



# Ferndale General Plan LAND USE ELEMENT

Revised  
Public Review Draft  
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## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: EXISTING LAND USES AND RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Background .....	2
Setting and Context .....	3
Key Community Assets.....	5
Areas of Interest .....	6
Internal Consistency with Other General Plan Elements .....	8
Military Facilities .....	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: LAND USE DESIGNATIONS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Residential (R1, R2, R3).....	9
Commercial (C1, C2).....	10
Other Designations .....	11
Land Use Diagram .....	11
<b>CHAPTER 3: OPEN SPACE &amp; CONSERVATION.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Open Space .....	13
Conservation .....	16
<b>CHAPTER 4: GOALS, POLICIES, &amp; IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Goals and Policies .....	18
Implementation Programs .....	22
<b>CHAPTER 5: REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>24</b>



## Introduction

This Land Use Element update includes goals, policies and implementation programs for land uses to accommodate future housing, employment development, population demographics, household size and income, and other community needs for the next 20+ years. This Land Use Element also serves as the City's consolidated Open Space and Conservation Elements and includes associated discussion, goals, policies, and implementation programs. It focuses on improved public health, reduced infrastructure costs, enhanced local economies, and long-term environmental issues such as climate change and natural resources management, following Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Guidelines.

This update provides goals and policies to promote residential infill and a more diverse housing stock accessible to a wide range of incomes and household sizes. The critical housing shortage throughout California cannot be met with single family zoning alone as it places a strain on infrastructure and natural resources. By promoting infill and higher density in areas with existing infrastructure, communities can provide infrastructure and services more cost effectively. Additionally, it supports alternate transportation modes for healthier lifestyles and reduced greenhouse emissions.

Ferndale's population has remained fairly consistent with limited to no growth over the last several decades. However, the City's demographics have changed. There are more persons 65 or older and fewer persons 20 to 45. The number of persons under 20 has declined slightly. By providing more housing size and affordability options, younger individuals and families will find more housing opportunities. Older persons will also have more options for smaller, more affordable, and easier to maintain homes.



Promoting infill and higher density has the added benefit of preserving the existing open space and agricultural lands. These important natural resources increase the City's aesthetic charm and provide natural mitigation to help reduce the effects of climate change. Forested lands sequester carbon and maintaining open space at the City's northern edge improves watershed management, while reducing flooding, and sea level rise.

To help manage the City's natural and cultural resources more sustainably, the local tribes (Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria and Wiyot Tribe) should be consulted on forest and watershed management practices. The native peoples lived in this region since time immemorial and have a vast knowledge base on how to actively manage natural resources for food, biodiversity, and healthy ecosystems. By drawing on this knowledge, the City can become better natural resource stewards. Additional partners for natural resources management include the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the County of Humboldt.

## Chapter 1: Existing Land Uses and Resources

The Land Use Element establishes the desired pattern of long-term development, revitalization, and conservation for the City, and includes guidance on the community form, character, growth, and expansion of commercial corridors, employment areas, and residential neighborhoods. The goals and policies provide the structure to guide day-to-day decisions. This element also:

- Establishes framework for land use and development proposals.
- Provides goals, policies, and programs to direct land use and development decisions.
- Establishes use type, location, density, and intensity.

The City of Ferndale, also known as Cream City and the Victorian Village, has a variety of land uses and is most known for its ties to agriculture and distinctive architecture. Areas, such as the Milton Avenue Business District, link agriculture lands to the more urbanized setting. In addition to meeting the daily service needs of residents, the Main Street Historic District provides shopping and dining experiences for those wishing to explore the rural area and enjoy the City's historic setting. This chapter discusses the City's existing land uses and resources, as the setting to guide goals and programs for future land use.

### Background

The City of Ferndale has a long rich agricultural history, primarily dairy, and multi-generational families with deep community connections. Since the city's European-American settlement in 1852 by a small group of people searching for fertile farmland, it has grown to a population of nearly 1,400 within an area of approximately one square mile. This historic town, noted for its preserved Victorian style architecture, has a unique setting that provides small-town rural living benefits while maintaining access to nearby City services.



*The Victorian Inn is a prime example of Ferndale's historic architecture.*

Land uses in and around Ferndale reflect rural living characteristics. Large parcels of pastureland surround single family homes on moderately sized lots. This conveys a sense of openness and connection to the land throughout much of the city. Commercial businesses are focused primarily along Main Street and in the Milton Avenue Business District. This provides a central gathering place for residents and maintains the quiet nature of surrounding neighborhoods.

This update describes the city components that contribute to the growth, preservation, and prosperity of the community. Specifically, this Element provides an outline for the City's future land uses, housing

strategies, natural resource management, and economic development initiatives, as well as guidance for historic and cultural preservation which make up Ferndale's community character. Although land use has remained relatively unchanged over the past several decades, community needs are changing. The increasing senior population may desire smaller more easily managed homes. There is also a need for more affordable options for individuals and families. In this update, City growth patterns, limitations, and opportunities are outlined. Goals are provided to guide City development in balance with the historic and rural character. This document has been structured to provide guidance for future City growth while still allowing flexibility to meet changing needs over the years.

## Setting and Context

### Setting

Prior to non-native settlement starting in the 1800's, the Eel River Valley was inhabited by the Wiyot people. They lived along and fished the Eel River and maintained a number of villages on and around Humboldt Bay. The village of Wotwetwok was located along the Salt River which runs just north of the City and is a tributary to the Eel River (CDFW 2005). It is likely that the Wiyot people utilized the lands in and around Ferndale for hunting, fishing, and gathering purposes.

