



Community Vitality



Purpose

Mill Valley has long been recognized for its vibrant culture, its economic well-being, and its integral relationship with its natural setting. The continued vitality of the Mill Valley community will depend on its ability to continue to sustain all of these features. Doing so will require a fiscally sound approach to governance that balances revenues and expenditures while allowing the City to continue to invest in the enhancement and maintenance of the community's physical assets and to create an attractive environment for business and homeowner investment.

Mill Valley's vitality is a function of not only its fiscal health, but also the community's physical health and cultural vibrancy. Maintaining the community's physical health means providing a safe physical environment in which to live. It also involves support for initiatives that promote more active lifestyles, improved access to healthy food, and safe and convenient services for all ages. Maintaining the community's rich cultural heritage means not only supporting Mill Valley's cultural institutions, but also promoting education and cultural literacy that will generate tomorrow's artists and cultural advocates.

This Community Vitality Element discusses how the City will continue to support and promote a community that is fiscally, physically, and culturally healthy and vibrant. The "Existing Conditions" section describes the context as it relates to each of these areas. Goals and policies for community vitality have been developed to address how the City will continue to provide the support needed to sustain an even healthier and more culturally rich environment.

Existing Conditions

Economic Well-Being

Employment in Mill Valley

Mill Valley is generally a prosperous community with high household incomes and low unemployment. The City does not have a particularly strong employment base, however, and would be classified as a "bedroom" community, with nearly half (46 percent) of all Mill Valley workers commuting to jobs outside Marin County. In 2012, Mill Valley had approximately 1,080 local businesses, the vast majority (67 percent) of which were quite small—employing



Top: Starduster Orchestra at the Community Center

Bottom: Wednesdays on Stage Library Program

small business create **75%** of the net new **JOBS** in our economy

JUST THE FACTS

A snapshot of the Mill Valley Community (when compared to statewide averages based on the 2010 Census)...

- **We tend to be older and younger**—the median age is 47 with 19% of the population 65 years or older and approximately 24% of the community is under 18 years of age.
- **We are really well educated**—73% of Mill Valley adults have a bachelor degree and 38% have a graduate degree.
- **We are more similar than not**—nearly 90% of the population identified themselves as “white” and 46% reporting being California natives.
- **We are more prosperous than most**—Mill Valley’s median household income is \$105,500.
- **We have many individuals living alone**—33% of total 6,084 households in Mill Valley report living alone (half of which are 65 years old or older).
- **The community is relatively safe**—Between 1999 and 2010, the crime index declined 41 percent.

four or fewer people. Only nine businesses employed more than 100 people. Altogether, local businesses generated 4,336 jobs in 2010, or approximately half a job (0.54) per working age adult (age 18 to 64) in Mill Valley.

“Management, business, science and art” type jobs are the most common (23 percent), followed by “health care and social assistance” (12 percent) and “retail” (11 percent). The majority of the community’s businesses provide goods and services to meet the needs of local residents. Employment data from the 2010 U.S. Census indicate that the majority of local jobs (88 percent) are filled by people who live outside Mill Valley (i.e., only 518 local jobs are filled by local residents). These statistics, however, do not include the estimated 1,000 local jobs of residents who work at home.

Economic Vitality Initiatives

Since 2008, City-appointed economic vitality groups such as the Business Task Force and the Business Advisory Board have researched and advocated for various economic vitality initiatives including marketing campaigns, parking management, and business regulation streamlining. More recently the revived local Chamber of Commerce, with which the City just entered a three-year service agreement, has helped the City balance the needs of residents with those of businesses and non-profits contributing significantly to the economic, cultural, and social health and fabric of Mill Valley. These three groups have created a body of valuable research and analysis that will continue to inform local policies, priorities, and implementation efforts.

Tourism and the Arts: Drivers of the Local Economy

Tourism and the City’s arts sector are major drivers of the local economy. Together they support hundreds of local jobs, contribute millions of dollars in direct expenditures to the local economy, and provide a vital share of the City’s tax base. The arts sector draws thousands of local residents and visitors into town each year to patronize Mill Valley stores and restaurants. Mill Valley’s reputation for excellence in the arts and its natural beauty work hand-in-hand to increase the community’s property values.

Fiscal Stability

Perhaps it is not surprising, given the community’s prosperity, that the City has a history of being fiscally stable and well-managed. The City’s revenues have increased 146 percent since 1990—from \$12.5 million to \$30.7 million. The City’s operating expenditures have increased 194 percent between 1990 and 2012, from \$8.7 to \$16.9 million. Historically, the largest single line item in the City’s budget has been for public safety—typically about 40 percent of the budget. The second largest line item in the City’s budget is parks and recreation, which has increased from 11 percent in 1990 to 21 percent in 2012. Between 1990 and 2012, the City’s Capital Improvement Program has consistently budgeted between \$2 to \$3 million for public improvements, with half or more of the budget being dedicated to street repairs/improvements.

Consistent with the high property values in Mill Valley, the City’s primary revenue source is property tax, which contributed 38 percent of the City’s total revenue in 2012. This is up 10 percent from 1990.

User fees are the second largest contributor to City revenues, consistently generating approximately 20 to 30 percent of the City’s revenue. Sales tax revenues have historically accounted for approximately 11 percent of the City’s budget. Sales tax revenues grew by 25 percent, an average annual growth of 2.8 percent, between 2000 and 2008, from \$2.06 million to \$2.57 million. The recession caused a significant decline in 2009 and 2010, when sales tax revenue dropped by a combined 25 percent, down to \$1.94 million. The years 2011 and 2012 saw a recovery, with sales tax increasing by a combined 21.4 percent to \$2.37 million.

The City’s pension is administered under contract with the California Public Employee Retirement System (CalPERS). The most recent CalPERS actuarial report identified the total pension liability for the City at \$85.2 million with a funding level of 88 percent. The CalPERS Board approved recent funding policy revisions intended to achieve 100-percent funding levels by the year 2043.

Cultural Vitality

The Community Vitality Element confirms the City’s commitment to nurture, support, and celebrate the artistic and cultural resources the artistic and cultural resources in the community and to provide



Mill Valley City Hall



First Friday Library Program



Eggstravaganza at the Community Center



Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission, 2009 Paint Off

equal and abundant opportunities for broad artistic and cultural engagement. Arts and culture give the community an authentic, connected, and unique sense of place; contribute greatly to quality of life; and serve as an important economic driver.

