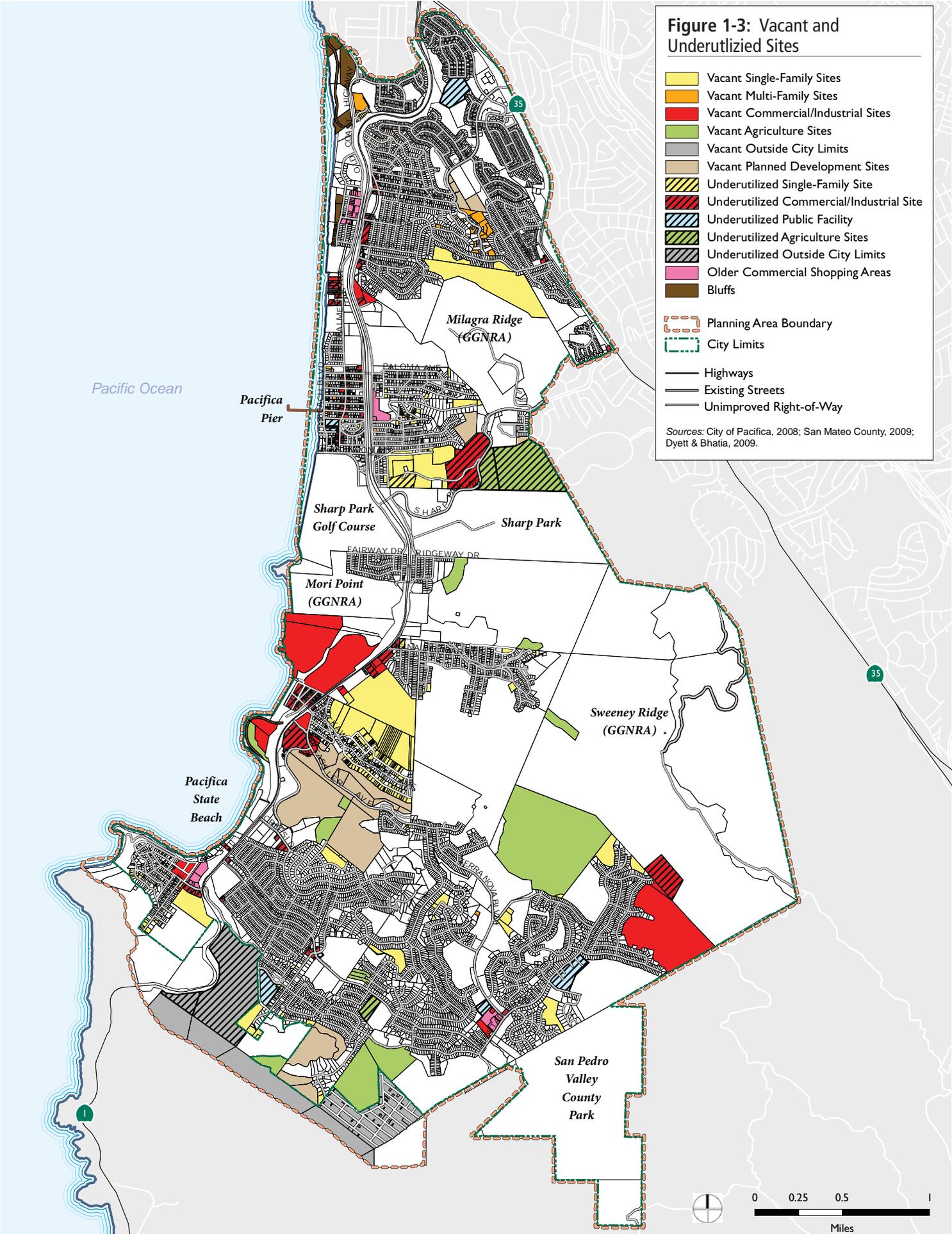
**TABLE 1-2: HOUSING NEED IN PACIFICA, 1999-2014**

Income Level	Need	Units Built or Approved <sup>1</sup>	Percent of Need Met	Remaining Need
Extremely Low Income <sup>1</sup>	32	3	9%	29
Very Low Income	151	10	7%	141
Lower Income	105	33	31%	72
Moderate Income	234	165	71%	69
Above Moderate Income	419	465	100%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>676</b>		<b>311</b>

Source: City of Pacifica, 2010.

