

2 Framework

The Framework chapter serves three important purposes:

First, it provides an overview of Piedmont’s location and history. This establishes the context for the General Plan and provides perspective on Piedmont’s current and future role within the San Francisco Bay Area.

Second, it includes demographic information about the city, including a profile of Piedmont’s population, households, housing stock, employment base, and projections for the future. This data underpins many of the General Plan’s goals, policies, and actions.

Third, the Framework establishes the major themes of the General Plan. The themes are cross-cutting, in that they do not relate to a single element of the Plan but rather to universal ideals about Piedmont’s future.

Unlike the subsequent elements of the General Plan, the Framework chapter does not contain policies and actions. Its intent is to provide the foundation for the rest of the Plan.

“What I like best about Piedmont is its central location, its residential character, the leafy beauty of its tree lined streets, the well-kept residences, and its intelligent, caring populace, which remains very committed to public education.”

*- General Plan Survey
Response*

SETTING

The City of Piedmont is located in the heart of the San Francisco Bay Area, the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States and home to 7.2 million residents. Piedmont is located approximately 10 miles east of San Francisco in Alameda County. It is the second smallest of the county’s 14 cities, with a population of 11,000 and a land area of 1.7 square miles (1.100 acres). Figure 2-1 shows the City’s location relative to the region.

One of Piedmont’s most unique geographic features is that it is completely surrounded by the city of Oakland. Oakland’s central business district lies approximately 1.5 miles west of the Piedmont city limits. The city is abutted by the Oakland neighborhoods of Trestle Glen/ Crocker Highlands on the southwest, Oakmore on the south, Montclair on the east, Upper Rockridge/Claremont Pines on the north, Piedmont Avenue on the northwest, and Rose Garden/ Grand Lake on the west.

Piedmont straddles a low ridge located west of the Berkeley-Oakland hills. In fact, the city’s location was the inspiration for its name, which translates to “foot of the mountain” in Italian. The city is built on rolling hills cut by numerous canyons, sloping southwesterly towards San Francisco Bay. Its elevation ranges from 40 feet above sea level along Grand Avenue to 704 feet behind the City’s Corporation Yard.

Land uses in Piedmont are almost entirely residential, along with complementary uses such as parks and schools. The City has a small commercial area near City Hall and a few small businesses along Grand Avenue, but most Piedmont residents rely on nearby shopping districts in Oakland for basic services.

One of Piedmont’s greatest assets is its central location. The City is less than one mile from the MacArthur and Warren Freeways, four miles from the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, and 10 miles from Oakland International Airport. There are four BART (rapid transit) stations within three miles of the city. A network of bus routes provides both local and trans-bay service.

Since its incorporation in 1907, Piedmont has gained a reputation as being one of the most desirable communities in the Bay Area. In 2007, the city was named one of the 25 top-earning towns in America by CNN-Money Magazine. In 2008, Forbes Magazine named the city one of the “Top Suburbs to Live Well” in the United States, citing its high quality schools and low crime. While the accolades often emphasize the city’s high income and home prices, Piedmont’s greatest strength is its sense of community.

FRAMEWORK



Blair established a dairy on what is now Highland Avenue, started a quarry on present-day Dracena Park, built a hotel on what would become Piedmont Park, and created a 75-acre amusement park in Moraga Canyon featuring picnicking, pony rides, and live entertainment.

HISTORY

Before 1850

The San Francisco Bay Area was home to Native Americans for thousands of years before European settlers arrived. While no archaeological sites have been identified in Piedmont, remnant shell mounds and other evidence of the area's original inhabitants have been found nearby in Berkeley, Oakland, and Emeryville.

In 1820, the Spanish governor of California granted title to more than 40,000 acres in the San Francisco East Bay to Don Luis Maria Peralta. The land grant, known as Rancho San Antonio, was subdivided in 1842 and distributed to Peralta's four sons. The area from Piedmont to the north was owned by Jose Domingo Peralta; the area from Piedmont to the south, including most of Oakland, was owned by Vincente Peralta. Following the 1849 gold rush and California's admittance to the Union in 1851, the Peralta ranchos were further subdivided.

