

# Martinez General Plan 2035 White Paper



## TRAILS



November 2016

## **The Issue**

The draft Martinez General Plan 2035 and Draft Program Environmental Impact Report were released for public review on September 15, 2015. 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, with nearly 50 letters requesting the City to include a hiking trail map in the General Plan that identifies the Alhambra Hills North-South trail as shown on the 1986 Alhambra Hills Specific Plan, as well as other existing and proposed trails within and adjacent to the City's planning area. The purpose of this white paper is to provide information on State requirements for the inclusion of trails in a general plan and outline options for the Council to consider in 1) identifying existing, planned and potential new trails in the General Plan, and 2) including policies and programs in the General Plan that support development of new trail segments.

## **White Paper Purpose**

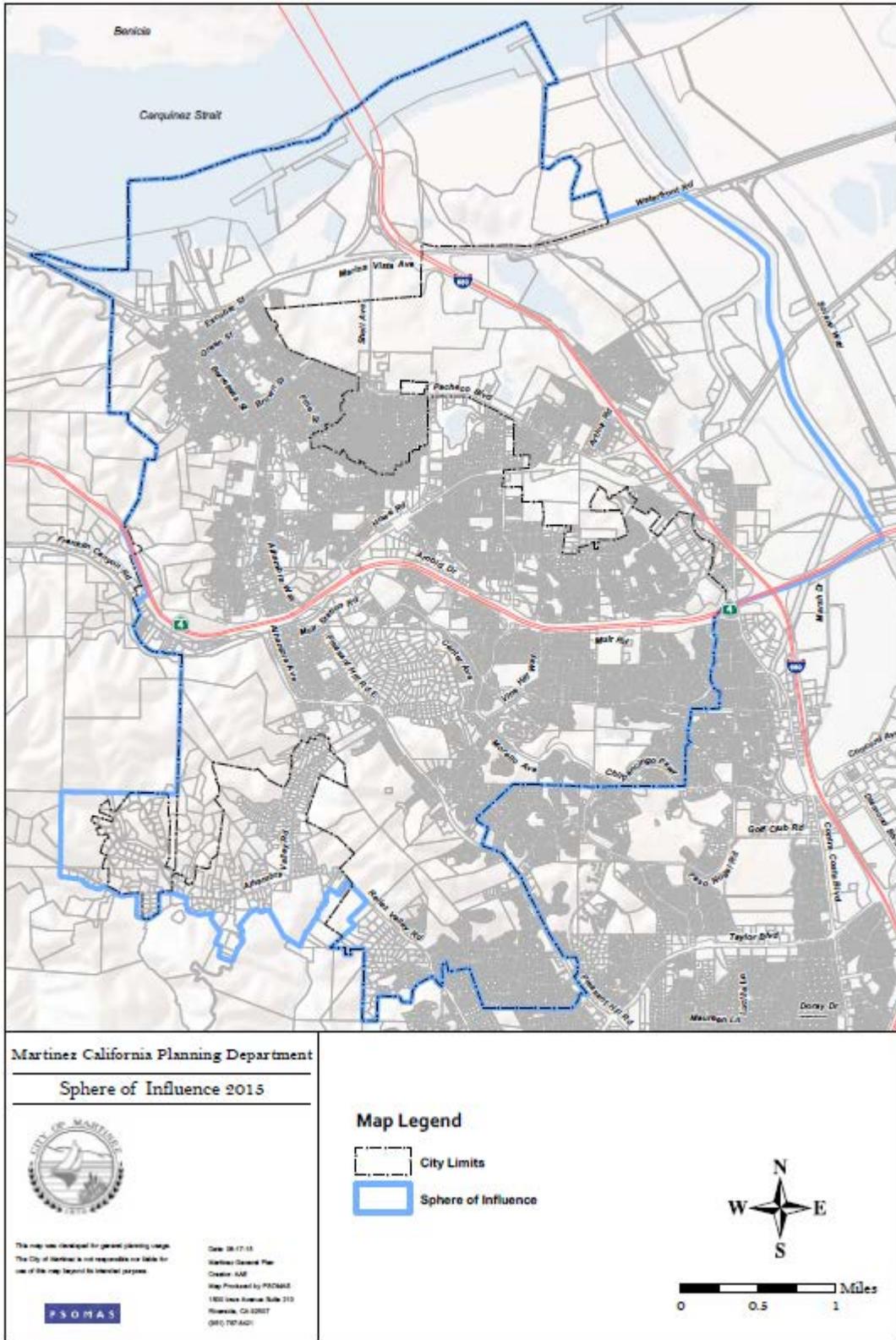
The purpose of the General Plan White Papers is to analyze and discuss policy issues that have been identified during public review of the draft Martinez General Plan 2035 and Draft Program Environmental Impact Report. Staff initially selected the White Paper topics and the City Council confirmed them on April 20, 2016. White Papers are intended to resolve significant policy options before the preparation of the final Environmental Impact Report and Planning Commission and City Council hearings on the full draft General Plan.

