



## Martinez General Plan Fact Sheet

### *What is a General Plan?*

#### **Overview**

Each city (and county) in California must prepare and adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the city and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgement bears relation to its planning. The California Supreme Court has called the general plan the "constitution for future development."

The General Plan must be structured to assure an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of development policies with diagrams and text setting forth objectives, standards, and plan proposals. The California Government Code defines specific purposes and content requirements for general plans. At the same time, the City of Martinez General Plan is intended to do much more than merely meet legal requirements. The City's General Plan exists as the community's statement of its fundamental values and as a shared vision for its future development. It is intended to articulate how the citizens of Martinez view the community, now and in the future, and, most importantly, how the community intends to deal with current and future planning and development issues.

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.

#### **Issue Comprehensiveness and Content**

A general plan must address a broad range of issues. The level of discussion given to each issue in the general plan depends upon local conditions and the relative local importance of that issue. Plus, the plan should also provide a particular focus on those issues that are relevant to the City. The Plan must contain seven mandatory parts (or elements) covering land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise and safety. In addition, optional elements may also be considered covering such issues as culture and arts, fiscal, the economy, etc.

#### **Land Use**

The land use element designates the type, intensity, and general distribution of uses of land for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public buildings and grounds, waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private uses.

#### **Circulation**

The circulation element identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, and other local public utilities and facilities.

## **Housing**

The housing element must be updated every seven years and is a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. It embodies policies and includes action programs for providing adequate housing.

## **Conservation**

The conservation element addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources, including water, forests, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits.

## **Open Space**

The open space element details plans and measures for the long-range preservation and conservation of open-space lands, including open space for the preservation of natural resources, the managed production of resources (including agricultural lands), outdoor recreation, and public health and safety.

## **Noise**

The noise element identifies and appraises noise problems within the community and forms the basis for land use distribution.

## **Safety**

The safety element establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards.

## **Other Elements**

In addition to the mandatory elements, a city or county may adopt any other elements that relate to its physical development. Once adopted, these optional elements become an integral part of the general plan with the same force and effect as the mandatory elements. Accordingly, zoning, subdivisions, public works, specific plans, and other actions that must be consistent with the general plan must be consistent with any optional elements.

## **Internal Consistency and Strategic Framework**

State Planning Guidelines place extreme importance on consistency of the plan elements and the direct correlation between the data collected and policies formulated. Each of the General Plan elements should contain something like the following policy structure:

**Goals and Policies:** Goals, policies, plan proposals and standards are generally grouped by the plan elements. Goals are the ideals to strive for, or the desired state of things. Policies establish a recognized community position on a particular issue. General Plan policies are set forth both as written text and as policy maps, such as the Land Use Plan. These are complementary; written policies set forth the basic approach to be taken while the policy maps show the intended spatial application of the policies.

**Implementing Programs:** The programs identified in the general plan usually require a further action such as additional study, new ordinances, special funding, and public review. The details relating to each action can then be evaluated at the time of implementation.