1850-1907

In 1850, Colonel John C Hayes acquired a portion of the Oakland Hills immediately above what is now Piedmont. To reach his property, he constructed a wagon road along what is now Moraga Avenue. In 1852, Walter Blair purchased 600 acres (more of half of modern-day Piedmont) from the Peraltas for \$1.25 an acre. Blair established a dairy on what is now Highland Avenue, started a quarry on present-day Dracena Park, built a hotel on what would become Piedmont Park, and created a 75-acre amusement park in Moraga Canyon featuring picnicking, pony rides, and live entertainment. Blair's Piedmont Springs Hotel became a getaway for wealthy San Franciscans, drawn by the curative powers of natural spring waters.

In 1877, Blair sold 350 acres of his property to James Gamble, the president of Western Union Telegraph. Gamble built a residence on Hillside Avenue and along with James deFremery, George Beaver, L.A. Booth, and T.L. Barker, created the Piedmont Land Company. Landscape engineer William Hammond Hall was hired to plan the avenues and subdivide the tract into 67 parcels. The first auction of land took place on April 10, 1877.

FRAMEWORK

The 1906 earthquake triggered a population boom in Piedmont, as displaced San Franciscans moved to the East Bay. The City was incorporated in 1907, largely to preclude annexation by Oakland.

By the 1880s, there were still just seven houses in Piedmont. A silk factory was briefly established at the top of Oakland Avenue but was closed in 1895. The Piedmont Springs Hotel burned down in 1892. Developer Frank Havens bought the property and built a restaurant and clubhouse, paths and bridges, an art gallery, and an outdoor theater for musical performances. By the first years of the 20th Century, Piedmont was both a haven for the wealthy and a Bohemian enclave. A number of prominent writers and artists, including Jack London, settled in the city around 1900.

The 1906 earthquake triggered a population boom in Piedmont, as displaced San Franciscans moved to the East Bay. The City was incorporated in 1907, largely to preclude annexation by Oakland (see text box next page). Within two years of Piedmont's incorporation, Oakland annexed all land to the east and north of the city, effectively landlocking Piedmont and making it an "island" within the Oakland City limits.

1907-1930

Incorporation was followed by the construction of new schools, churches, municipal buildings, and a downtown commercial center. Architect Albert Farr designed many of the city's most prominent buildings, including City Hall, Piedmont Community Church, Bonita School (later replaced by Havens Elementary), and the Piedmont Commercial Center (later replaced by the Wells Fargo Bank office building). Farr also designed the Oakland Avenue Bridge, replacing the 1890 wooden trestle over Linda Avenue with a gracious Mission-style gateway to the city. Electric streetcar service was extended to Piedmont during these years, with three lines connecting the city to Oakland, Berkeley, and the San Francisco ferry terminals.

Piedmont's population grew rapidly during the 1910s and 1920s. In 1910, the City had 1,719 residents. The population more than doubled to 4,282 in 1920, and doubled again to 9,333 residents by 1930. The building boom included a mixture of mansions and more modest homes built in a range of vernacular styles.

