

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO  
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

**DATE:** May 11, 2022

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Planning Staff

**SUBJECT:** 1) Overview and Introduction of the North Fair Oaks Rezoning and General Plan Amendment Project (Project), and 2) Public Scoping Session for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2011, the County of San Mateo adopted the North Fair Oaks Community Plan (Plan), which includes a variety of land use policies promoting development and redevelopment of specific areas in North Fair Oaks, particularly along the transportation and commercial corridors of Middlefield Road and El Camino Real. Subsequently, the County adopted multiple new higher-density residential mixed-use districts to implement the policies of the Plan, including the CMU-1, CMU-2, CMU-3, NMU and NMU-ECR districts, as well as the Design Review and Site Development Permit (SDP Chapter) chapter of the zoning regulations. The existing adopted zoning districts are shown in Attachment D.

Since adoption, implementation of the new regulations has revealed a number of ways in which standards and processes could be improved to provide greater clarity, facilitate implementation, and better advance the goals of the Plan. In addition, a number of new State laws have made some standards and processes inapplicable in many scenarios, creating confusion regarding when and how certain regulations apply.

The County has also identified several residentially-zoned areas adjacent to the residential mixed-use zoning districts along Middlefield Road and the northern portion of El Camino Real, currently zoned primarily R-3 (multi-family residential), with a few parcels zoned R-1 (single-family residential), that may be appropriate for rezoning to a similar higher-density residential mixed-use zoning designation, in order to promote consistent development along these corridors. This expansion would require both an amendment to the County's General Plan Land Use maps to apply designations allowing different uses and development intensities, and zoning amendments to apply different zoning districts.

The North Fair Oaks Rezoning and General Plan amendment project proposes to 1) amend the existing CMU-1, CMU-2, CMU-3, NMU and NMU-ECR zoning regulations, and related standards and processes of the SDP Chapter of the zoning regulations, to improve clarity and effectiveness, and address changes to State law, and 2) study

expansion of the CMU and NMU zoning districts, or application of other appropriate higher-density residential mixed-use zoning standards, to include additional areas along Middlefield Road and El Camino Real.

The County has determined that this project requires an EIR to assess the potential impacts of development on the environment, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. Because an EIR is required, no Initial Study will be prepared. The May 11, 2022 hearing of the Planning Commission will also constitute a public Scoping Session for the Environmental Impact Report. The Notice of Preparation for the Scoping Session is included as Attachment A.

## **DISCUSSION**

### 1. Project Area

The project area for the potential amendments to existing zoning regulations, and the potential zoning expansion areas, is shown in Attachment B. The area in total is approximately 81 acres, and contains a mix of commercial uses, including auto services, industrial, retail, restaurants, a motel, and office buildings, residential uses, including multi-family and single-family buildings, and public and quasi-public uses include a public parking lot, a church, and right-of-way for the Hetch Hetchy aqueduct, which supplies water to San Francisco and other communities. The project area is generally surrounded by residential neighborhoods with a mix of single-family and small multiplex buildings, except for commercial uses along a portion of El Camino Real, and west of the project area. Current land uses in the project area, and in surrounding areas of North Fair Oaks, are shown in Attachment C. The expansion areas alone make up approximately six acres.

### 2. Project Process and Timeline

Consultant Team. The Planning and Building Department has engaged the services of a consulting firm, Wilson Roberts Todd LLC, to manage the update process, with the additional services of a number of subconsultants, including Miller Planning Associates, Rincon Consultants for environmental analysis, Nuestra Casa and the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center for outreach, public input and facilitation, and W-Trans for transportation analysis.

Project Timeline. The anticipated timeline of the project is shown below, with general timeframes for key project stages, and tentative dates for key meetings and hearings.

- Project Initiation (February-March 2022)

- Project Analysis (April-June 2022)
  - Technical Advisory Committee Kickoff – April 20
  - North Fair Oaks Community Council No.1: Project Overview – April 28
  - Planning Commission Hearing No.1; Project Intro and EIR Scoping Session – May 11
  - TAC No.2 – May/June
  
- Project Alternatives (July-November 2022)
  - Community Webinar: Draft Zoning and Alternatives Watch Party at NFO Community Center – Sept 10
  - TAC No.3: Draft Zoning with Alternatives; DEIR (Administrative Draft) - Oct 3
  - NFO Community Council No.2: Preferred Alternative - Oct 27
  - Planning Commission Hearing No.2: Preferred Alternative - Wed Nov 9
  
- Zoning Development with Draft EIR (December 2022–February 2023)
  - TAC No.4: Draft Zoning & GP Amendments - Dec 19
  - Community Council No.2: Zoning & GP Amendments (Public Review Draft) – Jan 26
  - Planning Commission No.3: Zoning & GP Amendments (Public Review Draft); DEIR (Public Hearing) – Feb 8
  - TAC No.5: Zoning Refinements – Mar 6
  
- Finalize Zoning & GP Amendments with Final EIR (March-July 2023)
  - Community Council No.3: Review Final Draft; Final EIR – Mar 23
  - Planning Commission No.4 – Apr 12
  - Board of Supervisors No.1 (2nd/4th Tuesday) – May 23
  - Board of Supervisors No.2 – Jun 27

The project is anticipated to run generally from March 2022 to July 2023. As indicated in the timeline, the project is underway, with project analysis and initial public outreach in process. An initial briefing was provided to the North Fair Oaks Community Council at the Council’s study session on March 17, 2022, and a formal project kickoff is scheduled for the December 28 regular meeting of the Council.

