

This section describes the environmental and regulatory setting for population and housing. It also describes impacts on population and housing that would result from implementation of the proposed San Rafael Transit Center Replacement Project (proposed project) and other build alternatives and mitigation for significant impacts where feasible and appropriate. Impacts related to the No-Project Alternative are discussed in Chapter 5, Alternatives to the Project.

3.12.1 Existing Conditions

3.12.1.1 Regulatory Setting

Federal

There are no relevant federal regulations for population and housing.

State

Regional Housing Need Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area: 2015–2023

The Regional Housing Need Allocation process addresses the need for housing in communities throughout the state. To ensure that adequate housing is available for all income groups, the California Department of Housing and Community Development is responsible for determining the regional need in coordination with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), which is required to distribute the region's share of statewide need to the cities and counties within its jurisdiction. The objectives of the Regional Housing Need Allocation include increasing the supply, diversity, and affordability of housing; promote infill development and a more efficient land use pattern; promoting an improved intraregional relationship between jobs and housing; protecting environmental resources; and promoting socioeconomic equity. The purpose of the Regional Housing Need Allocation is to allocate a "fair share" of the Bay Area's projected housing need to the cities and counties by household income groups, which are categorized as very low, low, moderate, and above moderate.

Local

City of San Rafael General Plan 2020

The City of San Rafael General Plan 2020 (City of San Rafael 2016) provides a vision for long-range physical and economic development of the City of San Rafael (City), provides strategies and specific implementing actions, and establishes a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are consistent with the City's plans and policy standards. *The City of San Rafael General Plan 2020* contains a Housing Element, which includes trends and characteristics of the City's population as well as policies to address the City's housing needs for all income levels, and outlines specific development steps and design guidelines to address housing needs. However, because there

are no existing residential units in the project area, and no residential housing is proposed as part of the proposed project, none of the goals and policies listed in the element relate to population and housing for this proposed project.

The City is currently in the process of updating *The City of San Rafael General Plan 2020*. In addition, the Housing Element is not being updated as part of the update process, as it is for the 2015 to 2023 planning period.

San Rafael Downtown Station Area Plan

The City adopted the *San Rafael Downtown Station Area Plan* in June 2012 in accordance with Senate Bill 375, which required certain places to create sustainable communities strategies that combined transportation and land-use elements to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The plan provides a long-term strategy for the Downtown San Rafael station area through design guidelines that help to maximize transit ridership, sustain economic development and vitality, and ensure that the regional transit area fits into the context of the surrounding neighborhoods and improves connectivity. The *San Rafael Downtown Station Area Plan* contains the following goals and concepts related to population and housing that are applicable to the proposed project (City of San Rafael 2012):

Goal 4: Supply adequate parking for new housing and businesses while encouraging transit use, walking, and bicycling.

Goal 6: Enable new transit-oriented development characterized by increased activity, a mix of uses, and a strong sense of place.

Concept A: Explore allowing a height and/or [floor area ratio] bonus for developments that provide community benefits in the Plan Area.

Concept B: Explore removing maximum density requirements for residential uses in the Plan Area.

Concept D: Facilitate eventual reuse should the Bettini Transit Center be relocated.

Draft Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan

The City is in the process of updating the *Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan* (City of San Rafael 2020). The *Downtown San Rafael Precise Plan* contains the following principles and policies.

Principle 5: Enable mixed-use development in Downtown to increase housing, strengthen local businesses, and diversify the economy.

Principle 8: Promote housing access at all income levels and establish strategies to prevent homelessness, gentrification, and displacement.

Policy H-7, Protection of the Existing Housing Stock: Continue to protect existing housing from conversion to non-residential uses. Ensure that affordable housing provided through government subsidy programs, incentives, and deed restrictions remains affordable over the required time period, and intervene when possible to help preserve such housing.

Policy H-15, Infill Near Transit: Encourage higher densities on sites adjacent to a transit hub, focusing on the Priority Development Area surrounding the San Rafael Transit Center and future Downtown SMART station.

Policy EDI-3.1, Preventing Displacement: Prevent the displacement of lower income residents from their homes due to rising costs, evictions without cause, and other economic factors that make it difficult for people to stay in San Rafael.

3.12.1.2 Environmental Setting

This section provides a discussion of the existing conditions related to population and housing in the project area, within the jurisdictional boundary of the City, and within the jurisdictional boundary of Marin County.

Project Area

The existing San Rafael Transit Center operates regional and inter-county bus transit services and does not contain any residential units or residents. Approximately eight individuals per day are employed on the site.

Population

The 2020 population of San Rafael was approximately 59,807, and the 2020 population of Marin County was 260,831 (California Department of Finance 2020). Between 2020 and 2040, the City's population is expected to increase by approximately 11.8 percent to 66,880 residents, with an average growth rate of 2.4 percent every 5 years. Table 3.12-1 presents the anticipated growth for both the City and Marin County.

