

II. LAND USE ELEMENT

Belvedere is a community embracing two island promontories at the southwestern tip of the Tiburon Peninsula and a lagoon-landfill area linking the islands to the mainland. From the islands, there are sweeping marine views of the surrounding bay area. Within the landfilled area, there are views of and direct access to the more intimate lagoon. Fine weather complements community assets -- since among the marine micro-climates of the Bay area, the weather generally has more sun and less fog than that of its neighbors. With these environmental qualities, Belvedere has looked inviting to Bay Area residents for over 90 years, and has become one of the most desirable and attractive residential communities of the Bay Area.

Many of the permanent early Belvedere homes -- from around the time of the turn of the century -- were built above Belvedere Cove for summer and leisure use. Some early residents anchored arks or houseboats in Belvedere Cove during the summer and wintered in the sheltered lagoon behind Beach Road. Subsequent development occurred in the area around Laurel Avenue, followed by Corinthian Island and the western side of the island. In the 1950s and 1960s, San Rafael Avenue and the areas of the Lagoon, North Point, and West Shore were built, followed by apartments along Beach Road. Current development consists of remodeling and enlarging existing residences, and the construction of individual residences on the islands' scattered undeveloped lots, of which less than 20 remain. There have been some new lots created as old, large estates have been divided. The high prices of land and homes in Belvedere have also contributed to the pressure to divide these remaining large lots. Many of the remaining undeveloped lots are very steep and may have geologic problems associated with their development. As a consequence, in 1985 the City passed a Grading and Erosion Control Ordinance to permit detailed geotechnical review of these situations.

A. SETTING

1. Population

In 1990, the U.S. Census showed the City with a population of 2,147 people and 1,037 dwelling units. This indicates a household size of 2.22 people per household, somewhat higher than the County average but reflective of the large homes found in Belvedere. Seventeen percent of Belvedere residents are under 18 years of age and 23% are over 65. Belvedere is a city nearing the building capacity of its land. The city's growth curve is typical of a community approaching full development: 19% of its units were built prior to 1940; growth peaked in the post World War II period during the 1950s when 35% of the city's houses were built (at an average of 45 units per year); growth

dropped to 20 units per year in the 1960s and to 5 per year in the early 1970s. In the 1975 to 1986 period, a total of eleven homes were built, according to City records. City records indicate that in the past six years, 1987 through 1992, a total of 17 housing units were constructed, 16 in 1988 and 1 in 1992.

2. Residential Land Use

Belvedere is clearly a predominantly residential rather than a "balanced" community, with well over 90% of its land area either in residential use or zoned residential. Nearly all employment needs, and most residential service needs, are met outside Belvedere. There are three distinct residential areas of the community.

The Lagoon area consists of about 275 small- to moderate- sized lots, ranging from around 5,000 to 12,000 square feet in size. They contain predominantly one and two story homes, which were mainly built in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the lots in this area front on the waters of the Belvedere Lagoon, an artificial lagoon created by diking off portions of San Francisco Bay. Tide gates control the flow of water between the Lagoon and the Bay. Some of this area may be subject to flooding during severe high intensity storms.

Corinthian Island is a small natural island, about half of which is within the City of Belvedere and half within Tiburon. Lots on Corinthian Island are in general very small, and the homes are generally a mixture of both old and new. The streets are very narrow and slopes are very steep. There are 55 developed parcels, and one undeveloped lot which is large enough to permit development of a new home.

Belvedere Island is the oldest historical section of Belvedere and contains about 510 lots. Most of the land was originally subdivided by the Belvedere Land Company during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Homes built from that time to the present have been constructed on lots ranging in size from less than 5,000 square feet to over one acre in size. The island is characterized by a variety of architectural styles and sizes of homes, as well as by its dense, mature vegetation and narrow, winding streets.

In addition to these three main areas of single family housing, there are sections along lower Beach Road and San Rafael Avenue which accommodate multi-family housing. There were 162 such units in 1985 and 13 additional units were built in 1988.

The three single family residential areas comprise 273.7 acres of land, 20.35% of the total area of the City. The remaining land areas include almost 13 acres of land allocated to multi-family residential development (0.9% of area), which is concentrated

along Beach Road and Community Road, 2.6 acres (.2% of the area) of commercially zoned property adjacent to downtown Tiburon, and 17.48 acres of land in public and quasi-public uses including churches, City Hall, and the parks and open space lands, as listed in Table LU-1 below. Water area is 1,030.38 acres, 76.6% of the total area of the City of Belvedere.