## **Introduction**

A general plan is a city's road map for the future. It describes a community's long-term vision and sets forth goals, policies and programs to manage growth, direct land use decision making, and preserve the environment and character of the community. The State of California requires every city and county to have a general plan to guide future development, conserve resources, and provide for public welfare and safety. Local ordinances and other plans must be generally consistent with the general plan and applicable policies and programs.

The general plan provides 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 judgement, bears relation to its planning. The draft Martinez General Plan identifies its planning area as the area within its Sphere of Influence (SOI), as shown in Figure 1. The SOI includes all lands within the City's jurisdiction as well as small areas within the Alhambra Valley and a larger area east of the City and north of Highway 4. With respect to identifying new trails in the City's General Plan, it is important to recognize that the General Plan should only propose new trails within the City's planning area. The Plan may show future trails that have been identified by a regional planning agency, such as the Contra Costa Transportation Authority or the East Bay Regional Park District.

Figure 1: Martinez City Limits and Sphere of Influence



The general plan must cover seven mandatory elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addition, local agencies may cover other topics of local concern. These elements may be organized in any way the local jurisdiction sees fit. The draft Martinez General Plan contains the following elements and chapters:

Chapter 1	Introduction and Vision
Chapter 2	Land Use Element
Chapter 3	Open Space and Conservation Element
Chapter 4	Historic, Cultural, and Arts Element
Chapter 5	Parks, Community Facilities and Infrastructure Element
Chapter 6	Circulation Element
Chapter 7	Housing Element (separate document)
Chapter 8	Safety Element
Chapter 9	Noise and Air Quality Element
Chapter 10	Growth Management Element
Chapter 11	Appendices

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Identification of Existing and Proposed Trails in the Draft General Plan**

Trails are primarily addressed in the Parks, Community Facilities and Utilities Element on pp. 5-9 to 5-11. The section includes a short description of the trail system and its uses and benefits, as well as a goal, a policy, and ten implementing actions (the section on trails is attached to this white paper as Appendix A).

As required by State law, the City's Circulation Element identifies the bicycle and pedestrian network available for transportation. The focus of the State requirement is to ensure that local jurisdictions plan for and provide a complete transportation network that connects residents to employment centers, community centers, schools, commercial districts, and transit stops. Some of the bicycle and pedestrian routes may also be considered "trails," although recreation and access to open space is not the overriding consideration in the State's requirement for circulation elements. The City's Circulation Element contains the Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan map adopted by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority in 2009. This map (see Figure 2) identifies existing and proposed Class 1 facilities, which are multi-use pathways that provide a completely separated right-of-way for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians with minimized cross flows of motorized traffic. Existing Class 1 facilities inventoried in the General Plan and shown on the map are:

- Benicia-Martinez Bike Path (Marina Vista Avenue to Park Road)
- Contra Costa Canal Trail (Muir Road to Chilpancingo Parkway [Martinez only])
- Ferry Street (north of Marina Vista Avenue)
- North Court Street

The map also identifies the Bay Area Ridge Trail and future Class 1 multi-use paths. The map could be revised to better reflect the existing Bay Area Ridge Trail, as shown in the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council's map (Figure 3), and proposed improvements, as described in the Circulation Element as follows:

*Phase 1:* construct trail from existing staging area east along south edge of the Martinez Regional Shoreline to existing Shoreline Trail near Ferry Street. Relocate and repave parking lot;

*Phase 2:* construct trail from Nejedley staging area on the Carquinez Scenic Drive to Berrellesa Street along the south side of UPRR ROW and improve existing trail along Berrellesa Street to Granger's Wharf parking lot and existing section of Bay Trail;

*Phase 3:* construct new bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the UPRR tracks at North Court Street from the existing trail in the Martinez Regional Shoreline Park to the Escobar-Court Street intersection in downtown Martinez.

Maps published by the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council do not show a planned extension connecting Mt. Wanda to Feeder Trail #1. However, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council has stated its goal is to complete this link, as well as a link at Mococo Road connecting the Benicia-Martinez Bridge Bike Path to Marina Vista Avenue.