Community Center, Aquatics & Fitness Center, and Library

Mill Valley’s Community Center, Aquatics & Fitness Center, and Public Library provide access to a wide range of cultural activities and functions for the community. The Community Center includes outdoor sports fields and two recreation buildings. The Community Center and Aquatics & Fitness Centers host a wide range of public and private events, including wedding receptions, children’s birthday parties, fitness classes, educational classes/lectures, public meetings, art displays, and swimming and outdoor sports activities.

The Mill Valley Public Library is known for its beautiful architecture in the idyllic setting of the redwoods and is an important cultural center of the City’s literacy, artistic, and intellectual community. As noted in *Marin Magazine* (September 2012), “Marin County librarians agree that the future of libraries lies beyond books, regardless of their format, and that each library must embrace its role as a public center of culture, learning, community, experience and imagination.” The Mill Valley Public Library provides access to books, media, and digital content and serves an increasingly important role as a physical space for people to gather, collaborate, create, and invent in a variety of ways. Through innovative programming and creative collaborations, the Library is becoming an information common—a natural evolution of the Library’s traditional mission. The Library has prominently placed itself at the intersection of inspiration and invention.

Arts Institutions, Facilities, and Events

In the past century, Mill Valley has spawned and supported a wide array of arts institutions, facilities, and events that have contributed to the City’s reputation as an arts destination. These include, among others, the Marin Theatre Company, the O’Hanlon Center for the Arts, Throckmorton Theatre, Sweetwater Music Hall, The Outdoor Art Club, the Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival, the Mill Valley Film Festival, the Mill Valley Arts Commission, the Dipsea Race, the Milley Awards for Creative Achievement, the Mill Valley Chamber Music Society, and the Mill Valley Philharmonic. Mill Valley’s

public schools provide extraordinary arts education thanks to the community’s commitment and support through KIDDO!, Tam High United Music Boosters (THUMB), Patrons of the Arts at Tam High (PATH), Conservancy Theatre Ensemble (CTE) and the Academy of Integrated Humanities and New Media (AIM). The City also enjoys a wealth of art galleries, visual and performing arts schools, and art providers.

Diverse artists and art forms are essential to a vibrant creative environment. Variety and invention are necessary to reflect and serve our community’s wide range of artistic appreciation and to expand artistic horizons. Cultural activities encourage community spirit and a heightened appreciation for diversity, thereby strengthening community cohesiveness. The provisions of this General Plan promote and encourage artistic diversity and free artistic expression.

Well-established and supported arts organizations instill civic pride and promote economic stability by fostering strong relationships while allowing for growth and productive change through shared experiences and open communication.

Arts education promotes creative thinking and academic achievement and helps people live successful, rewarding lives. Learning about and participating in local creative endeavors also help to forge meaningful connections that strengthen the community. Arts education is a key way to continue to cultivate the City’s artistic character.

Artwork and performances in public places and in the physical environment, as well as in traditional venues, enhance the City’s unique sense of place and encourage human interaction. Art and artistry in the built and physical environment are encouraged in order to enhance the City’s artistic identity and distinguishing beauty, to integrate public and private buildings into the community landscape, and to ensure equal access to these artistic resources.

Throughout Mill Valley’s history, the City has been a magnet for a diverse array of established and emerging artists, including legends in their industries. Increasingly, most local artists cannot afford to live in town, and this undermines the artistic vibrancy of the community. This Community Vitality Element, in conjunction with the Land Use and Housing Elements, supports the creation of more affordable live/work places for artists.

Several major events attract thousands of visitors annually



Comedy Night in the Plaza sponsored by the Arts Commission



Fall Arts Festival

#1 Mill Valley has an active arts and cultural life.

- *Mill Valley is not only an attractive place to live, it is a popular cultural destination for the region offering a wealth of events that attract thousands of visitors annually, including, among others:¹*
 - *Mill Valley Film Festival*
 - *Dipsea Race*
 - *Mountain Play*
 - *Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival*
 - *Mill Valley Shakespeare in Old Mill Park*
 - *Mill Valley Wine & Gourmet Food Tasting*
 - *First Tuesday Artwalk*
 - *Summer Concerts on the Plaza*
 - *Click Off*
 - *Annual Comedy Night in the Plaza*
 - *DjangoFest Mill Valley*
- *The Mill Valley community supports an array of cultural institutions that provide and support world-class theater, music, comedy, film, fine arts exhibitions, and more in the community. Notable examples include:*
 - *Marin Theatre Company*
 - *The Outdoor Art Club*
 - *Throckmorton Theatre*
 - *Sweetwater Music Hall*
 - *Mill Valley Arts Commission/Milley Awards for Creative Achievement in Mill Valley*
 - *Mill Valley Chamber Music Society*
 - *Mill Valley Philharmonic*
 - *O'Hanlon Center for the Arts*
- *The Mill Valley community is deeply committed to arts education and donates well over \$2 million annually to sustain top-quality arts instruction in the public schools through such organizations and programs as:*
 - *KIDDO!*
 - *Tam High United Music Boosters (THUMB)*
 - *Patrons of the Arts at Tam High (PATH)*
 - *Conservatory Theatre Ensemble (CTE)*
 - *Academy of Integrated Humanities and New Media (AIM)*
- *In addition, Mill Valley is home to numerous organizations and businesses that provide high-quality instruction in a wide variety of visual and performing arts for all ages.*

- *Mill Valley’s creative atmosphere has long been a magnet for a broad spectrum of artists and arts businesses that further enrich the cultural environment.*
- *As in much of the Bay Area, food and dining is not only big business, it’s an integral part of Mill Valley culture. In 2011, there were 5,260 restaurants and 492 bars within 15 miles of Mill Valley—twice as many as the average for CNN/Money’s 100 best places to live.²*
- *The Mill Valley Public Library is an important cultural center and gathering place for the community. It is a place for people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests to gather, connect through shared experiences, and be part of an environment that lays the groundwork for a life-long love of reading and discovery. The Library also supports the local business community and new business development through its services and collaboration efforts. Most importantly, the Mill Valley Public Library continues the important legacy of public libraries by providing free and equal access to all of its innovative programs and services in order better the community as a whole. Notable facts include the following:*
 - *Over 80 percent of the Mill Valley population has library cards.*
 - *The Library includes more than 108,000 books.*
 - *The Library offers 778 programs and sees a quarter of a million visits each year.*
 - *The Library offers a constantly evolving collection, available in new formats as technology shifts, designed to meet the needs of an educated, sophisticated community.*
 - *An array of alternative and innovative collections engage the public in new ways of seeing or experiencing the world around them.*
 - *The Library offers technology education on a variety of topics to help patrons stay current and feel competent in their personal and professional lives, along with programs that support and celebrate the literary arts and the spoken word including creative writing, poetry, storytelling, and reading.*
 - *After-hours events provide adults and teens with opportunities to experience compelling lectures and performances and engage with presenters in an intimate setting.*
 - *The Lucretia Little History Room offers access to the City’s rich heritage through archives and showcases of local history, including oral histories, paintings, local author collections, documents, maps, and over 4,000 historical photographs.*
 - *The Library provides an impressive breadth and depth of programs for children and teens, supporting their development (social, literary, educational, and creative) from infancy through high school.*
 - *Access to larger collections of materials and digital content is available through the shared resources of library cooperatives.*
 - *Programs that support and celebrate the visual and performing arts include performances of all kinds, art exhibits, art and theater lectures, and films.*

