

## **General Plan Update - Public Forum #4: Enhancing mobility, accessibility and life on an island**

To: Honorable President and Members of the Planning Board

From: Andrew Thomas, Planning, Building and Transportation Director

### BACKGROUND

State law requires the City of Alameda to maintain a General Plan that is an “integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency.” (Government Code section 65300.5.) The General Plan establishes the local development and conservation policies necessary to guide physical development and protect the general health, safety and welfare of the community and the environment. The last comprehensive update of the current General Plan occurred almost 30 years ago and was designed to serve the City for 20 years or until 2010.

In August, staff completed a draft General Plan 2040 for public review and comment. The draft General Plan is available on the project website <https://www.alameda2040.org/>. Since the August publication, over 1,500 individuals have provided written suggestions and ideas through on-line surveys, and the Planning Board has held the first three of four public forums scheduled for the review of the first Draft General Plan. Approximately 75-80 people have attended each forum. In addition, staff continues to meet with a wide variety of organizations and groups. The following organizations and groups have met with staff and have submitted or are in the process of submitting comments on first draft: Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth and their Families, Social Service Human Relations Board, Downtown Alameda Business Association, Rotary Club of Alameda, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society, Commission on Persons with Disabilities, Alameda Point Collaborative, Transportation Commission, Community Action for a Sustainable Alameda (CASA), Alameda Renters Coalition, Bike Walk Alameda, the League of Women Voters, and the Alameda Chamber of Commerce.

Staff plans to continue to receive comments on the first Draft General Plan until January 1, 2021 through online surveys and group meetings. Staff has begun the preparation of the second Draft General Plan, which incorporates comments received to date from the Planning Board, the public, and other boards and commissions. Staff hopes to publish the second Draft General Plan and the Draft Environmental Impact Report in late February or early March 2021.

**Four Main Themes:** Chapter 1 of the draft General Plan describes the four major themes that run throughout the entire General Plan. The four themes are:

1. **Developing a healthy, equitable and inclusive city.** This is a new theme for the General Plan. The 1991 General Plan themes did not address health, equity or inclusivity as an overarching goal of the General Plan. This theme is implemented in policies in each element addressing the need to provide for housing, service, open space, safety, and transportation needs of all segments of the community, irrespective of income, race, cultural background, or physical ability. The associated survey related to this theme on the website focuses on a sampling of seven (7) policies in the General Plan that address the implementation of this theme.
2. **Preservation and enhancement of Alameda’s unique historic neighborhood character.** The draft General Plan continues the 1991 General Plan theme regarding the importance of

embracing and supporting Alameda's island environment and preserving Alameda's unique architectural and historic neighborhood character. The updated theme acknowledges that these goals must be achieved in a manner that is consistent with the goal of meeting regional and local housing and climate change objectives. The associated survey provides a sample of key policies related to this theme.

3. **Protecting the environment, responding to the climate crisis & meeting regional responsibilities.** This theme is also new to the Alameda General Plan. The 1991 General Plan themes did not include protection of the environment as an overarching goal and it did not consider the impacts of global climate change as an issue that needed to be addressed. The General Plan policies recognize that to protect the environment, Alameda must not only reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and transform its transportation system (which produces over 70% of the community's greenhouse gas emissions), but also must do its part to help the region meet its sustainability goals, including providing for the housing, economic, and service needs of all segments of society and future generations. The associated survey provides a sample of the key policies related to this theme.
4. **Enhancing mobility, accessibility and life on an island.** This theme builds on the 1991 General Plan theme calling for the "de-emphasis on the automobile" as the primary strategy to improve transportation and mobility in Alameda. The General Plan includes the need to address making streets safer, protecting the environment, providing enhanced access to the waterfront and open spaces, and embracing the island setting as essential to improving life on our island. The associated survey provides a sample of the key policies related to this theme.

## DISCUSSION:

### **Planning Board Forum #4: Enhancing mobility, accessibility and life on an island.**

Improving mobility and transportation options for all Alamedans and doing it in a manner that is equitable, reduces impacts on the environment and climate change, and preserves the character of Alameda is the fourth and final theme of the General Plan. To achieve this goal, General Plan 2040 focuses on four main policy objectives:

- Improving convenience and safety for people walking and bicycling;
- Improving transit;
- Reducing vehicle trips by building transit oriented, pedestrian friendly, mixed use development; and
- Reducing commute hour traffic by increasing employment opportunities in Alameda.

Improving convenience and safety for people walking and bicycling. Commonly referred to as "active transportation", walking and bicycling are the two most equitable forms of transportation, the two most environmentally sensitive modes of transportation, and the two forms of transportation that are most compatible with Alameda's historic, pedestrian oriented street grid and pedestrian and bicycle friendly topography. The following policies from the Mobility Element, Conservation and Climate Action Element and Land Use and City Design Element exemplify these General Plan policy objectives.

**Mobility Element Policy ME-3:**

**Equitable and Inclusive Transportation Planning.** Consider the needs of the most vulnerable communities when prioritizing public investments and improvements to the transportation system.

**Actions:**

**Equity.** Ensure opportunities for participation and actions to improve mobility for Alameda's low-income, senior, youth, and disadvantaged communities from environmental and climate change impacts.

**Assessments.** Identify neighborhoods with high levels of social vulnerability in order to prioritize locations for action and improvements.

**Legislative Agenda.** Support strong regulatory efforts to prioritize safety for people walking or biking, and reduce creation of tiered access to transportation options based on socio-economic status.

**Environmental Justice.** Ensure the fair treatment and meaningful participation of all people regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, socioeconomic status, or geographic location when considering the environmental impacts of transportation facilities and services.

**Mobility Element Policy ME-13:**

**Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel.** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on single occupancy vehicles, improve public health and safety, and enhance quality of life by making Alameda a city where people of all ages, abilities, income levels and backgrounds can safely, conveniently, and comfortably walk and bike to their destinations.

**Actions:**

**Community.** Foster a strong culture of walking and bicycling.

**Connectivity and Comfort.** Develop a well-connected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that are comfortable and convenient for people of all ages and abilities.

**Equity.** Ensure that comfortable bicycle and pedestrian facilities are implemented equitably throughout the city.

**Safety.** Increase the safety of all people bicycling and walking by improving the design of streets, enforcing traffic laws, and educating the public.

**Sidewalks.** Provide wider sidewalks in areas with higher pedestrian volumes to accommodate persons with disabilities, sidewalk cafes and other pedestrian friendly activities. Discourage the installation of fixed barriers for sidewalk cafes that permanently narrow effective sidewalk width when alternative methods are feasible.

**Bicycle Lanes.** Provide separated bicycle lanes instead of unprotected, standard bicycle lanes, unless not feasible.

**Street Trees.** Add street trees to provide shade, a more pleasant walking and bicycling environment, and to sequester greenhouse gases. Avoid tree species with aggressive roots that may cause sidewalk damage.

### ***Conservation and Climate Action Element Policy CC-9.***

***Climate Friendly Active Modes of Transportation.*** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by improving the local roadway network to support all modes and specifically encourage walking and bicycling.

#### ***Actions:***

- ***Active Transportation Plans.*** Maintain, regularly update and implement bicycle and pedestrian improvement plans identified in the Mobility Element of the General Plan, the Transportation Choices Plan and the Active Transportation Plan.

- ***Prioritize safety.*** Create a safe environment for bicycling and walking by establishing a goal of zero annual fatalities and severe injuries for bicyclists and pedestrians using Alameda's roadway network.

***Complete streets.*** Ensure that all streets are designed to provide a safe and convenient environment for all modes, including bicyclists and pedestrians and adequately maintain sidewalk conditions to avoid tripping hazards.

***Safe routes to school.*** Increase walking and biking to school by developing and improving safe routes to schools and out-of-school programs.

***Mobility for all.*** Prioritize roadway network improvements that increase mobility and equitable access for all residents, especially low-income individuals, youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and other vulnerable residents.

***Connectivity and Inclusiveness.*** Connect neighborhoods and major destinations such as parks, open spaces, civic facilities, employment centers, retail and recreation areas with pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Prohibit sound walls, gates and other barriers that separate neighborhoods and decrease physical and visual connectivity throughout the City.

***Access to the shoreline.*** Expand and improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the waterfront and recreational facilities throughout Alameda.

***Access to Oakland.*** Improve connections for all modes, including bicycle and pedestrian connections to Oakland.

***West Alameda to Jack London Square Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge.*** Continue to work with Oakland, Caltrans, the Alameda County Transportation Commission, the State of California, and the US Coast Guard to design, fund, and construct a bike and pedestrian bridge from West Alameda to Jack London Square in Oakland.

### ***Land Use and City Design Element Policy LU-2.***

***Safe, Pedestrian and Bicycle Friendly Transit Oriented Streets.*** Provide safe streets that enhance mobility and accessibility for everyone, support bicycling and walking, reduce vehicle miles traveled and automobile congestion, and support Alameda's goal of becoming a net-zero emissions community.