**Figure 1-3: Vacant and Underutilized Sites**

- Vacant Single-Family Sites
  - Vacant Multi-Family Sites
  - Vacant Commercial/Industrial Sites
  - Vacant Agriculture Sites
  - Vacant Outside City Limits
  - Vacant Planned Development Sites
  - Underutilized Single-Family Site
  - Underutilized Commercial/Industrial Site
  - Underutilized Public Facility
  - Underutilized Agriculture Sites
  - Underutilized Outside City Limits
  - Older Commercial Shopping Areas
  - Bluffs
- 
- Planning Area Boundary
  - City Limits
  - Highways
  - Existing Streets
  - Unimproved Right-of-Way
- Sources: City of Pacifica, 2008; San Mateo County, 2009; Dyett & Bhatia, 2009.



### Development Capacity

An estimated 1,110 acres in the planning area are undeveloped (not including protected open space) and another 361 acres are in agricultural use. Underutilized urban land—aging shopping centers and commercial districts—comprises another 163 acres (see Figure 1-3). Not including land outside City limits, potential development sites could accommodate an estimated 1,457 housing units and 2.1 million square feet of commercial space, based on current development regulations (see Table 1-3). This is more than is projected to be needed to accommodate growth. However, much of the land has difficult access competing demands for habitat protection, or fractured ownership. The Rockaway Quarry site, which accounts for 80 percent of the City’s commercial development potential, requires a public vote for any development that includes residential uses.



*The General Plan must support economic development opportunities, and ensure that development on hillside sites is sensitively designed to preserve habitat and open space and protect people from hazards.*

**TABLE 1-3: SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY AND PROJECTED DEMAND**

	Estimated Capacity		Projected Demand	
	Vacant or Underutilized Land (acres)	Capacity of Vacant and Underutilized Sites	Projected Population and Job Growth by 2030	Projected Residential and Commercial Demand
Residential Development	1,304	1,511 units	3,000 residents	1,300 units
Vacant Land Outside City	287	54 units	NA	NA
Residential Excluding Land Outside City	1,016	1,457 units	3,000 residents	1,300 units
Non-Residential Development	330	2,153,956 sq. ft.	1,600 jobs	640,000 sq. ft.
Quarry Site	94	1,712,714 sq. ft.	NA	NA
Non-Residential Excluding Quarry Site	236	441,242 sq. ft.	1,600 jobs	435,000 to 640,000 sq.ft.

Sources: California DOF, 2009; ABAG, 2006 and 2008; US Census, 2007; Dyett & Bhatia, 2010.

### 1.3 KEY POLICY CHOICES AND LAND USE ALTERNATIVES

Certain General Plan issues have revealed themselves to require more attention in Pacifica. These are the primary subjects of the Alternatives and Evaluation phase.

#### Future Residential Development and Protection of Biological Resources

Pacificans treasure the open spaces that define their city and prioritize open space preservation in the future. However, two of the draft policy statements receiving the least community consensus at the second workshop called for “limited or no development” on sites critical for open space connections or habitat preservation. An appropriate approach to the balance of development and preservation is considered in Chapters 2, Residential and Future Residential Areas, and 5, Parks, Open Space, and Biological Resources.

Chapter 2 focuses on the potential development sites that have residential land use designations. Pacifica has enough residential land to satisfy projected overall housing needs. The General Plan must ensure that development on hillside sites occurs at an appropriate density and is sensitively designed to preserve habitat and open space and protect people from hazards. In Chapter 5, preliminary recommendations are made concerning high-priority habitat and open space land. The chapter also presents ideas for future parks and park improvements, and for a complete trail system.

#### The Quarry Site and Revitalization of Commercial Areas

Most participants at the first two community forums agreed with policies of shopping center revitalization, mixed-use redevelopment, and the creation of a stronger center, but important locational questions remain. Critically, community members express mixed ideas about the future of the quarry site. These issues are considered in depth in Chapter 3.

The General Plan update will aim to help bring revitalization and economic development, and identify desired locations for civic uses, industrial uses, visitor-oriented uses, mixed-use districts. Three alternative scenarios are presented. In the first alternative, a new center is created at the Rockaway Quarry site, and new development is concentrated there. In the second alternative, the Quarry site receives some development, while the West Sharp Park neighborhood intensifies as the civic core of the city, and other sites also gain higher-density development. In the third alternative, the Quarry is almost entirely conserved as habitat and open space, while Pacific Manor, West and East Sharp Park, Rockaway Beach, and Linda Mar/Pedro Point each become a unique higher-density area.