FRAMEWORK

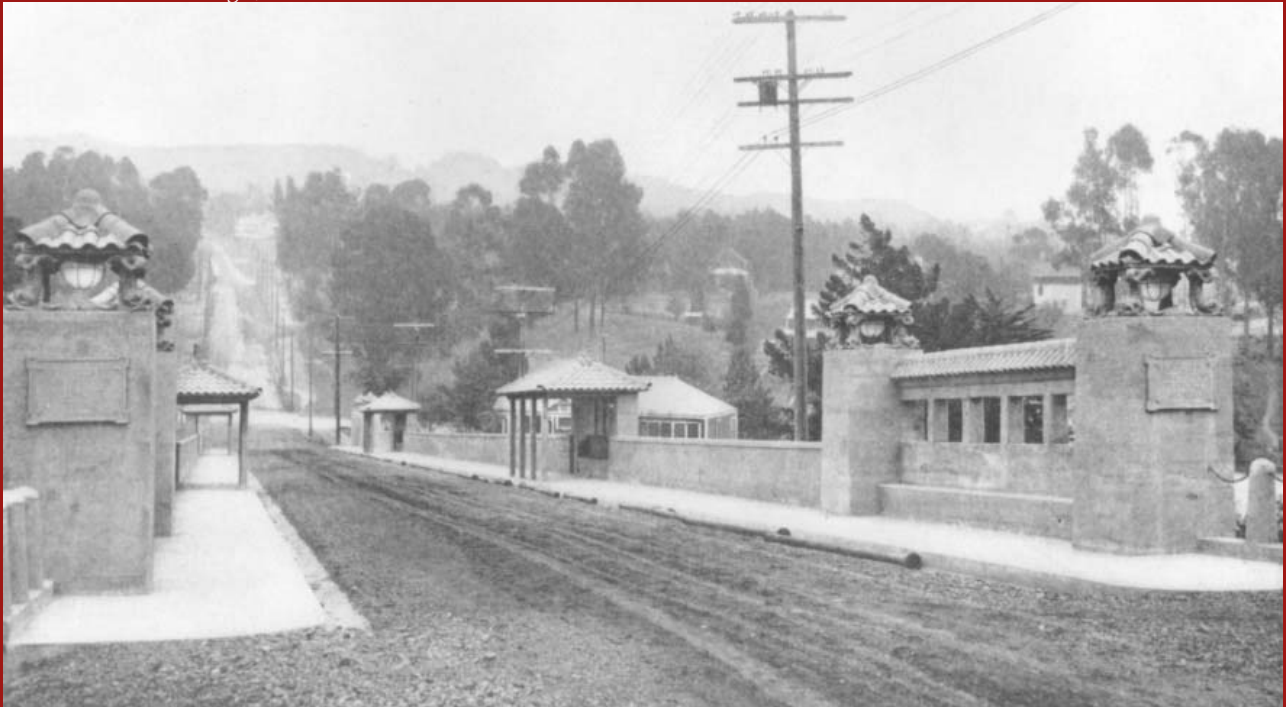
1907: A City is Born

In the months following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, thousands of homeless San Franciscans moved to the East Bay in search of safer ground. Oakland, which was already a booming industrial and commercial center, began annexing large tracts of rural land to accommodate its growing population. Annexation of Piedmont appeared imminent.

On January 7, 1907, Hugh Craig and James Ballentine filed papers with the State of California to incorporate Piedmont as a new city. The matter was hastily organized to forestall annexation, and surveying to establish logical city boundaries was not possible because of the time constraint. Craig and Ballentine used the Piedmont Sanitary Sewer District map to establish city limits, resulting in borders that bisected many existing lot lines.

An election was held on January 26, 1907, with a narrow majority voting in favor of incorporation. The outcome was challenged, prompting a second election that September. The measure narrowly passed a second time, and the city was officially created. The margin of victory was just 10 votes.

Oakland Avenue bridge, circa 1910



FRAMEWORK

While Craftsman-style homes and bungalows were built in western Piedmont, grand and elegant mansions were constructed along Sea View Avenue and in the blocks around Crocker Avenue and Hampton Road. Prominent architects like Julia Morgan, John Hudson Thomas, Bernard Maybeck, Charles Peter Weeks, William Knowles, and Greene and Greene created a legacy of fine residential design in the city.

While Craftsman-style homes and bungalows were built in many parts of Piedmont, grand and elegant mansions in a variety of architectural styles were constructed along Sea View Avenue and in the blocks around Crocker Avenue and Hampton Road. Prominent architects like Julia Morgan, John Hudson Thomas, Bernard Maybeck, Charles Peter Weeks, William Knowles, and Greene and Greene created a legacy of fine residential design in the city. Piedmont was home to many of the Bay Area's most prominent businessmen and socialites. A 1913 brochure published by developer Wickham Havens boasted that the City had more resident millionaires per square mile than any other city in California. By the 1920s, Piedmont became known as the "City of Millionaires."

The city's building boom had a number of casualties. Some of Piedmont's pioneer homesteads, including the Italianate Requa mansion and the Blair home on Highland Avenue, were demolished. Several of the large estates were subdivided. A portion of Piedmont Park was sold for development; another portion was purchased by the School Board for construction of Piedmont High School. The remainder of the park faced the threat of development but was purchased by resident Wallace Alexander and deeded to the City for permanent preservation.

In 1922, Piedmont became a charter city. The City completed a Master Plan for Piedmont Civic Center, including City Hall and Piedmont Park. Among the legacies of the Plan are the Piedmont Exedra and Community Center, both completed in 1925. Some elements of the 1922 Master Plan, including a civic plaza with a fountain, municipal garages, a streetcar tunnel under Highland Avenue, and a European style esplanade, were never constructed.

