



# TOWN OF ROSS

## General Plan

2007 - 2025

Amended May 8, 2025



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# Welcome and Overview

Ross will celebrate the 100th anniversary of becoming a town in 2008. While the railroad and horses of 1908 are gone, the residential neighborhoods still suggest a changeless quality.

Whether we represent a third generation Ross family or moved to Town yesterday, we share many reasons for choosing Ross as our home: its historic character, small-town charm, tree-lined streets, excellent school, wooded hillsides and meandering creeks. We want Ross to retain these attributes and still be a dynamic and evolving community.

We define stewardship as the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. This community shares a unique environment in which we foster, nurture and protect our families. The founding principles of this place are joy in the physical environment, the families who stand together and the education of the children who will learn and project these values into the future. We have come to this valley in search of a better way to live. In every aspect this view of the projected future, this General Plan, is grounded in the stewardship of these irreplaceable assets.

State law requires that all municipalities have a long-range general plan for their physical development. More than just meeting this mandate, we want our plan to be a compelling and stimulating road map for addressing the fundamental elements affecting our town. The Ross General Plan supports and advances healthy, safe and sustainable principles that preserve Ross' unique environmental qualities and encourage participation from all Ross residents in Town government.

For the creation of the General Plan, the Town Council appointed a steering committee comprised of seven Ross residents and a member of the Council. Over a period of more than two years, the committee met with professional planners, local design professionals, Town staff and numerous experts on the topics addressed in the plan. The process also included extensive opportunities for valuable community involvement to reflect the best current ideas and a future vision for our community.

Among new ideas contained in the General Plan are:

- **Establish ADR** (Advisory Design Review) comprised of an advisory group of local volunteer design professionals to provide design review assistance to staff.
- **Develop Detailed Design Guidelines** to be applied during the application review process.
- **Prepare a Plan for the Downtown Area** to address street design, parking, potential uses, design guidelines, pedestrian/bicycle access, and places for gathering.
- **Require Design Review of Larger Landscape Projects** that include alterations that could affect the visual and/or physical character of a site or neighborhood.
- **Prepare a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan** to assure safe bicycle and pedestrian travel in Ross, including safe routes for children.

# Acknowledgements

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Michael Skall  
Richard Strauss  
Jeanne Barr (*former member*)  
Thomas Byrnes, Jr. (*former member*)

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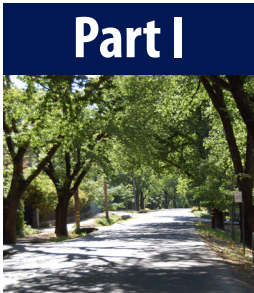
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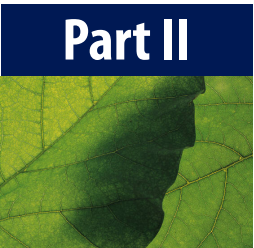
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# Our History And Where We Are Today

"In 1908, the residents of Ross voted to incorporate; the vote was 96-0. They wasted no time choosing trustees and instituting a number of laws. For example, dogs had to be licensed and lights were required on bikes after dusk. The Townspeople also set an early standard of environmental advocacy by insisting that trees could not be cut down unless the Town granted permission. The Town purchased land across from the train depot for a park that eventually became Ross Commons."<sup>1</sup>

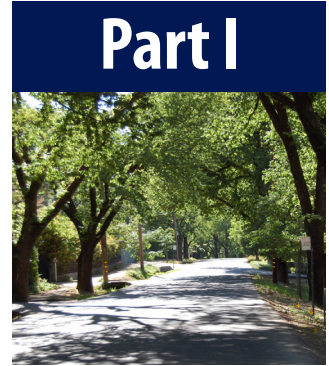
## How We Became A Town

For thousands of years prior to 1800, the Coast Miwok Indians lived and were sustained by the land that is now called Ross Valley. The Coast Miwok revered the land, plants and animals of the Ross Valley through tribal cultural beliefs and practices. European diseases eventually decimated the Indian population. The settlement in 1817 of Mission San Raphael, with its vast land holding, also resulted in further incursions into areas occupied by the Coast Miwok Indians.

After the Mexican Revolution of 1821, the "land grant" system of parceling out land gave rise to what we now know as Marin County. Ross was originally part of an 8,877-acre Mexican land grant to Juan B.R. Cooper in 1840 known as Ranch Punta de Quentin Canada de San Anselmo. The Town of Ross itself was named in honor of James Ross, who purchased the land in 1857 for \$50,000. Ross built his home on Redwood Drive and moved there with his wife and three children. When James Ross died in 1862 his wife, Annie Ross, was forced to sell a portion of James Ross' larger land holdings to pay each of their daughters \$10,000. The 297 acres she had remaining make up part of the Town of Ross today.

Once the Town was incorporated one of the first actions of the new Town Council was to make it illegal to cut down trees without Town approval. Soon the streets were paved, streetlights erected, concrete bridges built over the creek and a firehouse constructed. Thanks to the foresight of our early leaders, the Town today rests under a leafy canopy that is unique in Marin County.

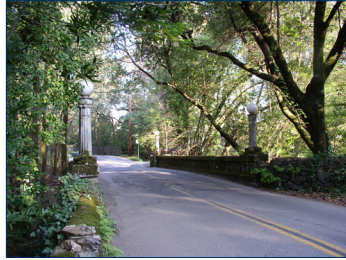
## Part I



<sup>1</sup> Kristin Bartus, "Our Towns at the Turn of the Century — A look back," Pacific Sun

## The History of Some of Our Important Places

The Town of Ross is a quiet residential community with tree-lined, shady streets. The wooded ravines, open grassy areas and long avenues of large shade trees provide an unmistakable sense that you have arrived in a unique and historic place. So, too, do the important landmarks in Town.<sup>2</sup>



### Ross Bridges

In 1909, the newly incorporated Town of Ross contracted to build five reinforced concrete bridges in the Town, hiring the famous bridge designer John Buck Leonard. The bridges are eligible for landmark status and inclusion on the “National Register of Historic Places.”



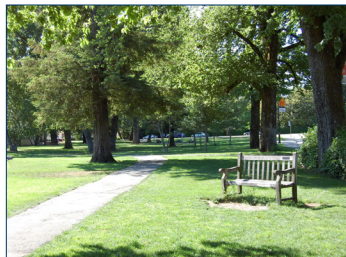
### Lagunitas Country Club

The Lagunitas Country Club was founded in 1903 and is a small, private, members-only tennis and swim club located on Lagunitas and Upper Road.



### St. Anselm Church

St. Anselm Church was dedicated in 1908. Archbishop Patrick W. Riordan began his dedication address for the church that year with: “This beautiful edifice will be a great joy and lasting benefit not only to you who are now present, but to many yet to come within the parish.”



### Ross Common

In 1911, Annie Ross Worn, the eldest daughter of John and Annie Ross, gave the Town of Ross the land for the Ross Common.



### St. John's Episcopal Church

St. John's Episcopal Church was built on its present site in 1911, on land donated by Mrs. Sarah Coffin.

<sup>2</sup> Most dates and descriptions are from the Ross Historical Society website.

### Ross School

Ross Grammar School was built in 1911 and then replaced in 1941. In 1991, Child Magazine named Ross Elementary School as one of the top ten schools in the nation. The academic ranking is in the 99th percentile, the highest any school can achieve.



### The Branson School

In 1922, The Branson School moved to Ross from San Rafael. It offered grades one to eleven and was co-educational through the fourth grade. Today, it is a 320-student high school.



### The Cedars of Marin

The Cedars of Marin began as a school for children with special needs in 1919. It has since evolved into a nationally recognized residential and day programming community for adults with developmental disabilities. Currently, the Ross campus houses half of its 100 residential clients.



### Town Hall

In 1926, the Town of Ross voted to spend \$100,000 to buy the Shotwell estate upon which the present Ross Town Hall and Fire Station were built in 1927.



### Ross Post Office

In 1958, the Ross Post Office was built on the site of the old North Pacific Coast Railroad Station.





### **Natalie Coffin Greene Park**

In 1967, the family of Natalie Coffin Greene gave 25 acres of Phoenix Lake land for a park in her memory.



### **"Ross Bear"**

When sculptor Beniamino Bufano's compressed marble dust bear was donated to Ross by Jerome and Peggy Flax in 1971, it was placed in front of the Town Hall and soon became the symbol of the Town.



### **Marin Art & Garden Center**

The Marin Art & Garden Center was founded in 1943 with the purchase of the property from A.J. Kittle, a member of the first Ross Town Council. It is also home to the Ross Valley Players, the state's oldest repertory company.

The Marin Art & Garden Center is surrounded by an unusual serpentine brick wall built in memory of its founder, Caroline Livermore.



## Who We Are Today . . . And Tomorrow

The Town of Ross is the second smallest of Marin's communities, with 1.6 square miles and slightly more than 800 residential parcels. At last census count (2000), we had 2,310 residents.<sup>3</sup> Between 1990 and 2005, the population grew by 214 people, which is about the same rate of growth as Marin County as a whole. Over the next 25 years, the population growth rate in Marin and Ross is expected to be even slower. In 2025, Ross is projected to have a population of 2,550 residents. The number of employed residents is projected to increase from 928 to 1,210 over this period.<sup>4</sup>

About 30% of Town residents are under the age of 17, and the resident average age is 42 years. The percentage of seniors living in Ross has remained relatively stable over the past decade at about 17% of the population, roughly comparable to Marin County as a whole. As the "baby boomers" hit their senior years, population demographics are expected to shift dramatically. According to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), almost 38% of the county's population will be over 60 years of age by 2025. Thus, it is projected that by the year 2025 about one in three persons living in Ross will be 60 years of age or older.<sup>5</sup>

Located in the Ross Valley, the Town of Ross lies within the "City Centered Corridor" of Marin County, as defined by the Marin Countywide Plan, and is adjacent to the Town of San Anselmo, City of San Rafael, and the unincorporated Kentfield area in Marin County. The Town of Ross location is shown on the next page.



Annual Town Dinner

2007



2005

### 2000 Census

#### Where we are today:<sup>6</sup>

- **Land Area:** 1.59 square miles
- **Population:** 2,329
- **Housing Units:** 805
- **Households:** 717
- **Average Household Size:** 2.94 persons
- **Median Household Income:** \$102,015
- **Age of Residents:**
  - Under 17 — 703 (30.2%)
  - 18 to 64 — 1,338 (57.4%)
  - 65 and Over — 288 (12.4%)
  - Median Age — 42.5
- **Mean Travel Time to Work:** 34.5 minutes
- **Employed Persons:** 928
- **Primary Occupations:**
  - Management, Professional, and Related Occupations (70.5%)
  - Sales and Office Occupations (20.2%)
  - Other Occupations (9.3%)

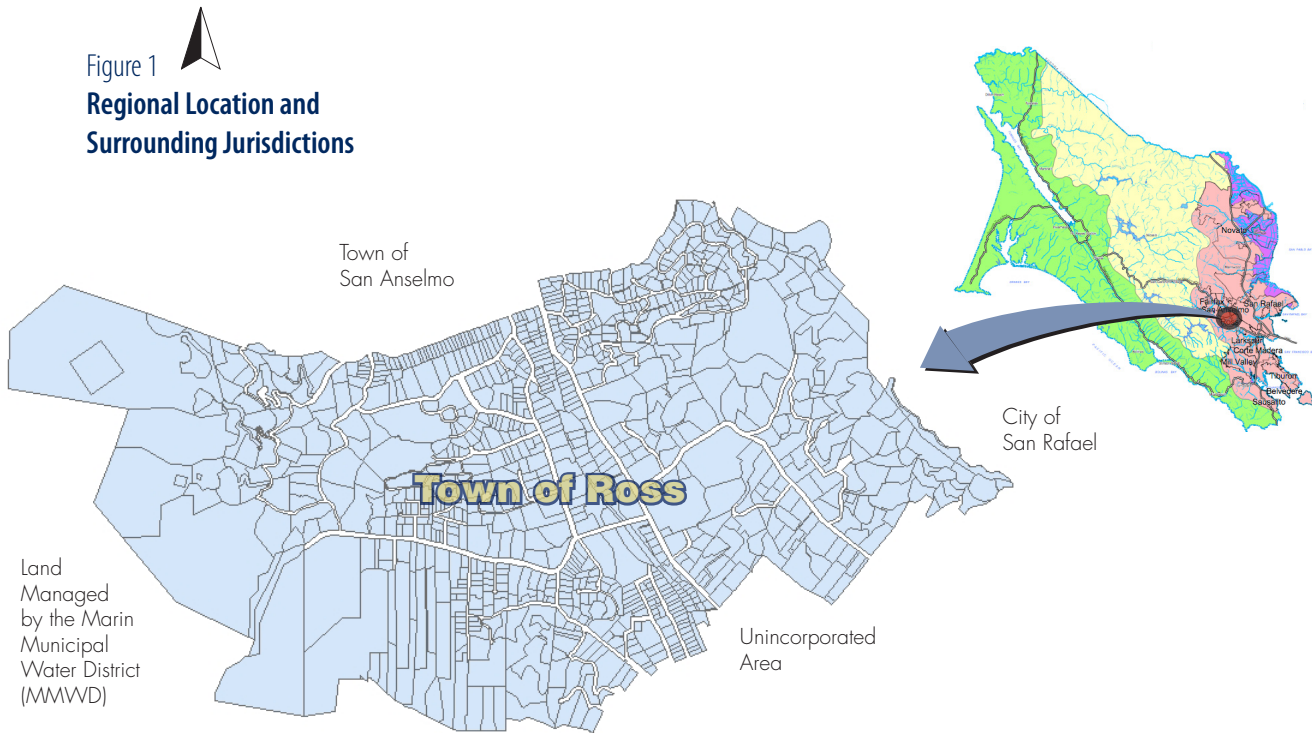
<sup>3</sup> 2000 U.S. Census

<sup>4</sup> Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)  
"Projections 2005"

