

## General Plan Update - Public Forum #1: Developing a healthy, equitable, and inclusive City

### BACKGROUND

Maintenance of an up-to-date and internally consistent General Plan is a requirement of State Law. The General Plan must be 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 in 1991. The 1991 Plan was designed to serve the City for 20 years or until 2010.

In August, the staff/consultant General Plan Update team 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/>. As described on the website and in a postcard delivered to every Alameda household in August, the City of Alameda is encouraging all Alameda residents and businesses to participate in the General Plan update process.

From August through December, the Planning Board and staff will be taking public comment on the first Draft General Plan. The public is invited to review and comment on the General Plan through on-line surveys and by submitting written comments. The four surveys focus on the four main themes or goals that run through the entire draft General Plan. In addition, four public forums hosted by the Planning Board are scheduled through the end of 2020. The subject matter for each forum reflects one of the four major General Plan themes:

1. **Developing a healthy, equitable and inclusive city.** (September 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM.)
2. **Preservation and enhancement of Alameda’s unique historic neighborhood character.** (October 12, 2020 at 7:00 PM.)
3. **Protecting the environment, responding to the climate crisis locally and regionally.** (November 9, 2020 at 7:00 PM.)
4. **Enhancing mobility, accessibility and life on an island.** (December 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM.)

In November, the voters in Alameda will decide whether to retain a citywide prohibition on multifamily housing and residential densities over 21 units per acre in the City Charter. The Planning Board’s review of the General Plan will be further informed by the voter’s November decision regarding Measure Z.

The Planning Board’s final recommendations to the City Council on the draft General Plan will likely occur in the spring of 2021 after conclusion of the forums and consideration of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that will be published this fall.

Reviewing and Commenting on the Draft General Plan. The General Plan website at <https://www.alameda2040.org/> is the central location for the community review of the draft General Plan. On the General Plan website, the public may:

- Review the Draft General Plan as a single PDF or as individual chapters.
- Review the current General Plan for comparative purposes.
- Complete one or more of four surveys about key General Plan policies related to the four main themes that run through the General Plan.
- Participate in four scheduled virtual public forums related to the four main themes.
- Submit comments and suggested revisions to the General Plan.
- Join the General Plan update email list for notifications on the process and updates.

Four Main Themes: Similar to the 1991 General Plan, Chapter 1 of the draft General Plan describes the four major themes that run throughout the entire General Plan. The four themes are:

- **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 eight (8) policies in the General Plan that address the implementation of this theme.
- **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 in each element related to this theme.
- **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 in each element related to this theme.
- **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 in each element related to this theme.

Four Surveys. The website includes four surveys. The City will keep the surveys open and available to the public throughout the next four months. The information received from the surveys will help inform the Planning Board's review of the draft General Plan and inform the content and focus of the four public forums. Since launching the website, over 379 people have taken the first survey. The first survey asked eight questions related to the General Plan. Exhibit 1 provides information about the 379 people who have responded to date. Exhibits 2 through 9 provide information about each of the eight questions asked.

Based upon the early results of the survey, it is apparent that the City needs to work harder to engage specific segments of the community in this process. Based upon the first 2 weeks of the survey results, it appears that:

- Lower income residents are underrepresented in the survey results received to date.
- Youth (under 25) are significantly underrepresented and seniors (over 65) may be underrepresented.
- The Black, Asian, and Hispanic communities are underrepresented.

The staff/consultant team is currently developing strategies to target increased participation by underrepresented segments of the community in this process, such as reaching out to specific groups, organizations and the Alameda Unified School District to encourage engagement in General Plan update process. With each monthly public forum, staff will update the participation and demographic survey data in Exhibit 1, which will allow the Planning Board and community to track progress toward achieving a fully representative and inclusive public process for the General Plan update.

Four Forums Each forum is an opportunity for the community and the Planning Board to review and discuss the adequacy and appropriateness of each theme and a sampling of key policies that implement and support that theme. At the end of the public forum, staff would like the Planning Board to address four questions:

1. *Does the Planning Board endorse the inclusion of the theme in the General Plan?*
2. *If yes, does the Planning Board wish to modify or expand the theme in any way?*
3. *Does the Planning Board endorse the policy directions articulated by the draft policies highlighted in the survey and in this staff report?*
4. *Does the Planning Board wish to modify, clarify or revise the policies in any way?*

Based upon the feedback from the community and the Planning Board, staff will be able to revise the draft General Plan to better reflect the policy goals of the Planning Board and community. These revisions will not be limited to the few sample policies highlighted in the survey or at the forum. Instead, staff will use this policy direction to review all of the policies in each element to ensure that all policies reflect the policy direction provided by the Planning Board and that the General Plan is internally consistent, as required by State Law.

