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**THE TOWN OF CORTE MADERA  
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE  
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**

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*Submitted to:*

**GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

*Submitted by:*

**CORTE MADERA TOWN STAFF  
PACIFIC MUNICIPAL CONSULTANTS**

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## QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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### INTRODUCTION

The community participation program is meant to be an on-going effort, supporting the General Plan Update. The program is designed to involve a broad sector of the community, including different economic groups and interests. This will be accomplished by wide distribution of notices of the General Plan Update process that emphasize the importance of participation by all groups, and the use of methods and communications that are clear and easy for the lay person to understand.

### PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the community participation program is to obtain input from a broad spectrum of the public, including homeowners, business owners, retailers, residents, and public officials and Town staff, that can be used as input for the preparation of the General Plan Update. Generally, the public involvement process is intended to obtain feedback on the General Plan, its goals and policies, land use designations, levels of public service and similar issues, collectively capturing the community's vision of the future of Corte Madera over the next 20 years.

### OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the community participation plan are as follows:

- **Team Building and Management**

The community participation program envisions a team approach to crafting the General Plan Update. The elements of teamwork will be evident at all points in the process, in how the public is invited to work closely with the Town Council, Planning Commission, Town staff, the Town's General Plan Update consultants, and others. The cornerstone of the program will remain public involvement as part of this team.

- **Community Education about the General Plan Update**

From a public participation perspective, the General Plan Update process will be broad in scope, with opportunities for community education about the General Plan and its intended use, and how the General Plan Update process will proceed. The approach utilizes workshops and other open community meetings as organizational benchmarks for the planning process, and as an opportunity to provide public discussion with technical and policy findings.

- **Wrapping the General Plan Around Core Policies**

The General Plan Update will focus on many areas of importance to the community. Among the issues to be addressed:

- ◇ An understanding of economic development constraints and opportunities, including site-specific approaches toward economic development in the future.
- ◇ Physical design features of the community, with a special emphasis on residential development, working toward creation of design standards and guidelines.

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- ◇ Recreational policies that incorporate long-term plans for provision of needed park sites and community-wide recreational amenities, including pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- ◇ An examination of flooding hazards in the Town and policy approaches that can help reduce the impacts to the community over time.
- ◇ Other key issues as determined by the community.

The General Plan will collectively ensure the long-term sustainability of the community through implementation of its goals and policies.

### **The Community Must Own the Plan**

The General Plan Update process and its product (a revised General Plan) must have the support of the community to be an effective working document in the coming years. The community participation plan will invite the public to help in developing the General Plan Update and increase the community's ownership of the General Plan.

### **ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**

The community participation program identifies the methods the Town, its guiding policy bodies, Town staff, the General Plan Steering Committee (GPSC, discussed below) and the Town's planning consultants will use to solicit public participation throughout the General Plan Update process. It also includes provisions for the planning consultants to provide general outreach to the community, to educate residents about the process and how the General Plan functions, what it consists of, and how the zoning ordinance and other plans and implementation tools relate to the General Plan Update process.

The Town's planning consultants will be responsible for preparation and presentation of information and summarizing the issues discussed and the range of comments offered at each meeting. These summaries will be reported to the public, the GPSC, Planning Commission and Town Council. All communications for public use will be written in a clear and concise user-friendly manner. The planning consultants will utilize the following elements for community participation:

### **Meetings and Workshops**

#### **General Plan Steering Committee (GPSC) Meetings**

The GPSC is among the primary forums for soliciting community input during the General Plan Update. The Town has formed a 17-member GPSC. Meetings will be held an average of once per month, advertised in advance in the community and open to the public. The GPSC will discuss a wide range of issues related to the General Plan Update, with public input sought on each issue. Summaries of GPSC meetings will be provided to the public, Town Council, Planning Commission and Town staff.

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### **Public (Community-Wide) Workshops**

PMC in concert with Town staff and the GPSC will conduct eight public workshops during the General Plan Update. Workshops would cover a wide range of topics, including but not limited to: education regarding the update process; establishing the vision for the future of the community; identifying key community issues; reviewing programs to address key community issues; discussion of economic and fiscal issues; and evaluation of General Plan alternatives.

