

# REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council  
From the City Manager

September 12, 2005

## Subject

General Plan – Issues Relating to Undeveloped Bayfront Land Zoned Tidal Plain (TP)

## Recommendation

Attached to this cover report is a copy of the staff report prepared on this same issue and presented to Council on July 11, 2005. Councilmember Foust requested that this issue be brought back to Council for discussion. No action is contemplated at this meeting.

## Background

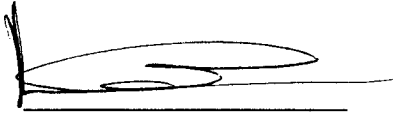
The following are some issues in question and answer format that may assist the Council discussion:

1. **When was the designation 'urban reserve' first used in Redwood City?** The first formal use was in the 1975 General Plan. It appears on the land use map but there is no reference to it in the text of the plan. It was applied to the tip of Redwood Shores and the area now part of the Don Edwards Reserve.
2. **Where was 'urban reserve' used in the 1990 General Plan?** It continued to be applied to the tip of Redwood Shores and to part of the area that is now the Don Edwards Reserve; and it was newly applied to about one-third of the land area of the salt ponds east of Seaport Boulevard.
3. **Was 'urban reserve' applied as an overlay on another underlying land use in the General Plan?** No. There is no reference either in the plan or on the map to another land use underlying urban reserve.
4. **If 'urban reserve' was removed from the General Plan, what would be the process?** Staff indicated in the July 11, 2005 report that we are looking into such a recommendation. If done as part of the overall General Plan, the recommendation would be made as part of the overall document that would be evaluated in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Planning Commission would hold hearings on both the Plan and its EIR and would forward recommendations on the General Plan to the City Council for adoption. If a recommendation to eliminate 'urban reserve' were acted on separate from the General Plan, such an action may or may not require an EIR depending on the specific land use designation being considered. A land use designation that would allow substantial development would probably require an EIR.

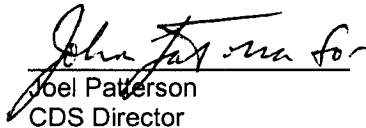
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Article X and XI of Chapter 18 of the Municipal Code, which generally follows State law, mandates a specific process for adoption and/or amendment of the City's General Plan. Key to this process, is requiring public hearings to which the general public and public agencies receive notice and are provided a meaningful opportunity to be heard. This is often referred to as procedural due process. To avoid any appearance of having reached predetermined conclusions, City Council or Planning Commission comments on the merits of a possible General Plan amendment should be made only after the legally required public hearings have been held.

5. **How much 'urban reserve' area now remains in Redwood Shores?** Only a small area at the far northern edge of Area H remains designated as 'urban reserve'. Even though the balance of area H is shown on the General Plan Land Use Map as commercial, residential and unimproved land, the zoning remains TP.



Michael Church  
Planning Manager



Joel Paterson  
CDS Director



Ed Everett  
City Manager

# REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council  
From the City Manager

July 11, 2005

## **Subject**

General Plan – Issues Relating to Undeveloped Bayfront Land Zoned Tidal Plain (TP)

## **Recommendation**

This is an informational report

## **Background**

At the June 6, 2005 Council meeting, staff was asked to provide information concerning remaining undeveloped lands on the Bayfront. The focus of the Council's interest was on the lands designated as Urban Reserve in the 1990 General Plan. Council also asked for information concerning the land area designated as "Area H" because it is one of the largest areas of undeveloped land in Redwood Shores and is partially designated as Urban Reserve.

This report is intended to provide Council with some of the history surrounding the evolution of the Urban Reserve land use designation, as well as a brief history of Area H; and also to provide some of the procedural choices available to Council, given that the City is already in process of updating the General Plan.

