

# 1 Introduction

The City of Piedmont is renowned throughout the San Francisco Bay Area for its beautiful neighborhoods, high-quality homes, excellent schools, attractive parks, responsive City services, and small town charm. These qualities have defined the City since its incorporation more than a century ago. They make Piedmont an exceptional place, unique among the cities of the East Bay.

Although Piedmont has been fully developed for more than 50 years, the city continues to face opportunities and challenges associated with growth. On the one hand, Piedmont is remarkably stable. On the other, the city is continuously adapting to new technology, homeowner preferences, demographic shifts, and national trends. New issues—from rising fuel costs to climate change—regularly emerge and require local responses. The City must be forward-thinking as it faces the future. It must plan ahead to preserve the qualities that matter the most to Piedmont residents and to sustain the quality of life in the city.

The Piedmont General Plan is intended to address this need. It sets forth the policies and actions necessary to conserve our neighborhoods and guide change during the coming years. The Plan provides a framework for the City to achieve long-term goals and respond to the expectations of Piedmont residents. These expectations have been clearly articulated by hundreds of Piedmonters over the course of the General Plan Update through surveys, community meetings, and testimony at public hearings.

The General Plan contains the City’s official policies on land use, transportation, housing, natural resources, sustainability, environmental hazards, public services, parks, and community design. Its focus is on the physical form of the city. The Plan is used by the Planning Commission and City Council to evaluate land use changes and to make budget decisions. It is used by staff to guide building and development. It is used by private citizens to understand the City’s long-range plans for different areas. The Plan also provides the foundation for Piedmont’s zoning regulations.

This document has been prepared to comply with State of California requirements for general plans (see text box), as well as the state’s *General Plan Guidelines*. The Guidelines refer to the general plan as a city’s “constitution” for development. As such, this plan has been designed to be comprehensive in its scope, long-term in its outlook, and internally consistent in its proposals.

The Piedmont General Plan focuses on local issues, but also recognizes the city’s relationship to the rest of the Bay Area. The issues it covers—transportation, affordable housing, air and water quality, and more—are not confined to political boundaries. Although the Plan’s policies focus on Piedmont’s 1.7 square miles, they express the City’s position on broader regional issues that affect Piedmont residents. The relationship between Piedmont and Oakland is particularly important in this regard, given the city’s geography and history.

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## Legal Basis for the General Plan

The General Plan is a legal document and must meet specific State requirements for content. The State Government Code (Sections 65302 and 65303) mandates that each city and county in California have a comprehensive, long-range, internally consistent plan for its future development. The plan must address seven topics, usually referred to as “elements.” The required elements are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, safety, and noise.

Cities can organize the elements as they please, develop their own formats, and add optional elements. Piedmont has added optional elements addressing Design and Preservation, and Community Services and Facilities. The City has combined the safety and noise elements into a single chapter called Environmental Hazards. The City has also expanded its state-mandated Conservation Element to address the broader topic of sustainability.

The relationship between the State-mandated elements and the Piedmont General Plan elements is summarized below.

State-Mandated Element	Corresponding Piedmont General Plan Element
Land Use	Land Use
Circulation	Transportation
Housing	Housing
Open Space	Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
Conservation	Natural Resources and Sustainability
Safety	Environmental Hazards
Noise	
	Design and Preservation
	Community Services and Facilities

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## BACKGROUND

Piedmont approved its first Preliminary Master Plan in 1958. That Plan served the city for 26 years with only a handful of amendments, including the adoption of a Noise Element in 1974 and a Safety Element in 1975.

In 1984, Piedmont adopted a new General Plan that conformed to state requirements. The 1984 Plan was amended in 1987 to include new policies to preserve existing density patterns and limit the creation of second units (in-law apartments). The Plan was amended again in 1992 to include an updated Housing Element.

In 1992, the City initiated a General Plan Update, consolidating some sections of the 1984 Plan and carrying other sections forward with almost no changes. The updated General Plan was adopted by the City Council in January 1996. In 2002, the Plan was amended to add a new Housing Element. The Housing Element was certified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development in 2003.

The 2008 General Plan Update is the first major Plan revision in 12 years. It looks ahead to a horizon year of 2025.

In some respects, this document is an “update” of the 1996 Plan and the 1984 Plan that preceded it. The 2025 General Plan carries forward the fundamental goals of the previous plans, and many of the same policies that have shaped the city for the last 25 years are included. The vision implicit in previous plans—that Piedmont should be sustained as a single family residential community—remains intact.

In other respects, this is a brand new Plan. It differs from its predecessors in some important ways. Its policies are more specific and far-reaching. A new vision for the Civic Center area is included. Additional topics are covered, and new background data has been provided. This is also a more action oriented plan than those that came before it. The City’s progress in implementing this plan can be measured over time.

