

Draft #1 – 7-13-12

Draft #2 – 7/26/12

Draft #3 – 8/9/12: *Changes from Draft#1 and Draft #2 incorporated into this version as a starting point*



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT DRAFT GOALS AND POLICIES

Related Community Values:

- Open space and natural resource and habitat protection that defines the physical character of our community, promotes active, outdoor recreation and fulfills our responsibilities toward environmental stewardship and climate protection.
- Protecting the community by planning and preparing for the impact of natural and manmade disasters, anticipating and adapting to potential threats to community facilities, systems and resources and promoting a community-wide level of readiness that will insure a timely and effective response.
- Community participation and volunteerism based on open communication, mutual respect, civil discourse, civic responsibility and building local and regional leadership.

Keep these questions in mind as you evaluate the following proposals:

GOAL: Does this create an appropriate and consistent vision of the future of Mill Valley? How does it align with community values?

POLICY: Is it clear? Does it accomplish the desired outcome looking toward 2040?

PROGRAM: Is it realistic and achievable? Is it action-oriented? **Note: program language has not been provided at this point. See 1989 General Plan for examples of typical “program” language.**

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Natural Environment Preamble

Nestled between the salt marshes of the San Francisco Bay and the foothills of Mt. Tamalpais, Mill Valley exist where it exists because of the desirability of its natural environment. Created by the seismic activities of the planet's San Andreas Fault, Mill Valley's natural environment evolved as the unique combination of climate, habitat and water into a working, functioning and flourishing Ecosystem. From the earliest settlements of the Coast Miwok Indians in the territory that became known as Eastland through to the present day, the essence of Mill Valley has been the natural environment of its place. Over a century of human settlement has created a different evolution of Ecosystem, but our ability to sustain Mill Valley's community vitality hinges on our ability to sustain the Ecosystem. In the broadest sense, it's what makes Mill Valley, Mill Valley. While the Ecosystem supports a vibrant community, it also presents significant hazards to the same community embedded in the Ecosystem.

UNDERSTANDING THE ECOSYSTEM

GOAL: Increase the community's knowledge and understanding of ecologically sensitive and significant natural communities and the corresponding hazards that result in the interface between the natural environment and human settlement.

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Policies

- **Data and Mapping.** Create a comprehensive “benchmark” study to identify and map critical habitat, natural amenities and potential natural hazards. Collaborate with regional, state and federal agencies to continually update and assess the information.
- **Resource Preservation.** Utilize a watershed approach (as compared to a parcel-by-parcel approach) to identifying, preserving or rehabilitating natural resources that contribute to the community's native plant and wildlife species value and to its aesthetic character.
- **Identification of Hazard Areas.** Identify and continually update mapping data showing areas of the city that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change related hazards, including sea level rise, loss of barrier habitats (e.g., wetlands), changing storm cycles and increased rainfall and extended periods of excessive heat.
- **Use Best-available Science, Technology and Practices.** Ground climate change adaptation strategies in the best-available scientific understanding of hazards, risks, impacts, and vulnerabilities. Don't delay adaptive plans and policies to wait for a more complete understanding of climate change impacts. Adjust plans and actions as our understanding of climate impacts increases.
- **Administrative and Equipment Capacity.** Maintain adequate levels of staffing, facilities, materials and equipment to provide a timely disaster response consistent with the needs of a demographically changing community and a challenging natural environment.
- **Community Outreach.** Encourage community programs and educational opportunities that explain and promote sustainability.

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- **Public Education.** Support educational programs for residents and visitors about the uniqueness and value of the natural resources, plants, and wildlife in Mill Valley, and how to appreciate, enjoy and protect those values.

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SUSTAINING THE ECOSYSTEM

GOAL: Preserve, restore and rehabilitate the integrity, function, productivity and long-term viability and resiliency of ecologically sensitive and significant natural communities and wildlife habitats.

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Policies

- **Public Access.** Provide access to designated open space areas along Richardson Bay and creek corridors consistent with preserving habitat and protecting threatened or endangered species.
- **Retain Habitat Areas.** Retain plant and wildlife habitat areas where there are known sensitive resources (e.g., sensitive habitats, special-status, threatened, endangered, candidate species, and species of concern) and that are contiguous with other existing natural areas and/or wildlife movement corridors.
- **Riparian Habitat Integrity.** Preserve the ecological integrity of creek corridors that support riparian resources by preserving or restoring native plants and removing invasive non-native plants. Insure that preservation and restoration efforts are consistent with and mutually support applicable flood control, storm drainage, water quality and public access values.

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Program Suggestions:

- List of suitable plants for creek banks and setback areas

- **Wetland Protection.** Preserve and protect wetland resources in compliance with applicable regional, state and federal regulations.
- **Scenic Vistas.** Enhance opportunities for public views of natural areas, including Richardson Bay, Mount Tamalpais and existing creek corridors.
- **Heritage Trees.** Protect populations, stands (groves) and heritage specimens of native tree species and implement regulations and development standards to ensure that native trees are protected from the encroachment of buildings or landscaping, severe pruning or unnecessary removal.
- **Open Space Acquisition and Maintenance.** Continue to collaborate with the Marin Open Space District, property owners and other open space acquisition agencies to identify and acquire additional open space resources for recreation, habitat protection, watershed management and flood control, and to complete identified emergency evacuation routes.

