

**MARIN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**  
**PLANNING DIVISION**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO: Planning Commission**

**FROM: Community Development Agency**

**RE: Use Of INDEX PlanBuilder Software as a Tool to Evaluate the Marin Countywide Plan Update Scenarios**

**DATE: October 6, 2003**

Purpose

The purpose of this meeting is to present the key highlights and capabilities of PlanBuilder Index software for use as a tool in evaluating the Marin Countywide Plan update alternative scenarios.

Background

The Community Development Agency has obtained INDEX PlanBuilder software for use as a community planning tool in evaluating the proposed alternative scenarios. INDEX PlanBuilder is a planning support tool intended to help stakeholders and decision-makers:

- Create plans through issue identification, alternatives analysis, and goal-setting,
- Implement plans by evaluating development consistency with goals,
- Achieve plans by measuring cumulative progress towards goals.

At the heart is a set of 52 indicators (see Attachment 1) that are used to benchmark existing conditions, evaluate alternative courses of action, and monitor change over time. Indicators are measurements of key community characteristics that provide insights into overall conditions.

Key Features and Capabilities of INDEX Planbuilder

Indicators

The premise of INDEX PlanBuilder is that plan formulation and implementation can be valuably informed by a standardized set of indicator measurements that are used regularly to gauge actions. Users may select from a menu of indicators those that are most relevant to a given situation from categories of land use, housing, employment, transit, and environment.

Cases

Any number of planning scenarios can be modeled, and can represent actual or proposed conditions. Typically a “base case” is used as a starting point in an application and “alternative cases” are created to represent different ideas and approaches to the issues at hand. Six cases have been run countywide in INDEX: existing conditions, build out of the current Countywide Plan, and build out of four alternative plans (Business, Housing, Environment, and TOD).

### Comparisons

Once the base case is completed, comparisons between the alternatives are conducted. The indicators are used as a basis of comparison and can be compared in three different ways:

- *Objective Achievement.* Indicators in an alternative are ranked in importance and scored. The score is displayed in a bar chart according to the degree the alternative achieved the ranking for that indicator.
- *Case Comparisons.* After the indicator ranking has occurred, the software can produce side-by-side comparisons of two alternatives and their indicator scores in terms of their relative objective achievement.
- *Rating and Weighting.* This function allows any number of cases to be evaluated against user priorities and values. This evaluation uses a rating and weighting (RAW) technique where each indicator is rated and weighted by the user and an overall RAW score is calculated for each case.

### Visualizing Outcomes

INDEX also has an option to generate maps comparing the outcomes of the alternatives.

### Future Steps

Eliot Allen from Criterion Planners/Engineers will be making a presentation introducing the INDEX PlanBuilder software. Staff will begin to assign values to the objectives for each scenario to determine the utility of this approach in evaluating the Countywide Plan scenarios. Please feel free to contact Kristin Drumm, Planner, if you have technical questions regarding this program.

Sincerely,

Alex Hinds  
Director

Attachments:  
Attachment 1 – Sample Objective Achievement Report