For **3** consecutive years

Marin has been named the **healthiest county in all of California**



Top: Yoga on the Plaza, Mill Valley Recreation program
Bottom: Using poles for walking, mobility & outdoor exercise, Mill Valley Recreation senior program

Trends in Community Vitality

#2 Staying safe and fit.



- In Marin County, 95 percent of adults and youth report living walking distance to a park, playground, or open space, and 85 percent report visiting one in the last month.³
- For three consecutive years, Marin has been named the healthiest county in all of California by a national study (University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).⁴
- The rate of adult diabetes in Marin County is 7 percent, compared to 11.3 percent nationally.⁵
- The rate of adult obesity rate in Marin County is 17 percent, compared to 36 percent nationally.⁶
- Marin County's rate of breast cancer has historically been among the highest in the nation.⁷ Rates for white women in Marin are 28 percent higher than rates in other Bay Area counties and 38 percent higher than in other urban areas in California.⁸
- Between 1991 and 1999, breast cancer rates in Marin increased by 60 percent, compared to increases of less than 5 percent in other areas of California.⁹
- In recent years, the number of Bay Area kindergartners who have been immunized against diseases like whooping cough (pertussis) and measles has declined.¹⁰
- Marin County has the lowest rate of immunizations (83 percent) in the nine-county Bay Area, and a rate of "personal belief" vaccine exemptions that is more than three times the state average.¹¹
- Marin County has been particularly hard hit by an outbreak of pertussis, having the second-highest case rate in the state, which is nearly eight times the statewide average.¹²

As reflected in the goals, policies, and programs of this Community Vitality Element, this General Plan is intended to ensure the continued success and growth of the City’s arts and culture sector by, among other things, recognizing and promoting the City’s artistic identity, encouraging and supporting cultural development and arts-related commerce and tourism, fostering and facilitating the activities of arts providers, building positive community involvement with and support for the arts, and supporting City-sponsored activities and facilities.

Community Health

Community health as discussed in the General Plan addresses the physical, mental, and social well-being of the community, not just the absence of disease. It involves the quality of the air we breathe, opportunities for physical activity, the availability of healthy food choices, high-quality education, healthy housing, safe places to play, and access to preventive health services. It is about creating social and physical environments that support good health and enhanced quality of life by promoting healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

Physical Health

While health statistics for the City of Mill Valley are not maintained, those for Marin County indicate that the population is generally quite healthy. For three consecutive years, Marin has been named the healthiest county in all of California by a national study (University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). The rate of adult diabetes in Marin County is 7 percent compared to 11.3 percent nationally, and the rate of adult obesity rate in Marin County is 17 percent compared to 36 percent nationally. Both of these diseases have been shown to have a direct relationship to a community’s level of physical activity and its access to healthy food.

Two anomalies in the county’s health picture are the unusually high rates of breast cancer and whooping cough. Marin’s rate of breast cancer has historically been among the highest in the nation. Rates for white women in Marin are 28 percent higher than rates in other Bay Area counties and 38 percent higher than in other urban areas in California. Between 1991 and 1999, breast cancer rates in Marin increased by 60 percent, compared to increases of less than 5 percent in other areas of California.

The US could avoid **\$550 billion** in projected medical costs by maintaining the current obesity rate of **36%**



Top: Dipsea finish line (date unknown)
Source Mill Valley Public Library, Lucretia Little History Room
Bottom: Dipsea start line (date unknown)
Source: Active Rain Corp



Top: Click Off (2008)
Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission
Bottom: Click Off (1999)
Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission
Photographer: Tammy Merritt

Marin County also has been particularly hard hit by an outbreak of whooping cough (pertussis), having the second-highest case rate in the state, which is nearly eight times the statewide average. In recent years, the number of Bay Area kindergartners who have been immunized against diseases like whooping cough (pertussis)

Trends in Community Vitality

#3 Public health will continue to rise as a priority.

- The percentage of U.S. residents who are obese is expected to reach 42 percent by 2030, raising the number of U.S. adults who are obese from 78 million in 2012 to more than 100 million by 2030.¹³
- The U.S. could avoid \$550 billion in projected medical costs by maintaining the current obesity rate of 36 percent.¹⁴
- Forty-eight percent of likely California voters responding to a Field Poll said unhealthy eating habits and a lack of exercise are the biggest threats to children's health.¹⁵
- Seventy-three percent of respondents to the Field Poll said they believe it is a community's responsibility to address childhood obesity.¹⁶
- Fifty-seven percent of respondents said local governments should be able to tax sales of alcohol, cigarettes, junk food, or sweetened beverages to pay for anti-obesity programs, if the proposals were approved by a majority of voters.¹⁷
- In 2010, health spending in California reached \$230 billion, triple 1991 levels.¹⁸
- California's per-capita health spending of \$6,238 was the ninth lowest in the nation.¹⁹
- In 2013, Marin County ranked #1 among the nation's healthiest communities for kids.²⁰

and measles has declined. During this time, Marin County had the lowest rate of immunizations (83 percent) in the nine-county Bay Area, and a rate of “personal belief” vaccine exemptions that is more than three times the state average.

Parks, Open Space, and Community Recreation

Many in Mill Valley choose to live here because of the rich natural setting, the strong orientation to the outdoors, and the healthy, active lifestyle that these support. Public parks and open space are treasured assets within the community and include hiking trails, play structures, BBQ and picnic areas, creekside access, tennis and basketball courts, sports fields, a dog run, a skate park, a golf course, a community garden, an outdoor stage, and the downtown Plaza. Figure 4.1 identifies parks within the Planning Area, and Figure 4.2 shows the locations of community facilities.

