PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

As part of the LCP amendments, the County conducted extensive public outreach activities from April to August of 2025. The County sought participation and input from people who represent the full range of demographics, perspectives, and experiences in West Marin, including existing residents, environmental protection groups, nonprofit housing developers, housing advocates, utility and service providers, historically underrepresented community members, and community organizations representing special needs groups such as older adults, agricultural workers, people experiencing homelessness and people with disabilities. Special attention was given to include community organizations focused on special needs groups, such as older adults, agricultural workers, individuals experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities.

The outreach efforts featured a series of in-person meetings with stakeholders in various locations, including Bolinas, Stinson Beach, Tomales, and Point Reyes Station. In total, the planning staff held 17 meetings with land trusts, affordable housing builders, the utilities districts, as well as individuals. Additionally, Zoom meetings were held to connect with groups, service providers, and individuals across West Marin. During the public outreach process, staff received a wide range of comments from participants. These comments have been carefully compiled and categorized into themes and provided below, in no particular order.

These outreach efforts included in-person meetings at Bolinas, Stinson Beach, Tomales, Pt. Reyes Station, and numerous Zoom meetings with groups, service providers, and individuals from the entire West Marin. Additionally, the County held one Community Workshop in Pt. Reyes Station, from which attendees came from the entire West Marin representing various community groups, land trusts, individuals, and concerned citizens. Over 50 people attended the workshop.

The most common topics of the comments staff received can be described as follows:

- Simplify the ADU Submittal requirements: To improve efficiency and increase accessibility to home-builders, the County should revise its submittal requirements for ADUs. Currently, the Planning application submittal requirement for ADUs is the same as that for new single-family homes, which creates unnecessary financial barriers for both homeowners and builders. Streamlining and simplifying the submission process specifically for ADUs would be a positive change, alleviating some financial burdens faced by individuals looking to build ADUs. This adjustment could ultimately encourage the creation of more ADUs, helping to address housing shortages and support community growth.

- Streamline the ADU Permitting process: The process for obtaining permits for ADU is often excessively lengthy, creating significant delays for homeowners and developers. To streamline this procedure and encourage more ADU development, the County should consider investigating options to exempt these structures from the requirement of a Coastal Development Permit (CDP). This could lead to a more efficient pathway for approval and ultimately support the growth of affordable housing in our communities.

- On-site septic system permitting: The County should work with the state to expand the exemption from a coastal permit for septic systems, and the county should explore changing septic capacity calculations to be based on water usage instead of the number of bedrooms.

- Financial assistance: The County should explore ways to make financial assistance available to those who want to upgrade their septic systems so that ADUs can be built.

- Protect coastal resources: As the legislature increasingly adopts state statutes that encourage the development of by-right multi-family housing, often lacking consideration for local context and regulations, it is crucial for the County to undertake all necessary measures. This is essential to safeguard the principles of the Coastal Act and to ensure that local governance and community needs are preserved and respected.

- Public engagement: The County must prioritize and strengthen public participation and notification for significant projects or policy initiatives that impact our communities. Ensuring that residents have a voice in these decisions is essential for fostering transparency and trust.

- Planning Permit: The planning permit process takes too long and is too expensive. Additionally, review comments received from the county staff often vary from one planner to another.

- Coastal Permits: The current permit process is prohibitively expensive and excessively complicated for individual homeowners. To better serve the community, the County should consider reforming the permitting process. For instance, the County could categorize application fees and submission requirements based on the specific complexity and size of each project. This would create a more accessible and efficient process that empowers homeowners instead of burdening them. Implementing these changes would not only reduce unnecessary financial strain but also promote responsible development in coastal areas.

- West Marin Planner: The planning department should designate a “West Marin” planner who would work in the coastal areas at least once a month to address public comments and engage with the community. Many residents have to drive hours to the Civic Center for basic information, which disadvantages West Marin. A dedicated planner visiting monthly would improve public engagement and provide answers to residents' questions.

A significant highlight of these efforts was a Community Workshop held in Point Reyes Station, which attracted over 50 participants from various community groups, land trusts, and concerned citizens from across the entire West Marin. The topics covered in the workshop as listed in the minutes attached to this report.

