

Public Workshop Summary Report

Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan - Public Workshop #3



*Thursday, March 7, 2013
Community Room at Drakes Landing Office Park
300 Drakes Landing Rd.
Greenbrae, CA 94904*



Acknowledgements

This workshop would not have been possible without the efforts of the following organizations and individuals:

CONSULTANT TEAM

- BMS Design Group
 - ❖ Barbara Maloney, Principal
 - ❖ Elizabeth Foster, Senior Planner + Urban Designer
 - ❖ Joy Glasier, Landscape Architect

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This project is funded in part through a Station Area Planning Grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission with additional funding from the Transportation Authority of Marin, the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District, the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District, the County of Marin, and the City of Larkspur.

Introduction

The City of Larkspur received a \$480,000 Station Area Planning Grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in May 2011 to prepare the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan. The grant was augmented by \$120,000 in matching funds from the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD), the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit District (SMART), the County of Marin, and the City of Larkspur. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) has partnered with MTC to manage the planning grant program.

The Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan (SAP) will be prepared in the form of a Local Area Plan and incorporated into the update of the City's General Plan, a planning process which the City is conducting simultaneously with the SAP process. An environmental impact report will also be prepared for the SAP. The Plan Area encompasses the Redwood Highway area, the eastern portion of Greenbrae, and the Larkspur Landing area.

Public participation is a key component of the SAP planning process. The community workshop summarized in this report (Community Workshop #3) marks the third of four community workshops that will be held during the approximately 18 month planning process (beginning in April of 2012). The General Plan Update/SMART Station Area Plan Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) will meet seven times during the process, which are publicly noticed and open to public attendance.

Community Workshop #3 was held on March 7, 2013 at the community room at the Drakes Landing Office Park in Greenbrae. The workshop was attended by approximately 30 community members and began with a brief discussion between project consultants BMS Design Group and workshop attendees regarding urban design guidelines (including building height and orientation, typical street cross sections, signage and wayfinding, and station connectivity). The proposed guidelines were formulated according to transit oriented design principals, feedback received from the Citizen Advisory Committee at their February 21, 2013 meeting, and comments previously received from the public either at past workshops or in written or verbal communications with City staff and project consultants.

Following the discussion, workshop attendees worked in groups to mark up maps of the Station Area to show where and what type of new public spaces and pedestrian and bicycle amenities were needed. Project consultants and City staff answered questions and engaged in discussions with workshop participants. At the conclusion of the work session, workshop attendees traveled around the room to view and discuss each group's proposal.

Outreach Efforts

The City of Larkspur employed a variety of outreach methods to advertise Community Workshop #3, including the following:

- City staff canvassing of the Station Area to speak with business owners and residents and distribute and post event fliers;
- An informational booth at the Larkspur Farmer's Market on March 2, 2013;
- Calendar listings in the Marin Independent Journal and Marin County Bicycle Coalition weekly newsletter;
- Calendar listing and notices on the City's online calendar, with a subscriber count of 155 community members.

Approximately 30 community members, including Citizen Advisory Committee members, property owners, residents, interest groups, public agency representatives, and business owners attended the workshop. City staff and project consultants are collaborating to devise additional outreach strategies that fit within the project budget to strengthen attendance at future workshops.



Workshop Summary

1) Welcome

Planning and Building Director Toft gave a brief overview of the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan's progress to date, including the release of the preferred land use and circulation plan in December 2012 as part of the Land Use Alternatives Report. He noted the workshop's agenda mistakenly did not include a time for public comment on items not on the agenda, and invited members of the public who wished to do so to speak.

Alan Nichol of San Rafael provided the following comments:

- He is a proponent of the Marin Trolley project, which just received a grant from the Transportation Authority of Marin to complete an initial evaluation/feasibility review for an electric trolley line from Fairfax to San Rafael.
- The organization is also proposing a trolley connection from the downtown San Rafael SMART station to the Larkspur ferry terminal via the SMART right-of-way as an alternative to extending the SMART line south.
- Cost of trolley service between San Rafael and Larkspur is estimated at \$20 million.
- We don't have transit oriented development if there's a 10 minute walk to get from the train to the ferry.