To meet the community’s recreation needs, the City of Mill Valley provides approximately 110 acres of parks, open space, and recreational facilities, including 44 acres of improved parkland, 24 acres of natural areas, and the 42-acre municipal golf course (see Figure 4.1). The total area represents 7.89 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, which is below the ten acres of park space per 1,000 residents recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association but considerably higher than the amount of parkland provided by many communities.

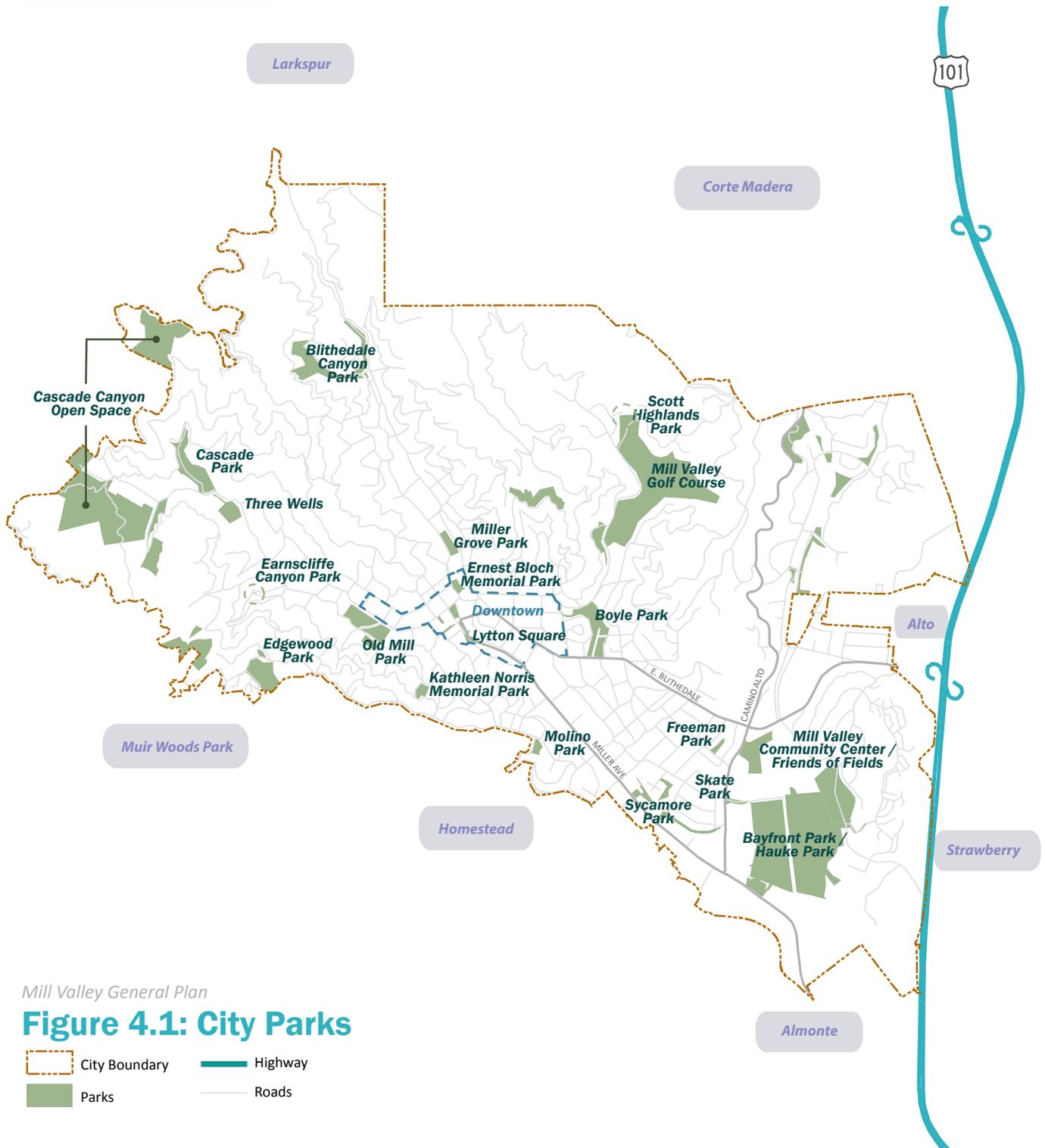
Mill Valley is surrounded by state and federal parklands on three sides. These nearby lands—which include Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument, and Mount Tamalpais State Park—augment Mill Valley’s open space and recreational resources and provide the community with unsurpassed opportunities for activities such as hiking, running, bicycling, and horseback riding.

Complementing these open space resources, Mill Valley’s pedestrian system includes 18 miles of sidewalks and a unique network of Steps, Lanes, and Path that extend the sidewalk system into the hillside neighborhoods. This network includes 5.5 miles of lanes and trails and 0.5 mile of steps. In addition, the City has 7.1 miles of bikeways, consisting of 2.5 miles of Type I bike paths, 0.85 mile of bike lanes, and 3.75 miles of Type III routes. The 2008 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan calls for an additional 3.4

 **7.1**
miles
of bike trails
in Mill Valley



Top: Mill Valley Golf Course, 5th Hole
Bottom: Bike and pedestrian path in Mill Valley