1930-2008

Piedmont's growth continued through the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, slowing in pace as the city approached "buildout." About 300 homes were added during the 1940s and another 500 were added during the 1950s. Prevailing building styles changed as modernist architecture came into vogue and steeper hillside sites were developed. The Craftsman, Mission, Prairie-style, and period revival homes that characterized the 1910s and 1920s gave way to single story California ranches and mid-century modern contemporaries. A number of small apartment buildings were built in western Piedmont during the 1950s, but because of its single family zoning the City did not experience the post-war apartment boom that took place in Oakland and Berkeley during this era.

FRAMEWORK

“I grew up here. I left, then returned to raise my family. I love that my kids (and myself) play and go to school in the same neighborhoods. I love that my neighbors and friends watch out for my family and vice versa. In general, the town members all work toward a common good.”

- General Plan Survey

Response

By 1960, Piedmont was essentially built out, with only scattered vacant lots remaining. Most of those lots were developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Since 1980, construction has averaged only two or three homes per year.

The last half-century has seen continuous reinvestment in the existing building stock and the upgrading of many of the city’s parks and public buildings. Three new parks were added, including Linda Park, Dracena Park, and Coaches Playfield. Piedmont Middle School was built in 1976. Major renovations of City Hall and Piedmont High School were completed, and a comprehensive earthquake retrofit program was launched for all school properties.

Through this period, the City has remained almost entirely residential, with virtually no expansion of commercial uses in the last 50 years. The small commercial district adjacent to the Civic Center remains, but today consists of banks, real estate offices, and a newly refurbished food market.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

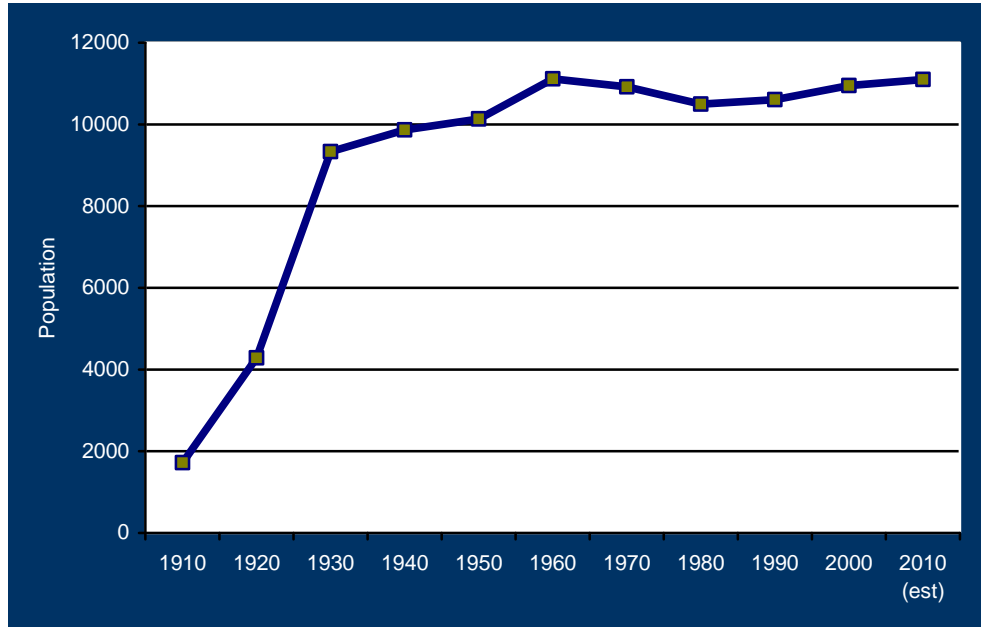
Population

Chart 2.1 indicates Piedmont’s population over the last century, beginning with the decennial census of 1910. The period of greatest increase was between 1910 and 1930, when the city grew by more than 400 percent. Piedmont’s population has varied between 10,100 and 11,100 for the last 50 years. The California Department of Finance indicated the City’s population was 11,100 in 2008, up slightly from the 2000 Census, and almost identical to the 1960 population.

Piedmont has the highest median age in Alameda County. In 2000, the Census reported a median of 43.7, compared to a County median of 34.5. The high median age is partially due to the absence of “starter” housing and rentals affordable to young adults and young families in the city. About one in seven Piedmonters is over 65, compared to one in ten in the county as a whole.

FRAMEWORK

Chart 2.1: Population Change in Piedmont, 1910-2010



Source: US Census (1910-2000), CA Dept of Finance (2010)

The number of older Piedmonters is expected to grow in the next two decades as the “baby boom” generation (persons born between 1945 and 1963) reaches retirement. During the 1990s, the number of Piedmonters aged 45 to 54 increased by 48 percent while the number of residents aged 20-34 declined by 34 percent.