Jean Severinghaus of Greenbrae provided the following comments:

- Coordinating the planning efforts of all the different agencies planning transportation improvement projects in the area is difficult.
- She requests formation of a Station Area Plan Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) to look in more detail at pedestrian and bike needs.

2) Review and Discuss Urban Design Guideline Concepts

Ms. Maloney began the presentation. A member of the public asked if the Larkspur Landing area would be the only area considered for a unifying community identity. Ms. Maloney stated the Larkspur Landing area would be the primary focus as most new development proposed in the preferred plan is located in that sub-area. A member of the public asked whether new transit was proposed in the Station Area Plan. Ms. Maloney replied the Station Area Plan would address both land use and circulation improvements, which could include augmented transit services such as buses, but would not propose any new transit systems.

Station Connectivity & Pedestrian Environment

A member of the public requested that future mapping of the proposed pedestrian path between the movie theater and the Larkspur Landing offices be consistent with the easement that currently exists. Another audience member noted that the pedestrian overcrossing over Highway 101 was not shown as an existing pedestrian pathway. Ms. Maloney explained that the

overcrossing is proposed to be removed under the Highway 101 Greenbrae/Twin Cities Corridor Improvement Project, though much opposition had been heard from the community and the cities of Larkspur and Corte Madera upon the release of that project's environmental document. The Station Area Plan will incorporate any changes to that project that may occur in the future due to public input.

An audience member asked how SMART users would get to the ferry. Ms. Maloney stated the Central Marin Ferry Connection would provide ADA-compliant bicycle and pedestrian access from the multi-use path adjacent to the SMART station over Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Additional planning for access through the Marin Country Mart and over the existing pedestrian overcrossing was currently underway between the owner of the Country Mart, the Transportation Authority of Marin, and transportation planners. The audience member noted both of those options required a long walk and it would make more sense to locate the station at the ferry terminal.

Ms. Maloney explained that when the location of SMART stations was originally planned several years ago, the Larkspur City Council did not want a station at the Larkspur ferry terminal and as a result, the station was located within the SMART right-of-way. Clearly the opinion of the community has changed since that decision was made. However, SMART is not interested in relocating the Larkspur SMART station at this time as they are committed to building the line as approved and analyzed in the SMART Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Station Area Plan is not intended to study the station itself, but will not preclude a different station location should that be studied and planned in the future.

A member of the public asked if the Station Area Plan EIR would study a SMART station located at the ferry terminal. Ms. Maloney replied it would not, as the Station Area Plan is not intended to plan for the SMART station's location but rather for land uses and circulation patterns within the area surrounding the planned SMART station.

An audience member stated the Highway 101 Greenbrae/Twin Cities Corridor Improvement project would eliminate parallel parking on Redwood Highway adjacent to the highway. That area is also the only part of that neighborhood that doesn't flood, so removing that parking would have a huge impact on the Greenbrae Boardwalk and other residents of the area who use it when other parking areas are under water. Another audience member noted the circulation improvements shown in the conceptual rendering represents a great opportunity to make Redwood Highway safe for families and kids. She suggested that bicycle and pedestrian paths be buffered from the travel lanes by parallel parking and plantings. Another member of the public agreed with this statement and added that the proposed bicycle and pedestrian route along the east side of Redwood Highway takes pedestrians and bicyclists across driveways and through parking lots which is dangerous and should never have been proposed.

Public Space

A member of the public stated that new housing in the Station Area should accommodate families with children, not just small adult households, and outdoor recreation areas for

children should be provided. Another audience member stated families with children should not live close to a diesel train due to dangerous health impacts. Ms. Maloney stated that the sites closest to the train station and tracks were identified as opportunity sites for new office or retail development, not housing.

A member of the public stated she believed SMART used eminent domain in San Rafael to take over a building owned by Whistlestop and develop it into senior housing. She did not find it an appropriate location for senior housing. *[Staff note: Whistlestop remains the owner of the property and has proposed redeveloping the property to provide affordable senior housing.]*

An audience member asked how much affordable housing was proposed and stated it should be a significant part of design guidelines discussion. Director Toft said the Station Area Plan would not propose a specific amount of affordable housing units but would include policies supporting affordable housing development and anti-displacement of existing low-income residents. He noted the Housing Element update in 2014 would identify where the City would provide affordable housing citywide, including in the Station Area.