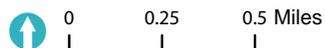


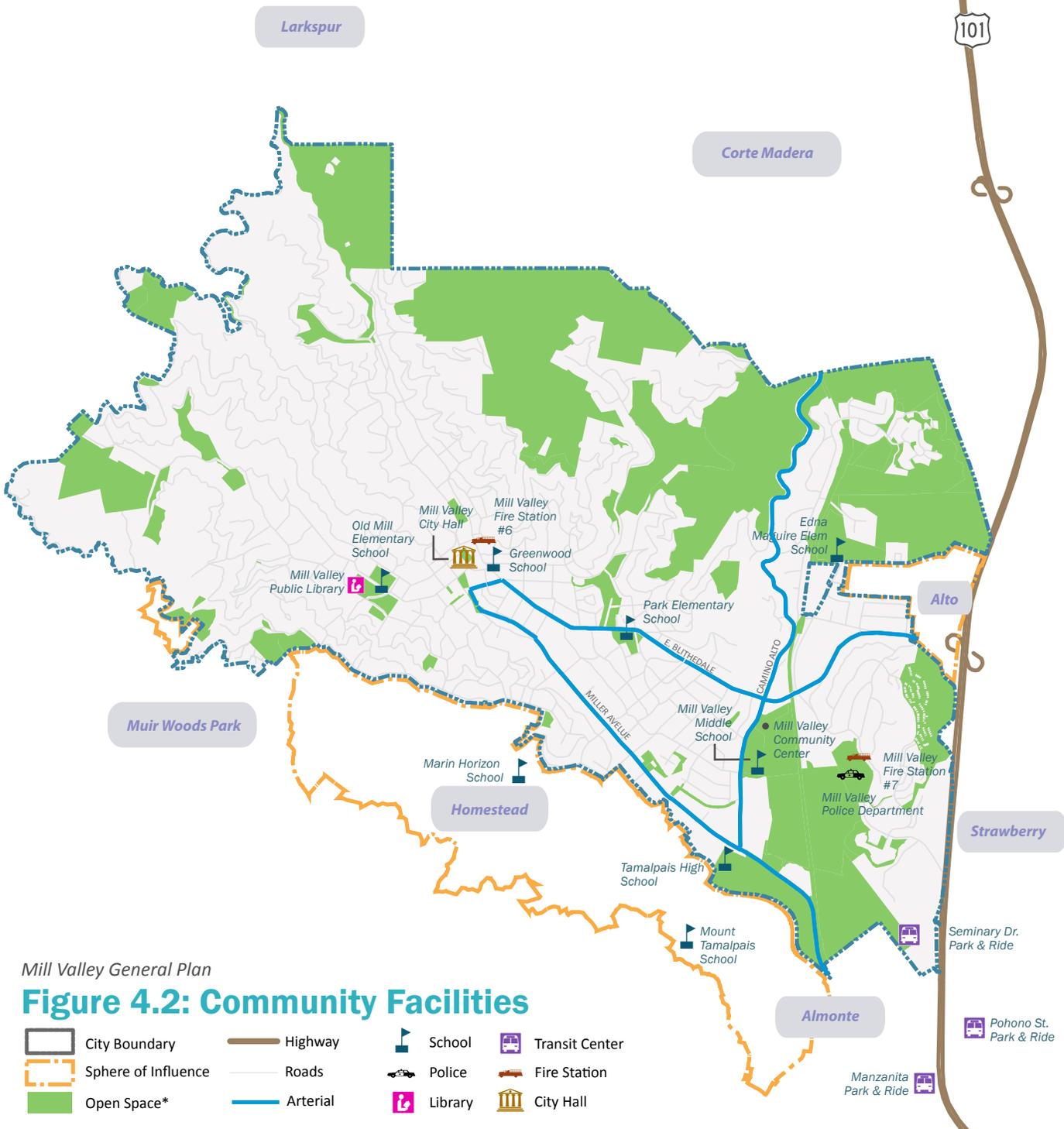
Mill Valley General Plan

Figure 4.1: City Parks

- City Boundary
- Parks
- Highway
- Roads

Source: City of Mill Valley, Marin Maps, 2012





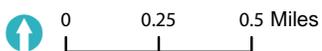
Mill Valley General Plan

Figure 4.2: Community Facilities

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--|----------|--|---------|--|----------------|
| | City Boundary | | Highway | | School | | Transit Center |
| | Sphere of Influence | | Roads | | Police | | Fire Station |
| | Open Space* | | Arterial | | Library | | City Hall |

*Includes land owned by the City, Mill Valley School District, and other public entities

Source: Marin Map, City of Mill Valley, 2012; WRT, 2013





Top: Mill Valley Aquatics & Fitness Center
 Source: Click Off (2003) Mill Valley Arts Commission
 Photographer: Hugh Kuhn
 Middle: Fitness programs at the Aquatics & Fitness Center
 Bottom: Teen Zone Room at the Community Center

miles of Class II and III facilities to be developed. Together, the pedestrian and bicycle networks connect the community’s many park and open space resources and promote pedestrian and bicycle activity.

Mill Valley is also home to the oldest trail race in America—the “Dipsea Race.” Established in 1905, the Dipsea Race recently held its 104th race. The 7.4-mile course extends from Mill Valley to Stinson Beach and includes the Dipsea stairs, which are part of Mill Valley’s Steps, Lanes and Paths network.

Mill Valley’s Community Center also is a focus of community and recreational activity. The Community Center is comprised of a large reception hall, teen and senior centers, meeting spaces, and activity rooms. The Aquatics & Fitness Center is dedicated to swimming and fitness and includes a gym, an indoor swimming pool with retractable roof, a 120-foot spiral waterslide, a Jacuzzi spa,

Trends in Community Vitality

#4

Mill Valley’s demographics are changing.

- *Mill Valley’s population increased by 651 during the six-year period from 2007 to 2013, based on U.S. Census and California Department of Finance data. Since the number of occupied housing units has increased by only 60 units in the same timeframe, this growth is due primarily to a “demographic shift” in the population, with young families replacing empty-nesters in existing housing.*
- *Because much of the population growth will include school-age children, Mill Valley’s demographic shift could have a significant impact on the City’s most constrained resources: streets, schools, and recreational facilities. This trend should be closely monitored and the General Plan revised as necessary if it continues.*

and an outdoor patio. Between 2005 and 2010, use of the aquatic facilities increased 37 percent to roughly 273,000 users, while the use of the rest of the facilities increased 85 percent to more than 181,000 users.

In addition to active recreation, the Community Center provides a community garden that offers 35 plots where community members can grow their own produce. While it has a limited number of plots, the garden reaches many more people. Many families share in the gardening of a plot, or the garden is shared between two families. At harvest time, many gardeners share their harvest unselfishly throughout the community, contributing to programs such as Meals of Marin.

Another source of healthy, locally grown produce is the Mill Valley Farmers Market, a full-service farmers market that offers a large range of produce, meat, and other food items from numerous local vendors. The market occurs once a week year-round.



Top: Mill Valley Farmer's Market
Bottom: Community Garden

Trends in Community Vitality

#5 Recreation is on the rise.

