

General Plan Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the General Plan

California law requires every city and county in the state to prepare and adopt a comprehensive long-range general plan for the physical development of the jurisdiction. The California Government Code defines specific purposes and content requirements for general plans. While the law establishes certain requirements, within that framework each community has the latitude to design its own future.

Upon adoption by the City Council, the maps, goals, policies, programs, diagrams, and figures, contained within this General Plan document will supersede and update those now contained in the different elements and area plans adopted since the early 1970s.

The Martinez General Plan contains a set of public goals and policies to guide the future development and maintenance of the physical environment in Martinez. In a broad sense, the General Plan addresses issues related to sustaining Martinez's quality of life. These issues include enhancing the Downtown as the central focus of the community, protecting residential neighborhoods and environmental resources; balancing future development with the provision of adequate services, facilities and infrastructure; collaborating on regional planning efforts; meeting housing needs; and providing for economic development to maintain a high level of City services.

So, while the California Government Code defines specific purposes and content requirements for general plans, the City of Martinez General Plan is intended to do much more than merely meet legal requirements. It is intended to be a statement about how the citizens of Martinez view their community now, and a vision of what they hope it will become. Most importantly, it provides a policy structure for addressing planning and development issues into the future. (See Figure 1-1 Regional Location Map)

State Law Requirements

A general plan is a comprehensive, long-term plan for the physical development of a city and of any land outside its boundaries (but within the Sphere of Influence) which, in the planning agency's judgment, bears relation to its planning. The California Supreme Court has called the general plan the "constitution for future development." State law requires that a general plan contain objectives, policies, standards and actions that are fully integrated and internally consistent with one another.

The general plan must cover the following seven mandatory elements: land use, circulation,

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housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addition, local agencies may cover other topics of local concern. These can be included in specific elements (termed “optional elements” in State law) or may be addressed in other ways within required elements of the general plan.



Figure 1-1

The general plan must meet standards of consistency both within individual elements and across all elements or policies contained in the entire general plan. In addition, once adopted, the general plan provides the basis for most future decision-making. For instance, all subdivisions, zoning, capital improvements, and other land use actions must be found consistent with the general plan.

The State's general plan requirements are intended to link regional transportation and housing plans to greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) have linked the Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA) process with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) process in developing a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as a way of reaching GHG reduction targets. Under the SCS, Downtown Martinez is identified as a regional Priority Development Area (PDA), meaning it is a locally-identified, infill development opportunity area where there is local commitment to developing more housing along with amenities and services to meet the day-to-day needs of residents in a pedestrian-friendly environment served by transit.

How to Use the Plan

The City of Martinez General Plan — Martinez 21st Century — is intended to be useful to all its readers and still contain all necessary information and policies per State requirements. To accomplish this objective, the General Plan is structured around eleven Chapters and nine highly interrelated elements, as follows:

Chapter 1	Introduction and Vision
Chapter 2	Land Use Element
Chapter 3	Open Space and Conservation Element
Chapter 4	Historic, Cultural, and Arts Element
Chapter 5	Parks, Community Facilities and Infrastructure Element
Chapter 6	Circulation Element
Chapter 7	Housing Element (separate document)
Chapter 8	Safety Element
Chapter 9	Noise and Air Quality Element
Chapter 10	Growth Management Element
Chapter 11	Appendices

State Law Requirements for General Plans

Government Code §65300, §65300.5 and §65302 state:

“Each planning agency shall prepare and the legislative body of each county and city shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning. Chartered cities shall adopt general plans which contain the mandatory elements specified in Section 65302.

In construing the provisions of this article, the Legislature intends that the general plan and elements and parts thereof comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency.

The general plan shall consist of a statement of development policies and shall include a diagram or diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals....”

In §65302.1 State law deals further with the matter of General Plans responding to local conditions, stating:

“The general plan shall address each of the elements specified in Section 65302 to the extent that the subject of the element exists in the planning area. The degree of specificity and level of detail of the discussion of each such element shall reflect local conditions and circumstances....”

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City Hall Plaza

Each of the nine elements is intended to convey a different level of information depending on what the reader wants to know. Goals and policies have been developed and grouped by the General Plan elements listed above. Many of these elements contain:

Goals: Broad statements that reflect community values and ideals.

Policies: Clear and specific statements that assist and guide decision making in order to realize an objective and or goal.

Implementation: Actions or procedures that support or carry out General Plan Policy. It is typical that each Policy have at least one corresponding Implementation.

Additionally, the primary instrument for implementing the General Plan is the City's Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance includes various land use districts that must be consistent with the General Plan. Each parcel of land in the community is designated with one of those districts. Written regulations establish permitted uses, standards for conditional use permits, design review, minimum lot size, building height and setback limits, lot coverage, parking and other development parameters within each zoning designation.