*The Bay Area Ridge Trail currently ends where the Mt. Wanda Trail meets privately-owned land.*

Figure 2: Bicycle Network from the Contra Costa Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2009)

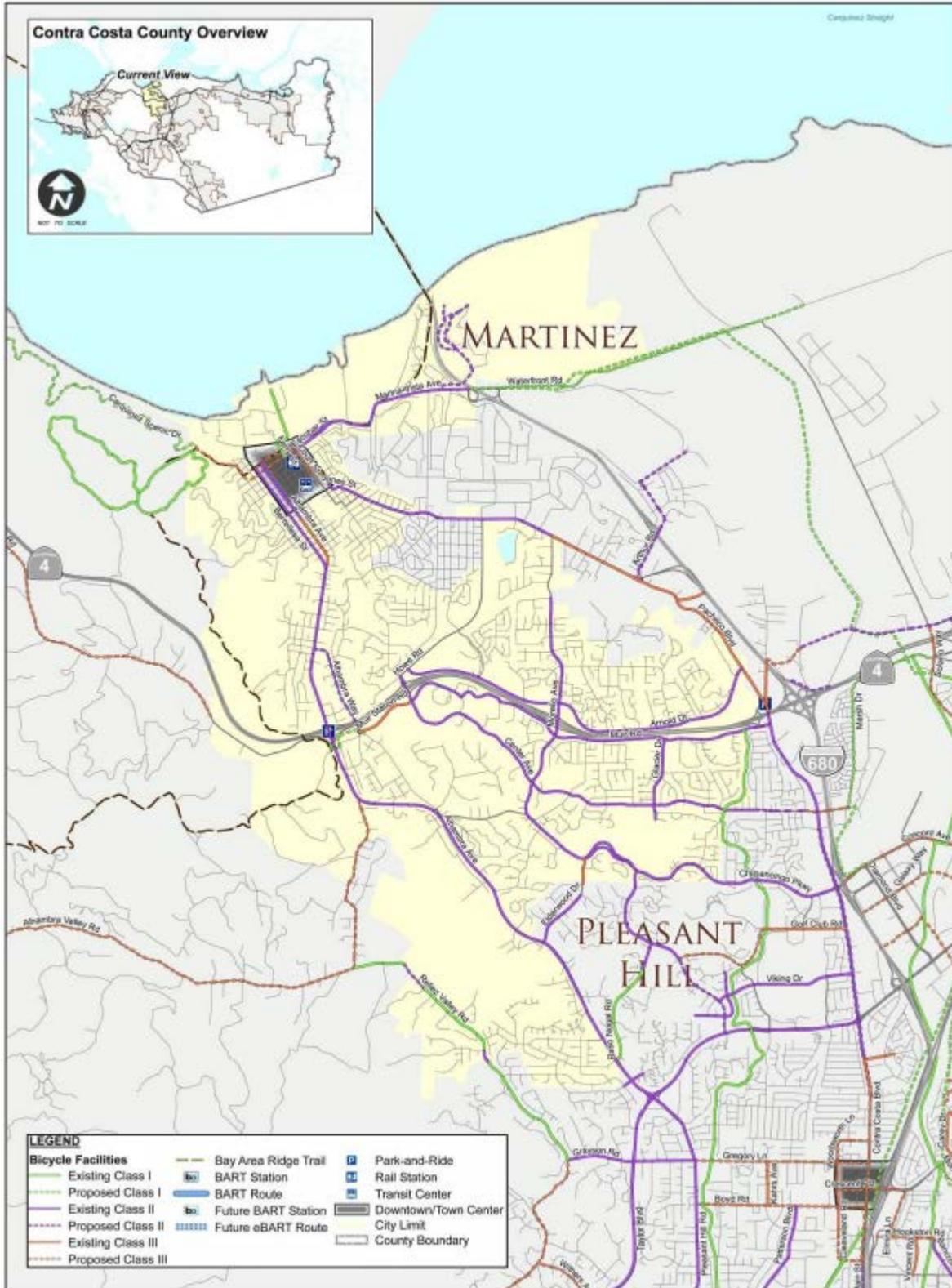
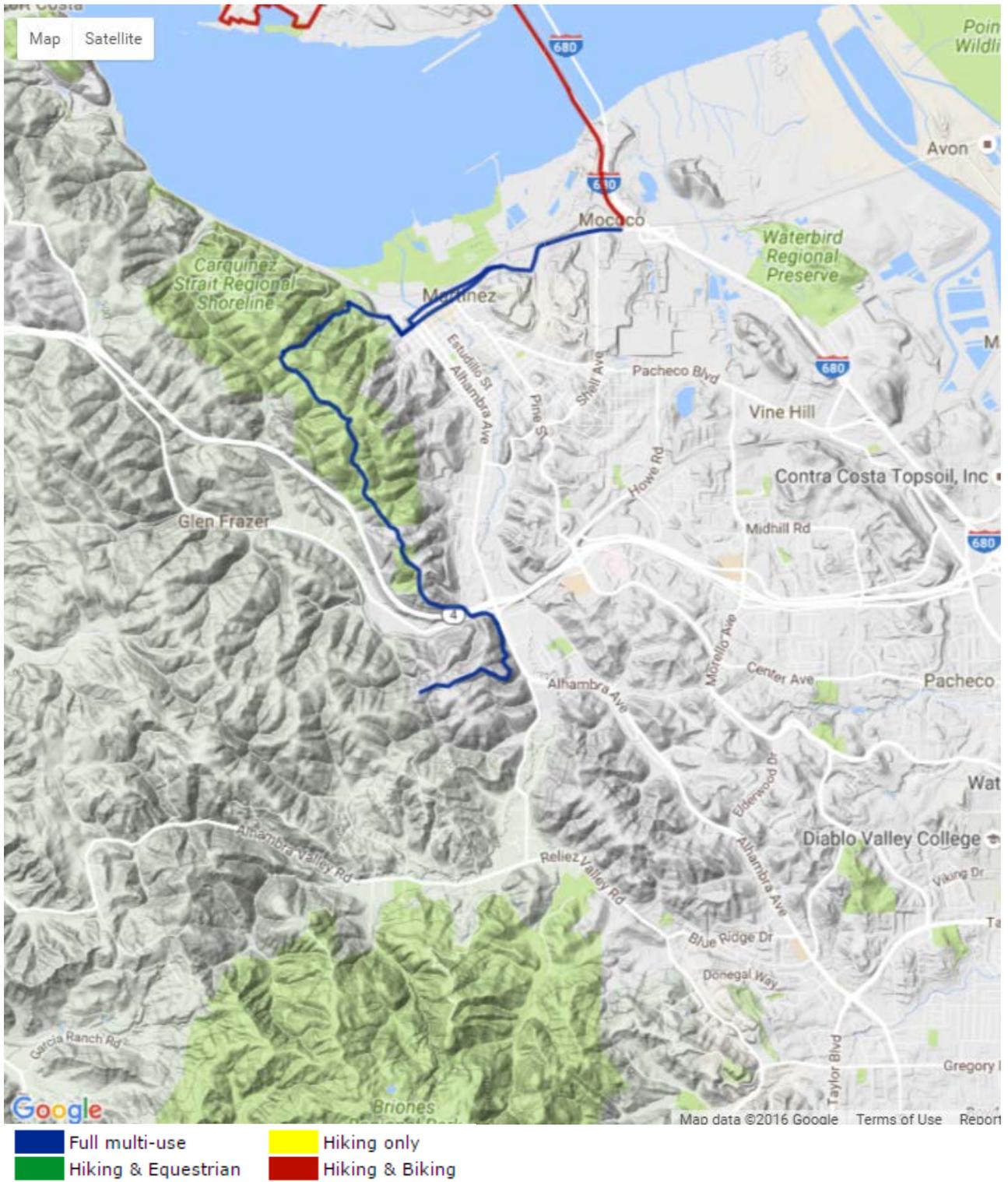