## DISCUSSION:

### **Planning Board Forum #1: Developing a healthy, equitable and inclusive city.**

The Equity Theme: The Introduction Chapter to the General Plan highlights the four themes that guide and interconnect all of the policies in all seven of the elements of the General Plan. The first theme reads as follows:

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**Developing a healthy, equitable and diverse city**

Alameda is a community of people. The General Plan policies ensure that Alameda continues to strive to be a place that is safe, healthy and provides a high quality of life for everyone irrespective of income, race, cultural background or physical abilities.

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Ensuring for the safety, health and high quality of life for all residents irrespective of income race, cultural background or physical ability as an overarching goal of the General Plan is a new theme for the Alameda General Plan. To implement this theme, the draft General Plan includes policies that address the need to:

- Provide for the housing, service, open space, safety, and transportation needs for all segments of the community irrespective of race, income, ability, age or cultural background;
- Establish that the needs of all segments of the community should be provided for in every Alameda neighborhood, and not segregated or limited to certain neighborhoods; and
- Ensure that all segments of the community are involved in city decision making processes regarding community needs and services.

Housing Equity: No single issue is more central to being an inclusive and equitable community than the challenge of providing housing for all those who need it, especially those with limited income.

The General Plan supports provision of housing for all segments of the community and commits the City to meeting its local and regional housing needs.

Under State law, the General Plan must be consistent with State Housing Law, and the General Plan must accommodate the State mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation or “RHNA”. Therefore, the General Plan must provide for housing for all segments of the community, if it is to be a legally adequate General Plan under State Law.

A number of respondents to the survey argued that the City should not allow any more housing to be built in Alameda until or unless other citywide issues, such as inadequate infrastructure, transportation congestion, or crime are addressed. The issues of infrastructure, transportation and crime are real issues that need to be addressed, but State Housing Law does not allow the City of Alameda to decide that important local issues are more important than the statewide need for housing. Therefore, the City cannot adopt General Plan policies halting housing development until such time that other local issues are addressed and still maintain a legally adequate General Plan.

The following goals and policies from the Housing Element represent the General Plan's overarching policy direction regarding the importance of meeting the local and regional housing need, but also ensure that we provide for housing for all members of the community irrespective of income race, cultural background or physical ability.

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**Goal #1: Provide housing services and opportunities to support, maintain, and enhance Alameda's diverse community and excellent quality of life and provide for the housing needs of Alameda's future residents and regional housing needs.**

**Policy HE-1:** Support public and private efforts to increase the supply of housing in Alameda consistent with the City's environmental, climate action, transportation, historic preservation, and economic development policy objectives.

**Goal #2: Provide housing that meets the City's diverse housing needs, specifically including affordable housing, special needs housing, and senior housing.**

**Policy HE-2:** Expand the City's supply of affordable rental and ownership housing for extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income households.

**Policy HE-3:** Create rental, homeownership, and other housing opportunities for special needs populations such as the elderly, homeless and people at risk of becoming homeless, people with physical and/or developmental disabilities, single-parent households, and young adults.

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**Neighborhood Equity:** The General Plan policies are designed to guide the development of new housing so that it is done in a manner that meets not only the State requirements, but also the City's local transportation, climate change, architectural and neighborhood character preservation objectives, as well as its inclusiveness and equity objectives.

From an equity perspective, a critical issue that Alameda is facing currently and will likely continue to face in future years is the issue of neighborhood equity. As shown in the survey, a number of respondents support equity and inclusion, provided that certain types of housing and households are not accommodated in their neighborhood. Other respondents talked about a history of redlining and more recent concerns that all new low income housing is being concentrated in west end neighborhoods. The ongoing struggles and resistance to the Wellness Center on McKay is a current example of Alameda residents arguing that they support housing for formerly homeless, but it should not be located in their neighborhood.

Land Use and City Design policy LU-1 states that the housing, open space, and service needs of all segments of our community should be accommodated in all neighborhoods in Alameda and not segregated or directed to one neighborhood if we are to achieve an inclusive and diverse community.

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**LU-1**

**Complete and Sustainable Neighborhoods.** Maintain complete and connected neighborhoods that support a mix of uses and meet the needs of residents of all ages, physical abilities, and incomes.

