



*Martinez Waterfront (Source: Kevin Murray)*

## 1.1 | INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose of the General Plan**

California law requires every city and county in the state to prepare and adopt a comprehensive long-range general plan for the physical development of the jurisdiction. The California Government Code defines specific purposes and content requirements for all general plans. While the law establishes certain requirements, within that framework each community has the latitude to design its own future.

Upon adoption by the City Council, the goals, policies, implementation measures, and figures contained within this General Plan document will supersede and update those now contained in the different elements and specific area plans adopted since the early 1970s. The [Downtown Specific Plan](#) and the Alhambra Hills Specific Plan will remain in effect as specific plans pursuant to Government Code §65450 et seq.

The Martinez General Plan contains a set of public goals and policies to guide the future development and maintenance of the physical environment in Martinez. . In a broad sense, the General Plan addresses issues related to sustaining Martinez’s quality of life. These issues include:

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- Enhancing the Downtown as the central focus of the community;
- Protecting residential neighborhoods and environmental resources;
- Balancing future development with the provision of adequate services, facilities, and infrastructure;
- Collaborating on regional planning efforts; meeting housing needs; and
- Providing for economic development to maintain a high level of City services.

While the Government Code defines specific purposes and content requirements for general plans, the City of Martinez General Plan is intended to do more than merely meet legal requirements. It is intended to be a statement about how the citizens of Martinez view their community now, and a vision of what they hope it will become. Most importantly, it provides a policy structure for addressing planning and development issues into the year 2035.



*(Source: Kevin Murray)*



*Joe DiMaggio Fields (Source: City of Martinez)*

### **State Law Requirements**

A general plan is a comprehensive, long-term plan for the physical development of a city and of any land outside its boundaries (but within the sphere of influence) which, in the planning agency's judgment, bears relation to its planning. The California Supreme Court has called the general plan the "constitution for future development." State law requires that a general plan contain goals, policies, and implementation measures that are fully integrated and internally consistent with one another. General plans must include seven mandatory elements covering the following topic areas:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Housing
- Conservation
- Open Space
- Noise
- Safety

In addition to the topic areas listed above, local agencies may cover additional topics of local concern. These topics can be included in specific elements (termed "optional elements" in State law) or they may be addressed in other ways within the seven required elements of a general plan.



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A general plan must meet standards of consistency both within individual elements and across all elements or policies contained in the entire general plan. In addition, once adopted, a general plan provides the basis for future decision-making. For instance, all subdivisions, zoning, capital improvements, and other land use actions must be found consistent with the adopted general plan.

The State’s general plan requirements are intended to link regional transportation and housing plans to greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals. The [Metropolitan Transportation Commission \(MTC\)](#) and the [Association of Bay Area Governments \(ABAG\)](#) have linked the [Regional Housing Needs Allocations \(RHNA\)](#) process with the [Regional Transportation Plan \(RTP\)](#) process in developing a [Sustainable Communities Strategy \(SCS\)](#) as a way of reaching GHG reduction targets. Under the Bay Area’s SCS ([Plan Bay Area 2050](#)), Downtown Martinez is identified as a regional Priority Development Area (PDA), meaning it is a locally-identified, infill development opportunity area where there is local commitment to developing more housing along with amenities and services to meet the day-to-day needs of residents in a pedestrian-friendly environment served by transit.



*Martinez City Hall*

## How to Use this General Plan

The Martinez General Plan is intended to be useful to all its readers and still contain all necessary information and policies per State requirements. To accomplish this objective, the General Plan is structured around eleven chapters and ten highly interrelated elements, as follows:

- Land Use Element
- Open Space & Conservation Element
- Historic, Cultural & Arts Element
- Parks & Community Facilities Element
- Circulation Element
- Housing Element
- Public Safety Element
- Noise & Air Quality Element
- Environmental Justice (EJ) & Disadvantaged Communities Element
- Growth Management Element

Martinez has elected to include a separate optional element on the topic of environmental justice and disadvantaged communities. In addition, optional elements were added for the topics of parks and community facilities, and historic, cultural and arts. The required elements for open space and conservation have been combined into one element.

Each of the elements listed above contain the following:

- **Goals:** These are broad statements that reflect community values and ideals.
- **Policies:** These are clear and specific statements that assist and guide decision making to realize each goal.
- **Implementation Measures:** These are actions that support or carry out a General Plan policy. It is typical that each policy has at least one corresponding implementation program.

