

Martinez General Plan Update Task Force Meeting #7 Summary

Wednesday, April 27, 2011

6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

City Council Chambers / Martinez City Hall

Task Force Members in Attendance

Donna Allen

Jim Blair

Scott Busby

Victor Carniglia, Chair

Earl Dunivan Jr.

Jenny Fitzgerald, Vice-Chair

Rachael Ford

Jeff Keller

Linda Meza

Cynthia Murdough

Cindy Nuse

Donald Pallotta

Leanne Peterson

Denise Sanchez Cannon

Igor Skaredoff

Mark Thomson

George Vetek

Jenny Ward

Jan Weiss

Chris Wills

Task Force Members Absent

Marshall Cochrane

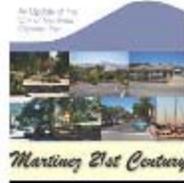
City Representatives and Consultant

Anjana Mepani, Associate Planner

Corey Simon, Senior Planner

Terry Blount, AICP, Planning Manager

Joshua Abrams, AICP, Consultant



General Plan Update Task Force Meeting

City of Martinez General Plan Update Task Force (GPUTF)

AGENDA

Task Force Meeting #7
Wednesday, April 27, 2011
6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

City Council Chambers / Martinez City Hall

- Outcomes:**
- (1) Review and confirm directions from the March 23, 2011 GPUTF meeting
 - (2) Review Preliminary Draft Growth Management Element required by Measure J
 - (3) Review Current Planning issues as they relate to the General Plan Update
 - (4) Review Open Space designations and mapping policies
 - (5) Undertake initial review of land use designations for potential change areas
 - (6) Review and confirm the next meeting agenda and the near-term schedule
- 6:30 pm I. Review Meeting Purpose**
- A. Review Task Force Meeting #7 Agenda
 - B. Check-in with Task Force Members (*any time constraints for the meeting*)
 - C. Other Administrative Items (*Meeting #6 Summary*)
- 6:40 pm II. Task Force Review of the Preliminary Draft Growth Management Element**
- A. Staff Overview
 - B. Task Force Questions, Discussion and Feedback
- 7:05 pm III. Presentation on Current Planning Issues and Open Space Planning**
- A. Presentation
 - B. Task Force Questions of Clarification
- 7:35 pm IV. Task Force Break-Out into Work Groups (*rotate after 30 minutes*)**
- A. Open Space Planning
 - B. Initial Discussion of Potential Change Areas
- 8:35 pm V. Summary of Task Force Work Groups Discussion**
- A. Staff and Consultant Overview
 - B. Task Force Comments
- 8:45 pm VI. Public Comments on All Items**
- 8:55 pm VII. Summary and Next Steps**
- A. Summary of the Meeting and Review of Next Meeting Agenda
 - B. Evaluation of the Meeting
- 9:00 pm Close**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Laura Austin at (925) 372-3523, or Fax to (925) 372-0257. Notification at least 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable accommodation to help insure accessibility to this meeting.

Meeting Purpose and Agenda

The primary purposes of the meeting of the General Plan Update Task Force (GPUTF) were to: (1) Review the preliminary draft Growth Management Element required by Measure J; (2) Review open space designations and mapping policies; and (3) Undertake initial review of land use designations for potential change areas;

The two new task force members, Rachael Ford and Jim Blair, appointed by the Mayor, introduced themselves to the group and summarized their background and interest in the process.

Planning Manager Terry Blount received agreement from the group that a summary from Task Force Meeting #6 was not necessary because the meeting's primary focus was on process and schedule only.

Review of the Preliminary Draft Growth Management Element

The Task Force discussed the preliminary draft Growth Management Element. It was important to discuss this section of the existing General Plan now because submittal of a preliminary draft to CCTA is required for the City to continue receiving transportation funding associated with Measures C and J; with the understanding that they would want to continue to discuss and make changes to the preliminary draft Growth Management Element in the future, the Task Force approved submitting it to CCTA.

Work Groups Discussions

As a prelude to discussing open space, Corey Simon, Senior Planner, summarized the complicated system of open space designations that the existing General Plan uses. Additionally, Christine Dean, co-owner of the Pine Meadow Public Golf Course, discussed the challenges she faced making the golf course a viable business and discussed her vision to change the land use to a mix of housing and open space.

The Task Force then divided into two work groups, one group discussed open space and one grouped discussed potential change areas. After 30 minutes, the two groups switched, so everyone was able to contribute to both topics.