**Actions:**

**Maintain Historic Street Grid.** Maintain and, where possible, extend Alameda's historic street grid to promote convenient, safe and walkable neighborhoods and districts with inter-connected well-designed streets.

**Enhance the Pedestrian-Friendly Environment.** Provide pedestrian amenities such as wide sidewalks, street shade trees, pedestrian lighting, bus benches and shelters, and other pedestrian amenities to accommodate pedestrians and promote walking, strolling, window-shopping and sidewalk dining. Promote opportunities for community interaction and encourage a sense of collective ownership of common areas.

**Improve Connectivity.** Connect neighborhoods and major destinations such as parks, open spaces, civic facilities, employment centers, retail and recreation areas with pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Prohibit sound walls, gates and other barriers that separate neighborhoods and decrease physical and visual connectivity.

**Achieve Vision Zero.** Promote street designs and landscape enhancements that help to eliminate traffic related fatalities and severe injuries on Alameda streets.

**Provide Well-Designed Pedestrian Crosswalks and Crossings.** Provide safe and clearly marked crosswalks. Minimize curb cuts and driveways that cross public sidewalks and bicycle facilities.

**Enhance Bicycle Safety.** Provide protected bicycle lanes wherever feasible.

**25 Miles per Hour.** Increase public safety and reduce fatalities and serious injuries on-streets by reducing automobile travel speeds to 25 miles per hour or less on all City streets and 15 miles per hour in school zones. To reduce travel speeds, minimize travel lane widths to 10 feet, and on truck routes, major transit routes, commercial districts, to 11 feet wherever possible.

**Fire Safety Access.** Provide access for fire safety vehicles. When more than 20 feet is necessary for aerial fire apparatus access, provide the additional street width space only where necessary. Minimize unnecessary lane width wherever possible to reduce travel speeds and the severity of traffic related injuries.

**Provide Traffic Calming.** Utilize sidewalk bulbouts, traffic circles, and other physical features to reduce vehicle speed and the frequency of collisions between automobiles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

**Prioritize Pedestrian, Bicycle and Transit Improvements.** When space is needed for pedestrian, bicycle, or transit improvements, prioritize safety and transit efficiency over the need for on-street parking.

Improving Transit: Alameda's street grid, network of interconnected neighborhoods and adjoining commercial streets were originally developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the advent of the personal automobile. Alameda was developed as a city where people traveled by foot, by bicycle, by ferry, and by commuter rail. As stated in a popular 1888 real estate poster for Alameda published by the Alameda Daily Argus (copies available from the Alameda Museum), Alameda 132 years ago boasted two commuter rail lines crossing the length of the island. According to the Argus, with 15 local stops, every property in Alameda was a 3 minute walk from a rail station. In addition, Alameda residents in 1888 enjoyed excellent

transit service to San Francisco. According to the Argus, the trip to San Francisco from Alameda only took 30 minutes and ferries left every 15 minutes all day long until midnight.

General Plan 2040 policies recognize that improving transit across the island and across the water is instrumental to Alameda's ability to improve mobility for everyone, protect the environment, and maintain Alameda's historic pedestrian and transit oriented character. For example:

***Mobility Element Policy ME-6***

***Cross Estuary Travel.*** Work with Oakland, regional, state, and federal agencies to design, fund, construct and operate improved cross-estuary travel for all modes of travel.

***Actions:***

***Maintain and Upgrade Bridges and Tubes.*** Work with Alameda County and Caltrans to ensure the maintenance and operations of Alameda's bridges and tubes; including the upgrade of the Miller-Sweeney Bridge to a lifeline, multi-modal facility; the addition or enhancement of walking and bicycling facilities on the Park and High Street Bridges; and the removal of the Fruitvale Railroad Bridge.

***Transit-Only Lanes.*** Consider transit only lanes on the bridges and in the tubes to support faster and more convenient bus transit service from Alameda to the region.

***Congestion Pricing.*** Consider congestion pricing strategies at Estuary crossings as a means to reduce peak hour automobile congestion and create a funding source for transportation system improvements.

***West Alameda to Jack London Square Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridge.*** Continue to work with Oakland, Caltrans, the Alameda County Transportation Commission, the State of California, and the US Coast Guard to design, fund, and construct a bike and pedestrian bridge from West Alameda to Jack London Square in Oakland.

***Water Transit to Oakland.*** Pursue design, funding and the operation of frequent, low or zero-cost, publicly accessible water shuttles from Alameda's northern waterfront to Oakland waterfront locations.

