INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Planning Context....1.0-1
Community Location and Characteristics....1.0-1
General Plan Introduction....1.0-2
General Plan Vision....1.0-5
Community Character....1.0-6
Growth Management....1.0-6
Land Use and Economic Development....1.0-7
Housing....1.0-7
Circulation....1.0-7
Community Services and Facilities....1.0-8
Health and Safety....1.0-8
Natural Resources and Open Space....1.0-8
Sustainability....1.0-8
Achieving the Vision....1.0-9
Relationship To Other Plans, Policies And Reports....1.0-9
City of Pinole Housing Element....1.0-9
Specific Plan....1.0-9
City of Pinole Zoning Code....1.0-10
Sustainability Element....1.0-10
West County Action Plan....1.0-10
Document Organization....1.0-10
Defining Use of Goals, Policies and Actions....1.0-11
Using and Interpreting this General Plan....1.0-12
Amendments to this General Plan....1.0-13
Implementation of this General Plan....1.0-13

FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Regional Location....1.0-3

INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sustainability and Stewardship

Community Tapestry

Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Health

PLANNING CONTEXT

The City of Pinole's last comprehensive update of the General Plan was more than 10 years ago. Since then, the General Plan has been periodically reviewed and updated to reflect changing conditions and to remain timely and useful. The City wanted to ensure that the General Plan reflects current concerns and remains legally adequate. This General Plan represents years of efforts on the part of residents and businesses in the community working to maintain and improve the City of Pinole's quality of life.

COMMUNITY LOCATION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Located 20 miles northeast from San Francisco, the City of Pinole is situated on the shores of San Pablo Bay in West Contra Costa County (see **Figure 1.1**). Pinole is well connected to Contra Costa County and the rest of the Bay Area (San Francisco/Oakland) by State Route 4 and Interstates 80 and 680.

The City of Pinole was incorporated in 1903 and occupies a land area of approximately 5.45 square miles and a total area of 13.3 square miles in the western portion of Contra Costa County, including portions of San Pablo Bay. With a current population of 19,629, Pinole is a bedroom community within the San Francisco/Oakland employment centers. Pinole straddles Interstate 80 and includes areas overlooking San Pablo Bay in the northern part of the city. The city is characterized by regionally serving retail services along Interstate 80, a historic downtown area, gently rolling hills and steep hillsides on the north and south, and established residential neighborhoods.

Surrounding communities around Pinole include the unincorporated areas of Montalvin Manor, Rancho Road and El Sobrante and the cities of Richmond and Hercules. The City of Pinole is largely built out but includes opportunities for infill mixed-use development in a strategically located area near the Berkeley/Oakland and San Francisco employment centers.

Pinole's existing land use pattern is generally a mix of residential neighborhoods and commercial and business centers combined with parks and open spaces. Several distinct areas characterize the city and surrounding area, including:

- Historic Old Town area north of Interstate 80 that contains historic residences built for individuals who worked in Pinole or at the Hercules Powder Plant during the city's formative years as well as a commercial and business core that contains important civic and recreational facilities.

- Pinole Vista and Pinole Ridge Shopping Center, a regionally serving shopping district along Fitzgerald Avenue between the Richmond Parkway and Appian Way exits of Interstate 80.

- Pinole Valley, an area that includes community serving retail, Pinole Valley High School, and residential areas with access provided primarily by Pinole Valley Road.

GENERAL PLAN INTRODUCTION

California state law requires every city and county to adopt a general plan for its future development. A general plan serves as a blueprint that "guides the physical development of the city and any land outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning" (Government Code Section 65302). Also referred to as the "constitution for future development," the general plan expresses the community's development goals and symbolizes public policy relative to the distribution of future land uses, both public and private.

A general plan typically has four defining features:

1. **General:** As the name suggests, the general plan provides the broad community-wide vision and policy guidance for future development of the city.

2. **Comprehensive:** The general plan addresses a broad range of physical, social, economic and environmental factors affecting the community, including land use, circulation, public facilities and other topics.

3. **Internal Consistency:** The concept of internal consistency holds that no direct policy conflicts can exist, either textual or diagrammatic, between the components of an otherwise complete and adequate general plan. Different policies must be balanced and reconciled within the plan.

4. **Long Range:** The general plan provides long-term vision and goals for the community and includes policies and actions to achieve that vision.

In order for a general plan to be effective, it must remain current by reflecting changing community sentiments and changing legal requirements. State law does not specify rigid requirements or timing for updating a general plan (other than for the housing element); however, it does establish that the responsibility for determining whether a general plan is up to date and accurate rests with each jurisdiction.

