



The General Plan Update Is Vision 2025 in Motion

The development of the General Plan Update began several years ago when the Madera Vision 2025 Plan identified four key principles that should influence actions that occur in the community. Maderans said they wanted a well-planned city, good jobs and economic opportunities, a safe and healthy environment, and a strong community with great schools. The General Plan Update is one of the most powerful tools that can help Madera achieve these goals.

The General Plan serves as the City's blueprint for development over a 20- to 30 year span. The General Plan contains goals, policies and implementation strategies that address Madera's growth and the quality of life of its residents. The Plan recognizes Madera's potential to experience significant growth in the future, and it reflects the fundamental principle that the community should be pro-active in its efforts to plan for the future and to take action while it has the most effect.

The General Plan is organized into chapters, or elements, that cover specific topics. Madera's General Plan covers all of the mandatory features required by the State of California, as well as several optional topics that were emphasized through Vision 2025. A total of ten topical elements are included in the Madera General Plan: community design, circulation and infrastructure, conservation, health and safety, housing, land use, noise, history and culture, sustainability, and parks and recreation. Each of the Madera General Plan Update elements is described below.



Community Design Element

This optional element is a key outcome of Vision 2025, which reflects the community's desire to improve the quality of design for public and private development projects. It "raises the bar" on the quality of Madera's built environment. Stated goals are to include high-quality urban design throughout Madera, retain Madera's sense of community and enhance Madera's small-city character.

The element also addresses public art, entryway treatments, planning for attractive streetscapes and designing neighborhoods that are walkable and foster interaction among residents. The Community Design Element applies design criteria to all types of development projects. Examples include breaking up large wall masses on commercial buildings to increase their visual appeal and minimizing the visual impact of garages in residential neighborhoods. Industrial land uses are asked to pay special attention to areas within industrial sites that have high visibility to the public. The Community Design Element also seeks to preserve and enhance the character of existing residential neighborhoods and preserve the historic character of downtown, making it a destination for residents and visitors.

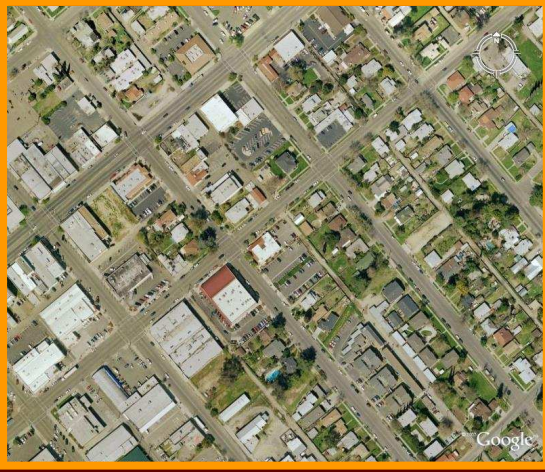


Circulation and Infrastructure Element

This required element of the General Plan addresses how Maderans get around and the availability of basic infrastructure services. The circulation portion of this element addresses roadways, bicycle and pedestrian paths, transit, airports and railroads that serve the city. In addition, domestic water supply resources, wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal (household and industrial garbage) are addressed.

The Circulation and Infrastructure Element takes its lead from Vision 2025 and plans for a transportation system that connects local neighborhoods and provides safe, clean and attractive streets to accommodate traffic of all types. The element incorporates transit features and integrates pedestrian and bicycle facilities in a variety of ways. New development areas would be required to dedicate sufficient right-of-way to accommodate vehicle traffic, and to include pedestrian and bicycle facilities and connections to public transit systems, commercial centers and other areas where there are higher concentrations of people.





The Circulation and Infrastructure Element calls for a modified grid system of roadways that will distribute traffic evenly and avoid excessive concentrations of traffic in any given area. Direct access to higher-capacity streets will be more restricted under the new circulation policies, with residential driveways onto collector and arterial streets prohibited in most cases. The Madera Loop is proposed as a system of enhanced arterials that will provide a continuous link around the perimeter of the city; this loop has the most restrictive access limitations of any city street in an effort to facilitate high capacity, speed and efficiency.

Public facilities would be phased in a logical manner to avoid "leapfrog" development and would foster the orderly development of roadways, water and sewer, and other public facilities. The use of interim or temporary public improvements will require discretionary approval by the City Council, and such improvements would not be eligible for public funds or reimbursements.

Conservation Element

This required element covers topics related to how resources are used in Madera (or are affected by human activities) and how they can be managed to ensure a sustainable future. The element addresses water supply and quality, climate change, soils and agriculture, biology, air quality and energy.

The Conservation Element identifies the significance of a sustainable water supply for Madera and states that the City will use a broad range of strategies to manage and procure water, such as conservation of use, reclamation of storm- and wastewater, recharge of groundwater, and seeking a diversity of water sources.

This element continues the City's stance of protecting agricultural lands by calling for the maintenance of agriculturally designated parcels at a minimum 20-acre size. Policies would also support the establishment of agricultural conservation easements around the city's perimeter and require buffers between residential and agricultural areas.

The Conservation Element also provides guidance in the use of green building practices in the planning, design, construction, management, renovation, operations and demolition of all private buildings and projects. Specifically mentioned is



the development performance standard guidelines, review criteria, incentives and implementation schedules.

Health and Safety Element

This required element contains goals, policies and actions directly related to improving the overall health and safety of the community. Goals include creating a safe and healthy environment for all Maderans, including clean air and water, adequate levels of police and fire protection, safe housing and safe places to work and play. The element also strives to have a healthy and fit population with access to health care, healthful food and places to be active and exercise.