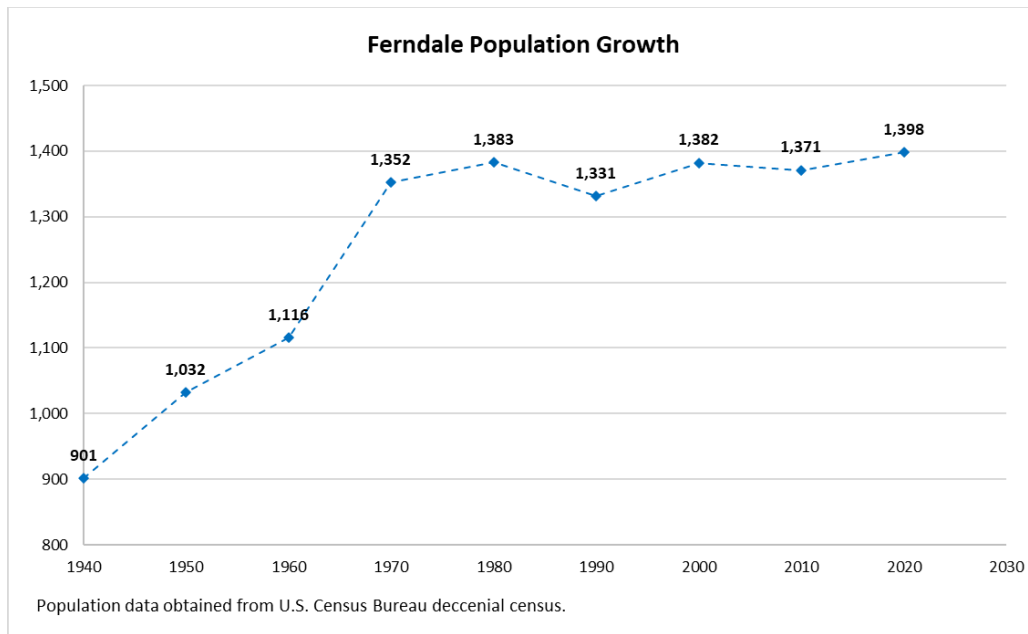
The City of Ferndale was settled in 1852 by a small group of settlers that crossed the Eel River and traveled up Francis Creek to the base of the surrounding hills. The City was officially incorporated on August 23, 1893 and covers approximately one square mile of land. This small community has traditionally had an agricultural-based economy that also supports a tourism economy. Specifically, the main industries in Ferndale are dairy farming, cattle ranching, tourism, lumber and wood products, and service.

The City of Ferndale is known as the "Victorian Village" for its classic Victorian-era architecture and its historic main street. The city is also the location of the Humboldt County Fairgrounds that hosts an annual fair and many other events. The City of Ferndale was designated as a State Historic Landmark (No. 883) in 1975 by the California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation. In addition, Ferndale's Main Street Historic District was established in 1994 by the National Park Service and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

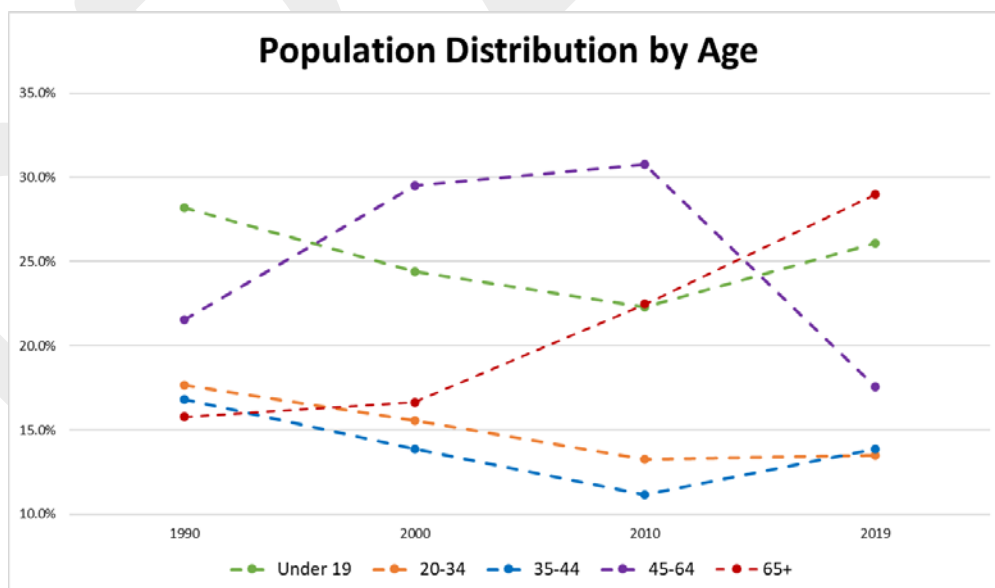
The city sits on the edge of the vast Eel River floodplain that is approximately two miles wide as it nears the Pacific Ocean. The majority of land use surrounding the city, as designated in the Humboldt County General Plan, is agricultural and agricultural exclusive with some timber production to the southeast.

### Population

Over the last five decades the city's population has remained relatively stable, experiencing a slight dip in population in 1990 to 1,331 and again in 2010 to 1,371 (Figure 1-1), followed by an increase to 1,398 residents in 2020. Overall, the City experienced a slight increase (0.20%) in population from 2010 to 2020 (US Census 2022).



While the city population has remained relatively unchanged over the past few decades, the demographics have been changing. The percentage of people over the age of 65 increased steadily over the past decade (Figure 1-2). This is creating a larger population of residents that may desire smaller, more accessible, and easily managed homes rather than traditional low density residential single-family homes. This is discussed in further detail in the Housing Element of the General Plan under Population Characteristics and Trends.



While official population growth projections are prepared for counties, they are not prepared for cities in California. However, there is likely a relationship between changes in future city population and changes in the population within a county as a whole. General factors that will affect future population

growth in Ferndale include demographics (age), economics (wealth and income of households and local and area-wide employment opportunities), environment (e.g., regional and environmental or social conditions which could lead to migration to northern California and losses and recovery from disaster, such as from wildfire), and wildcard factors like the COVID-19 global pandemic.

For purposes of the City of Ferndale General Plan Land Use Element Update and given that Ferndale has a low population where small increases or decreases in population can have an outsized impact, this discussion considers a low and high growth rate in planning for the next twenty or more years. The “low” annual average population growth rate (AAGR) used is 0.1 percent per year, which is generally consistent with City growth over the last 20 years (0.12 percent per year and reflects the projected decline in County population) and the “high” population growth rate used is 0.25 percent, which exceeds the higher rate of growth over the last ten years (0.2 percent per year). Based on these growth rates, the population of Ferndale could reach 1,416 to 1,452 by 2040 as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Projected Population Growth Rates**

Alternative	Average Annual Growth Rate	Future Year					
		2020		2030		2040	
		Population	Housing	Population	Housing	Population	Housing
<u>Current</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>1,398</u>	<u>719</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>
Low Growth	0.10 %	<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>	1,406	731	1,416	741
High Growth	0.25 %	<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>	1,422	747	1,452	777

## Key Community Assets

Within the city there are several key areas of community importance, which are distinct areas, neighborhoods, or districts of the City that are recognizable by their geography and general character. These areas help define the nature of the community and are valued by community residents.

### *Main Street*

Main Street (State Route 211) runs diagonally through the City from the northeast to the southwest, terminating near the base of Wildcat ridge. It is the town center and home to the main commercial district from Fern Avenue to Eugene Street. The designated historic district includes buildings from Shaw Avenue to Eugene Street. Community members described this area as a central meeting point and location of activity for most community events.

### *Milton Avenue Business District*

The Milton Avenue Business District, located at the north end of the city along Main Street at Milton Avenue, is viewed as the secondary commercial district in the city. This is the location of the old Central Creamery which has been repurposed as office space for small businesses.

