



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE ARCATA GATEWAY AREA PLAN

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### **Q: WHERE CAN I FIND RELIABLE INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC?**

A: The best source of information about the plan is the Draft Plan itself, which can be found here: [www.cityofarcata.org/DocumentCenter/View/11545/Gateway-District-Area-Plan-DRAFT-120121](http://www.cityofarcata.org/DocumentCenter/View/11545/Gateway-District-Area-Plan-DRAFT-120121). Another good source of information is a 60-minute in-depth pre-recorded informational video about the Gateway Area Plan draft, which can be found here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID4kcWonQ-w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID4kcWonQ-w). Additional information can be found here: [www.cityofarcata.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=412](http://www.cityofarcata.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=412) and here: [www.cityofarcata.org/896/Strategic-Infill-Redevelopment-Program](http://www.cityofarcata.org/896/Strategic-Infill-Redevelopment-Program). To speak with a City Planner on this topic, call 707-825-2045. Sign up to the City's email notification list to stay updated on public comment and engagement opportunities by clicking here: [www.cityofarcata.org/list.aspx](http://www.cityofarcata.org/list.aspx).

### **Q: WHAT IS THE TIMELINE OF THIS PLAN FROM THIS POINT FORWARD?**

A: The Area Plan, some modifications to the City's General Plan, and a CEQA Environmental Impact Report are all scheduled to simultaneously go before the City Council for adoption in December of 2022. Activities between now and then include public engagement (in addition to the extensive public engagement conducted to date), Planning Commission meetings, and environmental analysis.

### **Q: WHAT IS AN AREA PLAN?**

A: By nature, a General Plan is typically rather "general" and focuses on the City in a broad sense. An Area Plan is an Element (or Chapter) of the General Plan that provides additional specificity within a target area of the City. An Area Plan provides additional detailed vision, goals, policies, and implementation measures to guide development within the target area.

### **Q: WHERE IS THE GATEWAY AREA?**

A: The Gateway Area is a 138-acre location entirely within City limits that is generally north of Samoa Blvd, west of K Street, and south of Alliance Ave. A map of the Gateway Area boundary can be found in Figure 1 on page 6 of the Area Plan. See above for a link to the document.

### **Q: WHY IS THIS CALLED THE GATEWAY AREA?**

A: For many locals and visitors entering the City from the south and west, the Plan Area is the first impression of the City due to its easy access from Highway 101 via Samoa Boulevard. K Street, a main arterial through and into the City, also offers easy accessibility to many parts of the City including Arcata High School and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Thus, while the area has a lot of room for improvement with regards to general appearance and overall circulation flow, the area currently serves as a de facto "gateway" into the City.

### **Q: IS THE GATEWAY AREA IN THE TSUNAMI ZONE?**

A: The short answer is "no." A very minor portion of the Gateway Area is within the modeled Tsunami Hazard Zone, but that small portion is affected through a culvert under Samoa Blvd and only impacts a very small patch of protected wetlands.



#### **Q: IS THE GATEWAY AREA PROJECTED TO BE IMPACTED BY SEA LEVEL RISE?**

A: The Gateway Area is not modeled to be impacted by rising sea levels until nine feet of sea level rise occurs, which is 80 years into the future at the “Extreme” modeling scenario. Per the “Intermediate High” scenario, the site is not modeled to be impacted by SLR until well after the year 2100. Even then, SLR impacts would only reach very minor areas along the very southern edge of the Gateway Area and then only during high tides. The vast majority of the Gateway Area is well outside of all SLR model predictions, with elevations exceeding 20 feet in most of the district. Note that the SLR projections assume the City will do nothing to address flooding associated with SLR. Accordingly, if the projections prove to occur as modeled, then measures adopted by the City in the future to manage storm and tidal waters will extend the timelines.

#### **Q: HOW IS THE GATEWAY AREA DIFFERENT FROM THE CREAMERY DISTRICT?**

A: The Creamery District is a small Arts & Culture hub contained entirely within the Gateway Area. The Gateway Area is substantially larger. The Gateway Area is also regulatory, containing several land use designations (a.k.a. zoning districts) and related development regulations.