***BART to Alameda.*** Pursue construction of a BART station in Alameda as part of a second Transbay BART tunnel between Oakland and San Francisco.

***Conservation and Climate Action Element Policy CC-10***

***Transit Use.*** Reduce automobile greenhouse gas emissions by increasing transit use.

***Actions:***

***Partnerships.*** Collaborate and partner with AC Transit, Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA), BART, community groups, and employers to provide expanded and more convenient transit services throughout the community as well as to downtown Oakland, San Francisco, and the BART system.

**Convenience and Frequency.** Work with AC Transit to provide convenient and frequent bus service within a 1/4 mile of every Alameda residence and business during normal commute hours.

**Alameda Easy Pass.** Work with AC Transit and WETA to develop and fund an “Alameda EasyPass” program that would provide every Alameda resident with a pass for use on any bus or ferry.

**Transit Connections.** Improve connections between bus transit and water transit facilities and services, such as a cross-town bus service connecting east and west Alameda to the Ferry Terminal services at Alameda Point.

**Oakland Connections.** Establish water shuttle service to connect commuters, pedestrians and bicyclists to Oakland and reduce the need to use automobiles to cross the estuary.

**Transit Priority.** Evaluate the creation of signal priority lanes, transit-only lanes, and queue jump lanes to make transit more efficient and effective.

**Last Mile Connections.** Consider improvements that will increase last-mile access to major transportation nodes.

**Alameda BART.** Continue to work with BART to include an Alameda BART station in the design of BART’s plan for a second San Francisco Bay crossing connecting Oakland and San Francisco.

#### **Mobility Element Policy ME-12:**

**Environmentally Friendly Transportation.** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing reliance on the single occupancy vehicle and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

#### **Actions:**

**High Occupancy Transit Vehicles.** Support and expand transit options by constructing dedicated bus lanes, bus queue jump lanes, and expanding Easy Pass programs. Consider high occupancy vehicle lanes on major commute routes such as Webster Street, Constitution Way, Park Street, Tilden Avenue, and High Street, and at the entrances to the bridges and tubes.

**Water Transit Vehicles.** Support and expand ferry and water shuttle services from Alameda to San Francisco, Oakland, and other locations throughout the Bay Area. Consider the use of hydrofoil craft for access to locations along the south shore of Alameda.

**Active Transportation.** Support and expand pedestrian and bicycle facilities such as protected bike lanes, improved estuary crossings, and safety improvements.

**Transportation Demand Management.** Require on- and offsite transportation improvements and transportation demand management programs in all new development to reduce the impact of additional automobile trips, VMT, and greenhouse gas emissions.

**Shared EV charging stations.** Increase availability of shared, publicly accessible EV charging stations citywide, including for bicycles. Ensure that all developments with new parking lots include EV charging stations for residents and/or customers.

**Permitting EV charging stations.** Maintain streamlined permitting processes for existing homeowners and business owners who wish to install charging stations.

**City fleet.** Convert the City's vehicle fleet to zero- or low-emission vehicles, including electric bicycles, as technology becomes available, and right-size the fleet.

### **Land Use and City Design Policy LU-33**

**Parking Design.** To maintain the historic character of Alameda and reduce the impact of automobile parking and automobile trips on the environment, design parking facilities in a manner that de-emphasizes the automobile in the urban environment.

**Size.** Minimize the size and amount of land dedicated to off-street parking. Require shared use and active management of parking areas to minimize the size of parking lots.

**Location.** Place parking inside, below, or behind buildings. Do not place parking between the building and the public right of way or the waterfront.

**Landscape and Screening.** Parking areas should be well landscaped with shade trees to reduce heat island effects from expansive asphalt surfaces and to screen cars from view.

**Charging Stations and Solar Panels.** Require charging stations and encourage solar panels in parking lots.

### Transit Oriented, Mixed Use Development.

Higher density, mixed use buildings located near existing transit generate less automobile trips per unit than lower density, single family, suburban-style buildings. For example, on average, Harbor Bay residents drive further and more often each day than residents of the higher density, mixed use neighborhoods on the main island, according to per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) data from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

The two General Plan 2040 policies highlighted below recognize that as Alameda works to build new housing to address regional and local housing needs, Alameda should encourage and support higher density, mixed use projects in areas in close proximity to existing transit and commercial services. By doing so, Alameda will reduce automobile vehicle miles traveled, reduce automobile congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support additional transit service and increased number of trips done by walking and bicycling.

**Policy CC-12 Climate-Friendly, Transit-Oriented Development:** Reduce automobile use and vehicle miles traveled by new residents by requiring transit oriented, medium and high density mixed use development on transit and commercial corridors and near ferry terminals in Alameda.

