

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Program Environmental Impact Report Woodside Housing Element Update

Date May 23, 2023

To Reviewing Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Woodside General Plan Housing Element Update and Scheduling of a Scoping Meeting on June 7, 2023

The Town of Woodside will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Woodside Housing Element Update (the Project). The Project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described below.

Public agencies and members of the general public are invited to provide comments in writing as to the scope and content of the EIR. Specifically, the Town needs to know the views of Responsible and Trustee Agencies as to the potentially significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures that are germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project. Responsible Agencies will need to use the EIR prepared by the Town when considering permit or other approval for the Project.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, responses must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the NOP review period, which runs as follows: May 23, 2023, through June 22, 2023.

Please send written responses to Sage Schaan, Planning Director, Town of Woodside at the address shown below. Public agencies providing comments are requested to include a contact person for the agency.

PROJECT TITLE:

Town of Woodside Housing Element Update

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT:

Sage Schaan, Planning Director
Town of Woodside
2955 Woodside Road
Woodside, CA, 94062
Email: sschaan@woodsidetown.org
Phone: (650) 851-6790

PROJECT SPONSOR:

Town of Woodside
2955 Woodside Road
Woodside, CA, 94062

PROJECT LOCATION AND CONTEXT:

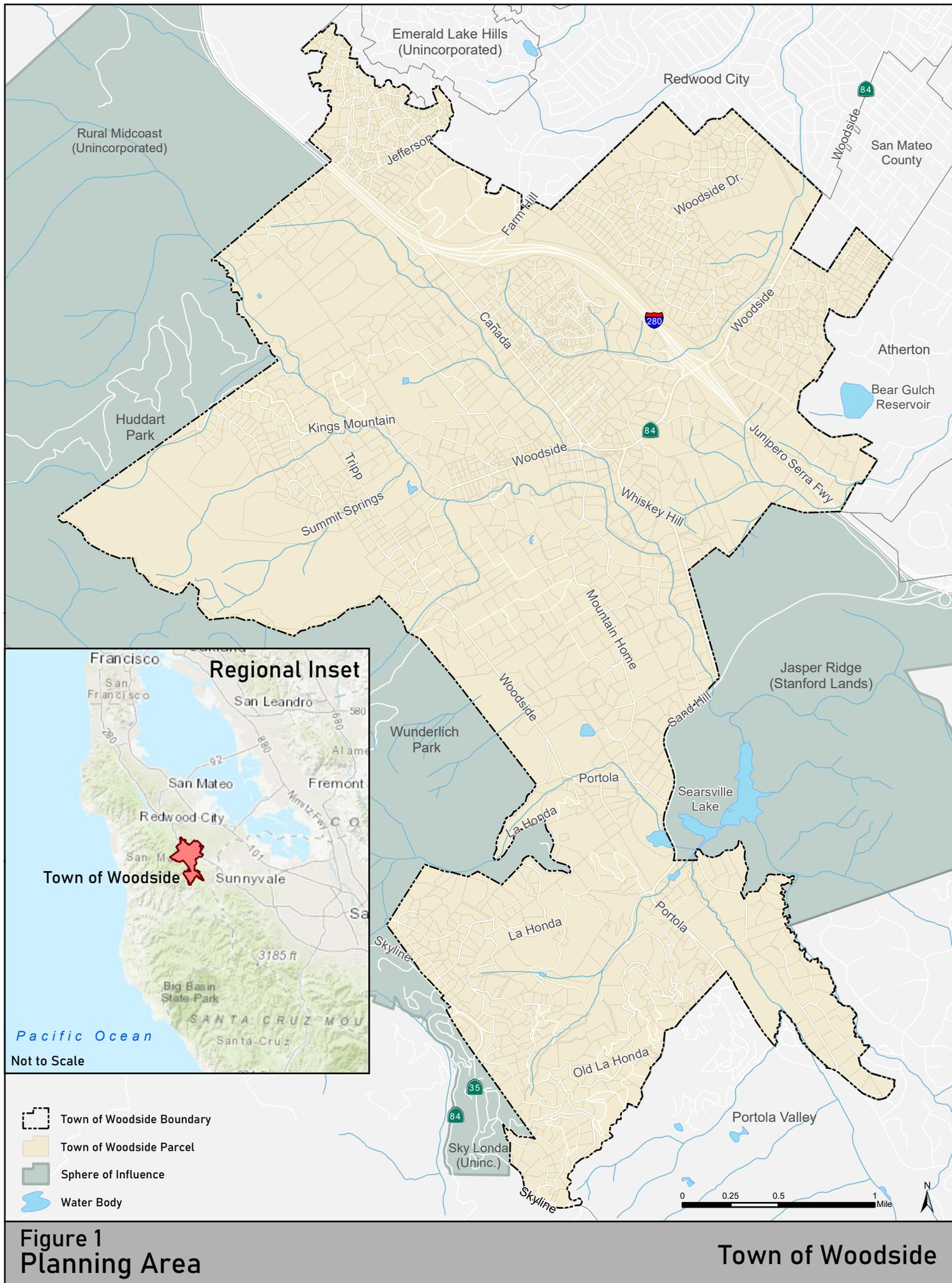
Located in San Mateo County, California, the Town of Woodside is situated on the San Francisco Peninsula approximately 6 miles west of San Francisco Bay, midway between San Francisco and San Jose. Interstate 280 (I-280) runs roughly north-south through the eastern portion of the Town, while State Route 84 (SR-84) passes through its center. Woodside is a residential community distinguished by its rural character, scenic vistas, natural landscapes, and equestrian heritage. Existing residential development in Woodside numbers approximately 1,911 housing units. These are predominantly single-family residences, with some guest houses and accessory dwelling units on single-family properties. The beauty of the natural landscape helps define the character of the community, but it also presents risk of natural hazards that limit the potential for new housing, including steep topography and areas of landslide hazard in the hills and risk of flooding and liquefaction on much of the valley floor. Adjacent to the Town are the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve to the southeast and Wunderlich County Park and Huddart County Park to the west of the Town limit. Residential neighborhoods of Redwood City and the unincorporated community of Emerald Lake Hills lie to the north, while the Town of Atherton borders the Town on the northeast.