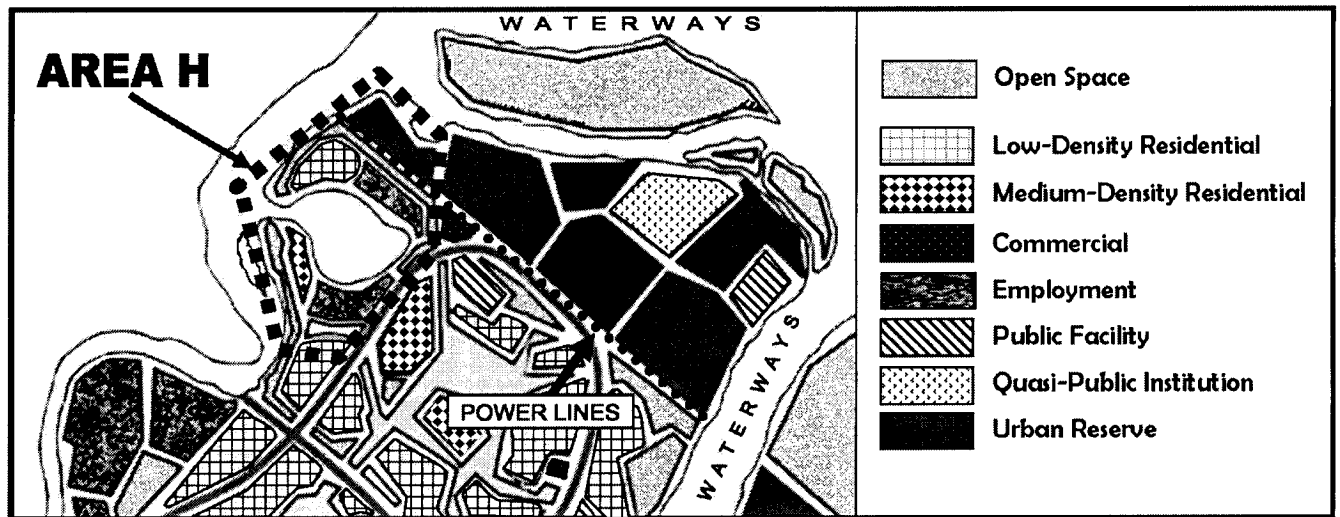
### *The 1975 General Plan*

The designation of Urban Reserve has existed in Redwood City's General Plan since at least 1975. The land use plan from the 1975 General Plan is *Attachment 3* to this report. In 1975 there were two areas of Urban Reserve, shown in grey on this land use map:

1. Most of the north-eastern-most tip of Redwood Shores, beyond the power lines
2. The area then known as South Shores (generally the area of the Bayfront between Steinberger Slough to the northwest and Redwood Creek to the south-east).

There is no explanation of the Urban Reserve definition, either on the land use map or in the body of the 1975 General Plan. The original designation of Urban Reserve was apparently placed in the General Plan because at the time both the City and the land owner anticipated continued development of both areas. There was apparently a desire to imply possible future development of these areas without conducting the environmental review that would have been necessary if these areas were given specific land use designations.

In 1975 the General Plan designations for Area H included “low” and “medium” density residential as well as “employment”, arrayed around a large water basin opening to Belmont Slough. The boundary definition for Area H is shown on *Attachment 2* to this report. The basin can be seen at the left side in the following exhibit. No changes were made to the zoning to respond to these General Plan designations. The zoning remained Tidal Plain (TP). Article 20 of the Zoning Ordinance defining Tidal Plain is included as *Attachment 1* to this report.



