



MARIN COUNTY  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
ALEX HINDS, DIRECTOR

December 16, 2003

Board of Supervisors  
County of Marin  
Civic Center  
San Rafael, CA 94903

**SUBJECT:** Status Report on the Countywide Plan Update.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Accept the Report

The purpose of this report is to update you on the status of the Countywide Plan.

Background

During the past year, substantial progress has been made toward finalizing the update of the Countywide Plan including:

- Producing the Trends, Issues, and Strategies Report
- Adopting and Certifying The Housing Element
- Completing the Draft San Quentin Vision Plan
- Completing an Agricultural Economics Study
- Preparing a Targeted Industries Study (to be presented by the Economic Commission to your Board in January)
- Completing the Draft Economic Element
- Preparation of an administrative draft Watershed Management Plan (currently being circulated for peer review)
- Preparing 4 Countywide Plan Scenarios
- Coordinating the input on pertinent sections of the Plan by several advisory bodies including the Marin Economic Commission and the San Quentin Reuse Committee
- Completing of an administrative draft Countywide Plan (currently being circulated for peer review by County departments)
- Conducting a series of Planning Commission workshop discussions on the different elements of the Countywide Plan.

Scenarios

Countywide Plan scenarios were prepared with the assistance of four groups of Marin County community members resulting in the preparation of an affordable housing, transportation choice, economic vitality and environmental preservation alternative. Staff then prepared a "preferred alternative" for incorporation into the draft Countywide Plan drawing from concepts contained in the alternative scenarios and from the previously prepared Trends, Issues and Strategies Report. As currently drafted, the preferred alternative will be similar to the total build-out included in the 1994 Countywide Plan, although several key policy changes are noted below. Additional time will be scheduled before your Board and the Planning Commission in January and February of 2004 to address the preferred alternative in more detail and receive additional public input.

## Countywide Plan

The Countywide Plan update addresses issues identified by the public through the extensive working group process. The new Countywide Plan will be organized into three main elements: *Natural Systems*, *Built Environment* and *Socioeconomic*. The state mandated elements are largely included in the Natural Systems and Built Environment elements. The following are several of the key changes proposed in the Countywide Plan Update.

Sustainability is the overarching theme of this update and goals and policies are evaluated in the proposed Plan in relation to the 3-E's (economy, equity and the environment) of sustainability. A future indicator monitoring program is proposed to be established after adoption of the Plan to monitor its ongoing effectiveness.

**Natural Systems Element:** This element addresses the natural setting and environmental heritage of Marin County. The topics in this element include: biological, water and mineral resources, atmosphere and climate, open space, trails and agricultural and food. The atmosphere and climate, food and water resources are new to the Plan.

*Agriculture:* Agricultural viability continues to be a concern. Farm-worker housing will be encouraged. Policies discouraging large estate homes are proposed, along with ensuring that there is a linkage between the amount and type of building proposed to the type of farming. Added protections are proposed for Marin's best agricultural soils. Food security policies are added to encourage locally grown food using a distinct "Marin" label to be sold in local grocery stores and eaten in schools.

*Wetlands:* Wetland protection policies will be applied countywide. The policy of "no net loss" of wetland will continue.

*Bayfront Conservation:* A fourth corridor is proposed based largely on the San Francisco Estuary Institutes historic baylands boundary. In addition, an adjacent upland buffer is proposed to extend into adjacent, large, undeveloped properties. Policies are proposed to encourage restoration of the marshlands, as well as acquisition of the baylands for open space. Limited agricultural and public use is allowed.

*Water Quality:* Water quality will be addressed holistically by considering the entire watershed and promoting the use of best management practices such as using more natural forms of drainage, restoration and weed abatement.

*Ridges, Greenbelts & Community Separator:* New policies extend protection of prominent ridgelines in the County. Ridge & Upland greenbelt boundaries will be expanded to include publicly owned properties and additional ridge properties. In addition, a transitional buffer was created for properties, which abut the greenbelt.

*Atmosphere and Climate:* New policies are proposed addressing the need to reduce fossil fuels in an effort to avoid the projected impacts of climate change.

*Mineral Resources:* The need to protect public health and safety and use best management practices at mining sites is addressed along with ensuring that financial assurances required for reclamation are sufficient to equal the cost of reclamation.

**Built Environment Element:** This element addresses development in towns, villages and construction related issues including the link between land use, housing, and transportation. The topics proposed in this element include: community development, community design, energy, environmental hazards, housing, transportation, noise, and community facilities.

*Development Potential:* A similar amount of development potential is proposed for the 2004 Plan as was approved in the 1994 Countywide Plan. However, development potential will be decreased on environmentally sensitive lands outside urban areas and West Marin villages. The development potential has been increased in the City Center Corridor at select sites by encouraging mixed-uses (including affordable and employee housing) through the reuse of commercial centers such as the Strawberry, Marin City, and Marinwood shopping centers.