An audience member stated the public plaza proposed at the ferry terminal should not be paved.

3) Identify Public Space Improvements

Ms. Maloney asked workshop attendees to mark up the maps of the Station Area at each table and discuss the potential for new public spaces, such as playgrounds, parks, plazas, or passive open space, as well as the potential for a distinct identity for the Station Area. Several questions were provided as prompts:

- What kind of open space is needed in the study area and where? (Community-at-large? Places for children? Seniors? Active recreation? Quiet space? Natural areas?)
- What open space connections are needed?
- What other types of community amenities should be provided in this part of Larkspur?
- Should this part of Larkspur have a distinct identity?
- What might its identity draw from? (Waterfront? Historic Larkspur? Modern? SMART corridor terminus and Larkspur ferry?)
- How should this be reflected in the public environment? (Signage? Seating? Lighting? Public art?)

The groups were given 20 minutes to complete the exercise and then were asked to report back.

Table 1

- They endorsed the proposed public plazas at the Marin Country Mart and ferry terminal.

- The multi-use path along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard East leading to Remillard Park provides great views of the Bay but is underutilized because it's hard to get to. A modest amount of money could make that existing pathway more attractive.
- The windsurfing access area should be improved with benches and other amenities for users.

Table 2

- They propose that the existing multi-use pathway along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard East from Remillard Park all the way around to the ferry building be transformed into green space with benches and better outdoor facilities.
- Kiosks should be installed to provide secure bike parking, shower facilities, and other amenities. Good locations would be near the train station or on the Marin Airporter lot.
- Many more trees should be planted throughout the area.
- They are concerned that the Station Area Plan will not provide for enough parking for new residents, and that existing residents at Drake's Cove already do not have enough parking.
- Public access to Tubb Lake should be provided.

Table 3

- They endorsed the public spaces proposed at the ferry and Marin Country Mart.
- The ferry plaza should be extended to the area by the inlet where the ferry docks to provide a centrally located open space that could unify the other open spaces in the area.
- There is a superb view from Miwok Park to Mt. Tamalpais and those should be preserved and enhanced for the public.
- Miwok Park should be improved for public access.

Table 4

- Need good bike and pedestrian access to the ferry in order to reduce vehicle and parking demand, which is why the pedestrian overpass over Highway 101 should be retained.
- A new linear park could be created by improving and connecting the multi-use pathways along the waterfront.
- The pathway along the south side of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard between the ferry terminal and Remillard Park needs improvement, including lighting, seating, and planting.
- A playground should be built somewhere obvious, maybe close to the Mart Country Mart.
- The bike and pedestrian connection to the Bon Air Shopping Center from the Station Area is terrible and very indirect.
- The area between the southbound US 101 on-ramp and Drake's Landing needs improvement.
- Need better access to waterfront.
- Elevated bridges would be safer for users and allow free flow of traffic.
- There should be a connection to Miwok Park through Drake's Way and any new development at the Sanitary District property.
- An ideal path route would stretch from the rear of the Airporter lot to Larkspur Landing Circle, with a new crosswalk near the Airporter entrance to cross Larkspur Landing Circle.

Users would continue on the sidewalk on the south side of Larkspur Landing Circle and cross Sir Francis Drake Boulevard East at the signalized intersection. There is a missing sidewalk between the SFD Boulevard signal and the pedestrian bridge landing on the ferry terminal site that would be the most direct connection.

- Going through parking lots to get to the ferry terminal is a bad idea.
- The fastest pedestrian and bike route to downtown Larkspur from the SMART station would be the Central Marin Ferry Connection crossing, continuing south over the creek, crossing Highway 101 via the pedestrian overcrossing and getting onto Lucky Drive; much faster than using Wornum.
- Secure bicycle parking should be provided inside the SMART train station and could include bike repairs, coffee, and sales of bike equipment. There could be a small charge for bike parking.
- Raised parking should not be constructed at the ferry terminal.

