

Section 1

General Plan Introduction

1.1 General Plan Authority and Purpose

All cities and counties in California are required by State law to prepare and adopt a general plan that meets detailed content requirements. The Pinole General Plan is intended to do much more than merely meet the legal requirements; it is intended to be a statement of how the citizens of Pinole view their community, how they see the future, and, most importantly, how they intend to deal with the planning, development, facilities and service issues facing the community.

The California Government Code specifically defines the purpose and content of general plans. Primarily, State law requires that the general plan be an integrated, internally consistent document containing analysis and data supporting the proposed objectives, policies, standards and actions of the plan. The Pinole General Plan is the City's foremost policy document with respect to its physical and economic development. The following excerpts are from the California Government Code.

“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.” (§65300)

“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.” (§65300.5)

“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. The plan shall include the following elements:

- (a) A land use element;*
- (b) A circulation element;*
- (c) A housing element;*
- (d) A conservation element;*
- (e) An open space element;*
- (f) A noise element; and*
- (g) A safety element” (§65302)*

Within the context of the mandatory requirements for the preparation and content of general plans, local conditions are the primary focus with respect to the ultimate content of the general plan. State law recognizes the need to balance local conditions with the detailed requirements of

State law as follows: “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.”

The broad purpose of the General Plan is to express policies which will guide decisions on future development and resource conservation in a manner consistent with the quality of life desired by Pinole residents. The goals in the General Plan are achieved in three ways: (1) policies and standards provide the bases for zoning, land subdivision, design, historic preservation and other regulations; (2) findings of consistency with policies must be made when approving projects to assure that day-to-day decisions on development applications and capital improvements are consistent with the General Plan; and (3) implementing programs are identified when specific follow-up actions are needed.

To assist local governments in meeting their general plan responsibilities, California Government Code Section 65040.2 directs the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to adopt and periodically revise Guidelines for the preparation and content of local general plans. While OPR’s General Plan Guidelines are advisory, they represent the official interpretation and explanation of the requirements of California general plan law and establish a means to check the adequacy of local general plans.

1.2 Organization of the General Plan

The Pinole General Plan articulates the goals of the citizens of Pinole regarding their community, and identifies policies and implementing programs addressing many specific issues, such as standards for development and redevelopment of land, preservation of open space, provision of affordable housing to maintain diversity in the community, conservation of natural resources, protection of the waterfront, improvement of the circulation system, control of noise and protection of life and property from natural or man-made hazards. Additionally, the Plan evaluates standards for the provision of local services.

The Pinole General Plan is structured around ten separate, but highly interrelated sections (or elements). Each section is intended to convey information on different topics depending on what the reader is interested in. While there is inherent overlap in many of the issues covered in the separate elements, redundancy is minimized to avoid potential inconsistencies and to make the Plan easier to use. Specific sections of the General Plan are described below.

1. **General Plan Introduction.** This section introduces the reader to the structure and purpose of the General Plan and State law requirements for general plans.
2. **General Plan Summary.** The General Plan Summary briefly describes the history of Pinole, summarizes key regional and local trends affecting future conditions in the planning area, and describes the major goals and key policy and implementing program features of the General Plan.
3. **Land Use and Economic Development Element.** Land Use and Economic Development identifies where and how residential, commercial, office, industrial, recreational and institutional activities can take place. Standards for building intensity and density, and policies covering the appearance of structures in relation to the built and natural environment and the historical heritage of the community are also included.
4. **Community Services and Facilities Element (to be added).** This element will address current and future needs for services and facilities provided by the City and other agencies.
5. **Circulation Element.** The Circulation Element addresses the interrelationship between land use and circulation by setting forth recommendations regarding the needed improvements. Topics include Pinole's Street system, trails, transit and the City's participation in regional transportation planning solutions.
6. **Housing Element.** Most of the Housing Element was first adopted in 1991 consistent with State law requirements. It identifies the potential for new housing and protects existing housing and neighborhoods by addressing the needs of the City's diverse population. Housing policies also address the need for low-and moderate-income housing and housing for special need groups in the community.
7. **Open Space and Environmental Protection Element.** Open Space and Environmental Protection encompasses two State mandated elements: Open Space and Conservation. It identifies and protects key natural environmental assets, including open space, vegetation and wildlife resources, waterfront resources, views, and air and water quality.