Community Outreach and Input. The process will include significant outreach to the community, including interviews with local community-based organizations and stakeholders, various community forums (which may be entirely virtual, depending on conditions), hearings at the North Fair Oaks Community Council, community surveys, and other methods of gathering information on community needs, issues and goals.

Technical Advisory Committee. The project will be advised by a technical advisory committee (TAC), made up of various department and agency staff, and members of the Community Council. As indicated in the timeline, the TAC will

meet periodically to review materials and provide input and direction for various components of the project. The initial TAC meeting was held on April 20, 2022.

Environmental Impact Report and EIR Scoping Session. The Planning and Building Department has determined that a full Environmental Impact Report is the appropriate level of review for the project, pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Per CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), because an EIR is needed, an initial study has not been prepared, and a programmatic EIR will presume potential impacts for required CEQA topics and analyze them in full. The following environmental issues are anticipated to be analyzed in detail in the Environmental Impact Report:

- Aesthetics;
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources;
- Geology and Soils;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Noise;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services and Recreation;
- Transportation; and
- Utilities and Service Systems.

Other environmental topics, including agriculture and forestry resources, energy, mineral resources, and wildfire are anticipated to be less than significant as future projects would be subject to existing review requirements and regulatory stipulations, and these topics will be analyzed in the EIR in a more limited fashion.

The Draft EIR will also examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the project, including the CEQA-mandated No Project Alternative and other potential alternatives that may be capable of reducing or avoiding potential environmental effects while generally meeting most of the project objectives. The Draft EIR will also analyze the cumulative impacts that could result with adoption and development under the project.

A Notice of Preparation for the EIR was prepared and posted and distributed per CEQA requirements on April 27, 2022. The NOP is provided as Attachment A, and provides more detail on CEQA requirements. As noted in the NOP, the May 11, 2022 Planning Commission hearing also constitutes a public Scoping Session for the EIR, at which responsible agencies, other public entities, interested parties, members of the public, and others are able and encourage to provide comment on the scope and content of the Draft Environmental Impact Report

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Notice of Preparation (NOP) of A Draft Environmental Impact Report & Scoping Session for North Fair Oaks Rezoning and General Plan Amendment Project
- B. North Fair Oaks Rezoning and General Plan Amendment Project, Project Area Map
- C. Project Area Land Use Map
- D. Existing Zoning Districts

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**County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department**

# **ATTACHMENT A**

## **NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT & SCOPING SESSION FOR NORTH FAIR OAKS REZONING AND GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT PROJECT**

**Date:** April 27, 2022

The County of San Mateo is preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the North Fair Oaks Rezoning and General Plan Amendment Project (“project”), as identified below, and is requesting comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR will address the potential physical and environmental effects of the project for each of the environmental topics outlined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The County of San Mateo is the Lead Agency for the project. This notice is being sent to the California State Clearinghouse, San Mateo County Clerk, adjacent cities, potential responsible agencies, and other interested parties. Responsible agencies are those public agencies, in addition to the County of San Mateo, that may have a role in approving or carrying out the project. When the Draft EIR is published, a Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR will be sent to Responsible Agencies, other public agencies, and interested parties and individuals who have indicated that they would like to review the Draft EIR.

Responses to this NOP and any questions or comments should be directed in writing to:

**Will Gibson, Planner III, Planning & Building Department, 455 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063; or [wgibson@smcgov.org](mailto:wgibson@smcgov.org).**

Comments on the NOP must be received on or before May 25, 2022. In addition, comments may be provided at the EIR Scoping Meeting (see below). Comments should focus on possible impacts on the physical environment, ways in which potential adverse effects might be minimized, and alternatives to the proposed project.

**EIR PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING:** The County of San Mateo Planning Commission will conduct a public scoping session when it meets on May 11, 2022, starting at 9:00 am. This meeting will be held virtually on Zoom. For meeting agenda and updates, including the Zoom link for the meeting, visit <http://planning.smcgov.org/planning-commission>.