This Plan also has a different look and feel than the 1996 Plan. It has been formatted to integrate color maps and graphics, making it more readable and understandable. Charts and photos have been included to illustrate key points. The General Plan has been written to be a resource for those who seek information on Piedmont. It is designed to be an educational tool, with useful data about the state of the city. The intent of the Plan is to “tell a story” about Piedmont today and Piedmont in the future.

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### HOW TO USE THE GENERAL PLAN

The Piedmont General Plan has been designed for use by elected and appointed officials, City staff, residents, businesses, service providers, and others with an interest in the future of Piedmont. The fact that so many different users will consult the Plan shapes the way information is presented. Although it is a legal document, the Plan has been written in “plain English” to make it more accessible. Key issues are described with data to make the purpose of the policies more apparent. Text boxes are used to convey background information.

Although many of the topics in the Plan are related, the Plan has been designed to avoid duplication. Cross-references are used throughout the text to direct the reader to other relevant and related sections.

If you are a Piedmont resident, the General Plan indicates the long-range plans and policies that may affect your neighborhood in years to come. The Plan’s Land Use Diagram is a useful starting point, since it shows the different uses permitted in each part of the city. However, it is important to review maps and policies throughout the document to get the full perspective on city plans. Because the Zoning Map implements the General Plan, it also must be consulted when decisions are made on the use of property.

The General Plan will be used as a tool for making local government decisions. It is used by the Planning Commission and City Council to assess development, evaluate capital improvements, and implement new programs and initiatives. Future decisions by the City Council must be consistent with the General Plan. The Plan will also assist other agencies such as Caltrans and East Bay Municipal Utility District as they plan and fund their own capital improvements within Piedmont.

The Plan is also a tool for creating positive change in the city. It identifies dozens of steps the City can take to improve the quality of life and respond to local priorities. Some of these actions are simple, like producing a walking tour brochure or installing a new sign. Others, like reshaping the Civic Center or developing new athletic fields, are more expensive and will take longer to implement

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At the core of the General Plan are a series of goal, policy, and action statements:

- **Goals** describe ideal future conditions for a particular topic such as housing or transportation. Each of the elements has at least one goal statement.
- **Policies** provide guidance to the city as it makes decisions relating to each goal. This document contains several hundred policies, each preceded by a title that indicates the subject being addressed.
- **Actions** identify the specific steps to be taken by the city to implement the policies. These are prioritized and assigned to City departments in the Implementation Element.

The General Plan includes a number of companion documents that may be consulted for further reference. These include: (a) the HCD-submittal Housing Element; (b) the Existing Conditions Report; (c) the Resident Survey Report; and (d) the Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration. The first of these four companion documents is part of the formally adopted Plan. The latter three documents are not part of the adopted Plan but are resources that provide additional detail on Plan topics.

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### HOW THIS PLAN WAS PREPARED

The update of the Piedmont General Plan was initiated in March 2007 following a series of briefings to the Planning Commission and City Council on the status of the 1996 Plan. Many of the prior General Plan's action items had been completed, and the document was ready for an update.

Most of the work on the Plan update was completed over a 15-month period between April 2007 and July 2008. During this time period, new traffic counts were conducted, noise measurements were taken, a citywide land use inventory was performed, and data on public services, community design, and natural resources was collected. An "Existing Conditions Report" documenting this work was prepared.

Community input was an essential part of the process. A citywide workshop was held in June 2007 to review major issues and General Plan goals. The Piedmont Planning Commission conducted five work sessions on the Plan during 2007 and 2008, each focused on a different Plan element or group of elements. Presentations to other City Commissions, including the Parks Commission and the Recreation Commission, were made during the process. All meetings were televised on Piedmont's cable channel (KCOM) and advertised on the city's website. The most extensive public input came from a citywide survey administered in April and May 2007 (see text box). Almost one-third of the city's households responded, providing an invaluable tool for measuring public opinion, priorities, and aspirations for the city's future.

The Draft General Plan was published in December 2008. At the same time, a Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared to comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Public hearings were held during Winter, 2008-09 with additional public input and comment received. The General Plan was adopted by the City Council in April 2009.

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## The General Plan Survey

In April 2007, the City of Piedmont mailed a four-page General Plan survey to every household in the City. The survey included a self-addressed stamped envelope for easy return, and offered the option of responding on-line via a dedicated website. More than 3,800 surveys were mailed and almost 1,300 (34 percent) were completed and returned. The survey provided an opportunity for all Piedmont residents to “weigh in” on the issues being addressed by the General Plan.

The survey included background information on the General Plan, followed by 16 questions. The first three questions were open-ended, asking respondents what they liked best and least about the City and what they would most like to change. The next five questions asked residents to rate their levels of satisfaction with 26 different City services, and to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with various policy choices. Each question had multiple parts, with opportunities for open-ended comments at the end. An open-ended question on sustainability also was included.