1975 General Plan Designations

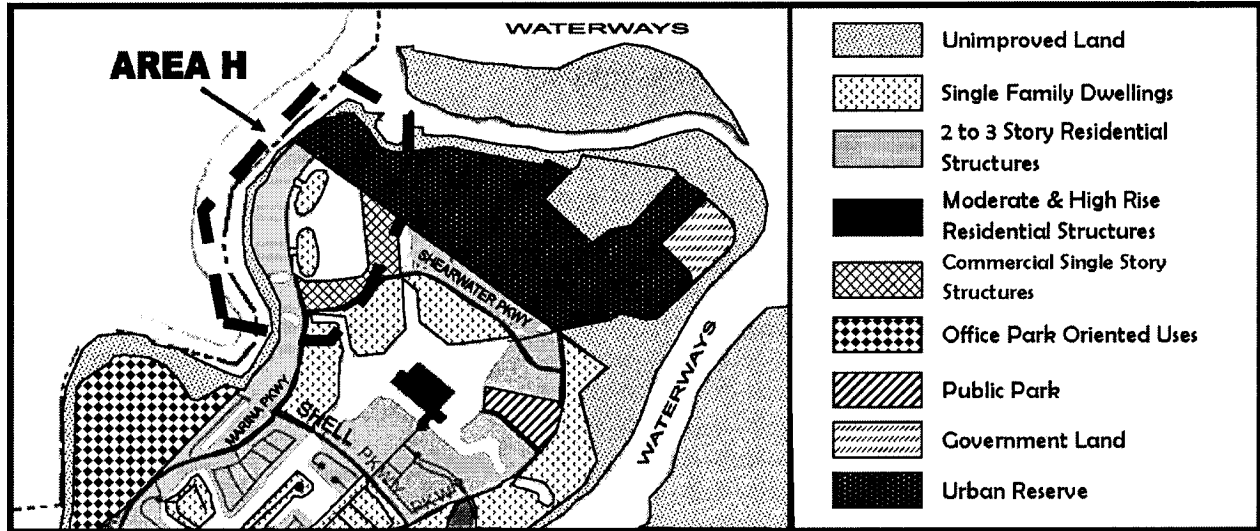
### *The 1990 General Plan*

The next major re-write of the General Plan was adopted on January 22, 1990. The 1990 General Plan map now reflected Urban Reserve (shown on the map as “Future Development Expanding Limits of Urbanization”) in the following areas (*Attachment 4*):

1. Most of the Redwood Shores area outboard of the power lines
2. The area of South Shores; and
3. The area along the south-eastern side of Seaport Boulevard identified in the text of the 1990 General Plan as the “Leslie Salt Crystallizers”. This area had been designated as ‘employment’ in the 1975 General Plan.

In addition, Area H’s land use designations were still shown as low and medium density residential, as well as Urban Reserve, “Open Space”<sup>1</sup> and “Neighborhood Commercial” but with the shape of the water basin slightly altered from 1975 and with the low density residential designation now applied to two peninsulas projecting out into the water basin.

<sup>1</sup> Open space as defined in the 1990 General Plan contemplates the following uses -- Open space for: Preservation of Natural Resources; managed production of resources; outdoor recreation and; public health and safety. (Page 9-1 of the 1990 General Plan).



1990 General Plan Land Use Designations

The 1990 General Plan defined Urban Reserve as follows:

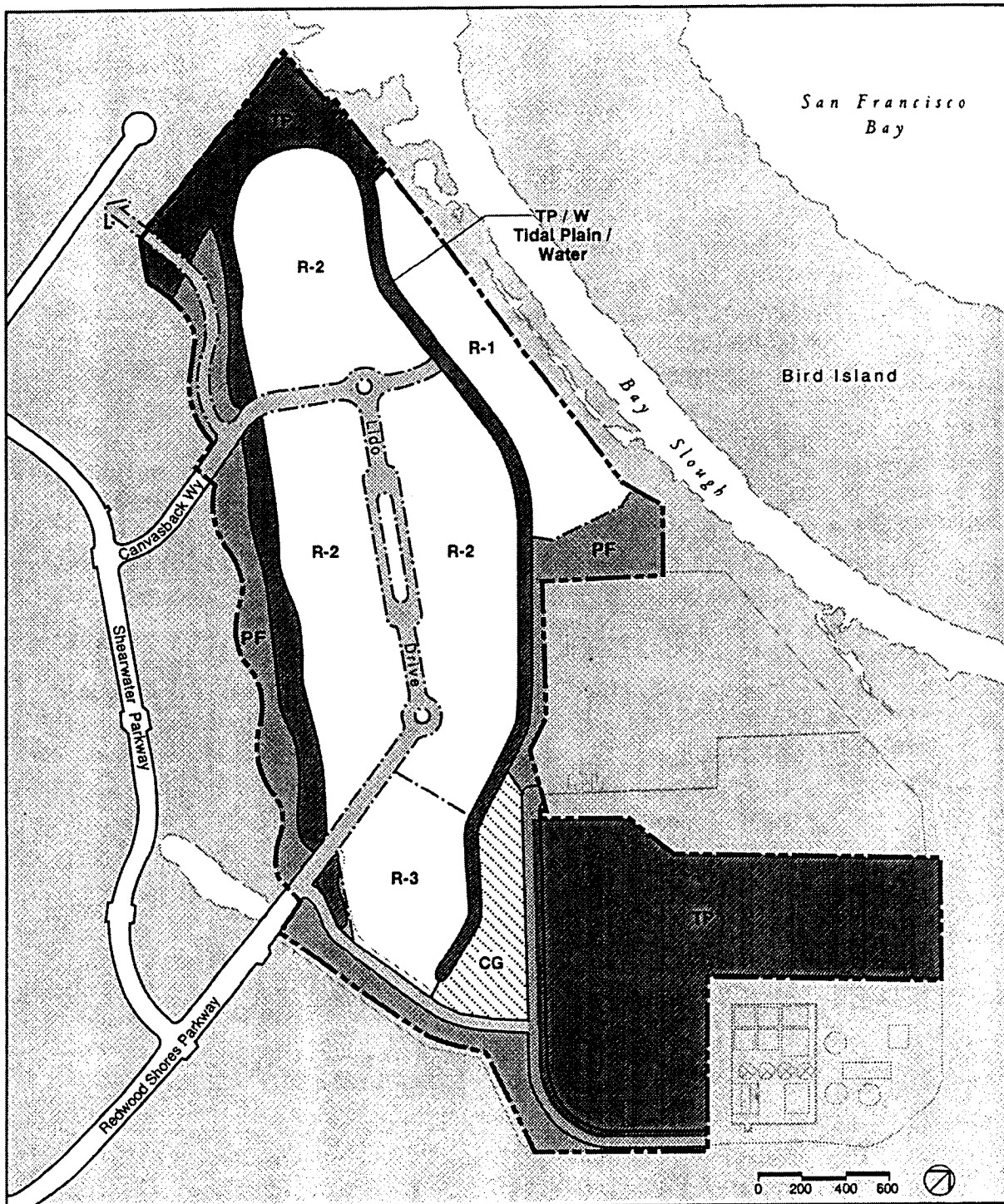
*“The intent of this designation is to show what properties the City expects to be developed in the future, but they each (referring to all three areas) have reasons why they haven’t been designated with specific land uses”. (page 2-2 of 1990 General Plan)*

The following sections provide further background on each area of undeveloped land.

**Redwood Shores – Urban Reserve and Area H**

The 1990 General Plan noted that there was concern about designating this area for development because it was not known what (if any) impacts the high tension electrical wires and the radio antennas might have on residents. There were also concerns about the possible impacts of the sewer treatment plant.

In June 1993 the Lido Specific Plan was adopted that addressed the possible safety issues of the high tension power lines and other issues. A zoning amendment was also approved at the same time. The zoning changed the bulk of the Lido area from TP to R-1, R-2, R-3, CG (General Commercial) PF (Public Facility) and TP-W (The ‘W’ referring to a Water overlay zoning). The zoning amendment, however, left the area around the South Bayside System Authority (SBSA) plant as TP. See the following map for details.