The workshops will identify significant community issues and review options for addressing the identified issues. The specific content of these workshops would be developed by the Town's planning consultants, reviewed by the GPSC, and approved by Town officials.

Workshops will be advertised by the Town and held at key points in the General Plan Update process. The Workshops will be used initially to facilitate the sharing of ideas and concerns and establishing the community's vision of its future as potential goals and policies of the General Plan are explored, as the Town works towards selection of a preferred General Plan alternative, and as the General Plan is prepared. The Town's planning consultants will develop appropriate handouts and background materials for these workshops. The consultants will also solicit the assistance of Town staff at the meetings, when shifting the focus of each workshop from information sharing to working sessions with Town residents. These "brain storming" sessions will be designed to identify key concerns and interest areas of the community for use in the subsequent project phases.

Additional workshops will identify issues of concern to the community, constraints and opportunities, and subject areas requiring specific attention in the General Plan for use in formulating goals and policies. A "Visioning Workshop" will be conducted. The objective for this event is to explore alternative land use and economic development scenarios. The Workshop agendas are anticipated to be similar to a planned "Kickoff" workshop in terms of presenting background information. However, information will be formatted in terms of alternative futures or visions for the Town of Corte Madera.

The General Plan Update process also is anticipated to include a topical workshop discussion focusing on Community Design to establish an understanding of opportunities and community priorities. Participants at this workshop are likely to include various service providers, as well as residents, businesspersons and other interest groups. Community Design and Character analyses discussed above. PMC anticipates that one of the workshops will be held on a Saturday to increase potential public involvement.

### **Small Working-Group Meetings**

An important companion piece to community-wide workshops are a series of neighborhood meetings to be facilitated by the Town's planning consultants. Ten such meetings are planned. These meetings will be smaller than community-wide workshops, with meetings held in different locations throughout the Town, often in the homes of Corte Madera residents. The meetings are to be smaller in size to better acquaint the City's planning consultant with issues on a more

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localized (neighborhood) level, and to better acquaint residents with the General Plan Update process. Findings from the planned Background Report, design issues, and General Plan alternatives will be among the topics discussed. The planning consultants would work with the Town staff to identify the groups and in arranging the meeting times and locations. Appropriate handouts and background materials will be brought to each of these meetings.

### **Community Speaking Programs**

The Town's planning consultants will make three presentations on the General Plan Update to local groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions or other service clubs or groups. Town staff or the GPSC will arrange the speaking engagements.

### **Presence at Community Events**

The Town staff, as well as the planning consultant's project manager and assistant project manager, will attend Octoberfest 2001 and Octoberfest 2002, and could attend additional events as an optional task. The purpose of attending these types of community events is to both encourage public participation in the General Plan Update, and to provide helpful information about the General Plan and the Update process.

### **Public Hearings**

In conjunction with the above-listed meetings and workshops and speaking engagements, the Town Council and Planning Commission will conduct a series of legally noticed public hearings. These hearings will be held to receive comments on the Environmental Impact Report to be prepared for the General Plan Update, and in consideration of the draft General Plan itself. A joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Town Council is planned with the GPSC to discuss community goals and policies. In addition to the public workshops outlined above, one meeting will be held with the Planning Commission and one with the Town Council focusing on the selection of a preferred General Plan alternative. Up to six hearings are planned to consider the Draft General Plan and related General Plan Environmental Impact Report, with up to three follow-up hearings held to consider the Final General Plan and General Plan EIR.

### **Meeting Notices/Materials**

Community workshops, meetings and public hearings would be advertised by the Town and held at key points in the General Plan Update process as described above. Town staff and the planning consultants will develop appropriate handouts and background materials for the meetings as a guide for public participants.

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## **Other Public Outreach Activities**

### **Community Announcement**

As one of the first activities to encourage public involvement, the Town will distribute a brief announcement that the General Plan is being updated. The announcement will include information on what the General Plan is, the purpose of the update, the anticipated range of key issues and concerns to be addressed, and how the public can participate in the program.