The increased number of seniors will impact the city in many ways. The demand for senior housing will increase, along with the need for retrofits to facilitate “aging in place”. There may be interest in new housing types that do not currently exist in Piedmont, such as assisted living and “co-housing”. Demand for transportation services, recreational and social programs, health care, and emergency medical services also may be affected. Some aging Piedmonters are likely to move out of the City, seeking smaller homes or lower-maintenance alternatives to their single family homes.

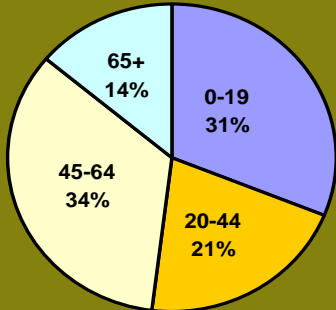
At the same time, Piedmont is expected to retain a large number of families. Children represented 31 percent of the City’s population in 2000, which is higher than the countywide average. Given the excellent reputation of Piedmont’s schools, the city will continue to attract parents with school-age children.

FRAMEWORK

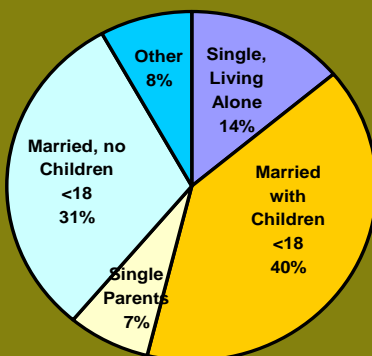
Piedmont 2008 Fast Facts

Population:	11,100
Households:	3,810
Persons per household:	2.91
Employed residents:	5,310
Jobs (within city):	1,660
Median household Income (2007):	\$155,800
Median home Price (2007):	\$1,437,928
Housing units:	
Single family	3,787(98%)
Multi-family	77 (2%)
Percent of homes built before 1940:	70.4%
Tenure:	
Owners:	90.6%
Renters:	9.4%

Age:



Household Type:



Piedmont has become more ethnically diverse over the past two decades, although the changes have been less dramatic than elsewhere in the East Bay. In 2000, the city was 79 percent White, 16 percent Asian, 1 percent Black, 3 percent multi-racial, and 1 percent “other.” Approximately 3 percent of the population was of Hispanic origin. The most significant change during the 1990s was the growth of the Asian population, from 1,323 residents in 1990 to 1,758 residents in 2000. The percent of residents speaking English “not at all” or “not well” has remained about 1.5 percent of the population.

Piedmont is one of the most highly educated communities in the Bay Area. The 2000 Census reported that 78 percent of the City’s adult residents had college degrees and only 2 percent of its adult residents had less than four years of high school.

Additional data on the City’s population is contained in the “Fast Facts” text box and in the HCD-Submittal Housing Element, a companion document to this General Plan.

Households

There are 3,810 households in Piedmont. Chart 2.2 shows average household size from 1940 to 2008. Household size fell between 1950 and 1980 but has been increasing slowly since then. In 2008, the average Piedmont household had 2.91 residents.

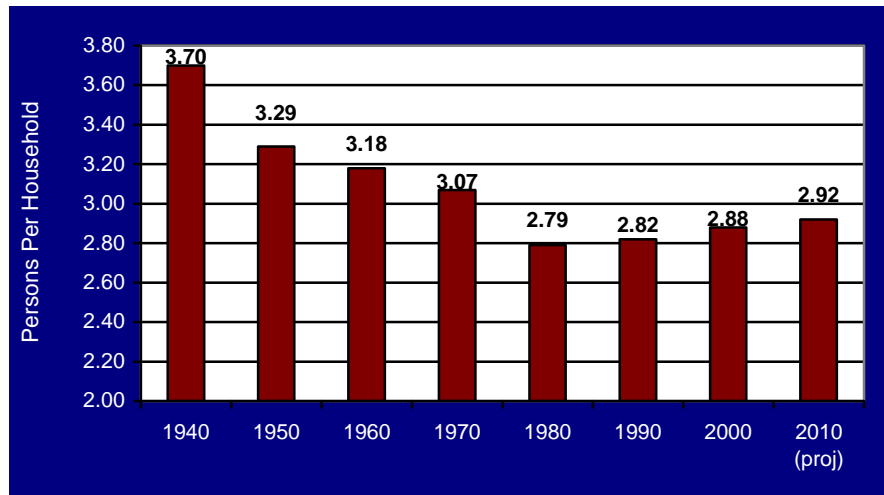
At the time of the 2000 Census, 82 percent of the city’s households consisted of families, compared to a county average of 65 percent. About 40 percent of the city’s households consisted of married couples with children under 18 and 30 percent consisted of married couples without children under 18. Roughly 7 percent of the city’s households were single parents raising children, and 14 percent of the city’s households lived alone. Almost 60 percent of the city’s households have lived in Piedmont for at least 11 years.