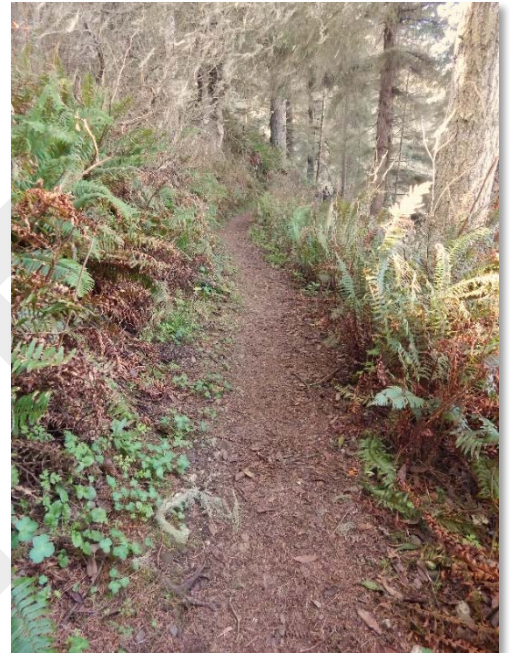


### *Fairgrounds*

The Humboldt County Fairgrounds, located at the north end of the city between Van Ness Avenue and Arlington Avenue, is the location of many community and County-wide events, including the annual County Fair going back to 1896. The Humboldt County fairgrounds offers livestock shows, horse racing during the fair, and various events throughout the year.

### *Open Space and Agricultural Land*

Ferndale has historically been an agriculturally based community due to its history as one of the leading creamery areas in the state. The surrounding open pastureland lends to the rural atmosphere of the City and provides residents with a strong connection to the land. Agricultural uses still exist within the City limits such as food production, grazing, and hay production. The City will continue to support these uses and provide regulations for conversion of agricultural lands to meet the City's growing needs while still protecting its rich agricultural heritage. More information on open space and conservation can be found in Chapter 3: Open Space & Conservation.



*Russ Park is the City's largest open space area and is a prime example of Sitka Spruce and Grand Fir forest habitat.*

## **Areas of Interest**

### *Francis Creek Watershed/ Salt River Restoration*

The Francis Creek Watershed includes a portion of the city and surrounding land upstream into forested areas to the south. Francis Creek generally flows south to north through the city and divides the area into eastern and western drainage areas. The creek flows to its confluence with the Salt River, which is a tributary to the Eel River near the mouth on the coastline. Francis Creek is a perennial stream with a small watershed, and stream flow quickly subsides after moderate rain events. Flooding events can occur periodically during large storm events.

The Salt River restoration project, in progress since 2013, is restoring tidal marshlands, clearing overgrown vegetation, and increasing surface water flows to improve sediment transport. Since Francis Creek is a Salt River tributary, it is important to ensure that land uses in the watershed do not impair water quality or increase sediment runoff.



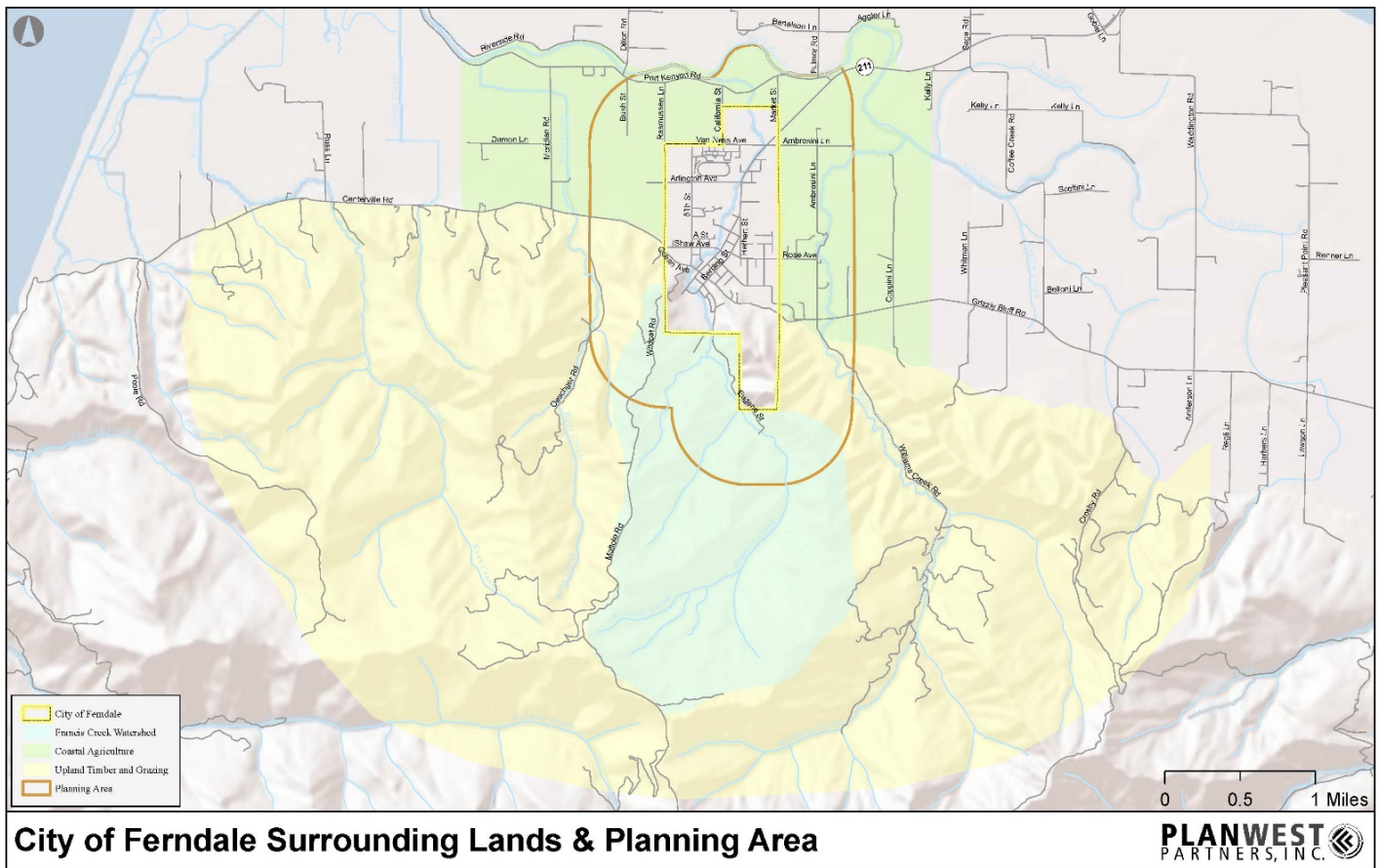
*A small example of the vast open space that surrounds the City. Much of this land is still used for agricultural grazing to support the County's dairy industry.*

### *Coastal Agriculture*

The Eel River valley and flood plain has large areas of fertile land well suited for agriculture. Much of the area surrounding Ferndale is coastal agricultural land and the economic well-being of the Ferndale area remains linked to the success of the dairy and other agricultural operations on the Ferndale bottoms. Community members have also expressed their desire to maintain and protect agriculture as it is a defining regional characteristic.