This element establishes a goal for the City to work with other agencies to protect residents and businesses from hazards caused by flooding and manage natural drainage ways, floodplains and flood retention basins in order to maintain harmony with environmental, recreational and open space objectives. The element adds a specific policy prohibiting the creation of new parcels where the access to those parcels will be inundated by the flows from a 10-year storm event.

Housing Element

This required element serves as a comprehensive statement by the City of its current and future housing needs at all income levels. It includes policies related to the provision of housing for all income levels as well as provisions that are State mandated. Housing Elements must be updated every five years, and the City of Madera last updated its Housing Element in March 2004.

The Housing Element concludes that sufficient property is available in the city to meet the expected housing needs for all income levels for the next several years. In order to facilitate housing opportunities, the City will increase the number of dwelling units that can be constructed on several properties. The element also calls for the City to make several amendments to the zoning code to achieve consistency with state law, and to remove any potential barriers to providing special needs housing, such as emergency shelters.



Land Use Element

This required element describes existing and future land use activity in the city. The Land Use Element is what people typically think of when they think of the "general plan" for the city. It establishes the pattern of activity the community would like to see develop in the years to come and defines areas of the city for housing, business, industry, open space, recreation, education and other public services. The element contains a Land Use Map showing the placement of land use designations. One significant new land use designation is that of "Village Reserve" which identifies areas where development is eventually expected to occur but must be comprehensively planned as a "village" before development begins.

Central to this element is the "Building Blocks" concept of development consisting of Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Centers, Villages and Village Centers reflecting the community's desire for a more livable, walkable and sustainable community. Neighborhoods developed in Madera will be more compact than has occurred in the city's recent past, with new projects required to meet targets for the number of dwelling units constructed per acre. Along with this focus on higher density is an emphasis on design features and amenities to ensure that these neighborhoods remain desirable places to live.

The Land Use Element also establishes a growth boundary for the city, which protects prime farmland and limits sprawl. The boundary would include the establishment and maintenance of a greenbelt of agricultural and other open space lands around the urbanized portion of the Planning Area. Along the west side of the city, where agricultural resources are most valuable, the growth boundary is intended to be permanent.

Noise Element

This required element defines acceptable noise levels for representative types of land use (residential, office, industrial, etc.) as well as defines how those levels will be achieved. The element addresses noise in its many forms and provides policies and actions to help ensure that noise levels maintain the "quiet" needed for a healthy and desirable community. Noise can come from two types of sources: mobile noises that are generally associated with transportation, and stationary sounds that can be pinpointed and do not move.





The Noise Element requires that any proposed land use that would create noise impacts on other properties be responsible for reducing the noise so that it does not exceed the allowable thresholds. The element also provides that if any project proposes noise-sensitive uses (such as residential uses) in an area which is prone to noise impacts, the sensitive land use is responsible for addressing and preventing noise impacts. Where the placement of a sound wall has historically been a common practice to reduce noise impacts, the City will prioritize the use of other techniques and allow sound walls only when no other feature will work.

Historic and Cultural Resources Element

This optional element seeks to identify and protect areas, sites and buildings having architectural, historical or cultural significance. It also provides goals, policies and actions designed to foster preservation of historic resources in the city and the Planning Area.

Specific goals include developing and updating an inventory of locally significant historic resources using the National Register, the California Register, California Historical Landmarks and California Points of Historical Interest, as well as other available sources, to identify structures or properties. This element also institutes policies that encourage restoration, renovation and/or rehabilitation of buildings in the city where those buildings retain their historic integrity. The renovation of buildings in the downtown should be complementary to the character of the downtown.



Sustainability Element

This optional element was added by the City of Madera to address this important topic and to implement Vision 2025. Sustainability is based on the principles of **Environment**, **Economy** and **Equity**, otherwise known as the "Three Es."

Environment is defined as the physical space in Madera, which includes a compact, walkable community, infill development, agricultural land protection and the efficient use of resources.

Economy refers to having a strong local economy now and in the future. Policies in this element facilitate the maintenance and development of a strong economy, an equitable jobs/housing balance and new "green" industries.

The **Equity** component relates to treating all segments of the community fairly and includes ensuring housing for all income levels, a fair and open planning process and access to transportation options.

This element serves to direct the reader to other elements of the General Plan (Land Use, Circulation, Conservation, etc.), in which sustainability is addressed. In addition, it serves as a place for sustainability policies not found elsewhere in the General Plan. The Sustainability Element's policies deal with four main topics: schools and education, good government, economic development/workforce development, and social and community systems.

Parks and Recreation Element

This optional element establishes goals and policies that plan for the existing and future parks, recreation and open space needs of the community. In addition, it provides for and maintains a framework to ensure adequate public parks, trails and recreation facilities as the city grows and changes.

A standard of 3 acres of parkland per 1000 persons is established in the element. Planning for new parks will need to be integrated with the planning for development projects to ensure that parks are a functional and attractive amenity feature for the community; parks not in conformance with the City's standards will not be accepted as public parks. Development of parks may be phased, but in no case shall parks be phased or timed so that insufficient park or other facilities are provided either permanently or temporarily.

The Parks and Recreation Element works in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which is an in-depth and detailed action plan for the Department of Parks and Community Services addressing public parks, trails and recreation facilities. The Master Plan is currently under development as a separate process and will be the subject of public review and input.