Table 5

- No comments

4) Schedule and Next Steps

Ms. Maloney stated the feedback received would be used to refine the urban design guidelines and plan for new public spaces in the Draft Station Area Plan, which would be released to the public in August 2013. The workshop adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Workshop Themes and Take-Aways

The following themes of community concerns and values relating to the Station Area Plan emerged from the workshop:

- New development should retain and echo the existing variety of architectural styles and building heights in the Station Area and in Larkspur at large.
- Safer and more direct pedestrian and bicycle connections are needed between the SMART station and ferry terminal.
- In the Station Area in general, interactions between cars and bicyclists and pedestrians should be avoided whenever possible (e.g., encourage use of elevated crossings or buffers between travel lanes and bicycle and pedestrian pathways).
- Access to the Bay frontage should be improved, including improvements to existing open spaces which are currently difficult to get to (e.g., Miwok Park and the multi-use pathway along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard East between the ferry and Remillard Park).
- Views of the Bay should be preserved from public spaces.
- The pedestrian overcrossing over Highway 101 proposed for demolition in the Highway 101 Greenbrae/Twin Cities Corridor Improvement project plays an important role in pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the Station Area.

These themes will directly shape the next phase in the planning process, as project consultants BMS Design Group finalize recommendations for urban design guidelines and public space improvements for inclusion in the Draft Station Area Plan. The Draft SAP will be released simultaneously with the Draft SAP Environmental Impact Report in August 2013.

Appendix A:

Breakout Group Mapping Results

Table 1

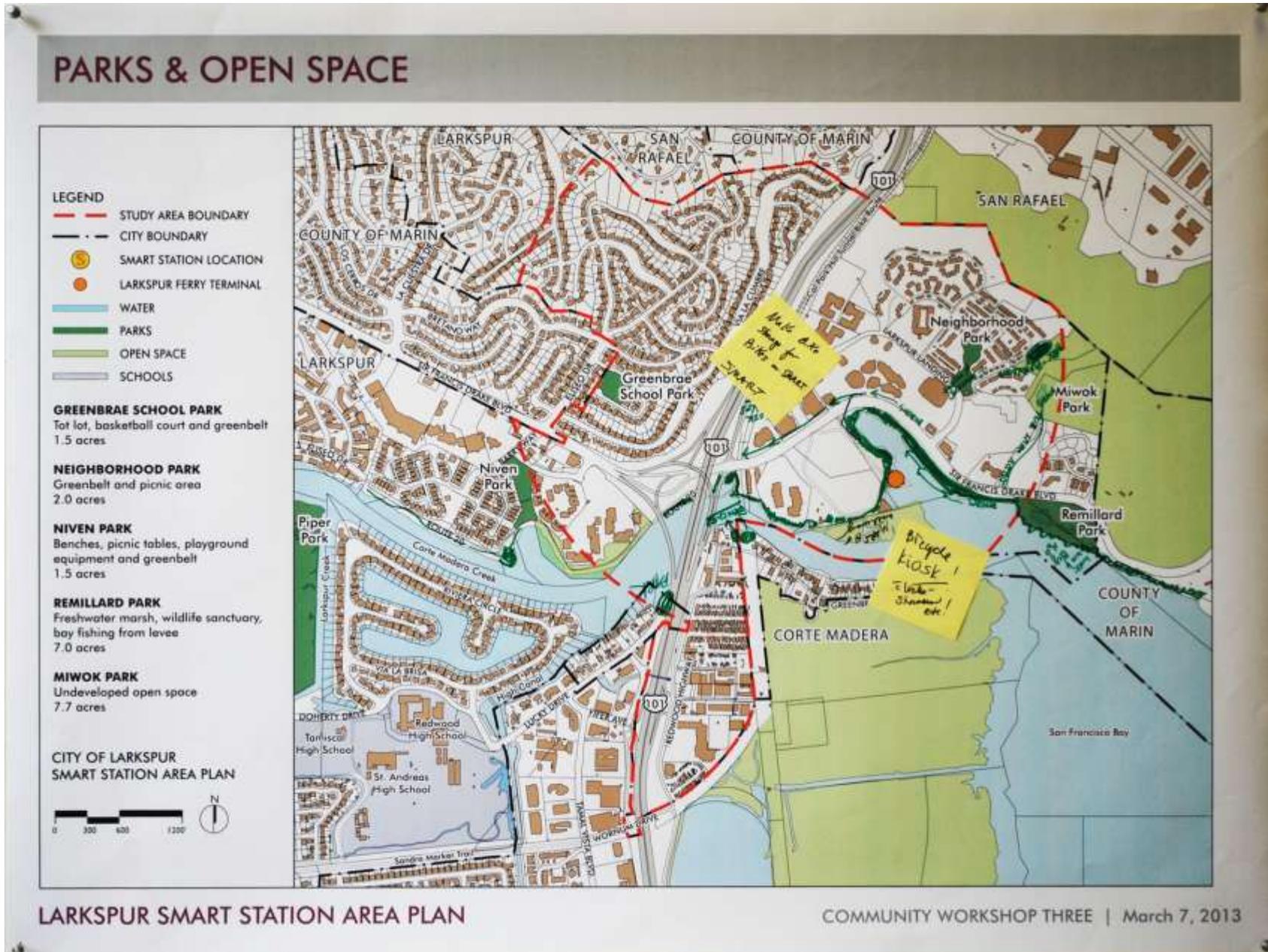


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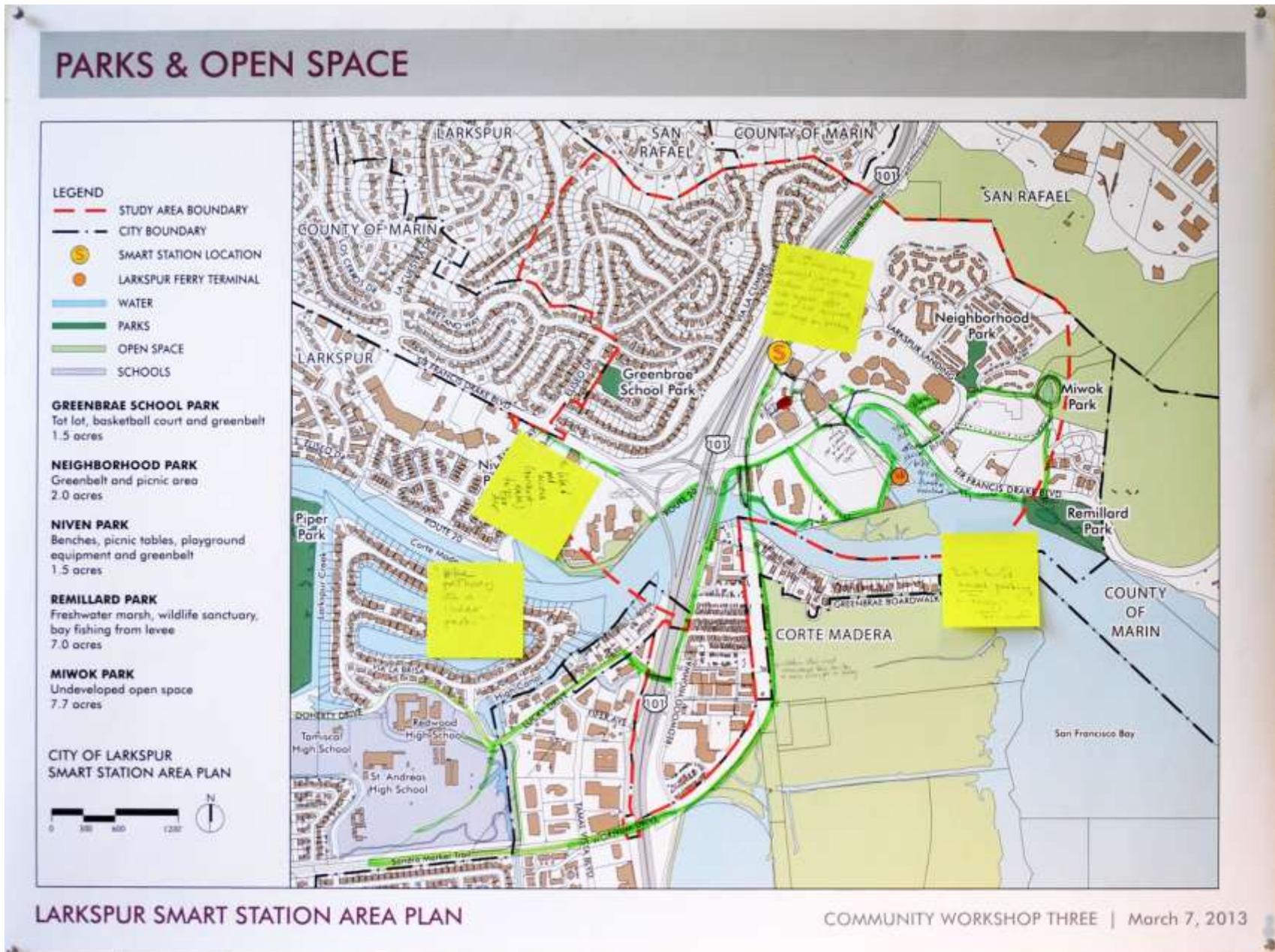