#### Coastal Development

Pacifica regulates development near the coast to ensure safety from flooding and erosion. These risks are compounded by the potential for sea level rise over the long term. The new General Plan will need to consider strategies for adaptation to sea level rise, covered briefly in Chapter 4.

This report presents strategies for managing new development in areas vulnerable to sea level rise; preserving undeveloped coastal land; and conducting “managed retreat” and shoreline restoration.



**Rockaway Quarry Site.** *The future of the quarry site is integral to planning for the city as a whole.*

## 1.4 SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY PREFERENCES

The January 29 community forum was structured as three presentations by the consulting team followed by two discussion periods. The first presentation was focused on land use alternatives for residential areas, the second on commercial areas, and the third session was devoted to coastal development policies and the future parks and open space system. Community members were asked to provide their feedback on individual worksheets, while the facilitators of each table group were asked to take notes on the discussions. The resulting community responses are incorporated into each section of this report, and summarized below. The worksheets are included as Appendix A, and complete responses are included in Appendix B. Table discussion notes are in Appendix C.

### Existing and Future Residential Areas

The planning team proposed approaches to eight focus areas where changes to current General Plan designations should be considered. The designation proposed for discussion was intended to permit a density appropriate to site conditions. Community members were asked to mark on worksheets whether they agreed, disagreed, or did not have an opinion. In many cases, community members also added comments to the worksheets.

As shown in Table 1-4, the proposed approach to seven of eight focus areas received majority agreement from workshop participants. The proposed approach to three focus areas received less than 60 percent support: Fairway Park, the Bowl and Fish Sites, and Linda Mar Boulevard. Responses are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

### Commercial Areas and Economic Development

Three alternative concepts were presented for the future revitalization and development of commercial areas. Broadly speaking, the alternatives were distinguished by the level of development they included at the Quarry site, and the extent to which other sites in the city were expected to redevelop at a higher density. The alternatives were compared overall, and then for each focus area (though for two of the eight focus areas, the alternatives all took the same approach). Participants were asked to rank their preferences overall and by focus area.

Table 1-5 shows that Alternative A was the first choice of the greatest number of participants as an overall concept 39 percent vs. 26 percent each for Alternatives B and C. Both Alternatives A and C were listed as third choice or given no rank by many participants, indicating that these alternatives had significant opposition.

**TABLE 1-4: LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSED APPROACH TO RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

Focus Area	Approach	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
1 Bowl and Fish	Match Lower of GP/Zoning	53%	32%	15%
2 Northern Bluffs	OSR, TDR	68%	30%	3%
3 Upper Monterey and Manor	Match Zoning	64%	27%	9%
4 East Sharp Park	Match Zoning	70%	18%	12%
5 Fairway Park	Match Higher of GP/Zoning	49%	46%	5%
6 Pedro Point Upper Slopes	Match GP	62%	34%	4%
7 Linda Mar Blvd	LDR, MDR	59%	32%	9%
8 Linda Mar and Park Pacifica Hillside	Match GP	73%	20%	7%

Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2011.