### **PROJECT TITLE:**

North Fair Oaks Rezoning and General Plan Amendment Project

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The project area is located within North Fair Oaks, an unincorporated community in San Mateo County, California, which is situated on the San Francisco Peninsula between the cities of Redwood City, Atherton, and Menlo Park (see Project Location Map and

Project Vicinity Map, attached). The project area is comprised of two non-contiguous subareas that are separated by a railroad right-of-way owned by Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board and used for freight service and Caltrain passenger rail. Of the two subareas, the northern subarea is comprised of parcels along and in the vicinity of Middlefield Road and Edison Way (see Project Study Area map, attached). The southern subarea is comprised of parcels along and in the vicinity of El Camino Real (State Highway 82) and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**PROJECT SPONSOR:** County of San Mateo

**EXISTING CONDITIONS:** The project area encompasses approximately 78 acres of land. The project area contains a mix of commercial uses, including auto services, industrial, retail, restaurants, a motel, and office buildings; and residential uses, including multi-family and single-family buildings (see Existing Land Use map, attached). Public and quasi-public uses include a public parking lot, a church, and right-of-way for the Hetch Hetchy aqueduct, which supplies water to San Francisco and other communities. The project area is generally surrounded by residential neighborhoods with a mix of single-family and small multiplex buildings, except for commercial uses along a portion of El Camino Real and west of the project area.

Land use intensity and building conditions vary in the project area. Roughly two-thirds of the project area has development potential by virtue of a parcel having a relatively low floor area ratio (the ratio of total building floor area to site area) and/or relatively low building value to land value, as compared with established development trends. Three parcels in the project area are present on one of the lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Section 95962.5 of the Government Code.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND:** In 2011, the County of San Mateo adopted the North Fair Oaks Community Plan, which promotes infill development along the commercial and transportation corridors that comprise most of the project area, where parcels presently have relatively low intensity and can be converted to more urban uses over time, to help revitalize North Fair Oaks, produce more housing, and confer other community benefits.

To implement the Community Plan, the County subsequently adopted mixed-use designations, standards, and procedures as part of its Zoning Regulations. Since that time, users of the adopted zoning have experienced difficulties with the application and administration of the mixed-use zoning standards. Additionally, the State of California has enacted new laws that require that zoning that regulates the production of multifamily housing provide objective development standards and streamlined permitting and approval processes that can be applied ministerially to encourage housing production. Furthermore, the County of San Mateo, like jurisdictions throughout the region and the state, is experiencing increasing demand for housing, and consequent housing availability and affordability challenges, and foresees the potential inability to provide sufficient housing for unincorporated County residents within the densities allowed by current zoning regulations, particularly in areas in proximity to transit.

Goals for the project include:



1. Adopt more effective zoning by revising provisions that are difficult to administer and/or implement, replacing provisions necessitating subjective interpretation with objective standards, refining development application and review procedures, and incorporating professional practices that better promote Community Plan policies.
2. Increase capacity for housing in the project area by modifying General Plan designations and zoning standards to potentially allow taller buildings, greater density, reduced building setbacks, modified parking requirements, and/or other strategies, while simultaneously protecting and expanding equitable access to opportunities, community livability, and desirable aspects of community character.

The project would result in changes to the County's Zoning Regulations, which include physical standards, allowable activities, and development procedures, and potentially changes to the County's General Plan Land Use maps, which specify the basic uses and densities appropriate to various unincorporated areas. These changes would apply to parcels when new buildings and/or site improvements are being considered.

For more about the project, please visit [www.RezoningNorthFairOaks.org](http://www.RezoningNorthFairOaks.org).