#### **Q: DOES THE GATEWAY PLAN HONOR THE PAST AND ON-GOING WORK OF THE CREAMERY DISTRICT?**

A: Yes. In fact, the Plan indicates that “New and expanded arts and entertainment uses will promote district vitality, generate economic activity, and enhance the quality-of-life for district residents and the community at large.” The Plan incentivizes projects that support the arts, such as murals on building exteriors, art installations in public-facing locations, outdoor stages, and outdoor pedestals for sculptures. The plan also encourages entertainment uses (such as theaters), incentivizes artist housing, encourages outdoor cultural performance spaces, calls for the infrastructure to support temporary events, and other art-related policies. The Creamery District will continue to exist within the Gateway Area and will be supported by a regulatory document that explicitly incentivizes arts and culture and creativity. All of this is intended to make the Creamery District stronger.

#### **Q: WHY CREATE AN AREA PLAN FOR THE GATEWAY AREA?**

A: In a basic sense, the City Council directed City staff to initiate this plan in late 2019 with the adoption of the recent Housing Element. That document includes Implementation Measure 12, which calls for the creation of a new “Arcata Gateway Specific Area Plan” as well as a “form-based code that allows high density infill development in this area” (the Gateway Area). Also within the adopted Housing Element is Implementation Measure 20, which mandates the creation of the “Arcata Gateway Specific Area Plan, which will include [a] form-based code that allows high density infill development.” The general objective of the Gateway Area Plan is to satisfy this requirement of the Housing Element by focusing housing growth in this strategic infill target area, thereby preserving the natural greenbelt around the City and avoiding sprawl.

#### **Q: WHAT DOES THE GATEWAY AREA PLAN PROPOSE TO DO?**

A: The vision statement for the Gateway Area is “To Grow Opportunity and Build Community Equitably.” In general, the Area Plan proposes to modify land use designations and development standards within the Gateway Area to stimulate the creation of new buildings, eliminate blight, fill in currently vacant sites, produce much-needed housing, promote the arts, formalize open space, improve bike/pedestrian networks, create new jobs/businesses, and promote racial equity. The Plan prepares for up to 3,500 new residential units within the Gateway Area. Interested parties are encouraged to read the document and/or watch the pre-recorded presentation cited above.



## **Q: WILL ALL OF THIS GROWTH HAPPEN IMMEDIATELY? IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS? 20 YEARS?**

A: No. Such growth is unlikely even in the 20-year timeline. The City's current General Plan allowed for a total City population of 20,000 people by the year 2,020. Yet, only half of the planned growth actually occurred. Additionally, the majority of the existing zoning districts in the City were established several decades ago and yet some areas are still undeveloped. Zoning changes take a lot of time to stimulate development. It is likely that the vision outlined in the Plan will not be realized for many decades to come. However, the Plan certainly allows for such growth within a 20-year timeline.

## **Q: WILL EXISTING BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS BE FORCED TO RELOCATE?**

A: No. Every business currently operating in the Gateway Area would be allowed to continue to operate. The community values the goods, services, and jobs these businesses provide, and no one wants to see them close. The vast majority of existing businesses will continue to be permitted under the current plan. Only a very few types of businesses will become legal non-conforming, such as mini-storage and natural gas distribution. A proposed regulatory policy of the Plan says the following: *"Except for in designated natural resource and open space areas, permit all land use designations in the Plan Area to allow mixed uses to complement residential uses. Ensure that all non-residential mixed-use development supports an active and livable neighborhood, with residential, retail, office, and light manufacturing uses thoughtfully blended together to create a cohesive neighborhood that feels complete. Allow flexibility in non-residential uses, with targeted limitations on uses that do not encourage street level human activity, livability, or neighborhood identity. Examples of uses that do not encourage human activity include heavy industrial uses, mini-storage, and outdoor automotive sales."* The Plan also calls for the promotion of "employment-focused businesses" and "resident-serving commercial businesses." Thus, existing businesses that meet these criteria (which is nearly of them) are a cherished component of the existing Gateway Area that will continue to be permitted. Those few businesses that consume entire City blocks with low-employment businesses (such as ministorage) will be encouraged to relocate to other parts of the City, but will continue to be allowed to stay in place for as long as they continue operations. Residential uses will be permitted throughout the entire Gateway Area. Thus, existing residential uses and structures will continue to be allowed into the future. The Plan does not call for the relocation of any existing residents.