Figure 3: Bay Area Ridge Trail



Source: Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Bay Area Ridge Trail Interactive Map, [http://www.ridgetrail.org/interactive\\_map/&Itemid=99/](http://www.ridgetrail.org/interactive_map/&Itemid=99/)

## **State Requirement to Include Trails in the Open Space Element**

Government Code §65560(b) requires the open space element to include an inventory and map of parcels or areas of land or water within the planning area that are: 1) essentially unimproved, 2) identified on any local, regional or State open space plan, and 3) devoted to open space use for natural resources, the managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, and tribal resources. Subsection (b) further describes open space areas currently or planned for outdoor recreation use as follows:

- areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value;
- areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and
- areas which serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors

The Open Space and Conservation Element describes open spaces areas and provides a map of open space parcels identified on the City’s Land Use map as agricultural lands, open space, or parks and recreation land, as well as visually sensitive lands (see Figure 3). Trails are not identified on this map, but, as described above, some are identified in the Contra Costa Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan map in the Circulation Element. Trails that link major recreation and open-space areas are the Bay Area Ridge Trail, the San Francisco Bay Trail, the California Riding and Hiking Trail, and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. These must be included on the General Plan Open Space Map.

## **Inclusion of a Hiking Trail Map in the General Plan**

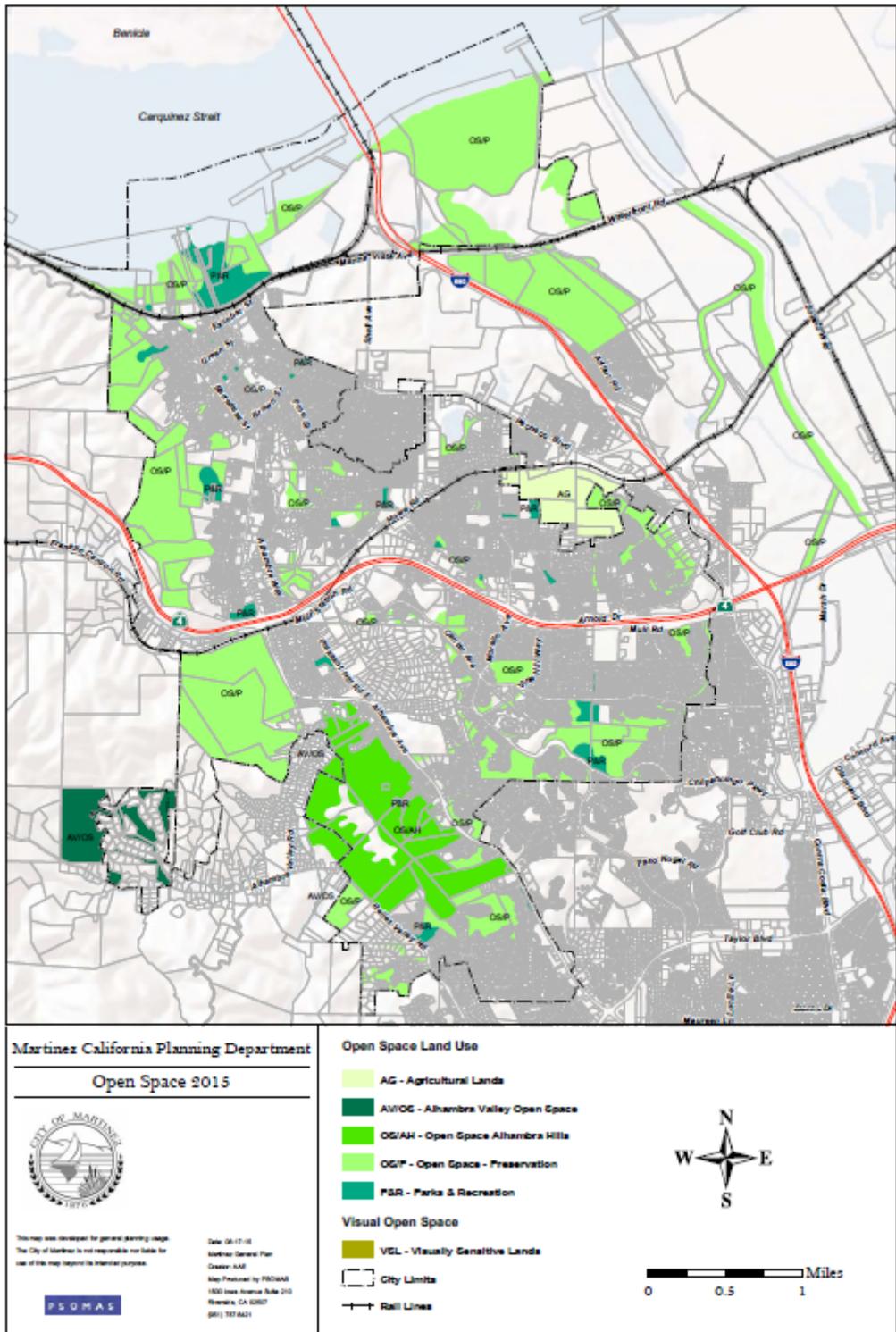
Although the General Plan does not identify proposed trails, the plan contains a number of programs that support and encourage the development of new trails, as follows:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| PCU-3.1a  | Establish priorities for funding for specific park or trailhead land through the Capital Improvement Program process.   |
| PCU-3.1b  | Consider purchasing land or accepting land dedication suitable for future trail development and recreational uses as land becomes available.  |
| PCU-P-3.2 | Locate and construct new trails where access is easy to maximize their potential use and enjoyment by residents and visitors. Consider locating new trails within unused street rights-of-way (such as the Panoramic Drive “paper street” between Green Street and Thomas Drive). |
| PCU-P-3.3 | Incorporate trail development in the City’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP).  |