**TABLE 1-5: PREFERENCES FOR PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES FOR COMMERCIAL AREAS**

Alternative	Approach	Preference				Points <sup>b</sup>
		1	2	3	None <sup>a</sup>	
<b>Overall</b>						
Alternative A	Strong Center at Rockaway Quarry	<b>39%</b>	11%	<b>39%</b>	11%	102
Alternative B	West Sharp Park Emphasis	26%	<b>47%</b>	5%	21%	106
Alternative C	Conservation and Redevelopment	26%	18%	37%	18%	85
<b>Focus Area</b>						
<b>1 Rockaway Beach / Quarry</b>						
Alternative A	Full Development	<b>49%</b>	4%	36%	11%	204
Alternative B	Limited Development	23%	<b>44%</b>	11%	21%	181
Alternative C	Minimal Development	21%	21%	<b>41%</b>	16%	149
<b>2 West / East Sharp Park</b>						
Alternative A	Commercial, Mixed Use	<b>43%</b>	13%	33%	10%	200
Alternative B	Office, Civic Center	35%	<b>30%</b>	14%	20%	193
Alternative C	Mixed Use, Civic Center	17%	23%	<b>38%</b>	22%	134
<b>3 Northern Palmetto / Base of Milagra Ridge</b>						
Alternative A	Maintain	33%	17%	<b>42%</b>	8%	171
Alternative B	Retail, Office	<b>38%</b>	<b>32%</b>	14%	17%	197
Alternative C	Recreation, Industrial	23%	24%	35%	18%	146
<b>4 Pacific Manor</b>						
Alternative A	Improve Existing	<b>42%</b>	20%	30%	7%	208
Alternative B	Mixed Use	36%	<b>33%</b>	13%	17%	203
Alternative C	Commercial, Office	20%	23%	<b>41%</b>	16%	146
<b>5 Pedro Point / Linda Mar</b>						
Alternative A	Commercial, Residential	<b>35%</b>	19%	<b>33%</b>	13%	167
Alternative B	Hotel, Commercial, Mixed Use, Residential	33%	<b>37%</b>	11%	19%	181
Alternative C	Mixed Use, Hotel	25%	19%	32%	24%	136
<b>6 Park Mall Area</b>						
Alternative A/B/C	Mixed Use	<b>89%</b>	2%	0%	9%	253
<b>7 Park Pacifica Stables</b>						
Alternative A/B/C	Maintain	<b>95%</b>	0%	0%	5%	260
<b>8 Gypsy Hill</b>						
Alternative A	Hotel, Residential	<b>54%</b>	5%	25%	16%	189
Alternative B	High Density, Open Space Residential	5%	<b>34%</b>	<b>33%</b>	28%	98
Alternative C	Planned Development	20%	30%	28%	23%	131

Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2011.

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> Where participants marked a preference for at least one alternative, any alternative that was not marked is considered to potentially indicate a negative response.

<sup>b</sup> This point system assigns 5 points to every first choice, 3 points to every second choice, 1 point to every third choice, and 0 points where an alternative was not ranked..

Alternative A received the greatest number of first-choice preferences for all focus areas but one, Northern Palmetto/Base of Milagra Ridge, where Alternative B received slightly more support. In many cases, preferences were nearly even. Responses to Alternatives A for most focus areas were divided between top and bottom choices, while Alternative B seemed to have fewer negatives. See Chapter 3 for a summary table and more detailed accounting of community response.



### Coastal Development Policies

Strategies for managing new development in areas vulnerable to sea level rise; preserving undeveloped coastal land; and conducting “managed retreat” were presented at the January workshop. Participants were asked to indicate on worksheets whether they agreed or disagreed with proposed approaches, and were given space to comment.



A majority of attendees reported that they agreed with the coastal development policies (see Table 1-6). Agreement was strongest (89 percent) concerning master plans for future development on public land. It was weakest (53 percent) for strict limits on future density. Responses are covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

**TABLE 1-6: LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSED APPROACHES TO COASTAL DEVELOPMENT**

Question	Answers		
	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion <sup>1</sup>
New development within designated area requires study demonstrating safety from sea level rise	76%	14%	10%
Strict limits on future density, and do not upzone any new areas	54%	34%	11%
Rolling easement ensuring setback and public access	64%	20%	16%
Permanent open space protection with clustered development	57%	27%	16%
Master plans for public land	89%	1%	10%
Regulatory structure and incentives for shifting development away from coast	67%	26%	7%

Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2011.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> includes items not marked.



**Community Forum.** *The third community workshop, held in January, 2011, drew about 100 members of the public and volunteer discussion facilitators. Participants' responses and ideas are covered in this report.*

## Parks, Open Space, and Biological Resources

Finally, the planning team presented a concept for future parks and open spaces, consisting of three main features: new neighborhood and pocket parks; priorities for future open space and habitat preservation; and enhancements to the trail system.

Meeting attendees were encouraged to provide open-ended comments regarding the open space presentation on the worksheets. These comments indicate a high level of support for new park space in neighborhoods. A slight majority of community members seemed to support conserving more natural open space. There was strong support for improving the trail system, a subject which also generated considerable interest in specifics. These are covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

## Concerns about Process

Several community members wrote that the choices were too confusing, that the language was too technical, and/or that the map color schemes were confusing. One participant wrote that insufficient time was provided to digest complicated information.

A small number of responses noted concern that the General Plan process must work closely with the Climate Action Plan Task Force, the Green Building Task Force, and with the Coastal Commission and other agencies to the extent possible.

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