
Section 2

General Plan Summary

2.1 Overall Vision for the City of Pinole

The City of Pinole General Plan carries forward many long-standing City goals and policies for protecting the fragile natural environment and the existing character of the community. The purpose of keeping the General Plan up-to-date is to effectively respond to changing conditions that may affect the quality of life in Pinole and to establish an explicit and consistent policy foundation for zoning and other implementing ordinances, design review, capital improvements, development review and other implementing actions.

A major focus of the General Plan is to preserve the quality of life in the City's residential neighborhoods and to continue to provide quality services and facilities. Historically, the Pinole General Plan has focused on protecting residential neighborhoods by discouraging street extensions and connections to the City of Hercules or Contra Costa County and limiting major through traffic from neighborhoods. Guiding land use and circulation policies in the General Plan state that residential areas should be separated from the vehicular traffic with controlled, safe points of intersection, and that residential areas shall be protected from intrusions of incompatible land uses and vehicular traffic. Little additional development is expected to occur in Pinole's single family neighborhoods.

At the same time, the General Plan recognizes the benefits of economic development in providing the City with revenues for to fund City services and to provide jobs and shopping. Fifteen years ago, much of the City's revenue came from property tax and the state and federal government. Today and in the future, the maintenance and improvement of public services will depend increasingly on revenues from the commercial sector. With changes in local government financing and the increasing cost of liability insurance, legal requirements, equipment, personnel, and capital improvements (sewer, drainage improvements, street maintenance. etc.), it is becoming more difficult to maintain existing expenditure levels and the level of service.

The City's ability to provide services and facilities is in part shaped by requirements and standards in the existing General Plan. The Growth Management Element states that all new development will be approved only if service standards are met or if facilities proposed in the Seven Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) can improve the City's ability to provide the minimum established service level. In addition, the Plan states that "new development shall generate adequate public revenues to support the services and amenities which the community determines necessary to maintain the existing quality of life. New development shall justify itself in terms of public revenues generated."

Pinole has been very aggressive in pursuing major capital improvements such as San Pablo Avenue reconstruction, the Atlas Road Interchange and other major street projects, new park developments including Bay Front, Pinole Valley and Fernandez Parks, and the Public Safety Building and Senior Center. Increases in population are expected to increase the demand for police, fire, seniors and parks/recreation services and facilities.

2.2 History of Pinole

In addition to the natural setting, Pinole is noted for its architectural heritage and historic past. Native American settlement of the West Contra Costa shoreline began at least 5,000 years ago. The Pinole region was the territory of the Huchiun Indians, whose territory extended from Berkeley to somewhere between Rodeo and Crockett. The recorded history of Pinole dates back to the early 1700s when a Spanish commandant, Don Pedro Fages, led an exploration through Contra Costa. With a small band of soldiers and an Indian guide, Don Pedro Fages left Monterey and traveled northward until he reached the area known today as Pinole. According to legend, the soldiers ran out of provisions on their march and found a village of Indians who gave them food. This food consisted of a form of meal, made from acorns, seeds, and wild grain, which they called “pinole” (derived from the Aztec word “pinolli” meaning ground and toasted grain or seeds.) Thus, the soldiers named their camp “El Pinole,” and Pinole received its name.

In 1823, Don Ignacio Martinez, commandant of the Presidio of San Francisco, received a land grant from the Mexican government. This land grant comprised over 17,000 acres and was known as “El Pinole.” The following year, in 1824, Don Ignacio Martinez built his first adobe hacienda in Pinole Valley about three miles from San Pablo Bay on what is now Pinole Valley Park.

By the 1850s, Bernardo Fernandez started a trading facility at the bay and built the historic Fernandez Mansion which still stands today at the end of Tennent Avenue. From these early beginnings, a small but thriving community grew to the city we know as Pinole. Many of these early structures still stand as reminders of Pinole’s colorful past.

One of the earliest Anglo-American settlers in Contra Costa County was Dr. Samuel J. Tennent, who married Rafaela, the daughter of Ignacio Martinez. In 1851, the Tennents built their home, about a half mile out the Valley Road (Pinole Valley Road today) from the Tennent Avenue Creek Bridge, of lumber, that was shipped from Maine. Tennent, through his wife Rafaela, owned much of the acreage in the area.

With the advance of the Southern Pacific Railroad through the wharf area in 1878, the way became open for the California Powder Works to move into the adjacent waterfront they called Hercules. The company built both the plant and its houses and became the largest producer of dynamite in the world by the turn of the century. During World War I it manufactured more TNT than any other plant in the country. The town of Pinole became the service center for the plant, and the success of the plant had a direct relationship with the development of Pinole. Twenty of the homes built by the company for worker housing have been rehabilitated and relocated to an historic district receiving area adjacent to the Pinole City limits.