Open Space

Open Space Categories & Mapping of Categories

- The work groups generally supported staff's proposal to consolidate the General Plan's current eight categories of *Open Space* down to three, as outlined below:

- *Open Space-Protected* – areas already protected through public/private ownership and or land use.
- *Open Space-Planned* – areas where protection by public/private ownership and or land use areas is planned due to recognized values (e.g. 30% + slope, oak woodland, etc.). Some in the work groups preferred a more neutral label rather than open space, as the land would not yet be public or regulated by map conditions at the time the new General Plan designation is adopted.
- *Environmentally Sensitive Lands* (some in the work groups liked the *ESL* label from the Franklin Hills subarea of the Central Martinez Specific Area Plan) - areas of private land, that are seen as remaining private, but are largely to be retained in their natural state and yet do and/or can accommodate very minimal development (e.g. one unit per pre-existing parcel and/or one unit per 10 acres – as specified in the Franklin Hills subarea plan).
- Many felt this mapping task could not go forward without a map, showing all areas of natural 30% + slopes.
- Even more critical than a City wide map of natural 30% + slopes, the Task Force requested larger scale blow up maps of at least the most critical areas in need of further clarification of development potential and areas planned to remain as open space (e.g. Masters site at Alhambra Avenue and Vine Hill Way). Consensus was that better mapping of 30% + slopes is needed if policy guidance is to be put forward.
- Some felt the biggest problem with the current General Plan Land Use Map is the use of the dark green open space category (*Public Permanent Open Space* being one of its many names) over private property where there is, as of yet, any public control other than the General Plan Land Use Map designation itself.
 - It was felt such a designation wrongly implies government ownership of such properties and/or a prohibition of all private development.
 - Staff and the work groups concur that these properties need to be re-designated as either *Residential* (such as in the Muir Oaks area, where subdivision and home construction has already occurred) or the proposed *Environmentally Sensitive Lands* designation, such as the western edge of the Hidden Lakes area and slopes above Forest Hills. The new *Environmentally Sensitive Lands* designation would greatly limit, but not totally prohibit, additional development.
- Some in one of the groups wanted to map publically owned lands separately from private individual and/or HOA lands.





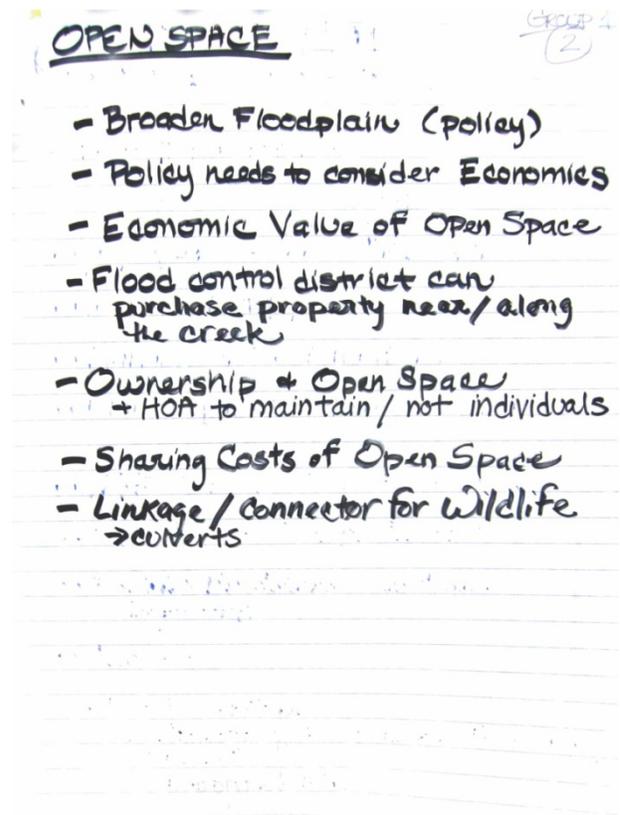
Creek Policy Issues

- All support existing creek protection/enhancement/restoration policies.
- One Task Force member proposed a policy encouraging a public agency (City or Contra Costa County Flood Control District) to purchase creek side homes when they become available. Such property would:
 - be primarily for reducing flood risk and protection of the creeks' natural/naturalistic condition, as the need for future property protecting, but possibly environmentally degrading bank stabilization projects would no longer be needed; and
 - lead to the possibility of future creek side trails.

