



## Summary of Community Comments and a Draft “Working Vision 2035” for the Martinez General Plan

*Prepared for the February 23, 2011 Martinez General Plan Update Task Force Meeting*

This document is organized into three parts: (1) an overview of visioning; (2) key comments and themes from the community outreach process conducted from September, 2010 through January, 2011; and (3) a DRAFT “Working Vision 2035” for the Martinez General Plan Update.

### About Visioning

A vision is a dream about the future, shared by the community. It paints a picture of the type of place in which we want to live, work and play. Our vision is more than just a description of what we hope to see in Martinez. It also describes the legacy we hope to achieve and defines the way we want to work together to create a more livable community.

A vision is a unique process for a community. Beginning as an inspiration for change, a vision evolves into an image of what we want to create for our children and grandchildren. Because a vision reflects the soul of a community, it must be grounded in values shared by those who live here. And because a vision describes where we’d like to go in the future, it reflects the community’s shared wishes and aspirations. With a vision in mind, a community can set out in a common direction, hopeful about opportunities and open to change.

Our vision is based on a statement of community-shared values. These values express how we share our community life together, and what we hold most important. They define who we are and are the ultimate key to where we want to go. Our shared values guide our life together, shaping over time the foundation and character of Martinez. As we consider improvements and changes, we rely on the values and vision we hold in common to help us make the best decisions.

Martinez has a rich history and is known for its wonderful neighborhoods, excellent schools, waterfront and beautiful hillsides. Residents are asking now: How should our community change over the next twenty-five years? What can we do to keep our neighborhoods desirable places to live? How can we keep our competitive edge as a successful business center? How can we build a stronger sense of community? Where can we make a difference?

It takes foresight for a community to embark on a visioning process to answer these questions. It also takes faith in each other. Many creative and exciting concepts are described in the “Working Vision 2035” for the Martinez General Plan. At the same time, this vision is practical. It contains the direction we need to make the decisions which will make this vision a reality as the updated Martinez General Plan is prepared and then implemented. People who live, work, shop or own property in Martinez helped shape the vision. Bold in its scope and approach, the visioning process successfully included more than 500 people at a variety of community events and outreach activities, including 230 youth participants from Martinez Junior High School.

## **Key Themes — Summary of Community Comments**

The Draft “Working Vision 2035” was written based on comments and directions from the community. During the course of the visioning outreach process, a number of themes emerged as key concepts. Collectively, these concepts represent our hopes and aspirations for a beautiful, safe and close-knit community. The “Community Conversations Report #1” contains a detailed documentation of community comments that have formed the basis for the Draft “Working Vision 2035”.

**1. We celebrate Martinez’s unique qualities and overall quality of life.** Martinez is a place unlike any other, mixing the old and new while retaining its sense of history and providing a comfortable sense of belonging for those who live, work and visit here. Martinez is a city of residential neighborhoods, with pockets of commercial uses and a distinctive downtown. Future development must be attractive and a graceful complement to existing neighborhoods. Key aspects of the quality of life in Martinez include the small-town atmosphere, feel and charm (“There is a small town feel even though we are in a large metropolitan area.”). Residents appreciate that Martinez has an involved and committed citizenry dedicated to seeking solutions and improvements. They also appreciate the cooperation between residents, businesses and government in solving problems. The desire is to make sure there is a comprehensive framework and clarity for decision-making.

While participants expressed concern about the negative image of Martinez, primarily due to the proximity of the refineries, the unique small city nature of Martinez is highly valued, including small businesses, history, and natural areas that make it feel different from other “homogenized” towns.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) Martinez has the potential to be a safe, clean, quaint, enjoyable destination for residents and visitors alike.
- (2) Martinez is the county seat.
- (3) Martinez is uniquely located near the Carquinez Strait and is not built around a freeway.
- (4) Our defined downtown.
- (5) We have safe, healthy and friendly neighborhoods.
- (6) We have nice well-kept neighborhoods.
- (7) Most neighborhoods are quiet and have accessible neighborhood parks.