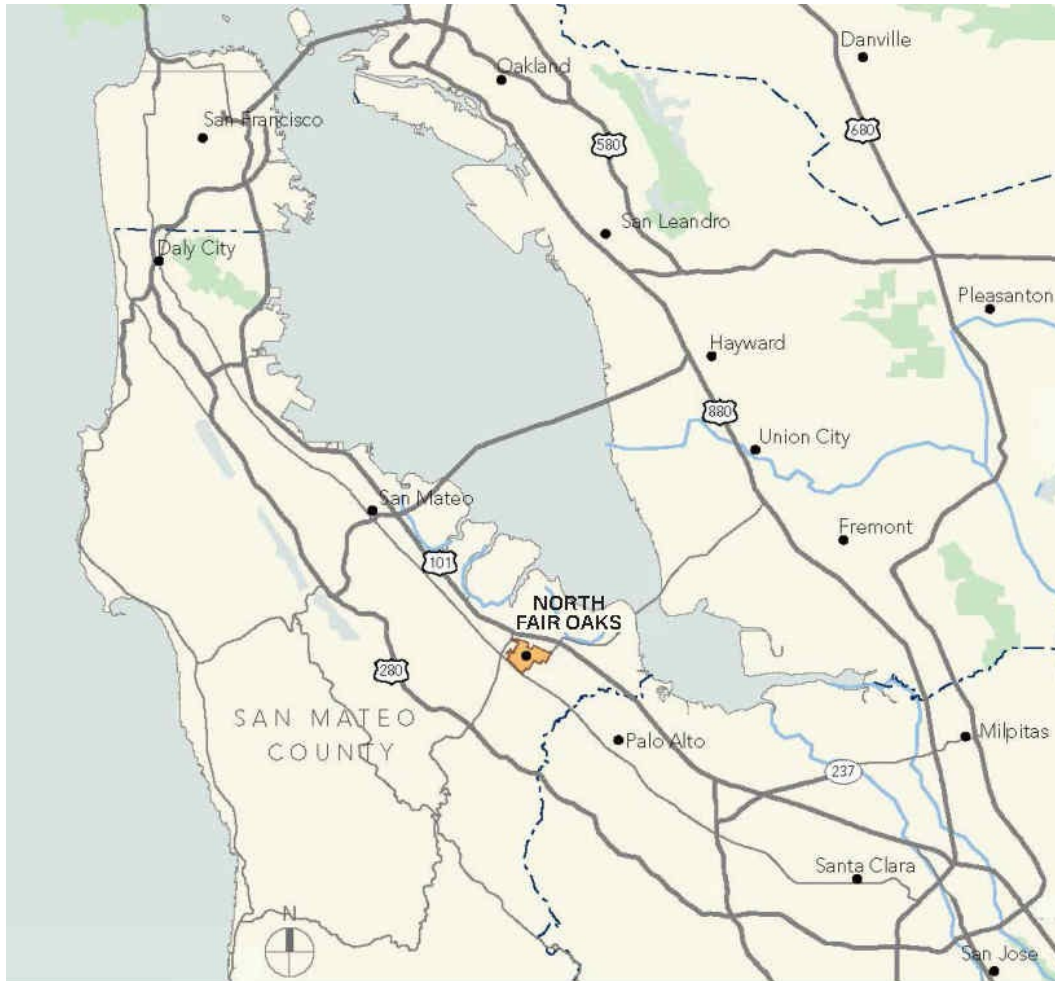
**POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:** The County determined an EIR was the appropriate level of CEQA review, following a preliminary review of the project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), because an EIR is needed, an initial study has not been prepared. Therefore, a programmatic EIR presumes potential impacts for many required CEQA topics and will analyze them in full. The following environmental issues are anticipated to be analyzed in detail in the EIR:

- Aesthetics;
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources;
- Geology and Soils;
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- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
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- Land Use and Planning;
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- Population and Housing;
- Public Services and Recreation;
- Transportation; and
- Utilities and Service Systems.