About 90 percent of Piedmont’s households are owners and only 10 percent are renters. Most rental properties in the city are single family homes, since apartments constitute less than 2 percent of the city’s housing stock.

Data from California Department of Finance (2008), City of Piedmont (2008), Money.CNN.com (2007), and Census 2000.

FRAMEWORK

Chart 2.2: Average Household Size in Piedmont, 1940-2010



Source: US Census (1940-2000), CA Dept of Finance (2010)

At the time of the 2000 census, the median household income in Piedmont was \$134,270. More current data sources indicate a 2007 median income of approximately \$155,800. In 2000, Piedmont's median income was more than double the countywide median. Despite the city's affluence, Piedmont includes households of all income levels, including residents living below the poverty line, seniors on fixed incomes, and low to moderate income working families.

Housing Stock

Piedmont's has 3,864 homes, 98 percent of which are single family detached residences. The city's housing stock is in excellent condition, despite the fact that Piedmont has the oldest median home age of any Bay Area city. About 70 percent of the city's homes were built before 1940. Many Piedmont homes have been updated and expanded since they were constructed, in some cases dramatically changing their size and character. Yet the City retains a legacy of fine early 20th Century residential architecture, including the works of some of the Bay Area's most renowned architects and builders.

FRAMEWORK

The 2000 Census reported that 54 percent of all Piedmont homeowners with mortgages had monthly payments exceeding \$3,000. In 2000, nearly one-quarter of Piedmont's homeowners spent more than 35 percent of their incomes on housing.

Piedmont homes tend to be large, with more than one-third of all residences containing nine or more rooms. Based on the census, Nearly half of all Piedmont homes have four bedrooms or more. Some Piedmont homes include secondary units, in some cases used as independent residences, and in other cases used as home offices or living space for the primary household.

In 2005, the estimated median house value in Piedmont was approximately \$1.5 million, nearly three times the county median. Although prices have declined since the market peak in 2006, Piedmont homes had held their value to a greater degree than other areas of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. The City's housing market remains fairly resilient and the city's effective vacancy rate remains below 1 percent.

The high cost of housing translates to very high mortgage payments for many Piedmont households. The 2000 Census reported that 54 percent of all Piedmont homeowners with mortgages had monthly payments exceeding \$3,000. In 2000, nearly one-quarter of Piedmont's homeowners spent more than 35 percent of their incomes on housing. For renters, and for low and moderate income households, the percentages were even higher.

Employment

There are 1,660 jobs in Piedmont, primarily associated with local government, service businesses, and home occupations. The largest employers in the city are the Piedmont Unified School District, with some 350 full- and part-time employees, and the City of Piedmont, with about 150 full- and part-time employees. Other employers include five churches (and two affiliated parochial schools), three banks, a real estate office, a hardware store, a small grocery store, several medical and dental offices, and several small retail and service businesses on Grand Avenue.

In 2008, there were 305 licensed home occupations in the city. This is more or less consistent with 2000 Census data which indicates that about 400 Piedmont residents work from home. On any given day, there are also non-Piedmont based workers in the city, including construction crews, gardeners and landscapers, delivery drivers, domestic workers, and home child care providers.

FRAMEWORK

Table 2.1:
Projections for Piedmont,
2000-2035

	Households	Population	Employment
2000	3,804	10,952	2,120
2005	3,810	11,000	2,090
2010	3,820	11,100	2,100
2015	3,830	11,100	2,110
2020	3,840	11,200	2,120
2025	3,850	11,200	2,120
2030	3,860	11,200	2,130
2035	3,870	11,200	2,140

Source: ABAG Projections 2007

There are 5,310 Piedmont residents in the labor force, or about two-thirds of the residents over 16. Only about 12 percent of these residents work within the City; about 65 percent commute to San Francisco, Oakland, or San Jose. The unemployment rate in the city at the time of the 2000 Census was 2.6 percent. Nearly half of all working Piedmont residents hold professional services jobs, including nearly 1,000 people in the legal and medical fields. About one-quarter of the city's residents work in management, business, and financial operations.