**2. We treasure our open space and environmental resources.** Martinez is defined by the Carquinez Strait and surrounding hillsides, undeveloped ridgelines and open space. Over the years, Martinez has secured natural areas to save them as open space which

has resulted in surrounding hills that form a natural backdrop to the community. Retaining the beauty of the surroundings and protecting environmental resources is a high priority for the community. At the same time, however, people want to enjoy this valuable resource and want to see amenities, such as Alhambra Creek, better used. Access to these areas would be balanced with the sustainability of their natural habitats. Education and stewardship are essential factors in protecting our natural environment.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) Alhambra Creek, including views of the creek and its healthiness, the waterfront, regional Shoreline Park, open space, and John Muir site.
- (2) Nature that surrounds the community and the waterfront, which adds a highly valued type of open space.
- (3) The beautiful setting with surrounding green hills and trees.
- (4) There are active and passive parks and open space which contribute to the character of the community.
- (5) Open space is abundant and the scenery is beautiful.
- (6) There are no houses on ridgelines and we have preserved our ridgelines.
- (7) All our open space has been maintained and enhanced, including hills.
- (8) We are a model green city.
- (9) We have encouraged energy efficiency.
- (10) The hills surrounding Martinez remain as open space.
- (11) Alhambra Creek is open to the public.
- (12) We continue to work on preserving our open space.
- (13) We are using clean, non-polluting energy.

### **3. We value community connections and sense of community that bring us together.**

Residents have expressed a high sense of community and community connections, including the desire to improve those connections through events, facilities, amenities, and places to get together. The fragmentation of the community, including the separation and lack of connection of various neighborhoods to each other and the downtown was also expressed. Comments identified gathering places and events as providing an essential forum for social interaction and enhancement of a sense of shared life for the people who

work, live and visit our community. Good gathering places are easy to get to and provide opportunities for a variety of activities such as shopping, eating, sitting, socializing and recreation. Parks are wonderful places for people to get together as well. Our shopping centers could include restaurants and cafes with outdoor eating areas, bookstores and plazas to create places with vitality and excitement. Many people want nighttime activities in downtown as well as places to go with friends at the end of the day. Sports and recreational facilities provide special places for the community to gather and have fun — each offering opportunities for the young and old alike — to spend time together and to get to know each other.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) Support for youth; we are a youth friendly community.
- (2) Our civic organizations and services.
- (3) People make a difference and support one another.
- (4) Long-term residents and people who return to raise their families.
- (5) A sense of personal safety.
- (6) We know people, know our neighbors and feel part of the community.
- (7) People care and have strong values.
- (8) The closeness and togetherness of the community.
- (9) Our community events.
- (10) People are willing to volunteer their time.
- (11) There are community gatherings.

**4. We value our history and special places, like downtown, the marina and waterfront, as focal points of the community.** Many of the community comments focused on downtown, the marina and the waterfront, where people want to see improvements and connections between these areas. These areas are a focal point where the values and history of the community are expressed and supported, and where community identity is strengthened and community cohesion is fostered. However, there is a strong desire expressed by the community to enhance downtown vibrancy, bring people to downtown, increase the diversity of stores, and provide activities for all ages. Residents want the general look of the downtown and the waterfront to be improved. They also want to

improve the sense of safety and crime downtown, including the need for police control and support services for the homeless. Reuse of county buildings was also mentioned as a concern.

Downtown is seen as a place where residents and workers can gather — formally and informally — to share community life. Support was expressed for cultural activities, art, a wide variety of unique shops, many places to eat, and a number of entertainment options. The history of Martinez is also cherished, including the historic character of downtown and the connection to John Muir.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) The layout of downtown and its historic character is intimate and keeps it small; there is a quaint, human scale and charm of downtown.
- (2) Downtown restaurants and music downtown.
- (3) The charm of Main Street and that there are fun things to do on Main Street.
- (4) There are few chain stores in downtown.
- (5) Downtown needs a place for kids and families.
- (6) Activities at the marina.
- (7) The unique history of Martinez.
- (8) Older homes and variety of housing.
- (9) The historical charm and older houses, and the older buildings downtown.
- (10) Martinez is a hub for culture and art, and its reputation has changed for the better.
- (11) Martinez retains the historic town created by Italian and Portuguese fishermen in the 1800s.
- (12) Hills and the Carquinez Strait are still visible and the marina has been maintained.
- (13) The marina has been improved and includes a restaurant and many recreation opportunities.
- (14) There is a vibrant marina area with activities, ferry access, places to stay nearby, and places to learn for students.
- (15) There is a revitalized waterfront.
- (16) Downtown is thriving with businesses drawing people to visit.
- (17) We have a diversity of stores, more shopping and activities in downtown.