## **Q: DOES THE AREA PLAN PROPOSE TO CHANGE THE ROADWAY, BIKE LANE, AND TRAIL SYSTEM WITHIN THE GATEWAY AREA?**

A: Yes. See Policy Chapter 7 of the Gateway Area Plan. One of the primary objectives of the Plan is to provide residents with the opportunity to live a car free lifestyle. The proposed reconfiguration of the circulation system is intended to substantially improve the bicycle and pedestrian network with the district. The plan also coincidentally improves vehicular traffic flow.

## **Q: WILL THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CIRCULATION SYSTEM MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO GET AROUND? FOR INSTANCE, WILL IT BECOME MORE DIFFICULT TO WALK FROM THE PLAZA TO THE CREAMERY BUILDING?**

A: No, quite the opposite. Getting around within the Gateway Area will be substantially easier and safer for all modes of transportation. To address the specific example, walking from the Plaza to the Creamery Building will be notably safer and more pleasant. Crossing K Street at 9<sup>th</sup> Street currently requires traversing two opposing lanes of traffic on K Street while simultaneously contending with two perpendicular lanes of traffic on 9<sup>th</sup> Street that could be turning onto K Street. This totals 32 possible points of conflict that a pedestrian currently needs to consider when crossing the street (northbound, southbound, northbound turning left, northbound turning right, etc.). Under the proposed plan, that same intersection would only present four points of conflict to consider (northbound, westbound, northbound turning left, and westbound turning north). In addition, the proposed plan calls for enhanced pedestrian crossing bump outs, which shorten the distance that pedestrians would need to cross the street.



**Q: DOES THE AREA PLAN PROPOSE TO ALTER THE RAIL-WITH-TRAIL THAT GOES THROUGH THE HEART OF THE GATEWAY AREA AND PASSES IN FRONT OF THE CREAMERY BUILDING?**

A: Yes, some minor modifications are proposed. See Policy Chapter 7 of the Gateway Area Plan for a series of maps and graphics that detail the proposed changes. In general, the alignment north of 10<sup>th</sup> Street is proposed to shift several feet to the west to make space for a single lane of vehicular traffic. In addition, the trail is proposed to shift several feet to the west along the segment south of 7<sup>th</sup> Street to Samoa Blvd, also to make room for a single lane of vehicle traffic. However, the trail will continue to be its current width and will continue to be separated by a vegetated strip along the entire L Street right-of-way. It is also worth noting that a new equivalent trail is proposed to be added along the entire N Street right-of-way from Alliance Ave all the way south to Samoa Blvd, much of which would not be associated with vehicular lanes. This new trail would more than double the total length paved Class I trail within the Gateway Area.

**Q: DOES THE AREA PLAN PROPOSE TO PRIORITIZE PARKING?**

A: No. Parking is not a listed priority. In line with the existing development pattern of the Core Downtown, the Plan does not seek to stimulate the creation of large parking lots or to generate a strip mall pattern of development. Instead, the City seeks to provide quality on-street parking, such as can be found around the Plaza and along other thriving streets within the City. Off street parking will, however, be encouraged and/or required in the highest density areas of the Barrel District. It is important to note that some on-street parking will need to be eliminated or reduced in some parts of the Gateway Area while new off-street parking is proposed to be added in other parts of the Area. These reconfigurations of on-street parking are designed to accommodate the envisioned circulation improvements.

**Q: DOES THE AREA PLAN PROPOSE TO CHANGE THE ZONING WITHIN THE GATEWAY AREA?**

A: Yes. See Policy Chapter 1 of the Gateway Area Plan. If approved by Council, there will be four new Land Use Designations and corresponding zoning districts.