### *Upland Timber and Grazing*

To the south of Ferndale are abundant hills and valleys including the Francis, Reas, and Williams Creek watersheds. These areas were historically used for upland grazing of cattle and timber production which can be found both outside and inside the City limits. Areas currently outside of the city boundary can directly impact areas within the city along ecological corridors. Conversion of these lands to residential use may potentially increase runoff and sediment into the watersheds that could impact the city by causing exacerbated erosion along the Francis Creek corridor. The City will continue to work with the County on programs that encourage preservation of these lands to help reduce potential impacts from development.



## Internal Consistency with Other General Plan Elements

It is important to maintain consistency throughout all elements of the General Plan. As such, the Land Use Element will be drawing on information from other elements and will help inform future updates of elements that are currently out of date, such as the City's Circulation Element.

The Housing Element, last updated in 2019, provides background on population trends and housing needs that inform Land Use Element programs and policies to address housing needs while maintaining the City's rural characteristics. Additionally, information in the Safety Element, updated concurrently with the Land Use Element, will guide defining areas for future growth and which areas, due to safety issues or other limitations, should be avoided.

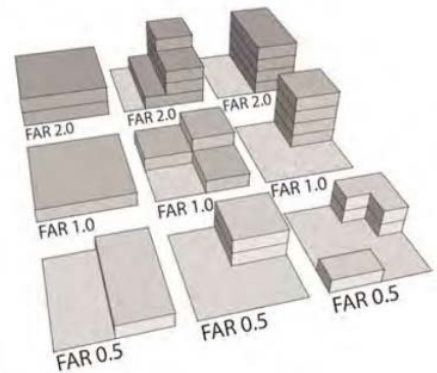
## Military Facilities

Compatibility of military land uses must be considered in a general plan per Government Code Section 65302(a). There are no active military facilities or training areas in or around the City of Ferndale. As such, there are no considerations for military facilities included in this land use element. Should military facilities be proposed in the future, this land use element will be updated by amendment.



## Chapter 2: Land Use Designations

Ferndale land uses include primarily Residential, and Commercial designations. The descriptions below provide details on the allowable uses for each designation and their applicable density/intensity standard. Density is typically defined as the maximum number of dwelling units per acre (du/ac) and intensity is expressed as the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR). This is the ratio of building floors (stories) relative to the parcel. For example, an area designated with a FAR of 1.0 would be allowed to construct a one-story building that covers the entire parcel, a two-story building that covers half the parcel, a four-story building that covers a quarter of the parcel, and so on.



### Residential (R1, R2, R3)

Residential land use designations within the City allow dwelling units as their primary use, range from low to high density, and are intended to allow a broad range of housing types, sizes, and tenure. Limited public/quasi-public and commercial uses compatible with a residential setting may be allowed as provided by the zoning code. Historically, primary residential development in the City has been low-density single-family homes. Moving forward, the City intends to support a broader range of housing types to increase affordability and provide diverse housing options for all income levels.

#### *Residential Low Density (R1)*

The Residential Low Density designation accommodates primarily detached residential units on individual lots with private yards. One accessory dwelling unit per lot is a primary and compatible use.

**Density:** One primary unit and one accessory dwelling unit per lot up to a maximum of 9 primary dwelling units per acre.

#### *Residential Medium Density (R2)*

The Residential Medium Density designation is applied in areas where more density can be accommodated. This can include side-by-side or stacked units, multiple units on a lot, or other unit types that meet the defined density including attached residential units, small-lot subdivisions, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses with private open space, and cohesive multi-unit/ multi-story structures with common open spaces. [Single family homes and](#) ADUs are also a primary and compatible use.

**Density:** Up to 18 dwelling units per acre. This is equivalent to two dwelling units per 5,000 square foot lot.



### *Residential High Density (R3)*

The Residential High Density designation is applied in areas of the City that can accommodate cottage courts, townhome developments, and/or apartments typically in single structures or a collection of cohesive structures with multiple units, common open space areas and shared amenities. This designation is often located in proximity to parks, schools, and public services. Intended to compliment the character of adjacent lower density residential and neighborhood commercial development. ADUs are also a primary and compatible use.

**Density:** Up to 27 dwelling units per acre. This is equivalent to approximately three dwelling units per 5,000 square foot lot.

## **Commercial (C1, C2)**

### *Neighborhood Commercial (C1)*

The Neighborhood Commercial designation is intended to provide for neighborhood shopping centers with commercial uses for nearby residential areas, consistent with neighborhood character and design. This includes limited-scale convenience retail, restaurants, offices, and personal services, including pedestrian-oriented neighborhood retail. Residential uses are allowed on upper floors and may be conditionally allowed on ground floors. Light industrial uses such as small scale manufacturing may also be permitted as applicable by the zoning code.

**Intensity:** Maximum FAR 2.5

### *Community Commercial (C2)*

The Community Commercial designation provides a full range of commercial uses for community convenience and visitor serving needs. This includes visitor-related retail, restaurants, lodging, entertainment, recreation, and tourist services, as well as upper floor residential and office uses. Intended to emphasize commercial retail and tourism-related uses, recreation, leisure activities, lodging, and upper floor office/residential uses. Primarily caters to visitors to historic and multi-story buildings with pedestrian-scaled storefronts at the sidewalks. Residential and office uses are primarily allowed only on upper floors and non-street-facing portions of buildings.

**Intensity:** Maximum FAR 3.0



*Victorian architecture is highlighted along Historic Main Street and can be seen in many areas of the City.*

## Other Designations

### *Public Facility (PF)*

The Public Facility designation is intended to be applied to lands owned by public agencies or to lands upon which such agencies operate public facilities. This includes public and private institutional uses, government facilities and services, schools, courts, cemeteries, fairgrounds, and major utility facilities, as well as parks and other public recreational facilities.

Intensity: N/A

### *Agricultural Exclusive (AE)*

The Agricultural Exclusive designation is applied in areas where agricultural use is the predominant use of land and in which it is desired to protect agricultural operations including production of crops, livestock grazing, animal and poultry raising, apiaries, dairies, stables and associated residences and farmworker housing. Timber harvest is allowed under certain conditions.

Density: One farm dwelling per four acres and applicable farm worker housing as allowed by the zoning ordinance.