Planning Area Boundaries

The Woodside Planning Area (Planning Area) totals approximately 11.8 square miles, including incorporated Town lands as shown in Figure 1.

Existing Land Uses

Located in San Mateo County, the Town of Woodside encompasses about 11.8 square miles and is home to 5,131 residents. Existing land uses within the Town are primarily single-family residential and open space uses, with some limited local-serving commercial uses. Institutional, public, and quasi-public land uses in Town include a school, a fire station, a library, a church, local government buildings, and a museum. Agriculture, including production of food and fiber products, livestock pasturing, vineyards, and beekeeping, is permitted on most lands within the Town. Overall, residential uses account for 5,611.3 acres, commercial uses occupy 17.6 acres, and open space uses occupy 1,001.4 acres. Vacant land accounts for 258.8 acres within the Town.



Natural Resources and Environmental Constraints

Woodside boasts abundant biodiversity due to the interplay of a range of microclimates, topography, and soils in the region. The wooded slopes and stream corridors of the Santa Cruz Mountains form the western backdrop to the town, while the central part of Woodside is characterized by gentle oak and grassland foothills, as well as flatter valley areas with rich riparian habitat. Numerous creeks flow in and through Woodside, including Redwood Creek and many tributaries of San Francisquito Creek. The freshwater marsh near Searsville Lake in the southern portion of Woodside is also an important water feature. Residential development is limited in and near these resources to preserve existing biodiversity, including required setbacks along the creeks.

Flood hazard areas are generally concentrated around Searsville Lake; however, portions of Woodside downstream from Schilling Lake, Bear Gulch Reservoir, and Searsville Lake are potentially at risk of flooding in the event of seiche or dam failure. Alleviated flatland areas in central portions of the Town have been identified as areas of liquefaction hazard, while the areas of steep terrain in the Western Hills have been identified as areas of significant potential for seismically induced landslides. Additionally, several active and potentially active fault traces pass through Woodside, including the San Andreas, Cañada, and Pilaratos Faults. Such features in the town that bring risk of exposure to natural hazards, including flooding, wildfires, liquefaction, and landslides, are shown in Figure 2.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Proposed Project involves a comprehensive update to the Town of Woodside Housing Element to account for changing demographics, market conditions, and projected housing need over an 8-year planning period that runs from 2023 through 2031. A detailed project description is included in the Initial Study, attached. Key project components are summarized below.

