

**Town of Corte Madera
General Plan Update
Community Preferences Survey Results
September 30, 2002**

Survey Background

As part of its public outreach program, the Town of Corte Madera distributed a Community Preferences Survey (“Survey”) on July 15, 2002. The Survey was intended to solicit community viewpoints on a wide variety of issues affecting the Town. Information gained from the Survey would be considered as the Town completes its update to the General Plan, which was last updated in 1989.

The Survey was prepared by the Town’s planning consultant, Pacific Municipal Consultants, and reviewed and modified by the Town’s General Plan Steering Committee during meetings on May 9 and 23, 2002, and then forwarded to the Town Council for final approval. The Town Council considered the Survey at its meeting of June 18, 2002, and approved the Survey without any additional changes.

Survey subjects included Parks and Recreation, Residential Construction, Residential Property Development and Maintenance, Quality of Life and the Environment, Traffic and Circulation, Commercial Centers, Natural Hazards and Safety. Additionally, the Survey sought information on the age and neighborhood of the respondents, as well as information on where they worked.

Survey Methodology

The Survey provided a four-week period to respond by either delivering or mailing completed Surveys to the Town offices; the latter was encouraged through the Town’s provision of a self-addressed stamped envelope that accompanied the Survey mailer. Surveys were mailed to all property owners in the Town – nearly 3,800 were mailed – along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the Survey (see Attachment A). There were 1,095 respondents, a return-rate of approximately 30 percent.

Responses were categorized according by both age and neighborhood of the respondents. The Survey questions typically required a numerical response to questions with a value of one to five. There were also numerous opportunities to make written comments directed to the particular Survey subject, as well as any other issue the respondent felt was important enough to mention. The numerical responses to the Survey are summarized in tabular form (see Attachment B), while written comments are summarized at the end of this report.

Responses to the Survey are reflected as averages both by age of respondents and by neighborhood. Some respondents did not respond to every question. Similarly, some respondents did not indicate their neighborhood or age.

Summary of Survey Responses

The Survey generally found that respondents were pleased with the Town – its operation, livability and with respect to characteristics of parks, transportation, design, and public services. There were no responses, on average, that reflected either extreme displeasure *or* satisfaction within the question categories. Rather, the average responses indicated “neutral” or generally acceptable conditions. However, written responses contained a high degree of variability, both in terms of subject matter and on intended or possible solutions to a particular issue.

Age, Neighborhood and Work Places of Respondents

Age Group Responses:

The age groups of the Survey respondents were as follows:

Ages 45 and under: 35 percent
Ages 46-60: 45 percent
Ages 61 and over: 20 percent

(While the Survey provided an age category of 30 and under, only 14 responses were received; as a result, the Survey summary combined this age group with the age 30-45 category.)

These age-group responses are similar in nature to Census data for age groups of all Town residents.

Neighborhood Responses:

The Survey grouped responses by five neighborhoods: Christmas Tree Hill/Chapman Hill, Ring Mountain, neighborhoods around Town Park and the lagoons, neighborhoods south of Paradise Drive, and neighborhoods north of Paradise Drive. (Note: a Survey map was prepared to assist respondents in identifying their neighborhood and was to be mailed with the Survey. This map was inadvertently omitted from the final printing of the Survey. Instead, a copy of the Survey map was posted on the General Plan Update web page.) Responses by neighborhood were as follows:

Christmas Tree Hill/Chapman Hill: 29 percent
Ring Mountain: 14 percent
Town Park/Lagoons: 17 percent

South of Paradise Drive: 26 percent
North of Paradise Drive: 14 percent

This response rate showed significant response from neighborhoods east of Highway 101 (54 percent), compared to the 46 percent of Town residents who reside east of the Highway.

Work Places of Respondents:

Responses by places of work were as follows:

Corte Madera: 29 percent
Other Marin County areas: 20 percent
San Francisco: 34 percent
Oakland/East Bay Area: 12 percent
Other: 5 percent

Parks and Recreation

Those living in the Town Park/Lagoons neighborhoods, as well as those aged 45 years and younger, saw a strong need for recreational facilities.

Respondents who declined to state their neighborhood or age felt there was little need for new parks and recreational facilities.

Residents of Ring Mountain see a strong need for new and improved bicycle and pedestrian paths.

Recreational programs and facilities for teenagers was seen as a strong need in most neighborhoods and by those aged 60 years and younger.

The respondents were generally neutral towards the need for adult recreational programs and facilities. Residents of Ring Mountain saw a strong need, while those who declined to state a neighborhood or age saw little need.

The issue for senior recreational programs and facilities was seen as neutral by most groups except those in Christmas Tree Hill/Chapman Hill and those who declined to state their neighborhood or age, who saw little need for such.

Residential Construction

Most groups of respondents found the overall appearance and design quality of new residences and remodels to be acceptable, with those in Ring Mountain finding them clearly acceptable.

The size of residential additions was found to be acceptable by all except those who declined to state their neighborhood or age, whose responses were neutral.

The height of new residential additions was found to be acceptable by most respondents, except residents in the Town Park/Lagoons neighborhoods, those 46 to 60 years old, and those who declined to state their neighborhood or age, who were neutral.

The respondents in Ring Mountain and Town Park/Lagoons, as well as those aged 45 and younger, saw a strong need for residential property development and maintenance policies. Other respondent groups were neutral, with the exception of those who declined to state their neighborhood, who saw little need for such.

Residents of Christmas Tree Hill/Chapman Hill, as well as those respondents between 46 and 60 years old, were neutral towards the issue of preservation of existing views, while all other respondents saw a strong need for such action.