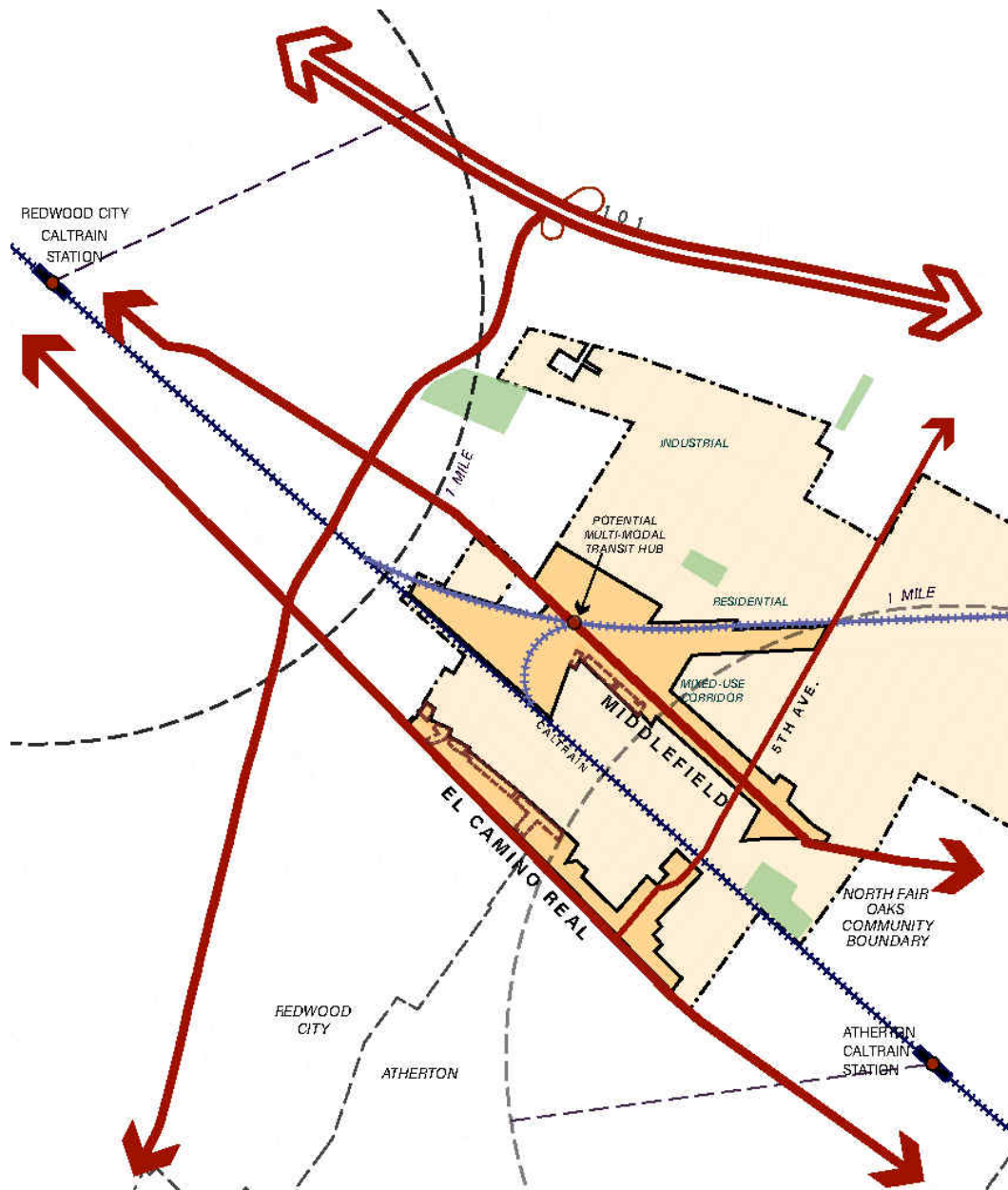
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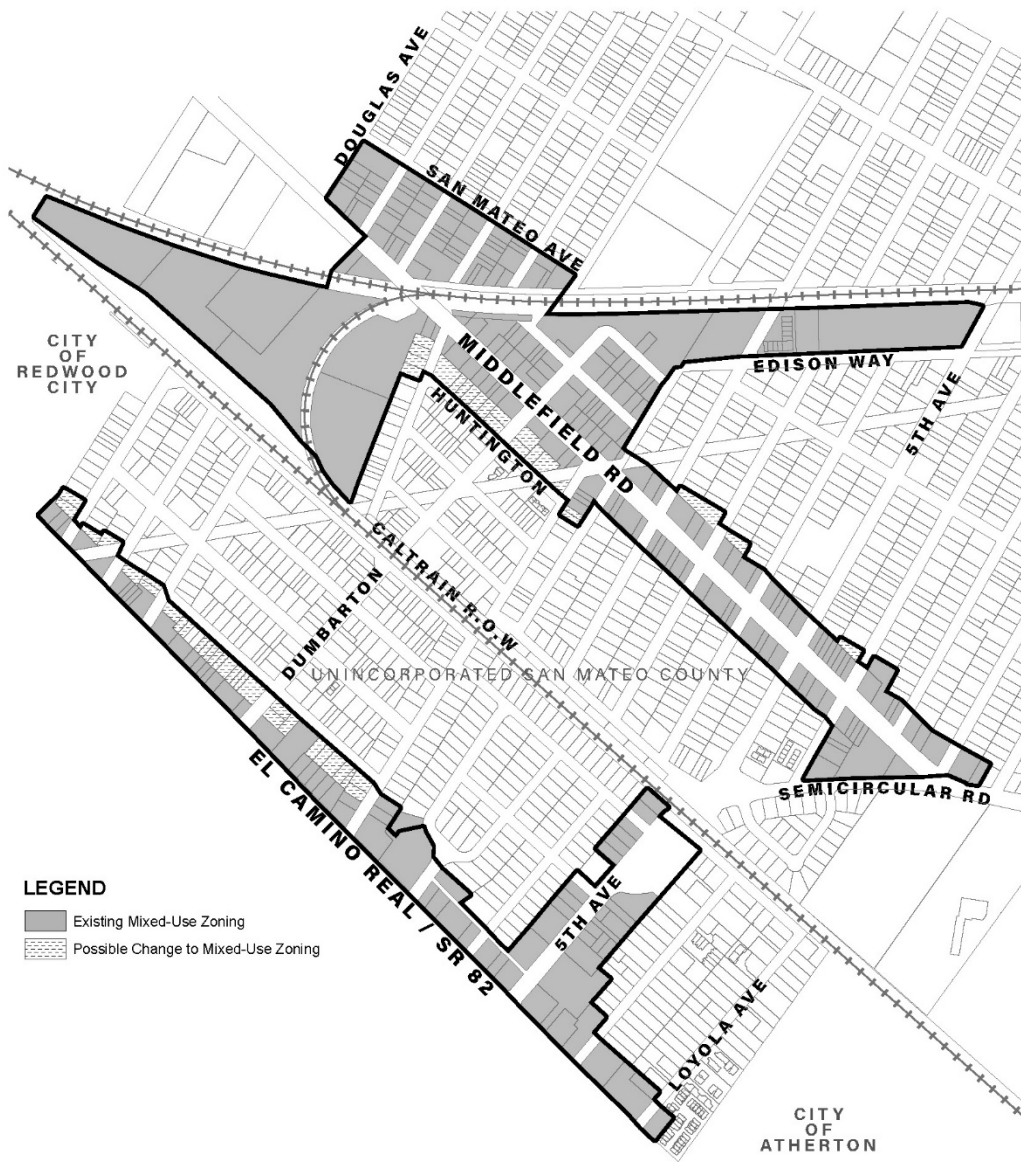
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### PROJECT LOCATION MAP