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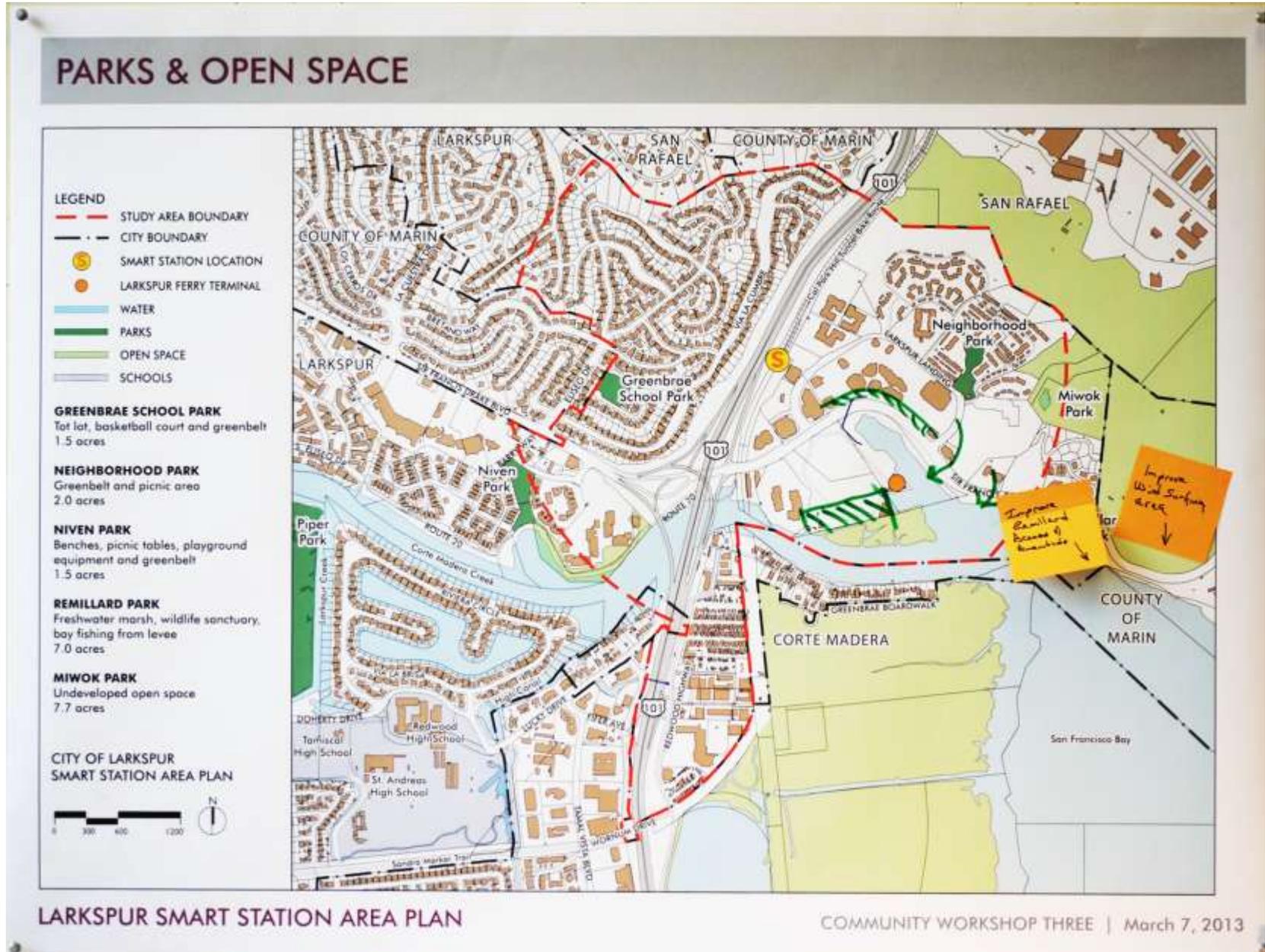


