

# Mill Valley General Plan

**MV**  
2040



Land Use



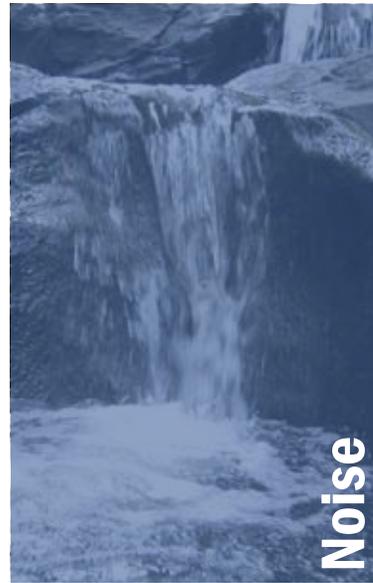
Climate Action



Community Vitality



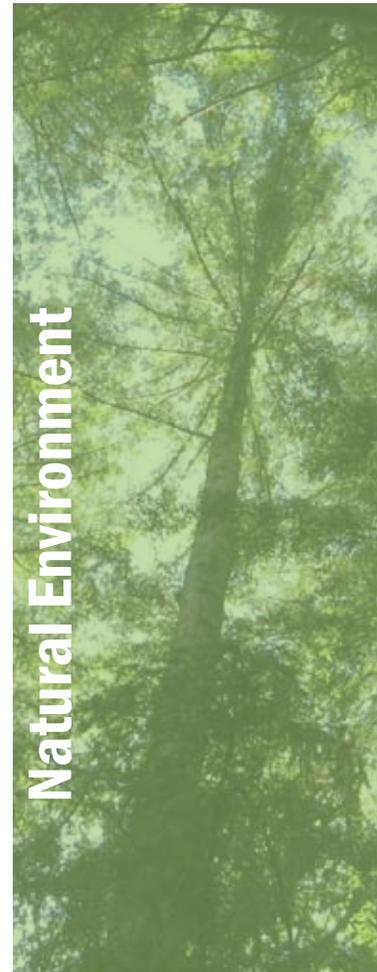
Mobility



Noise



Hazards & Public Safety



Natural Environment



MV2040 Award Winner for Comprehensive Planning  
American Planning Association

Print Version: May 1, 2014

# MV 2040



Adopted by the Mill Valley City Council  
October 7, 2013



Prepared by the City of Mill Valley  
with assistance from WRT



# Forward

The Mill Valley City Council and a group of engaged residents adopted Mill Valley's last General Plan in 1989 and laid the groundwork for nearly a quarter century of the City's evolution. That document withstood the test of time, but twenty-four years later it was clearly time to chart our next chapter to address new and emerging issues, as well as reach consensus among a growing number of varied community interests.

Laws and regulatory requirements have changed in the past two decades. New technologies have emerged such as Internet communications, webcasts of City meetings, and digital downloads. New issues have emerged such as climate change and rising sea levels, renewable energy alternatives, and the need for "multi-modal" means of travel, while familiar issues, such as public health and safety, face new challenges. We now focus significantly more on emergency preparedness in the neighborhoods, and embrace our arts community even more. While we have always benefitted from the contributions of many sincere and concerned residents, these new and emerging issues brought with them additional groups of community members seeking a greater voice in the processes.

To address these factors, the City embarked on a two-year journey beginning in early 2011. We had a few guiding principles: Protect and enhance the natural beauty and small-town character of Mill Valley, reaffirm and respect our core values, evaluate the impact of new issues, enfranchise a broad range of people and interests in the process, be financially prudent by doing as much of the work with existing staff, and preserve those aspects of the 1989 General Plan which had proven effective. The process worked well.

The City launched "MV2040" – the working title for the General Plan process. We started by taking advantage of all the new technology and created an online "virtual Town Hall" called MV2040.org. This site was used as a platform and network to begin a visioning process and gather community input about the issues and values important to residents. It also acted as a public forum for residents to convene and collaborate. City staff also solicited input from elementary, middle and high school students, the business community and retirees.