**General Plan Goals, Policies,
Programs and Maps**

- *Goals: Goals are ideals or desired future conditions to strive for or the desired state of things. The Plan has a minimal number of overall goals in order to succinctly state the vision of the community. In addition, each element includes more specific goals related to discrete topics.*

- *Policies: Policies establish a recognized community position, standards or a measure that will be employed in regard to a particular issue. General Plan policies are set forth both as written text and as policy maps or diagrams, such as the Land Use Plan. The text and maps are complimentary; the Written policies set forth the basic approach to be taken while the policy maps show the intended spatial application of the written policies*

- *Programs: Programs are an ongoing organized series of actions or measures, separate from normal day-to-day activities, that the City is committed to undertaking following adoption of the Plan. A discrete number of programs are identified in the General Plan to provide a realistic list for follow-up action.*

- *Maps: The maps and the policy text of the General Plan are complimentary; the written policies set forth the basic approach to be taken while the maps show the intended spatial application of the written policies. Land use map amendments or text amendments will be included as an appendix to the General Plan document. Future land use decisions must be consistent with Land use maps, text and future amendments.*

8. Health and Safety Element.

Hazards must be considered in order to assure adequate protection of public health and safety. Health and safety topics include seismic and geologic hazards, flooding, fire hazards and noise. Services and facilities necessary to protect the community will be covered in the Community Services and Facilities Element. Standards that adequate services and facilities must meet are included in the City's Growth Management Element.

9. Growth Management. Element Most of the Growth Management Element was first adopted in 1992 in compliance with the requirements of the Contra Costa County voter-approved Measure C. It provides policies and standards that must be maintained for various services and facilities.

10. Implementing Program Priorities. The Implementing Program Priorities section groups all of the General Plan programs into priority categories so that budgeting and staffing decisions can be made each year in the context of the needs expressed in the General Plan. Priority listings are intended to be updated annually.

General Plan Appendices. General Plan Appendices contained in this document include: (A) Land Use Categories definitions that are graphically shown on the Land Use Plan maps; (B) Noise Contour Distances that are graphically shown on the Noise Contour map; and (C) Glossary of Key Terms. Separate background reports listed in the Table of Contents are available at the Pinole Community Development Department that provide additional information.

The complete Pinole General Plan is comprised of this document and the background reports identified in the Table of Contents. The background reports include data, inventories, projections and other information related to the Pinole planning area and provide a basis for policy formulation contained in the General Plan. In addition, reports have been prepared summarizing comments from community workshops and Special Policy Group meetings conducted as part of the Plan's preparation.

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) assessing the potential environmental impacts of the Draft General Plan and alternatives. The EIR and the General Plan strive to evaluate the cumulative impact of development on environmental conditions, need for services and facilities, and other issues so that the overall "quality of life" in the community can be protected and enhanced.

1.3 Public Participation in Creating the Plan

The City encourages a high degree of public awareness and involvement in the consideration of planning issues and policy alternatives. The City was assisted in preparation of the General Plan by special policy groups, composed of interested members of the public representing a broad spectrum of community interests. The Planning Commission also reviewed background and policy direction reports on General Plan issues (see the Table of Contents).

The General Plan is also based on inter-jurisdictional cooperation and assistance to the fullest extent possible. Through noticing, interviews and review of the Draft General Plan and EIR, the General Plan has been coordinated with various City departments, other planning jurisdictions,

the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD), and other utilities. On a broader scale, preparation of the General Plan has been coordinated with regional, state and federal agencies.

1.4 Implementation of the General Plan

Implementation programs are important to achieving the goals of the Plan. They are listed in each section and prioritized in the Implementing Program Priorities section. The list of program priorities recognizes two concerns: (1) there are limited staff and budget resources to undertake all possible programs; and (2) there are many programs which are desirable to implement the Plan but they are of lesser immediate importance. “Higher Priority” programs are determined based on the goals of the community and whether they address immediate health and safety needs, pressing development issues, or legal requirements which must be fulfilled.

Most of the programs identified in the General Plan will require some type of follow-up action; either further study, ordinance adoption, special funding consideration or other public review. Detailed standards, environmental impacts or administrative procedures concerning each program will be evaluated at that time.

1.5 Future Review and Amendment of the General Plan

Any interested citizen may submit a request to have an amendment to the General Plan considered. State law restricts the number of amendments that may be made to four each calendar year, although each amendment may encompass a series of individual changes to the plan. Plan amendments are considered by the Planning Commission, which makes a recommendation to the City Council. Since General Plan Amendments are legislative actions, the final decision is made by the Pinole City Council following a public hearing. The City Council has broad discretion to approve or deny proposed amendments, subject to their being deemed to be in the public interest. Amendments which have been adopted by the City Council shall be published as follows:

Policy and Text Changes: Changes to the policies and other text of the 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 plan maps 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 the changes which have accumulated since the previous revision. The date of the amendment will be noted on the map for each area amended.

Programs in the plan are time-referenced, although, program priorities must be evaluated within the overall context of the City budget. The General Plan recommends that an annual review of the General Plan occur at the beginning of each year tied to the budget cycle. This review will evaluate the status of General Plan implementing programs in order to establish each year’s work priorities within the framework of other City needs. Modifications to the timeframes or priorities will not require a General Plan Amendment. A comprehensive review and revision of the Plan will be undertaken at least every five years, following the first such review in 1999.