<sup>5</sup> Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)  
"Projections 2005"

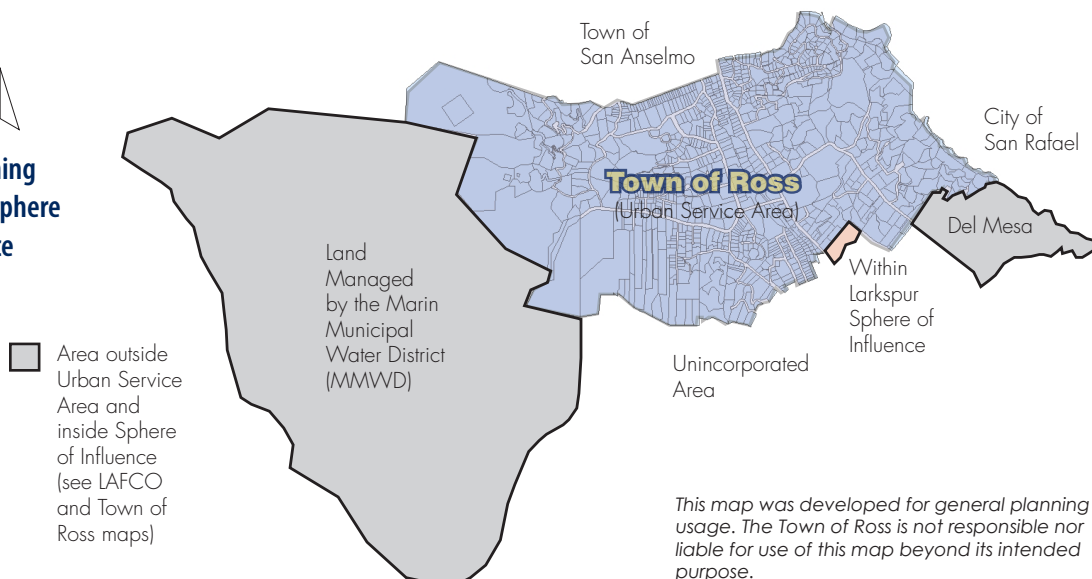
<sup>6</sup> 2000 U.S. Census

Figure 1  
Regional Location and  
Surrounding Jurisdictions



The Ross Planning Area covers the corporate limits of the Town of Ross, the Del Mesa area (an area under county jurisdiction and encompassing residential areas north and west of Laurel Grove Avenue, between Makin Grade and Wolfe Grade) and the area surrounding Phoenix Lake (administered by the Marin Municipal Water District). In addition to the services provided by the Town, there are a number of single-purpose public entities delivering specialized services such as sewer, water, solid waste pick-up, and schools.

Figure 2  
Ross Planning  
Area and Sphere  
of Influence



# Our Relationship With The Natural Environment

## Goal 1

### An Abundance of Green and Healthy Natural Systems

Ross' mystique lies in the beauty of its natural resources: the trees, hillsides, ridgelines and meandering creeks. These features have shaped the growth of Ross and affect how we experience the community. They provide habitat for wildlife, privacy between neighbors, and create scenic vistas around every bend.

#### DEFINITION

**A Vision** is a way of looking at the future and our ability to define a future state. A vision statement, in its simplest terms, is one's ability to define a future state. A community visioning event was held in 2005. The visioning ideas of the community have been incorporated into each general plan section, as shown below.

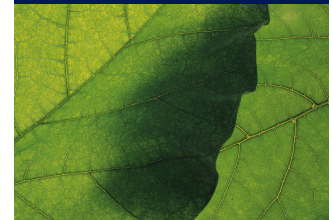
### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

Set in a valley between open hillsides, Ross enjoys a natural environment where cultural and civic activities are encouraged and thrive. There's an abundance of green from tree-lined streets, parks and open space, to healthy creeks and watershed. Ross has maintained access to open space for all people, not just its residents, but this access should not disturb the privacy or peaceful enjoyment of the Town by its residents. Proper management of the eco-system helps to prevent erosion and excess stormwater runoff, reduces ambient temperatures, retains natural habitat for wildlife and birds, and enhances the beauty of the natural landscape.



Landscaping and its relationship to the public right-of-way

## Part II



### Major New Ideas

- ☐ Establish a Tree Committee
- ☐ Create a Landscape Master Plan for Public Areas

**DEFINITION** **Policies** are the way we can turn our vision of Ross in the year 2025 into a reality. Policies are specific or general statements of principle, positions or approaches on a particular issue or subject. Policies motivate us, guide our actions and direct us toward the Ross we envision. Policies for Goal 1 (An Abundance of Green and Healthy Natural Systems) begin below.



View of Bald Hill looking south

## Ross General Plan Policies

**1.1 Protection of Environmental Resources.** Protect environmental resources, such as hillsides, ridgelines, creeks, drainage ways, trees and tree groves, threatened and endangered species habitat, riparian vegetation, cultural places,<sup>7</sup> and other resources. These resources are unique in the planning area because of their scarcity, scientific value, aesthetic quality and cultural significance.

**1.2 Tree Canopy Preservation.** Protect and expand the tree canopy of Ross to enhance the beauty of the natural landscape. Recognize that the tree canopy is critical to provide shade, reduce ambient temperatures, improve the uptake of carbon dioxide, prevent erosion and excess stormwater runoff, provide habitat for wildlife and birds, and protect the ecosystem of the under-story vegetation.

**1.3 Tree Maintenance and Replacement.** Assure proper tree maintenance and replacement.

**1.4 Natural Areas Retention.** Maximize the amount of land retained in its natural state. Wherever possible, residential development should be designed to preserve, protect and restore native site vegetation and habitat. In addition, where possible and appropriate, invasive vegetation should be removed.

**1.5 Open Space Plan.** Execute the Open Space Plan (See Figure 3 in Appendix A) for land in public and private ownership, including existing and future parcels. The designation of “Upland Ridge and Greenbelt” on the Open Space Plan is approximate and is intended to identify those properties that would require further analysis of their potential open space value.

<sup>7</sup> “Cultural places” are defined in the California Public Resources Code and include, but are not limited to, archaeological sites, historic and prehistoric ruins, and Native American historic, cultural, and sacred sites, including a sanctified cemetery or burial round, a place of worship, a religious or ceremonial site, and a sacred shrine.

## Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

The Ross Town Council took dramatic steps since our last General Plan to preserve our critical environmental resources. The Hillside Lot Ordinance was tightened to limit the total amount of buildable floor area development on steep, sensitive sites. The Council very rigorously applies the Hillside Lot Ordinance floor area ratio guideline to all development proposals on slopes over 30%.

The Town has adopted additional design review requirements for projects with grading, filling, or retaining walls construction, further ensuring the preservation of the Town's hillsides. Creek and drainageway setbacks and an expanded tree protection ordinance were added to the Town's zoning regulations to protect waterways and vegetation for future generations. Applications to remove or alter trees are carefully scrutinized by the Town as part of any project review.

**DEFINITION** **Actions** are specific and discrete implementing programs, procedures or activities that the Town needs to undertake to fully achieve the goals of this general plan. While policies tell us how to achieve our vision, specific actions are also needed to fully effectuate our policies and to provide greater detail for future decision-making. The action list of new ideas under Goal 1 are described below.



Natural woodlands are present throughout the Ross Planning Area

## Action List of New Ideas

**1.A Establish a Tree Committee.** Establish a Tree Committee to develop recommendations for trees, landscaping and maintenance in the public right-of-way.

**1.B Create a Landscape Master Plan for Public Areas.** Develop a Landscape Master Plan for entryways, streets, parks and other public areas of Ross. The plan may include: (1) clarification of responsibility for selecting, maintaining and irrigating Town trees; (2) an approved planting list; (3) a requirement for homeowners to plant and maintain certain types of trees from an approved list; (4) a replacement policy for trees when trees are removed; and, (5) guidance for issues such as tree lanes and waterways.

## Goal 2

### Sustainable Building and Community Practices

As part of the larger community, Ross recognizes our responsibility to conserving the environment for future generations by incorporating sustainable practices as a guiding principle for all our actions, including project design, conservation and energy efficiency, integrated pest management, land use, circulation and transportation.

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

To perpetuate the health of our community, we have followed environmentally sustainable management and development policies with regard to our environment. The natural environment for plant and animal health and habitat is not to be compromised. The Town has developed and follows policies for “green” building. We have worked to reduce our ecological footprint by shifting our reliance away from fossil fuels toward renewable sources of energy and by ameliorating the local conditions that contribute to global warming.

#### Major New Ideas

- ☐ Establish “Green Building” Requirements
- ☐ Establish a Tree Committee
- ☐ Consider Secondhand Smoke Ordinance
- ☐ Consider Solar Access Ordinance

#### Ross General Plan Policies

**2.1 Sustainable Practices.** Support measures to reduce resource consumption and improve energy efficiency through all elements of the Ross General Plan and Town regulations and practices, including:

- (a) Require large houses to limit the energy usage to that of a more moderately sized house as established in design guidelines.
- (b) Encourage affordable workforce housing (see Housing Element) and a development pattern that encourages people to walk.
- (c) Preserve uses in the commercial area of the town that serve local residents and reduce the need to drive to other areas.
- (d) Choose the most sustainable portion of a site for development and leaving more of a site in its natural condition to reduce land impacts on the natural environment.
- (e) Use green materials and resources.
- (f) Conserve water, especially in landscaping.
- (g) Encourage transportation alternatives to the private automobile.

- (h) Increase the use of renewable energy sources, including solar energy.
- (i) Recycle building materials.

**2.2 Incorporation of Resource Conservation Measures.** To the extent consistent with other design considerations, public and private projects should be designed to be efficient and innovative in their use of materials, site construction, and water irrigation standards for new landscaping to minimize resource consumption, including energy and water.

**2.3 Reduction in the Use of Chemicals and Non-Natural Substances.** Support efforts to use chemical-free and toxic-free building materials, reduce waste and recycle building waste and residential garbage. Encourage landscape designs that minimize pesticide and herbicide use.



Sidewalk in the Winship Area

**2.4 Footprints of Buildings.** Utilize smaller footprints to minimize the built area of a site and to allow the maximum amount of landscaped and/or permeable surfaces.

### Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

The Town supports reducing consumption of water and energy through enhanced energy efficiency, energy conservation, renewable energy, and green building practices. The Town encourages include the use of energy efficient lighting, motors and refrigerators that use less energy for the same or greater output, solar power, and the the use of materials, design and construction practices that consider the energy used to extract, produce and transport building materials and for ongoing building operation and maintenance.

All new construction must meet the current California Energy Commission standards. To the extent consistent with other design considerations, the Town has also supported designs that are creative, efficient and innovative in their use of materials and methods to minimize resource consumption. This has included drought-tolerant planting selections in landscape plans and water-conserving irrigation systems, such as drip irrigation, low flow sprinklers and automatic controls.

### Action List of New Ideas

**2.A Establish “Green Building” Requirements.** Establish specific development regulations that require buildings and substantial remodels to be built using “green” building techniques, including recycling of building materials where possible, and to conform to an industry approved certification or rating such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building

Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), or Build it Green, which is a professional non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote healthy, energy and resource-efficient buildings in California.

**2.B Review Pesticide and Herbicide Requirements.** Review current Town standards to ensure the prudent use of pesticides and herbicides. Implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program that uses a variety of methods to control pests. The program would also include actions to identify and eliminate conditions that may attract and support pests.

