



MEMO

To: GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

From: Brian Millar
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Date: April 17, 2003

Re: Corte Madera Design Issues

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This memorandum follows our field trip, focused on community design, on March 29, 2003. At the conclusion of the trip, we had decided to continue the discussion on design to the Steering Committee's meeting of April 24th. This memo begins to outline the range of design issues (from a policy standpoint) that can be included in the General Plan Alternatives study. Three General Plan Alternatives are being prepared: one focusing on maintaining the built environment, one focusing on development potential throughout the Town, and one focusing on community livability. Design issues are therefore grouped per these Alternative approaches.

Mike Notestine (our design consultant) will again join us for the discussion on April 24th.

Alternative I – Maintain Existing Built Environment

Overview: This approach recognizes the range of existing uses within the Town and the general characteristics of the built environment. As such, it would primarily utilize existing Town development ordinances and standards with respect to design.

Key Policy Approaches:

- Utilize general range of current General Plan policy approaches, including:
 - Preservation of the character of the Town's residential neighborhoods, balancing recognized need for remodeling and expansion.
 - Balance issues of views, privacy and neighborhood scale when considering residential projects.
 - Residential development shall be consistent with the character and intensity of adjacent residential uses.
 - Encourage horizontal expansion rather additional stories for residential uses.
 - Ensure development potential is limited to development of vacant properties in the Town.
 - Revise the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the policies of the General Plan, including review of height and bulk regulations of the Town to determine if they provide adequate protection in preserving neighborhood character. To this end, consider development of a floor-area ratio (FAR) ordinance.
 - Regulate intensity of site development for commercial, office and industrial uses by limiting FAR to 34 percent of usable site area; modify standards for FAR on freeway

frontage parcels along Paradise Drive if traffic impacts are consistent with those of development utilizing a maximum .34 FAR.

- Ensure use of durable materials, high-quality structures and landscaping.
- Revise the Town's tree ordinance to ensure tree management and maintenance.
- Ensure only local-serving businesses and low traffic generation for commercial uses in existing neighborhood shopping centers.
- Use the design review process to strengthen the character of development along Highway 101.
- Prepare and implement Town-wide streetscape plan.
- Development in ridgeline and hillside areas shall respect natural slope configurations, and re-vegetate slopes where disruption of natural vegetation occurs.
- Maintain land use designation/densities of development for residential neighborhoods.
- Implement policy requirements of the new Housing Element, including possible zoning changes relative to identified sites (Wornum Drive extension, Old Corte Madera Square, San Clemente/Paradise Drive, Madera Bay Park, Town Corporation Yard and Robin Drive) and review of possible multi-family sites.
- Maintain General Plan and Zoning Ordinance approaches for range of permitted retail and local-serving commercial uses in the various commercial areas.
- Maintain General Plan approach for use of Industrial lands.

Alternative II – Town Development

Overview: This approach recognizes development potential within the Town through build-out of those few remaining vacant parcels, combined with redevelopment of existing, older commercial centers.

Key Policy Approaches:

- Utilize key current General Plan policy approaches, including:
 - Reduce disincentives for parking structures, if the structures are compatible in design and scale with the surrounding area.
- Encourage redevelopment of the Town's older commercial centers.
- Provide a set of development standards for the Town's older commercial centers that may include modified parking, FAR, building height and lot coverage standards that would apply for development proposals implementing General Plan land use policies (i.e., for targeted land uses).
- Consider amendments to General Plan policies regulating FAR. In particular, explore use of higher FAR's for commercial and office properties along Highway 101 and at existing commercial and office centers in Town, including:
 - The Market Place
 - Park Madera Center
 - Along Casa Buena Drive near the Tamalpais Drive/Highway 101 interchange
 - Paradise/San Clemente Center
 - Paradise Shopping Center
 - The Village
 - Town Center
 - Lucky/Nellen center
 - Old Corte Madera Square
- Consider development on vacant residential lots where plans demonstrate substantial compliance with overall Town design and site planning objectives.

Alternative III – Community Livability

Overview: This approach recognizes that the Town is largely built out, with resultant emphasis placed upon creation of a set of community livability policy approaches that touch upon issues of the environment, use of design standards and guidelines, view preservation, and community enhancement

issues related to design (such as connectivity of key Town nodes). In many respects, this approach represents a very viable option for a Town such as Corte Madera where community sentiment has consistently emphasized recognition of existing Town character, with a desire to improve the interconnectivity of the various residential, public use/open space and commercial nodes – issues which be profoundly influenced through design and site planning policies.

Key Policy Approaches:

- Will require fully revised set of General Plan policies focusing on issues of community sustainability and livability. While some policies hint at such approaches, the General Plan would need to incorporate the following types of issues at a much more focused level, outlined below:
 - Plans to consider “reinvigorating” selected sites from a design standpoint.
 - Potential use of pedestrian walks and bridges in selected locations
 - Creating a set of focused design guidelines that would apply throughout the Town, with potential for some focused design applications by neighborhood.
 - Concurrent with such design guidelines, develop set of landscape plan guidelines (focusing on plant materials, plant sizes, views, maintenance)
 - Ensuring consistent approach in design by neighborhood; *not* repetitive architectural designs, but consistent application of Town Codes and design guidelines.
 - Allow for variation in use of building materials and styles for new residential, office and commercial development; emphasize deep shade patterns, use of balconies and trellises, covered porches, operable windows, eave overhangs, courtyard areas, de-emphasized garages, etc.
 - Require pedestrian-scale improvements for new residential developments and large additions (front porches, walkways, eyes on the street, appropriate line-of-sight to front doors from the street, etc.)
 - Develop plans for interconnection of key Town places. Examples: Old Corte Madera Square and Town Hall; Town Hall and Town Park; pathway connections from residential neighborhoods to neighborhood shopping centers; pathway connections between residential neighborhoods and schools (particularly in areas with constrained vehicular access patterns).
 - In conjunction with such plans for interconnection of nodes, provide plans for public gathering spaces/seating and shade structures.
 - Maintain human-scale improvements when considering street furniture, building elements, landscaping, especially when nearby public gathering locations.
 - Require placement of art in public places in conjunction with new development proposals.
 - Where new commercial centers are proposed (or existing centers redeveloped), ensure inclusion of the policy element approaches listed herein.
 - Develop standards for dual or multiple land use that maximize use of parking spaces (such as residential and office).
 - Ensure development of bicycle paths is emphasized in the General Plan and through Capital Improvement Plan annual budgeting.
 - Emphasize an “infill” approach to new development, wherein vacant or underutilized parcels can be developed at appropriate scale.
 - Plan for use and improvement of transit stops at key locations throughout the Town.
 - Encourage (or perhaps even require) use of green building materials and approaches or adopt the Green Building Council’s LEED Criteria. For example, the Town should develop guidelines for builders to minimize constructed-related wastes, create healthier home environments (such as through use of materials that reduce potential for harmful gases), use of resource-efficient building materials (such as recycle-content building materials), use of water-conserving appliances and landscaping, etc.
 - Require energy-efficient designs in all development submittals for new homes and large additions, and with respect to building siting/orientation.