| PCU-P-3.4 | When considering development on parcels providing missing links in the planned trail system; Trails and connections should be incorporated into the development plan with a possible easement or dedication of public right-of-way when possible.                                 |

- PCU-P-3.5 Work with the East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD), Contra Costa Water District, Contra Costa County, adjacent cities, regional trail groups, and other public agencies on trail planning issues, such as trail development and linkages.
- PCU-P-3.6 Construct trails according to the standards established by the *California Trails Manual* and EBRPD standards.
- PCU-P-3.7 Locate new trails with an emphasis on scenic qualities and making connections with local and regional open space areas, parks, points of interest and community facilities.
- PCU-P-3.9 When appropriate, encourage the public purchase of private lands for the preservation of open space ridge lines.
- PCU-P-3.10 Require future development within or upon ridgelines to include a condition of approval to provide access to and from or through the development via public trails.

Beyond the requirement to describe and inventory transportation routes in the Circulation Element and trails that serve as links between major recreation and open space reservations in the Open Space Element, there is no State requirement to include a hiking trail map in the General Plan. Nonetheless, cities may include such a map and many choose to do so. There are several hiking maps published by various agencies and organizations that are readily available on the internet. These include a Mount Wanda hiking map published by the U.S. National Park Service (<https://www.nps.gov/jomu/planyourvisit/maps.htm>; see Figure 5) and maps published by the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (<http://ridgetrail.org/the-trail/trail-maps/43-east-bay>), the San Francisco Bay Trail (<http://baytrail.org/get-on-the-trail/map-by-number/carquinez-strait/>), the Association of Bay Area Governments (Bay Trail) (<http://baytrail.org/get-on-the-trail/map-by-number/carquinez-strait/>) and the East Bay Regional Park District (<http://www.ebparks.org/parks>). The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, Bay Trail, and the East Bay Regional Park District also provide online interactive maps (<http://interactivemap.ridgetrail.org/applications/12/embed#9/37.8171/-122.1416>, <http://baytrail.org/baytrailmap.html> and <http://gis.ebparks.org/public/parksmobile/>). Several of these maps are attached in Appendix B. These sources provide more information than could be accommodated in a General Plan map, although they would provide a good starting point for developing a General Plan map at the appropriate level of detail.

