



MEMO

To: GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
From: Brian Millar
Date: October 7, 2003
Re: Environmental Preliminary Goals and Policies

- SACRAMENTO**
10461 Old Placerville Road
Suite 110
Sacramento, CA 95827
(916) 361-8384
Fax (916) 361-1574
- MONTEREY**
225K Cannery Row
Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 644-9174
Fax (831) 644-7696
- MT. SHASTA**
612 N. Mt. Shasta Blvd.
Suite D
Mt. Shasta, CA 96067
(530) 926-4059
Fax (530) 926-4279
- CHICO**
140 Independence Circle
Suite C
Chico, CA 95973
(530) 894-3469
Fax (530) 894-6459
- DAVIS**
231 G Street
Suite 22
Davis, CA 95616
(530) 750-7076
Fax (530) 750-2811

The October 9th Steering Committee will provide an opportunity to discuss preliminary goals and policies relating to a range of environmental issues. We will begin with an overview of storm drainage (flooding), presented by Borcalli and Associates, PMC’s engineering sub-consultant on the General Plan update. As time permits, the discussion will turn to other environmental issues, including biology, air quality, noise and geologic hazards.

While the Committee has held some general discussions on these issues in the past, the intent of the October 9th meeting will be to achieve Committee consensus on approaches to the environment.

Provided below are suggested approaches to key overarching goals and policies, by subject. Consider them essentially as “slices” (examples of) the types of approaches that can be included in the Draft General Plan.

Storm Drainage (Flooding)

Storm drainage and related flooding issues affect several areas within the Town, most notably low-lying lands near the San Francisco Bay and along drainage course such as San Clement Creek.

Goal: Mitigate storm drainage and flooding-related hazards to life and property.

Policy Options:

Pursue construction of flood control measures that are considered acceptable to the Town Council to reduce or alleviate adverse storm drainage and flooding conditions.

Implement flood measures for San Clemente Creek that address the full range of flooding issues. Consider dredging, drainage infrastructure and maintenance activities as a collective program solution to flooding problems.

Prohibit new development in flood-prone areas unless flood risk mitigation is provided (continuing requirements of the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 16.30). Mitigation shall demonstrate that no adverse impacts are created to other properties, including upstream and downstream prosperities.

Ensure new development or redevelopment of existing sites does not increase flood hazards or adversely impact the Town's existing storm drainage facilities.

Review plans for new development and redevelopment of existing sites to protect structures from a 100-year flood and to ensure upgrades are provided to the storm drainage system.

New development and redevelopment of existing sites shall provide stormwater detention or retention facilities (on- or off-site), if necessary, to prevent flooding due to run-off.

Work with FEMA to regularly consider updates to FEMA flood maps of the Town.

The Town shall work closely with Marin County to ensure implementation of all applicable NPDES requirements relative to storm drainage and water run-off.

Continue to utilize the services of the Town's Flood Control Board to advise the Town Council on provision of flood control protection for Corte Madera.

Goal: Storm drainage projects should enhance the natural character of Corte Madera's creeks and marshlands.

Policy Options:

Continue to provide flood control measures that are sensitive to wildlife habitat and open space preservation.

Include and consider wildlife habitat and open space facilities when designing new or upgraded flood control and storm drainage facilities.

Flood control improvements for stream banks shall use linings that are environmentally sensitive, such as earth-covered rip-rap, that provide effective flood protection.

Consider utilization of small storm water collection systems that can provide an additional source of water for the Town's landscape irrigation needs.

Goal: Increase community awareness of flooding hazards in areas of Town subject to inundation.

Policy Options:

The Town shall implement a public outreach program intended to increase public awareness of flooding issues, including areas subject to flooding, steps the public can take reduce potential property damage, and evacuation procedures in the event of a flooding emergency.

As part of the public outreach effort, identify prohibition of unauthorized fill in creeks and floodplains.

Goal: Pursue funding options for construction of flood control measures.

Policy Options:

Continue to fund flood control and storm drainage improvement and maintenance activities, such as upgrades or repairs to pump stations.

Continue to collect and utilize Storm Drainage Tax funds for programmed improvements, while aggressively pursuing other sources of State and Federal funding.

Biology/Natural Resources

The Steering Committee has previously discussed various aspects of the natural environment in Corte Madera. Moving from the more protective-oriented stance of the 1989 General Plan to a more proactive approach in the General Plan update seems an appropriate overarching goal.

Goals: Support the sensitive environmental needs and recognize the significant resource contributions of the Town's marshland habitats.

Actively include Corte Madera's unique natural resources and habitat areas as a community resource for education and recreational enjoyment.

Discussion Point 1: 1989 General Plan biological and natural resource policies are still mostly relevant, but focus should be on opportunities to enhance biological systems within the Town and within ecosystem communities contiguous with the Town. Enhancement of ecological systems typically involves identifying the limits of the systems, which are typically defined by landscape, topography and other factors that transcend political boundaries. This might involve seeking opportunities to team with adjacent jurisdictions to protect a given ecological resource that occurs with the Town and an adjacent community.