The final six questions related to the demographics of the respondents. This helped ensure that the survey represented a diverse cross-section of residents and neighborhoods and was representative of the City as a whole. While survey respondents tended to be older, long-time Piedmont residents, the volume of returns was so high that all groups in the City were represented. Results of the resident survey are cited throughout the General Plan, and quotes from Piedmont residents are used to highlight some of the issues and key points in the document.

The Resident Survey findings were published as a companion document to the General Plan in November 2007.



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### ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The Piedmont General Plan contains 11 chapters. The first two chapters provide the context for the rest of the document. Chapter 3-10 constitute the plan's "elements." Each element includes narrative text about the topics it covers, followed by goals, policies, and actions. The last chapter of the Plan addresses implementation, and includes a "roll-up" of all Plan actions.

An overview of the chapters is provided below:

- **Introduction (Chapter 1)** describes the General Plan process and introduces the reader to the document
- **Framework (Chapter 2)** includes background data on Piedmont and establishes the major themes of the General Plan. The chapter describes Piedmont's history and development, its demographics, and the trends shaping its future.
- **Land Use (Chapter 3)** describes existing land uses and land use issues in the city, and presents concepts for conserving and enhancing Piedmont neighborhoods. The Land Use Element includes the City's Land Use Diagram, which is the official map designating the intended use of land throughout Piedmont over the next 15 years.
- **Transportation (Chapter 4)** addresses mobility and accessibility in the city. It is organized by topical headings corresponding to different modes of travel (e.g., bicycles, walking, buses, autos, etc.), and transportation issues (e.g., parking, traffic safety, etc.).
- **Natural Resources and Sustainability (Chapter 5)** addresses Piedmont's natural environment, including its topography, soils, plants and animals, creeks, and air and water resources. This chapter also addresses environmental sustainability issues in the city, including energy and water conservation, recycling, and "green" building.
- **Environmental Hazards (Chapter 6)** addresses earthquake hazards, landslides, erosion, flooding, and wildfire. The Element describes current hazards, anticipates future hazards, and presents policies to minimize future loss of life and property. The chapter also includes the state-mandated noise element, focusing on policies and programs to minimize excessive noise in the city.



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- **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (Chapter 7)** guides the management of Piedmont's parks and addresses the delivery of recreational services to Piedmont residents. The Element also includes policies and programs to protect open space in the city.
- **Design and Preservation (Chapter 8)** profiles Piedmont's architectural resources, public spaces, and community character. Its policies and programs ensure that new development will conserve and enhance the city's aesthetic qualities, and maintain a strong sense of local identity. This element also recognizes the extensive historic resources in the city, with policies and actions that encourage historic preservation.
- **Community Services and Facilities (Chapter 9)** addresses the provision of police, fire, school, library, child care, senior care, water, sewer, drainage, energy, and telecommunication services to Piedmont residents and businesses. It is organized under topical headings corresponding to these categories. Where appropriate, the Element discusses the capital improvements and programs needed to maintain outstanding public services for Piedmont residents.
- **Housing (Chapter 10)** identifies the steps the city will take to conserve the quality of its housing stock, create opportunities for new affordable housing, and meet the needs of the elderly, disabled, and other groups with special housing needs. This chapter is an executive summary of a companion document (the HCD-submittal Housing Element) which includes more detailed documentation of the city's housing needs, formatted to meet the requirements of state law.
- **Implementation (Chapter 11)** presents a summary of the action items in each of the General Plan elements, along with an overview of the activities the City will undertake to carry out the Plan. These programs include strategic planning, design review, permitting, environmental review, code enforcement, and capital improvement programming, among others.

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### IMPLEMENTING AND AMENDING THE PLAN

The General Plan is intended to be a dynamic document. It will be implemented through a variety of ordinances, programs, and activities. Chapter 11 of the Plan identifies the steps that will be taken to put the Plan to work, including specific actions and ongoing programs and procedures. The chapter categorizes General Plan actions as “ongoing”, “short-term”, “mid-term”, and “long-term”, providing guidance for Piedmont’s decision-makers in the coming years.

Although this Plan uses a horizon year of 2025, the City should not wait until the end of the planning period to begin the next update. General plans must be periodically updated so they remain current and responsive. Some parts of the plan—namely, the Housing Element—must be updated every five years to comply with state law. Other parts of the plan may become outdated as conditions change, actions are completed, new data becomes available, and new issues emerge. An annual review of the General Plan is required to ensure it remains relevant.

Most communities update their plans about once every ten years. In the intervening period, general plan amendments may be considered to respond to new plans, unforeseen conditions or specific development proposals. The State allows up to four general plan amendments a year. All amendments are subject to environmental review, and a finding that the change is in the public interest and would not be detrimental to public health, safety, and welfare.

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