Additionally, the primary instrument for implementing the General Plan is the City's [Zoning Ordinance](#). The Zoning Ordinance includes various zoning districts that must be consistent with the General Plan and the land use designations contained therein. Each parcel of land in the community is designated with a land use designation and is assigned to a compatible zoning district in the zoning ordinance. Written regulations in the zoning ordinance establish permitted uses, standards for conditional use permits, design review, minimum lot size, building height

and setback limits, lot coverage, parking, and other development parameters within each zoning district. Following the adoption of this General Plan, the City of Martinez will begin a comprehensive update of its zoning ordinance to make existing zoning regulations consistent with the General Plan.



*Downtown Martinez Makers Market (Source: Kevin Murray)*

### **Monitoring, Evaluating, and Amending the General Plan**

The Martinez General Plan is a living document that will be reviewed and refined as conditions change, as implementation measures are accomplished, and measures are considered. The City of Martinez will measure successes and challenges in General Plan implementation. Means of measuring progress will range from state-required or recommended procedures such as conducting annual reviews, updates, and amendments to conducting ongoing evaluations. State-required procedures for General Plan updates, review and amendments are described below.

**General Plan Updates, Review, and Amendments:** Periodically, California cities must update their general plans to conform to changes in state law and other legal requirements, and to reflect changes in land development patterns since the last general plan was adopted. Although the state does not mandate a specific timetable for general plan updates, many jurisdictions decide to initiate the update process approximately every 15 years or once the social, economic or development contexts have changed to such a degree that a comprehensive general plan

update is warranted. To ensure that general plan documents remain relevant in the near-term, general plans should be regularly reviewed and amended as appropriate.

**Annual Review Report:** The Martinez General Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that is regularly reviewed and evaluated in response to changing conditions and community needs. State government code encourages cities to review their general plans annually. Annual reports can be prepared for review by the City Council and Planning Commission, and submittal to the [State Office of Planning and Research](#) and the [State Housing and Community Development Office](#). This implementation progress report is a vital part of keeping the planning process open, transparent, and responsive. It can also be a vehicle for review and refinement of implementation priorities, deletion of completed actions and the addition of new actions or policies. Specifically, the annual review report serves to:

- Provide the City Council with an implementation progress update;
- Examine the degree to which land use and other planning decisions align with general plan goals, policies and implementing actions;
- Establish a basis for determining whether specific development proposals and public projects align with the community's preferred future;
- Assess progress made in meeting the City's share of regional housing needs; and
- Recommend any modifications necessary to improve implementation.

**Amendments:** A general plan is intended to be the vision for a city's development and changes are allowed only when there is a clear public purpose. Where amendments to a general plan are deemed necessary, State law allows jurisdictions to amend an adopted general plan up to four times per year. Proposed amendments must be reviewed to ensure consistency with other plan elements and the plan's companion environmental impact report.

### **How the General Plan was Prepared**

The General Plan was created through the contributions of decision makers, the General Plan Update Task Force, individual residents, and representatives of many organizations in the community. The update process began with the preparation of the General Plan Work Program in 2010 and ended with City Council adoption in November 2022. Please note the final preparation of the General Plan following the City Council's adoption on November 2, 2022, includes some minor revisions to the elements, which are intended to provide the reader with additional clarification and therefore serve to assist the reader with understanding of the General Plan, and were subsequently adopted by the City Council on December 6, 2023.



**General Plan Update Task Force:** The General Plan Update Task Force was involved in the update effort, helping to formulate and participate in outreach to the community, identifying issues of concern, assisting with formulating a vision for the General Plan, hearing from experts on various topics, providing an opportunity for key property owners to provide their ideas, and reviewing background materials and policy choices.

**General Plan Outreach:** As part of the update process an extensive outreach process was conducted with various interest groups in the City and the community as a whole. Activities conducted between September 2010 and January, 2011 included: community workshops held in four different parts of the City; a survey of 230 eighth-graders at Martinez junior high school; use of the City’s website/User Voice Survey to pose questions and obtain responses similar to the workshops; and outreach to various stakeholder groups and neighbourhood coffees conducted by General Plan Update Task Force members.

