



✓ COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
ALEX HINDS, DIRECTOR

July 26, 2004

Marin County Planning Commission
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, California 94903

SUBJECT: Public Hearing on the Draft Marin Countywide Plan, *Socioeconomic* Element

Dear Planning Commission Members:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Review the administrative record and conduct a public hearing
2. Continue the public hearing to Monday, August 2, 2004, at 1:00 P.M.

DISCUSSION

Background

This meeting is the eighteenth public hearing on the draft Marin Countywide Plan and the first for the Socioeconomic Element in which your Commission is receiving public input and providing staff initial direction to assist in further defining the “project description” of the Plan for environmental review purposes.

Today’s hearing will focus on the Introduction, Key Trends and Issues, and Framework sections and, time permitting, the *Economy* chapter.

The Socioeconomic Element

The Socioeconomic Element focuses on the interactions of people including economic vitality, social and environmental justice, cultural opportunities, and overall welfare of the residents of Marin. Although not required by State planning law, the topics covered in this Element address the economic, social and cultural issues in Marin County and provide policy direction to address them. Specifically, the sections of this element include:

- Economy
- Childcare
- Public Safety
- Community Participation
- Diversity
- Education
- Environmental Justice
- Public Health

- Arts and Culture
- Historical and Archaeological Resources
- Parks and Recreation

Key Trends and Issues Overview

Economy: Marin County has enjoyed relative prosperity and economic diversity in recent years. However, increasing labor costs, traffic congestion and a shortage of affordable housing have impacted local business viability.

Childcare: Childcare demand continues to outpace supply, and employment trends are likely to further increase the need for childcare, particularly subsidized care.

Public Safety: Marin’s crime rate has been lower than the State’s for many years, and is decreasing. The rate of physical abuse cases, however, has been higher than the statewide rate since 1998.

Community Participation: Levels of community participation are generally high in Marin. However, there is not enough ethnically diverse participation in community decision-making.

Diversity: Ethnic diversity in Marin is low but increasing.

Education: Educational institutions and programs are generally very successful in Marin, but educational inequities exist based on income, geography and race.

Environmental Justice: The disproportionate exposure to toxins by lower income communities is a concern both in the county, and outside of the county where Marin’s products are manufactured and disposed of.

Public Health: Despite the general good public health of county residents, some disturbing trends face the population including high cancer rates, obesity and other targeted health issues.

Arts and Culture: Marin is a culturally rich community and the arts industry is a strong contributor to the local economy and quality of life.

Historical and Archaeological Resources: The county contains 630 recorded archaeological sites including settlements and villages, hunting camps, quarries, rock art and trails associated with Native American habitation of the areas.

Parks and Recreation: Nearly half of the county land is dedicated to parks and recreation use and open space including 500 miles of trails.

The **framework and vision** presented in the Socioeconomic Element is of a diverse and vital economy that is increasingly less dependent on fossil fuels, hazardous chemical, and manufactured substances that accumulate in nature. In addition, affordable choices for housing and child and elder care would complement high-quality education and services available to people of all ages, cultures and income levels.

Economy

The draft Economic Element was prepared in conjunction with the Marin Economic Commission between 2001 and 2003, and contains four key goals with associated policy and program recommendations:

1. Promote a vibrant, viable, diverse, and sustainable local economy by pursuing policies that balance economic, environmental, and social equity needs of the county.
2. Assure the presence of an institutional framework in Marin County to support economic development.
3. Assure the availability of housing for Marin County's workforce and the availability of employment for Marin County's resident workforce.
4. Provide a transportation system that supports economic vitality by assuring the reliable movement of workers and goods throughout the county.

The policy recommendations for the third and fourth goals, housing and transportation, have been incorporated into the policies of the housing and transportation sections of the Built Environment Element. The entire draft Economic Element will be included as an appendix to the Countywide Plan.

The underlying philosophy of the draft Economic Element centers around the Four Principles of Economic Sustainability, drafted by the Rocky Mountain Institute:

1. *Plug the Leaks.* Where possible, stop the outflow of local dollars by producing goods locally that Marin residents consume, or using the ones we do import more efficiently.
2. *Support Existing Businesses*
3. *Encourage new local enterprise;* e.g. by adding value before exporting, facilitating lending (through special micro-enterprise banks or other arrangements).
4. *Recruit new businesses that are compatible with existing businesses.* In this context, "compatible" means that a new business develops underutilized resources, meets needs unfulfilled by existing businesses, complements existing economic activities, and is consistent with community, social, and environmental values.

The key focus of the economic vitality policies is to determine, given the constraints on development in Marin, what types of businesses can thrive here while having minimal adverse impacts. Additionally, it recommends strategizing on ways to retain businesses that are already here. With the recent completion of the targeted industries study that identified key business clusters, additional analysis will be undertaken to target those types of businesses and strategize on ways to incubate and grow them. The tables on the following page show the relationship to existing business clusters and businesses that are recommending for targeting followed by the criteria used by the study to determine which industries should be targeted.

Existing and Targeted Businesses

Existing Clusters	Targeted Businesses
Real Estate and Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Building
Business Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boutique Consulting • Environmental Technology
Multimedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Imaging (Motion Pictures) • Interactive Media & Game Development • Engineering and Design Software
Finance and Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Wealth Management Services • Online Financial Services • Personal Financial Advising
Restaurants and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-Tourism • Outdoor Recreation and Equipment • Arts and Crafts
Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Healing and Meditation • Alternative Medicine • Biotech • Emergent Care
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic Value-Added (Niche) Agricultural Products • Food Product Manufacturing

Targeted Industries Screening Criteria

Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above-average wages • Emphasis on value-added activities • Primary vs. secondary engine of growth • High productivity • Occupational diversity and upward mobility • Industry diversity
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average firm size • Reduce dependence on inputs from other regions • Employs local residents • Telecommuting or transit-friendly • Allows flex-time • Potential sustainable partner
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative and innovative • Links to aging population • Consistent with County goals and principles

This section also recommends improving review procedures for targeted business clusters, enhancing the physical infrastructure to support those businesses and the community at large, partnering with the private sector to address economic vitality issues, and working with other

agencies such as the Workforce Investment Board to improve education, training, and employment opportunities for the local workforce.

The Economy section also encourages the County to lead by example through implementation of socially-responsible business practices, green purchasing, and implementation of a green business program.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alex Hinds
Agency Director

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