Projections

Population and employment projections for the City are developed every two years by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). Table 2-1 shows the most recent projections.

The projections indicate an anticipated increase of 60 households between 2005 and 2035, or 1.5 percent over the baseline figure of 3,810 households. This equates to a net increase of just two households a year. Household increases may occur through new construction, new second units, the division of single family homes into multiple dwellings, or the conversion of non-residential space to housing. The City's population is not expected to change significantly over the next 20 years. In 2035, Piedmont is projected to have just 100 more residents than it does today.

ABAG's forecasts show an increase of 50 jobs in Piedmont between 2005 and 2035, a 2.4 percent increase. Because ABAG's figures includes workers from outside of Piedmont who may be present in the city on any given day, it is slightly higher than the city's own employment estimate.

Both the job and household forecasts for the City envision very little change over baseline (2005) conditions during the next 30 years. The forecasts are reflective of the City's built-out character and limited opportunities for infill and redevelopment.

On the other hand, areas around Piedmont may see significant growth in the future. Alameda County as a whole is expected to add 367,000 residents between 2005 and 2030. As the region embraces "smart growth" strategies that redirect development back toward the core, Oakland is projected to absorb one-third of this increase. Based on ABAG's projections, Oakland will grow from 410,000 residents in 2005 to 527,000 residents by 2030. Oakland is also projected to be the county's biggest job gainer during this period, capturing 23 percent of the 320,000 jobs to be added.

“The residents of Piedmont believe it to be in the welfare of all residents to preserve the beauty and architectural heritage of the City’s housing stock, the mature vegetation, and the tranquility and privacy which now exist.”

*Chapter 17 of the
Piedmont City Code*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The General Plan is based on eight guiding principles, presented below:

Maintain Piedmont as a Quality Residential Community

Piedmont was established as a residential city and has retained its single family residential character for more than a century. Looking forward, this will remain one of Piedmont’s highest priorities. Major land use changes and large-scale development are not envisioned. While a limited amount of change is inevitable, the essential quality and character of Piedmont’s homes, natural features and open spaces will be protected. The ambiance of the city’s residential streets and public spaces will be conserved. These are the things that make Piedmont special, and they are central to the city’s vision for its future. This basic principle underpins all elements of the General Plan.

Strengthen the Civic Center as the City’s Gathering Place

Shortly after incorporation, the Civic Center was conceived as the heart of Piedmont. Its civic buildings, schools, commercial uses, and open spaces continue to play an important role in community life, but they lack the critical mass and cohesive design qualities usually associated with a town center. During 2007-2008, the City embarked on a master planning process to re-imagine the Civic Center, identifying specific design and circulation changes. At the same time, a new plan for Havens School was developed to reshape and modernize the campus. The cumulative outcome is an updated vision for Central Piedmont in the 21st Century, with additional recreational facilities, updated public buildings, reconfigured parking and street layouts, and new public spaces. While some intensification of uses will occur, the major change will be to rearrange activities to make the space more functional, attractive, and dynamic.

Rezoning in Piedmont



Section 9.02 of the City Charter establishes the power of the Council to classify and reclassify zoning districts. The Charter stipulates that “no zones shall be reduced or enlarged with respect to size or area, and no zones shall be reclassified without submitting the question to a vote at a general or special election.”

In other words, a majority vote of the general electorate is required to rezone property. The exception to this rule is that land that is not currently zoned for single family homes may be voluntarily rezoned for single family use. Thus, the charter clearly expresses the City’s intent to retain low density residential zoning and limit the encroachment of non-residential uses.

Sustain Piedmont’s Schools and Parks as Focal Points of Public Life

Schools and parks are an important part of what attracts residents to Piedmont, and the community has a long tradition of support and stewardship for both. After residential uses, parks and schools are the second and third largest land uses in Piedmont respectively. The City and School District are committed to managing these resources wisely. During the coming years, the City Council and School Board will work collaboratively to provide outstanding educational and recreational services to Piedmont residents. As Piedmont’s schools are retrofitted and modernized, opportunities for new community amenities, outstanding architecture, and improvements that enhance the learning experience for Piedmont students will be encouraged. Planning for the city’s parks, on the other hand, will balance the demand for “active” recreational facilities such as soccer fields and tennis courts with the desire to preserve “passive” open space for the enjoyment of nature.