TABLE LU-1: EXISTING LAND USES -- CITY OF BELVEDERE -- 1993

<u>Use</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Single Family Residential	276.70	20.6
Multi-Family Residential	12.74	0.9
Offices/Commercial	2.60	0.2
Public Facilities	0.72	> 0.1
Churches & Schools	1.88	0.1
Public Parks/Recreation	6.11	0.5
Private Recreational	1.11	0.1
Open Space	7.66	0.6
Undeveloped	5.34	0.4
	-----	----
Total Land Area	314.86	23.4
Water Area	1030.38	76.6
	-----	-----
TOTAL	1345.24	100.0%

3. Commercial and Industrial Uses

Many residents take the bus, ferry, or a car to San Francisco or other Marin County jobs. The employment base within the community is very small; a few offices, retail businesses, a branch bank, two yacht clubs, and occasional construction activities supply most intown jobs. According to the 1990 U. S. Census, 115 Belvedere residents work at home, and the mean number of minutes that residents commute to work is 30.

Commercial uses within the City consist of the portion of the Boardwalk shopping area which lies within the City boundary and the office spaces found along Beach Road near the San Francisco Yacht Club. Therefore, most neighborhood shopping and services needs are met in the other shopping areas of the Tiburon Peninsula: in downtown Tiburon, the Cove shopping center, or at Strawberry Village. No industrial uses are permitted within the City.

4. Recreational/Open Space Uses

Most of the recreational uses are related to San Francisco Bay. There are two major yacht clubs and the Belvedere Sailing

Society. For parks, the City has the Community park adjacent to City Hall (which has a basketball court, a small active play space and children's play facilities), the park in Beach Road opposite the San Francisco Yacht Club, Tom Price Park, Cove Beach, and the San Rafael Avenue walkway along the shoreline of Richardson Bay. Private open space -- yards adjacent to most houses -- takes care of most small-scale play and open space needs. Two private recreation clubs in Tiburon with swimming pools, tennis courts, and club house facilities, are used by many Belvedere residents for active play. Additionally, the Joint Belvedere-Tiburon Recreation Committee operates six tennis courts: two at Lagoon Road Park, two at Point Tiburon, and two at Del Mar School in Tiburon.

Other active and passive play needs, such as those frequently met in communities by playgrounds, playfields, and neighborhood or community parks ranging in size from three to ten acres, are available in public or private facilities in neighboring Tiburon. Opportunities for expansion of recreation facilities in Belvedere are few. Tom Price Park was developed in 1978; the San Rafael Avenue seawall, with its walking path extending to the Richardson Bay Lineal Park Multi-Use Path, was completed in 1985. The City also owns open space along Beach Road where it fronts on the Bay in Belvedere Cove. A system of walking pathways and lanes also exists, and a study is being done to determine which of these can be upgraded to provide for recreational walking.

5. Community/Public Facilities

Among the City's community facilities, there are two churches, and a City Hall and Community Center, as well as the City's Corporation Yard. The City owns its own sewerage system and contracts for maintenance and waste disposal with Tiburon Sanitary District No. 5. Water is supplied by the Marin Municipal Water District. Both systems are capable of handling the expected small amount of additional growth. Community Center facilities on the lower floor of City Hall are used for recreation classes and community meetings.

6. Educational Uses

There was one elementary school -- Belvedere School -- in the city. It housed two elementary grades of the Reed Union School District, but declining enrollments since 1975 caused the closure of this school. The School District then sold the property to the Belvedere Land Company, which redeveloped the site for housing. The only other school facility in the community is a nursery school on Cove Road Place. Elementary students now attend Reed School, Bel Aire School, or Del Mar School in Tiburon; high school students go to Redwood High School in Larkspur or attend private schools. According to the 1990 U. S. Census, 92% of Belvedere residents over the age of 18 have attended college.

B. ISSUES

During the 1970's and 1980's, increasing land values and property taxes had an adverse impact on development in Belvedere. Buildings disproportionate to lot size have been proposed, and some have been built. Some large lots have been subdivided and sold off to defray high property taxes and provide income. The lack of density regulations in the residential zones raised fears of inharmonious development. In 1990 the Design Review Ordinance was amended to strengthen the criteria for consideration of Design Review applications. In 1991 and 1992, the Zoning Ordinance was amended to add floor area ratios in all single-family residential zoning districts to control the bulk and mass of new houses plus additions to existing houses.

Exhibit 1 is a map showing Existing Land Use. Table LU-1 on page 4 shows the present land uses in the City of Belvedere.