Community volunteers gathered to assist in the process. The MV2040 General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) was created as an oversight committee to provide a framework to ensure maximum community input and participation. Volunteer working groups were formed to hold public hearings to explore in considerable depth and breadth various aspects of the General Plan – Land Use and Mobility, Natural Environment and Community Vitality. An Arts Subcommittee was also instrumental in providing a link to the vibrant and robust arts community in Mill Valley. Throughout a one-year period, over fifty community meetings were held with hundreds of community members providing input and feedback. These community meetings and online participation provided essential, transparent conversations and maximum participation. It was through this foundation that stakeholders helped to align the goals of community participants and leaders.

MV2040 was finished on time and under budget. It included an Environmental Impact Report and resulted in a State certified 2009-2014 Housing Element. The City Council salutes the exemplary efforts of those who volunteered their time and expertise to make all of this happen. It is particularly gratifying because our community made it a collaborative effort. The process is an excellent example of local government and community in action with the community defining – by itself and for itself – the goals and policies for future generations. The result is a document created by Mill Valley, for Mill Valley, and with Mill Valley’s best interests at heart. This General Plan speaks directly to our mission of providing a full-range of municipal services to residents and businesses. It is true to our core values. It creates a vision for our community.

MV2040 is a living document and will be reviewed annually and also every five years by both City staff and members of the Mill Valley City Council. With constantly changing conditions and circumstances, such reviews and reporting will ensure that the City is moving forward to achieve the visions outlined in the General Plan. These reviews will also provide a meaningful way to measure goals and objectives on an ongoing basis, and will coincide with the City’s fiscal year review of its budget and capital improvements programs.

It has been our privilege and honor to participate in this community-wide effort as your elected representatives on the Mill Valley City Council. We are also grateful to City Manager Jim McCann for his leadership throughout the process and to Planning and Building Director Mike Moore and Senior Planner Danielle Staude for their hard work, knowledge and commitment to excellence in preparation of the MV2040 General Plan. We also want to thank our consultants for their guidance, perspective and diligence on the 2009-2014 Housing Element. Finally, we want to thank the residents and local businesses in Mill Valley for their support. We are all in this together, and the result is our shared success.



City Council Adoption of the MV2040 General Plan (October 7, 2014)

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-  Shawn E. Marshall  
Vice Mayor
-  Kenneth R. Wachtel  
City Councilmember
-  Stephanie Moulton-Peters  
City Councilmember
-  Garry Lion  
City Councilmember



Councilmembers (Left to Right): Mayor Andrew Berman, Shawn Marshall, Stephanie Moulton-Peters, Ken Wachtel & Garry Lion

# Acknowledgements

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Stephanie Moulton-Peters  
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A special thank you to the Mill Valley community for your thoughtful participation and input in developing the MV2040 General Plan.



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# Introduction



## Overview of General Plan

### Why a General Plan Update?

The City of Mill Valley prepared its first General Plan in 1975, which was subsequently updated in 1989. The City has revisited the 1989 General Plan to ensure that the policy direction for the next 30 years is as responsive to the community's values today as it was in the past and addresses the inevitable challenges of the future.

In the State of California, the General Plan serves as an opportunity to update and establish:

- **A Community Vision.** The General Plan preparation and adoption process offers the opportunity to bring the community together to express (or confirm) its collective values and shape a common vision for the future.
- **Public Policy Coordination.** The General Plan is not just a land use document that governs future growth and development. It is where all of a community's major policy initiatives are identified, assessed, and expressed in a comprehensive and consistent form.
- **Budget and Capital Investment Coordination.** The General Plan can be used to strategically identify budget and capital investment and implementation priorities based on the vision. It can subsequently serve as a management tool to unite City departments and decision-makers.
- **Legal Basis for Implementation.** State statutes and established case law require that local government decisions affecting a community's growth and development be consistent with the General Plan.

### Geographic Context

The City of Mill Valley is bounded on the east by the unincorporated neighborhoods of Strawberry and Alto, and Highway 101; on the north by the towns of Corte Madera and Larkspur; on the west by Mount Tamalpais; and on the south by the unincorporated neighborhoods of Homestead and Almonte, and Richardson Bay. Mill Valley and its relationship to surrounding cities and communities are illustrated in Figure 1.1.