### *Natural Resources (NR)*

The Natural Resources designation is applied to areas where protection, enhancement, restoration, management, study, and passive recreational use of habitats and natural areas are the desirable land uses. It is intended to protect land that is primarily suitable for permanent habitat preservation, compatible resource related uses, nature study, and natural-resource related recreation. Public access, passive recreation, active recreation, and visitor-related facilities (such as restrooms, interpretive centers, trailheads, parking areas, etc.) may be allowed as provided by zoning ordinance.

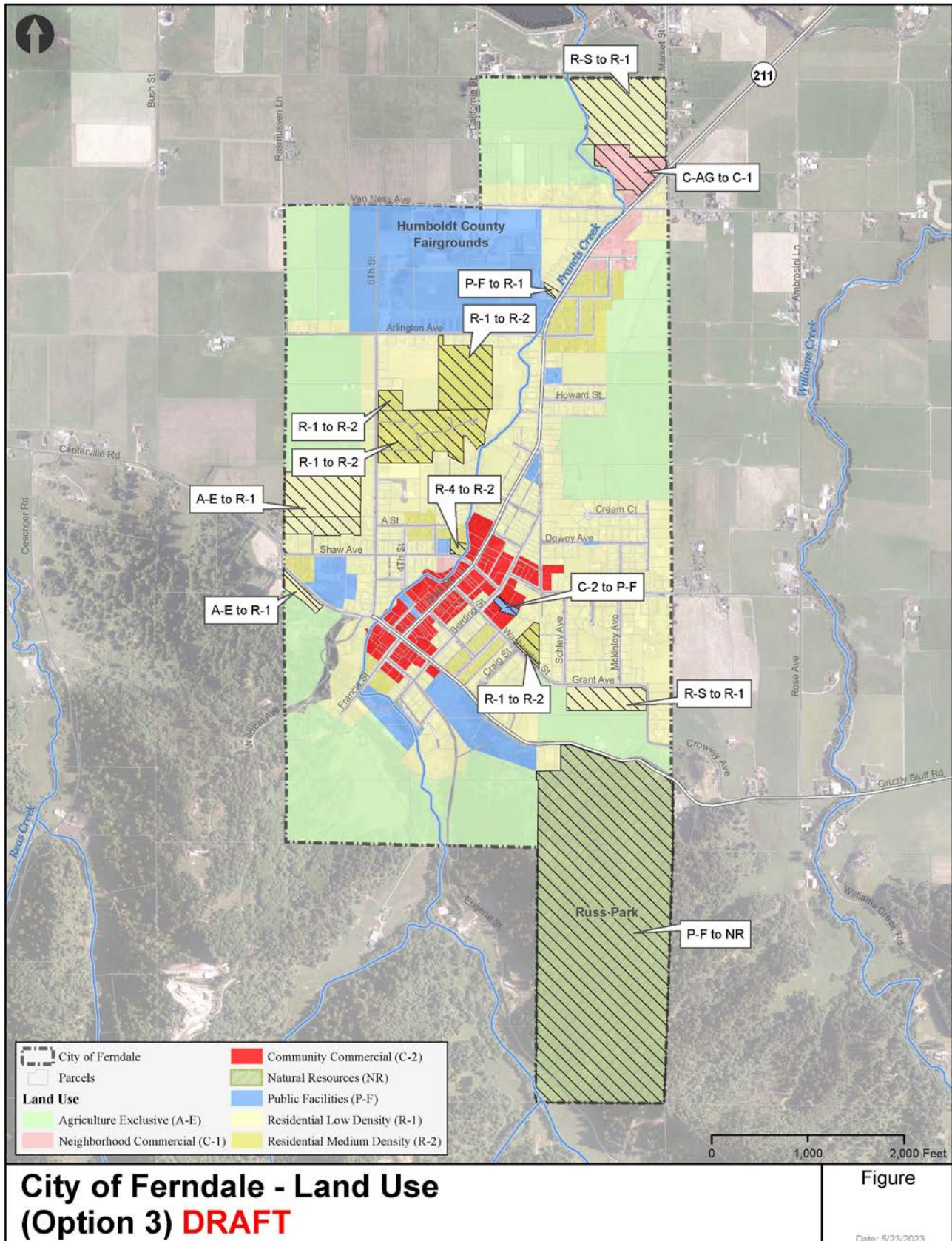
Intensity: Nature-study related buildings/structures may be constructed with a conditional use permit.

## Land Use Diagram

The planned distribution of land uses throughout the City are shown on the land use diagram which is included below. This diagram is intended to guide re-use and potential future development in an orderly and logical manner while still taking into consideration community character.

[Note: The Land Use Diagram alternatives are currently available for review here:

<https://ci.ferndale.ca.us/documents/general-plan/> ]





## Chapter 3: Open Space & Conservation

Ferndale's open spaces are an important aspect of the City and its rural aesthetic. The vast open agricultural fields and forested hillsides provide a stunning backdrop for the historic structures of the town. Not only are these open spaces stunningly beautiful, but they allow for movement of cool ocean breezes, provide places for solitude and relaxation, and provide passive recreation for residents and visitors. Conservation of these resources can also provide beneficial carbon sequestration that helps combat climate change.

### Open Space

#### *Natural Resources*

As defined in G.C. §65560(b)(1), natural resource open space is, "Open space for the preservation of natural resources, including, but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species; areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes; rivers, streams, bays, and estuaries; and coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands".

Preservation of natural resources is key for ensuring continued functionality of biological processes throughout the region. Important natural resources within the City include Francis Creek which was discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 and Russ Park, which is discussed in more detail under Outdoor Recreation below. The City will continue to implement policies that protect these valuable natural resources.

#### *Production of Resources*

As defined in G.C. §65560(b)(3), resource production open space is, "Open space used for the managed production of resources, including, but not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands, and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of groundwater basins; bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers, and streams that are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply".

Within the City there is ample land that is designated as agricultural exclusive. This land primarily supports grazing for dairy cows. Additional agricultural land is used for hay production and minimal food production. Due to the area's location in the Eel River floodplain, the soil is rich in nutrients and is considered excellent for cultivation. The City wishes to preserve these rich agricultural soils by limiting the amount of agricultural land that is converted to other uses. As such, conversion of agricultural lands should be limited and only take place in portions of the City that have access to existing infrastructure including water, wastewater, and street access.



### *Outdoor Recreation*

As defined in G.C. §65560(b)(3), outdoor recreation open space is, “Open space for outdoor recreation, including, but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas that serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors”.

Ferndale residents and visitors have access to many outdoor recreation activities due to the City’s proximity to the coastline and abundant redwood forests. While having access to these nearby outdoor resources is beneficial, it is also important to maintain outdoor recreation areas within the City for those who may not be able to travel or otherwise access other outdoor areas.

