



CHAPTER 1.0: INTRODUCTION AND VISION

This General Plan represents the product of years of efforts on the part of residents and businesses in the community working to maintain and improve Madera's quality of life and implement the community's shared vision for the future.

This Introduction provides a brief overview of the Plan itself, the key ideas which are addressed in the City's policies, and notes about how this Plan will be implemented over time (and how it can be amended to reflect changing realities).

VISION 2025

Recognizing the need to create a roadmap to the City's future, the Madera community embarked on a process in 2005 that began with the preparation of **Vision Madera 2025**. This community-based effort was undertaken to create an improved sense of unity in Madera, generate more effective decision-making, and provide the City with guidance for long-range planning. The **Vision Madera 2025** report (available as a separate volume) listed hundreds of ideas and actions developed by the community—this General Plan builds on and implements these community values. Key

statements of principles and ideas from **Vision 2025** are excerpted below, and are described in more detail in Chapter 2.0 – Vision 2025.

The statement of principle titled **A Well-Planned City** is concerned with the physical aspects of Madera's growth. Affordable housing, balancing residential, commercial and agricultural needs and providing efficient services are significant concerns for a rapidly growing community. Open communications between the community and City/County government and within those governments are vital to a healthy city.

The statement of principle titled **Good Jobs and Economic Opportunities** recognizes the need for good jobs, a well-trained, well-paid workforce and a broad spectrum of business opportunities. The vision underscores the need to attract commercial and retail businesses and to encourage residents to buy locally.

The statement of principle titled **A Strong Community and Great Schools** highlights development of leadership, expansion of educational opportunities, support for the arts and recognition of the Madera's unique culture. Support for Madera's youth in education, after-school programs and sports activities reflects the community's desire to create a caring environment in which to raise a family.

The statement of principle titled **A Safe, Healthy Environment** emphasizes the community's desire to protect Madera's natural resources, enjoy a secure community and provide healthy educational and recreational activities. The Vision recognizes the need for Madera's parks and open spaces to be convenient and well-maintained. This statement also emphasizes excellent health care and related services for all community members.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City of Madera recognizes and acknowledges the ability of planning to affect the quality of lives of residents, the success of the local economy, the appearance of the community, the ability of Madera to respond to changing economic circumstances, and the extent to which the city can help in state-wide and national efforts to reduce energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In light of these potential affects, and taking queues from the four pillars of Vision Madera 2025, the Madera General Plan embodies several guiding principles throughout its ten elements.

- **Be proactive**, addressing important issues as early as possible, when the City's actions can have the most effect;
- **Think ahead**, working to identify important issues and to continually seek out the best practices of other cities and communities and implement them in a way that is meaningful to Madera;
- **Recognize Madera's Heritage** by conserving the agricultural uses that have been a part of the City's fabric since its beginnings;
- **Support Madera's transition** from a small town to a contemporary small city, while retaining its sense of community;
- **Embrace diversity** in all aspects of the city—its people, its housing, its economy—in recognition of the strength and flexibility it provides; and
- **Ensure the long-term viability of Madera** both from an economic standpoint and from the perspective of the physical systems—land, water, air, and so forth—that are critical to a healthy city.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE GENERAL PLAN

Citizen participation played an important role in preparing this General Plan. Because the General Plan needs to reflect community goals and aspirations, citizens were involved, from the onset, with issues identification and goal formulation. One of the most important parts of this process was the General Plan Public Advisory Committee, whose members met monthly throughout the preparation of the Draft General Plan to bring their own expertise to the process and to encourage participation and comments from all segments of the community.



A wide variety of civic and professional organizations were consulted during the Plan preparation stage whenever possible. Numerous public meetings were held in various locations throughout the community to discuss the Plan.

Citizen groups and individuals participated in preparation of the General Plan through attendance at General Plan Public Advisory Committee meetings, at General Plan public workshops, in focus group meetings, and at public hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council.

ROLE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is a broad framework for planning the future of the City of Madera. The General Plan is the official policy statement of the City Council to guide private and public development of the City, as well as the City's own operations and decisions.

State law requires that the City's ordinances regulating land use be consistent with the General Plan. The Zoning Code, individual project proposals, and other related plans and ordinances must be consistent with the goals and policies in this General Plan. In addition, all capital improvements and public works projects must also be consistent with the General Plan.

Periodic review and possible amendment of the General Plan to adjust to changing conditions and priorities is required. This General Plan, while prepared with a time horizon of at least 20 years in mind, is not unchangeable. As circumstances or the City's desires change, this General Plan may be amended by the City Council following review by the Planning Commission.

THE TEN ELEMENTS OF THIS GENERAL PLAN

State law requires that General Plans address seven topics: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. This General Plan covers all of these topics plus several additional issues, which are organized in the following chapters, commonly referred to as elements:

- Community Design (Optional Topic);
- Circulation (Required Topic, per state law);
- Conservation (Required Topics of "Conservation" and "Open Space," per state law);
- Health and Safety (Required Topic of "Safety," per state law, plus additional topic of "Health");
- Housing (Required Topic, per state law);
- Land Use (Required Topic, per state law);
- Noise (Required Topic, per state law);
- Historic and Cultural Resources (Optional topic);
- Parks and Recreation (Optional Topic);
- Sustainability (Optional Topic).