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GOAL: Systematically demonstrate sustainability and resource conservation in all planning and decision-making.

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Policies

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- **Leadership and Coordination.** Collaborate with local, state and federal agencies and private organizations to initiate and implement sustainable policies and programs. **Lead by example** in developing and promoting sustainable practices and using an ecosystem approach to solving resource related issues that goes beyond political boundaries.
- **Conserve Water Resources.** Promote the use of recycled water through rainwater storage and grey water systems for landscape irrigation.

Program Suggestions:

- *Landscape design guidelines*
- *Watershed approach*

- **Water Quality.** Improve the quality and control of urban runoff through storm water protection measures consistent with the City’s National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit and watershed-based regional water quality standards.
- **Development and Construction Standards.** Create incentives and regulatory standards that result in low impact new development and encourage the retrofit of existing buildings and infrastructure to current standards.
- **No Net Increase in Storm water Runoff.** Require all new development to contribute no net increase to stormwater runoff peak flows over existing conditions associated with a 100-year storm event.
- **Water System Integrity.** Work with MMWD to optimize storage, transmission and distribution capacities and efficiencies and to minimize water outages due to emergencies or disasters.

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Program Suggestions:

- *Refit Cascade Dam in case of drought or emergency*

- **Clean Energy.** Update design guidelines and development standards to encourage solar, water harvesting and other emerging green building technologies.
- **Remove Regulatory Barriers.** Remove barriers to the application of new technologies that are environmentally beneficial.
- **Recycling and Waste Management.** Reduce the volume of the waste stream by encouraging recycling and composting and moving toward Zero Waste objectives.

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Program Suggestions:

- *Zero Waste*

- **Community Involvement.** Draw on Mill Valley’s commitment to volunteerism and environmental stewardship to help protect and rehabilitate the area’s natural resources.

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Program Suggestions:

- *Involved neighborhoods and volunteerism*

CLIMATE CHANGE

GOAL: Reduce Mill Valley’s vulnerability to the impacts of climate change

Policies

- **Sense of Urgency.** Make adaptation planning and implementation a City budget and operational priority.
- **Identification of Hazard Areas.** Identify and continually update mapping data showing areas of the city that are vulnerable to climate change related effects, including sea level rise, loss of barrier habitats (e.g., wetlands), changing storm cycles and increased rainfall and extended periods of excessive heat.
- **Prioritize the Most Vulnerable.** Prioritize adaptation planning and funding to help people, places, and infrastructure that are most vulnerable to climate impacts.
- **Protection of Critical Infrastructure.** Establish a long-term strategy for adapting critical City infrastructure.
- **Build Strong Partnerships.** Promote adaptation across multiple sectors, geographical scales, and levels of government. Build on the existing efforts and knowledge of a wide range of stakeholders who understand local or regional risks and needs.
- **Changing Hazards.** Recognize that the effects of climate change will also affect the type and intensity of potential community hazards and update community hazard mitigation plans to anticipate impacts and responses.

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COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

GOAL: Maximize Mill Valley’s ability to prevent, mitigate and recover from disaster.

Policies

- **Resilient Neighborhoods.** Encourage neighborhood organization in those areas of Mill Valley where none currently exist as a means to support neighborhood specific strategies to educate, prepare and respond to disasters.
- **Inform and Engage.** Create and implement regular educational and training programs for City staff, residents, businesses, schools and neighborhood groups that include emergency response protocols and procedures, disaster risk education, and self-sufficiency.
- **Interdepartmental Recovery Coordination.** Ensure continuity of City operations through ongoing interdepartmental coordination, contingency planning and periodic exercises in order to provide swift and effective disaster response and recovery.
- **Emergency Response and Evacuation Routes.** Continue to expand the network of anticipated emergency response routes and regularly exercise evacuation protocols and procedures.
- **Notification and Early Warning Systems.** Consider new technology and procedures to improve the capability of the early warning system

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- **Protection of Essential Facilities.** Prioritize strategies for protecting critical facilities following a major disaster to help prevent problems during post-disaster evacuations, rescues and major clean-up operations.

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Program Suggestions:

- *Sprinklers*
- *Building Materials*
- *Hazard Maps and Data*
- *Vegetation Management*
- *Emergency Vehicle Access*
- *Fire Inspection*
- *Water Supply*
- *Grading*
- *Runoff*
- *Flood Protection*
- *All Hazards Mitigation Plan*
- *Mutual Aid*
- *WUI Review*
- *Inventory of Existing Programs and Practices*

○ [Residential Building Reports to identify hazards for potential home buyers](#)

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RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP