

The Corte Madera Climate Change Adaptation Plan

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Summary Statistics

The first Draft Corte Madera Climate Change Adaptation Plan (subsequently changed to the Climate Adaptation Assessment) was available for public comment from November 18, 2020 through February 10, 2021. Comments were received verbally at several public engagement events, through the project webpage, and by email. In addition, the second Draft Corte Madera Climate Change Adaptation Plan is available for review and public comment until March 31, 2021. You can find the draft on the website cortemaderaadapts.org.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

In response to these comments, the Town and the project team have prepared the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to assist community members in understanding basic information about the proposed update to the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Plan and to address the more frequent and relevant public comments.

Communication and Community Engagement

Is it too late to be included in a discussion of the proposed actions?

Absolutely not. Community inclusion and engagement is paramount, and we highly encourage our entire Town to participate in the process of how best to address the many challenges identified by the Adaptation Plan to date. The list of actions discussed in this document are not shovel-ready projects, and this Climate Change Adaptation Plan does not provide any “shortcuts” or “loop-holes” on ideas that future Town Councils may wish to pursue. If implemented, actions discussed in this Plan would still go through the full public process, such as: additional public notices, public hearings, public workshops, community discussions, public review by various boards and commissions, and compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Future Councils may also decide to not pursue certain ideas outlined in this plan.

How were community members notified of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan and associated public engagement events?

Dating back to December 2018, the project provided outreach notifications in the Town's newsletter, annual Flood Newsletter mailer, Nextdoor posts, Facebook posts, email blasts, and frequent project webpage updates were distributed publicly. The engagement effort also included a series of four public workshops, two public surveys, and several updates at our Town's Flood Control Board meetings in 2019 and 2020.

In a response to requests for additional engagement opportunities, the Town mailed every resident a flyer in January 2021 inviting them to a series of community discussion sessions in February 2021. Two additional public workshops and a discussion with the Flood Control Board as well as efforts by residents helped get the word out about the plan and provide additional engagement opportunities for the entire community.

Is climate change affecting the Town?

Yes, climate change is a real and present threat to Corte Madera. The community faces very real challenges from extreme weather and changing climate conditions that will need to be addressed to be better prepared for longer-term impacts. It is up to the community and the Town to build on the foundation created by this Adaptation Plan to decide which actions should be implemented and when.

How important is it to educate the community?

Education is a central component to the plan and will continue to be important as the Town and community work together to select initial actions for further exploration or implementation from the list of Adaptation Actions.

What are the objectives, purpose, and implications of adopting the Climate Adaptation Plan by the Town Council?

This Plan serves as the next step on the journey to plan for climate change and enhance the resilience of the community. It lays out options the community can further consider and invest in overtime to help protect and prepare the community and the Town's infrastructure for the future. Adoption of the Plan will confirm the Town's commitment to being stewards of public funds and support and enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of all residents. It provides information on the relative urgency of addressing different climate change challenges and identifies potential actions that can be taken to address these challenges and adapt to a changing climate. **The actions and adaptation options identified in the plan are not final and require further analysis and additional community discussion.** The introduction of the Plan has been revised to clarify the goals and purpose of the plan.

Central Section of the Adaptation Plan

How will consideration of affordable housing be considered in the Plan?

Building affordable housing and meeting the State's housing mandates will be a challenge and should be considered as the Town and community selects adaptation actions to implement. The Adaptation Plan does not directly address affordable housing issues and the State's housing mandates; however, it does begin to outline current and potential future issues in certain areas and throughout the Town as a whole that the Town will need to consider when moving forward with future housing development and planning. Analyzing where and how to build climate resilient affordable housing in the community in the context of a changing climate may be important in the coming years.

Will the Adaptation Plan include consideration of bike safety and bike stations?

Investments in supporting alternative transportation options (e.g., walking, bikes, ebikes) are included in the Plan and the list of potential adaptation actions. The Town's Bike and Pedestrian plan creates a good foundation on which to build additional actions. Alternative transportation options can provide multiple benefits such as enhancing health and wellness, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, and providing alternative evacuation options. The Town and the community can consider these options further as actions are selected for implementation.

How are greenhouse gas emissions reductions discussed or included in the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Plan?

The focus of the Adaptation Plan is on identifying and reducing the community's risk associated with extreme weather events and climate change. The Town already has a Climate Action Plan that is focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, there can be overlap between adaptation actions and the climate change mitigation or emissions reductions actions. For example, the CAP does discuss greenhouse gas emissions as it relates to projected sea-level rise. Likewise, urban forests provide shade, help capture stormwater, and absorb carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) from the atmosphere. As actions are selected for further evaluation or implementation they could be evaluated for particular co-benefits, such as reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions.

Should the Climate Change Adaptation Plan give additional consideration to water, electrical, and telecommunications infrastructure?

Investments in supporting resilient utilities are important to the near- and long-term resilience of the community and our ability to better prepare for and respond to extreme weather events. We have experienced how the Public Safety Power Shutoff events can have cascading impacts through other infrastructure systems. These utilities are not under the direct control of the Town, but actions included in the plan highlight the importance of working collaboratively with industry to address these issues.

Hillside Section of the Adaptation Plan

Why was electrical “undergrounding” not discussed more in the initial draft Adaptation Plan?

In the public engagement events and comments received throughout the adaptation planning process and prior to the release of the initial draft Climate Change Adaptation Plan, the issue of electrical undergrounding was not emphasized by the public. Therefore, the project team was not aware that it was an item to highlight or discuss at significant length.

Since the draft Plan was released, a substantial number of public comments were received on this issue and thus the project team, Town staff, Central Marin Fire Department, and PG&E have all increased their level of involvement to discuss this concept directly. One of the additional public workshops in February focused on wildfire risk reduction and the undergrounding of electrical utilities. The discussion of the undergrounding of electrical utilities has been expanded significantly in the Hillside section of the Updated Draft Adaptation Plan to more adequately cover the nuances and complexities of this issue as well as potential next steps and studies that can be completed to better understand the costs, benefits, and feasibility of undergrounding.

While electrical lines are not owned or maintained by the Town, “undergrounding” is worth evaluating more closely to understand our options as a community. What we’ve learned thus far is electrical undergrounding is not a “silver bullet” to reducing wildfire risk; it is one of many actions that should be considered, supported, and further analyzed in an effort to proactively reduce wildfire risk.

How does the Climate Change Adaptation Plan stress the urgency of addressing our risk to wildfires?

Wildfire is a current risk and definitely one of the most immediate climate-related concerns that the Town faces. Because of this immediate risk, in 2020 voters across the county approved the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority. This collaboration helps fund and support wildfire risk reduction efforts across the county and within the Town of Corte Madera. The Central Marin Fire Department is already very active in efforts to reduce wildfire risk across the community, and this Adaptation Plan reinforces the importance of those collaborative efforts.

The list of adaptation actions included for potential consideration by the Town and the community identifies numerous actions that could help to further reduce risk, expand evacuation options, and enhance community resilience. Many of the wildfire-focused actions would be most effective if implemented in the near future, but it is truly up to the community to work closely with Town staff to decide which concepts, ideas, and actions are further developed given that community support for and active participation in these efforts is of the utmost importance.

Shoreline Section of the Adaptation Plan

Is a flood control barrier or seawall necessary to address King Tides that only happen 5-6 times a year?

The draft Adaptation Plan has been revised to focus more on our Town's vulnerabilities to future sea level rise and potential for flooding from extreme weather events using the best available scientific models, studies, and data, and less on potential actions. Flood control barriers and levees currently protect the Town from not just King Tides, but also extreme storm events, and it will be important to consider how these systems will function as the climate changes and sea levels continue to rise. The Plan has taken a step back from exploring what specific resilience concepts could look like in certain neighborhoods. As a result of the public comment period, it became apparent that far more public engagement was necessary to establish the community goals and work collaboratively on developing and analyzing various infrastructure and policy alternatives.

Moving forward, the Town staff will re-engage with community members, particularly residents in the Marina Village and Mariner Cove neighborhoods, as well as appropriate local and regional partners, to work closely and collaboratively to determine how best to respond to the challenges of climate change. The Introduction and the Shoreline sections of the Adaptation Plan have been refined and updated to provide clarity on these issues.

How can we promote investments in nature-based solutions and enhanced marsh lands as protection measures?

One of the Plan's principles is to prioritize the use of nature-based and hybrid solutions when feasible. Potential nature-based solutions are being considered and discussed in the Shoreline section of the plan. That section has been updated to clarify the pros & cons of some potential approaches, particularly investments in and around the marsh, and their role in the plan so that they will be adequately considered by the community as it moves towards implementation.

Can the section of the Plan discussing "managed retreat" be removed?

Managed retreat is an approach that some communities have chosen to use to move buildings and infrastructure out of harm's way when it has been decided that other actions to reduce or limit risk are either too expensive or unlikely to succeed. Although not currently recommended for the Town, a high-level discussion of the concept of "managed retreat" is prudent, given the severity of risks faced by the community over the long-term (due to likely sea level rise in the latter half of the 21st century). However, due to community feedback and concerns related to the immediate effects on property values in low-lying areas of the town, any reference to managed retreat actions in the context of specific neighborhoods has been removed from the Plan. The Shoreline section has been significantly refined and updated to change how this concept is discussed.

Should the Town consider raising key roads (such as Paradise Drive and Lucky Drive)?

Investments in the Town infrastructure should be considered holistically, as these particular roads/road segments are part of an interconnected local and regional transportation network. The potential for elevating Paradise Drive and Lucky Drive is discussed in the Shoreline section of the Adaptation Plan.

If flood control projects were initiated for Mariner Cove, would they only be focused on sea level rise or would they also consider precipitation events?

The interconnected nature of the climate system and our infrastructure systems means that vulnerabilities arising from both inland and coastal flooding (which are both projected to get worse with climate change) should be addressed together and not separately. The Adaptation Plan provides a list of potential actions that could be considered to address some of these flooding issues, but no individual actions have been approved at this time. Many of the actions could be implemented in conjunction with others to improve the efficacy of all actions. It will be up to the community and the Town staff and leadership to work together to decide which, if any, actions should be explored further and implemented to address current and future flooding in the neighborhood.

Can the Climate Change Adaptation Plan pay more attention to supporting individual homeowners and retrofitting homes to be more resilient?

Effective adaptation to climate change will most likely involve a mix of investments made by the Town as well as investments made by individual property or homeowners (some with support from the Town). These types of actions are included in the potential list of adaptation actions that the Town and the community can consider for future refinement and implementation.

How can the Town effectively address sea level rise if it does not own or manage the majority of the shoreline?

Multi-jurisdictional and community collaboration are paramount to addressing complicated regional issues such as sea level rise. The Town is committed to supporting on-going and future regional discussions geared towards enhancing the resilience of the marsh and planning for sea level rise within and across jurisdictional boundaries. This has always been part of the Plan, and the Shoreline section of the plan has been refined to enhance clarity around this issue and discuss potential partnerships.

Are the navigational rights of the homeowners along San Clemente Creek and Corte Madera Creek being considered?

The Updated Draft Adaptation Plan is focused on a higher level to better understand the climate change risks and vulnerabilities facing the community and shoreline neighborhoods and to develop a list of potential actions that could be used to address those risks. Because of this focus on broader climate vulnerabilities, this specific issue of navigational rights has not yet been considered in detail. The Town and community can build in consideration of navigation as we further develop the goals of how to respond to climate change and further explore which options/actions best achieve these goals.