A Draft Housing Element update was released for public review on May 19, 2022 and subsequently sent to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for review, as required under State law. Upon receipt of comments from HCD, the Draft Housing Element was revised based on direction from the Town Council and re-released for the legally-mandated 7-day public comment period on March 6, 2023, prior to resubmittal to HCD for certification. The Revised Draft Housing Element is available at this link: <https://www.woodsidetown.org/planning/draft-2-housing-element-submitted-hcd-60-day-review-period>

Under State law, each city and county in California must plan to accommodate its share of the regional housing need - called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) - for the coming 8-year planning period. The State determines the estimated need for new housing in each region of California, based on population projections and other factors including rates of vacancy, overcrowding, and cost-burden. The various regional planning agencies then allocate a target to each city or town within their jurisdiction, considering factors such as access to jobs, good schools, and healthy environmental conditions. RHNA is split into four categories representing different levels of affordability, based on area median income (AMI) in the county. The affordability categories are as follows:

- Very Low Income - Households making less than 50 percent of AMI
- Low Income - Households making 50-80 percent of AMI
- Moderate Income - Households making 80-120 percent of AMI
- Above Moderate Income - Households making more than 120 percent of AMI

Amid the ongoing housing crisis in California, Woodside is required to plan for at least 328 new housing units between 2023 and 2031, including 90 Very Low-Income units, 52 Low Income units, 52 Moderate income units, and 134 Above Moderate units.

As required by State law, the Draft Housing Element includes a map of sites available for housing and an inventory of realistic capacity. The inventory demonstrates a total capacity of up to 423 new housing units, which is sufficient to meet the Town's RHNA obligations at all income levels with a buffer. The buffer is required to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet RHNA obligations at all times during the planning period, in the event that some sites on the inventory develop at lower densities than envisioned. Implementation of the Draft Housing Element would primarily involve facilitation of smaller scale housing construction in established neighborhoods on existing lots and infill sites.

Buildout of the Proposed Project would involve construction of small-scale residential projects as well as higher density housing at 773 Canada Road, Raymundo Drive at Runnymede Road, High Road at Woodside Road, and Canada College. Table 1 below provides a summary of the sites inventory and its projected capacity during the planning period.

Table 1: 2023 – 2031 Woodside RHNA Plan

	<i>Low and Very Low Income</i>	<i>Moderate Income</i>	<i>Above Moderate Income</i>	<i>Total</i>
Current Zoning Sites				
Vacant Single-Family Sites			105	105
Non-Vacant Single-Family sites			44	44
Pipeline Projects	6	3	21	30
Cañada College	75			75
ADUs @ 15 units annually	72	36	12	120
Rezoning Sites				
773 Cañada Site @ 20 units/acre		16		16
High Road @ 20 units/acre	11	5		16
Raymundo @ 20 units/acre	12	5		17
Total	176	65	182	423
RHNA Allocation	142	52	134	328
RHNA Buffer @ 20%	28	10	27	65
Total RHNA + Buffer	170	62	161	393
Surplus/Deficit	+6	+3	+21	+30

Source: Town of Woodside, 2022

The Draft Housing Element also includes an Action Plan, organized around six Guiding Principles. Each Guiding Principle is supported by policies and implementing programs that describe actions the Town will take to help meet its RHNA obligations. The housing sites inventory and map are included in the detailed project description in the Initial Study, together with a summary of Action Plan contents.

