



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

DATE: December 27, 2007

TO: Responsible Agencies, Organizations and Interested Parties

LEAD AGENCY: City of Madera
Contact: Dave Randall
205 West Fourth Street
Madera, CA 93637

SUBJECT: Environmental Impact Report for the Madera General Plan Update

In discharging its duties under Section 15021 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the City of Madera, as Lead Agency, intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the proposed City of Madera General Plan Update (Proposed General Plan Update). In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City of Madera has issued this Notice of Preparation to provide Responsible Agencies and other interested parties with sufficient information describing the proposal and its potential environmental effects.

The determination to prepare an Environmental Impact Report was made by the City of Madera. An Initial Study has been prepared pursuant to CEQA Section 15063, which identifies the anticipated environmental effects of the project.

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines, the comment period for this Notice of Preparation and Initial Study is 54 days (starting on December 27, 2007 and ending on February 19, 2008). The City of Madera welcomes agency and public input during this review. In the event that no response or request for additional time is received by any Responsible Agency by the end of the review period, the Lead Agency may presume that the Responsible Agency has no response.

The City is scheduled to hold a **Public Scoping Meeting** on January 28, 2008, at 5:00 p.m. at the Frank A. Bergon Senior Center (238 S. D Street, Madera). The public is invited to attend this scoping meeting to provide oral comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis. Copies of the Notice of Preparation and Initial Study are available at City Hall.

Comments may be submitted in writing prior to February 19, 2008 and addressed to:

Dave Randall
City of Madera
205 West Fourth Street
Madera, CA 93637

Comments will also be accepted by email: info@maderageneralplan.com.

A. PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed Madera General Plan Planning Area (proposed Planning Area) includes the City of Madera and surrounding lands. The proposed Planning Area is generally bounded by Road 22 to the west, Avenue 20 to the north, Road 32 to the east, and Avenue 10 ½ and Cottonwood Creek to the south (See **Figure 1**, Planning Area Map). The Planning Area is predominately flat, with the Fresno River and Cottonwood Creek traversing the area. The Planning Area includes, but is not limited to, land uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and public and semi-public uses. State Route 99, a major north-south highway in California, crosses the proposed Planning Area, passing through Madera.

B. PROJECT HISTORY

The City of Madera was incorporated in 1907. It is a general law city with a current population of over 52,000. The City of Madera conducted its last comprehensive update of its General Plan in 1992, with subsequent amendments occurring since then. Chief among these was the updated Housing Element adopted in 2003. A separate Bicycle Plan was adopted in 2004.

Like most communities in the Central Valley, Madera has experienced significant growth in recent years, and the City expects future growth that will require the annexation of unincorporated property. Also, the City acknowledges development practices under the current General Plan has not consistently yielded high-quality development, as evidenced by the lack of innovative design features and community amenities incorporated within projects. For these reasons, the City has decided on a comprehensive update of its General Plan.

Over the past two years, the Madera community has undertaken a visioning process to assess its current condition and to define where the community wants to be. This resulted in the City's adoption of the Madera Vision 2025 Action Plan in December 2006. The visioning process addressed a wide range of community issues. However, land use and development concerns were cited as critical components in shaping the environment and building a sense of community. The preparation of a new General Plan was identified as a specific action in the Madera Vision 2025 Action Plan necessary to achieve many of the goals articulated in the community's vision and to bring about the type of development desired in Madera.

The City issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the proposed General Plan Update in February 2007. As part of the proposed General Plan Update, an Environmental Impact Report assessing environmental issues associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update was requested. The City hired PMC to prepare both the General Plan and the EIR for this project and work commenced in August 2007.

C. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City proposes to update the City of Madera General Plan, which had its last comprehensive update in 1992. In accordance with State law, the proposed General Plan Update will address the seven mandatory topics of Land Use; Circulation; Housing; Open Space; Conservation; Noise; and Safety. The proposed General Plan Update will also include three optional elements: Community Character; Community Design; and Sustainability. Each element will include a goals, policies and action items to address issues related to the element. The elements in the proposed General Plan update are as follows:

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- Land Use – Issues include, but are not limited to, population and employment, agricultural preservation and land use, airport land use compatibility, Indian gaming, growth management, downtown Madera, the structure and design of new “urban cores” and neighborhoods, the State Center Community College planning area, Specific Plans, expansion of the City’s wastewater treatment plant, and land uses and designations within the unincorporated portion of Madera County that lie within the City’s proposed Planning Area. A Land Use Map would be prepared that describes and designates potential land uses within the Planning Area.
- Circulation – Issues include, but are not limited to, existing and future travel demand and traffic patterns, level of service and other performance measures, coordinating land use and circulation planning, traffic and roadways, transit and paratransit, pedestrian and bicycle use, and air and train transportation, as well as at-grade railroad crossings and the proposed alignment of the state highway 145 through Madera. This element would include a Circulation Map that identifies the ultimate roadway system in the Planning Area, a Bicycle Map, and potential locations of multimodal facilities.
- Parks, Trails and Open Space – Issues include, but are not limited to, public parks, recreational open spaces, natural areas, hiking and equestrian trails, and open space and parks as part of an overall strategy of sustainability and quality of life. Also enhancement of the Fresno River and Cottonwood Creek will be addressed.
- Conservation – Issues include, but are not limited to, protection and enhancement of air and water quality, water use and conservation, energy conservation, biological resources such as special-status species and habitats, and managed production of resources. This element also would include strategies to encourage “green” building design and practices.
- Health and Safety - Issues include, but are not limited to, fire safety, seismic safety and geologic hazards, flooding, manmade hazards including hazardous materials, and terrorism and homeland security, as well as at-grade railroad crossings.
- Community Character – This is an optional element that the City has opted to add to the General Plan. It includes all required information for the mandatory Noise Element. Issues include, but are not limited to, aesthetics and visual resources, noise, odors, light and glare, and historical, architectural, and archaeological resources and preservation.
- Community Design – This is an optional element that the City has opted to add. This element would include design goals and policies for residential, commercial, industrial and civic buildings. Included would be illustrations to help the reader understand the design principles described in the policies.
- Sustainability – This is an optional element that the City has opted to add. It includes a definition of “sustainability” as it applies to Madera, a discussion of topics related to sustainability in Madera, the City’s overall sustainability goal, a cross-reference to policies related to sustainability contained in other elements of the General Plan, and policies specific to sustainability that do not fit in other General Plan elements. One of the topics that would be discussed is the emission of greenhouse gases resulting from General Plan implementation, and its impacts on climate change.

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- Housing – Under State law, the Housing Element does not need to be updated until June 2009. However, the City will be updating the Housing Element as part of the General Plan update process.

The proposed General Plan Update will also include an Implementation section that gathers all the action items and implementation steps identified in the elements of the General Plan. This section also would include an estimated cost for each implementation item, and a priority ranking.

D. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

See attached Initial Study. Environmental issues that potentially would be affected by implementation of the proposed General Plan Update include:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agricultural Lands
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service System

In addition, the proposed General Plan Update would likely have environmental impacts that are cumulatively considerable, growth-inducing impacts, and irreversible environmental effects.

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Insert Figure 1, Proposed Planning Area