



To: Mayor and City Council
From: Alan Shear, Assistant City Manager
Prepared by: Christine O'Rourke, General Plan Consultant
Subject: Draft General Plan Review and Adoption Process
Date: April 13, 2016

Recommendation

Approve the proposed process to review the draft General Plan and provide feedback on the proposed white paper topics and work program to complete the update to the 1973 General Plan.

Background

Each California city is required to adopt a General Plan to guide future growth and development. The General Plan provides criteria that decision-makers use to evaluate new development proposals and establishes priorities for City services, infrastructure and actions for staff to implement. Martinez's current General Plan was adopted in 1973.

A comprehensive update of the General Plan commenced in 2008. The Mayor and City Council selected a 19-member task force of community members to assist in the process. The task force was comprised of residents from a variety of backgrounds and interests. The General Plan Task Force convened 22 times during the span of 2 years, helping to formulate and participate in outreach to the community, identifying issues of concern, assisting with developing 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. Activities conducted between September 2010 and January 2011 included community workshops held in four different parts of the City, outreach to various stakeholder groups, and neighborhood coffees conducted by General Plan Update Task Force members.

In addition, as part of the General Plan update, staff conducted a series of workshops in 2011 titled Downtown Matters. The goals of the workshops were to formulate a long-range vision, discuss land use issues, and delve into the question of downtown development and density.

After initially working with a consultant on the draft General Plan, City planning staff took over the General Plan update process in 2013. This effort included writing the draft plan and working with technical consultants, e.g. noise, traffic and environmental consultants.

The draft Martinez 2035 General Plan and Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were released for public review on September 15, 2015 and circulated to relevant agencies pursuant to State law. Members of the public and other interested agencies submitted comments on the draft General Plan and Draft EIR during the 45-day public review period. The City received approximately 125 letters from individuals and several letters from public agencies.

Discussion

The Martinez 2035 General Plan includes a comprehensive set of goals, policies and implementation measures, as well as a revised Land Use Map. The State requires that the General Plan contain seven mandatory elements: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open Space, Noise, Safety and Conservation. The Housing Element was completed ahead of the rest of the General Plan Elements, and was adopted by the City Council on May 20, 2015. The Martinez 2035 General Plan includes all of the State-mandated elements, as well as two optional elements: a Parks, Community Facilities, and Infrastructure Element and a Historic, Cultural and Arts Element.

The overall purpose of the Martinez 2035 General Plan is to create a policy framework that articulates a vision for the City's long-term physical form and development, while preserving and enhancing the quality of life for Martinez residents. The key components of the 2035 General Plan include broad goals for the future of Martinez, objectives for meeting those goals, and specific policies and action items that will help meet the goals and objectives.

White Papers

Upon review of the responses received from the draft General plan and draft EIR, and in consultation with the City Attorney, staff has identified several issues that could benefit from analysis, discussion and resolution of policy options before preparation of the final EIR and review and hearings on the full draft General Plan. Staff is proposing to provide "white papers" on these subject areas that will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council. White papers would be drafted and presented every two months, with the possibility of presenting two white paper topics in one meeting when the subject matter is related or issues presented are less complicated.

The proposed white paper issues, pending Council approval and direction, include the following:

Trail Segments. Staff received numerous comment letters requesting the City to include a hiking trail map in the General Plan that includes the Alhambra Hills North-South trail as shown on the 1986 Alhambra Hills Specific Plan as well as additional trail segments within and adjacent to the City's planning area. A white paper on this issue would identify the ownership and jurisdiction of the affected parcels, provide a history of the proposed trail segments (including a discussion of applicable specific plans, tentative maps, and development approvals), and outline options for the Council to consider in 1) identifying existing and proposed trails in the General Plan, and 2) including policies and programs in the General Plan that support development of new trail segments.

635 Vine Hill Way/Freitas Property. The City has received a request from the owner of the property located at 635 Vine Hill Way to redesignate a 3-acre site of a 5.57 acre parcel (APN 162-420-009) from Open Space to Residential. The current Open Space designation was required in 1976 as part of the Pine Meadows subdivision. The property owner, Gary Freitas, has applied for a General Plan Amendment to redesignate the site to allow residential development on three previous occasions. A proposal in 1989 sought to create 5 lots, while an application in 2003 proposed 4 lots. Neither application was approved by the City. In 2006, Mr. Frietas initiated a third application in order to allow the possibility of creating four single family homes in addition to the existing single family home on the parcel. The Planning Commission recommended the Council deny the application, and the Council considered the application at two regular meetings in October 2007 and January 2008. The application was withdrawn in June 2008.