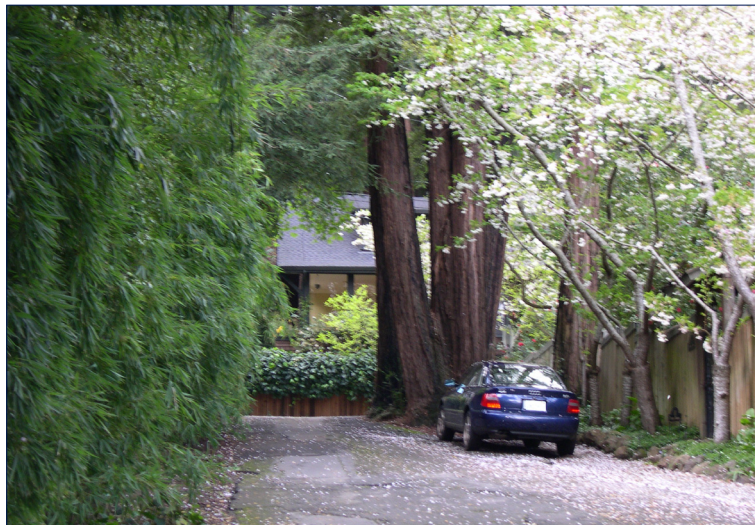


Street in the Winship area

**2.C Adopt Woodsmoke or Biomass Smoke Ordinance.** Adopt a Woodsmoke or Biomass Smoke Ordinance to reduce particulate emissions from wood or biomass burning appliances, including fireplaces, that do not meet EPA standards of emission. The purposes of the ordinance will be to either require or encourage the removal of existing wood or biomass burning appliances that do not meet standards of emission, and to implement requirements at the time of major remodel projects.

**2.D Consider Secondhand Smoke Ordinance.** Study and consider enactment of a Secondhand Smoke Ordinance in Ross.

**2.E Consider Solar Access Ordinance.** Study and consider enactment of a Solar Access Ordinance to encourage use of solar design for Ross development.



Access from Madrona Avenue

# Excellence of Design

## Goal 3

### Design With Nature, Neighborhood and Community

Ross encourages architectural variety of buildings and the open feeling of the Town. Buildings recede into the background while landscaping and open space take center stage. Ross' neighborhoods mix old and new construction through the use of appropriate building materials and landscaping, and through the appropriate design, scale, and siting of improvements.. We have come to expect an excellence of design that blends with the neighborhood setting.

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

The Town has encouraged diversity in home design. While design review is based in part on the need to preserve architectural features that serve as significant reminders of the past, it nevertheless encourages 21st century creativity. The Town has made investments in infrastructure resulting in architecture and landscaping that promote the aesthetic and sustainable needs of the community.

Each neighborhood shows pride of community through maintenance and design quality. Our government responds to changing needs and is grounded in the recognition that creating and maintaining a quality environment in which to live is everyone's job.

Advisory Design Review (ADR) has been established to assist applicants, staff and Town Council with the permit process. ADR helps maintain and apply consistent guidelines for architectural and landscape design.

## Part III

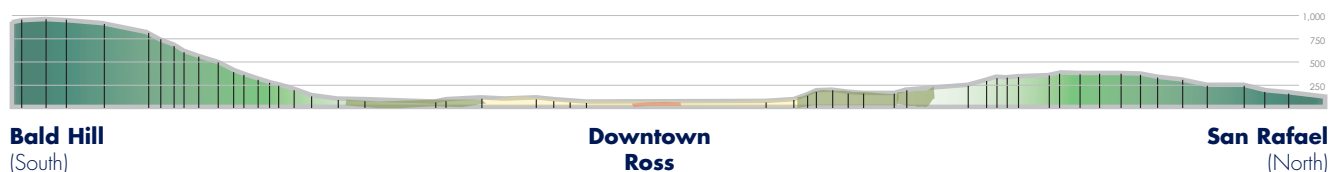


#### Major New Ideas

- Establish Advisory Design Review (ADR)
- Require Design Review for Larger Landscape Projects
- Pursue Undergrounding of Utilities
- Develop Detailed Design Guidelines and Requirements

Figure 4

#### Transect of Ross



## Ross General Plan Policies

**3.1 Building and Site Design.** Design all structures and improvements to respect existing natural topographic contours. Open areas and buildings shall be located to provide adequate defensible space for wildfire protection while also protecting land forms and natural site features, including cultural places and resources, wherever possible. Where feasible, site development must avoid intact or previously disturbed cultural resources during excavation and grading.



Example of tree canopy and historic bridge in Ross

**3.2 Landscape Design.** Where appropriate, encourage landscape designs that incorporate existing native vegetation, enhance the cohesiveness of the Town's lush, organic landscape and integrate new planting with existing site features. Landscaped areas around structures should be maintained and designed to reduce fire danger. Plans shall recognize the importance of open space on a lot and shall address the look and feel of the space between structures so as to avoid overbuilding.

**3.3 Buildings on Sloping Land.** New buildings and additions to existing residential buildings constructed on sloping land should be designed to relate to the current landforms with the goal of integrating the building with the site (e.g., step with the slope). Low retaining walls are encouraged where their use would minimize uphill cutting, and large single-plane retaining walls should be avoided. Cut and fill areas and on/off-hauling should be minimized, especially in locations of limited or difficult access. Special care should be taken to final grade all disturbed areas to a natural appearing configuration and to direct stormwater runoff to areas where water can naturally infiltrate the soil.

**3.4 Bulk, Mass and Scale.** Minimize the perception of building bulk and mass so that homes are not out of scale, visually or structurally, with neighboring residences and their setting. Consider building bulk and mass during the design review process, and when applying requirements and guidelines addressing Floor Area Ratio (FAR), maximum home floor area and other development standards. Building heights should stay in scale with surrounding vegetation and buildings.

**3.5 View Protection.** Preserve views and access to views of hillsides, ridgelines, Mt. Tamalpais and Bald Hill from the public right-of-way and public property. Ensure that the design look and feel along major thoroughfares maintains the "greenness" of the Town.

**3.6 Windows, Roofs, and Skylights.** Window and skylight size, placement and design should be selected to maximize the privacy between adjacent properties. To the extent consistent with other design considerations, the placement and size of windows and skylights should minimize light pollution and/or glare.

**3.7 Materials and Colors.** Buildings should be designed using high-quality materials and colors appropriate to their neighborhood and natural setting.

**3.8 Driveways and Parking Areas.** Driveways and parking areas should be designed to minimize visibility from the street and to provide safe access, minimal grading and/or retaining walls, and to protect water quality. Permeable materials should be used to increase water infiltration. Driveways and parking areas should be graded to minimize stormwater runoff.

### Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

The Design Review Ordinance, adopted in 1993, requires Town Council approval of all new houses and all additions over 200 square feet in size. The design review process was developed to protect the design character of the Town by providing design criteria and policies for reviewing proposed development. The intent is to encourage excellence of design, minimize environmental impacts, and ensure compatibility with the character of the surrounding area — how a house presents itself from the street, fits into the neighborhood, and blends with its setting.

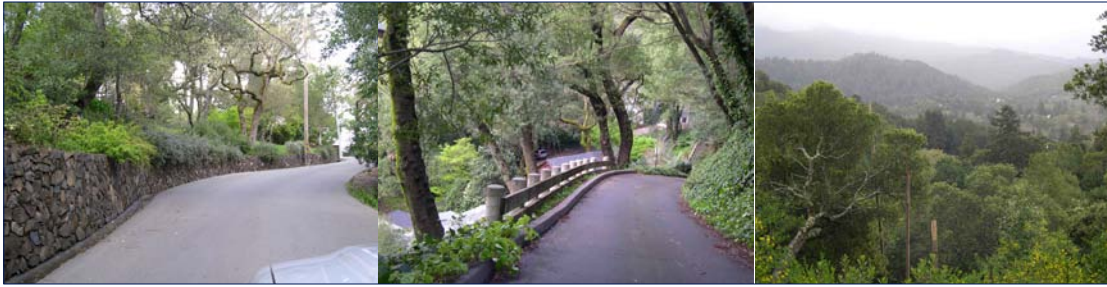
In 2000, the Town adopted a guideline maximum of 10,000 square feet of total floor area for homes. Allowances above 10,000 square feet are permitted, but only if the Town Council finds that such development intensity is appropriate and consistent with the Ross Municipal Code and the Ross General Plan.

The Town has also had to address issues unique to different areas of Ross, such as maintaining privacy on small lots, minimizing excavation and retaining walls on steep sites, and avoiding the appearance of “looming” structures projecting out from hillside sites. “Sub-areas of Ross” (neighborhoods) have been identified in the Ross General Plan to establish a generalized method of understanding different areas in the community. These areas are shown on the map in Appendix A (Figure 5) and described below. They provide a starting point for area-appropriate design guidelines and design review.



Examples of variations in street frontage of homes in Ross

**A**



**MORE STEEPLY SLOPING AREAS** where the natural setting is predominant.

**B**



**MORE GENTLY SLOPING AREAS** where the natural setting is predominant — estate lots and properties providing transition from steeper to flatter sites.

**C**



**HISTORIC, OLDER, TRADITIONAL ROSS NEIGHBORHOODS** — generally smaller lots near to the flatter, lower valley area.

**D**



**THE DOWNTOWN AREA** — the historic center of the community and location of the commercial area, Ross School and The Ross Common.

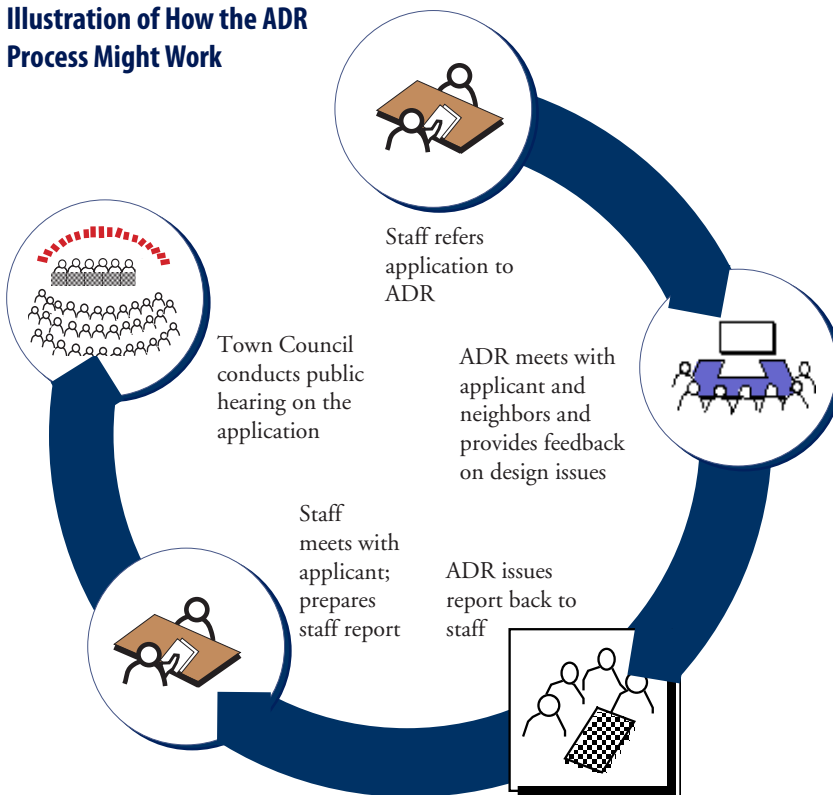
## Action List of New Ideas

**3.A Establish Advisory Design Review (ADR).** Develop a process for incorporating design review of development proposals utilizing an advisory group of local volunteer design professionals to provide technical assistance to staff.

Advisory Design Review (ADR) will act as an advisory body to Planning Department staff. It will provide professional review of design-related issues, including site planning, building massing, setbacks, light/air, privacy, etc. ADR will also consider material selection, for both architectural and landscape design. The intent of ADR is to provide applicants with helpful advice early in the review process. ADR will offer an early opportunity for neighbor input and feedback, and professional design suggestions and solutions, in an informal setting conducive to dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. ADR can produce better quality design and a smoother, less stressful, more-efficient, design review process.

Figure 6

### Illustration of How the ADR Process Might Work



## What is ADR?

The following concepts would be considered in developing ADR:

- Identify a rotating pool of local volunteer designers, including licensed architects and landscape architects, who would be available to assist staff in the design review of proposed projects.
- Define better submittal requirements so less time is spent in design review.
- Require presentation materials to be prepared that provide a neighborhood context for design review.
- Enable ADR participation in the development of design guidelines (see Program 3.D).

**3.B Require Design Review for Larger Landscape Projects.** Require design review for large landscape projects that include significant hardscape, retaining walls, vegetation modifications, modification of topography, additional impervious surfaces, alterations of drainage patterns and other site modifications that could affect the visual and/or physical character of the site and neighborhood. Ensure that larger landscape projects include water efficient plant materials and efficient irrigation design.