- *Recreation programs: Over 1,655 classes offered with more than 11,285 people participating annually. Classes total over 15,600 hours of arts and recreation by more than 125 local instructors. Over 165 members in the Teen Zone and 180 members in the Senior Club.*
- *Private events: The Community Center hosts over 2,500 rentals per year with over 130,000 people in attendance.*
- *Aquatics and fitness center: Over 100,000 visitors annually with over 2,900 pass holders and 30,000 drop-ins.*
- *Parks and fields: 3,000+ individual bookings with 325,000 visitors totaling 16,820 hours of use each year.*
- *Youth sports: utilize over 9,000 allocated hours annually.*
- *Scholarships: \$182,000 in scholarships to 3,500 recipients.*

Community Vitality Goals, Policies & Programs

VITALITY-1 | Economic Vitality

Maintain a strong, diverse, and vibrant local economy that welcomes those who want to make a positive economic impact, create sustainable commercial success, support Mill Valley's small-town character, and enhance the quality of life of the community.

CV.1 Business Attraction and Retention

Create a transparent operational, informational, and regulatory framework to attract and retain businesses (including, but not limited to, local-serving businesses and entrepreneurs that provide goods, services, or medical, educational, cultural, artistic, entertainment, or recreational amenities for the community).

CV.1-1 Establish a partnership among the City, the Chamber of Commerce, and the business community that promotes effective communication and a collaborative, entrepreneurial approach to business attraction and retention issues, and opportunities to strengthen and revitalize commercial areas through targeted funding, regulatory improvements, temporary or “pop-up” uses, and other incentives.



Annual Holiday Arts and Craft Fair sponsored by Mill Valley Recreation and Co-sponsored by the Mill Valley Seniors' Club

CV.1-2 Work with the Chamber of Commerce, Marin Economic Forum, and other organizations to develop policies and programs that facilitate the successful development of locally based “start-up” companies and related business growth opportunities.

CV.1-3 Create a “Doing Business in Mill Valley” page on the City’s website or use other technology that provides a central source of information on local business-related programs, policies, and procedures; identifies opportunities to share local jobs, goods, and services; promotes a “go local first” approach to meeting needs; and monitors available commercial space by size, location, amenities, constraints, and other pertinent features.

CV.1-4 Encourage “green” businesses that are non-polluting, offer or support environmentally sustainable goods or services, and/or actively promote telecommuting, alternative work schedules, and alternative transportation modes.

CV.1-5 Create unique gateway design treatments (using landscaping, signage, public art, etc.) for the key entryways into the City that communicate a sense of arrival and welcome to Mill Valley.

CV.2 Economic Development

Continue to leverage the economic contributions of the arts sector as a key component of the City’s economy.

CV.2-1 Undertake a public awareness campaign to build community understanding and support for the arts as a significant contributor to the local economy.

CV.2-2 Promote cultural tourism essential to sustain top-quality cultural offerings and economic vibrancy.



Advertisement on Mill Valley storefront supporting local business.

 **Dining**
is an integral
part of Mill Valley
economy 

VITALITY-2 | Civic Vitality

Supported by balanced City budgets and ongoing two-way communications with the community, create a built environment and civic structures that encourage a high quality of life, promote healthy living and physical activity, and strengthen opportunities for social interaction and building of community relationships.

CV.3 Community Collaboration and Communication

Support the work of community institutions, government agencies, non-profits, and local businesses that contribute to the quality of life of Mill Valley residents.

CV.3-1 Use technology and new methods of public participation to strengthen the quality of communication, civil discourse, and problem-solving by embracing open communication, transparency, and mutual respect.

CV.3-2 Build local and regional leadership by expanding opportunities to collectively address matters of local and/or regional importance through community participation and volunteerism.

CV.3-3 Strengthen the network of neighborhood, community, and business associations, including fostering the creation of new associations in areas where none exist, and support activities and programs that enhance the quality and consistency of communication and interaction.

CV.4 Public/Commercial Space and Events

Create well-designed, accessible public and private spaces that will encourage and support community interaction and activity for all ages.

CV.4-1 Use the City's special events policy to allow neighborhood associations, groups of neighbors, and other community organizations to periodically close streets or use public parking lots for block parties and similar neighborhood and community events.



Pacific Boys Choir performance at the Mill Valley Public Library



Annual Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast hosted by the Mill Valley Volunteer Firefighters Association

CV.4-2 Maintain and support local events like the Memorial Day Parade, Winterfest, Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival, Mill Valley Film Festival, and others that enhance community pride and interaction.

CV.4-3 Encourage new development, particularly in infill areas, to provide small plazas, pocket parks, civic spaces, and other gathering places that are available to the public to help meet recreational demands. 🌿

CV.5 City Budget and Prudent Fiscal Policies

Maintain Mill Valley's tradition of prudent fiscal management and use the City budget process as an opportunity to identify operational improvements and efficiencies, evaluate and set priorities for General Plan program implementation, and involve the community in addressing fiscal issues and funding strategies, including government pensions and other benefits programs.

CV.5-1 Maintain a regularly updated schedule of fees for all City services and permits that reflects actual service costs, remains consistent with the rate of inflation, and provides sufficient revenue to maintain and enhance City programs and operations, consistent with the General Plan and the budget priorities and core values of the City Council.



The Plaza in Downtown Mill Valley. Winterfest 2013 hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

CV.5-2 Use the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as one of the means to rank and fund identified General Plan programs.

CV.5-3 Establish outreach programs and procedures that will constructively engage and inform the community about important fiscal issues and decisions.

CV.6 Consistent Public Improvements

Improve Mill Valley's appearance and charm through City policies, regulations, and standards that promote consistently high-quality design and construction.

CV.6-1 Establish and maintain public improvement and development standards that emphasize the City's attention to detail and design excellence and result in an aesthetically consistent appearance and quality of materials for public roads, sidewalks, pathways, street lights, street furniture, and other features of the public realm.

CV.6-2 Update and expand the City's design guidelines to address all types of new development (not just single-family residential), redevelopment, and public improvements.



Story poles used as part of residential design review to articulate the footprint and roof line for a redevelopment project.

VITALITY-3 | Healthy Community

Maintain a broad range of public and private programs that meet diverse community needs, including mental health, arts, recreational, intellectual, educational, and cultural programs.

CV.7 Diverse Programs and Services

Continue to place high priority on programs and facilities that serve the entire community, and ensure that programs and services meet the diverse needs in the community for users such as seniors, youth, and special needs groups, with facilities and/or amenities planned and designed to accommodate a range of ages and abilities and changing definitions of recreation.

CV.7-1 Develop joint-use agreements or other collaborative means between the City and the owners of identified facilities to allow the use of existing community facilities (the Public Library, Community Center, Golf Course, parks, churches, and schools) on a formal and informal basis to expand opportunities for physical or social activities during off-peak hours in proximity to neighborhoods and to create additional revenue sources for enhancing and maintaining existing facilities.