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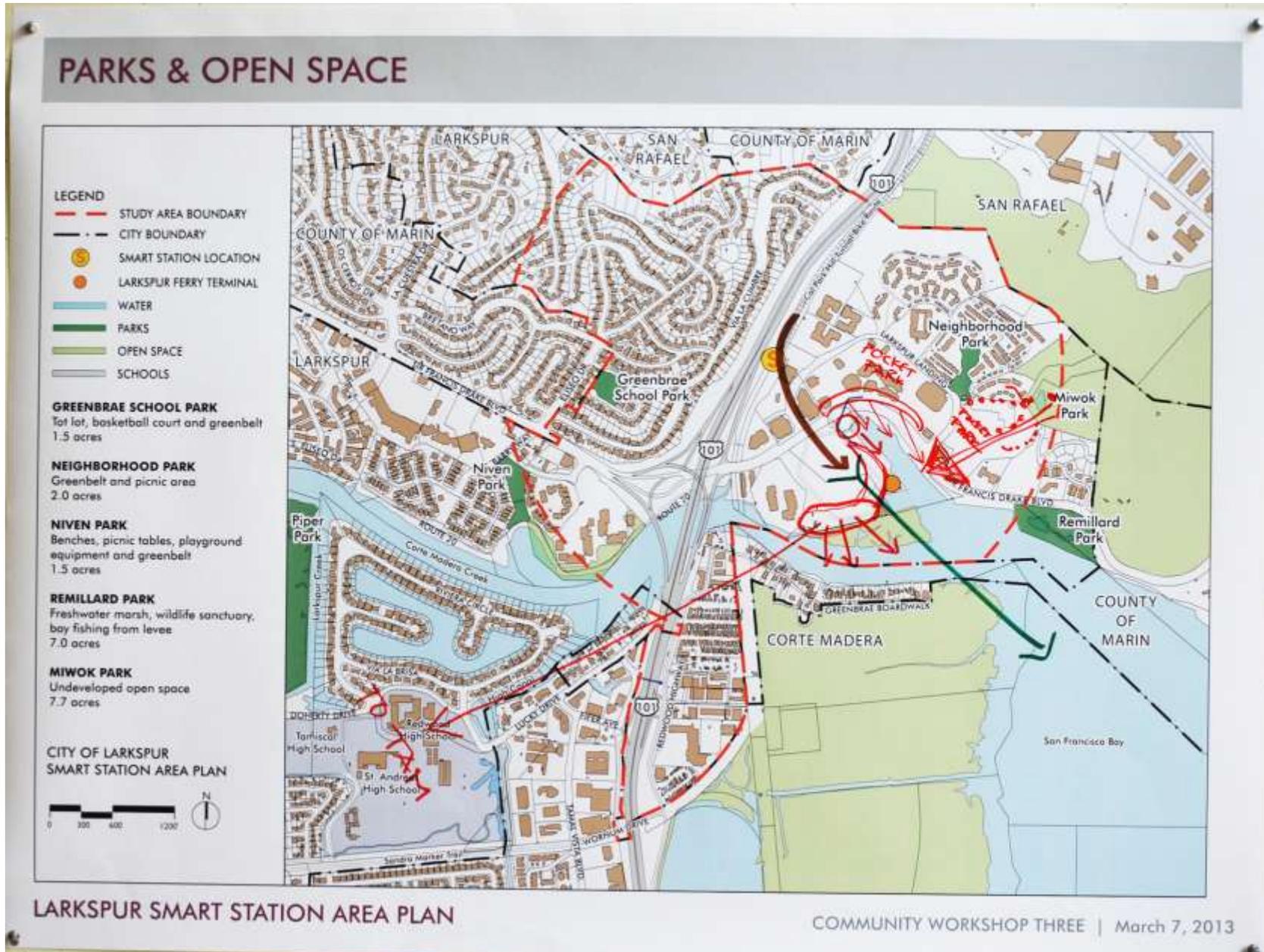


