

TOWN OF CORTE MADERA
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Summary of Key Findings from the July 2002 Background Report

Purpose of the Background Report

The Background Report serves as a foundation to update the Corte Madera General Plan. It presents background information (data, facts and findings) on the existing conditions of the Town and its environment. The Background Report will serve as a resource for the General Plan Update and the related Program Environmental Impact Report.

Land Use

Incorporated in 1916, the Town of Corte Madera occupies approximately four square miles. Its current population is 9,234. Key neighborhoods or areas in the Town include the Highway 101 corridor, presence of regional shopping centers, the Town Center area, historic Old Corte Madera Square area, eastern residential neighborhoods, western residential neighborhoods, upslope (hillside) residential neighborhoods, and ecological/open space areas.

The existing General Plan was adopted in 1989. Its primary purposes were to establish long-range development policies, to serve as a basis for evaluating development proposals, and inform the public and agencies of Town policies.

Key existing land uses include single-family residential (26% of Town area), and commercial (5%), with the majority of lands in Town either in water features (32%) or parks and open space (27%). There are only a few remaining vacant parcels in Town that appear to have viable development opportunity, including parcels along San Clemente Drive.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Corte Madera was found to produce twice as many jobs per household as does Marin County as a whole, with almost four times as many retail sector jobs compared to the County. Corte Madera provides over 9,600 jobs.

Corte Madera's retail sector generated \$4.43 million in sales tax in 2000, a 10 percent increase over 1990. Most of this revenue is generated by The Village (43% of total) and Corte Madera Center/Town Center (21% of total). Estimates for the FY 2002-2003 project sales tax providing 55 percent of tax revenues and property tax 23 percent of totals.

The Town Budget for 2001-2002 Fiscal Year shows estimated revenues of \$14.1 million, with recurring operating expenses of 12.0 \$million. The Preliminary Town

Budget for FY 2002-2003 shows estimated revenues of \$14.4 million, with recurring expenses of \$13.2 million.

The Town has 3,850 households. The median age of Town residents is 40.7 (compared to 40.4 in 1990). A total of 133 housing units were added between 1990 and 2000. In this same period, vacancy rates for residential units dropped from 3.8 to 1.9 percent. Approximately three out of four housing units in the Town are single-family residences.

Public Facilities and Services

Police and Fire protection services were analyzed, along with response times for calls for service. Target response times for fire (through the Corte Madera Fire Department) are five minutes or less for 90 percent of service calls, while police response times (through the Twin Cities Police Department) are generally less than three minutes for priority/emergency calls.

Local school districts were contacted relative to student enrollment and projected capacity issues. Many local schools are nearing enrollment capacity. However, relative flat enrollment increases were projected by some of the schools due to generally slow growth rates in the area.

The Marin Municipal Water District and Sanitary District No. 2 of Marin County provide water supply and wastewater treatment services, respectively. Water planning projections indicate that Marin's water sources (supplemented by water from the Russian River) will provide sufficient supplies for at least the next two decades. Capacities at the Central Marin Sanitation District treatment plant appear adequate to meet planned growth in the region, although the District is investigating establishment of a reclamation plant for use of reclaimed wastewater for non-potable uses.

Flooding conditions in Corte Madera occur as a result of storm runoff that floods lowlands due to inadequate drainage channels and pipes necessary to transport water to the San Francisco Bay, and as a result of Bay tidal influences. Portions of the Town in low-lying areas are within the FEMA 100-year floodplain. Within the Town's ten watersheds, a number of storm drainage and flooding improvements have been constructed, including a series of pump stations and pipes/canals.

Traffic and Circulation

Key Town roadways include US Highway 101, which bisects the Town in a north-south direction, Tamalpais Drive, Corte Madera Avenue, and San Clemente and Paradise Drive. Operating "levels of service" or LOS are generally acceptable. (Note: LOS is a qualitative measure of how well traffic moves along local streets, with LOS A representing very low delays and LOS F representing a stalled or saturated driving condition.) All roadways and intersections in Town operate at LOS

C or better, with the exceptions of Corte Madera Avenue (LOS E in the p.m. period peak), and Tamalpais Drive (LOS D west of Highway 101 and LOS E east of Highway 101 in the p.m. period peak). The Corte Madera Avenue/Redwood Avenue intersection also operates at LOS D during the peak hour.

The Town has 4.9 miles of bikeway facilities, most of which are identified as Class I bike paths (used by pedestrians and bicyclists, located on a paved surface separated from Town streets). The Town also has extensive hiking trails, mostly located in hillside areas connecting to regional open spaces.

Open Space and Recreation

The Town has 35.8 acres of parklands, with the largest facility being the 22.7-acre Town Park located along Tamalpais Drive. This acreage does not reflect the various marshland sites near the San Francisco Bay, or the five regional open space areas in and adjacent to the Town.

The Town's Recreation and Leisure Services Department offers a wide range of recreational leisure programs for Town residents, including programs for children, teens, adults and seniors. The Recreation Center along Tamalpais Drive is the primary facility used by Town residents.

Physical and Environmental Resources

Geology in the Corte Madera area is varied due to a series of structural blocks and faulting. Corte Madera lies approximately nine miles northwest of the San Andreas Fault. Bedrock in the Town consists mostly of Franciscan Formation (an assemblage of sandstone, shale and other rocks) that is often fractured and loosely consolidated. This condition can lead to increased slope failure potential and resultant geological hazards.

The San Francisco Bay Air Basin dominates air quality conditions in the area. Marin County does not have a significant number of polluting industries and is located on the up-wind edge of the basin, with resulting generally good air quality conditions. Presence of ozone, carbon monoxide and suspended air particulate matter are the air pollutants of greatest concern in the area.

The Town's biological setting includes wetlands and related wildlife, as well as terrestrial vegetation and related wildlife. The marshlands along the eastern edge of the Town (along San Francisco Bay) offer substantial wetlands habitat to a number of threatened and endangered species. This area of Town also includes tidal marsh and mudflat habitats. The Corte Madera State Ecological Reserve, covering approximately 200 acres, is the largest contiguous piece of wetland habitat in Town.

Noise generating uses in Town consist primarily of Highway 101 vehicle traffic. Away from the highway, the noise environment tends to be defined by local traffic

conditions and short-term noise generated by afternoon use of school playing fields and parks. There are no major noise-producing commercial or industrial operations in the Town (with noise from some commercial and industrial operations in Town masked by Highway 101 traffic noise).

Visual resources in the Town are varied, due to the varied topographical nature of Corte Madera. Development in the Town is also varied, with moderate and low-density residential uses occupying both lowland and hillside areas. The commercial centers (such as Town Center, The Village and The Market Place) tend to dominate the visual corridor along Highway 101.