**Q: DOES THE AREA PLAN PROPOSE TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR DEVELOPERS TO BUILD NEW BUILDINGS?**

A: Yes. The Plan includes provisions for new development to qualify for a fast-track approval process if projects offer pre-defined "community benefits" (a.k.a. community amenities). For details, see Policy Chapter 2 of the Gateway Area Plan.

**Q: DOES THE PLAN REQUIRE THE DAYLIGHTING OF JOLLY GIANT CREEK?**

A: No. Plans are already well underway for daylighting and creek restoration north of 11<sup>th</sup> Street and south of Alliance Ave. However, an analysis indicates that there is very little opportunity for additional creek daylighting in the Gateway Area south of 11<sup>th</sup> Street. This largely due to the depth of the creek, which requires a very wide daylighting footprint in order to have reasonable creek bank slopes. There are two exceptions. The first exception consists of several minor opportunities for daylighting on private properties. These limited opportunities are few in number and constitute very little in total length of new daylighted creek. In these limited cases, the City is actively exploring incentives and/or requirements to stimulate the little daylighting that is feasible. The second exception is the most substantial opportunity for creek daylighting, which is to eliminate entire street segments along entire City blocks to daylight longer segments of the creek. In a few locations, all of the sidewalks, parking lanes, bike lanes, and vehicular lanes along an entire City block-length could be eliminated to daylight portions of the creek. By using the entire street right-of-way, the newly daylighted creek would have sufficient width for a natural channel with vegetated banks. However, such an undertaking would be remarkably costly, would require the relocation of underground utilities, would be very disruptive to the circulation patterns of all forms of mobility, and could eliminate driveway access for dozens of parcels. The Plan does not currently entertain any such elimination of streets for the purposes of creek daylighting.



**Q: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE GATEWAY AREA PLAN TO THE GENERAL PLAN, HOUSING ELEMENT, ZONING CODE, LAND USE CODE, AND LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM (LCP)?**

A: This question is best answered on pages 9 and 10 of the Draft Area Plan. In the simplest sense, the Gateway Area Plan is an Element (or Chapter) of the General Plan. So too is the Housing Element. The Zoning Code (which is called a "Land Use Code" in Arcata) implements the General Plan and its various Elements. The LCP applies only the Coastal Zone. A portion of the Gateway Area is within the Coastal Zone, so the Gateway Area is regulated by all of these documents. See the Area Plan for two color-coded graphics outlining these complex relationships.

**Q: WHO IS THE APPROVAL AUTHORITY FOR AN AREA PLAN?**

A: Since an Area Plan is a part of a General Plan, the City Council is the final approval authority for the Plan. Per State law, the Planning Commission must make a recommendation to City Council regarding the adoption of the Plan, though Council is authorized to go against Planning Commission recommendation. The Area Plan, along with some other modifications to the City's General Plan, is scheduled to go before the City Council for adoption in December of 2022.

**Q: WILL THIS PROJECT REQUIRE CEQA APPROVAL?**

A: Yes. The City is preparing a CEQA Environmental Impact Report, which is scheduled to go before the City Council for adoption in December of 2022.

**Q: WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I OPPOSE ALL OR PARTS OF THIS PLAN? LIKEWISE, WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUPPORT THE PLAN?**

A: The City highly encourages everyone to participate in public meetings, walking tours, Planning Commission Meetings, and City Council meetings. Review the document and make your voice heard! Speak up during public meetings and during the public comment periods of the Planning Commission and City Council meetings. Also consider submitting written comments during the CEQA process. Information on future public engagement opportunities will be provided as it becomes available. Dates and times of upcoming public meetings can generally be found here: [www.cityofarcata.org/896/Strategic-Infill-Redevelopment-Program](http://www.cityofarcata.org/896/Strategic-Infill-Redevelopment-Program). To speak with a City Planner about this topic, call 707-825-2045. Most important, community members are encouraged to sign up for the Community Development Department's Long Range Planning & Community Visioning email notification list to stay updated on public comment and engagement opportunities. Sign up here: [www.cityofarcata.org/list.aspx](http://www.cityofarcata.org/list.aspx).