Ferndale maintains two parks within its City limits for enjoyment of residents and visitors alike; Firemen’s Park and Russ Park. The Ferndale Cemetery is also located within the City and provides open space for walking and quiet contemplation. The Ferndale City Hall includes a small lawn area and gazebo/bandstand which is also accesible by the public.

#### *Firemen’s Park*

Firemen’s Park is located along Berding Street and Francis Creek in the southern portion of the City and is approximately 5 acres. The park includes a picnic area, playground, softball field, basketball court, and several bocce ball courts. The Ferndale Community center is also located in the parking lot of the park. A native plant park known as Shirley’s Pocket Park is located at the entrance to Fireman’s Park and was dedicated to Shirley Walker, longtime president of the Ferndale Garden Club.

Firemen’s Park is home to many events including the annual Bocce Ball Tournament, Easter Egg Hunt, and numerous others. Portions of the park, including the bocce ball court, can also be reserved for private parties.



*Fireman’s Park is a dedicated Open Space area for recreation and public gatherings. The play structure shown here is one of the main features of the park.*

### *Russ Park*

Russ Park is located on the southern edge of the City and is approximately 105 acres. The steep hillsides are covered with Sitka Spruce and Grand Fir creating a densely shaded terrain. In the mid-1850s, the Russ Park hillside was cleared and used for cattle or sheep grazing. No structural remains have been found in the park, except for scattered fence materials and the remains of a dump south of the Eucalyptus grove. The large Sitka Spruce immediately up from the main parking lot was cored in 1989 by a biologist from Redwood National Park and was documented to date from the early 1870s<sup>1</sup>.

In 1920, the land was dedicated to the City by Mrs. Zipporah Patrick Russ so that it may act “as and for a park and recreation grounds” (property deed statement, 1920). The deed also specifies the following:

- The City may cut, remove and market trees but not in such numbers that will destroy its natural beauty and usefulness as a park or interfere with the park as a refuge and breeding place for birds.
- When a tree is removed, a new tree must be planted somewhere in the park.
- All possible precautions must be taken against the spread of fire in or over the park. Should any trees be destroyed by fire they must be replaced immediately by replanting.

Russ Park can be accessed from Bluff Street approximately half a mile from the intersection of Berding and Bluff Streets. However, the parking area is small and the road narrow which makes access difficult for pedestrians and cyclists. The park is used for hiking and bird watching and has four trails totaling approximately four miles. The trails and other park features, such as signs and picnic tables, are predominantly maintained by volunteers. In order to increase safety for visitors to the park, additional sidewalks, bike trails, and/or parking areas will be considered along Bluff Street and Eugene Street as funding is available.

### *Public Health and Safety*

As defined in G.C. §65560(b)(3), public health and safety open space is, “Open space for public health and safety, including, but not limited to, areas that require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, flood plains, watersheds; areas presenting high fire risks; areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs; and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality”.

As discussed in Chapter 4 of the Safety Element, there is a portion of the City that falls within the FEMA 100 and 500-year flood plain. This includes areas along the Francis Creek corridor, areas to the north adjacent to the Salt River, and a small depression on the eastern edge of the City along the City’s drainage channel. In order to protect the lives and property of Ferndale residents, the City will continue to encourage development outside of these areas and maintain the open space for flood management purposes.

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<sup>1</sup>City of Ferndale website: <https://ci.ferndale.ca.us/city-of-ferndale-facilities/russ-park/>

### *Other Open Space Categories*

Additional types of open space can exist within the urban landscape including open space for military support, archaeological, paleontological, and historical sites. These types of spaces are not currently identified within the City of Ferndale.

[Open Space Map Placeholder]

## **Conservation**

The land we live on and the abundant resources it provides is our most precious resource and is worth conserving. Strong conservation policies can help ensure that our region's natural resources are protected long term. While the City has limited land area for conservation due to its small size, there is still opportunity to implement policies and programs to protect the City's natural resources and surrounding areas.

### *Water Resources*

As discussed in other portions of this element, the primary surface water and aquifer resource within the City is Francis Creek. Like many creeks running through cities, much of Francis Creek has been channelized to allow for development of businesses and homes along the creek. However, there are still portions of the creek that have not been channelized and where development does not exist near the bank of the creek. This presents an opportunity to protect sensitive streamside habitats and allow Francis Creek to naturally shift course from season to season. Implementing a setback for new development would help ensure that the creek is protected from further channelization and potential pollution from runoff.

### *Agricultural Resources*

There are 219 acres of agriculturally designated lands within the City and much of the city sits atop Prime Agricultural Soils. Almost half of the soil within the City limits is classified as Weott (0-2% slope). Thousands of years of fine sediment deposits from floods along the Eel River and its tributaries has created this rich mix of soil that is comprised of silt or loam that is alluvium derived from mixed sources and is noted as prime farmland. The next largest soil type within the



*The land surrounding Ferndale has historically been used as grazing pasture for the cows that support the regions rich dairy industry.*



City is Loleta (2-5% slope) which is comprised of loam, also alluvium derived, and noted as prime farmland (NRCS 2022).

The majority of the agricultural land is located on the borders of the City with residential and commercial development focused in the City's center along Highway 211/ Main Street. This agricultural land provides an open space buffer around the City and grazing areas for the regions dairy cows. In order to protect prime agricultural land, the City will continue to encourage infill development and revitalization of existing development before conversion of farmland takes place.

### *Forest Resources*

While much of City is noted for its flat fertile landscape, a portion of the City to the south reaches up into the Wildcat Hills. This area is densely forested and is also the location of Russ Park. As discussed previously, Russ Park is a bird sanctuary and forest reserve that was deeded to the City for the protection of its natural resources. To the west of the park is approximately 50 acres of forested private land that is designated as Agricultural Exclusive. This allows for the production of timber in these areas but could also lead to conversion of these forested areas to other agricultural practices such as grazing, fruit trees, or other crops. In an effort to preserve the City's timber resources, conversion of forested lands to other uses should be limited and include provisions for establishing replacement forests.



*A view of Russ Park from Eugene Street. This steep forested slope is just a small example of the expansive Wildcat Hills.*

Maintaining the forested hillsides to the south of the City helps with preventing erosion and hazardous stormwater runoff during large storm events. This ultimately protects Francis Creek and the Salt River from over sedimentation and excessive flooding. The established root structures also help to reduce the potential for large landslides that may impact roadways in the area. Lastly, forested lands also aid in carbon sequestration and help improve overall air quality. This is discussed in more detail in the Climate Change chapter of the Safety Element. While forested lands in Ferndale are limited, the City is dedicated to promoting conservation of these areas.



## Chapter 4: Goals, Policies, & Implementation Programs

The Land Use Element goals and policies provide a policy basis for guiding orderly development and redevelopment based on the Land Use diagram provided in Chapter 2.

