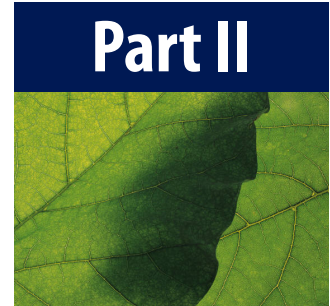


# Our Relationship With The Natural Environment

## Goal 1 An Abundance of Green and Healthy Natural Systems

Ross' mystique lies in the beauty of its natural resources: the trees, hillsides, ridgelines and meandering creeks. These features have shaped the growth of Ross and affect how we experience the community. They provide habitat for wildlife, privacy between neighbors, and create scenic vistas around every bend.



**DEFINITION** A **Vision** is a way of looking at the future and our ability to define a future state. A vision statement, in its simplest terms, is one's ability to define a future state. A community visioning event was held in 2005. The visioning ideas of the community have been incorporated into each general plan section, as shown below.

### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

Set in a valley between open hillsides, Ross enjoys a natural environment where cultural and civic activities are encouraged and thrive. There's an abundance of green from tree-lined streets, parks and open space, to healthy creeks and watershed. Ross has maintained access to open space for all people, not just its residents, but this access should not disturb the privacy or peaceful enjoyment of the Town by its residents. Proper management of the eco-system helps to prevent erosion and excess stormwater runoff, reduces ambient temperatures, retains natural habitat for wildlife and birds, and enhances the beauty of the natural landscape.



Landscaping and its relationship to the public right-of-way

### Major New Ideas

- Establish a Tree Committee
- Create a Landscape Master Plan for Public Areas

**DEFINITION** **Policies** are the way we can turn our vision of Ross in the year 2025 into a reality. Policies are specific or general statements of principle, positions or approaches on a particular issue or subject. Policies motivate us, guide our actions and direct us toward the Ross we envision. Policies for Goal 1 (An Abundance of Green and Healthy Natural Systems) begin below.



View of Bald Hill looking south

## Ross General Plan Policies

**1.1 Protection of Environmental Resources.** Protect environmental resources, such as hillsides, ridgelines, creeks, drainage ways, trees and tree groves, threatened and endangered species habitat, riparian vegetation, cultural places,<sup>7</sup> and other resources. These resources are unique in the planning area because of their scarcity, scientific value, aesthetic quality and cultural significance.

**1.2 Tree Canopy Preservation.** Protect and expand the tree canopy of Ross to enhance the beauty of the natural landscape. Recognize that the tree canopy is critical to provide shade, reduce ambient temperatures, improve the uptake of carbon dioxide, prevent erosion and excess stormwater runoff, provide habitat for wildlife and birds, and protect the ecosystem of the under-story vegetation.

**1.3 Tree Maintenance and Replacement.** Assure proper tree maintenance and replacement.

**1.4 Natural Areas Retention.** Maximize the amount of land retained in its natural state. Wherever possible, residential development should be designed to preserve, protect and restore native site vegetation and habitat. In addition, where possible and appropriate, invasive vegetation should be removed.

**1.5 Open Space Plan.** Execute the Open Space Plan (See Figure 3 in Appendix A) for land in public and private ownership, including existing and future parcels. The designation of “Upland Ridge and Greenbelt” on the Open Space Plan is approximate and is intended to identify those properties that would require further analysis of their potential open space value.

## Overview of Our Past Accomplishments

The Ross Town Council took dramatic steps since our last General Plan to preserve our critical environmental resources. The Hillside Lot Ordinance was tightened to limit the total amount of buildable floor area development on steep, sensitive sites. The Council very rigorously applies the Hillside Lot Ordinance floor area ratio guideline to all development proposals on slopes over 30%.

<sup>7</sup> “Cultural places” are defined in the California Public Resources Code and include, but are not limited to, archaeological sites, historic and prehistoric ruins, and Native American historic, cultural, and sacred sites, including a sanctified cemetery or burial round, a place of worship, a religious or ceremonial site, and a sacred shrine.

The Town has adopted additional design review requirements for projects with grading, filling, or retaining walls construction, further ensuring the preservation of the Town's hillsides. Creek and drainageway setbacks and an expanded tree protection ordinance were added to the Town's zoning regulations to protect waterways and vegetation for future generations. Applications to remove or alter trees are carefully scrutinized by the Town as part of any project review.

**DEFINITION** **Actions** are specific and discrete implementing programs, procedures or activities that the Town needs to undertake to fully achieve the goals of this general plan. While policies tell us how to achieve our vision, specific actions are also needed to fully effectuate our policies and to provide greater detail for future decision-making. The action list of new ideas under Goal 1 are described below.



Natural woodlands are present throughout the Ross Planning Area

## Action List of New Ideas

**1.A Establish a Tree Committee.** Establish a Tree Committee to develop recommendations for trees, landscaping and maintenance in the public right-of-way.

**1.B Create a Landscape Master Plan for Public Areas.** Develop a Landscape Master Plan for entryways, streets, parks and other public areas of Ross. The plan may include: (1) clarification of responsibility for selecting, maintaining and irrigating Town trees; (2) an approved planting list; (3) a requirement for homeowners to plant and maintain certain types of trees from an approved list; (4) a replacement policy for trees when trees are removed; and, (5) guidance for issues such as tree lanes and waterways.

## Goal 2

### Sustainable Building and Community Practices

As part of the larger community, Ross recognizes our responsibility to conserving the environment for future generations by incorporating sustainable practices as a guiding principle for all our actions, including project design, conservation and energy efficiency, integrated pest management, land use, circulation and transportation.