**Q: WHY HAVE I NOT HEARD ABOUT THIS PLAN EARLIER?**

A: The City has conducted over 22 public engagement opportunities directly related to the Gateway Area Plan in the year 2021 alone, plus several additional public engagement opportunities associated with the Infill Market Study in 2019 and 2020, as well as dozens of additional meetings for the City's Housing Element that occurred in 2018 and 2019. Both the Infill Market Study and the Housing Element are directly related to and explicitly called for the development of the Gateway Area Plan. If you are just now hearing about the Gateway Area Plan for the first time, the City welcomes you to the ongoing conversation and invites you to participate, comment, and influence the content and vision of the Plan. The Plan is scheduled to go before the City Council for adoption in December of 2022, so there is still plenty of time to participate. See the response to the previous question for information regarding how to find date/times of public engagement opportunities as well as how to sign up for notifications. For more about the public engagement opportunities and community participation thus far, see page 7 of the Draft Gateway Area Plan.

**Q: WHAT DOES THE CITY MEAN WHEN IT SAYS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?**

A: Affordable housing means one of three things depending on the context. We use the term 1) in relation to what is affordable at the household level, 2) to describe state mandated policy objectives, and 3) within the context of our affordable housing regulatory programs. Affordable housing at the household level means the household is not overpaying for housing costs. Generally, housing is considered affordable if the household is paying 30% or less of its income towards rent or less than 38% of its income towards a mortgage. From a policy perspective, affordability is defined at the



population level. The City's Housing Element goes into greater detail, but in short, the City must plan for housing that is affordable to all economic segments of its population. Housing affordability categories are based on Area Median Income (AMI), and the City is responsible for providing sufficient land to accommodate housing for all income levels. The income groups are defined by the state as follows:

- Very low income: 31 to 50 percent of AMI
- Low income: 51 to 80 percent of AMI
- Moderate income: 81 to 120 percent of AMI
- Above moderate income: 120 percent or more of AMI

In 2021, Humboldt County's AMI was \$72,000. This is based on a household size of four. For more information on the state's method for determining AMI by household size, see [www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/income-limits/state-and-federal-income-limits/docs/income-limits-2021.pdf](http://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/income-limits/state-and-federal-income-limits/docs/income-limits-2021.pdf).

Number of Persons in household:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Humboldt County Area Median Income: \$72,000	Extremely Low	14700	17420	21960	26500	31040	35580	40120	44660
	Very Low Income	24500	28000	31500	34950	37750	40550	43350	46150
	Low Income	39150	44750	50350	55900	60400	64850	69350	73800
	Median Income	50400	57600	64800	72000	77750	83500	89300	95050
	Moderate	60500	69100	77750	86400	93300	100200	107150	114050

Lastly, the City's affordable housing programs are regulated through agreements with housing developers. Affordable housing in this context is defined by the AMI category as described above, but each project commits to an income level. Generally, affordable housing in this context means low income or lower.

**Q: CAN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE HANDLE THIS MUCH GROWTH? WHEN WILL NEW INFRASTRUCTURE GET BUILT? WHO IS GOING TO PAY FOR IT?**

A: The infrastructure impacts resulting from planned growth will be evaluated during the environmental review. The infrastructure impacts must be evaluated based on planned growth, not maximum build out potential. Planned growth is modeled based on estimates of population growth. Maximum build out is the total potential floor area if every site was developed to the maximum standard. While it is a mathematical possibility to reach maximum buildout, Arcata has never reached maximum build out in any zone in its history, and staff is not aware of any community that has hit the theoretical maximum build out after adopting a zoning code.

Once the projections for growth are modeled, the amount of infrastructure necessary to serve the new and existing uses will be identified. In addition, the means for evaluating and revising thresholds for additional infrastructure will be identified. As growth approaches the thresholds, the new infrastructure will be financed and built. Some critical infrastructure will be required prior to development. Other infrastructure may be added to the City as new developments are built. For example, road infrastructure will be required to be sufficient to serve a developed proposed. But the first new project will not trigger the requirement that all new road infrastructure is complete.