CV.7-2 Consider establishing a “Youth Commission” to address safe and responsive entertainment/recreation services and facilities that meet the needs of the City’s youth, and assist in collaboration efforts between local schools and the City to better serve youth and the neighborhoods in which schools are located.

CV.7-3 Continually monitor and analyze the overall needs of the City’s senior citizen population in order to meet the needs of this segment of the community. Provide the appropriate type, quantity, schedule, and class size of senior programs and activities.

CV.7-4 Enhance recreational, cultural, and educational programming to help meet the recreational needs and interests of Mill Valley’s residents, workforce, and visitors by strengthening partnerships, coordination, and outreach among the non-profit, public, and private sectors.

CV.7-5 Ensure that the collaborative partnership with and adequate funding from the County of Marin will continue to allow residents from the unincorporated areas adjacent to Mill Valley affordable access to recreational, cultural, and related services provided by the City.

CV.8 Health Considerations in Planning and Design

Make public policy decisions that promote positive health outcomes.

CV.8-1 Coordinate with paramedics, community-based organizations, and County and City

staff to identify residents most at risk for falls and provide them with assessments of their homes and regular check-ins to reduce the risk of injuries related to falls. 🌿

CV.8-2 Create “Safe Routes for Seniors” by identifying routes that older adults take to access medical care, food, and social events in the community and making those routes safer.

CV.8-3 Develop facilities that support continuing engagement, personal enrichment, and independence of older residents.

CV.8-4 Work with Marin County Health & Human Services, local schools, and residents as appropriate, to implement new policies and enforce existing proven policies to reduce alcohol abuse, tobacco use, and illicit drug use, including but not limited to targeting teen parties, expanding smoke-free spaces, and increasing prescription drug take-back.

CV.8-5 Work with the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, community organizations, and residents to promote “Healthy Retail,” a local food processing and distribution network that connects local agriculture to local retailers, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and other institutions. 🌿

CV.8-6 Support the establishment of urgent and preventative health care facilities and services for local residents with limited access to traditional facilities and services.

CV.8-7 Promote community gardens, edible schoolyards, and edible landscapes that support sustainable and organic farming practices. 🌿

CV.8-8 Minimize the impact of epidemic or pandemic outbreaks of disease through public education and outreach and support of immunization and other preventative programs.



Library After Hours program

VITALITY-4 | Healthy Community

Provide a complete and integrated system of community facilities, public parks, and open space areas throughout Mill Valley that provide opportunities for both passive and active recreation.

CV.9 Parks and Cultural Facilities

Design and implement parks and recreational facilities to meet the unique and anticipated needs and interests of residents.

CV.9-1 Create a standardized and readily identifiable way-finding program for all public recreational and cultural facilities, pathways, and Steps, Lanes and Paths.

CV.9-2 Establish maintenance standards that minimize graffiti and trash problems and promote a “pack-it-out” sensibility for users of Steps, Lanes and Paths and other open space areas.

CV.9-3 Integrate recreation and community facilities with other public spaces and rights-of-way (e.g., Steps, Lanes and Paths, bikeways, sidewalks, trails, bridges, and transit routes) that are easily accessible by alternative modes of transportation and can be used for exercise.

CV.9-4 Work with local organized sports groups to ensure that local facilities are used efficiently, serve local demand to the greatest extent possible, and preserve the quality and safety of the facility.

CV.10 Library

Continue to support and enhance the role of the Mill Valley Public Library as an important cultural and intellectual center of the community.

CV.10-1 Provide opportunities (physical and virtual) for collaboration, invention, and creative endeavors at the Library.

CV.10-2 Advocate for a literate population and build community through programs that help people connect and find common ground.

CV.10-3 Preserve the City’s cultural heritage by collecting, archiving, and showcasing local art, culture, and history at the Library.

CV.10-4 Regularly update a strategic plan for programs, services, and facilities that keep the Library at the forefront of the community’s intellectual needs and priorities.

VITALITY-5 | Healthy Community

Support a complete and integrated system of youth and adult sports leagues and activities that focus on the needs of Mill Valley residents.

CV.11 Sports Leagues

Support youth and adult sports leagues that contribute to Mill Valley's community health and economic vitality.

CV.11-1 Support, sustain, and develop excellent sports facilities.

CV.11-2 Work with local organized adult and youth sports leagues to ensure that local facilities are used efficiently, serve local demand to the greatest extent possible, and preserve the quality and safety of the facility.

CV.11-3 Continue to establish and promote local partnerships and working relationships, such as those already created with Friends of Fields, Boyle Park Tennis Courts, and Mill Valley Golf Club, that help maintain and promote local sports programs and facilities.



Click Off (2003)
Source: Mill Valley Arts Commission
Photographer: Ken Rosenberg

Arts & Culture Goals, Policies & Programs

ARTS-1 | Arts and Culture Identity

Maintain a strong identity for Mill Valley as a regional destination for excellence in the arts, culture, and arts education.

ART.1 Contribution of Arts and Culture to Mill Valley’s Community Vitality

Identify and record, on an ongoing basis, the contribution of the arts, culture, and arts education to the City’s history, character, economic vitality, and quality of life.

ART.1-1 Conduct an initial and, thereafter, periodic arts census to document and disseminate information about art-related events, assets, activities, organizations, and venues. The census may include:

- Determining and monitoring the economic impact of the arts upon the City’s economy;
- Inventorying facilities and creating an availability matrix;
- Producing and maintaining a City arts guide with a directory of local artists based on the census;
- Exploring resource pooling to minimize the cost of producing and participating in arts events;
- Surveying arts and culture spending on related programs in similar-sized communities; and
- Conducting an annual roundtable among City and arts leaders to develop shared arts sector priorities.

ART.1-2 Catalog the City’s art history, including arts, artists, and arts education.

ART.2 Facilities

Support, sustain, and develop excellent arts and culture facilities.

ART.2-1 Develop cooperative use agreements for public and private facilities.

ART.3 Outreach and Promotion

Work with artists and art organizations to promote and publicize the City's arts, entertainment, and cultural assets, both within and outside the community.

ART.3-1 Develop gateway and informational signs and other media to support and promote the City's cultural identity and resources.

ART.3-2 Implement and update outreach tools such as a central informational and ticketing kiosk, develop a local arts and entertainment website, and emerging technology applications.

ART.3-3 Provide news and listings for arts organizations in City publications and communications.