MV2040 General Plan Advisory Committee

Unlike the City's 1989 General Plan, which was done in conjunction with the County of Marin and addressed a "Planning Area" that included the unincorporated neighborhoods of Homestead, Tam Valley, and Almonte, the MV2040 General Plan only addresses those areas within the city limits of Mill Valley. In a few minor instances, the General Plan addresses the City's Sphere of Influence, which extends beyond the Mill Valley city limits to include those unincorporated areas served by the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin (SASM) wastewater treatment plant. The Sphere of Influence is illustrated in Figure 2.5 and shown in other figures when necessary.

### Demographic Context

While Mill Valley has experienced only modest population growth over the past several decades, analysis of the City's demographic and household characteristics illustrates changes in the make-up of the population that may result in higher population growth.

Demographic data for Mill Valley indicate that senior citizens continue to represent a growing segment of the community, currently comprising 19 percent of Mill Valley residents, compared to just 15 percent a decade ago. Approximately half of Mill Valley's seniors are age 75 and above.

Most young adults depart Mill Valley in their early 20s and are replaced by parents in their 30s with school-age children. Most significantly, the community has realized a noticeable increase in the school-age population (5 to 17 years old) over the past decade, growing to 18 percent of the population. Mill Valley School District K-8 enrollment figures confirm this trend, showing a 30-percent increase in enrollment between 2002 and 2011. This appears to be attributable to a "demographic shift" in existing single-family housing occupancy, as elderly "empty nesters" seek smaller units closer to shopping and services and are replaced by young families with school-age children. This trend anticipates that older, single- or two-occupant households in existing single-family homes in Mill Valley will continue to turn over to younger households with school-age children over the long term, thereby yielding a significant net increase in population growth.

If not closely watched over the term of this General Plan, this population growth, primarily composed of school-age children, could significantly affect community facilities and services (especially traffic, schools, and recreational facilities) beyond what is addressed

## JUST THE FACTS

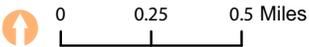
- Area of City: 4.8 square miles
- 2010 Population: 13,903 people
- Number of Households: 6,534
- Average Household Size: 2.27 persons
- Population Density: 2,883 inhabitants per square mile



Mill Valley General Plan

**Figure 1.1: Planning Area**

- City Boundary
- Arterial
- Highway
- Roads



Source: Marin Map, US Census TIGER, 2012

- INTRODUCTION
- LAND USE
- MOBILITY
- COMMUNITY VITALITY
- NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
- CLIMATE ACTION
- HAZARDS & PUBLIC SAFETY
- NOISE
- GENERAL PLAN ADMINISTRATION
- CITATIONS/ APPENDICES

# 79.5 YEARS

life expectancy  
for those born  
in 2020



Click Off (2009)

Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission

Photographer: Phil Shaw

by the General Plan’s policies and programs assuming Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) population estimates. As such, Land Use Element Program LU.1-4 would require that the “demographic shift” and its impacts be assessed as part of each five-year General Plan review and update called for in the General Plan Administration Element. This would give the City the opportunity to evaluate the impacts on existing General Plan goals, policies, and programs and amend existing or add new policies to address identified impacts consistent with the General Plan’s overall goals and community values.

## Goals and Community Values

As the General Plan Advisory Committee and its three working groups began to explore the direction the community wanted to take over the next 30 years, it was important to understand the existing context and character.

- Who are we as a community now in 2013?
- How has Mill Valley changed over the past 23 years, since the last General Plan update?
- What are we observing that might influence our decisions about the future of Mill Valley?

The MV2040 General Plan attempts to answer these and other major questions based on the considerable public input and discussion that occurred over the course of preparing this General Plan and the collective vision and aspirations of the community as expressed in the following pages, but especially through its overall goals and community values.

The MV2040 Goals and Community Values are similar to those represented in the 1989 General Plan, exemplifying the City’s interest in maintaining and preserving the great qualities that make Mill Valley a special place to live, learn, work, and play. The goals and community values cited below are intended to be a statement of how the citizens of Mill Valley view their community today and in the future, and, most importantly, how they intend to guide decision-making on important issues the City may encounter along the way.