Generally, for large public works investments, such as a wastewater treatment plant, the cost is distributed through a variety of mechanisms. Often the upfront cost of the infrastructure is borne by the City in a loan or a bond issuance. The loan is repaid through capital connection fees, use fees, and perhaps impact fees for development. These are some typical ways jurisdictions pay for larger public works, but the specifics for the infrastructure needs based on future growth will be developed for each infrastructure need. In short, the majority of the new infrastructure is paid by new development



through project specific impact fees. But often the new infrastructure comes with up-graded existing infrastructure, which a share of is paid by existing users through use fees.

**Q: WHY DIDN'T THE CITY PREPARE ENVIRONMENTAL AND FISCAL IMPACT REPORTS BEFORE DEVELOPING THIS PLAN?**

A: The City did produce and adopt an Infill Market Study that evaluated, among other things, the fiscal impact on the City of Infill vs. green field expansion to meet its housing needs. That Study found the infrastructure and long-term maintenance costs of infill to be more fiscally responsible. The Study is on the City's website ([www.cityofarcata.org/DocumentCenter/View/11558/Infill-Market-Study](http://www.cityofarcata.org/DocumentCenter/View/11558/Infill-Market-Study)). The financial structures to make the necessary infrastructure improvements will be developed along with the need for the infrastructure.

The City will evaluate the impact to the environment; the impact of growth on the City's infrastructure, including fire and police services, water and wastewater services, and a range of other public services through the environmental document. Concerns over how these services will be provided in the future will be outlined in the environmental document, along with the thresholds for triggering new service or infrastructure. This document will also provide suggested frameworks for how to implement the infrastructure improvements to show that the proposed triggers and improvements are feasible. In effect, the mitigation for growth impacts on infrastructure is to build adequate infrastructure to offset the impact. Mitigations can only be adopted if they are feasible.

**Q: I'VE HEARD THE CITY IS GOING TO USE EMINENT DOMAIN TO TAKE LAND FROM PROPERTY OWNERS TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN. IS THIS TRUE?**

A: No. The Plan does not rely on eminent domain for any reason. The Plan shows new roads and other infrastructure on private property and lands owned by the North Coast Rail Authority, which is currently undergoing a transition to a trail-oriented successor agency. Any property acquisition will be done in cooperation with landowners by mutual agreement. Where a property owner is not interested in working with the City, the location of planned facilities will be re-evaluated. As for implementing the plan's goals for housing and economic development, the City expects that the market will drive those changes and therefore the City does not plan to rely on the limited, costly, and complex tool of eminent domain. There is sufficient private land in the Gateway Area and elsewhere in the City with planned rezones to satisfy future growth and development needs. If the land is not being redeveloped, then there is no market for it. If there is no market for it, eminent domain doesn't make sense. Said another way, there is no reason for the City to use eminent domain to obtain a property for a use for which there is no market. In any case, the City does not have capital nor the inclination to seize land from private citizens in order to become a developer. The City has no plans or interests in utilizing eminent domain to implement the Gateway Area Plan. The phrase "eminent domain" does not appear in the Plan for this reason and for the reasons outlined above.

You can read more about the process of eminent domain here <https://eminentdomainlawcalifornia.com/process/>

**Q: WHY IS THE CITY IN SUCH A RUSH TO ADOPT THIS PLAN?**

A: There is no rush. The City will conduct public outreach and engagement through 2022. There will be several opportunities for community members to weigh in on the Plan over the next year. The Council and Planning Commission want to hear from all of you. Please get involved and let us know what you think.

**Q: I HEARD I WON'T BE ABLE TO ADD A SECOND UNIT TO MY PROPERTY UNDER THIS PLAN. IS THAT TRUE?**

A: No. There are several single-family homes scattered throughout the Plan Area. Homeowners will be allowed to maintain, improve, add on to, and build second units or accessory dwelling units under the Plan.