# PROJECT VICINITY MAP





**LEGEND**  
 Existing Mixed-Use Zoning  
 Possible Change to Mixed-Use Zoning

**REZONING PROJECT AREA**

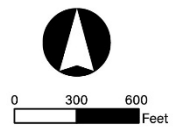




**LEGEND**

- Auto
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Multi-family
- Parking & Open Storage
- Professional Bldg. and Offices
- Public & Quasi-Public
- Retail and Restaurants
- Single Family
- Vacant Land

**EXISTING LAND USE**

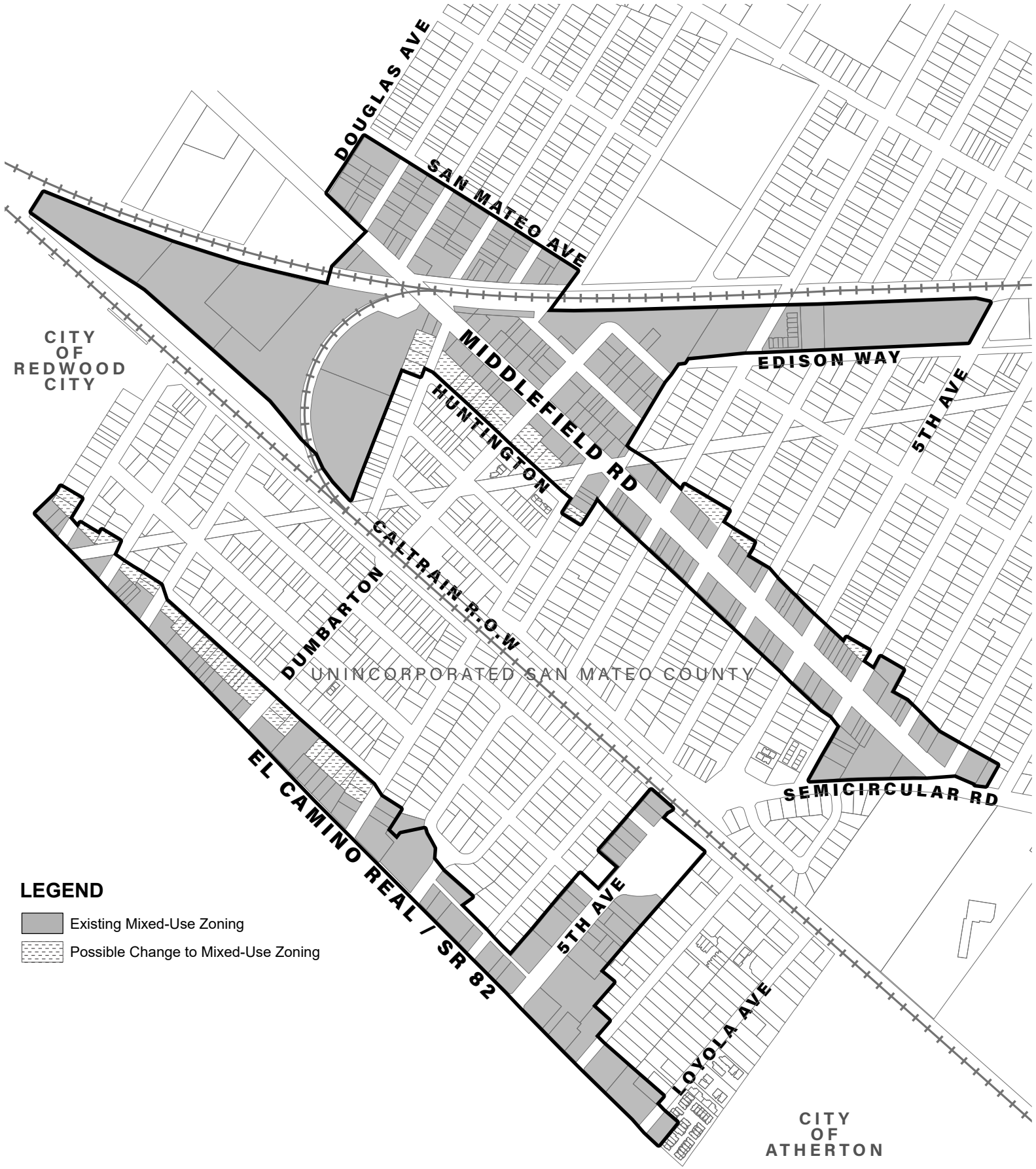






**County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department**

# **ATTACHMENT B**





CITY OF REDWOOD CITY

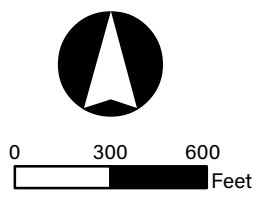
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**LEGEND**