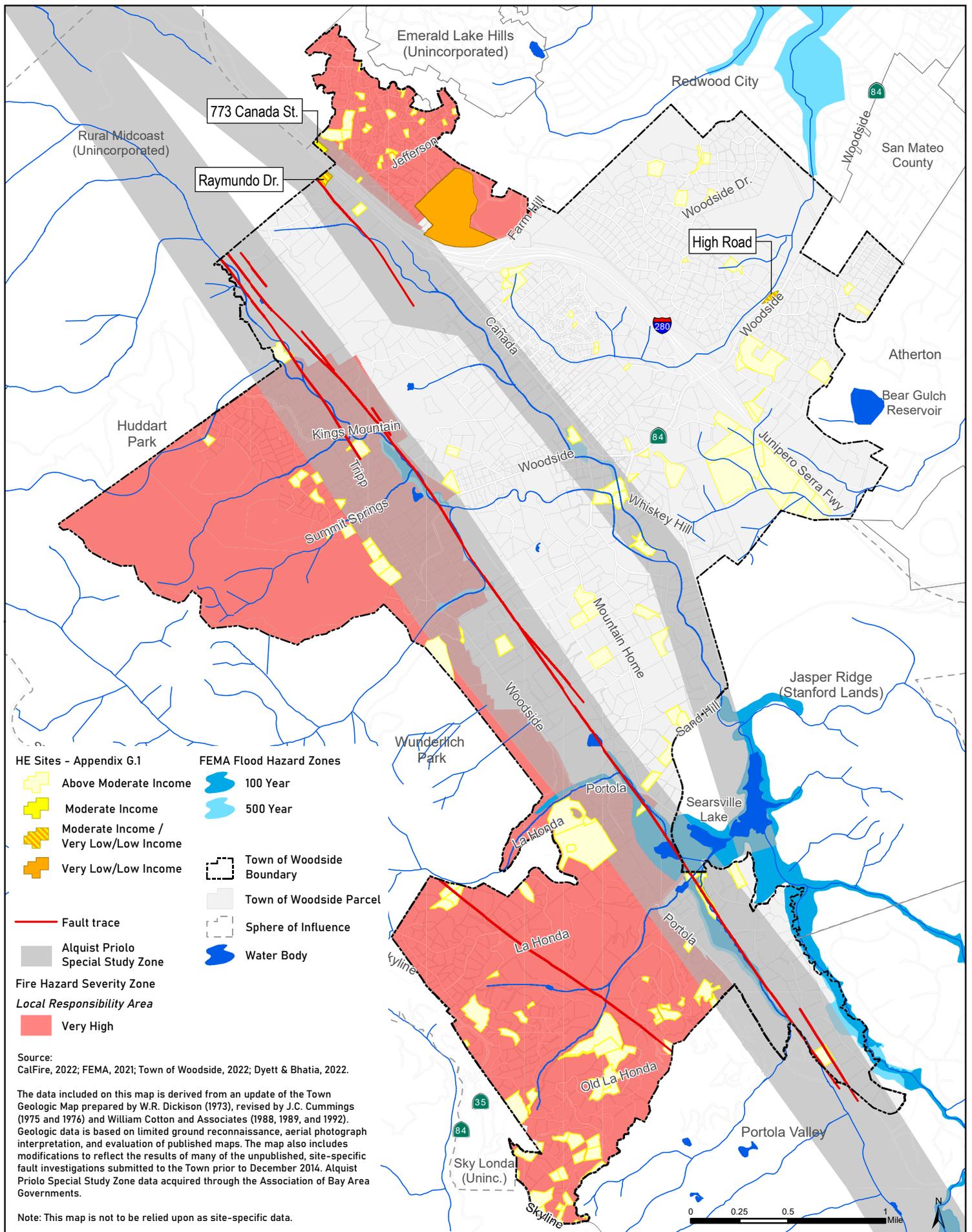


Figure 2
Housing Sites and Environmental Constraints

Town of Woodside

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

An Initial Study was prepared to evaluate potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the Project. Consistent with the State CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G), the following environmental resource categories were analyzed:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agricultural and Forest Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural, Tribal, and Historic Resources
- Energy, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Geology, Soils and Seismicity
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology, Drainage, and Water Quality
- Land Use, Population, and Housing
- Noise and Vibration
- Public Facilities and Recreation
- Traffic and Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

Environmental effects found to have no impact or a less-than significant impact are identified in the Initial Study. These topics will not be evaluated in detail in the EIR, which will focus on the potentially significant impacts of the Project, as identified in the Initial Study. Mitigation measures will be recommended in the EIR as needed to address any significant impacts identified, and the Initial Study will be incorporated as an Appendix to the Draft EIR. The following is a summary of the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Project identified in the Initial Study.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Buildout of the proposed sites inventory would introduce multifamily housing adjacent to I-280, a State Scenic Highway, as well as along Canada and Woodside Roads, which are designated scenic corridors in the General Plan. A careful analysis of potential impacts to these scenic resources is required, together with a consideration of potential impacts to scenic quality from new development. Appropriate mitigation measures will be developed.

Air Quality

Development would happen incrementally over the course of eight years, from 2023-2031, which would involve construction single-family housing and ADUs, that would not generate substantial quantities of construction-related pollution. Nevertheless, larger scale construction projects such as those involving multi-family development at the High Road at Woodside Road, Raymundo Drive at Runnymede Road, 773 Cañada, and Cañada College sites could involve diesel-emitting equipment over many months and could potentially impact adjacent sensitive receptors. This potentially significant construction-related air quality impact will be analyzed in detail in the EIR.

Biological Resources

Given the extent of biological resources throughout Woodside, future development pursuant to the Proposed Project has the potential to adversely affect sensitive species, riparian habitats, and sensitive communities. The potential presence of sensitive biological resources within the Town will be reviewed as a basis to determine whether new development on one or more of the housing opportunity sites may have potential to affect such resources. Where potential impacts are identified, programmatic biological resources mitigation measures will be identified that would apply to future individual development projects.