### **Actions:**

**Residential Density.** When zoning property for residential or residential mixed use, zone for medium and high density housing and prohibit low density housing to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions from new housing in Alameda.

**Commercial Intensity.** When zoning property for commercial use, allow for higher floor area ratio (FAR) when proximate to transit or planned transit.



***Parking Requirements.*** Revise off-street parking requirements to replace minimum requirements with maximum requirements to limit the amount of onsite parking allowed with each development to reduce automobile trips and automobile ownership in each residential development.

***Transportation Demand Management Ordinance.*** Prepare and adopt a Transportation Demand Management Ordinance requiring new development to actively address the mobility of new residents and employees, including but not limited to contributing to annual operations and capital improvements for supplemental transit, water shuttle, land based shuttle services and improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian network.

#### ***Land Use and City Design Element Policy LU-15***

***Transit-Oriented Infill Development.*** Promote and support dense mixed-use infill development on vacant and underutilized parcels in the Mixed-Use, Community Mixed-Use, Neighborhood Mixed-Use, and Medium-Density Residential areas.

#### ***Actions:***

***Multifamily and Affordable Housing.*** Preserve lands in transit-oriented, mixed-use locations for multifamily and affordable housing.

***Transit Support.*** Require that major new developments include transportation services and facilities to support transit and alternative modes of transportation and reduce automobile use.

***Parking Requirements:*** Revise parking requirements for new development to reduce automobile ownership and dependency as well as housing construction costs.

***Commute Hour Traffic.*** Alameda is a largely residential community, and most employed residents work off-island on a typical 9 to 5, five day a week schedule. As a result, Alameda has suffered from commute hour traffic leaving in the morning and returning in the evening. General Plan 2040 recognizes that by increasing employment opportunities on-island for Alameda residents and increasing opportunities for residents to work from home will reduce commute hour traffic, reduce vehicle miles traveled and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

#### ***Land Use and City Design Element Policy LU-8***

***On-Island Employment.*** Increase on-island employment opportunities to reduce commute hour congestion and greenhouse gas emissions by Alameda residents.

#### ***Actions:***

***Economic Development Strategic Plan.*** Focus economic development resources and initiatives on expanding and attracting business sectors identified in the Strategic Plan.

***Life sciences businesses.*** Retain, grow, attract, and support innovative companies and industries in life sciences including, but not limited to, research, related advanced device manufacturing, and medical manufacturing.

***Green Tech, Clean Tech, and High Tech Businesses.*** Retain, grow, attract, and support innovative companies and industries, clean and sustainable technologies, fuels, vehicles and

*equipment, including software and computer technology, alternative energy, and other advanced manufacturing businesses.*

***Maritime Businesses.*** *Support and expand maritime commercial, industrial, and recreational businesses and uses. Support blue technology and maritime businesses, including commercial maritime businesses, ship building and repair, recreational marinas, and “blue tech” research and development, engineering, software, and advanced manufacturing. Support restaurants and retail stores and on-water access opportunities (e.g. floating docks with picnic tables and transient boat docks where appropriate) on waterfront sites.*

***Retail businesses, restaurants, and hotels.*** *Support expansion of retail, restaurants, and visitor supporting uses, such as hotels. Allow for a hotel of up to four stories and 220 rooms plus conference rooms, with improvements and maintenance of the 6.5-acre shoreline parcel for public open space.*

***Arts and Makers.*** *Support the arts in Alameda and creation of public art in new development.*

### ***Conservation and Climate Action Element Policy CC-13***

***Climate Friendly Employment Commute Behavior.*** *Encourage residents to telecommute or work from home to reduce commute trips, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce commute hour congestion.*

#### ***Actions:***

***Home Occupations.*** *Consider municipal code amendments to allow for a wider variety of “home occupation permit” types in residential zoning districts.*

***Work Live.*** *Support and encourage “work-live” developments in commercial zoning districts.*

***Telecommuting Work Sites.*** *Improve accessibility within Alameda to telecommuting workplaces, such as cafes, libraries, community centers and parks.*

### ***Questions for the Planning Board:***

- Does the Planning Board endorse the inclusion of Theme #4 in the General Plan?
- If yes, does the Planning Board wish to modify or expand the theme in any way?
- Does the Planning Board endorse the policy directions articulated by the policies highlighted in the survey and in this staff report?
- Does the Planning Board wish to modify or revise policies in any way?

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Thomas, Planning, Building and Transportation Director

Exhibits 1-8: Survey Results Received to date.