

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
PLANNING DIVISION

Brian C. Crawford
DIRECTOR

Thomas Lai
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Marin County Civic Center
3501 Civic Center Drive
Suite 308
San Rafael, CA 94903
415 473 6269 T
415 473 7880 F
415 473 2255 TTY
www.marincounty.org/plan

March 17, 2015

Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: Revisions to Community Plan Update Strategy

Dear Board Members,

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve proposed revisions to the Community Plan Update Strategy to further refine and clarify the process for updating community plans as outlined in Attachment 1.

BACKGROUND:

On August 7, 2012, your Board adopted a new approach to the preparation and updating of community plans referred to as the Community Plan Update Strategy (Strategy). As described in the document, the intent of the strategy is to establish an effective community plan process which focuses on the implementation of Countywide Plan policies at a local level, where applicable, as well as any unique planning issues not already addressed by existing policies and programs. In early 2013, the Santa Venetia and Blackpoint communities were selected to participate in the updated community plan process under the newly adopted Strategy. Work began on both plans in the summer of 2013 and is still ongoing.

During preparation of the Santa Venetia Community Plan, it became apparent that various parties and decision makers had differing expectations regarding the type of issues and level of detail appropriate for a community plan. In their review of the draft plan, the Planning Commission raised concerns that the document did not provide specific land use, density, and design policies for key sites in the community or adequate policy direction on issues such as flood control, sea level rise, traffic capacity, and affordable housing. Subsequently, your Board agreed it would be appropriate to focus more attention on key properties in the community by providing information on special features and development considerations (including the ways in which specific Countywide Plan policies and zoning requirements may affect development on each site).

After considering the Planning Commission's concerns and input from staff at your hearing of November 25, 2014, your Board agreed on revisions to the Strategy that emphasize a more deliberative process to prioritize major policy issues that may arise in the community engagement process, particularly those relating to site specific standards affecting existing zoning and general plan land use designations that saddle the update process with difficult to resolve legal issues or changes that

would trigger an environmental impact report or other substantive environmental studies exceeding the completion schedule and budget for the plan update (see Attachment 1, Sections V and VI). In general, the Board did not appear to be supportive of zoning changes that could raise legal challenges or trigger the need for substantive CEQA review. The Board also agreed that broad issues addressed by current or anticipated planning efforts on a countywide or watershed basis, such as the countywide sea level rise vulnerability assessment or flood control and watershed programs, should be not be addressed by community plans at this time to avoid duplication of effort or the potential for conflicting policy directions.

SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that your Board consider several refinements to the Strategy to reflect the Board's input that staff received at your hearing of November 25, 2014. In general, these changes should ensure more consistent expectations about the community plan process among various participants and decision-makers for future community planning efforts (shown in revision marks in Attachment 1).

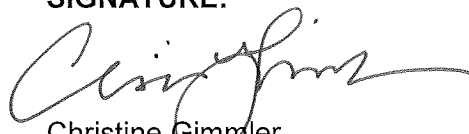
Most importantly, the Strategy should be revised to incorporate additional steps early on in the process to identify and prioritize community issues in direct consultation with the Planning Commission and your Board. Although the concept of developing a "scope of work" was envisioned in the original Strategy, the on-going community plan work in Santa Venetia and Blackpoint has highlighted the importance of developing a common understanding of what can and should be addressed in a particular community plan as early in the process as possible, and preferably with the endorsement of those who will ultimately be reviewing the final document. The early identification and prioritization of issues would also allow for development of a more realistic timeline and budget for each community plan effort, and a determination whether commitments from other County departments are necessary to address particular issues.

In addition, staff recommends several revisions to memorialize the Board's direction on subjects that are more appropriately addressed on a uniform basis throughout the County (such as sea level rise) as well as to clarify those issues that are outside the jurisdiction of the Community Development Agency, and, therefore, for the most part beyond the scope of a community plan (such as flood control planning or transportation and traffic improvements and operations under the purview of the Department of Public Works).


FISCAL/STAFFING IMPACT:

None at this time. Estimates of direct and indirect costs associated with community plan updates would be prepared for each community once the scope and duration of the update process has been determined in more detail.

SIGNATURE:


Christine Gimmler
Senior Planner

Reviewed by:


Brian C. Crawford
Director

Attachment 1 - Revised Community Plan Update Strategy, dated March 17, 2015
Attachment 2 - Board of Supervisors letter, dated November 25, 2014