The MV2040 Goals and Community Values provide the overall framework of the General Plan and were used to form the subse-

quent goals and policies contained in each chapter or “element” of the General Plan. These overarching principles are also intended to guide future actions and decision as programs and policies contained in the General Plan are implemented.

### General Plan Goals

The two primary goals of the General Plan remain the same as established in the 1989 General Plan, and are:

1. To protect and enhance the natural beauty and small-town character of Mill Valley; and
2. To encourage continued diversity of housing, income levels, and lifestyles in the community.

### Community Values

Through the development of this General Plan, community members consistently expressed their belief that Mill Valley values...

- Preserving the quality, diversity, and historic resources of the community’s residential neighborhoods;
- Maintaining a strong, healthy economy that supports locally owned and local-serving businesses;
- Maintaining prudent municipal fiscal policies and practices and operational excellence by City officials and employees;
- Managing and restoring the scenic quality and physical character of the bayfront, ridgelines, and hillsides for open space, resource protection, and outdoor recreation;
- Preserving and enhancing creeks, marshes, woodlands, and other natural resources for health of habitat and natural species, and the use and enjoyment by current and future generations;
- Fostering sustainable policies and practices that enhance climate protection and adapt to climate change;
- Minimizing traffic congestion and encouraging safe and convenient mobility alternatives;
- Planning for, preparing for, adapting to, and responding to natural and human-made disasters;
- Accommodating more housing choice for all income levels and community needs than may be possible under conditions in the private housing market;



Click Off (2000)  
 Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission  
 Photographer: Joanne Madden

- Promoting the arts, the artistic community, and its ongoing and lasting contribution to the culture, heritage, character, economy, and quality of life of the community;
- Cultivating community participation, volunteerism, mutual respect, civil discourse, and civic responsibility; and
- Furthering excellence in public education and an open, effective, and mutually supportive relationship among the community, public schools, and the City.

## Components of the General Plan

The MV2040 General Plan is organized to reflect the most relevant issues facing Mill Valley now and into the future. The organization of the MV2040 General Plan includes all seven General Plan elements mandated by the State of California (Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Safety, and Noise).

The MV2040 General Plan contains the following elements:

- Land Use
- Mobility
- Community Vitality
- Natural Environment
- Climate Action
- Hazards and Public Safety
- Noise
- General Plan Administration
- Housing (separate document)

Each element begins with a purpose statement and a summary of existing conditions. Several of the elements also contain “Facts” and “Trends to Watch,” which are a series of important data points that tell a story about Mill Valley and the forces at work in the community. These can be easily updated in a timely manner so that the General Plan is always current. Each of the elements concludes with goals, policies, and programs for action. Sources for these facts and trends are located in a Citations section for the General Plan.



View from Miller Avenue at Camino Alto

The goals, policies, and programs of the General Plan were created by three General Plan working groups focusing on Land Use and Mobility, Natural Environment, and Community Vitality. Many goals and policies were developed to further the City’s focus on sustainability, which is woven throughout the General Plan. In each element, policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are indicated with a “leaf” symbol (  ); these policies serve as part of the City’s Climate Action Plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 within the community as part of municipal operations. The working groups recommended General Plan goals, policies, and programs to the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), which helped to review and refine the goals, policies, and programs before their incorporation into the Draft MV2040 General Plan.

Additional information that was used to analyze existing conditions or provide additional explanation and context are contained in appendices. Appendices are listed in the Table of Contents.

## Implementation of the General Plan

The relationships among goals, policies, and programs as well as the process for their formation are illustrated in Figure 1.2. The “Implementation Plan” referenced in Figure 1.2 can be found in Appendix A and will be regularly updated as the City is able to re-define, set priorities, and allocate resources for specific programs.