-  Existing Mixed-Use Zoning
-  Possible Change to Mixed-Use Zoning

**REZONING PROJECT AREA**

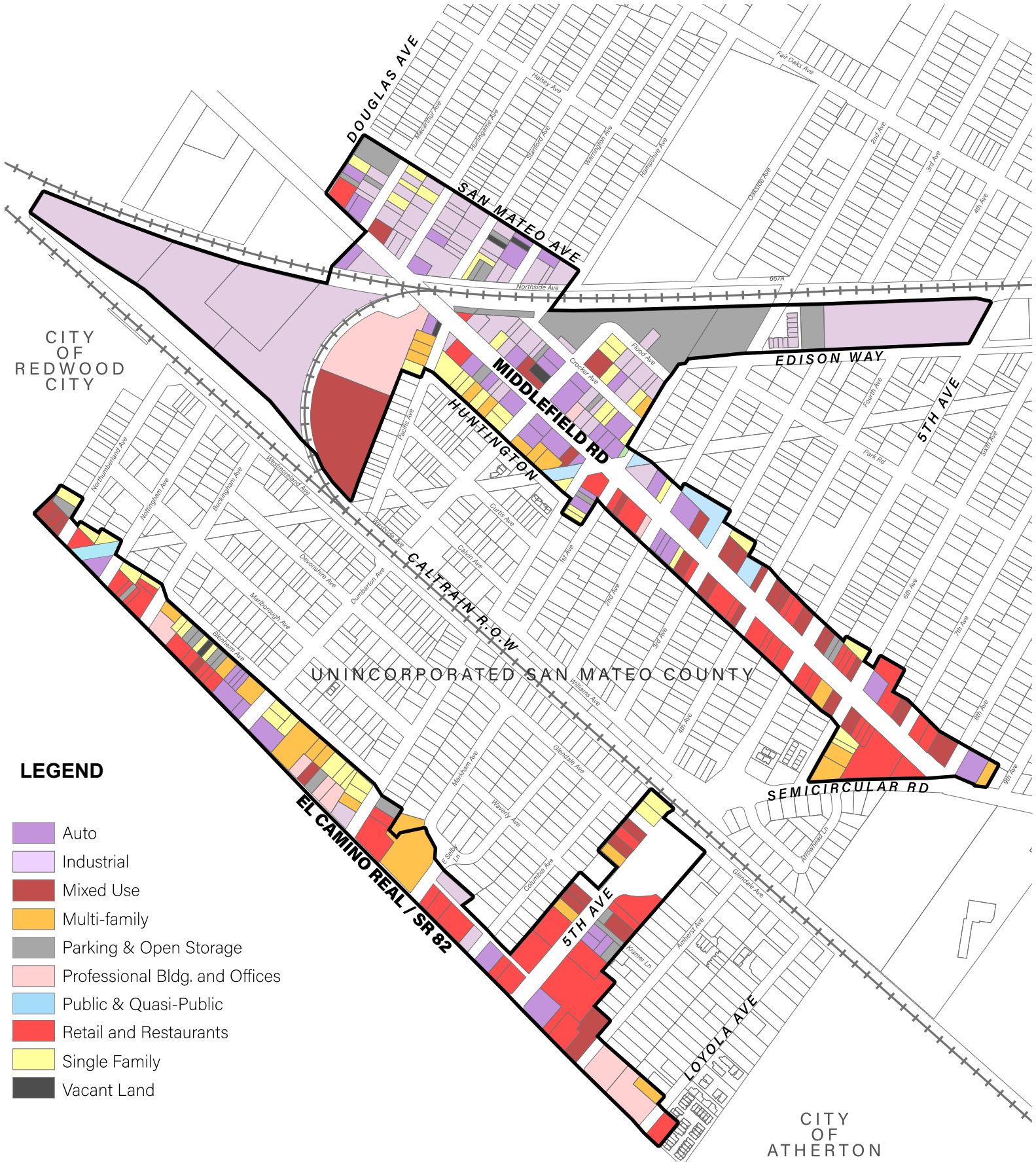




**County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department**

# **ATTACHMENT C**





CITY OF REDWOOD CITY

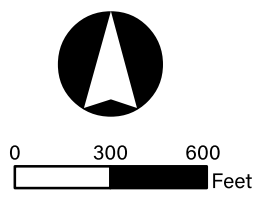
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CITY OF ATHERTON