Edward M. Downer came to Pinole in late 1889 and went to work in 1890 as a dispatcher and station agent at the Southern Pacific train depot at the end of Tennent Avenue near the waterfront. During the last ten years of the Nineteenth Century and the early part of the Twentieth, he was one of the most influential and prominent business figures in Pinole and the surrounding areas including Rodeo, Crockett, Port Costa, Richmond, El Cerrito and Albany. This was due to the chain of banking houses which he and his family established in these cities and to his civic efforts and successes all through these areas.

The history and architectural character of Pinole was very much influenced by the commercial

activity that took place here, including the Gold Rush, agricultural shipping (about 1854 to 1885), railroad shipping, California Powder Works Company (1879 to the 1970s), the growth in automobile travel, World War II - 1940s, and construction of I-80. The Old Town area of Pinole is unique. Despite rapid growth since the 1950s, Pinole's downtown has retained a great deal of historic and architectural character. A large number of historic residences, primarily Queen Anne and Italianate cottages, remain in good condition, and many of the old commercial buildings still remain.

2.3 Overview of Local and Regional Conditions

The City of Pinole is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, on the shores of San Pablo Bay in West Contra Costa County, as shown on map GP-I. I-80, which traverses the City, connects the San Francisco/Oakland metropolitan area with Sacramento and points east. Pinole is linked to Central Contra Costa County and the cities of Martinez, Concord and Pleasant Hill by State Route 4, which begins just north of the City and connects with I-680.

All of the communities within the West County Planning Area have an interest in area-wide land use and transportation planning, economic development and policies related to environmental protection, open space, services and other issues. Surrounding communities include the unincorporated areas of MonTaraBay, Rancho Road and El Sobrante, and the cities of Richmond and Hercules. Pinole, El Cerrito, Richmond, Hercules, San Pablo and Contra Costa County comprise the planning jurisdictions in the West County Planning Area as defined in the Contra Costa County General Plan.

The major regional shopping center for West County is located in the "Hilltop" area of northern Richmond, about two miles south of Pinole. North Richmond includes housing units and a large business park, and is becoming a major growth center for the whole West County area. Just north of Pinole is Hercules, which has experienced rapid residential growth in recent years.

Population Trends

Major factors that are expected to affect conditions in Pinole over the next 15 years include:

- (1) **Minimal increase in population, but greater increase in households, with households being slightly smaller.** There was a 32% increase in population between 1970-1990 with little increased ability to provide services due to Proposition 13 and other revenue shifts. There will be increases in households and population with a continuing need to provide services. Population is expected to grow in the Pinole Planning Area by 3,231 people between 1990 and 2010 (a 12% increase). The number of households is expected to increase by 1,317 between 1990-2010 (a 14% increase). The average household size is projected to decrease from 2.86 in 1990 to 2.79 persons/household in 2010.
- (2) **Aging population and about the same number of families with young children.** The number of seniors is expected to increase over the next twenty years to between 12%-15% of the population in Pinole. The increasing longevity of people and the increasing number of seniors in the population in Contra Costa County and Pinole will create additional need for specialized services for older residents, increased service demands, and demand for police, fire, senior services and parks/ recreation services and facilities. Almost 48% of all households in the City in 1990 had children under 18 years of age, and

over 21% of these were headed by a single parent. The number of pre-school age children (age 5 and under) in Pinole in 1990 was 1,493, or 8.5% of the population.

Economic Development Trends

Increases in jobs in the future will exceed the expected increase in residents, which will improve the jobs/housing balance. Most of the projected jobs will be at salary levels below what is needed to afford market rate housing in Pinole. Most of the new employment, 1,000 to 1,300 jobs will result from the completion of the Pinole Vista Shopping Center. More jobs will be created with the redevelopment of San Pablo Avenue, Old Town, Pinole Valley Road South, and expansion at Doctor's Hospital. The following are key economic development considerations:

- (1) **Significant amount of job growth and better jobs/housing balance.** The increase in jobs in the future will exceed expected increase in residents, which will improve the jobs/housing balance. Due to increasing local jobs, the number of employed residents per job is expected to decrease from 2.7 to 2.3 employed residents/job between 1990 and the year 2010.
- (2) **Reduced office/industrial demand.** The San Pablo Avenue corridor, as well as the City as a whole, except for medical offices near Doctors Hospital, will have less office/industrial demand than was estimated when the Specific Plan was adopted in 1986. Most of the regional offices/industrial uses will locate at Hilltop, along Richmond Parkway or in Hercules. A persistent vacancy in existing second tier office facilities in West County will be slow to fill.
- (3) **Steady retail demand.** There are plans for the development of regional shopping facilities at Pinole Vista Shopping Center. Retail demand in Contra Costa County are doing well due to population growth around Pinole and as a result of Pinole's location on the heavily traveled I-80 corridor through West County.
- (4) **Neighborhood shopping undergoing a transition.** The vacancy rate in some neighborhood shopping areas has increased. Centers with higher vacancy rates may need to look to alternative land uses, such as residential or mixed use (commercial and residential), and must assess their future markets to tailor retailing to demand.
- (5) **Land Assembly and Parking Constraints.** The primary constraint to developing or redeveloping San Pablo Avenue will be the high cost and time requirements for land assembly. A constraint to enhancing activity in Old Town is the lack of capital and adequate parking. Redevelopment Agency participation and the provision of common parking facilities may be needed to assemble land and to provide additional parking.

Traffic Issues

Traffic capacity has become a limiting factor to growth throughout Contra Costa County and in many other parts of the Bay Area. The major impact of traffic on the future character of Pinole will come from development outside the City and as a result of pass-through and spillover traffic along the I-80 corridor. While local City streets are generally in good condition, the development of sufficient capacity and programs to handle the huge volume of through traffic on I-80, San Pablo Avenue and connecting arterials will be difficult and must be addressed through regional

solutions. The City of Pinole adopted a Growth Management Element in 1992 in compliance with Measure C and has participated in the development of other implementing measures in coordination with other west county jurisdictions and various transportation agencies.

Community concerns expressed at General Plan workshops identified the need to evaluate the cumulative effects of regional growth, particularly in terms of traffic impacts. Success in addressing traffic problems will depend on inter-jurisdictional coordination, the availability of sufficient funding and implementation of highway and transit improvements and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) trip reduction programs.

Other Land Use Planning Considerations

Overall, the housing stock in Pinole is in good condition, consistent with its age and upkeep. The exceptions are scattered homes and apartment complexes and a few areas adjacent to Old Town. Adoption of a neighborhood preservation ordinance to address neighborhood standards and code enforcement will have the greatest impact on maintaining the character of the neighborhoods. While real estate values have leveled off or even dropped in recent years, the 9,600 housing units in Pinole's Planning Area should continue to maintain their value into the foreseeable future. Other planning considerations include:

- (1) **Future commercial and residential growth will be limited to several key areas.** Most employment growth will occur at Pinole Vista Shopping Center. Improvements are also expected to occur along San Pablo Avenue. No significant changes to existing residential areas are anticipated and no further large housing developments are projected.
- (2) **Need for affordable housing.** Only about 37% of Pinole households have an annual income high enough to purchase the average priced home in Pinole. Although residential development opportunities are limited, there is a potential to provide affordable housing through infill and mixed use development, especially along the San Pablo Avenue corridor. Housing for people who work in Pinole will maintain the quality of life and keep commute trips to a minimum.
- (3) **Annexation of unincorporated areas (MonTaraBay and Rancho Road/El Sobrante) is not cost effective under currently planned land uses.** Unincorporated areas are developed mostly with older single family residential uses. Key revenues — property and sales tax — are lower, on average than within the City. Without the potential for redevelopment or the negotiation of a more favorable property tax split with the County than might be anticipated, annexation of these areas would not be cost effective. The City would be hard pressed to provide proper levels of municipal services to annexed areas without a reduction of services to current residents.

2.4 General Plan Goals and Key Policy Features

The City of Pinole is largely built out. Most opportunities for development will be infill construction of housing and commercial development, primarily along San Pablo Avenue. Community concerns raised at the General Plan workshops include maintaining the safety level in the community, maintaining and enhancing Pinole as a good community for children, and providing safe walking to school. Other local issues of concern include speeding on residential

streets and moving traffic through Pinole so that traffic does not jam up in Pinole or divert onto neighborhood streets. Many people also identified the need to evaluate the cumulative effects of regional growth, particularly in terms of traffic impacts. People commenting at community workshops recognize the benefits of Pinole's location and easy freeway access and there appears to be general support for programs, such as sales tax initiatives that increase regional funding of highway and transit improvements.

The existing San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan has been incorporated into the General Plan to simplify consideration of land use issues along San Pablo Avenue. Appendix A contains Land Use Categories definitions for the different types of land uses shown on the Land Use Plan maps (Maps GP-5 and GP-6). Broad categories include commercial, industrial, residential, public and other land uses.