The parcel currently carries a split designation Open Space Preservation on the draft General Plan Land Use Map, as endorsed by the General Plan Task Force. Approximately two acres of the 5.57 acre is designated Residential Very Low, which would allow the development of two single family houses in addition to the existing single family home. The remainder of the lot is designated Open Space Preservation. A white paper on this issue would summarize the history of the planning applications and present options for the Council to consider in designating the site for open space and/or residential development.

Land Use Designations in the Downtown. The draft General Plan proposes new land use designations that are intended to more closely reflect existing uses as well as residential densities and non-residential development intensities (expressed in Floor Area Ratio) currently permitted by existing zoning regulations. In the Downtown, the new land use designations generally align with the residential densities permitted in the existing Downtown Specific Plan as shown in the table below.

Downtown Specific Plan Land Use Areas		Proposed General Plan Land Use Designations	
Downtown Core	29-43 du/ac	Downtown Core	29-43 du/ac
		Downtown Transition	19-29 du/ac
Downtown Shoreline	17-35 du/ac	Downtown Shoreline	18-30 du/ac
Downtown Neighborhood	12-35 du/ac	Central Residential Low-B	Up to 9 du/ac
		Central Residential Low-C	Up to 17 du/ac
		Downtown Transition	19-29 du/ac
		Central Residential Medium	Up to 29 du/ac
		Central Residential High	Up to 35 du/ac
Grandview	7-17 du/ac	Downtown Core	29-43 du/ac
		Central Residential Low-A	Up to 7 du/ac
Civic	3.0 FAR	Central Residential Low-C	Up to 17 du/ac
		Downtown Government	Up to 3.0 FAR

A white paper on this subject will describe the proposed land use designations, residential densities and non-residential intensities in the Downtown area, and compare these to existing zoning and Downtown Specific Land Use Areas. The paper will also include a discussion of extending the Downtown Shoreline and Downtown Government land use designations to parcels north of the railroad tracks (identified as the North Downtown Shoreline District in the Downtown Specific Plan). The white paper will present the Council with options for identifying land use designations, residential densities and non-residential intensities in the Downtown, as well as adopting conforming changes to the Downtown Specific Plan and Housing Element.

EIR Alternative 3. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines require an Environmental Impact Report to describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the project (in this case, the draft General Plan) which would reduce or avoid significant impacts and which could feasibly accomplish the objectives of the proposed project. The General Plan Draft EIR includes an Agricultural Preservation Alternative (Alternative 3). Under this alternative, the 4.36 acres of Unique Farmland that is located within the city limits and designated for residential development (R 0-6 on the current Land Use Map and Residential Low in the draft General Plan) would instead be designated as Agricultural Lands. This land is currently part of a larger existing vineyard operation (Viano Vineyards) that extends beyond the city limits into the sphere of influence. The Residential Low Designation allows residential development at densities between one and five units per acre, which would allow approximately 21 units to be developed on the site. The EIR found Alternative 3 is environmentally superior to the draft General Plan, primarily because the alternative would slightly reduce impacts (air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, traffic, demand for public services and utilities, etc.) associated with development of these 21 units and would preserve Unique Farmland. A white paper on this subject would present information for the Council to provide direction on whether or not to change the land use designation for the 4.36 acre parcel to Agricultural Lands.

Other Issues

In addition to the white paper topics described above, staff will prepare and present General Plan revisions in response to comments received from individuals and agencies, as well as revisions recommended by the environmental consultants during the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report. Staff-initiated changes may also include any revisions needed to address recent changes in the law and ensure a legally-sufficient general plan. Staff will also provide a discussion of the new land use designations proposed in the draft General Plan to replace the existing land use designations.

Proposed Process to Review the Draft General Plan

Staff is proposing the following process to gain policy direction, complete review and analysis of the draft General Plan and to hold public hearing on and ultimately adopt the Draft General Plan:

- Present white papers and staff-initiated changes to the Planning Commission and the City Council.
- Edit the draft General Plan document in accordance with direction received and to address staff initiated modifications as discussed above

- Consult with the EIR consultant to determine if any of the General Plan edits require changes to the draft EIR and/or recirculation thereof.
- Publish and provide to the public the revised draft General Plan and revised draft EIR if necessary.
- Prepare responses to comments and final EIR.
- Planning Commission hearings on the draft General Plan and final EIR.
- City Council hearings and adoption of the General Plan and final EIR.

The proposed process and white paper topics will be posted on the City's website and additional information and documents will be posted periodically to keep the public informed and updated on the progress of the General Plan update.

Fiscal Impact

No impact to the General Fund.

APPROVED BY: 
Interim City Manager