LOCAL PLAN AMENDMENT
COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION
MEETING NOTES
Dance Palace, Pt. Reyes Station
August 26, 2025

Topic 1: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

Septic

- Septic - Provide free evaluations (capacity)
- Change septic rules
- Create new septic types
- Why streamline if major constraints remain?
- Submittal requirements for permits
- Provide sample plans, resources, free consultations, assessment estimates
- Low interest financing
- Estimate impacts of an ADU on property tax and insurance
- More guidance about the process
- Connect property owners and tenants
- Comprehensive look at what is feasible
- EHS – septic underutilized. Septic capacity based on a metric other than bedroom count.
- Update and lower water standards
- EHS – Bolinas water program
- How are new codes helping with costs?
- Low cost structures – shipping containers
- Multi-units are limited
- Work with community developers
- More clarity: what makes ADUs affordable; cost, size, etc.
- ADU parking requirements (# of spots) present challenges and not always realistic
- What is the relationship between affordability and ADUs
- Low income definition in Marin is not inclusive of very low income
- ADU Process:
    - Subsidize septic units
    - Zero waiting time
    - Lack of transparency
    - Unnecessary complexity – privileged bypass process
    - Ombudsman available
- Requirement to use an ADU as an ADU
- ADUs- ministerial review only

Topic 2: Areas of Discretion and Local Control

- Support community groups to present to developers
- Do an evaluation of what public input matters
- Can the County create a newer, more effective public input process for projects?
- Create a historic and environmental vision for West Marin
- Proactive planning
- Increase density or go/build up – do not build out
- Education on work preference – fair housing laws; potential consequences
- Want to know upfront what is coming from the State
- Harmonize built environment
- Unclear of emergency procedures – provide more clarity for the community
- Join notification list in your area
- Simplify – have 1 document in the General Plan
- Misunderstanding even within the department
- Provide better resources
- Lack of consistency; not consistent with planners
- Better internal communication
- There should be more noticing for projects
- Requirements are not consistent
- Need very clear, step-by-step process and keep informed
- Rules are currently ambiguous
- Discrepancy between rental laws, renters' needs vs homeowner needs
- Housing skewed towards short-term rentals
- Indemnify rent control for ADUs- 10-20 years

Topic 4: Community Engagement and Outreach

- Representation when Supervisor recuses
- Broadcast project meetings (local TV, radio, etc.)
- Subscription issues, website issues, broken links
- Keep resources at the Library and West Marin
    - CDA Resources: ADUs, Housing Element, Septic, CDP
    - Share what is possible, answer general questions, tangible materials, in-person meetings
- Education and better communication about the Board
- County is good about sending out mail
- County should communicate more with new neighborhoods
- Few projects at this time – County should reach out to the community
- Flyers, community boards, Pt. Reyes Light, radio, podcast, West Marin comments
- Invest more on outreach; have outreach more than just once
- Education on work preference – fair housing
- County does a good job reaching out about progress, but County should provide more context about projects
- Provide more storytelling about projects
- Community wants assurance that they are being heard on any housing project

- Measure A and W – connect ag and housing
- Our voices are not being heard – more advocacy for legal support
- Fraction of ownership – no more – other Counties have banned this
- No STRs
- These recommendations are harmonized with Growing Together Report
- County communicates with people who want/are pro housing; community does not see changes
- County needs to streamline affordable housing
- Form based code not user friendly or effective; need to streamline
- Self-help enterprise
- Self-build options and support for economic development
- Senior Housing
- Section 8 Vouchers
- Collaborate with HHS to communicate with West Marin
- Education about AMI – what is affordable and why do we need it
- County website notifications work great but not many know how to sign up
- When there is a project happening, send notification to local neighbors
- Public input could be a double-edged sword
- Informing public is important, but too much public input can be a hinderance on development
- Project proposers host “parties” to inform neighbors about new development projects
    - Builds a sense of community
    - County’s involvement can be to send a representative to attend the party
- General planning process is convoluted:
    - Lack of trust leads to many unpermitted projects
    - Current rules are creating a bad dynamic
    - Overall, a discordant environment between residents building
- Only ones who get through planning review process are those who can pay the necessary fees
- Support services for elderly members of the community.

Additional Comments

- The County has dedicated planners
- Include/engage younger people
    - Hold meetings at school
    - Meet them where they are
- Have more County involvement in West Marin – not just some departments
- Develop more sustainable housing types
    - Percentage of housing costs should be placed in a fund for future sustainable growth
- Restore evacuation planning
- Help with 2050 Plan
- Make septic capacity based on water usage instead of number of bedrooms
- Really appreciate the County having an in-person meeting; should do more