**Documentation of Community Outreach Comments:** In total, approximately 500 people participated and provided comments that are summarized in a Community Conversations Report. About 75 people attended four community workshops, and approximately 130 people participated in the UserVoice survey available through the City’s website. An additional 300 people, including youths, participated through other outreach activities, such as stakeholder groups, and neighbourhood coffees. The Community Conversations Report also summarizes the results of a tour of the City conducted by the General Plan Update Task Force, and interviews with various departments within the City. The tour and interviews were intended to identify key issues of concern.

**Noticing:** Noticing for the General Plan effort, including the workshops and the online UserVoice survey, was done using banners, ads and articles in the Martinez News-Gazette and Contra Costa Times, Martinez Patch.com, Twitter, Facebook, General Plan business cards, announcements at Planning Commission and City Council meetings, announcements and use of the City’s website, outreach through various community groups (Kiwanis, Friends of Alhambra Creek, Main Street Martinez, Alhambra Watershed Council, etc.) and others.

**Downtown Matters:** In 2011, the City also embarked upon an ambitious effort to involve people in identifying needed improvements and activities in the Downtown. The effort was called “Downtown Matters! Make it Real and Making it Happen!” Downtown Matters was comprised of a series of six community outreach events, including four workshops and tours of revitalized downtowns located in Redwood City, Lodi, and Livermore. This series was part of the General Plan update process and helped to identify the choices, trade-offs, priorities, and strategic actions required for Downtown to prosper in the 21st century.



**White Papers:** Following release of the Draft General Plan 2035 for public review in September 2015, the City staff produced four “white papers,” or policy papers addressing specific issues raised in comments received by the City on the draft plan. White paper topics included: 1) trail segments; 2) a project alternative identified in the General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report to preserve unique farmland located at 180 Morello Avenue; 3) the proposed land use designation for 635 Vine Hill Way; and 4) proposed land use designations for the Downtown. The Planning Commission and the City Council reviewed the white papers at noticed public meetings, and the Council’s policy direction was incorporated in a revised draft that was released to the public in 2017.

**Measure I:** In June of 2018, the voters of the City of Martinez approved Measure I - an Initiative Measure Amending the Martinez General Plan to Create a Protected Open Space and Parks Overlay Designation, Apply the Overlay to Certain Properties as Set Forth in the 1973 General Plan and Adopt Land Use Regulations Thereto.

Litigation relating to Measure I was thereafter commenced and ultimately settled through the adoption of a Settlement Agreement and implementing actions which were incorporated into the previous General Plan by the adoption of Resolution 115-19 by the City Council on August 18, 2019. City Council Resolution 115-19 clarified certain provisions of Measure I consistent with the terms of the Settlement Agreement. These provisions have been incorporated into this General Plan and specifically identified herein.

## 1.2 | MARTINEZ VISION 2035

The Vision Statement below is a brief description of what Martinez wants to become through the implementation of its General Plan. The Vision Statement provides a sense of the purpose and mission for the General Plan and sets the tone for the goals, objectives, policies, and actions of the rest of the General Plan.

The City of Martinez, including the communities within its sphere of influence, will retain a unique, small-town historic character within its larger suburban context of Central Contra Costa County. Martinez’s identity will be largely based on its vibrant, eclectic downtown, set within pedestrian-oriented neighbourhoods, that are easy to bike and walk in, and are made up of varied and traditionally designed homes. The temperate climate, the Carquinez Strait, Alhambra Creek and its tributaries, the Marina and waterfront, and especially the open hillsides surrounding the existing urban areas, frame our physical identity.

Visitors will continue to be attracted to Martinez because of its historic character, shops, restaurants, waterfront recreation, surrounding natural beauty and role as the County seat. Martinez residents know that the City also provides a strong and inclusive sense of belonging for its residents. It contains a broad array of 19th and early 20th century buildings that form multi-faceted streetscapes and neighborhoods and support an economically diverse community. Neighborhoods will retain their liveable mix of quality and varied housing opportunities, including affordable workforce housing, convenient and appropriately scaled commercial areas, plentiful parks and open spaces, and strong pedestrian and bicycle connections between them.

Martinez will retain its qualities for future generations by providing quality education facilities, a vibrant economy that emphasizes economic development, job creation, and a balance of jobs and housing; that is linked to a viable community social structure which promotes social equity, racial and environmental justice; that conserves energy and natural resources and reduces greenhouse gas production; and through conservation preserves the ecosystem, including open spaces, creeks, and habitat, and the built environment that supports it. Martinez is and will remain, a safe community, that promotes a diversity of people and businesses, in which its residents can take pride.