

Town of Corte Madera, California

Corte Madera is a small town in Marin County, one of the nation's wealthiest counties. While the town was originally built after World War II with modestly priced housing, county regulation of land supply, surging demand, economic growth, and unnecessary or excessive regulations resulted in skyrocketing prices. By 2005, the average sales price of a home had risen to over \$800,000. In 2002, the town updated its state-required "Housing Element" of the comprehensive plan to focus on regulatory barriers. The town changed its land use and related regulations to encourage affordable housing through creation of an Affordable Housing District as well as broad-based reform throughout the community. For a small town, results have been dramatic and include: a 79-unit affordable housing project, mixed-use projects with both low-income and workforce housing units, and a number of accessory or "granny flat" units.

Specific Actions Taken:

- **Specifies an Affordable Housing Mixed Use District that features: triple density, at least 50 percent affordable units, fee waivers, reduced parking, streamlined development standards to increase lot coverage, reduced lot sizes and setbacks, and tripled allowable commercial space in buildings with affordable housing.**
- **Maintains a high-density land designation that allows 25 dwelling units per acre.**
- **Designates three high-density zones in which 50 percent of units must be affordable.**
- **Reduces parking standards for affordable housing.**
- **Streamlines environmental reviews to eliminate many environmental impact statements.**
- **Streamlines permitting for mixed use projects.**
- **Streamlines approval of accessory units.**