#### OUR VISION OF ROSS IN YEAR 2025

To perpetuate the health of our community, we have followed environmentally sustainable management and development policies with regard to our environment. The natural environment for plant and animal health and habitat is not to be compromised. The Town has developed and follows policies for “green” building. We have worked to reduce our ecological footprint by shifting our reliance away from fossil fuels toward renewable sources of energy and by ameliorating the local conditions that contribute to global warming.

#### Major New Ideas

- Establish “Green Building” Requirements
- Establish a Tree Committee
- Consider Secondhand Smoke Ordinance
- Consider Solar Access Ordinance

#### Ross General Plan Policies

**2.1 Sustainable Practices.** Support measures to reduce resource consumption and improve energy efficiency through all elements of the Ross General Plan and Town regulations and practices, including:

- (a) Require large houses to limit the energy usage to that of a more moderately sized house as established in design guidelines.
- (b) Encourage affordable workforce housing (see Housing Element) and a development pattern that encourages people to walk.
- (c) Preserve uses in the commercial area of the town that serve local residents and reduce the need to drive to other areas.
- (d) Choose the most sustainable portion of a site for development and leaving more of a site in its natural condition to reduce land impacts on the natural environment.
- (e) Use green materials and resources.
- (f) Conserve water, especially in landscaping.
- (g) Encourage transportation alternatives to the private automobile.

- (h) Increase the use of renewable energy sources, including solar energy.
- (i) Recycle building materials.

**2.2 Incorporation of Resource Conservation Measures.** To the extent consistent with other design considerations, public and private projects should be designed to be efficient and innovative in their use of materials, site construction, and water irrigation standards for new landscaping to minimize resource consumption, including energy and water.

**2.3 Reduction in the Use of Chemicals and Non-Natural Substances.** Support efforts to use chemical-free and toxic-free building materials, reduce waste and recycle building waste and residential garbage. Encourage landscape designs that minimize pesticide and herbicide use.



Sidewalk in the Winship Area

**2.4 Footprints of Buildings.** Utilize smaller footprints to minimize the built area of a site and to allow the maximum amount of landscaped and/or permeable surfaces.

**Overview of Our Past Accomplishments**

The Town supports reducing consumption of water and energy through enhanced energy efficiency, energy conservation, renewable energy, and green building practices. The Town encourages include the use of energy efficient lighting, motors and refrigerators that use less energy for the same or greater output, solar power, and the the use of materials, design and construction practices that consider the energy used to extract, produce and transport building materials and for ongoing building operation and maintenance.

All new construction must meet the current California Energy Commission standards. To the extent consistent with other design considerations, the Town has also supported designs that are creative, efficient and innovative in their use of materials and methods to minimize resource consumption. This has included drought-tolerant planting selections in landscape plans and water-conserving irrigation systems, such as drip irrigation, low flow sprinklers and automatic controls.

**Action List of New Ideas**

**2.A Establish “Green Building” Requirements.** Establish specific development regulations that require buildings and substantial remodels to be built using “green” building techniques, including recycling of building materials where possible, and to conform to an industry approved certification or rating such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building

Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), or Build it Green, which is a professional non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote healthy, energy and resource-efficient buildings in California.

**2.B Review Pesticide and Herbicide Requirements.** Review current Town standards to ensure the prudent use of pesticides and herbicides. Implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program that uses a variety of methods to control pests. The program would also include actions to identify and eliminate conditions that may attract and support pests.

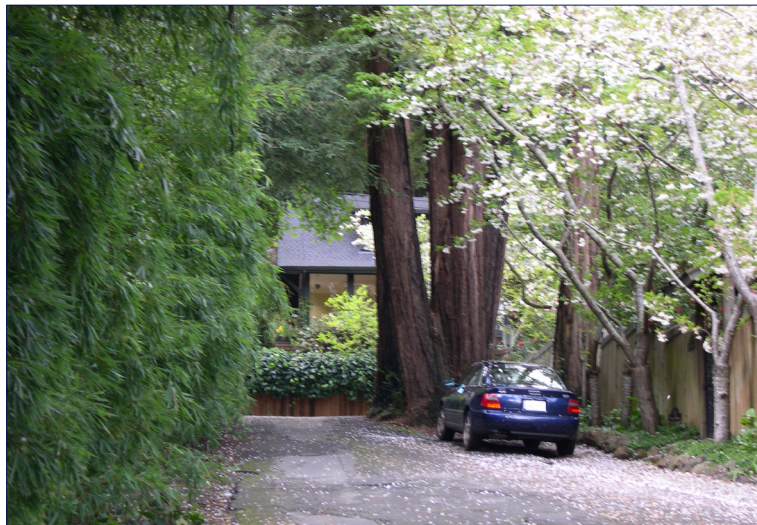


Street in the Winship area

**2.C Adopt Woodsmoke or Biomass Smoke Ordinance.** Adopt a Woodsmoke or Biomass Smoke Ordinance to reduce particulate emissions from wood or biomass burning appliances, including fireplaces, that do not meet EPA standards of emission. The purposes of the ordinance will be to either require or encourage the removal of existing wood or biomass burning appliances that do not meet standards of emission, and to implement requirements at the time of major remodel projects.

**2.D Consider Secondhand Smoke Ordinance.** Study and consider enactment of a Secondhand Smoke Ordinance in Ross.

**2.E Consider Solar Access Ordinance.** Study and consider enactment of a Solar Access Ordinance to encourage use of solar design for Ross development.



Access from Madrona Avenue