ART.3-4 Coordinate and simplify permit procedures for signs, banners, and other materials used to promote local cultural resources and events.



Mural at 142 Throckmorton

ARTS-2 | Leadership

Establish and maintain strong and cooperative civic arts leadership, working collaboratively with public and private arts providers.

ART.4 Roles and Relationships

Define and support a strong, clear role for the Arts Commission, including meaningful support from appropriate City department(s) and well-defined relationships with other City entities.

ART.4-1 Initiate a strategic plan for the Arts Commission, which would include creating clear roles, guidelines, and responsibilities, and administration and oversight of the arts and culture provisions of the MV2040 General Plan.

ART.4-2 Expand volunteerism and its provision and coordination.

ART.4-3 Strengthen communication and the working relationship between the Arts Commission and other City departments.

ART.4-4 Foster cooperation and collaboration with and among members of the arts community.

ART.4 Partnerships

Encourage and support partnerships among the arts, business, and the schools.

ART.5-1 Improve communication, coordination, and sharing of resources among the arts, education, and business communities.



Tam High Honors Drawing & Painting Exhibition at the Mill Valley Public Library



Bloom-A-Thon Volunteers

ARTS-3 | Funding and Other Support

Facilitate the delivery and enjoyment of the arts through robust public and private funding.

ART.6 Funding and Services

Support adequate public and private funding for the continued growth of the arts.

ART.6-1 Develop necessary funding and staff support to enable the Arts Commission to effectively carry out the responsibilities identified in Program ART.4-1.

ARTS.6-2 Facilitate the efforts of local artists and arts organizations to obtain private funding.

ARTS.6-3 Provide supportive services and other incentives to facilitate the delivery and enjoyment of the arts, culture, and arts education, where feasible.



Above: Concerts in the Plaza sponsored by the Mill Valley Arts Commission

Left (top): Poster for comedy in the Plaza sponsored by the Mill Valley Arts Commission

Left (bottom): 1st Tuesday Art Walk sponsored by the Art Commission. Click Off photography competition award winners on display at the Community Center

ARTS-4 | Education

Reflect and encourage arts, culture, and arts education in the City's environment.

ART.7 Integration of Art in Building, Design, and Public Spaces

Facilitate the integration of artwork and performances in public and publicly accessible spaces (e.g., public buildings, parks and squares, rights-of-way), and encourage the inclusion of artwork and artistry in the planning and design of new and existing buildings and structures.

ART.7-1 Initiate a program for temporary public art, with varied and changing art installations and performances Citywide.

ART.7-2 Develop a Public Arts Ordinance with the participation of the local arts community and stakeholders that will accomplish the following without compromising First Amendment guarantees of artistic expression:

- Define the role of the Arts Commission;
- Include the Arts Commission when selecting art in public places;
- Enable the Arts Commission to participate in the approval process for artistic components of major public or private development projects;
- Identify standards for incorporating permanent and temporary public art throughout the City, such as along the Miller Avenue corridor;
- Encourage artistic diversity;
- Provide incentives for the inclusion of artwork in development projects; and
- Accommodate the incorporation of artwork in buildings and structures.

ART.7-3 Support performances and events in public spaces and non-traditional settings.

ART.8 Arts Education

Support community opportunities for artistic enrichment through arts education.

ART.8-1 Support and promote educational workshops and lectures.



Art display outside a commercial building in Downtown Mill Valley

ARTS-5 | Cultural Environment

Attract and support diverse art forms, artists, and audiences to sustain a vibrant cultural environment.

ART.9 Artistic Diversity and Variety

Support and encourage a wide variety of established and emerging art forms and artists that include varied ethnic, cultural, age, gender, and economic populations among the users and providers of the City's arts, culture, and arts education offerings.

ART.9-1 When enacting City regulations, ensure support for artistic freedom, variety, and eclecticism.

ART.9-2 When promoting the arts, also promote the value of artistic diversity to encourage creativity, expand horizons, and accommodate a wide variety of artistic tastes.

ART.9-3 Provide low-cost opportunities for artists to display and sell their work in public and at events.

ART.9-4 Host and support multi-cultural arts events, performances, and displays.

ART.9-5 Encourage local arts community leaders and providers that reflect the diversity of established and emerging art forms and artists.

ART.9-6 Support and reflect artistic expression that draws upon the cultural diversity as found in the community's workforce.

ART.10 Accessibility

Promote access to the arts, culture, and arts education for all members of the community.

ART.10-1 Explore and support the provision of accommodations such as priority seating and closed captioning at public events.

ART.10-2 Consider low-cost ticketing, empty seat programs, and other means to promote greater access to local arts and cultural events and facilities.

ART.10-3 Encourage the use of technology to engage the broader community in the arts.



The Sweetwater Music Hall with Mose Allison (1983)

Source: Mill Valley Public Library, Lucretia Little History Room

The Sweetwater opened in 1972 in a rustic, downtown Mill Valley storefront previously occupied by a local watering hole called “the Office.” On its opening night, the Sweetwater presented an acoustic folk-rock group that played for a crowd that lined up halfway down the block to get in. While the Sweetwater enjoyed a most auspicious beginning, it wasn’t until a decade later that the tiny 90-seat tavern with a stage earned its rightful place in music history.

In the 1980’s, new owner Jeannie Patterson took over the reins of the Sweetwater and show by show, cemented the Sweetwater’s reputation as the little room adored by the biggest names in rock n’ roll, including Bob Weir, Aaron Neville, Big Mama Thornton, Carlos Santana, Clarence Clemons, Elvis Costello, Etta James, Gregg Allman, Huey Lewis, Jerry Garcia, John Hiatt, John Lee Hooker, Maria Muldaur, Mimi Farina, Odetta, Ramblin’ Jack Elliot, Richie Havens, Robert Cray, Sammy Hagar, Townes Van Zandt, Van Morrison, among many more musical luminaries. Times of London hailed the Sweetwater as one of the best nightclubs in America.

In September 2007 the Sweetwater closed its doors, and after four years of continued community interest and support, a new Sweetwater opened its doors under new ownership and relocated in a renovated lower floor of Mill Valley’s Masonic Temple (opposite Mill Valley’s City Hall) on January 21, 2012. The inaugural music event featured local musician Austin De Lone’s band with guest performers including Jerry Harrison (local resident and former lead guitarist for The Talking Heads).

(Source: <http://www.sweetwatermusicall.com/the-sweetwater/>, accessed March 4, 2014)