**Goals** are general statements of community values or aspirations. They define the ends toward which the City will address its efforts.

**Policies** are more precise expressions of the community's position on particular issues, or how particular goals can be reached. Policies may include guidelines, standards, objectives, maps, diagrams, or a combination of these components.

**Implementation Programs** present specific actions the City or other identified entity will undertake to address policy issues and move closer to community's goals. These might include ongoing City sponsored programs, time-specific actions, or further planning actions.

### Goals and Policies

**Goal LU-1: To ensure Ferndale's growth will proceed in a thoughtful, orderly manner, retains its unique village character, and is located where there are efficient and equitable public services available.**

Policy LU-1.1 – Diverse Uses: Maintain a diverse range of compatible land uses that offer adequate flexibility to respond to evolving market opportunities.

Policy LU-1.2 – Community Amenities: Provide safe, clean, and pedestrian friendly streetscapes and public spaces through careful design and active maintenance of sidewalks, landscaping, street furnishings, park furnishings, lighting, public art, and other elements.

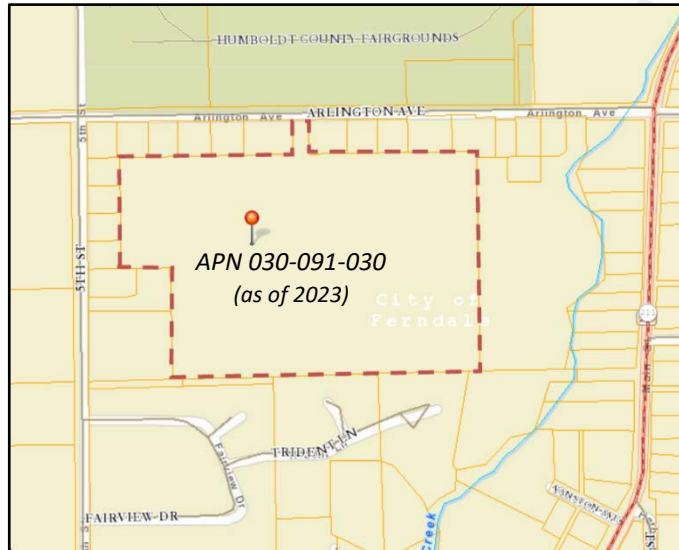
Policy LU-1.3 – Design Standards: Ensure new development is compatible with existing historic architecture and community character by creating objective design standards to maintain the small-town charm of the City.

Policy LU-1.4 – Residential Infill: The infilling and completion of residential neighborhoods should be encouraged to take full advantage of available public services.

Policy LU-1.5 – Diverse Housing: Promote a diversified housing stock throughout the City to increase housing supply, types, accessibility, and affordability for individuals and families of all incomes.

Policy LU-1.6 – Special Needs and Senior Housing: Work with community organizations and applicants to develop housing for special needs populations with an emphasis on ADA accessibility, universal design, and low-maintenance housing for seniors to support those who wish to age in place.

**Policy LU-1.7 – Planned Development:** Promote the use of the Planned Development (PD) zoning overlay for areas of special interest to the City, including APN 030-091-030 (see inset map), that could support a range of housing types and community amenities, addresses stormwater drainage, and provides for at least two points of ingress/egress for proposed developments.



**Policy LU-1.8 – Multi-Modal Transportation:** Encourage multi-modal travel by increasing bike and pedestrian routes throughout the City enhanced with bike parking, exercise stations, and safe roadway crossings. Actively seek out public access easements and/or right-of-way acquisition for pedestrian creek crossings to better connect Ferndale Housing and potential development on APN 030-091-030 (see policy LU-1.7) to Main Street. Potential crossings may include Fern Avenue, Vanston Avenue, E Street, or an alternative location.

**Policy LU-1.9 – Right-of-Ways:** Ensure street design and right-of-way acquisition will support pedestrian and bike mobility. This includes seeking acquisitions from willing landowners to develop a broader trail network within the city.

**Policy LU-1.10 – Community Spaces:** Require higher-density neighborhoods and mixed-use areas to incorporate small public spaces and have sidewalks furnished with appropriate ADA pedestrian amenities providing comfortable and attractive settings for high levels of pedestrian activity.

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**Goal LU-2: A welcoming and supportive environment for businesses to grow, thrive and continue to contribute positively to Ferndale's economy.**

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**Policy LU2.1 – Commercial Infill:** Promote infill and commercial activity in existing commercial areas in the Main Street Historic District and Milton Avenue area to provide services to residents and visitors and to prevent disturbance of residential neighborhoods.

Policy LU2.2 – Tourism and Resident Services: Encourage development of resident service businesses (i.e. individual and group medical practices), building and maintenance supplies, and repair businesses by designating these as principally permitted uses in commercial zones while prioritizing tourism services in the Main Street Historic District.

Policy LU2.3 – Existing Buildings and Sites: Support economic investment in existing buildings and sites along Historic Main Street including facade improvements, new paint and signage, retrofitting, adaptive reuse, improved sidewalks, and upgraded landscaping in keeping with the historic nature of the City.

Policy LU2.4 – Light Industrial Uses: Support light industrial uses (i.e. research & development, light manufacturing, metal, wood and leather works) through modified zoning practices in order to provide diverse employment opportunities for City residents while maintaining compatibility with adjacent uses.

Policy LU2.5 – Main Street Historic Area Preservation, Uses, and Activities: Support the following uses and activities within the Main Street Historic area:

- a. Mixed-use emphasizing a highly interactive street level retail and service setting with office and residential uses primarily above and in portions of buildings that do not have street frontage.
- b. Uses and activities that extend Main Street Area activity into evening hours.
- c. Rehabilitation and/or conversion of vacant upper floors of buildings and portions of buildings that do not have street frontage to increase housing supply.
- d. Encourage live-work and mixed-use spaces through reduced or eliminated parking requirements and other incentives.
- e. Neighborhood commercial uses and other services for residents and employees.
- f. Specialty and boutique shops, restaurants, and other locally-owned storefront businesses.
- g. Cultural and art related facilities and events that attract patrons with renovation of the Ferndale Repertory Theater and other historic facilities.
- h. Visitor serving uses and recreational activities on street frontages.
- i. Professional and business services, such as attorneys, realtors, architects, engineers, investment specialists, and other professional fields that provide a daily customer base for retail and food-related uses.
- j. Craftsman shops where items such as baked goods, glass, pottery, small furniture, clocks, and other specialized items are made and sold onsite.
- k. Programs and activities that educate the public about Main Street’s history and historic resources.