Future Review and Amendment

Any interested person may submit a request to have a proposed amendment of the general plan considered. State law restricts the number of amendments to four per general plan element, each calendar year, although each amendment may encompass a series of individual changes to the general plan. The City Council, by resolution of a majority of its members, may also initiate a proposed amendment at any time it deems suitable or appropriate.

General Plan amendments will also be considered by the Planning Commission, which will make a recommendation to the Martinez City Council. Since General Plan Amendments are legislative actions, the final decision is made by the City Council following a public hearing. General Plan amendments will be published as follows:

Policy and Text Changes: Changes to the policies and other text of the General Plan will be published on pages which may be inserted in the appropriate locations as replacement pages or additional

pages in the applicable element. The effective date of the last adopted amendment will be referenced on the pages with changes or additions.

Map Changes: Amendments to the land use map and other policy and informational maps will be published on pages which may be inserted in the document; periodic revisions of the original document maps will incorporate all of these changes which have accumulated since the previous revision.

How the General Plan was Prepared

The General Plan was created through the contributions of decision-makers, the General Plan Update Task Force, individual residents, and representatives of many organizations in the community. The update process began with the preparation of General Plan Work Program in 2010.

General Plan Update Task Force: The General Plan Update Task Force was involved in the update effort, helping to formulate and participate in outreach to the community, identifying issues of concern, assisting with formulating a vision for the General Plan, hearing from experts on various topics, providing an opportunity for key property owners to provide their ideas, and reviewing background materials and policy choices.

General Plan Outreach: As part of the update process an extensive outreach process has been conducted with various interest groups in the City and the community as a whole. Activities conducted between September, 2010 and January, 2011 included: community workshops held in four different parts of the City; a survey of 230 eighth-graders at Martinez junior high school; use of the City's website/User Voice Survey to pose questions and obtain responses similar to the workshops; and outreach to various stakeholder groups and neighborhood coffees conducted by General Plan Update Task Force members.

Documentation of Community Outreach Comments: In total, approximately 500 people participated and provided comments that are summarized in a Community Conversations Report. About 75 people attended four community workshops; approximately 130 people participated in the UserVoice survey available through the City's website; and an additional 300 people partici-



General Plan Update Task Force meeting

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pating included youth participants, stakeholder groups, and neighborhood coffees participants. The Community Conversations Report also summarizes the results of a tour of the City conducted by the General Plan Update Task Force, and interviews with various departments within the City. The tour and interviews were intended to identify key issues of concern.

Noticing: Noticing for the General Plan effort, including the workshops and the online UserVoice survey, was done using banners, ads and articles in the Martinez News-Gazette and Contra Costa Times, Martinez Patch.com, Twitter, Facebook, General Plan business cards, announcements at Planning Commission and City Council meetings, announcements and use of the City's website, outreach through various community groups (Kiwanis, Friends of Alhambra Creek, Main Street Martinez, Alhambra Watershed Council, etc.) and others.

Downtown Matters: In 2011, the City also embarked upon an ambitious effort to involve people in identifying needed improvements and activities in the Downtown. The effort was called "Downtown Matters! Make it Real and Making it Happen!" Downtown Matters was comprised of a series of six community outreach events, including four workshops and tours of revitalized downtowns located in Redwood City, Lodi, and Livermore. This series was part of the General Plan update process and helped to identify the choices, trade-offs, priorities and strategic actions required for Downtown to prosper in the 21st century.

Review and Adoption of the Draft General Plan: This Draft General Plan and General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be reviewed at noticed public meetings of the Planning Commission and the City Council.

1.2 MARTINEZ VISION 2035

The Vision Statement below is a brief description of what Martinez wants to become through the implementation of its General Plan. The Vision Statement provides a sense of the purpose and mission for the General Plan and sets the tone for the goals, objectives, policies and actions of the rest of the General Plan.

Martinez will retain a unique, small town historic character within its larger suburban context of Central Contra Costa County. Martinez' identity will be largely based on its vibrant, eclectic downtown, set within pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods made up of varied and traditionally designed homes. The temperate climate, the Carquinez Straight, Alhambra Creek and its tributaries, and especially the open hillsides surrounding the existing urban areas frame our physical identity.

Visitors will continue to be attracted to Martinez because of its unique small-town character, shops, restaurants, waterfront recreation, surrounding natural beauty and role as the County Seat. Martinez residents know that the City also provides a strong sense of belonging for its res-

idents. It contains a broad array of 19th and early 20th century buildings that form multi-faceted streetscapes and neighborhoods and support an economically diverse community. Newer neighborhoods will retain their livable mix of quality and varied housing opportunities, convenient and appropriately scaled commercial areas, and plentiful parks and open spaces.

Martinez will retain its qualities for future generations by providing a vibrant economy linked to a viable community social structure and by conserving the ecosystem and built environment that supports it. Martinez is, and will remain, a community in which its residents can take pride.