Figure 1.2 | General Plan Components

	Goal	Policies	Programs	Implementation Plan
Definition	Sets a general direction; an ideal future; long-range and comprehensive in nature; and used to describe a desired result or outcome	A specific statement that guides decision-makers; a commitment to a particular course of action; describes context and rationale of desired outcome, and are more specific than goals. ("shall" v. "should" is important to consider when formulating policies).	Actions or procedures that carry out a policy. Specific steps to actually achieve the goals and policies identified in the General Plan.	A sequence of steps that must be taken or activities that must be performed in order to successfully implement goals, policies and programs.
Informed By	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing Conditions and trends</li> <li>Community Values;</li> <li>Opportunities and Constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing conditions &amp; trends</li> <li>Existing City policies and documents</li> <li>Opportunities and Constraints</li> <li>Goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing conditions &amp; trends</li> <li>Existing City and community programs</li> <li>Opportunities and Constraints</li> <li>Goals</li> <li>Policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals</li> <li>Policies</li> <li>Programs</li> </ul>
Categories/Types	<p><b>Types of Goals for Mobility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-Modal/Complete Streets</li> <li>Safety</li> </ul>	<p><b>Types of Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternative fuel – Vehicles and infrastructure</li> <li>School traffic</li> <li>Bicycle network and facilities</li> <li>Transit</li> <li>Pedestrian facilities</li> <li>Traffic operations</li> <li>Roadway design</li> <li>Transportation Demand Management</li> <li>Public parking</li> </ul>	<p><b>Types of Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding sources or support</li> <li>Staff support and/or coordination</li> <li>Infrastructure needs: improvements, changes, or modifications</li> <li>Data collection/monitoring</li> <li>Implementation of recommendations based on associated studies or reports such as Master Plans</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major Components</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific tasks</li> <li>What will be done by whom (e.g. City, local interests and local organizations)</li> <li>Time horizon-when it will be done</li> <li>Resource allocation (staff time and funding)</li> </ul>
Example: Mobility/Transportation	Create a safe and efficient transportation system that balances the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit (Complete Streets)	<p><b>Example (safety):</b> The City shall give the highest consideration to the safety of users when planning and designing system improvements to maximize efficient use of the street network.</p> <p><b>Example (efficiency/multi-modal):</b> The City shall encourage sustainable transportation practices, such as demand management, to modify and promote the use of non-automotive modes wherever possible.</p>	<p><b>Example (safety):</b> The City shall promote local school-related transportation safety efforts by providing support to the Safe Routes to School program and implementing safety improvements, as appropriate.</p> <p><b>Example (efficiency/multi-modal):</b> The City shall implement the proposed projects and improvements identified in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, as funding is available.</p>	<p><b>Example (safety):</b> Public Works Director to be liaison to Safe Routes to School –ongoing, and provide assistance in constructing improvements–ongoing, as projects funded.</p> <p><b>Example (efficiency/multi-modal):</b> Update Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Plan on a regular basis, at least every 5 yearsDepartment of Public Works; Pursue grant funding for non-motorized projects –Department of Public Works, ongoing; Update capital improvement program to prioritize bicycle &amp; pedestrian projects –ongoing.</p>



Mill Valley's name comes from the first mill built in the San Francisco Bay Area. It is now (although rebuilt) the oldest standing mill in California that currently resides on the creek in Cascade Canyon. This mill was originally built by John Reed in about 1835.

John Reed came to San Francisco in 1826. In 1834 he obtained a land grant for Rancho de Corte Madera del Presidio (cut wood for the Presidio). Reed's mill initially made timbers for construction of his residence, but subsequently produced lumber for sale. The construction of the mill was a mortise and tendon joint system secured with oak pegs. The mill was driven by an undershot wheel. Water came from a mill pond behind a dam on the creek. Redwood trees were felled in Cascade Canyon and hauled to the mill by oxen.

In 1849 a more efficient steam-powered mill in Sausalito rendered Reed's mill obsolete. By 1890, it had deteriorated, but was spruced up for the land auction held by Tamalpais Land & Water Co., owners of Rancho Sausalito. Map No. 1 specified that subdivision properties would be offered at auction on Saturday May 31, 1890. Four morning ferries connecting to four special trains brought 3000 people to the auction that took place beside the Old Mill (and what is now considered Old Mill Park). More than 200 parcels, totaling about 200 acres were sold. Three speculators bought more than a dozen lots each. Most buyers intended to build on their property and live in Mill Valley, at least in the summers.

Restoration work was done in 1947 on the Old Mill, and again in 1959. Reconstruction of the Old Mill began in 1984 and was completed in 1991.

(Source: Mill Valley Historic Society, [www.mvhistory.org](http://www.mvhistory.org), accessed March 2014 )