Together, these Elements provide the City's policies on a broad range of issues related to the future of Madera, its livability, and its desire to become a model for other Central Valley communities.

THE PLANNING AREA

This General Plan addresses a "Planning Area" that extends outside the current city limits (see **Figure I-1**, on the following page). This Planning Area was defined during the initial stages of the 2008/2009 General Plan Update, and represents the area which the City envisions may ultimately be included either in a Sphere of Influence or in the incorporated city limits.

Outside the city limits, this General Plan is purely advisory, although it does provide a statement of the uses the City desires in these areas. While the City has no jurisdiction over these areas, it can advise the County of Madera on land use policy, and can provide input to the County on projects taking place in the Planning Area.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

This General Plan uses the following basic conventions for goals, policies, and actions:

Goals are a statement of a target, an ambition, or an end state toward which the City is working. Example: *“Quality infrastructure that meets the needs of the community at the time it is needed.”* Goals do not say *how* their target will be achieved—that is the purpose of Policies and Actions.

Policies provide guidance on City’s approach to an issue, and help define how the City will respond to various issues. Policies may be used to express the City’s preference on an issue (e.g., *“The City discourages ...”* or *“The City encourages ...”*). Policies can also include standards, such as those included in this General Plan for roadway congestion, parkland, noise, and other issues. In some cases, Policies may be hard-and-fast rules (e.g., *“The City shall ...”*); in others, they may provide more general guidance.

Action Items are specific things that the City will do to implement this goals and policies in this General Plan. In some cases, Actions refer to a one-time plan or project (such as the adoption of a change to the Zoning Code); in others, the action is ongoing and will occur over a period of years (or longer).

USING AND INTERPRETING THIS GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is intended to be used by a broad range of persons, including:

- The City Council and Planning Commission in decision-making activities;
- City staff in developing programs and projects;
- The development community in preparing development proposals; and
- Residents and citizens interested in the future of Madera.
- The County of Madera in considering development in close proximity to the City.

When using this General Plan, the following basic rules should be kept in mind:

- Only those statements specifically listed as “Goal” are to be interpreted as stating the City’s goals.
- Only those statements specifically listed as “Policy” are to be interpreted as statements of City policy. Narrative descriptions and discussions not preceded by a Policy designation are provided for information and background only and may assist decision makers with the interpretation of Policies.

- Unless otherwise defined by Policy, the standard definitions of words and terms shall be used. The Glossary to this General Plan provides definitions of many commonly used planning terms; these may be used as a starting point in resolving disputes about the meanings of words in Goals or Policies.
- Some information in this General Plan (e.g. population figures) is expected to become outdated in the normal course of events. Where this information is critical to the use of this Plan's Goals or Policies, the most up-to-date information should be used, even if it comes from sources other than this General Plan.

The following specific conventions are used in this General Plan:

- Where the word "City" is capitalized, the reference is generally to the City of Madera as a governmental agency, as in "*The City's offices are located in the Downtown District.*"
- Where the word "city" is lowercase, the reference is generally to the geographic place, as in "*There are many parks in the city.*"
- References to current facts and figures should generally be considered to refer to the years 2008-2009, unless specifically stated otherwise.

AMENDMENTS TO THIS GENERAL PLAN

Recognizing the need for the General Plan to remain up-to-date and reflective of local issues and policies, State law allows the City to amend the General Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the conditions, values, expectations, and needs of the community. The State's General Plan Guidelines note:

“The General Plan is a dynamic document because it is based on community values and an understanding of existing and projected conditions and needs, all of which continually change. Local governments should plan for change by establishing formal procedures for regularly monitoring, reviewing, and amending the General Plan.”

Periodic revision of the Housing Element is required by state law, but there is no required regular update for any other portion of the General Plan.

IMPLEMENTING THIS GENERAL PLAN

While this General Plan seeks to guide Madera’s growth and decision-making, it is not intended to answer every question which will be faced by the City over the lifetime of the Plan. This General Plan is not a step-by-step guidebook for its own implementation; instead, it will rely on the diligence, ingenuity, and hard work of Madera’s elected officials, residents, and staff to find ways to apply its policies to situations which will be unpredictable and new.

THE ZONING ORDINANCE

The City of Madera Zoning Ordinance is a key implementation tool for the General Plan. Many of the Goals, Policies, and Action Items in this General Plan are achieved through zoning, which regulates public and private development. The City is responsible for ensuring that the Zoning Ordinance and this General Plan are in conformity. In most instances, this will mean that land is designated in the General Plan and zoned for similar uses with similar development standards (i.e. similar densities and minimum parcel sizes). Where zoning and General Plan land use designations are not identical, policies of this General Plan should be consulted carefully for guidance in amending the Zoning Ordinances to be consistent with the General Plan.