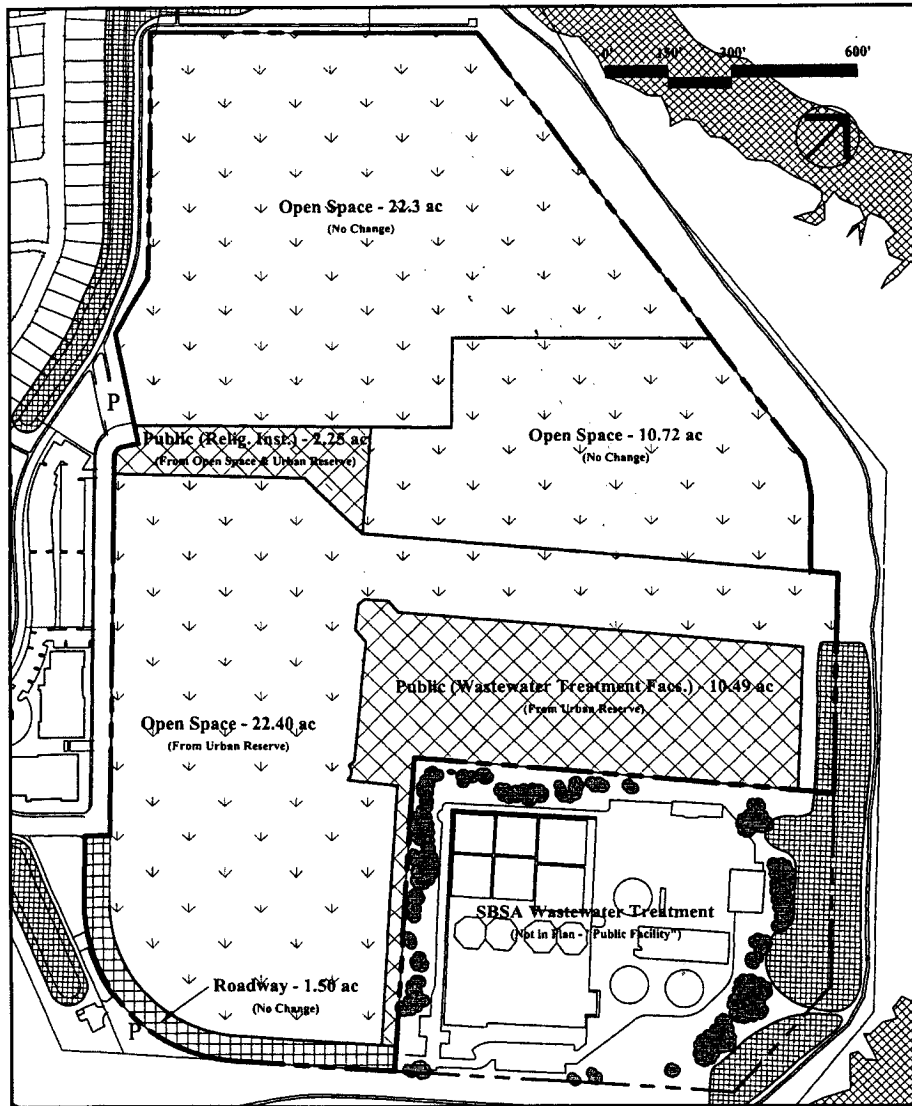


1993 Lido Specific Plan Zoning

The next change in this area occurred in June 1999 when the Zoning Ordinance was amended to create a zoning category called "Redwood Shores Bayfront "(RSB) which allowed only restored wetlands as an outright permitted use. The area already contained uses such as the SBSA plant, a church and a radio station/transmitter and these were all defined as conditionally permitted (meaning they would have to go through a Use Permit process to be approved). The zoning of the area surrounding the SBSA plant was changed from TP to RSB at the same time. The zoning amendment also required that a specific plan be adopted prior to any development within the RSB district. The Redwood

Shores Bayfront Specific Plan was adopted in 2002 which made two major changes in land use: a specific designation for recycled water storage and for religious worship.

The new General Plan designations are shown on the following map:



1999 Redwood Shores Bayfront New General Plan Designations

In 1990 almost all of the land at the tip of Redwood Shores had been designated in the General Plan as Urban Reserve. By 2003, the amendments occurring as part of the Lido and Bayfront Specific Plans had reduced this area of Urban Reserve to one small area at the most northerly point of Redwood Shores, in Area H. No amendments were made to the zoning of Area H. It was zoned Tidal Plain in 1990 and it remains Tidal Plain today.

#### *Urban Reserve – South Shores*

The single largest area of Urban Reserve was the South Shores area. This area was designated as 'employment' in the 1975 General Plan. However, no specific land use was

designated because “there are no services proposed for this area and there is no allocation for either sewer treatment plant capacity or water”. This area has since been sold to the federal government and is now a part of the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge. This area was zoned TP at the time of the 1990 General Plan and is still zoned TP.