Policy LU2.6 –Existing Commercial Areas Revitalization. Reinvestment to upgrade and/or expand existing commercial centers along Main Street and in the Milton Avenue District shall be encouraged. Upgrades

should include provision of facilities to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians and to reduce vehicle trips, and residential units on upper floors or in new structures.

Policy LU2.7 – Increase Residential Uses. Commercial developments should include residential units where feasible. Residential units should be located on upper floors or at the rear, to maintain uninterrupted commercial uses at the street level. Residential uses in new structures shall comply with the R-3 development standards.

Policy LU2.8 – City Parking Standards. Consider initiating periodic parking studies to assess potential parking needs, capacities, and recommendations.

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**Goal LU-3: Protect, preserve, restore, rehabilitate, and enhance open spaces and natural resources.**

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Policy LU-3.1 – Conservation: Preserve existing open space and agricultural land at the edges of and surrounding the City.

Policy LU-3.2 –Improve Drainage: Incorporate drainage improvements and low impact development in all areas of the City to increase onsite retention and reduce flooding.

Policy LU-3.3 – Manage Flood Plains: Development is to be encouraged outside the 100-year flood plain. Development within the 100-year flood zone must have ground floor elevations above 100-year flood elevation and shall not significantly increase downstream flow levels and be in compliance with the Drainage Ordinance.

Policy LU-3.4 – Francis Creek Corridor: The Francis Creek riparian corridor shall be maintained or improved to permit natural flow where possible, prevent flooding in developed areas, and maintain natural habitat uses where appropriate.

Policy LU-3.5 – Forest Lands Preservation: Encourage preservation of forest resources and require timber management plans for any proposed forested lands conversion or harvesting that address erosion control and revegetation. The management of timberlands shall be encouraged to use current principles of sustainable forestry for all aspects of forest use and function: recreation, timber production, biodiversity, air and water quality, and carbon storage.

Policy LU-3.6 – Funding: Develop a program and pursue funding to coordinate acquisition of important open space property from willing landowners through conservation and/or drainage easements or other mechanisms.

Policy LU-3.7 – Regional Coordination: Maintain an active relationship with adjacent communities and government agencies to encourage cooperative management of natural resources and ecosystems in the surrounding area. Coordinate open space planning, acquisition, and development efforts with those of Humboldt County and regional and State agencies.



#### Goal 4 – Conserve soil resources and minimize erosion and other soil depleting processes.

Policy LU-4.1 – Russ Park Stewardship: Actively manage Russ Park for trails, habitat biodiversity, and stable soils in collaboration with local, regional, and state agencies.

Policy LU-4.2 – Francis Creek Riparian Habitat ~~Enhancement~~ and Erosion Control: ~~A streamside protection area shall be established along both sides of Francis Creek to protect stream ecosystems and the associated riparian habitat areas. Buffers from the top of bank or the edge of the riparian dripline, whichever is greater, on either side of the stream, shall be established. Development within streamside protection areas shall only be permitted under limited circumstances where mitigation measures have been provided to minimize potential environmental effects including: Establish a 50-foot stream protection zone, from the Francis Creek top of bank unless a reduced setback, no less than 25 feet, would not significantly affect biological resources.~~

- ~~a) Road, bridge, and trail replacement or construction may be permitted that would not degrade fish and wildlife resources or water quality, and where vegetative clearing is kept to a minimum.~~
- ~~b) Fencing along property boundaries and along buffer boundaries to prevent bank erosion and degradation of natural riparian vegetation.~~
- ~~c) Maintenance of existing roads, driveways, utility lines, and structures.~~
- ~~d) Agricultural operations compatible with maintenance of riparian resources.~~
- ~~e) The removal of vegetation for disease control, flood control, or public safety purposes may be approved, in consultation with CDFW.~~
- ~~f) In areas where existing development is adjacent to the creek, buffers may be reduced where the City determines, in consultation with CDFW, that the reduction will not significantly affect the biological resources of the creek or stream within the property.~~
- ~~g) When the prescribed buffer prohibits development of the site for the primary use for which it is designated, measures shall be applied that allow development and result in the least environmentally damaging feasible project.~~  
~~This zone is to be actively monitored and managed to maintain habitat and prevent erosion in the creek channel.~~

Policy LU-4.3 – Agricultural Use Preservation: Encourage infill development and revitalization of existing residential and commercial uses with setbacks and other measures to preserve prime agricultural lands on the outer edges of the City.

### Implementation Programs

Implementation programs are action items to advance general plan goals and policies. Each implementation program includes a description, City Department and/or other responsible party, and estimated timeframe for completion.

**LU-IP1: Develop Design Standards:** In coordination with the Planning Commission, develop objective design standards to provide a common basis for the evaluation of design during the project approval process.

Department: Planning

When: Within one year

**LU-IP2: Zoning Code Updates:** Update the zoning code as necessary for land use designation, density, intensity, and lot size consistency. Consider adding affordable housing provisions and a Francis Creek corridor streamside protection zone.

Department: Planning

When: Within two years

**LU-IP3: Planned Development Designation:** Consider applying the Planned Development overlay for APN 030-091-030 that establishes objective standards for development including community spaces, mixed housing types, minimizes off-site drainage, and includes at least two points of ingress/egress to the development (one from Arlington Ave. and one from 5<sup>th</sup> street).

Department: Planning

When: Within 1 year

**LU-IP4: Drainage Infrastructure Funding:** Actively seek out funding programs to complete stormwater drainage projects for erosion control, retention, and detention facilities to alleviate flooding within the City.

Department: Planning, City Manager

When: Ongoing

**LU-IP5: Drainage Master Plan Priorities:** Review Drainage Master Plan priority projects every five years to maintain an up to date list for guiding drainage improvements and seeking funding opportunities.

Department: Engineering

When: Every 5 years

**LU-IP6: Stream Set Back Standards:** Establish a 50 foot stream set back requirement for new development along designated waterways within the City including Francis Creek. The set back may be reduced if specific evidence is provided showing there will be no impact to the waterway.

Department: Planning/Engineering

When: Within 2 years

**LU-IP7: Open Space Action Program:** Seek funding to develop an Open Space Action Program that will include specific open space restoration, maintenance, and acquisition/easement projects with associated timelines.

Department: Planning

When: Within 5 years

## Chapter 5: References

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Salt River Watershed Assessment, May 2005. Native Inhabitants summary provided by Marnie Atkins, Cultural Director of the Table Bluff Reservation of the Wiyot Tribe, pg. 43.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Web Soil Survey, City of Ferndale Area of Interest. Accessed February 25, 2022 from [websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx](https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx).

United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census Data for the City of Ferndale and American Community Survey Population Estimates for 2019. Accessed January 18, 2022 from [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov).

Governor's Office of Planning and Research, General Plan Information – General Plan Guidance Documents. Updated June 24, 2020.