Table 4

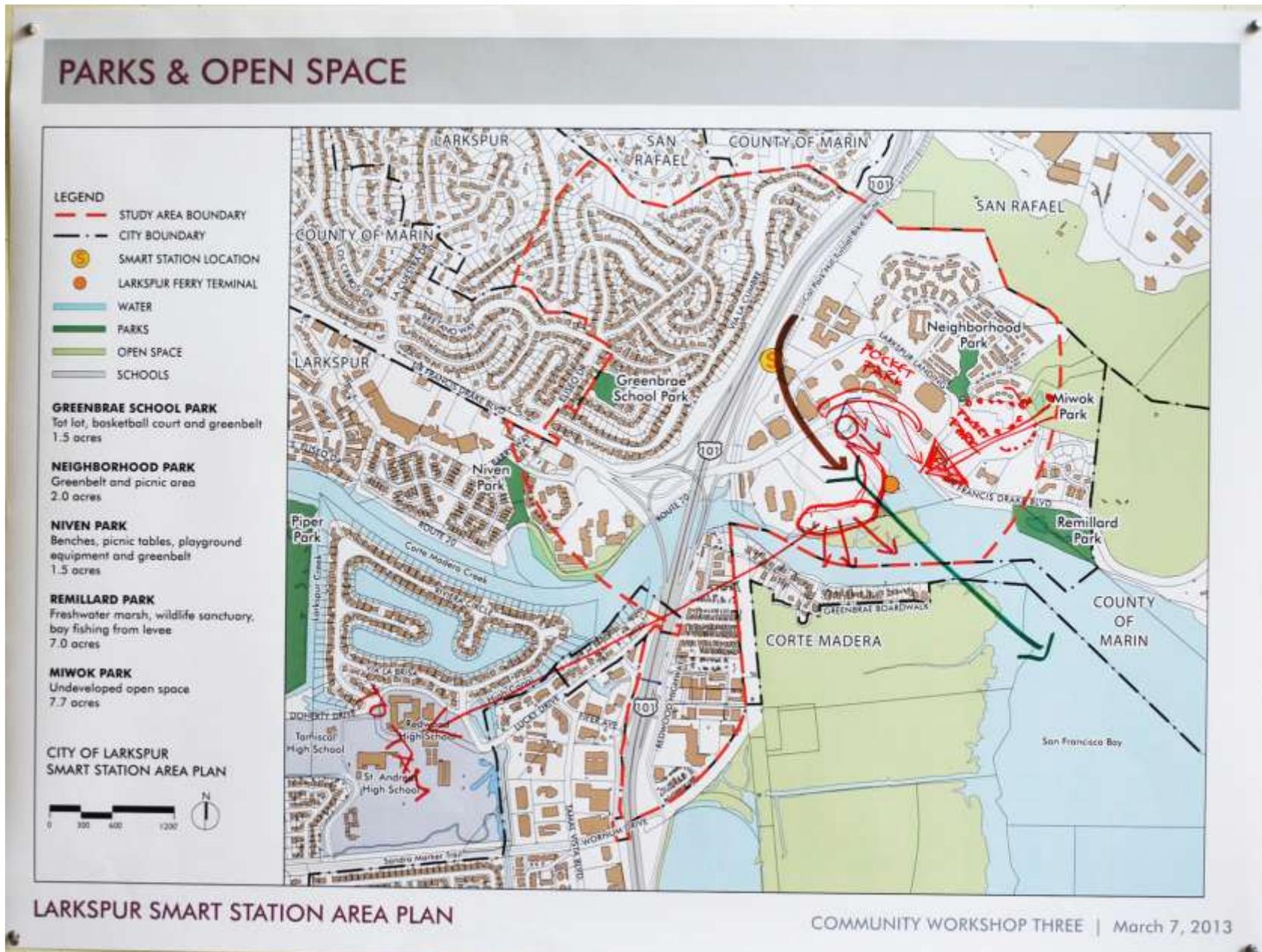


Table 5