Those residents in Ring Mountain, as well as those who declined to state their neighborhood, were neutral towards the preservation of a property owner's ability to develop. All other respondents saw this as a strong need. This response, compared to the response on preservation of existing views, indicates some potential for conflict, depending upon how the General Plan and Town development policy is crafted: preservation of views versus a property owner's right to develop their property.

Quality of Life and the Environment

Most respondents agreed that the Town has a positive quality of life, with the exception of those who declined to state their neighborhood or age, who were neutral. Residents aged 46 to 60 strongly agreed.

Some residents were neutral on the issue of the Town's well-defined identity. Residents of Town Park/Lagoons and those South of Paradise Drive and North of Paradise Drive, as well as those aged 61 and older, agree that the Town has a well-defined identity, but those who declined to state their neighborhood disagreed.

Most residents agreed that there are adequate locations that allow the entire community to gather for special events and celebrations. Those who declined to state their age disagreed.

Nearly all the respondents agreed that there are adequate locations that allow smaller groups or neighborhood residents to gather for special events and celebrations.

Many residents were neutral on the issue of whether the Town should sponsor additional programs and events that bring the community together, with residents of Ring Mountain, and those aged 46 to 60, agreeing that such are needed, while those who declined to state their neighborhood, and those 45 years or less, disagreed.

Residents of Town Park/Lagoons and South of Paradise Drive, as well as those aged 61 and older, agree that Highway 101 presents a significant barrier for interaction between residents in the east and west parts of the Town. Those in Ring Mountain, and those aged 45 and under, disagree.

Most residents agree that natural resources are adequately protected from incompatible uses, but those who declined to state their neighborhood or age disagreed.

Most residents agree that the General Plan should stress concepts of community sustainability, as outlined in the Survey.

Many residents agreed that the Town adequately serves the general need of its citizens, while those who declined to state their neighborhood, as well as those aged 45 and younger, disagreed.

Circulation

Most respondents agree that the Town should emphasize programs aimed at relieving traffic.

With regards to the Corte Madera Avenue/Redwood Avenue intersection, residents of Ring Mountain, South of Paradise Drive, those aged 61 years and older, and those who declined to state neighborhood or age, agree that it is adequate.

Most residents agree that where feasible, the Town should pursue construction of Highway 101 interchange improvements.

Most residents agree that where feasible, the Town should improve bikeways. Those who declined to state their neighborhood disagreed.

All residents agreed that where feasible, the Town should improve pedestrian pathways, with residents South of Paradise Drive, and those aged 45 years and younger, in strong agreement.

With the exception of those who declined to state their age, who were neutral, all respondents agreed that where feasible, the Town should improve or pursue construction of multi-use paths.

The Ring Mountain residents agreed that there are adequate Town public transit opportunities with the exception of those who declined to state their neighborhood and those aged 45 years and younger, who disagreed.

The Ring Mountain residents, those who declined to state their neighborhood, and those aged 45 years old and younger, disagreed that there are adequate regional public transit opportunities.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Most residents agree that the Town should retain its existing neighborhood commercial centers in their current form and configuration, with the exception of those aged 45 years and younger, who were neutral.

Most respondents are neutral on the issue of whether new uses should be allowed or encouraged in the Town's smaller neighborhood commercial centers, while those aged 46 to 60 agree that new uses should be allowed.

Safety

While the residents of Christmas Tree Hill/Chapman Hill, those aged 45 and younger, and those who declined to state their age, were neutral, all other residents agreed that the Town should pursue improvements to emergency access in hillside areas, including consideration of road widening and vehicle pull-outs.

While the residents of Christmas Tree Hill/Chapman Hill were neutral, all other respondents agreed that the Town should pursue flood abatement options, with residents South and North of Paradise Drive in strong agreement.

Many respondents agreed that the Town should increase public awareness of its citizen participation programs to help respond to local emergencies.

Summary of Written Responses

A wide range of issues were commented on and are summarized below by subject:

Environmental Issues:

Do more to protect the environment: 202 responses
Restrict development that may be harmful to the environment: 68 responses
Put a restriction on and/or ban the use of pesticides: 43 responses
The natural environment is fine the way it is: 20
There is too much development already: 9
Put a ban on leaf blowers: 8

Dog Park:

Expressed an interest in the development of a dog park(s): 27

Pathways:

More pathways are needed: 84
Desire to open the Alto Tunnel: 16
A need for more enforcement on existing pathways: 14
Develop pathways for highway crossing: 12
Pathways should not be paved: 11
No more pathways are necessary: 10
Do not open the Alto Tunnel: 7

Parks and Recreation:

Desire for a community pool: 90
Desire for a new and/or improved Recreation Center: 60
Desire for the development of a Skate Park: 12

Flooding:

Improvements to prevent flooding: 22

Public Transportation:

Need for regional expansion: 22
Town service could be expanded: 20
Need for general expansion: 15
Desire for school buses: 13
Regional expansion should include ferry service: 6

Traffic/Circulation:

Speeding is a problem: 30
Parking is a problem: 18
Request for a traffic signal at Redwood Avenue and Corte Madera Boulevard: 9
The intersection at Redwood Ave and Corte Madera Blvd could be fixed without a traffic signal: 9
Request for more enforcement: 8
Problems with RVs/boats parked on streets: 7
Problems with homeless or others on the streets: 5

Tamaplais/Highway 101 interchange:

Too much traffic, and street improvements are necessary: 62
Too much congestion, and street improvements are necessary: 21

Housing:

In support of low-income housing: 39

In support of limited building: 37

Supportive of building without restrictions: 13

Against low-income housing: 8

General opposition to new housing: 7

In support of protecting views: 4