Develop Local Solutions to Regional Housing and Transportation Issues

Piedmont confronts many of the same challenges facing other cities in the Bay Area. Housing in the city is very expensive, while mobility is constrained by rising fuel costs, congestion, and transit cutbacks. Although there are very few opportunities for building affordable housing in Piedmont, the city will take steps to address regional housing needs and the special housing needs of Piedmont residents. Secondary units, or in-law apartments, are a crucial part of the city’s housing strategy. They will continue to provide an important resource for Piedmont’s young adults, seniors, and local workforce. On the transportation front, the City is committed to increasing choices for Piedmont residents and reducing dependency on the automobile as the sole means of getting around town. This means keeping Piedmont walkable, improving provisions for bicycles, lobbying for better bus service, supporting telecommuting and other means of reducing peak hour travel, and exploring new connections to BART and other transit systems.

While environmental sustainability is a global issue, it is one that begins at the local level—through the individual decisions of each Piedmont resident. Many Piedmonters are interested in reducing their carbon footprints by cutting home energy costs, recycling more, driving less, and switching to environmentally-friendly products and practices.

Promote Greener, More Sustainable Living

The “green movement” is one of the most important forces shaping planning in Piedmont today. While environmental sustainability is a global issue, it is one that begins at the local level—through the individual decisions of each Piedmont resident. Many Piedmonters are interested in reducing their carbon footprints by cutting home energy costs, recycling more, driving less, and switching to environmentally-friendly products and practices. At the municipal level, these changes may affect decisions about land use, development and construction, transportation, public works, and City operations. The City is committed to being a role model by promoting environmental education, diverting 75 percent of the city’s solid waste stream from landfills, conserving water, and “going green” in City standards and practices.

Celebrate Piedmont’s History, Identity, and Sense of Place

Despite its “invisible” boundaries, Piedmont has a very strong sense of community identity. Its responsive services are a source of civic pride, and its accessible local government is highly valued by residents. The city’s physical identity is shaped by its traditional early 20th century architecture, its beautiful tree-lined streets, and its panoramic vistas of San Francisco and Oakland. Its social identity is shaped by a long tradition of community organizations, sports clubs, and community events like the annual Fourth of July parade. These organizations and activities allow residents to meet their neighbors and establish the personal connections that sustain Piedmont not just as a physical place, but also as a real “community.” The City strongly supports activities which sustain the city’s sense of identity, history, and pride, and keep Piedmont a great place to live.

Keep Piedmont Safe

One of the major themes of the General Plan is keeping Piedmont safe. The city is vulnerable to earthquakes, landslides, and wildfires and is less than one-half mile from the Hayward Fault. Exposure to these hazards can be dramatically reduced through appropriate planning and building regulations, construction practices, seismic retrofitting, vegetation management, and emergency preparedness. Maintaining safety also means reducing traffic hazards and enforcing traffic regulations, and keeping Piedmont a safe and comfortable place to walk and bicycle. It means sustaining the high level of police and fire services that Piedmont residents now enjoy, and effectively addressing crime and personal safety concerns. The General Plan is an important vehicle for advancing these measures.

“We’ve lived in Piedmont for 20 years. We came for the schools, which we liked. Now we’re staying because of the sense of community. Although we do partake in the surrounding areas of Oakland and Berkeley, Piedmont is home for now. Its safety and beauty are also important.”

- General Plan Survey Response

Build a Productive, Positive Relationship with the City of Oakland

Piedmont’s geography requires continuous coordination with the City of Oakland. Virtually every City service, from police protection to sewer maintenance, requires communication with Oakland. The Oakland-Piedmont city limits bisect over 100 properties. There are also functional dependencies. Piedmont residents rely on Oakland neighborhoods for shopping, dining out, entertainment, health care, and many local services. Residents use Oakland streets to travel to and from town. Piedmont benefits from improvements in Oakland, but it is also vulnerable to adverse impacts when improvements are deferred. In the coming decades, the City will build positive and productive relationships with Oakland to achieve results that are mutually beneficial for both cities. This will include close review of development near the city limits and coordinated improvement of local services.