Figure 3: Open Space Map



## Proposed Trail Segments

As discussed above, the City received nearly 50 letters requesting the General Plan include the Alhambra Hills North-South trail as shown on the 1986 Alhambra Hills Specific Plan on a General Plan hiking trails map. This proposed trail segment is discussed below. The City also received a more detailed letter from Jamie Fox on October 28, 2015, identifying existing and proposed trail segments that could be included in a hiking trails map in addition to the Alhambra Hills North-South trail. These trails are discussed in Appendix C.

The requested Alhambra Hills North-South trail presumably is based on the Land Use and Circulation Figure 31.30 in the 1986 Alhambra Hills Specific Plan (see Figure 4). That figure included a “conceptual nature trail” with potential trail segments for: 1) an east-west trail connecting Alhambra Avenue to Reilez Valley Rd; and 2) a north-south trail connecting Horizon Drive, Skyline Drive and Bernham Drive to the south, intersecting and joining the east-west trail for a short distance, and continuing to an emergency egress route with access to Wanda Way at the northern boundary of the plan area.

These trail segments were intended to connect the developed areas of the plateau. Section 31.383 of Specific Plan states:

“Public trail easements shall link the plateau area to surrounding development and the general plan riding and hiking trail system. Minimum connections shall include the California Riding and Hiking Trail to the east near MacAlvey Drive, Briones Regional Park, Golden Hills, the Foothills area and John Swett School. Recommended linkages are shown in Figure 31.30. Trails shall be constructed by the developer when the City or other public agency will accept maintenance responsibility for the trail.”

In 1990, the Alhambra Highlands Residential Project was approved. The project was significantly reduced from the project envisioned in the Specific Plan. It included 216 dwelling units in three subdivisions covering a developable area of approximately 122 acres. Subsequently, the federal and State permit process resulted in necessary changes to the proposed project. In 2008, the property owner, Richfield Investment Corporation, filed applications to modify the 1990 project approvals.

In April 2011, the City approved a new project for the Alhambra Highlands Planned Unit Development (#08-01). The new project includes 110 houses on 72 acres of the 297 acre site. Several of the sites will not be developed as envisioned in the Specific Plan, including Sites L, M and Q that were intended to be linked to the southern reach of the North-South trail.

The approved project retains the east-west trail that connects Alhambra Avenue to Reilez Valley Road, as shown in the Landscape and Trail Plan of the 2011 Vesting Tentative Map, in essentially the same configuration as depicted in the Specific Plan (see Figure 5). The north-south trail, however, is not included. This occurred for a variety of reasons. First, as noted above, the removal of Sites L, M and Q from housing development precluded the need to link those sites to a trail system. The northern reach of the north-south trail was determined to be infeasible due to topographical and geotechnical constraints. There is an existing fire trail that provides access from Darley Way to the northern