Overall, very few changes have been made to the land uses designated on the Land Use Plan maps. The areas designated for Low Density Residential (single family) and Open Space have been preserved. The major changes shown on the maps include: Redesignating Montalvin Manor, within the unincorporated area of Pinole, for High Density Residential; adding a Mixed Use land use category to allow for commercial and residential land uses to be combined; and designating some property for waterfront commercial development within the San Pablo Bay Conservation Area land use.

It is crucial to the long-term health of the City that the General Plan reflects the specific goals of the community and that these goals are kept in the forefront as projects and implementing programs are approved and carried out. For example, the General Plan must be sufficiently specific to respond to changes in traffic conditions and new issues facing the City and region over the next 15 years. In addition, the General Plan must respond to the detailed requirements of State law, Measure C and other regional planning initiatives. The goals from each element of the General Plan are listed on the following pages.

Land Use and Economic Development Goals

- LU1 **PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER.** Preserve and enhance the natural resources, high quality residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, and the small-town (semi-rural) character of Pinole.
- LU2 **PLANNING COORDINATION.** Assure the City takes an active leadership role coordinating planning with its neighboring jurisdictions and other public agencies.
- LU3 **HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND COMMUNITY DESIGN.** Preserve the historic resources and ensure high quality site planning and design.
- LU4 **RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.** Preserve and strengthen the identity and quality of life of Pinole's residential neighborhoods.
- LUS **ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE SITES.** Assure any development of environmentally sensitive sites protects important natural resources and recognizes hazard constraints.

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- LU6 **WATERFRONT ENHANCEMENT.** Protect and enhance the natural resources of the San Pablo Bay waterfront for the enjoyment of Pinole residents.
 - LU7 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.** Balance housing and employment opportunities to reduce trips in and out of the region and encourage commercial development which maintains and enhances the quality of the City’s commercial areas, provides services for residents and broadens the tax base of the community to provide needed revenues for public services.
 - LUS **COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY AREAS.** Concentrate commercial development and mixed use activity areas so as to provide needed services and tax revenues while not detracting from the overall character of the community.

Community Services and Facilities Goals (to be added)

Circulation Goals

- C1 **CIRCULATION SYSTEM DESIGN.** Develop, improve and maintain a circulation system which provides efficient and safe access for private vehicles, commercial vehicles, public transit, emergency vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians, while protecting the quality of Pinole’s residential neighborhoods and commercial activity areas.
- C2 **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING.** Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions and other public and regional agencies in the provision of adequate circulation, and the development of balanced housing and employment opportunities to reduce trips in and out of the region.
- C3 **LOCAL STREET IMPROVEMENTS.** Provide and maintain a safe, attractive and efficient circulation system that ensures ongoing convenient access to all residential, commercial and community areas and to neighboring jurisdictions.
- C4 **TRANSIT.** Support the provision of public transit services and alternative programs such as Transportation Demand Management (TDM) to provide a viable alternative to single occupant automobile travel for all citizens and a convenient means of transportation to the “transit dependent” population.
- C5 **FUNDING OF IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE.** Provide for adequate funding for regional and local infrastructure maintenance, transit and transportation improvements to assure implementation in a timely manner.
- C6 **PARKING.** Ensure adequate off-street parking is provided for in all new projects and designed for safe and effective circulation, and that existing parking ordinances and enforcement are reflective of community needs and safety.

- C7 PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CIRCULATION AND TRAILS.** Develop and maintain a comprehensive pedestrians bicycle, hiking and equestrian circulation network and trails system which connects open space, activity areas and recreation areas, provides linkages to regional trails and open space, offers safe recreation opportunities, and provides an alternative to automobile travel.

Housing Goals

- HI HOUSING DESIGN.** Encourage the development of housing which protects the existing “semi-rural” character of Pinole through good design.
- H2 ADEQUATE SERVICES AND FACILITIES.** Provide adequate services and facilities to meet the needs of the city’s current and future population.
- H3 EXISTING HOUSING AND COMMUNITY HERITAGE.** Protect and conserve existing housing and community heritage.
- H4 HOUSING NEEDS.** Within the overriding context of maintaining existing community character and providing adequate services and facilities, maintain the current social diversity that exists in Pinole by providing a mix of housing types and prices that meet the City’s Fair Share of Regional Housing Need.

Open Space and Environmental Protection Goals

- OS1 PRESERVE NATURAL RESOURCES.** Preserve natural resources which provide important habitat, ecological or archeological value, and maintain clean air and water quality.
- OS2 PROTECT VISUAL RESOURCES.** Enhance the City of Pinole’s character by protecting key visual resources.
- OS3 PROVIDE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.** Provide for a wide variety of recreational activities in open space areas, parks, and school grounds within the City of Pinole, balanced with the protection of important habitat.
- OS4 OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT.** Maintain and effectively manage an integrated pattern of open space areas.