- (18) Parking issues have been taken care of in downtown.
- (19) Downtown is bustling and people come from out of town to be there.
- (20) Downtown is thriving and improved and is vibrant and a fun place to go for all ages. There are safe hangouts and kids want to go downtown.
- (21) Downtown is an attractive place to work.
- (22) Downtown is a safe place to go.
- (23) We have a lively downtown with music and the arts, and downtown is well lighted attractive with inviting restaurants and other destinations and there are lots of people walking.
- (24) We have world-class nightlife and music venues in downtown that are open late.

**5. We have a high level of community services, safety, and important recreational, cultural and arts activities and resources.** Martinez is a family-centered, multi-aged community with many different social needs ranging from recreational activities to informational services to cultural activities and the arts. In order to have an enriched and fulfilled community, quality activities, facilities and services are essential. Living in a safe community is critically important to Martinez residents, particularly in the downtown and public places. Although Martinez is considered very safe, it is important to maintain a high sense of security by assuring excellent public safety services. People emphasized the need for communication of information, whether by library services, computers or information kiosks. Youth in particular have varying interests and would benefit from increased opportunities to pursue these interests without having to travel too far. Our young people would like to have places just to “hang out” and get to know each other.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) City services including police, parks, and public works.
- (2) In-town medical services.
- (3) Senior center.
- (4) Excellent schools.
- (5) Many cultural activities, the theatres and the arts.
- (6) Our parks.
- (7) Library services and easy access to information.

- (8) Martinez is a destination for artists, including theater arts.
- (9) We have many festivals and community gathering events.
- (10) We have a sports center.
- (11) We have a nicer library.
- (12) Enlarged and safer skate park.
- (13) The aquatic park is used year-round by the community.
- (14) We are free of flooding problems.

#### **6. We can get around the community easily and connect to regional destinations.**

Residents of Martinez would like to maximize opportunities to improve and make safer traffic flow, and increase opportunities for walking, biking and using transit, including railroad, bus and other forms of transit. The ease, frequency and safety of getting around are important for our community. Circulation both within Martinez and to regional destinations is important. A variety of transportation options can better link us to each other and to places we frequent. Improving the many ways we move about can help combat auto congestion; there are ways we can make the area more pedestrian friendly and safer. Bicycling continues to be a highly popular way to travel in Martinez, enjoy the outdoors, and get exercise. Public transit enables commuters and seniors who may not want to drive a car an affordable and reliable way to get around.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) Trails throughout Martinez that also connect to other areas.
- (2) Access to trains.
- (3) Bike lanes and trails.
- (4) Walking areas such as Hidden Lakes open space and the waterfront.
- (5) Safer and easier ways to get around.
- (6) More bike and hiking trails.
- (7) Improving roadways that are unsafe for pedestrians.
- (8) We have transportation access to other areas, including ferry, bus, bicycle, pedestrian, railroad.
- (9) Lots of bike trails and they provide alternative routes of transportation.
- (10) Traffic flow that doesn't cut up the community.

- (11) There are walking trails throughout Martinez and we are a walk-able community with pedestrian connections to transit and commerce.
- (12) Carquinez Scenic Drive connects Martinez to Crockett for bicycles and pedestrians.
- (13) We have high-speed ferry service.

**7. Design, beautification and maintenance is a critical part of community pride and identity.** Martinez is blessed with a spectacular setting of open hills, large oak trees and views out to the Carquinez Strait. The beautiful natural surroundings form a backdrop treasured by residents, workers and visitors. Residents yearn for an inviting, charming and attractive community. They want a place that is beautiful to live in and walk around in, one which has grown gracefully into a pretty town. A beautiful community inspires its residents. Where beauty is pervasive, inhabitants share a common pleasure and a sense of civic pride essential to community life. To create a physical environment that is pleasing and appealing to residents, workers and visitors, the open spaces and buildings must be interesting, complex and diverse. Beautiful buildings create places to go, to see and be seen, and to be exposed to the tangible legacy of those who have gone before us. Areas such as the downtown and various shopping centers can be transformed into exciting places to explore with a diversity of buildings, beautiful architecture and landscaping, and delightful pedestrian areas. Above all, residents expressed a desire that our public and private places need to be cared for since we collectively have an investment in the infrastructure of our community. There is a desire that maintenance projects include repair of our roads and sidewalks, irrigation of our landscaping, removal of litter, and use of code enforcement to keep our public places and private homes in good and safe conditions.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) Improved maintenance and clean-up around town.
- (2) Alhambra Avenue upkeep and commercial uses upkeep.
- (3) Improved entryways to the community.
- (4) The refinery's appearance.
- (5) We have maintained the historic significance of Martinez.