Lagunitas Road/Lagunitas Bridge  
entryway to Ross

**3.C Pursue Undergrounding of Utilities.** Undertake a program to underground utilities in Town neighborhoods if an investigation shows resident financial support for such action or if alternative viable funding mechanisms can be developed.

**3.D Develop Detailed Design Guidelines and Requirements.** Prepare design guidelines to be used in the design review process. Guidelines may include, but would not be limited to: (1) definition of what is subject to design review; (2) criteria to be used in design review, including contextual criteria; (3) criteria for exceptions to standards; (4) recommendations for fire-resistant design and materials. and (5) submittal and presentation requirements. A refinement of the design review process based on sub-areas in Ross may also occur. A preliminary mapping of sub-areas is shown in Figure 5 located in Appendix A. ADR should be involved in this process.

## Goal 4

### Protecting Historic Places and Resources

History is alive in Ross. The history of our Town sets it apart from other places and makes it a unique place to live. As we move through our fast-paced, technology-driven lives, it's comforting to have a special place to escape to that connects us to our past and reminds us of the simpler days of yesteryear.

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

The architectural and environmental ambiance that attracted caring residents to Ross since the Town's incorporation in 1908 have been preserved through a tradition of stewardship that has guided the decisions of the Town Council. Ross Recreation, the Marin Art & Garden Center, Town parks, Natalie Coffin Greene Park, Phoenix Lake and proximity to the College of Marin are among the resources that provide cultural, educational and recreational opportunities.

The Lagunitas Bridge, symbolic entry to the Town proper, has been rebuilt to mitigate flood and seismic concerns. The new bridge maintains the character and style of the old bridge, and is consistent with the style of other bridges in Town that were designed by John Buck Leonard. The peaceful ambiance of the Ross Common provides the focal point for the community.

#### Major New Ideas

- Conduct Study to Identify Historic Resources
- Adopt Historic Resources Regulations
- Map Archaeologically Sensitive Areas

#### Ross General Plan Policies

**4.1 Historic Heritage.** Maintain the historic feel of Ross by preserving and maintaining historic buildings, resources and areas with recognized historic or aesthetic value that serve as significant reminders of the past.

**4.2 Design Compatibility with Historic Resources.** Require new construction to harmonize with existing historic buildings and resources, and ensure a compatibility of landscaping with Ross' historic character.

**4.3 Town Bridges.** Maintain and protect bridges as an important part of Ross' heritage. If a bridge must be rebuilt or retrofitted, it should be done in a way that is compatible with its historic look.



One of five historic bridges  
in the Town of Ross

**4.4 Preservation of Existing Housing Supply.** Discourage the demolition or combining of existing residential units that will reduce the supply of housing in Ross.

**4.5 Archaeological Resources.** Implement measures to preserve and protect archaeological resources. Whenever possible, identify archaeological resources and potential impacts on such resources. Provide information and direction to property owners in order to make them aware of these resources. Require archaeological surveys, conducted by an archaeologist who appears on the Northwest Information Center's list of archaeologists qualified to do historic preservation fieldwork in Marin County, in areas of documented archaeological sensitivity. Develop design review standards for projects that may potentially impact cultural resources.



Finished obsidian arrowheads, knives and tools (Photo courtesy of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria — see website)

### Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

Before 1993 we were losing residences that contributed to the charm and character of our community. As a result, the Demolition Ordinance was adopted requiring property owners to obtain Town approval before tearing down a residence. A welcome consequence of the ordinance has been to encourage people to purchase houses because they want to retain them and enhance their historic character, rather than raze them. The Demolition Ordinance has helped to protect historic homes from demolition, but the Town has not had specific regulations or design standards for historic homes.

The Demolition Ordinance was amended in 1998 to specifically discourage demolitions that reduce the number of housing units in Town and to combat the purchase of multiple adjacent residences to tear down and replace with a single oversized residence. It also protects historic residences from being altered without Town review. Since 1998 only one residence has been demolished without a replacement unit being built, and that was by the Marin County Flood Control District for Corte Madera Creek access.

We are trying to preserve the rich historical record that lies beneath our topsoil. There are eight known archaeological sites in the Town of Ross. These are either temporary Native American campsites or permanently occupied sites located primarily along Corte Madera Creek. The Town requires that, if an archaeological site is uncovered during any construction, activity must be halted and an examination made by an archaeologist who appears on the Northwest Information Center's list of archaeologists qualified to do historic preservation fieldwork in Marin County, in consultation with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Sacred Sites Protection Committee.

## Action List of New Ideas

**4.A Conduct Study to Identify Historic Resources.** Identify potential districts and significant properties that may be eligible for National Register or California Historic Resources status, or which may have local significance or distinction.

**4.B Adopt Historic Resources Regulations.** Adopt guidelines, regulations and requirements to protect historic resources, including buildings, accessory structures, kiosks, gates, bridges, etc. Incorporate historic review into ADR design guidelines and consider the development of findings as part of the Town record for disclosure at resale, indicating that the home or site carries special significance to the town and therefore has special requirements for future renovation or alteration.

**4.C Map Archaeologically Sensitive Areas.** Consult with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, the Northwest Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System, and other resources to develop a map of potentially sensitive archaeological areas that can be used to identify locations where an archaeological inventory may be necessary prior to approval of development activity.



St. Anselm Church

# Assuring the Health and Safety of the Community

## Part IV



## Goal 5

### Protecting Community Health and Safety, and Preparing for Emergencies

It is important to recognize that one of Ross' greatest assets could become one of its greatest liabilities. Our tree-covered landscape could become fuel for fires that could char and destroy our land and homes. Our scenic hillsides can fall victim to unrelenting winter rains, causing landslides, mudslides and erosion. Like all of the Bay Area, we are also always at risk from earthquake. Appendix A includes additional maps of areas at risk in the event of a natural disaster and an analysis of emergency evacuation capacity that has informed General Plan policies and actions. Planning is needed to minimize the potential for loss of life, injury and property damage from any natural disaster.

### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

The health and safety of the community are critical concerns. We have worked to prepare and practice emergency response and to minimize risks of fire danger by emphasizing responsible landscaping practices (especially in the steeper, less accessible areas of the Town). Additionally, we have worked to minimize noise pollution.

### Ross General Plan Policies

**5.1 Location of Future Development.** Development will only be permitted in areas where risks to residents can be adequately mitigated. New development and substantial remodels in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) shall be conditioned on implementation of measures to reduce associated wildfire risks, including preparation of a Fire Protection Plan that minimizes risks by:

- Assessing site-specific characteristics such as topography, slope, vegetation type, wind patterns etc.;
- Siting and designing development to avoid hazardous locations (e.g. through fire breaks; within 100 feet of high voltage power lines) to the extent feasible;
- Incorporating fuel modification and brush clearance techniques in accordance with applicable fire safety requirements and carried out in a manner which reduces impacts to environmentally sensitive habitat to the maximum feasible extent;

### Major New Ideas

- Prepare Water System (Pressure) Master Plan
- Implement Ross Valley Emergency Preparedness

- Using appropriate fire-safe building materials and design features, consistent with the adopted City Code and Fire and Building Code standards to ensure the minimum amount of required fuel modification;
- Using fire-resistant, native plant species in landscaping; and
- Complying with established standards and specifications for fuel modification, defensible space, access, and water facilities.

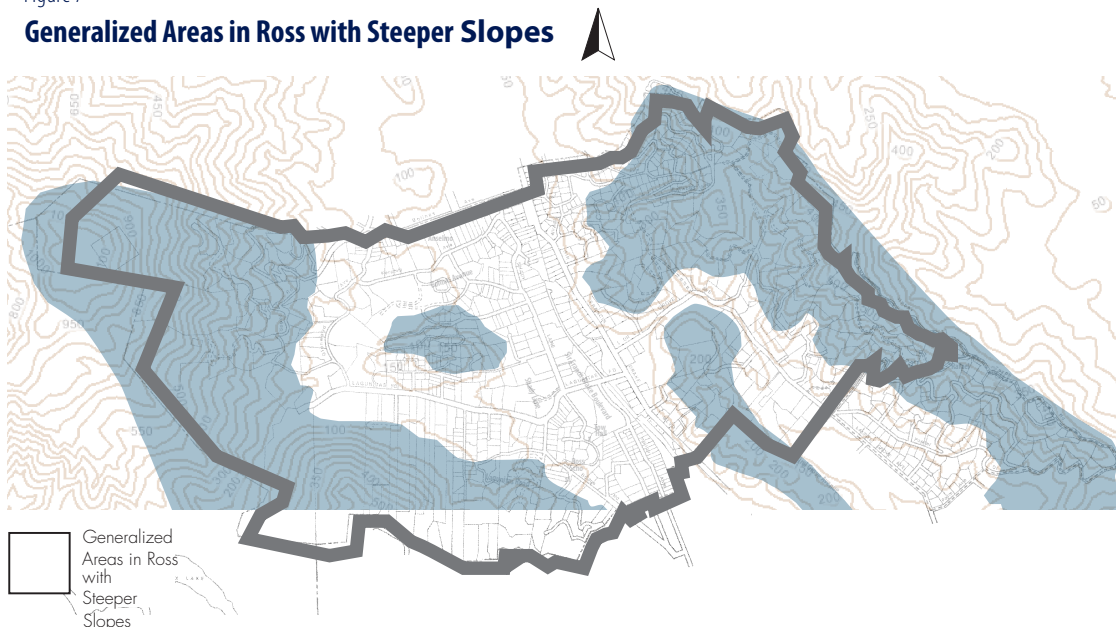
**5.2 Geologic Review Procedures.** At the time a development is proposed, Ross geologic and slope stability maps should be reviewed to assess potential geologic hazards. In addition, suitability for development must be based on site-specific geotechnical investigations.

**5.3 Fire Resistant Design.** Buildings shall be designed to be fire defensive. Designs should minimize risk of fire by a combination of factors including, but not limited to, the use of ignition-resistant building materials, fire sprinklers, noncombustible roofing, defensible space and fire-resistant, native plant species in landscaping.

**5.4 Maintenance and Landscaping for Fire Safety.** Ensure that appropriate fire safety and landscaping practices are used to minimize fire danger, especially in steeper areas. Due to the high fire hazard in the steeper areas of Town, special planting and maintenance programs will be required to reduce fire hazards in the hills and wildland areas, including removal of invasive non-native vegetation such as broom, acacia and eucalyptus. In the WUI, new development and major remodels should be required to enter into a long-term maintenance agreement for vegetation management in defensible space and roadside fuel reduction. Additionally, proactive weed abatement, brush thinning, and removal services shall be required in the WUI in order to curb potential fire hazards.

Figure 7

#### Generalized Areas in Ross with Steeper Slopes



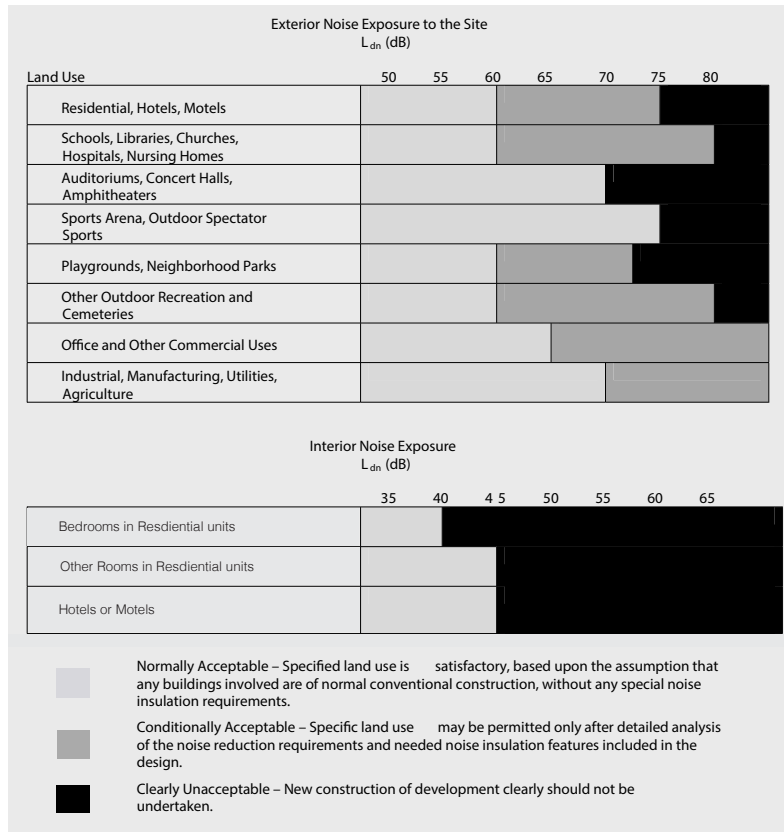
*This map was developed for general planning usage. The Town of Ross is not responsible nor liable for use of this map beyond its intended purpose.*

**5.5 Fire Safety in New Development.** New construction shall comply with applicable provisions of the California Building Code, the California Fire Code, Board of Forestry Fire Safe Regulations, and California Government Code sections 51175 and 51189. Hazards to life and property shall be minimized by such measures as fire preventive site design, fire safe building materials, fire-resistant, native landscaping, and the use of fire suppression techniques and resources.

**5.6 Noise/Land Use Compatibility Standards.** The Land Use/Noise Compatibility Standards (see Figure 8) apply to the siting and design of new structures and substantial remodels. Any project that is located in a “conditionally acceptable” or “normally unacceptable” noise exposure area will be required to prepare an acoustical analysis. Noise mitigation features may be required by the Town.

Figure 8

### Land Use/Noise Compatibility Standards



**5.7 Noise Standards for Exterior Residential Use Areas.** The noise standard for exterior use areas (such as backyards) in residential areas is 55dB (decibels)

L<sub>dn</sub> (a day-night weighted 24-hour average noise level). All areas of Ross meet this standard except for those properties located along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. General Plan policy requires that any new residential construction

**5.8 Interior Noise Standards.** Protect the community against the effects of intrusive and unhealthy exterior noise sources. Establish interior noise standards for new residential and residential health care projects of 40dB (L<sub>dn</sub>) for bedrooms and 45dB (L<sub>dn</sub>) for other rooms — decibel levels determined based on a day-night weighted 24-hour average noise level.

**5.9 Noise Generated by Commercial Projects.** Design of commercial projects should be sensitive to noise impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

### 5.10 Traffic and Construction Noise.

Require mitigation of construction and traffic noise impacts on the ambient noise level in the Town.

**5.11 Hazardous Materials Storage and Disposal.** Require the proper use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials to prevent leakage, contamination, potential explosions, fires or the escape of harmful gases, and to prevent individually innocuous materials from combining to form hazardous substances, especially at the time of disposal.

**5.12 Wind Hazards.** Monitor issues related to damage from windstorms and undertake precautionary measures as needed, such as tree trimming. Promote the undergrounding of overhead power lines and require that new development be set back a safe distance from high voltage power lines.

**5.13 Adequate Emergency Vehicle Access and Infrastructure.** New construction shall be denied unless designed to provide adequate access for emergency vehicles, particularly fire fighting equipment. Additionally, new development and substantial remodels shall be conditioned on the provision of adequate infrastructure and water supplies for fire suppression, and where private gates are proposed, owners shall be required to register gate codes with the Police Department, Ross Valley Fire Department, and Ross Valley Paramedic Authority to ensure that first responders have access in the event of an emergency.

**5.14 Town Responsibilities for Emergency Preparation and Response.** Undertake emergency preparedness planning in cooperation with other public agencies and local organizations. Maintain mutual aid agreements and communication links with the County of Marin and other surrounding jurisdictions that allow for supplemental aid from other police and fire personnel in the event of emergencies. With a view to building community resilience and empowering community members to react effectively in the event of a disaster. Publicize emergency plans, provide information on disaster preparedness to residents and businesses, and continue essential Town emergency public services during natural disasters.

**5.15 Post Disaster Recovery.** Work with adjacent jurisdictions and responsible agencies to plan for a coordinated post-disaster recovery following any type of hazard event in a manner that reduces further losses or damages from future disasters.

### **Overview of Our Past Accomplishments**

As development has been proposed on the least developable hillside lots in Ross, the Town has required thorough review by outside hydrologists and geologists to ensure that potential hazards such as erosion, landslide and debris flow are fully addressed and mitigated. New development in geologically hazardous areas is not approved without first demonstrating that the proposed construction will not result in on-or off-site dangerous conditions.

Fire risk in Ross is high due to vegetation, steep topography and climactic conditions. The majority of the Town is located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), a zone where human settlements and natural landscapes come into contact, creating a transition area where structures are vulnerable to wildfires. The Ross Valley Fire Department reviews all development applications, and new construction must meet fire safety standards and provide adequate access for emergency vehicles. The Town's Hillside Lot Ordinance further requires clearing of brush, installation of class "A" roofing, and replacement of inadequate water lines and fire hydrants to ensure a sufficient water supply for fire fighting. The Town's Tree Permitting Ordinance requires the removal of trees determined to be fire hazards by the local fire authority, including certain non-native species.

The Town has adopted a local annex to the Marin County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) that identifies specific mitigation goals, objectives, and projects to reduce and/or eliminate risk from natural and humanmade hazards in Ross. The annex includes an assessment of vulnerability to the effects of climate change, and it addresses risks associated with dam failure, debris flows, drought, earthquake, flooding, land subsidence, extreme heat, high winds, and wildfire. The MJHMP and the Town of Ross local annex are incorporated by reference into this General Plan. The Town is also a party to the Marin County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), which provides a science-based assessment of wildfire hazards and threats to homes in wildland-urban interface areas of Marin County and incorporates strategies to reduce fire hazard and mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires, while promoting the protection and enhancement of the county's economic assets and ecological resources.

## Action List of New Ideas

**5.A Prepare Water System (Pressure) Master Plan.** Coordinate with the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) to evaluate water pressure and water lines to ensure adequate fire protection. Identify locations where improvements are needed and adopt requirements and funding mechanisms in coordination with MMWD to implement these improvements.

**5.B Implement Ross Valley Emergency Preparedness.** Continue to work with the Ross Valley Fire Department, Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA), Marin County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and neighboring jurisdictions to plan for a coordinated response to emergencies such as flood, fire, earthquake or other emergency situations. Specific actions to optimize emergency evacuation capacity include:

- Identifying measures to protect critical evacuation routes such as Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, Lagunitas Road, and Laurel Grove Avenue and to develop contingency plans for operations when these and other roads are inoperable due to natural hazard events;
- Identifying traffic management strategies to ensure efficient access from feeder streets onto critical evacuation routes during an emergency evacuation event; and
- Studying the feasibility of deploying dynamic message signs, roadway sensors, and other Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) tools to disseminate real-time traffic conditions, alternative routes, and delays to drivers, enhancing situational awareness and decision-making.

**5C Promote Emergency Preparedness.** Promote community awareness and understanding of threat hazards, disaster response, and steps that can be taken to reduce personal risk by:

- Providing information and links to resources on the Town website, in Town newsletters, and at community events;
- Coordinating with the Ross Valley Fire Department to promote and facilitate formation of Firewise community groups in Ross and for the establishment of Neighborhood Response Groups, targeting neighborhoods and areas that face the greatest evacuation challenges (Figures 14 and 15) as a priority;
- As a JPA member, supporting Ross Valley Fire Department efforts to recruit and retain a Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator to facilitate neighborhood level emergency preparedness and response activities in Ross;
- Promoting registration among Ross residents for the countywide alert and early warning system (Alert Marin) among Ross residents, targeting efforts in particular to residential areas that face the greatest evacuation challenges (Figures 14 and 15); and
- Periodically conducting outreach to encourage residents with access and functional needs to register with the Police and Fire Departments to ensure that their needs are incorporated into all emergency response plans.

**5.D Facilitate Emergency Access in Constrained Neighborhoods.** Explore options to facilitate access to emergency evacuation routes in evacuation constrained neighborhoods, such as ensuring that gates barring access are unlocked on red flag days and during events requiring emergency evacuation.

## Goal 6

### Protecting Creek Habitat and Reducing Flooding Hazards



Creek drainageway

Fueled by heavy winter rains, Corte Madera Creek can turn from a peaceful stream in the summer and fall months into a raging river in the winter months. Throughout history, and most recently during the New Year's Eve Flood of 2005, there was massive and widespread flooding in the low-lying areas of Town when the creek overflowed its banks in Ross and San Anselmo. Our region's historic pattern of developing the flat lands along Corte Madera Creek in the Ross Valley leaves us vulnerable to the whims of nature.

#### Major New Ideas

- Participate in Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program
- Develop Rules Regarding Runoff
- Develop Regional Land Use Regulation

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

Flood control improvements have been made and a new creek management program has been completed. All new structures are above the 100-year flood elevation in the downtown area and in new and remodeled houses located along the creeks and in the low areas. Houses in the floodplain have been granted expedited Council approval to be raised above flood levels and all businesses have installed flood protection mitigation. Specific standards for upstream mitigation and drainage system restoration have been implemented and overall runoff reduced.

#### Ross General Plan Policies

**6.1 Flood Protection in New Development.** All new construction and substantial remodels (including fences, ancillary structures, and other encroachments) within the 100-year floodplain must comply with the Town's floodplain regulations and FEMA's "no rise" certification requirements as applicable. All development applications for areas within a 100-year flood hazard zone will be reviewed for consistency with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and Community Rating System (CRS) standards as well as applicable provisions of the Town Code to mitigate flood hazard potential.

**6.2 Flood Control Improvements.** The Town supports the construction of public and private flood control improvements consistent with the natural environment, the design character of the Town of Ross and the safety and protection of persons and property.

**6.3 Ross Valley Flood and Watershed Protection.** The Town will continue to coordinate with the Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and work with other jurisdictions within the Ross Valley watershed to develop and implement a comprehensive, sub-regional approach to flood protection and resource preservation strategies.

**6.4 Runoff and Drainage.** Stormwater runoff should be maintained in its natural path. Water should not be concentrated and flow onto adjacent property. Instead, runoff should be directed toward storm drains or, preferably to other areas where it can be retained, detained, and/or absorbed into the ground.

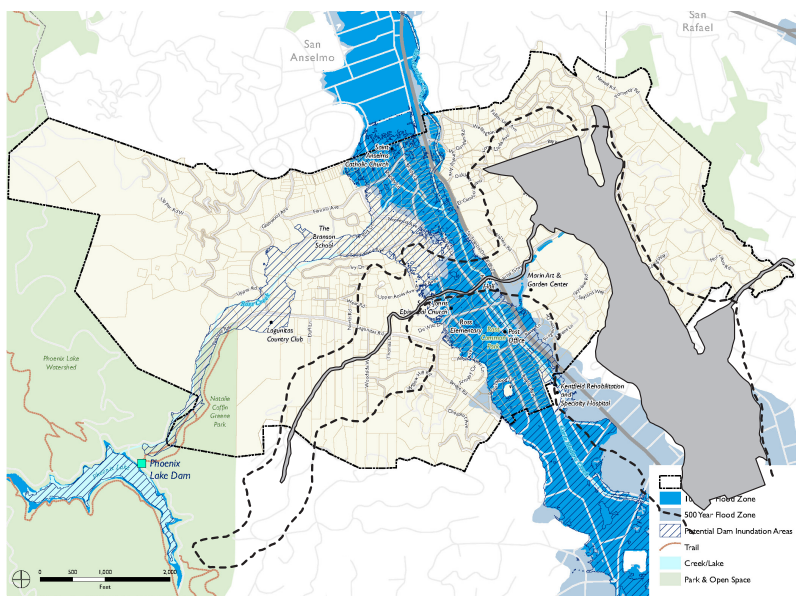
**6.5 Permeable Surfaces.** To the greatest extent possible, development should use permeable surfaces and other techniques to minimize runoff into underground drain systems and to allow water to percolate into the ground. Landscaped areas should be designed to provide potential runoff absorption and infiltration.

**6.6 Creek and Drainageway Setbacks, Maintenance and Restoration.** Keep development away from creeks and drainageways. Setbacks from creeks shall be maximized to protect riparian areas and to protect residents from flooding and other hazards. Encourage restoration of runoff areas, to include but not be limited to such actions as sloping banks, providing native vegetation, protecting habitat, etc., and work with property owners to identify means of keeping debris from blocking drainageways.

**6.7 Riparian Vegetation.** Protect existing creek and riparian vegetation and encourage the use of native species during creek restoration. Assure that modification of natural channels is done in a manner that retains and protects creekside vegetation, integrates fish passage and includes habitat restoration in its natural state.

Figure 9

### Flood Hazards and Potential Dam Inundation



*This map was developed for general planning usage. The Town of Ross is not responsible nor liable for use of this map beyond its intended purpose.*

## Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

Ross is a member of the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP), which is the leader in stormwater management within the Bay Area. Programs encourage public participation, education and appropriately designed development to curb water pollution in Marin County. The Town encourages

practices that enable water to percolate into the surrounding soil, instead of letting sediment, metals, pesticides and chemicals run off directly into waterways or the storm drain system.



Creek drainageway from Phoenix Lake

Many of these development practices also help to reduce stormwater flow. In particular, gravel driveways, permeable pavers and grass-lined drainage ditches on the side of the roads (as opposed to curbs and sidewalks) enhance water absorption and filter out pollutants, such as hydrocarbons.

Most of the land adjacent to Ross Creek and Corte Madera Creek is in private ownership. Therefore, educating homeowners about the best ways to stabilize banks and care for creeks has been important. Techniques include biotechnical bank stabilization, which utilizes native plants and natural materials for banks. In addition, rocks can be used at the toe of the bank to provide bank stabilization, and to provide shelter and feeding areas for trout. The Marin Art & Garden Center showcases a variety of native plants that are appropriate for riparian areas.

In a coordinated effort, the County of Marin and the municipalities of Fairfax, Larkspur, Ross and San Anselmo established the Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program with three main objectives: (1) achieving comprehensive flood damage reduction, (2) conserving and enhancing the natural creek network, and (3) providing an affordable local financing plan. Since 2015, the Town has administered a floodplain management program that complies with the requirements of both the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the Community Rating System (CRS) to enhance public safety and environmental protection while reducing the potential for loss and damage to property and public infrastructure. Areas in Ross subject to flooding and potential dam inundation are shown in Figure 9, and areas affected by the New Year's Eve flood of 2005 are shown in Figure 10. After the 2005 New Year's Eve flood the Town fast-tracked applications and waived fees to raise houses, and more than a dozen property owners took advantage of this program to raise their houses up above 100-year floodplain levels.

## Action List of New Ideas

### 6.A Participate in Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program.

Continue to work with other Ross Valley jurisdictions to implement a watershed-wide approach to drainage, warning systems, emergency response, and flood insurance programs.

**6.B Proactive Flood Prevention.** Continue to conduct an annual Creek Walk with local volunteers prior to storm season to identify locations for removal of debris from creeks and culverts in the public stormwater conveyance system. Engage contractors to remove vegetation and debris in identified locations.

**6.C Location of Critical Facilities .** As part of the Town Facilities Master Plan process, ensure that all critical facilities, including emergency operations centers (EOC), police stations, fire department and paramedic facilities, are located at least 1 foot above the 100-year flood elevation or at the 500-year flood elevation level, whichever is higher.

### 6.D Risk Assessment for Critical Facilities and Infrastructure.

Conduct a study to assess the compound risk to critical public safety facilities and utility infrastructure from geologic, seismic, and flood-related risks.

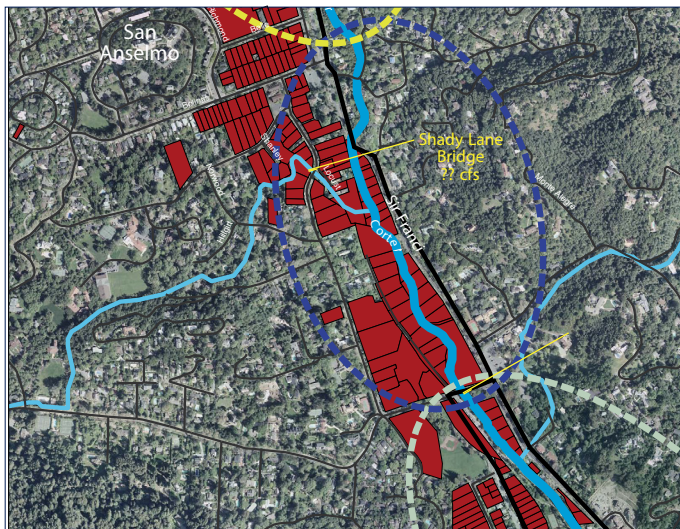


Salmon in Corte Madera Creek  
(photo courtesy of Friends of Corte Madera Creek)

Figure 10

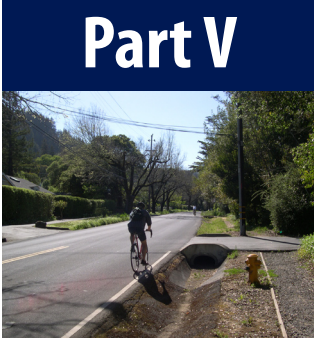
### Properties Affected by the New Year's Eve Flood of 2005

(Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program)



# Easy and Safe Travel Throughout Ross

## Part V



### Goal 7

### Safe, Connected and Well-Maintained Streets, Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes

Trying to drive anywhere in Marin at certain times of day can be frustrating. Travel through and around Ross is affected by countywide development and travel patterns since Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is the major east-west arterial from West Marin to Highway 101. Bottlenecks on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard can push through-traffic onto Bolinas Avenue, Shady Lane, Laurel Grove Avenue and Poplar Avenue, adversely impacting residential neighborhoods. We want to maintain manageable traffic volumes. Thus, we encourage alternative travel including safe walking and biking.

### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

Measures are in place to keep our streets and walkways safe for adults, children, pedestrians, bikers and the disabled. We have developed safe bicycle routes and provided bicycle racks in public areas, including the Downtown, parks, schools and the post office. Drivers and cyclists are careful to “share the road.” Everyone observes traffic signs, signals and rules, with consistent enforcement by Public Safety.

### Ross General Plan Policies

**7.1 Safe Streets.** Provide streets that are as user-friendly and safe as possible for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

**7.2 Traffic Level of Service Standards.** Sir Francis Drake Boulevard will not be widened to accommodate additional vehicular traffic. Establish a level of service (LOS) “D” along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and level of service “C” on local streets during weekday mornings and evening peak hours using procedures from the most recent Highway Capacity Manual.

### Major New Ideas

- Prepare Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan
- Pursue Funding for Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements

**7.3 Traffic Diversions.** Minimize diversion of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard traffic onto local streets, and reduce incidents of speeding and other unsafe behavior.

**7.4 Traffic Impacts.** Ensure that full CEQA review is undertaken of significant development proposals in Ross, in nearby areas and along the Sir Francis Drake Boulevard corridor that may impact traffic operations, safety, air quality and other environmental conditions.

**7.5 Pavement Management.** Maintain acceptable pavement management on all public streets and mitigate roadway impacts due to construction activities for aesthetic, structural and acoustical reasons. In future updates to the Capital Improvement Program, prioritize preventative maintenance and repair on roadway segments designated as evacuation routes. Hold developers responsible for pavement degradation caused by construction vehicles.

**7.6 Parking Program.** Address on-site and street parking needs through adequate parking standards and enforcement. Limit on-street and overnight parking.

**7.7 Transit and Carpools.** Encourage carpooling and transit use, including handicapped-accessible transit service, commuter service and local service.

**7.8 Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel.** Encourage travel via bicycle and walking by providing and maintaining safe pedestrian and bicycle routes along main arteries in Ross. Consider links with Town destinations, surrounding area destinations and regional trails and bicycle systems. Participate in the Safe Routes to Schools Program.

### Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

To keep our streets safe, police enforce speeding and traffic safety laws for both motorists and bicyclists. The Town also coordinates with Ross School on the Safe Routes to Schools Program and is implementing pedestrian improvements along Sir Francis Drake, Shady Lane, Laurel Grove and other streets. The Town's strategies echo the goals of the Ross Safe Routes to Schools program, which are to:

(1) Increase walking and biking to Ross School; (2) improve the safety of all routes in the town; and (3) determine if outside funding is available for these circulation improvements.

The Town has complied with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), as amended, and relevant state and local codes and regulations by providing reasonable

## Traffic Levels

Below are Existing (**2006**) and Forecasted (**2025**) intersection Level of Service (LOS):

■ **SIR FRANCIS DRAKE/BOLINAS**  
**AM Peak LOS** — Existing C — Forecast (C)  
**PM Peak LOS** — Existing C — Forecast (C)

■ **SIR FRANCIS DRAKE/LAUREL GROVE**  
**AM Peak LOS** — Existing B — Forecast (B)  
**PM Peak LOS** — Existing A — Forecast (B)

■ **SIR FRANCIS DRAKE/LAGUNITAS**  
**AM Peak LOS** — Existing C — Forecast (C)  
**PM Peak LOS** — Existing C — Forecast (D)

■ **BOLINAS/SHADY LANE**  
**AM Peak LOS** — Existing A — Forecast (A)  
**PM Peak LOS** — Existing A — Forecast (A)

■ **LAGUNITAS/SHADY LANE**  
**AM Peak LOS** — Existing A — Forecast (A)  
**PM Peak LOS** — Existing A — Forecast (A)

*Source: Parisi Associates (2006)*

Traffic LOS definitions describe conditions in terms of speed and travel time, volume, capacity, ease of maneuverability, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety. There are five gradations of LOS, from A to F. LOS A reflects free flow conditions, with vehicles traveling at the maximum posted speed. LOS F reflects congested conditions, with vehicles traveling bumper-to-bumper. The LOS designation provides a quantitative tool that can be used to analyze the impacts of land use changes on a street network. Traffic LOS also is used as a measure of system performance (e.g., congestion).

accommodation to persons with disabilities, which is identified as an implementing program in the Town's adopted Housing Element.

## Action List of New Ideas

**7.A Prepare Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.** Encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel in Ross by developing a safe bicycle and pedestrian route system, including requirements for providing bicycle racks at commercial projects and public facilities. The master plan will be coordinated with the Safe Routes to Schools program and will also consider methods to assure protection of pathways and the entire walkway system in Ross. The map in Appendix A (Figure 11, Pedestrian/Bicycle System in Ross) shows the current bicycle and pedestrian system.



The Town will continue to coordinate with the Safe Routes to Schools Program at Ross School

**7.B Pursue Funding for Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements.** Investigate and apply to programs which could provide funding for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, including grants through the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) and state and federal sources.

# The Future Use of Our Land

## Goal 8

### A Beautiful, Safe and Close-Knit Community

When we talk about what we like about our Town, there are many common themes. Among them are preservation of the small-town character, maintenance of architectural diversity and protection of the green, tree-dominated hills. The purpose of the general plan is to translate concepts like these into usable guidelines, goals and codes. The challenge lies in preserving the Town character and traditions that Ross residents hold dear, while allowing room for necessary change. The Ross General Plan does not intend to turn Ross into a live-in museum; rather, it seeks to guide change to preserve the architectural mix and take into account not just the individual property, but the community-at-large.

### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

As citizens of Ross we are dedicated to leaving our community a better and more beautiful place than we found it. Our neighborly connections, historic heritage, sense of community, natural ecological environments, attractive neighborhoods, local businesses and Town services all work well together.

The Ross Common is where Town residents participate in community celebrations throughout the year, including the annual Ross Town dinner, and the Fourth of July parade and picnic. Next to The Common is the Ross School. We recognize the importance of Ross School to our community. Maintaining the school's academic excellence is a goal of everyone in Town. The Ross Post Office is an informal gathering place for the community and a place where residents can maintain their connection to the community as a whole.

The commercial downtown area has two-and three-story buildings that are home to an eclectic variety of retail stores, restaurants and professional offices. The Town encourages the community to support these businesses in order to maintain their viability and to sustain a timeless "country village" appeal to the Downtown area.

## Part VI



### Major New Ideas

- Prepare a Precise Plan for the Downtown Area
- Modify Downtown Commercial Zoning
- Develop New Sign Ordinance for the Downtown
- Investigate Enforcement Mechanisms

## Ross General Plan Policies

**8.1 Land Use Plan.** Establish land use categories, densities and intensities of land use, as depicted on the Land Use Plan (see Figure 12 in Appendix A), that support the vision and goals of the Ross General Plan.



The Ross Common and downtown provide a gathering place

**8.2 Densities and Intensities of Land Uses.** Define limits on densities of development as shown on the Land Use Plan. Development on any site shall conform to existing zoning and the following factors: site resources and constraints; potentially hazardous conditions; traffic and access; adequacy of infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.); design policies; development patterns of adjacent areas; and prevailing densities or intensities of adjacent areas.

**8.3 Special Planning Area.** Prepare area-specific development guidelines for locations designated on the Land Use Plan as “special planning area.”

**8.4 Downtown and Ross Common.** Maintain the Town-owned Ross Common areas linked to uses and activities at Ross School, and linked to the Town’s downtown area as the central recreation, gathering and local shopping area of Ross. Maintain the downtown area as an attractive, pedestrian-friendly, small retail/business area. Encourage smaller-scale housing units mixed with commercial uses.

**8.5 Downtown Commercial Uses.** Create a warm, friendly, attractive and economically viable shopping environment in the downtown by encouraging local-serving commercial uses that create a pedestrian feel in the Downtown, especially in ground-floor storefront locations. Create an attractiveness to the Downtown commercial area through regulation of signage, awnings, and other façade treatments, and through public improvements.

**8.6 Gathering Places.** Encourage and enhance community gathering places such as downtown, the Ross Common and the post office. Support the activities of Ross Recreation, Ross School, and the Marin Art & Garden Center.

**8.7 Enforcement of Regulations.** Ensure the safety, proper construction and maintenance of buildings, property and neighborhoods through enforcement of codes, public education and cooperation with other public agencies.

## Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

The general plan and zoning have guided decision-making to enable new development to gracefully fit-in with the community. As special issues have arisen over the past 15 years, new regulations have been developed to respond to those needs. The Town is now essentially built-out, with almost all of the remaining vacant land in Town located on steeply sloping hillside areas with limited residential development potential. A significant amount of vacant land zoned for residential use is contained in three major parcels adjacent to or part of Bald Hill. There are very few vacant lots located in the flatter portions of the Town. The figure below shows existing land use in Ross as of 2006.

Figure 13

### Existing (2006) Land Use in Ross

Land Use Designation	Acreage in Town Limits (2006)	Percentage
Very Low Density Residential	300.47	38.1%
Low Density Residential	156.46	19.8%
Medium Low Density Residential	73.75	9.4%
Medium Density Residential	13.02	1.7%
Local Service Commercial	1.25	0.2%
Public Park and Open Space	50.47	6.4%
Limited Specialized Recreational/Cultural	28.15	3.6%
Public Service	6.24	0.8%
Limited Quasi-Public/Private Service	18.52	2.3%
Roadways and Other Right-of-Way	140.32	17.8%
Total	788.65	100.0%
Source: Town of Ross (2006)		

## Action List of New Ideas

**8.A Prepare a Downtown Area Plan.** Develop a plan for the Downtown area as a “Special Planning Area” (see Land Use Plan) to include the Downtown commercial area, parking area through the post office to Lagunitas Avenue, and Ross Common. The plan would include: (1) street design improvements;



Ross Post Office

(2) parking; (3) potential uses, including opportunities for limited housing; (4) design guidelines; (5) pedestrian and bicycle access — including access to Frederick Allen Park and Kentfield Rehabilitation Hospital; and, (6) outdoor gathering areas.

**8.B Modify Downtown Commercial Zoning.** Revise commercial zoning in the Downtown to prohibit offices in storefront locations, to encourage mixed use housing, and to encourage uses that are local-serving and would contribute to the vitality of downtown.

**8.C Develop New Sign Ordinance for the Downtown.** In coordination with Advisory Design Review, develop a new sign ordinance for the downtown to provide greater flexibility in sign design and Town approval.

**8.D Investigate Enforcement Methods.** Review enforcement needs as part of the development of design guidelines and other programs intended to refine Town practices for application review and approval.

## Goal 9

### Excellence of Community Stewardship

We define stewardship as the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. This community shares a unique environment in which we foster, nurture and protect our families. The founding principles of this place are joy in the physical environment, the families who stand together and the education of the children who will learn and project these values into the future. We have come to this valley in search of a better way to live. Every aspect of this shared view of the projected future is grounded in the stewardship of these irreplaceable assets.

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

We visualize Ross in 2025 as a friendly and welcoming Town that encourages interaction and community involvement. The population is diverse and welcomes people of all races, ages, creeds and ethnic backgrounds. All members of the community treat others with friendly respect. Our amicable and considerate demeanor significantly influences the behavior of our children. There is a feeling of inclusion in the community that translates into the opportunity for everyone to participate in the civic and community life of the Town.

#### Ross General Plan Policies

**9.1 Coordination with Other Jurisdictions and Agencies.** Ensure that regional, state and federal agencies, nearby cities, Towns, and special districts, College of Marin, County of Marin and LAFCO are aware of and responsive to the goals, policies and programs of the Ross General Plan.

**9.2 Adequate Town Services.** Maintain facilities and staffing to support general government, public works, fire protection and police services that are responsive to local needs. Use the design and development review process to minimize increases in service needs resulting from new development.

**9.3 Water and Sewer Service.** Coordinate with Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) and Ross Valley Sanitary District (Sanitary District No. 1) in the provision of adequate water and sewer facilities to meet the current and future needs of the Town.

#### Major New Ideas

- Consider Fire Service Consolidation
- Establish a List of Town Specialists
- Monitor General Plan Implementation
- Provide Information to All Residents
- Establish Town Development Review Protocol

**9.4 Coordination with Schools.** Maintain a close, collaborative relationship with the Ross School and other educational programs in Ross to maintain the excellence of the education programs offered and to plan for future needs. Use all direct and indirect means available to the Town of Ross to ensure that the modification, operation and maintenance of Ross School is consistent with the goals and aspirations of the Ross General Plan.



The Branson School (Soccer)

**9.5 Coordination with Non-Profit Groups, Organizations and Businesses in Ross.** Provide for effective outreach and coordination with churches, the post office, clubs, organizations, service providers and local businesses in planning matters of mutual interest, as well as community events and cultural activities.

**9.6 Community Involvement.** Encourage community participation in the formulation and review of planning policies, Ross General Plan implementing programs and development proposals.

**9.7 Annexation Criteria.** Areas that can reasonably be served through extension of the existing service area of the Town will be considered for annexation. Annexations will be considered based on the following criteria:

- (a) Resident interest.
- (b) The effect of the annexation on the Town's "small town" character
- (c) The cost/revenue implications of the provision of Town services.
- (d) The availability of Town services and infrastructure.
- (e) Access.
- (f) Location within the Ross watershed.
- (g) Potential liability concerns related to drainage, geotechnical conditions and roadway adequacy.

Where existing properties are situated within the Town of Ross Planning Area (some properties may be in two jurisdictions), the Town will consider property owner requests for annexation on a case-by-case basis, depending upon the reasonableness of the request and conformity with the Town's annexation criteria.

### Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

Our community cannot operate without the strong interaction and involvement of its residents. Community involvement pumps fresh ideas into our Town. Each person is different, and collectively we all benefit in recognizing that the participation of a

full cross-section of the community gives a validity and creative boost to our planning and decision-making. Resident participation leads to better government and a better community.

Town government plays a critical role in bringing the community together. We encourage community participation in the formulation and review of planning policies, implementing programs and development proposals. The Town provides information to the community about planning policy issues to (a) enable effective participation from all segments of the community, (b) enhance community dialogue, (c) foster consensus building, (d) bring in expert analysis, and (e) achieve the best decisions based upon achieving the greatest good. For example, the Town uses its “information by email” list with over 500 contacts to keep people aware of what is going on in the community, emailing them Council agendas each month and special email releases from Town staff and other notices of public interest.

The Town must also coordinate with surrounding jurisdictions, special districts and the Marin County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). LAFCO coordinates the logical and timely changes in local governmental boundaries (annexation and detachment of territory, formation of special districts, and consolidation, merger, and dissolution of districts) and ways to reorganize, simplify and streamline governmental structure.



Ross Fire Department

## Action List of New Ideas

**9.A Study and Implement Town Hall Remodel.** Evaluate options for remodeling Town Hall for police, fire, administrative staff and meeting space.

**9.B Consider Fire Service Consolidation.** Study opportunities to consolidate fire protection service with other Ross Valley jurisdictions and agencies.

**9.C Review Fees.** Conduct a periodic review of fees to assure cost recovery for services provided by the Town.

**9.D Post General Plan Information on the Town Website.** Provide an interactive general plan format by posting the Ross General Plan on the Town’s website and providing links to make it easy to navigate for users.

**9.E Establish a List of Town Specialists.** Identify specialists in fields such as hydrology, archaeology, historic preservation, cultural places, etc. (similar to the Town Arborist position) who can provide technical review and recommendations, as needed by Town staff, for development proposals.

**9.F Monitor General Plan Implementation.** Conduct a biennial, publicly noticed meeting to review and update the section of the Ross General Plan entitled “Priorities for Implementing the Ross General Plan.” Program priorities will be reflected in the Town’s budgeting and capital improvement programming decisions.

**9.G Provide Information to All Residents.** Maintain, publicize and distribute information on a variety of topics related to community health, safety and environmental protection. This information includes, but is not limited to, disaster planning material, an inventory of hazardous materials and substances used by the Town and ways for residents to dispose of hazardous materials, drought tolerant landscaping, contact information, schedules of fees, etc. Strive to create electronic access to the community by using “Information by Email” as appropriate, and other means.


**9.H Establish Town Development Review Protocol.** Establish Town protocol (procedures and responsibilities) for Town Council, committees, technical specialists and consultants, applicants, neighbors, and Town staff in the development review process and formulation of town policies, procedures and enforcement. Ensure compliance with state and local laws and regulations.

## THE SNEAK PEEK


*A Preview of Selected Items on the November 8, 2007  
Ross Town Council Meeting Agenda*

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**Design Review...in Ross?**  
The newly adopted Town of Ross General Plan 2007-2025 calls for the Town to establish an advisory design review process to provide applicants with helpful early advice. The Council will talk about its progress in implementing its five Council goals for 2007-2008, including an informal design review in which owners, design professionals and neighbors can discuss issues and brainstorm design solutions.



**Council to Consider Outdoor Smoking Restrictions on November 8th**  
The Town Council will continue its lively discussion of a proposed ordinance to expand existing smoking laws in town to restrict smoking in additional outdoor public places and to declare secondhand smoke a public nuisance. The Council would like your reaction to this ordinance: learn more about this issue at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org) under “What’s New?”



**Flood Control Report**  
With the rainy season soon upon us, let’s talk flood control. Learn about the wrap up of the Town’s successful downtown floodgate project, raising (and sometimes razing) Ross residences above the 100-year flood, what the Army Corps is saying about getting the Flood Zone Unit 4 project out of the starting blocks and (if that isn’t enough) the status of flood litigation against Ross (and San Anselmo, and Fairfax, and The County of Marin, and the State of California, and the Flood Control District, etc., etc.) and what that means to you.



**Planning Applications for Consideration on November 8<sup>th</sup>**

- ▶ 83 Laurel Grove, Eric and Trisha Ashworth: Construction Time Extension
- ▶ 7 Woodside Way, Lee and Stephanie Notowichig: Construction Time Extension
- ▶ 2 Hillgirt Drive, Timothy and Katrina Harmon: Construction Time Extension
- ▶ 23 Baywood, Richard and Cynthia Hannum: Design Review Amendment
- ▶ 14 Walnut Avenue, Loretta Gargan and Catherine Wagner: Design Review
- ▶ 37 Upper Road, Thomas and Susan Reinhardt: Variance/Design Review
- ▶ 30 El Camino Bueno, Colin Lind and Anne Dickerson-Lind: Variance/Design Review
- ▶ Upper Toyon, Harvey Glasser: Lot Line Adjustment, Merger, Resubdivision

Detailed notices on these planning applications are available at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org). The complete agenda and staff reports for the November 8, 2007, 6:30 p.m. meeting will be available on the web Friday. The Town of Ross welcomes, and encourages, your participation and input in Town issues.

“The Sneak Peak” provides a preview for residents of selected items on each upcoming Ross Town Council meeting agenda

“The Morning After” is published the day after each Ross Town Council meeting to provide the meeting highlights for residents.

## THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of October 11, 2007*

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Volume 1, No. 4

October 12, 2007



**Welcome from Mayor Scot Hunter**  
This month’s edition of “The Morning After” could well be called “Later that Morning.” It was after midnight this morning when we adjourned our October meeting. The evening featured a lively agenda with interesting, and sometimes heartfelt, debate on topics as varied as an enhanced smoking ordinance, the use of the Ross Common for temporary classrooms, and the hillside lot ordinance. All of these discussions are more meaningful if we know how you, as our constituents, feel about the issues – please email or call and let your Council know what you think. In the meantime, read on...

**Council Considers Outdoor Smoking Restrictions**  
The Town Council continued discussion of a proposed Town ordinance further regulating secondhand smoke until more residents could become aware of the ordinance’s provisions. The ordinance would expand the Town’s existing smoking regulations to include smoking in some outdoor public places and to declare smoking to be a public nuisance.

Council members Diane Durst, Michael Skall and Rick Strauss expressed reservation with provisions declaring secondhand smoke to be a nuisance, allowing a resident impacted by a neighbor’s smoke drifting onto their property to pursue legal remedies. They expressed concern that the proposed ordinance would encourage litigation.



The ordinance proposed expanding the Town’s 1989 smoking prohibitions in enclosed public places to include smoking in bars, common areas of multi-family housing, and 50% of hotel guest rooms. The ordinance also prohibited outdoor smoking in Town-owned parks and recreation areas, outdoor dining areas of restaurants, service areas such as ticket lines and bus stops, and within 20 feet of any opening of an enclosed area within which smoking is prohibited.



The Council majority was concerned that many Ross residents were not aware of the proposed ordinance and had not had an opportunity to voice their opinion. The Council agreed to allow more time for community input before revisiting the issue. The Council also directed staff to include a provision that would designate smoking areas on Town-owned property.

## Goal 10

### Provision of Affordable Housing Opportunities

Home ownership in Ross and throughout Marin County has become an ever more distant dream for many people. The median sales price for single family homes in Ross for the three-month period from August through October, 2006 was almost \$2.0 million. The double-edged sword of steep home prices is apparent as we see subsequent generations priced out of the local housing market. Similarly, people who work in Ross are often forced to live far away where housing is more affordable.