A discussion within the small group ensued, as those who didn't see any possibility of obtaining financial resources for such a program thought the policy should not be raised. With the understanding that such a policy could be written as *should resources become available, then...*, most concurred that such a policy should be explored.

Other Value Statements & Possible Policy Issues

- One of the two work groups had a lot of dialog about the economics of open space, such as added community wide property values from its existence v. liabilities to individual property owners who have to individually maintain scenic easements on their properties.



- One Task Force member proposed that all such scenic open spaces must be owned either by the City or an HOA – and not be an individual property owner’s responsibility (the shared costs of a shared asset).
- Another asked: Can all undeveloped properties be maintained as open space for perpetuity?
- One Task Force member wants to emphasize the importance of maintaining the values of the Franklin Hills Plan and its preservation of the appearance of the natural and undeveloped hills. The comments get to the importance of visual open space regardless of a site’s map designation.



Potential Change Areas

The group discussed two potential change areas, and notes from the conversation are summarized below:

Pine Meadows Golf Course

- Task Force members appreciate that the golf course provides open space and recreational opportunities and would love to see a way to preserve it.
- If that is not possible, most members felt it was reasonable to allow the owners to develop it as a residential property with some caveats, see below. A few Task Force members felt that it should remain open space.

Additional comments include:

- If the golf course is redeveloped, it is important to create some neighborhood park space.
- It is important to be fair to the neighbors. This includes having buffered edges.
- Having neighborhood oriented retail would be an asset to the community. A neighborhood meeting/gathering space is important (e.g. coffee shop).
- Senior/retirement housing is a good option. It could be Martinez’s Rossmoor.
- Give the Planning Commission some direction, but don’t micromanage the redevelopment.
- Protecting the hills is more important (than the golf course).

- Golf Course**
- △ Some notes: park space important
 - △ Develop Policy at a higher altitude
↳ let PC decide with guidance
 - △ Give PC Direction
 - △ Save the hills 
 - △ Give Residential option ✓ - Divergent opinions
 - △ Last piece - important opportunity
Beautiful area ↳ open space is community asset!
 - △ Unfair to property owners
 - △ Do Be fair to neighbors, buffered edges
 - △ Senior/retirement housing - Rossmoor
 - △ Save at least for park
 - △ Is there a way to make it work as an open space?
 - △ Can you save a portion of it?
 - △ Some small scale commercial is ok, for local use
 - △ Need a central neighborhood meeting space
commercial area.
 - △ This area is a little forgotten

- The golf course is the last piece of open space in that area and is therefore an important opportunity site.
- It is unfair to property owners to not allow them to develop their land if the golf course is not viable.
- Is there a way to make it work as open space or to save a portion of it as open space?
- The area now is a little forgotten.

Alhambra Avenue Corridor

There was general agreement that the Alhambra Avenue Corridor is dated, lacks a unified feeling, and could be improved. Some Task Force members felt that cosmetic changes would be enough to improve the corridor, while others were less satisfied with the current condition of the street and consequently more open to changes in land use regulation, especially between the gas stations and the highway. Challenges include limited parking, and sites constraints from the creek and topography. Suggestions for cosmetic improvements include:

- Undergrounding utilities
- Sign, sandwich board and newspaper rack regulations
- Tree planting
- More pedestrian oriented, easier to cross the street

Potential land uses suggested include:

- Small offices
- Housing, especially near the highway

Other comments include:

- Les Schwab is a bad example of development
- Parking in rear may be detrimental to neighbors
- Current traffic problems affect surrounding neighborhoods

- Alhambra**
- △ Hodgepodge - have a unified feel
↳ make a consistent setback
 - △ Feels dated △ small offices, hub
 - △ From gas station to hwy, run down
 - △ Underground utilities
 - △ Noise + traffic & concerns for residential
↳ disagreement, dense housing is ok ✓✓
↳ but concerns about car trips
↳ but maybe ok near highway, (starting at Walgreens)
↳ condos on Monument a good example
 - △ Sign regulation, limit newspaper dispensers and sandwich boards design
 - △ Tree planting
 - △ Minimal with parking in front = opposite of US14
 - △ Parking in rear may be detrimental to neig.
 - △ Traffic affects side streets
 - △ Not terrible now, has improved since '70s
 - △ creek squeezes building, topography ↳ focus on unifying
 - △ ~~At~~ Less auto oriented uses, more retail, offices
 - △ Les Schwab - bad example Pedestrian
 - △ Limited parking problem