- (6) Entryways to Martinez are improved.
- (7) The train trestle has been painted.
- (8) Better upkeep throughout Martinez.
- (9) We have strong, suburban residential neighborhoods, and there are connections between neighborhoods in Martinez and the downtown.
- (10) Historic buildings have been retrofitted yet are still affordable.
- (11) We have put utilities underground.
- (12) The refinery tanks have been painted and tall trees have been planted along Pacheco Boulevard to block views of the refinery.
- (13) We have quality housing with waterfront views.
- (14) We have gateways and streetscapes we can be proud of.

**8. We sustain the diversity of the local economy and we want to maintain housing choices and support services for all.** Martinez has a variety of services, jobs and housing opportunities. Plus, we have many types of housing to meet our varied needs. Our housing is designed imaginatively, including such techniques as zero lot lines, porches, parking in back, mixed use (housing above retail), cottages in back of houses, housing for artists and artisans, live/work housing opportunities, etc. The variety of housing to meet various needs, including the needs for seniors, has been identified as an important consideration for future planning in Martinez.

Martinez has a very healthy, broad-based business community. Maintaining business vitality is essential for a prosperous economy. We want to keep the competitive edge of the Martinez business community, and to continue to enjoy the convenient local shops and employment opportunities. Local diverse businesses provide jobs for residents, goods and services for residents, taxes for city services, and donations for local schools and non-profit agencies. Residents and workers alike would benefit from retaining homegrown businesses and industrial uses, bringing in more upscale and unique shops, and increasing the number of restaurants and cafes.

Below are other key comments:

- (1) You can live and work in the community.

- (2) We value local working business owners and we are concerned about their success and that they stay in Martinez.
- (3) The variety of shopping areas.
- (4) We have attractive and easy to access neighborhood shopping districts (not strip centers) that have shops and restaurants serving local needs.
- (5) We have a variety of housing, including reasonably priced housing and high-quality senior housing.
- (6) We have paid attention to the homeless.

## Draft “Working Vision 2035” for Martinez

In the year 2035 we have preserved Martinez’s beautiful surroundings and respected our heritage, while creating a vibrant downtown connected to a thriving waterfront/marina, and distinctive, livable, “whole” neighborhoods that have nearby services and facilities.

Our environment is clean and sustainable, with high standards for energy and resource conservation and green building. Our city is set within open hillsides and there is protected wildlife habitat and access to regional parks near the water. We have designed our city to promote health and wellness.

Our vibrant economy is strengthened through innovation and diversification. Economic development and housing are balanced so that people who work here can live here. We have a number and variety of recreational amenities, and we have created more vibrant gathering places to bring our community together.

The goals of the Downtown Specific Plan and the Marina Plan have been achieved. The downtown, waterfront, and marina are connected and offer a mix of interesting and fun destinations. Downtown is appreciated within the region as being both vibrant in activities and quaint in character. There are lots of people living and working in downtown, and there is easy access to transit. Residents from all areas of Martinez go to downtown to enjoy restaurants, cultural and arts activities, shopping, events, and to visit with their neighbors. There are imaginative, attractive entryways to Martinez and to the downtown that proudly present Martinez as a desirable place to be. The train trestle has been painted, as have the refinery tanks, and trees soften views of the refinery.

We have reduced the need to drive by providing safe, attractive bicycle and walking connections within and between neighborhoods and the downtown. We can walk to neighborhood markets, shopping, and run errands. We have reliable and accessible bus service; public transit connects local and regional destinations with a shuttle service, light rail and express bus. We get around easily on smooth streets, and parking needs are met.

Our housing and neighborhoods are attractive. There is a blend of modern and historic buildings. We are smart and efficient in how we use and reuse our land so that new development adds positively to the health and fabric of the community. We have respected our heritage. Our city is attractive, well-maintained, and pleasing to experience. Homeowners take care of their properties and there are no blighted properties. There are old (traditional) style homes, with a variety of styles and opportunities for people to interact. Our buildings are seismically safe.