



MARIN COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
ALEX HINDS, DIRECTOR

May 24, 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 7, 2004, at 5 P.M.

DISCUSSION

Background

This meeting is the third public hearing on the draft Marin Countywide Plan, *Built Environment* Element. At last Monday's meeting, the Planning Commission agreed to several initial changes to the **Community Development** and **Community Design** sections.

Today's hearing will focus on *Energy and Green Building*, and *Environmental Hazards* and, time permitting, begin the *Transportation* section. The already state certified housing element is scheduled for discussion on June 7th.

Overview of the Energy and Green Building Section

Energy is essential to every sector of the economy and community, and the design of the built environment as well as consumer habits affect how much energy is used. Electricity generation from non-renewable fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) is the single largest contributor to United States' greenhouse gas emissions. Most of the energy consumed in Marin County and State is dependent on imported fossil fuels. Marin is therefore vulnerable to supply disruptions and price increases.

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

- Increasing energy efficiency and conservation.
- Increasing use of renewable resources.
- Increasing public awareness of the need for conservation
- Promoting green building design and materials.

Key Energy and Green Building Issues include:

- Should energy and green building incentives and technical assistance continue to be provided?
- Should energy efficiency, renewable energy, and green building techniques be mandatory, particularly for larger homes and businesses?
- Should energy efficiency and green building standards be enacted to address existing residential and commercial buildings?
- Should the County of Marin lead by example, i.e. meet Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design standards and use renewable energy sources in public buildings?
- Should the link between the need to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions be strengthened?

Key Energy and Green Building goals include:

- **Decrease Energy Use.** Reduce energy waste and peak electricity demand through energy efficiency and conservation in homes and, businesses
- **Increase Renewable Resource Use.** Utilize local renewable energy resources, such as solar and photovoltaic, and shift imported energy to renewable resources

Tim Rosenfeld, energy consultant, and Sam Ruark, green building coordinator, will be present.

Overview of the Environmental Hazards Section

Environmental hazards can threaten the natural and built environment. Since Marin is in a seismically active area, ground shaking from earthquakes is a major potential hazard. Wildland and structural fires and flooding and also significant threats. Sudden Oak Death in Marin has created tinder that amplifies the threat of wildland fire to communities on the urban interface. Insufficient water supply and difficult access contribute to fire risks. Countywide Plan policies and programs are proposed to protect people and property from hazards related to these natural phenomena.

Local government policies and programs can contribute to protecting property and persons by:

- Careful siting and construction
- Education and awareness about potential hazards
- Local preparedness

Key Environmental Hazards Issues include:

- Should educational materials and maps regarding potential safety hazards be provided to existing and prospective property owners in hazardous areas?
- Should applicants be required to identify “defensible space” and other fire mitigation techniques on the plans in high-risk wildland fire areas?

Key Environmental Hazard Goals

Key Environmental Hazard goals include:

- **Hazard Awareness.** Raise public awareness about potential environmental hazards.
- **Safety from Seismic and Geologic Hazards.** Protect people and property from risks associated with seismic activity and geologic conditions.
- **Safety from Flooding and Inundation.** Protect people and property from risks associated with flooding and inundation.
- **Safety from Fires.** Protect people and property from risks associated with wildland and structural fires.

Scott Alber, Marin County Fire Marshall will be available at this meeting to answer questions regarding fire management in Marin County. John Wooley, Senior Civil Engineer with the Department of Public Works will be available to answer questions about flood control.

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 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.

Alex Hinds
Agency Director

Michele Rodriguez
Principal Planner

Attachment: New Home Green Building Residential Design Guidelines