C. POLICIES

1. Significant new development is discouraged. Building is permitted only on existing legal lots of record or new lots of legal size for the residential zone in which they lie.
2. Residential densities shall be controlled to preserve the character of Belvedere. The two single family zones -- R-15, requiring 15,000 sq. ft. of lot area per unit, and R-1, requiring 7,500 square feet of lot area per unit -- are retained.
3. New construction is to be in harmony with existing development. To ensure reasonable intensity of lot use, ensure high environmental quality, and maintain the density and character of the neighborhoods, the City has design review standards in addition to controls on height, bulk, floor areas, and setbacks.
4. The circulation system is to be retained essentially as is, with no improvements planned beyond those needed to remove safety hazards.
5. Opportunities to expand the supply of moderate income housing in response to needs of the current population are to be explored and implemented. A site adjoining the Christian Science Church on San Rafael Avenue was developed in 1988 into 11 units of senior citizen/handicapped moderate income housing. Further, a second unit ordinance was adopted in 1981 allowing for up to 50 such units; all of these units had been allocated as of 1987. Whether or not to permit additional second units, above the original 50 units allowed, is a decision for the City Council.

6. The open water surrounding Belvedere is to be kept open in perpetuity. In 1984 the City adopted the Richardson Bay Special Area Plan, along with the other three cities and the County of Marin which adjoin the Bay. This Plan provides for a vessel-sewage no-discharge area to be created in Richardson Bay, and for changes to the anchorage regulations in the Bay and in Belvedere Cove which will help to eliminate the random anchoring of boats throughout the Bay. The City incorporates the policies of the Richardson Bay Special Area Plan (RBSAP) into this General Plan.
7. A desirable feature of every Belvedere home should be usable outdoor open space. Minimum usable outdoor living space standards were incorporated into zoning and building regulations for the multi-family zones.
8. Views of the Bay, San Francisco, and the mountains are to be retained wherever possible. The Zoning Ordinance includes provisions for the dedication of a view site or easement.
9. Present density and intensity standards (and existing densities) are as follows:
 - a. R-1 zones 2.5 to 5 dwelling units per gross acre. 6.75 to 13.5 persons per acre. The total floor area permitted, without an Exception, is 50% of the lot size in the R-1C (Corinthian Island) and R-1L (Lagoon Area) zones and 40% of the lot size in the R-1W (West Shore Road) zone.
 - b. R-15 zone: 1 to 2.5 dwelling units per gross acre. 2.7 to 6.75 persons per acre. (Small lots in this zone raise the current density range to 1-3.0 d.u. per gross acre.) The total floor area permitted, without an Exception, is 33% of the lot size.
 - c. R-2 zone: 5 to 14.5 dwelling units per gross acre. 13.5 to 39 persons per acre.
 - d. R-3/R-3C zones: 5 to 20 dwelling units per gross acre. 13.5 to 54 persons per acre.
 - e. R-3/SC-H overlay: Same as R-3, except density may be increased upon Planning Commission's

findings of benefit to the community and lack of environmental impact.

f. C-1 Floor Area Ratio not in excess of 1:1.
Not over 50% of lot covered.
Minimum lot of 5,000 square feet.

10. Based on the seismic and geologic study in which the City participated with the County in 1975, additional regulations have been added to the City's code requiring special geologic studies prior to any development of sites in hazard areas. Further studies may also show some small areas within existing residential zones which should not be developed for reasons of safety.
11. Definition and relocation of the City limit lines between Belvedere and Tiburon has been under discussion with the intent to solve the remaining problems. Concerns include the line through the Boardwalk Shopping Center, and resolution of the boundary of the Corinthian Yacht Club, which has its clubhouse in Belvedere and its berths and parking area in Tiburon.
12. Opportunities to provide additional recreational facilities in Belvedere should be explored and encouraged. In particular, the existing lane and path system was surveyed in a 1986 study. (See Circulation Element).
13. A study of all remaining properties capable of being subdivided under present regulations should be undertaken with an analysis of the potential for additional development, geologic hazards, environmental impact, and other factors. If necessary, the zoning regulations and Subdivision Ordinance should be amended to change the conditions under which existing large lots may be divided.
14. Due to the close proximity of many homes in the Lagoon area, and the issues of privacy which this raises, consideration should be given to determining the feasibility of restricting the amount of second story building which can occur on each lot in the Lagoon area.
15. The City should periodically review its Zoning and Design Review Ordinances to determine if revisions are warranted, and to give the Planning Commission and City Council more specific standards by which to review proposed building projects.