### **Electronic Outreach**

The Town's planning consultant will coordinate with the Town's website manager to ensure relevant materials are available electronically. A new web page will be developed, tiering off the Town's existing web page. The site would be used to provide up-to-date information about the General Plan process, upcoming meetings, summaries of workshops, meetings, results of surveys, and related information. The web page would also establish an e-mail address to allow a convenient means for the public to forward questions directly to Town staff, the planning consultants, and will provide convenient links to other related web pages. Notices of public participation opportunities will also be published on the web page.

### **Use of a Community Preferences Survey**

A community preferences survey will be developed and distributed to all Corte Madera households and businesses, to determine key issues and concerns of the community in a wide range of areas, including land use, community design, and parks and recreation. The Town's planning consultants will compile the results and present a summary report to the GPSC, Planning Commission and Town Council, and to the community.

Of note is that the survey will include a focus on community design. The planning consultants will develop this portion of the survey, to be used as an educational and discussion tool for local elected officials, planners, and community members. This part of the survey will help the community obtain input from residents about what they like and dislike about existing patterns and styles of development.

### **PMC Staff Extension**

As a component piece to the overall community participation program, the planning consultants will establish regular hours at the Town offices for public access, in effect serving as an extension of Town staff. This is anticipated to include scheduling an average of four hours per week for consultant staff (primarily the assistant project manager) to be working from the Town's planning offices to be available for responding directly to the public about the General Plan update process. These staffing hours would be advertised to the community through the means noted herein, including posting on the web page.

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### **Newsletters**

The Town will publish periodic newsletters on the General Plan Update for distribution to the public and posting on the web page. Each newsletter will explain the status of the General Plan Update, upcoming meetings and events, and will outline topics or issues of interest to the community related to the General Plan.

### **Press Releases**

The Town will also issue periodic press releases for the local media explaining the status of the General Plan Update, upcoming meetings, and how the public can get further involved in the program. The *Marin Independent Journal*, the *Pacific Sun*, the *Twin Town Times*, and local radio stations could be utilized.

### **DECISION POINTS MEETING APPROACH**

In the case of all General Plan Update meetings, including GPSC, community workshops and small-group meetings, the Town's planning consultant will develop specific meeting goals to help keep the meetings focused and on target. Meetings will be structured around clear decision points that allow meeting participants to focus their comments. This approach is critical in guiding public meetings in order to obtain clear direction and to ensure meetings are productive and meaningful.

The Town staff and planning consultants will process ideas developed in these meetings and present these ideas at public workshops for review and discussion. Input from the meetings will be used to refine and select community vision statements and identify community concerns and preferences that will be systematically classified and documented by the consultant team. This data will then be used to develop the preferred community vision statement and to select, refine and augment goals and policies in the General Plan.

One of the more challenging aspects of conducting community workshops is working with areas of community disagreement, particularly among individuals or groups with different opinions. Some community workshops will not require issue resolution; in fact, many of the workshops are intended to receive input without necessarily having to accept or reject an idea. But where workshops are intended to summarize ideas or issues, the suggested approach focuses first on consensus: on what issues or ideas there is general agreement. Experience in facilitating meetings has shown that community workshops and meetings tend to be more productive if they maintain forward momentum; building upon areas of agreement establishes a better foundation for further discussion of issues where consensus is not apparent. Role-playing or approaching a difficult subject matter from another perspective can also help focus the areas of disagreement. Town staff and the planning consultants may also "intervene" in such discussions where a technical, legal or procedural matter needs to be considered. While further discussion of a topic may allow for issue resolution, there will be a point in a community workshop discussion where the item must be concluded in order to move on to the next subject. Meeting summaries typically would note the range of opinions offered on difficult or sensitive subject matters for consideration in

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subsequent work efforts. The GPSC would be used in some instances to further discuss controversial issues raised at workshops.

### CONCLUSION

Community participation in the Corte Madera General Plan Update is crucial to the success of the Plan. Every attempt will be made to invite and allow for public participation as the General Plan Update process moves forward. The stated goal of the program is to make this the *community's* General Plan, not solely that of the Town Council, Planning Commission or Town staff. Over 50 meetings are envisioned over the next two years as this very important planning process moves from its initial information-gathering stage to identification of General Plan alternatives, to selection of a preferred General Plan alternative, and finally to General Plan adoption.