**Actions:**

- **Family-Friendly Neighborhoods.** *In all neighborhoods, provide equitable access to parks and recreation facilities, community services, public facilities, schools, child care facilities, and amenities.*
- **Parks and Open Space.** *Maintain a comprehensive and integrated system of parks, trails, open space, and commercial recreation facilities within a safe and comfortable 1/4 mile walk from all neighborhoods.*
- **Affordable Housing.** *In all neighborhoods, provide housing opportunities for all income levels, ages and family types and sizes. Provide both “for-rent” and “for-sale” affordable housing units.*
- **Accessory Dwelling Units.** *In all neighborhoods, allow for accessory, in-law or secondary units to provide affordable housing opportunities for seniors and small households.*
- **Shared Housing.** *In all neighborhoods, allow for shared housing opportunities, including co-housing, congregate housing, senior assisted living, single room occupancy housing, transitional housing, emergency warming shelters, and shelters for the homeless.*
- **Cottage Business and Home Occupations.** *Allow employment and business opportunities by permitting “cottage businesses”, home occupations, and live-work opportunities in all neighborhoods to reduce distances between home and work and home and shopping.*
- **Local Food.** *Allow for farmers’ markets, fresh food stands and community gardens to supplement the availability of healthy food throughout the City.*
- **Prohibit Barriers.** *Prohibit land use regulations that are not equitable or that are exclusionary.*

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Thinking Regionally, Acting Locally. Many of the local issues that respondents highlighted (climate change, transportation, and infrastructure) as reasons to limit housing, are in fact regional issues. The General Plan policies recognize that if the City acts locally in a manner that is consistent with regional plans to address climate change, transportation, affordable housing, then the city will be better able to leverage regional initiatives and regional funds to improve local conditions.

Policy LU-14 recognizes and reinforces the policy direction that to successfully address the global climate change crises, the City must act both locally and regionally. Working regionally means providing a fair share of the region’s housing needs in Alameda, consistent with the Regional Sustainable Communities Strategy to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions.

Land Use and City Design Policy LU-14 states that, consistent with regional plans, new housing should be developed and designed as climate friendly, multi-family, transit oriented designs that generate less greenhouse gas emissions and less automobile trips than traditional, single family, low density homes.

It is important to emphasize that this policy emphasis on higher density, transit oriented development and de-emphasis on low density single family housing development is consistent with the City’s 2019 Climate Action Plan and 2017 Transportation Choices Plan, but it is in direct contrast to, and a significant policy shift from the 1991 General Plan.



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**LU-14**

**Planning for Climate Change.** Prepare for climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions regionally and locally.

