



MARIN COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
ALEX HINDS, DIRECTOR

June 14, 2004

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

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

Dear Planning Commission Members:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Review the administrative record and conduct a public hearing
2. Continue the public hearing to Monday, June 21, 2004, at 3 P.M.

DISCUSSION

Background

This meeting is the twelfth public hearing on the draft Marin Countywide Plan, and the fifth for the *Built Environment* Element. At last Monday's meeting, the Planning Commission agreed to several initial changes to the **Energy and Green Building** section.

Today's hearing will focus on the *Housing Element*, the *Transportation* section and, time permitting, the *Noise* and *Community Facilities* sections.

Overview of the Housing Element

At your last meeting, staff gave a presentation on the state certified housing element. Staff will begin this meeting with a very brief recap followed by public testimony on the Housing Element. If the Planning Commission identifies additional housing policies and programs, staff recommends placing them in the Community Development or another appropriate section.

Overview of the Transportation Section

The transportation system and land use pattern are inextricably linked. Although private cars will likely remain the dominant form of transportation for the foreseeable future, traditional solutions to maintaining acceptable traffic flows, such as road widening, tend to be prohibitively expensive and environmentally damaging while not relieving traffic congestion for the long term. Instead,

convenient, alternative transportation and major changes in travel behavior will be needed to reduce traffic congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution in Marin.

Local government policies and programs can contribute to a more sustainable transportation future by:

- Increasing transportation choices.
- Enacting an integrated, convenient multi-modal system to supplement and supplant automobile use.
- Requiring circulation improvements and new development to enhance the travel experience for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.

Key Transportation Trends include:

- Residents are making more automobile trips than ever and most people drive alone.
- Most people are driving within Marin County.
- Many people don't ride bikes due to safety concerns.
- Expanded transit services are unlikely in the short term due to budgetary constraints.

Key Transportation issues include:

- Should additional funding be pursued to enact transportation improvements for public transit, trail, carpool lanes, bike lanes, safe routes to school and other projects?
- Should increased attention be placed on reducing peak hour automobile travel through techniques such as alternate work schedules, increased Internet and video conferencing capabilities, increased home occupations and live-work opportunities, etc?
- Should the Transportation section be amended to reflect the current transportation initiative?
- Should transit oriented development be pursued at select sites?
- Should hybrid cars with 45 miles per gallon or higher rating be allowed to use car pool lanes?

Key Transportation goals include:

- **Safe and Efficient Movement of People and Goods.** Provide a range of transportation options that meets the needs of residents, businesses, and travelers.
- **Increased Bicycle and Pedestrian Access.** Expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities and access in and between neighborhoods, employment cents, shopping areas, schools, and recreation sites.
- **Adequate and Affordable Public Transportation.** Provide efficient, affordable public transportation service countywide that meets the needs of everyone, including the elderly, disabled, and transit-dependent.
- **Protected Environmental Resources.** Minimize environmental disruption and energy use related to transportation.

Dean Powell, Principal Transportation Planner, will be available at the meeting to answer questions regarding transportation planning.

Overview of the Noise Section

Vehicle noise is the primary source of noise in Marin County, with the highest noise levels occurring along major roadways. Other significant local noise sources include aircraft, mining activity, and constructions. Estimates of future noise along major roadways can be projected based on estimates of future traffic, while changes in noise due to other sources may depend on a range of site-specific factors. Noise will continue to be an important factor in the planning process as most of the future housing is proposed on properties exposed to high noise levels.

Local government policies and programs can contribute to a more sustainable noise future by:

- Limiting noise from construction activities.
- Designing building and sites to buffer occupants from noise.
- Working with aeronautics agencies to regulate airplane noise over Marin.
- Enforcing noise limits.

Key Noise Trends include:

- Roadway noise levels have not changed significantly since 1987.
- Local aircraft noise is not expected to increase.
- Noise from larger commercial aircraft has become an issue in some areas.
- Heavy equipment produces noise complaints.
- Future passenger rail service could generate significant noise.

Key Noise issues include:

- Should alternatives to sound walls be promoted to reduce noise impacts, especially along Highway 101?
- Should a noise ordinance be adopted which limits construction activity on holidays and weekends?

Key Noise goal includes:

- Protection from excessive noise.

Overview of the Community Facilities Section

Public services, especially water and sewer, are essential to support existing development and to enable proposed development. Many unincorporated areas of the County could be efficiently served by a city. The Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) establishes a sphere of influence (SOI) for each city – its probable ultimate physical boundaries. Within each SOI is an urban service area where development can best be accommodated over the next 5-to-10 years. Community Facility planning in Marin is complicated because of the number of agencies providing services (six community service districts, 16 city or county fire districts, and 11 sanitary districts) and the Federal, and State permitting agencies they coordinate with.

Local government policies and programs can contribute to a more sustainable community facilities future by:

- Encouraging long range planning between the agencies.
- Regulate the conservation and reuse of supply.
- Encourage the use of new technologies.

Key Community Facilities Trends include:

- Islands of unincorporated territory exist in most Marin cities.
- Water providers are anticipating increased demand over the next 20 years.
- Landfill diversion rates are very high, but so is solid waste generation.
- Hazardous materials pose risks countywide.

Key Community Facilities issues include:

- Should the requirement that new development pay for the full cost of all infrastructure apply to below market rate housing?
- Should even more aggressive water conservation measures be passed, such as “zero net impact”?
- Should safe gray water use be evaluated and encouraged?
- Should even more aggressive recycling, resource recovery, and composting strategies be pursued?

Key Community Facilities goals include:

- Adequate public facilities.
- Sustainable water resources.
- Safe processing of wastewater and solid waste.
- Decreased exposure to hazardous materials.
- Minimization of telecommunications facilities and related impacts.

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