Geology and Soils

There are two active faults within Woodside designated under the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act: the San Andreas Fault and the Cañada Fault. The Pilarcitos Fault also exists within Woodside, though it is not designated under the Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act. Because of these faults, the Town is subject to high levels of ground shaking. Creekside and hillside areas, which comprise the majority of the built environment in Woodside, are most vulnerable to damage caused by seismic-related ground failure. Creekside development on alluvial deposits can experience differential settlement caused by liquefaction. Given the steep topography in Woodside, there is also significant potential for landslides, particularly in the Western Hills. The development of housing in or adjacent to areas of geologic hazard could potentially result in significant impacts, which will be analyzed in further detail in the EIR.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

As a long-range plan, the Proposed Project would be assumed to have a less than significant impact related to GHG emissions if the Town has a qualified GHG Reduction Strategy that demonstrates consistency with established SB32 and EO B-55-18 targets. While the Town's Climate Action Plan sets out a pathway to reducing GHG emissions by 15 percent below 2005 levels by the year 2020, it does not demonstrate consistency with targets for 2030 and 2045. Therefore, GHG emissions from the Proposed Project will be quantified and analyzed in further detail in the EIR. Consistency with the CARB Scoping Plan will also be analyzed.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Implementation of the Proposed Project could result in construction of up 423 new housing units in Woodside. The western half of Woodside is within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) delineated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), as well as the most northern areas near unincorporated Emerald Lake Hills. All new development would be required to comply with the fire protection provisions of the California Building Code and the Town Code; however, given the extent of wildfire hazard in Woodside, Project implementation would involve risk of exposure of people and structures to wildland fires. This is a potentially significant impact that will be analyzed in further detail in the EIR, accounting for new strategies proposed in the Safety Element Update and identifying mitigation as needed.

Noise

Vehicle trips generated by new residential development pursuant to the Project may increase ambient noise levels in Woodside, while construction activities may cause intermittent impacts. Construction-related noise effects and traffic noise effects will be evaluated based on Town standards and data regarding noise intensities for typical construction activities. Noise modeling will be conducted to determine if noise levels in excess of standards established in the General Plan and Town Code could be exceeded as a result of project implementation, either cumulatively or as a result of project implementation.

Transportation

According to State guidance, transportation impacts would result if home-based vehicle miles travelled (VMT) per resident under the Project are not 15 percent below baseline levels. VMT forecasts developed for the Project indicate that a 4.6 percent reduction in per capita VMT as compared to 2020 baseline conditions would result. This exceeds the threshold prior to mitigation. As such, this is a potentially significant impact that will be analyzed in further detail in the EIR with mitigation identified accordingly.

Tribal Cultural Resources

Given the high potential for yet undiscovered tribal cultural resources in Woodside and the ongoing tribal consultation, it cannot be definitively determined that no significant impact will result at this stage. This section will address whether the Proposed Project may have an adverse change on the significance of a tribal cultural resource.

Utilities and Service Systems

New residential development under the Proposed Project would increase demand for utilities and service systems involving expansion of sewer infrastructure. There would be expansion at specific sites as mentioned in the Housing Element, including 773 Cañada Road and Raymundo Drive at Runnymede Road. It is possible that the construction of expansion of sewer infrastructure may cause significant environmental effects. These potential impacts will be analyzed in detail in the EIR, and mitigation will be recommended to address impacts, as appropriate.

Wildfire

Given the extent of wildfire hazard in and adjacent to Woodside, this section of the EIR will address whether the project would substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan; expose people to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; require installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment; or expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope of downstream flooding or landslides as a result of runoff, postfire slope instability, or drainage changes.

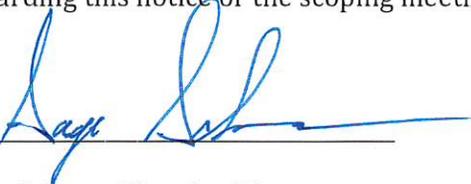
SCOPING MEETING:

A scoping meeting will be conducted on Wednesday June 7, 2023, to collect oral comments from agencies and members of the public regarding the scope and content of the EIR in accordance with CEQA Section 21083.9.

EIR Scoping Meeting on the Woodside General Plan Housing Element Update
Wednesday June 7, 2023 | 6:00 PM
Independence Hall
2955 Woodside Road, Woodside, California 94062

For project information, please visit
<https://www.woodsidesidetown.org/planning/draft-2-housing-element-submitted-hcd-60-day-review-period>

Please contact Sage Schaan at (650) 851-6790 or sschaan@woodsidesidetown.org with any questions regarding this notice or the scoping meeting.



Sage Schaan, Planning Director

May 15, 2023

Date