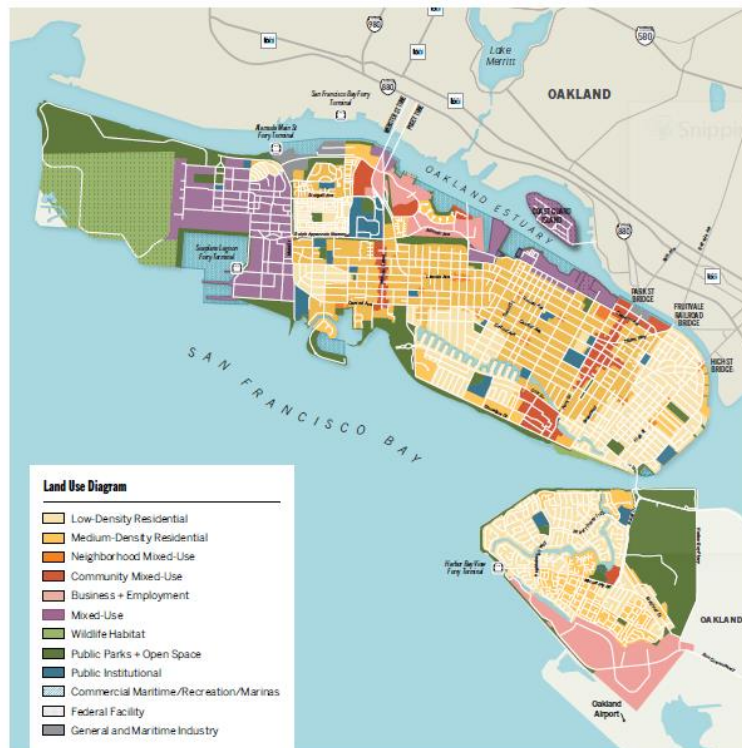
**Actions:**

- **Sustainable Communities Strategy.** *Maintain consistency between the City's General Plan, the Municipal Code and Plan Bay Area, the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy to reduce greenhouse gases.*
  - **State and Regional Programs.** *Support and participate in state and regional efforts to address climate change through greenhouse gas emission reduction, transportation system improvements, and increased affordable housing supply near job centers and existing transportation infrastructure.*
  - **Local Sustainable Development and Design.** *In Priority Development Areas (PDA's), plan for and support transit-oriented, mixed-use, compact development patterns, with higher residential densities, jobs, shopping, and transit within easy walking distance to reduce automobile dependence and greenhouse gas emissions.*
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Accommodating New Housing while Preserving Alameda's Unique Character. The second theme in the General Plan is the "Preservation and enhancement of Alameda's unique historic neighborhood character". Land Use and City Design Element Policy LU-17 recognizes that land is available in Alameda to accommodate our regional housing needs over the next 20 years, and that the additional housing can be accommodated in Alameda without changing the fundamental character of Alameda's existing historic neighborhoods.

Policy LU-17 identifies the areas in Alameda that can accommodate future housing development to meet the State-mandated RHNA over the next 20 years. Per State Law, the City needs to update its Housing Element every eight years for the next 20 years (in 2022, 2030, and 2038). LU-17 identifies the sites necessary for each of those future updates. Each Housing Element update can then focus on which sites are the most appropriate and available to meet the RHNA over the next 8 years.

As stated in LU-14 and LU-17, the draft General Plan directs new housing to Alameda's two regionally-designated priority development areas at the former Naval Air Station lands at Alameda Point, the former industrial lands along the northern waterfront, and to the Park Street and Webster Street commercial transit corridors. The references to "Mixed Use", "Commercial Mixed Use", and "Moderate Density Residential" areas are references to the land use classifications on the Land Use Diagram in the General Plan.



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#### **LU-17**

**Housing Opportunity Areas.** Provide opportunities for new housing and appropriately zoned property to accommodate the regional and local housing need consistent with the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy, in Mixed-Use, Community Mixed-use, and vacant sites within the Medium-Density Residential areas.

##### *Mixed Use Sites*

*Alameda Point, Alameda Landing, Northern Waterfront, College of Alameda, and Coast Guard Island*

##### *Community Mixed Use Sites*

*Webster Street corridor north of Lincoln and Marina Village Shopping Center, and Park Street corridor north of Lincoln and South shore Shopping Center*

##### *Medium Density Residential Sites*

*North Housing and Tilden Avenue vacant sites*

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**Staff Initial Findings:** Based upon the early results of the survey, staff's initial conclusions are that:

- Alameda residents support a General Plan goal of creating a healthy, equitable and inclusive city. The theme should be retained in the draft General Plan

Many Alameda residents feel we have a long way to go to achieving a healthy, equitable and inclusive city for all income groups and all people of color. Approximately 40% of respondents believe that Alameda is not a community that is doing a good job to ensure a healthy, safe and inclusive environment, for people of color or lower income residents. Many Alameda residents feel that people of color are treated differently than white residents in Alameda by other residents and by the City of Alameda.

- The General Plan must include clear and strong policies regarding housing, because housing policy remains such an issue of disagreement in Alameda.
- Although a number of Alameda residents argue that the City should not build any more housing until certain infrastructure, transportation, or other challenges are overcome, a legally adequate General Plan cannot choose to ignore or postpone the housing needs of a growing region and the housing needs of its own lower income residents. The General Plan must provide for the regional housing needs, despite local challenges related to transportation, infrastructure, or crime.
- The policies highlighted in the survey represent a strong policy position, but they could be improved with additional specificity and specific measures or metrics to enable the community to measure progress.
- The General Plan should include additional policies regarding equity, inclusion, and discrimination related to public safety, policing, and schools.
- The transportation, infrastructure, crime, and safety issues raised by several respondents to the survey cannot and should not be ignored. Just as the General Plan must address the housing crises, the General Plan must address the transportation, infrastructure, safety and crime issues. The Mobility Element, the Climate Action and Conservation Element, and the Safety Element include policies and programs to address these issues. These policies will be the subject of the third and fourth public forums and should be carefully reviewed by staff and the Planning Board.

**Questions for the Planning Board:**

- Does the Planning Board endorse the inclusion of Theme #1 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 1-9: Survey Results Received to date.