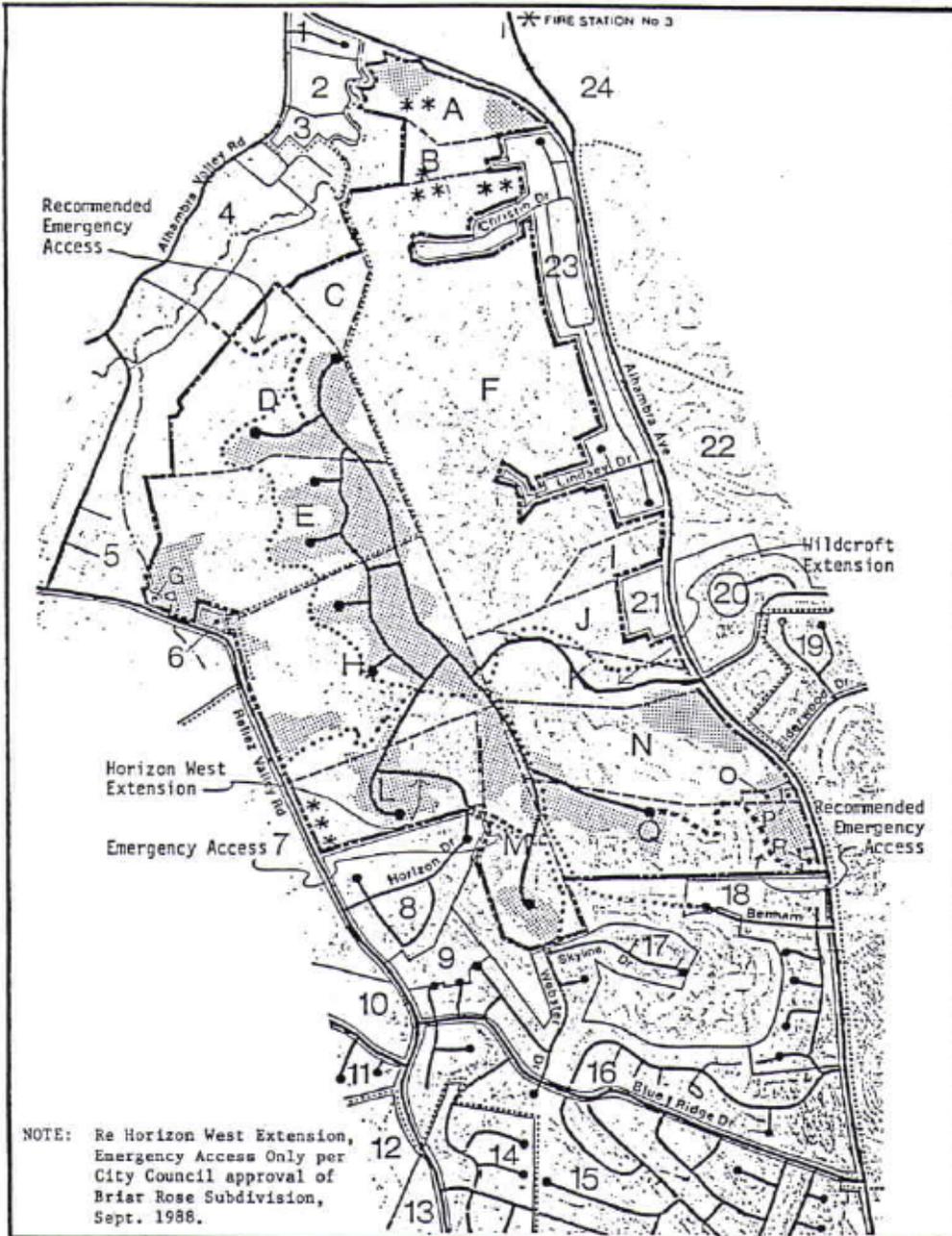
boundary of the development area and the City limits, but there is currently no public access to Wanda Way, and since the roadway is located outside the City limits, the City has no jurisdictional control over this critical connection.

In approving the Alhambra Highlands development in 2011, the City found the project consistent with both the General Plan and the Alhambra Hills Specific Plan. In particular, the City found the project consistent with Section 31.383 of the Specific Plan, and noted:

“Within the limits of geotechnical constraints, the trail network as conceptually illustrated in Fig. 31.30 as shown on approved Landscape Improvement Plans is to be constructed by the developer, linking Alhambra Avenue to Horizon Drive and Reliez Valley road. The trail is to be built to East Bay Regional Park District standards and is to be maintained by the Alhambra Highlands Homeowner’s Association or equivalent.”

As the Alhambra Highlands tentative map remains in effect, only those trails that were approved can be shown on a potential General Plan hiking trail map. This is necessary in order to maintain consistency between the General Plan and the approved vesting tentative map. However, the City is currently in negotiations with the property owner for a potential purchase of the property. If conditions change – e.g., the property is sold to the City or a non-profit organization for open space and recreational use – the General Plan hiking map, if adopted, could be amended to include new proposed trails within the Alhambra Hills planning area.

Figure 4: Land Use and Circulation Figure from the 1986 Alhambra Hills Specific Plan