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

The Town has obtained funding to provide affordable housing for teachers, Ross Town personnel and others. Some of the affordable housing units are apartments above the retail establishments.



The Cedars of Marin Ross campus

#### Major New Ideas

- Housing Element Update by June, 2009
- See Other Programs in the Town of Ross Housing Element Adopted January 13, 2005

# Commitment to Our Future

## Part VII



### Goal 11

#### Implementing the Ross General Plan

Planning in Ross does not begin and end with the General Plan. The Ross General Plan recognizes that the process of change is dynamic and unpredictable and that a continuing process for monitoring the General Plan, and the assumptions upon which it is based, is necessary. The General Plan sets out our road map, but it is the ongoing commitment of time and resources that will achieve our vision of Ross in the year 2025. All of the actions identified in the General Plan require further study, new ordinances, special funding, or public review. The details relating to each action will be evaluated at the time they are undertaken.

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

The General Plan is a strategic document that identifies commitments to action and implementation goals. It is a blueprint for the adoption of ordinances and for establishing Town Council and staff work priorities.

The planning and permitting process is transparent, understandable and objective. Decisions are based on staff and design review recommendations, familiarity with the General Plan and sound judgment. Applicants for variances or use permits are assisted by staff and the Town's Advisory Design Review Committee (ADR), and are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the process for obtaining variances and permits. The process is simplified and efficient.

## Criteria to Define Action/Implementation Priorities

There are many actions the Town should undertake to implement the Ross General Plan. However, not all actions can be undertaken immediately as there are community needs, staffing availability and financial resources to consider. The following factors have been used for grouping General Plan implementation actions into priority categories.

### First-Level Criteria (Near-Term or Urgent Need and Benefit)

- (1) Does the action address an immediate health or safety concern?
- (2) Is the action a legal requirement that must be fulfilled?
- (3) Does the action respond to a pressing development issue?
- (4) What is the financial impact on the Town?
- (5) Is the action a special project that has already been started?
- (6) Is the action already an ongoing normal responsibility of the Town?
- (7) Does the time-frame for the action require it to be implemented before another program action can be taken?



Downtown Ross Commercial Building

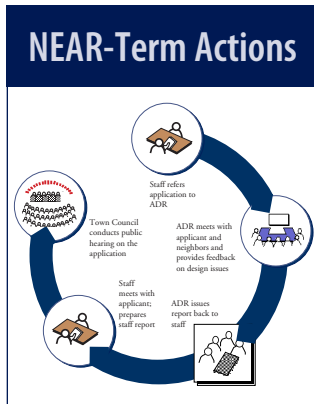
### Second-Level Criteria (Medium-Term Benefit)

- (8) Does the action respond to a longer-term planning need?
- (9) Will the action result in a longer-term aesthetic improvement?
- (10) Is the action necessary to keep the General Plan current?

To ensure that the Plan remains up-to-date and reflective of current town policy and consistent with State law implementation of the General Plan will be reviewed biennially by the Town Council concurrently with the budget so that any modifications can be made. This portion of the General Plan will be evaluated as part of the General Plan's review.

## Near-Term Actions (1-3 Years) Not In Order of Priority

**1.A Establish a Tree Committee.** Establish a Tree Committee to develop recommendations for trees, landscaping and maintenance in the public right-of-way.



**3.A Establish Advisory Design Review (ADR).** Develop a process for incorporating design review of development proposals utilizing an advisory group of local volunteer design professionals to provide technical assistance to staff.

**3.B Require Design Review for Larger Landscape Projects.** Require design review for large landscape projects that include significant hardscape, retaining walls, vegetation modifications, modification of topography, additional impervious surfaces, alterations of drainage patterns and other site modifications that could affect the visual and/or physical character of the site and neighborhood. Ensure that larger landscape projects include water efficient plant materials and efficient irrigation design.

**3.C Pursue Undergrounding of Utilities.** Undertake a program to underground utilities in Town neighborhoods if an investigation shows resident financial support for such action or if alternative viable funding mechanisms can be developed.

**3.D Develop Detailed Design Guidelines and Requirements.** Prepare design guidelines to be used in the design review process. Guidelines may include, but would not be limited to: (1) definition of what is subject to design review; (2) criteria to be used in design review, including contextual criteria; (3) criteria for exceptions to standards; (4) recommendations for fire-resistant design and materials. and (5) submittal and presentation requirements. A refinement of the design review process based on sub-areas in Ross may also occur. A preliminary mapping of sub-areas is shown in Figure 5 located in Appendix A. ADR should be involved in this process.

**5.A Prepare Water System (Pressure) Master Plan.** Coordinate with the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) to evaluate water pressure and water lines to ensure adequate fire protection. Identify locations where improvements are needed and adopt requirements and funding mechanisms in coordination with MMWD to implement these improvements.

**5.B Implement Ross Valley Emergency Preparedness.** Initiate discussions with other Ross Valley jurisdictions to consider opportunities to jointly respond to emergencies such as flood, fire, earthquake or other emergency situations. Cost savings and coordination opportunities could include the creation of a

Town staff disaster planning coordinator, formation of a disaster preparedness committee reporting to Town staff (resident volunteers, Town official), sharing of resources and development of outreach programs to residents and businesses to provide training and information about disaster preparedness.

**6.A Participate in Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program.** Work with other Ross Valley jurisdictions to address a watershed-wide approach to drainage, warning systems, emergency response, and flood insurance programs.

**7.A Prepare Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.** Encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel in Ross by developing a safe bicycle and pedestrian route system, including requirements for providing bicycle racks at commercial projects and public facilities. The master plan will be coordinated with the Safe Routes to Schools program and will also consider methods to assure protection of pathways and the entire walkway system in Ross. The map in Appendix A (Figure 11, Pedestrian/Bicycle System in Ross) shows the current bicycle and pedestrian system.

**7.B Pursue Funding for Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements.** Investigate and apply to programs which could provide funding for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, including grants through the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) and state and federal sources.

**8.A Prepare a Downtown Area Plan.** Develop a plan for the Downtown area as a “Special Planning Area” (see Land Use Plan) to include the Downtown commercial area, parking area through the post office to Lagunitas Avenue, and Ross Common. The plan would include: (1) street design improvements; (2) parking; (3) potential uses, including opportunities for limited housing; (4) design guidelines; (5) pedestrian and bicycle access — including access to Frederick Allen Park and Kentfield Rehabilitation Hospital; and, (6) outdoor gathering areas.

**8.C Develop New Sign Ordinance for the Downtown.** In coordination with Advisory Design Review, develop a new sign ordinance for the downtown to provide greater flexibility in sign design and Town approval.

**9.A Study and Implement Town Hall Remodel.** Evaluate options for remodeling Town Hall for police, fire, administrative staff and meeting space.

**9.B Consider Fire Service Consolidation.** Study opportunities to consolidate fire protection services with other Ross Valley jurisdictions and agencies.

## NEAR-Term Actions



**9.C Review Fees.** Conduct a periodic review of fees to assure cost recovery for services provided by the Town.

**9.D Post General Plan Information on the Town Website.** Provide an interactive general plan format by posting the Ross General Plan on the Town's website and providing links to make it easy to navigate for users.

**9.E Establish a List of Town Specialists.** Identify specialists in fields such as hydrology, archaeology, historic preservation, cultural places, etc. (similar to the Town Arborist position) who can provide technical review and recommendations, as needed by Town staff, for development proposals.

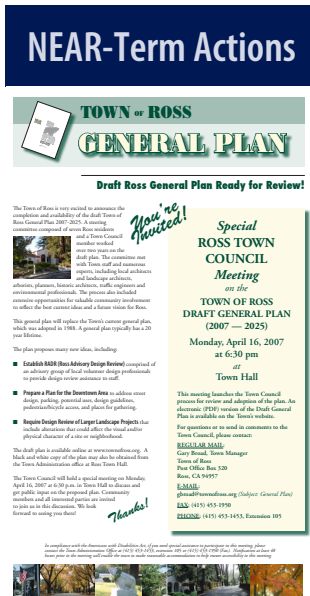
**9.F Monitor General Plan Implementation.** Conduct a biennial, publicly noticed meeting to review and update the section of the Ross General Plan entitled "Priorities for Implementing the Ross General Plan." Program priorities will be reflected in the Town's budgeting and capital improvement programming decisions.

**9.G Provide Information to All Residents.** Maintain, publicize and distribute information on a variety of topics related to community health, safety and environmental protection. This information includes, but is not limited to, disaster planning material, an inventory of hazardous materials and substances used by the Town and ways for residents to dispose of hazardous materials, drought tolerant landscaping, contact information, schedules of fees, etc. Strive to create electronic access to the community by using "Information by Email" as appropriate, and other means.

**9.H Establish Town Development Review Protocol.** Establish Town protocol (procedures and responsibilities) for Town Council, committees, technical specialists and consultants, applicants, neighbors, and Town staff in the development review process and formulation of town policies, procedures and enforcement. Ensure compliance with state and local laws and regulations.

**Implement Scheduled Housing Element Programs** (see Housing Element)

**Update the Housing Element (By June, 2009)**



## Medium-Term Actions (3-8 Years) Not In Order of Priority

**1.B Create a Landscape Master Plan for Public Areas.** Develop a Landscape Master Plan for entryways, streets, parks and other public areas of Ross. The plan may include: (1) clarification of responsibility for selecting, maintaining and irrigating Town trees; (2) an approved planting list; (3) a requirement for homeowners to plant and maintain certain types of trees from an approved list; (4) a replacement policy for trees when trees are removed; and, (5) guidance for issues such as tree lanes and waterways.

**2.A Establish “Green Building” Requirements.** Establish specific development regulations that require buildings and substantial remodels to be built using “green” building techniques, including recycling of building materials where possible, and to conform to an industry approved certification or rating such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), or Build it Green, which is a professional non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote healthy, energy and resource-efficient buildings in California.

**2.B Review Pesticide and Herbicide Requirements.** Review current Town standards to ensure the prudent use of pesticides and herbicides. Implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program that uses a variety of methods to control pests. The program would also include actions to identify and eliminate conditions that may attract and support pests.

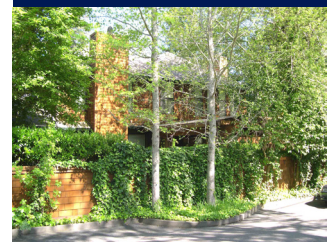
**2.C Adopt Woodsmoke or Biomass Smoke Ordinance.** Adopt a Woodsmoke Ordinance to reduce particulate emissions from wood or biomass burning appliances, including fireplaces, that do not meet EPA standards of emission. The purposes of the ordinance will be to either require or encourage the removal of existing wood or biomass burning appliances that do not meet standards of emission, and to implement requirements at the time of major remodel projects.

**2.D Consider Secondhand Smoke Ordinance.** Study and consider enactment of a Secondhand Smoke Ordinance in Ross.

**2.E Consider Solar Access Ordinance.** Study and consider enactment of a Solar Access Ordinance to encourage use of solar design for Ross development.

**4.A Conduct Study to Identify Historic Resources.** Identify potential districts and significant properties that may be eligible for National Register or California Historic Resources status, or which may have local significance or distinction.

### MEDIUM-Term Actions



## MEDIUM-Term Actions



**4.B Adopt Historic Resources Regulations.** Adopt guidelines, regulations and requirements to protect historic resources, including buildings, accessory structures, kiosks, gates, bridges, etc. Incorporate historic review into ADR design guidelines and consider the development of findings as part of the Town record for disclosure at resale, indicating that the home or site carries special significance to the town and therefore has special requirements for future renovation or alteration.

**4.C Map Archaeologically Sensitive Areas.** Consult with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, the Northwest Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System, and other resources to develop a map of potentially sensitive archaeological areas that can be used to identify locations where an archaeological inventory may be necessary prior to approval of development activity.

**6.B Develop Rules Regarding Site Runoff.** Develop guidelines that limit the coverage of impervious surfaces, that require the use of permeable surfaces, that implement other regulations to effectively channel and minimize site runoff, and that allow water to percolate into the ground.

**6.C Develop Regional Land Use Regulation.** Work with other Ross Valley jurisdictions to explore and adopt land use regulations to minimize additional runoff, or reduce runoff, within the Ross Valley watershed.

**8.B Modify Downtown Commercial Zoning.** Revise commercial zoning in the Downtown to prohibit offices in storefront locations, to encourage mixed use housing, and to encourage uses that are local-serving and would contribute to the vitality of downtown.

**8.D Investigate Enforcement Methods.** Review enforcement needs as part of the development of design guidelines and other programs intended to refine Town practices for application review and approval.