Health and Safety Goals

- HS1 COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY.** Minimize the potential for loss of life, injury, damage to property, economic and social dislocation and unusual public expense due to natural and man-made hazards.
- HS2 PROTECTION FROM NATURAL AND MAN-MADE HAZARDS.** Protect the community from the risk of flood damage and minimize hazards of soil erosion, weak

and expansive soils, potentially hazardous soils materials, other hazardous materials, geologic instability and seismic activity.

- HS3 **PREPARE FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.** Ensure government agencies, citizens and businesses are prepared for an effective response and recovery in the event of emergencies or disasters.
- HS4 **NEW DEVELOPMENT NOISE STANDARDS.** Ensure all new development complies with the noise standards established in the Pinole Health and Safety Element and prevent all new noise sources from increasing the existing noise level above acceptable standards.
- HS5 **REDUCE EXISTING OBJECTIONABLE NOISE SOURCES.** Eliminate or reduce noise from existing objectionable noise sources.

Growth Management Goals

- GMI **COORDINATED REGIONAL PLANNING.** Attain a level of mutually beneficial communication and coordinated planning among the City of Pinole and its neighboring jurisdictions and other public and regional agencies in the provision of adequate services and facilities, and housing and employment opportunities.
- GM2 **ADEQUATE COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES.** Provide community services and facilities and commercial services and amenities which are accessible from all residential neighborhoods.
- GM3 **PROVIDE SAFE, ATTRACTIVE AND EFFICIENT CIRCULATION.** Provide a safe, attractive and efficient circulation system that ensures ongoing convenient access to all residential, commercial and community areas and to neighboring jurisdictions.
- GM4 **GUIDE, CONTROL AND MONITOR FUTURE GROWTH.** Guide, control and monitor future growth to ensure that the goals and values of the citizens of Pinole as expressed in the General Plan are maintained and enhanced.

Implementing Program Priorities Goals

- IP1 **GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.** The City will take an active leadership role in assuring the implementation of General Plan programs.
- IP2 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.** Encourage public review and effective participation in all aspects of the planning process.
- IP3 **UP-TO-DATE PLANNING.** Maintain and periodically revise and update the City's General Plan to reflect current community goals and policies.

2.5 Primary Implementing Programs

As the foremost policy document for the City of Pinole, the General Plan establishes policy direction and standards for land use and other issues and provides the basis for the maps and text in the Zoning Ordinance, subdivision requirements, capital and service improvement programming, and other important community decisions. Achieving consistency among these plans is an important reason for keeping the entire General Plan up to date.

Zoning is the primary instrument for implementing the General Plan because it provides very detailed standards and requirements for each of the land use districts. Each parcel of land in the community is included in one of those districts. Updating the Pinole Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with the General Plan is an important task to be done in a timely manner after General Plan adoption. Written regulations, consistent with the General Plan, establish standards for minimum lot size, building height and setback limits, lot coverage, lot to building floor area ratio, parking, and other development parameters within each land use zone (the land use categories of the General Plan as shown on the Land Use Plan maps GP-5 and GP-6 are defined in Appendix A). Other key implementing programs include:

- (1) **West County Action Plan.** Participate in regional transportation planning and growth management to provide coordinated, long-range actions addressing future travel needs in the City and the West Contra Costa County/I-80 travel corridor.
- (2) **Pinole Redevelopment Agency.** Provide funding for local improvements, commercial retail development and affordable housing within the Redevelopment Project Area through the unique powers of the Redevelopment Agency, and as projected in the Redevelopment Agency's capital budget, which is part of the City's Seven-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP), with special attention to improvements in Old Town and along San Pablo Avenue.
- (3) **Monitor Pinole Vista Development.** To ensure that this area remains economically viable, continue to play a role in the design, marketing, development and enhancement of Pinole Vista through the implementation and monitoring of development and ground lease agreements at Pinole Vista.
- (4) **Code Enforcement Program.** Adopt a code enforcement program to ensure that private properties are maintained in accordance with community standards.
- (5) **Community/Civic Center Study.** Adopt and implement the Community/Civic Center Feasibility Study and, if approved for construction, include in the Seven-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- (6) **Geotechnical Review Procedures.** Update City guidelines establishing geotechnical review procedures, including but not limited to, the content of geologic feasibility reports, design level geotechnical reports, and the credentials of the authors of such reports