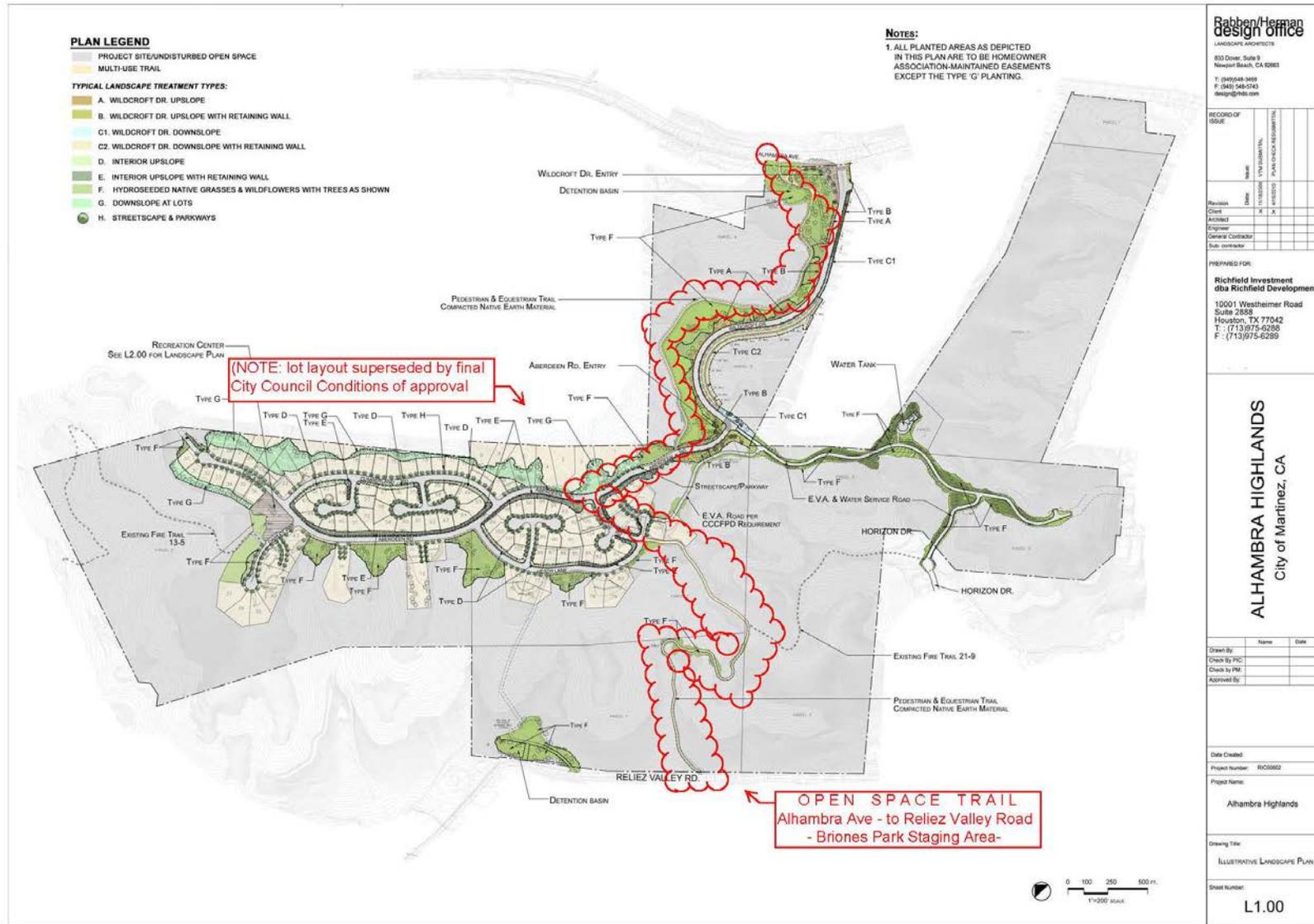
**LEGEND**

- Planning Area Boundary
- Martinez City Limits
- Primary Access Roads
- Emergency Egress
- ..... Conceptual Nature Trail
- ▭ Development Area
- \* Remote Homesites

**Land Use and Circulation**      Figure 31.30  
**ALHAMBRA HILLS SPECIFIC PLAN**



Figure 5: Alhambra Hills Vesting Tentative Map Landscape and Trail Plan (annotated)



## CONCLUSION

A hiking trails map is not a State requirement for a general plan. However there are State requirements to describe and inventory transportation routes in the Circulation Element and trails that serve as links between major recreation and open space reservations in the Open Space Element. There are several agencies that provide detailed hiking trail maps and online interactive maps, including the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, the East Bay Regional Park District, and the National Park Service. These sources provide more comprehensive information than what would typically be included in General Plan maps.

## CHANGES RECOMMENDED BY THE CONSULTANT AND INITIATED BY STAFF

The General Plan consultant recommends the following changes be made to the draft General Plan:

1. In order to comply with State law, regional hiking trails that serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations should be added to the Open Space map. These will include the Bay Area Ridge Trail, the San Francisco Bay Trail, the California Riding and Hiking Trail, and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.
2. The General Plan Bicycle Network map should be revised to accurately reflect the existing Bay Area Ridge Trail.

Staff concurs with these changes and will make the revisions to the draft General Plan.

## GENERAL PLAN POLICY OPTIONS

The General Plan consultant and City staff have identified the following options for the Planning Commission and City Council's consideration. These options and staff's analysis of the pros and cons of each option are discussed below.

### ***1. Do nothing, other than the staff-initiated changes identified above.***

Pros: Would require the least amount of time and expense to revise the draft General Plan. Would avoid conflicts with other agencies' published hiking trails maps. Would minimize future General Plan amendments needed to reflect changes in General Plan maps.

Cons: Planners, decision makers, and community members would need to refer to other published maps to identify potential new trail segments and trail connections when reviewing development applications and planning for new recreation and circulation facilities and improvements.

### ***2. Do not include a hiking trails map, but add a program to the General Plan to develop and adopt a Trails Master Plan as follows:***