**LEGEND**

- Auto
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Multi-family
- Parking & Open Storage
- Professional Bldg. and Offices
- Public & Quasi-Public
- Retail and Restaurants
- Single Family
- Vacant Land

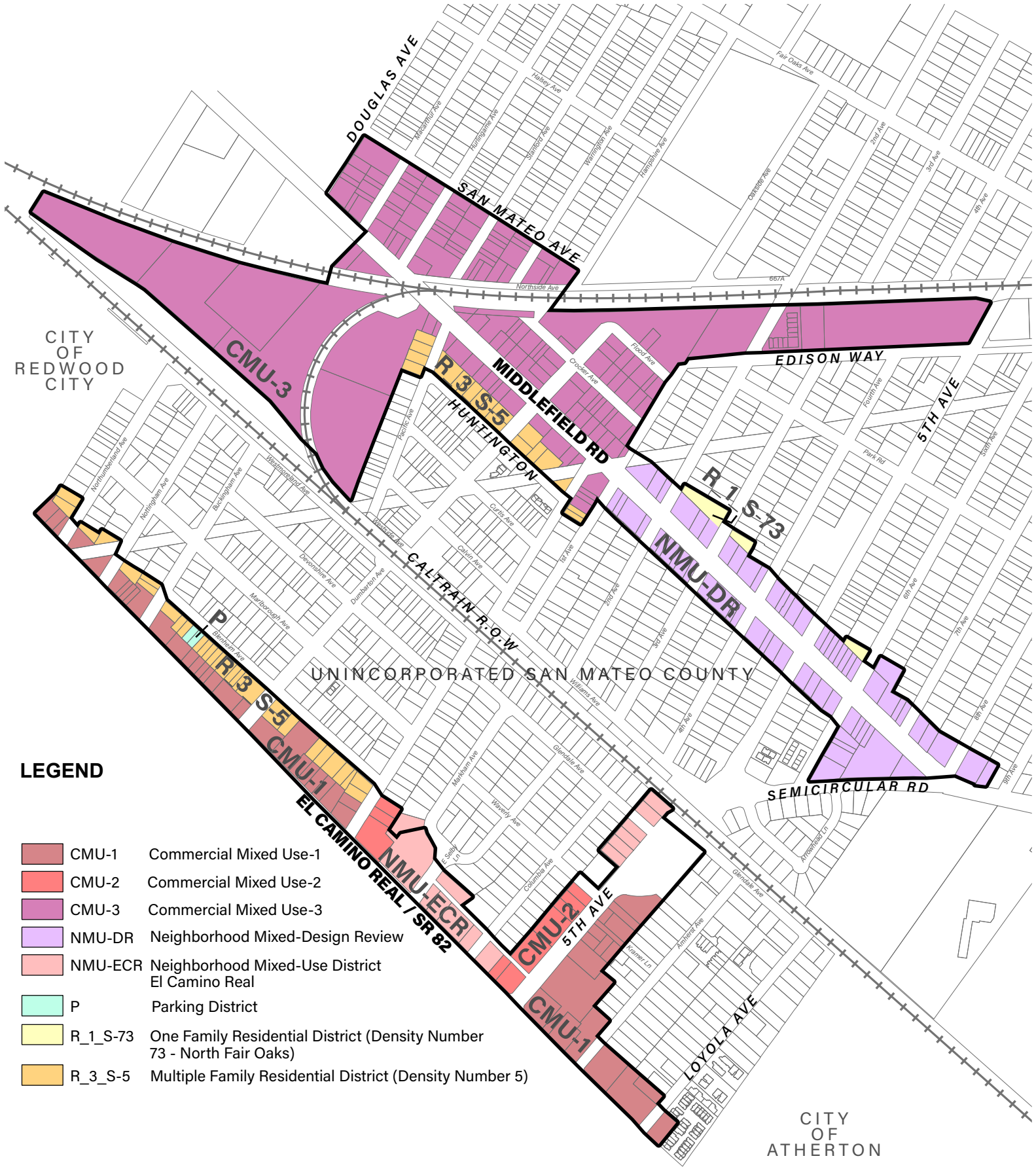
**EXISTING LAND USE**





**County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department**

# **ATTACHMENT D**



CITY OF REDWOOD CITY

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CITY OF ATHERTON

**LEGEND**

- CMU-1 Commercial Mixed Use-1
- CMU-2 Commercial Mixed Use-2
- CMU-3 Commercial Mixed Use-3
- NMU-DR Neighborhood Mixed-Design Review
- NMU-ECR Neighborhood Mixed-Use District El Camino Real
- P Parking District
- R\_1\_S-73 One Family Residential District (Density Number 73 - North Fair Oaks)
- R\_3\_S-5 Multiple Family Residential District (Density Number 5)

**EXISTING ZONING DESIGNATIONS**