Table 3.12-1. San Rafael and Marin County Population Growth Projections, 2020–2040

Year	City of San Rafael Population	Percent Change		Marin County Population	Percent Change	
		Incremental	Cumulative		Incremental	Cumulative
2020	59,807	—	—	260,831	—	—
2025	61,610	3.0	3.0	269,250	3.2	3.2
2030	64,220	4.2	7.4	274,530	2.0	5.3
2035	65,550	2.1	9.6	278,215	1.3	6.7
2040	66,880	2.0	11.8	282,670	1.6	8.4

Sources: California Department of Finance 2020; ABAG 2019

Housing

This section describes existing housing units and household characteristics in San Rafael and Marin County.

Housing Units

In 2020, there were 24,133 housing units in San Rafael (Table 3.12-2), an increase of 122 housing units compared with 2010. Approximately 95.9 percent of the housing units were occupied in 2020, compared with 94.8 percent in 2010. In Marin County, there were 112,516 housing units in 2020, up from 111,214 housing units in 2010. In 2020, approximately 6.7 percent of the housing units were vacant in Marin County compared with 7.2 percent in 2010 (California Department of Finance 2020).

Table 3.12-2. San Rafael and Marin County Housing Units, 2010 and 2020

	2010	2020
City of San Rafael		
Total Housing Units	24,011	24,133
Increase in Housing Units	—	122
Occupied Housing Units	22,764	23,154
Change in Occupied Housing Units		+390
Percent Occupied	94.8	95.9
Percent Vacant	5.2	4.1
Marin County		
Total Housing Units	111,214	112,516
Increase in Housing Units	—	1,302
Occupied Housing Units	103,210	104,975
Change in Occupied Housing Units		+1,765
Percent Occupied	92.8	93.3
Percent Vacant	7.2	6.7

Source: California Department of Finance 2020

Households

In 2020, there were 23,575 households¹ in San Rafael (ABAG 2019). As shown in Table 3.12-3, ABAG projects that the number of households in San Rafael will increase by approximately 8.4 percent between 2020 and 2040, with an average increase of approximately 1.7 percent every 5 years.

Average Household Size

The average household size in San Rafael was 2.49 people in 2020 (California Department of Finance 2020). The average household size is expected to increase to approximately 2.52 people per household by 2040 (ABAG 2019).

Table 3.12-3. San Rafael and Marin County Household Growth Projections, 2020–2040

Year	City of San Rafael Households	Percent Change		Marin County Households	Percent Change	
		Incremental	Cumulative		Incremental	Cumulative
2020	23,575	—	—	108,195	—	—
2025	24,135	2.4	2.4	109,375	1.1	1.1
2030	25,175	4.3	6.8	111,065	1.5	2.7
2035	25,410	0.9	7.8	111,350	0.3	2.9
2040	25,565	0.6	8.4	111,585	0.2	3.1

Source: ABAG 2019.

¹ Households are based on occupied housing units.

Employment

ABAG estimates that there will be an approximate 3.9-percent increase in the number of jobs in Marin County between 2020 and 2040, increasing from 129,900 to 134,960. The number of jobs in San Rafael is projected to increase by approximately 2.5 percent between 2020 and 2040 (ABAG 2019). In 2019, the unemployment rate was 2.3 percent in Marin County and 2.2 percent in San Rafael (California Employment Development Department 2020). Table 3.12-4 summarizes the projected 5-year incremental increases in the number of jobs in San Rafael and Marin County between 2015 and 2040.

Approximately 37 percent of the jobs in Marin County are in San Rafael. This trend is projected to continue until 2040. In 2019, the City had 41,473 jobs and 29,507 employed residents, a ratio of 1.41 jobs for every employed resident (U.S. Census Bureau 2019a, 2019b). This means that some employees who work in San Rafael live elsewhere and are in-commuting. However, over the past couple of years, Marin County has had a trend of having more employed residents than jobs, which indicates that residents of Marin County commute to other nearby counties for jobs. This trend is expected to continue through 2040.

Table 3.12-4. San Rafael and Marin County Employment Projections, 2020–2040

	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
City of San Rafael	47,835	48,140	48,650	48,875	49,050
Marin County	129,900	131,120	133,480	134,650	134,960

Source: ABAG 2019

3.12.2 Environmental Impacts

This section describes the impact analysis related to population and housing for the proposed project. The section describes the methods used to determine the impacts of the proposed project and lists the thresholds used to conclude whether an impact would be significant. Measures to mitigate (i.e., avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, eliminate, or compensate for) significant impacts accompany each impact discussion, where necessary and appropriate. Impacts for the build alternatives are presented together unless they differ substantially among alternatives.