Policy Option:

The Town should consider partnering with other local jurisdictions and agencies, including BCDC and the Coastal Conservancy, to expand opportunities to enhance marsh and tidal lands.

Discussion Point 2: Permitting of development by the marsh and tidal lands will prove exceptionally difficult and may prove environmentally detrimental. Permits from Local, State and Federal agencies may be easier to obtain if any future proposed development includes ecological restoration or environmental education components. Development of areas adjacent to existing marsh habitat might include visitor's center or kiosk that directs public and allows more access to the marsh, without encouraging encroachment on sensitive habitats that occur in adjacent areas. Being sensitive to the existing ecology (and not creating opportunities for existing habitats to be overrun by people) and yet encouraging public interest are successful strategies for development in marsh areas and would be more favorably received by permitting entities.

Policy Options:

Limit opportunities for development within sensitive habitat areas, including marsh and tidal lands.

Create expanded educational opportunities for local schools using Corte Madera's varied natural resource base as an outdoor field laboratory.

Establish interpretive and informational signage in marsh and tidal land areas that encourages appropriate low-impact recreational and educational uses of the areas.

Work cooperatively with other local and regional agencies to ensure completion of the Bay Trail.

Consider opportunities to establish a Bay-Mountain Educational Trail that identifies the various habitat and ecological zones present within Corte Madera.

Discussion Point 3: The Town should consider various program opportunities to enhance marsh and tidal land habitat. This should include maintaining contacts/awareness of on-going Bay restoration efforts and local plans and goals for the Bay ecosystem. Identifying on-going Bay goals or restoration efforts and expressing interest to the organizing group could help to ensure that the Town and its ecological systems are fully considered in group planning and even included in specific plans or goals developed by ecological interest groups and agencies. This action could also improve funding opportunities to implement local programs.

Policy Option:

Establish a Town environmental and natural resource working group that is focused upon opportunities to outreach to the community and related agencies and interest groups to develop programs that recognize and enhance habitat and natural resource areas within the Town and surrounding jurisdictions.

Other Policy Options:

Coordinate Town actions relative to storm water and flood control improvements with watershed efforts to enhance streams.

Ensure all storm drainage and flooding control projects incorporate environmentally sensitive improvement plans.

Ensure that landscaping improvements for medians, parks, trails and other public areas include, where feasible, use of native plant materials and species which recognize and enhance the natural resource setting of Corte Madera.

Land development and redevelopment shall utilize grading principles which respect natural habitat areas, including large stands of trees and other on-site vegetation.

Noise

Noise impacts in Corte Madera have been found to be primarily associated with the freeway. Noise contours drop off dramatically with distance from the freeway.

Goal: Minimize noise intrusion to commercial and office areas along the Highway 101 frontage.

Policy Options:

New commercial and office development and redevelopment projects along the freeway frontage shall include evaluations of methods to reduce Highway 101-related noise impacts.

Goal: Ensure Town noise standards remain current and effective.

Policy Options:

Standards of the Noise Element shall reflect findings of noise evaluations conducted for the General Plan update, with particular focus upon potential impacts to sensitive noise receptors such as schools, day care and senior centers.

Goal: Design projects to minimize noise impacts to sensitive receptors.

Policy Options:

Based on the results of noise studies conducted in conjunction with the General Plan Environmental Impact Report, include a list of site design and construction options in the Noise Element that can be used to reduce noise impacts to sensitive receptors. Consideration shall be given to site design, landscaping, setback, building design and use of noise barriers.

Geologic Hazards

Corte Madera shares many of the same geologic hazards with many other communities in Marin County and the Bay Area, including hazards associated with liquefaction, earthquakes and slope failures.

Goal: Minimize geologic hazards associated with new development and redevelopment of existing sites.

Policy Options:

New development and redevelopment projects with the potential for presence of geological hazards, such as slope failures or soil subsidence, shall be subject to geotechnical evaluation.

Ensure application of geotechnical project mitigation measures prior to issuance of grading or building permits.

Require regular disaster preparedness drills (at least one per year), using the services of the Neighborhood Emergency Response Training group.

Air Quality

Corte Madera, while not as adversely affected by air quality conditions as many other Bay Area communities, still must be cognizant of opportunities to improve air quality.

Goal: Reduce adverse air quality impacts associated with new development and redevelopment of existing sites.

Policy Options:

Require pedestrian, bicycle and transit oriented features in new development and redevelopment projects.

Consider imposition of an air quality based impact fee related to construction of new bicycle paths and pedestrian trails.

Encourage new development and redevelopment of existing sites that incorporates mixed land uses located near employment and commercial service centers.