#### *Urban Reserve -- Leslie Salt Crystallizers*

The third area, newly designated Urban Reserve in the 1990 General Plan, is the area of the Leslie Salt Crystallizers. The General Plan notes that, “no services are provided to this area and there is no allocation for either sewer treatment capacity or water”. The area designated Urban Reserve is estimated in the General Plan to be about one third of the land area of the salt crystallizers in Redwood City. The balance of the area was designated as Open Space. Joel Patterson who was involved with the process leading up to the 1990 General Plan indicates that the Urban Reserve designation was driven by those who wanted to create additional industrial lands around the existing heavy industry cluster surrounding the port. The zoning of this area was predominantly TP with one area of General Industrial (GI) and it was not changed subsequent to the 1990 General Plan. Westpoint Marina is under development on lands purchased from Cargill but neither the General Plan designation (Open Space) nor zoning (Tidal Plain) was changed in the process. The marina use was consistent with both the General Plan and zoning.

Since the 1990 General Plan, Cargill (the successor owner to Leslie Salt) has sold much of their south bay holdings to the federal government and other agencies (while retaining the right in perpetuity to harvest salt in some of the areas). The Cargill lands in Redwood City were offered to the public in 2003 but the offer was declined due to the high asking cost of the property.

In summary, with only one residue of Urban Reserve left in Area H and the largest area of Urban Reserve in South Shores now permanently part of the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge staff has been studying whether the new General Plan should consider keeping the Urban Reserve land use designation on Area H and the Leslie Salt Crystallizers.

Staff was asked to provide some of the land use background to the major areas of undeveloped land on the Bayfront, and to discuss possible alternative processes that the Council might consider.

Staff’s recommendations on changes to the General Plan will be made to the Planning Commission and the Commission will recommend to City Council, after completing and certifying the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). If Council wishes to make changes to land use designations on these undeveloped lands they have two choices:

1. Deal with all the changes coming out of the General Plan Amendment process as an integrated whole, reviewing them as part of the overall General Plan document. Staff estimates that the critical path for the General Plan is the time it will take to complete the EIR – generally a 9 month process<sup>2</sup>. The EIR has not yet started

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<sup>2</sup> The broad steps in the EIR process include: creation of the draft EIR (approximately 3 months); processing the

because no project definition yet exists. Assuming the EIR can start in August 2005, the earliest date Council will be able to adopt the General Plan is April/May 2006.

2. Council may wish to explore with staff the possibility of separating out consideration of land use designation changes on undeveloped lands along the bay from the larger General Plan process. Even if the City Council wished to see such recommendations treated separately from the overall General Plan, however, the changes will still require environmental review, and again, this review will be the critical path for this approach. Taken separately, a proposal to change the land use designation of these undeveloped parcels may not elevate to the level of a full EIR since staff presumes that the action might be to conform the General Plan designations to the existing Tidal Plain zoning, which would be expected to have much less environmental impact than a proposal to allow development where none is currently approved. However, even if a full EIR was deemed unnecessary, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) would still have to be done, and this could not be certified and the amendments to the General Plan approvable earlier than November/December 2005.

Staff will be prepared to discuss this material with City Council at the July 11, 2005 Council meeting.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There will be no fiscal impact as this is only an informational item.



Michael Church  
Planning Manager

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Joel Patterson  
Director, Community  
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Ed Everett  
City Manager

### **Attachments**

1. Article 20 of Zoning Ordinance – Tidal Plain
2. Map of Redwood Shores SHOWING Area H
3. Map showing urban reserve in 1975 (color)
4. Map showing urban reserve in 1990 (color)

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draft, including a mandatory 45 day public review and comment period and public hearings (4 months); and preparation and certification of the Final EIR, incorporating public comments to the draft and lead agency responses to the comments (2 months).

## **Attachment 1: Article 20 of Redwood City Zoning Ordinance**

### **20.1 Purpose.**

To create a district for the marsh lands adjacent to San Francisco Bay and to permit certain types of development therein of a relatively temporary nature which can ultimately be replaced by permanent development under another more appropriate zoning district. (Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

### **20.2 Permitted Uses.**

The following structures and uses are permitted in the TP District:

- A. Agriculture;
- B. Extraction of chemicals from sea water by natural evaporation and extraction of oyster shells or other deposits from San Francisco Bay;
- C. Public parks and public recreation areas or facilities.  
(Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

### **20.3 Accessory Uses.**

The following structures and uses are permitted in the TP District when accessory to a use permitted under Sections 20.2 and 20.4:

- A. Living quarters of watchmen or caretakers regularly employed on the premises; but not including labor camps and dwellings for transient labor;
- B. Offices necessary to the conduct of a principal use;
- C. Parking lots, or garages, and stables;
- D. Other accessory uses and structures customarily appurtenant to a principal use.  
(Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

### **20.4 Conditional Uses.**

The following structures and uses are permitted in the TP District subject to first securing a use permit therefor:

- A. Commercial recreation areas, uses, or facilities, including shooting clubs or facilities and marinas, but not including facilities in which the principal use is enclosed in a permanent building such as bowling alleys;
- B. Outdoor theaters, golf driving ranges, swimming pools, beaches, carnivals, and circuses;
- C. Airports, race tracks, and rodeo or exposition grounds;
- D. Dirt, gravel, rock, or fill businesses, not including concrete or asphalt batch plants;
- E. Public or private sewage disposal plants or the production of fertilizer therefrom;
- F. Equipment or materials storage or salvage yards, petroleum or inflammable liquids storage, and explosives storage or testing;
- G. Sanitary land fill operations;

H. Radio, radar, or television transmission or receiving facilities;

I. Public or quasi-public uses;

J. Refuse or garbage disposal;

K. Warehouses and storage buildings.

(Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

### **20.5 Height Regulations.**

No structure shall exceed two and one-half (2 1/2) stories or thirty (30) feet in height, whichever is greater. (Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

### **20.6 Lot Area.**

The minimum lot area shall be five (5) acres. (Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

### **20.7 Lot Coverage.**

Not more than fifty percent (50%) of the lot area shall be covered by buildings. (Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

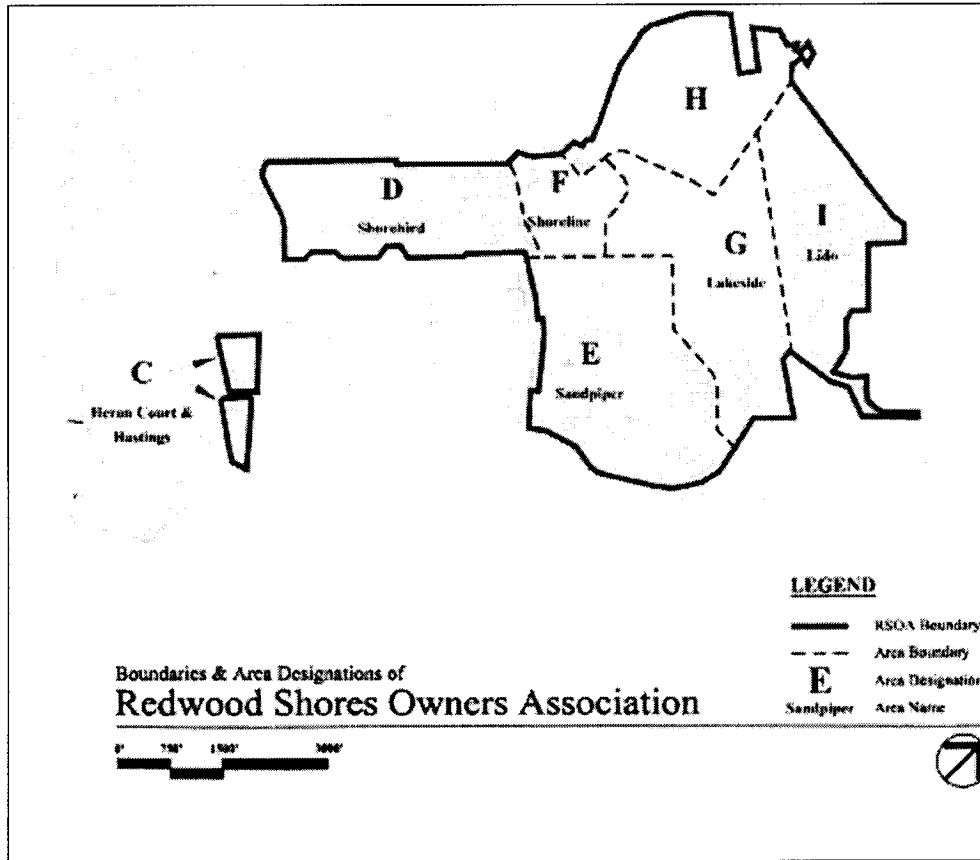
### **20.8 Yard Requirements.**

The following yards are required:

A. **Front yards:** Front yards shall have a minimum depth of fifty (50) feet.

B. **Side yards:** Side yards shall have a minimum width of thirty (30) feet.

C. **Rear yards:** Rear yards shall have a minimum depth of thirty (30) feet.  
(Ord. 1130, eff. 7-10-64)

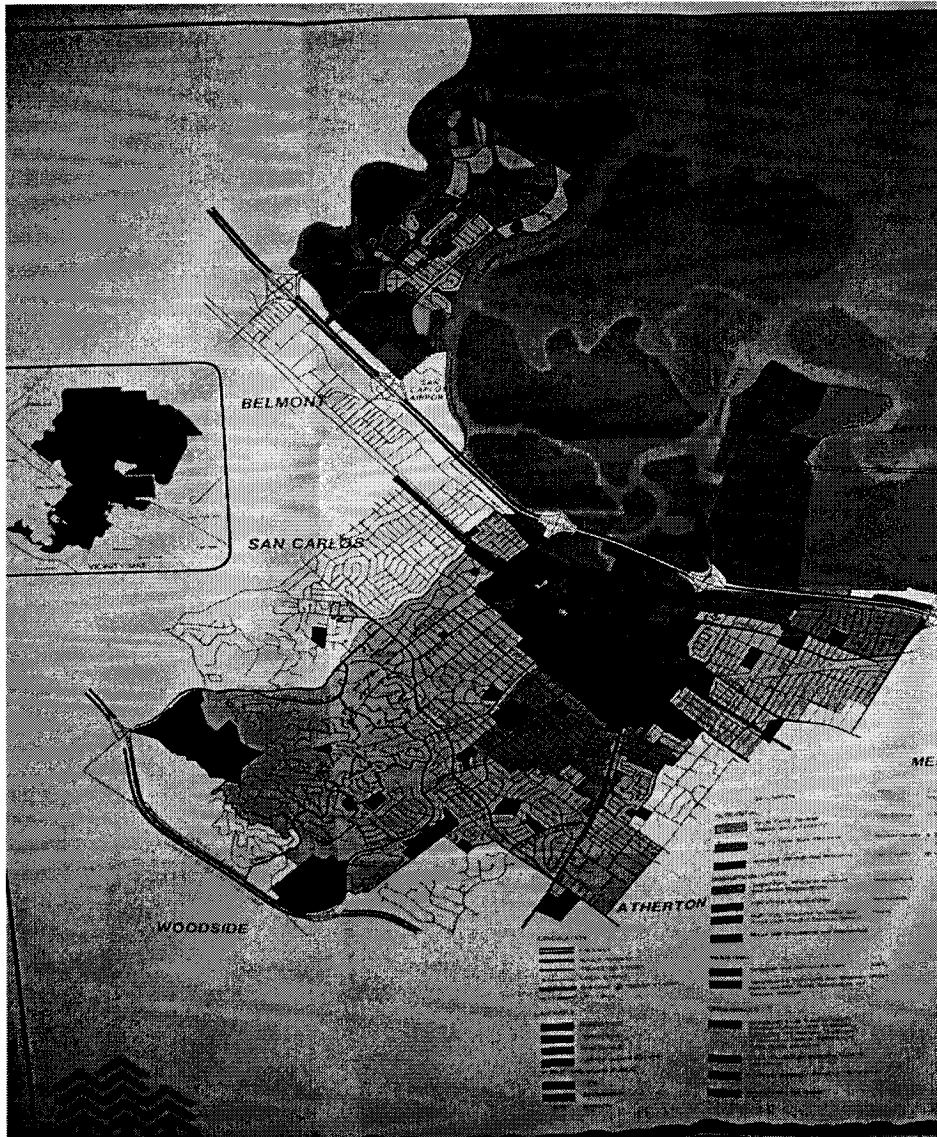


Attachment 3: Extent of Urban Reserve in 1975



See the areas shaded in grey.

Attachment 4: Extent of Urban Reserve in 1990



The areas of Urban Reserve are now shown in brown. The area to the east of Seaport Boulevard that was shown as Employment in 1975 is now Urban Reserve.