*Land Use Maps:* The land use maps are being modified to accurately reflect changed circumstances such as the public purchase of formerly privately owned lands.

*Community Development and Design:* Future buildings and streets will be well designed, be energy efficient, use green building materials and transit oriented design strategies. New commercial buildings will be expected to provide or contribute to some new employee housing, along with encouraging on-site childcare, public meeting space and employee volunteerism. A multi-jurisdictional planning effort is proposed along Highway 101 to identify additional affordable housing opportunities. Affordable housing is emphasized for both commercial and residential development. Neighborhood preservation will remain, although more 2<sup>nd</sup> units will be encouraged.

*Energy:* Additional energy policies and programs are recommended that reflect current initiatives such as working with the Towns and Cities to promote energy efficiency.

*Housing Element:* The Housing Element was adopted by your Board on June 3, 2003 and certified by the Department of Housing and Urban Development on July 24, 2003. The Countywide Plan will include a summary of the policies and programs of the Housing Element.

Implementation of several Housing Element programs is already under way, including:

- Approval of projects cited as meeting the County's "fair share" allocation including the Fireside Motel, Gibson House, Point Reyes Affordable Homes and Waldo Point Harbor. The Marin City Church housing proposal is under review with an increase in the proposed very low and low-income units. Marin County has also taken title to a portion of the Ross Hospital property that was provided in compliance with the project's affordable housing requirement.
- Approval of a \$ 1 million grant application to the State to establish the Marin Workforce Housing Trust Fund including a match of \$1 Million in funding or land.
- Establishment of a new jobs housing linkage ordinance and modifications to the existing residential inclusionary ordinance.

An annual Housing Element status report will be provided in 2004.

*Transportation:* The Transportation section includes the recommendations from the 25-Year Transportation Vision Plan entitled "Moving Forward" which emphasizes techniques such as traffic demand management, public transit, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities, as well as encouraging the use of low emission vehicles.

**Socioeconomic Element:** This element focuses on the people of Marin County and the connections between individual well being, economic prosperity, community involvement, and cultural richness. Topics addressed in this element include: economy, childcare, public safety, community participation, diversity, education, environmental justice, public health, arts and culture, historical and archeological resources and parks and recreation. Most sections are new to the Plan except archeological resources, parks and recreation, public safety and the economy.

*Diversity:* Ethnic diversity in Marin County is recognized as a benefit to be celebrated and policies are proposed to increase participation by minorities on County Commissions and at public meetings.

*Public Health:* There is a link between land use planning and public health and a variety of policies are proposed. Preventative healthcare is a major focus, along with employing the precautionary principle. Promoting a health lifestyle including sound nutrition and exercise is critical, along with getting low cost care to everyone.

*Arts & Culture:* Residents of Marin County value creativity and the opportunity to attend high quality cultural activities. An emphasis in this Plan is in preserving and recognizing Marin County's history, supporting local artists and installing art in public spaces.

*Emergency Services:* Emergency Preparedness at the neighborhood level is necessary for emergency preparedness. Continued staff training and preparedness is expected at all levels of government.

*Economy:* Marin County has a strong economy despite recent downturns, a shortage of affordable housing and traffic congestion. The Plan proposes supporting and targeting businesses that do well in the Marin County culture and reducing the time it takes for businesses to occupy new sites, -by making more information readily available about environmental constraints, having design guidelines for commercial structures and providing information early in the process about whether a project is suitable for a site. The policies and programs proposed in the updated economic element prepared in collaboration with the Marin Economic Commission will be summarized in this section of Countywide Plan.

### Next Steps

*Environmental Impact Report:* A programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be completed. A public scoping meeting for the EIR will be scheduled in January 2004. A draft EIR is expected in the summer of 2004.

*Public Outreach Meetings:* Meetings will be held with various public interest groups (e.g., League of Women's Voters, Marin Conservation League, and others) in January and February 2004 to discuss the 2004 Countywide Plan with them. Staff will present key concepts of the Plan along with the public review process, answer questions, and respond to their concerns.

*Public Workshop:* A public workshop is tentatively scheduled for February 2004 to introduce the public to the Plan Elements, along with the major issues and how they will be addressed by the Plan. The public will have an opportunity for exchange with staff and comment on the draft policy and program language. Notice will be sent to the 1,500 names on the Countywide Plan mailing list and to media representatives.

*Planning Commission:* Several concurrent three-day meetings have been set-aside in March to review, comment and modify the Plan.

*Plan Distribution:* The website continues to be a major form of communication and public review drafts of the Plan will be posted for larger distribution beginning in January or February 2004. At least one free hard copy of the Countywide Plan will be sent to each public library and interested community organizations, and compact disks of the Plan will also be made available free of charge. Notice of the availability of the Plan will be noted in the media and mailed out to the extensive Countywide Plan mailing list

Sincerely,

Alex Hinds  
Director

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Principal Planner

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