3.12.2.1 Methodology

Identifying a project's impacts on population and housing involves a review of ABAG's Projections 2040, U.S. Census Bureau Data, California Department of Finance Data, California Employment Development Department Data, and *The City of San Rafael General Plan 2020*, then measuring the proposed project's population growth impact against the data. As the proposed transit center would be in the City of San Rafael and would serve the larger Marin County population, the study area for the impact analysis is the City of San Rafael and Marin County.

3.12.2.2 Thresholds of Significance

The following California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Appendix G thresholds identify significance criteria to be considered for determining whether a project could have significant impacts related to existing population and housing.

Would the proposed project:

- Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?
- Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

3.12.2.3 Impacts

Induce Substantial Unplanned Population Growth in an Area, Either Directly (for Example, by Proposing New Homes and Businesses) or Indirectly (for Example, Through Extension of Roads or Other Infrastructure)

Construction

All Build Alternatives

Construction of the proposed project would result in a temporary increase in the number of construction-related job opportunities in the local area. However, the opportunities provided by project construction would most likely not result in construction workers relocating their households to the project vicinity because these jobs would be temporary. It is expected that construction workers would be drawn from the construction labor force already residing in San Rafael and the surrounding communities. However, the construction jobs produced by this proposed project would be new jobs, and would slightly alter the balance of jobs to employed residents in San Rafael. This effect would not be permanent, and would not be expected to change the current ratio of 1.67 jobs per employed resident. Accordingly, employment opportunities provided by construction of the proposed project would not generate substantial population growth, and would result in a *less-than-significant impact*. No mitigation is required.

Operations

All Build Alternatives

Direct Population Growth

The proposed project does not include the development of housing or businesses, and therefore would not directly induce population. The proposed project would provide transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements consistent with multiple City planning documents including *The City of San Rafael General Plan 2020*, *San Rafael Climate Change Action Plan 2030* (City of San Rafael 2019), *San Rafael Transit Center Relocation Study* (City of San Rafael et al. 2017), *Short-Range Transit Plan* (Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District 2019), *San Rafael Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* (City of San Rafael 2018), and *San Rafael Downtown Station Area Plan*. As mentioned above, approximately eight individuals per day are currently employed in the project area. With implementation of the proposed project, the same eight employees would work in the project area. This would result in no net increase in the number of employees on site, and therefore would be an insignificant increase in the number of jobs available in the City. In addition, the proposed project

would be consistent with ABAG employment projections; therefore, the impact would be ***less than significant***.

Indirect Population Growth

The proposed project would require the extension of certain utilities, which potentially could induce growth in adjacent areas. As explained in Chapter 2, Project Description, the proposed project would require connection to existing sewer, water, and power infrastructure to operate the planned restrooms, kitchenette, and building spaces. In addition, the proposed project would require the removal of existing storm drain infrastructure and would install new inlets, manholes, and bioretention facilities on site. However, in this instance, the proposed project is an infill development, and the project area is already developed with a mix of uses, including commercial or residential uses, and therefore would not induce growth in adjacent areas. Furthermore, the proposed project would not require the construction of any new roads. Therefore, impacts related to indirect population growth are considered ***less than significant***. No mitigation is required.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

Displace Substantial Numbers of Existing People or Housing, Necessitating the Construction of Replacement Housing Elsewhere

Move Whistlestop Alternative

This project site crosses several parcels and is currently occupied by the Whistlestop building, a café, a restaurant, parking spaces, the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) tracks, and the Citibank with its affiliated parking lot. There are no existing residential structures on the project site. The Move Whistlestop Alternative would not displace existing housing or people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. Therefore, there would be ***no impact***. No mitigation is required.

Adapt Whistlestop Alternative

No existing residential structures are on the project site. The Adapt Whistlestop Alternative's impacts on displacing housing or people would be the same as those of the Move Whistlestop Alternative outlined above. Therefore, there would be ***no impact***.

4th Street Gateway Alternative

This project site is currently occupied by offices and retail (salons, check cashing services, and a bagel shop) and associated parking spaces. The Citibank building and parking lot currently occupy the existing portion of the site south of 4th Street. To the west of the Citibank parcel are the SMART tracks, and adjacent to the tracks are the Whistlestop building and Jackson Café. There are no existing residential structures on the project site. The 4th Street Gateway Alternative's impacts on displacing housing or people would be the same as those of the Move Whistlestop Alternative outlined above. Therefore, there would be ***no impact***.

Under the Freeway Alternative

This alternative would be underneath U.S. Highway 101 where there are park-and-ride lots, maintained and operated by the California Department of Transportation, in the vicinity of the existing transit center. In addition to the California Department of Transportation park-and-ride lots, north of 4th Street, the existing project site is currently occupied by offices, a bicycle shop, parking, and vacant storefronts, and south of 4th Street, the project site is currently occupied by retail and office uses. There are no existing residential structures on the project site. The Under the Freeway Alternative's impacts on displacing housing or people would be the same as those of the Move Whistlestop Alternative outlined above. Therefore, there would be ***no impact***.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.