The current General Plan for the City of Pinole was adopted in 1995, with the exception of the Housing Element that was last updated in 2003. Since that time, Pinole has experienced many physical, demographic and economic changes, resulting in new opportunities and challenges for the City. The existing General Plan is being updated in order to reflect current community sentiments and the changes in land use, growth patterns and demographic and economic conditions.

The City of Pinole General Plan will be used to inform citizens, decision-makers and other interested groups of the policies that will guide development-related decisions in the community. The General Plan will serve as a guide to future land use and economic development through its goals, policies and actions.

Figure 1.1
Regional Location

PMC®

INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN

GENERAL PLAN VISION

Strive to make Pinole a sustainable community where the citizens act as stewards for the environment, the economy, and the social equality of the community, preserving Pinole's historic past, while maintaining a healthy economy for all members of the community now and in the future.

GENERAL PLAN VISION

In the course of preparing the General Plan, the community described their vision for Pinole. This Vision Statement and the Guiding Principles are expressed in several land use choices the City has put in place throughout this General Plan. Notable among the many policies and programs contained in this document are five key topics that emerged:

1. Sustainability – This General Plan contains a separate Sustainability Element, one of the first of its kind in the state. The City has conducted a Greenhouse Gas Audit and is preparing to direct land use, government and citizen actions to help reduce automobile dependence, promote reuse and recycling, and conserve community resources.

2. Priority Development Areas – The City seeks to create more compact, less automobile-dependent, future land use along the San Pablo Avenue and Pinole Valley Road corridors to support, and be served more efficiently by, public transit.

3. Economic Development – Specific area planning for the three primary travel corridors through Pinole will help the City pursue an improved jobs/housing balance, encourage new development and provide a wider range of employment opportunities, commercial services, and housing opportunities over time. The City's Three Corridors Specific Plan identifies opportunities to more actively use existing vacant and previously developed properties.

4. Recreation and Resources – San Pablo Bay and San Francisco Bay as a whole and the Pinole Creek Watershed are not only rich in habitat, they also provide recreation and circulation opportunities for Pinole. The General Plan seeks to support ongoing efforts to restore Pinole Creek, bridge the existing gap in the San Francisco Bay Trail, and support recreational activity. The General Plan also seeks to create additional recreation facilities and connections throughout the city.

5. Housing – Recognizing that the City will need diverse housing opportunities for people who work in Pinole and the region, the General Plan seeks to establish a land use framework that ensures adequate workforce housing.

GENERAL PLAN OBJECTIVES

- **Improve public safety and delivery of public services.**
- **Encourage new residential and commercial development to concentrate activity within existing urbanized areas with sufficient densities to support transit service, and encourage development of improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities.**
- **Improve the safety and attractiveness of new development and the viability of a variety of transportation modes.**
- **Promote programs to reduce drive-alone commute trips during rush hour.**
- **Enhance sustainable practices in the city.**

GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The goals, policies and actions of this General Plan are collectively intended to achieve the community vision and guide future decisions related to land use and development. This General Plan helps to ensure that important land use decisions will take into account a full range of topics that affect the quality of life and the environment of Pinole.

Many issues will become apparent during implementation of this General Plan; some can be foreseen now, while others are less clear and will need to be dealt with as part of the ongoing process of implementing the plan. For example, our efforts to address climate change currently focus on minimizing our contribution to greenhouse gases. As science continues to contribute more to the knowledge about the impacts of climate change, we will need to address impacts that are relevant to the City of Pinole, which may include changes in sea level, water supplies or energy needs.

In this situation, as in others that may arise, Pinole must respond to change and to internal and external factors in proactive ways, identifying issues before they become crises and developing innovative ways to respond on its own and in cooperation with other local and regional governmental agencies. As a result, this General Plan presents a policy framework that can and should be adjusted or adapted as needed over time.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The Community Character Element contains goals, policies and actions related to aesthetics, views, arts and culture, historic resources, noise, odors and education. Collectively, the goals, policies and actions ensure that the character of Pinole will be retained and enhanced land use compatibility will be considered in conjunction with future development reviews.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The intention of growth management is to establish level of service standards for managing the growth of Pinole as well as traffic and performance standards for fire, police, parks, sanitary facilities, water, and flood control. When combined with goals, policies and actions, these standards will establish a long-range program that will match the demands for public facilities generated by new development with plans and capital improvement programs to ensure that there are adequate facilities to serve anticipated development. The content of the Growth

Management Element is dictated by the requirements of the Contra Costa County Transportation Authority (CCTA), and this element follows a specific format required by that agency. The element also serves as a means for the CCTA to determine whether the City is in compliance with policies that support the receipt of Measure J funding.

LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Land Use and Economic Development Element contains goals and policies that will guide existing and future land use development to create a strong identity for Pinole and maintain a high quality of life. This element is designed to help achieve the City's long-range goals of encouraging development along the primary transit corridors to provide a wider range of employment, housing, retail/service and entertainment options to residents. The element establishes goals, policies and actions to improve the City's economic conditions, maintain regional competitiveness, and achieve a healthy jobs/housing balance to attract targeted businesses and make Pinole a more financially self-sustaining community.

HOUSING

The Housing Element contains strategies aimed at addressing current housing needs and increasing the supply of housing available to people at all income levels. The Housing Element contains a detailed housing needs assessment and goals, policies and actions designed to address the community's housing needs. The element recognizes that limited land is available for new single-family housing development but opportunities exist for more compact residential development along transit corridors to ensure new housing is affordable to the existing workforce and in particular to low-income households and special needs populations such as the elderly, disabled and homeless.

CIRCULATION

This element seeks to ensure that Pinole will have a multimodal transportation system that prevents sprawl and its attendant impacts. The Circulation Element contains goals and policies related to the transportation system, including the extent and condition of the roadway and trail system and desired service levels as well as alternative modes of travel. This element also contains circulation maps, which show the existing and desired major transportation facilities within Pinole.

Collectively, the maps, goals, policies and actions in this element help to ensure that residents and visitors to Pinole will have transportation choices. Roads will provide the highest level of service feasible while supporting transit and energy-efficient modes (e.g., walking and bicycling) as safe, attractive and efficient alternatives to automobile use by:

- Encouraging new residential and commercial development to concentrate along primary transportation corridors at sufficient densities to support transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

- Increasing the safety and attractiveness of alternative transportation modes and development of bicycle lanes and facilities.
- Implementing programs to reduce drive-alone commute trips during rush hour.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The Community Services and Facilities Element addresses capital facilities and service programs that are necessary to adequately serve the city. The element sets forth goals, policies and implementing actions that will be required to ensure adequate emergency, water, education, cultural, health-related, utility, transportation, parks and recreation, solid waste, wastewater and storm drain facilities and programs to serve existing and planned future development.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Health and Safety Element seeks to minimize Pinole's risks from natural and man-made hazards, while maximizing the City's emergency preparedness. Health and safety issues include air quality, noise, health care, man-made and natural hazards, neighborhood policing, fire services and flooding. The Health and Safety Element contains goals, policies and actions that identify viable solutions to minimize the risk of death and injury, property damage, economic hardship and social displacement resulting from fires, floods, earthquakes, landslides and other hazards. This element also addresses safety and hazards related to groundwater contamination and the potential release of hazardous materials into the community. The City is actively participating in County-led emergency preparedness planning for the region.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

The Natural Resources and Open Space Element contains goals, policies and actions related to the protection of open space for recreation and other purposes, with an emphasis on publicly accessible open space. Collectively, the maps, goals, policies and actions contained within this element ensure that Pinole's natural resources and open spaces are increasingly protected and made accessible to residents and visitors, with trails and bikeways connecting the population to nature-based parks, environmental education facilities and regional trails.

SUSTAINABILITY

While the General Plan will incorporate sustainable practices in all elements, the Sustainability Element will provide the repository for all sustainable goals, policies and actions and will create a framework within which the City can make land use choices to have a positive impact on climate change, minimizing reliance on oil and other fossil fuels, and reducing the consumption of natural resources. This element defines sustainability, identifies the existing sustainable practices in Pinole and identifies the actions Pinole can take to increase sustainability efforts.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

This General Plan is intended to express the community's vision and provide policymakers with the guidance they need to make wise decisions in support of that vision and accepted community values.

Ensuring that the vision expressed by this General Plan is achieved will require conscientious effort on the part of citizens and City officials. In order to organize this effort, the General Plan includes actions, or "next steps," in every element except the Housing Element, since that element contains its own implementation program and quantified objectives.

Monitoring progress during General Plan implementation will be important if the City is to achieve the community's vision, since the policies and actions in the General Plan will have to be monitored and periodically adjusted in order to be effective. As a result, the plan embraces the concept of adaptive management, whereby monitoring data is collected and used to determine which policies and practices are effective and which policies and practices should be adjusted or reconsidered. This process of periodic evaluation and adjustment is critical to the long-term success of this General Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS, POLICIES AND REPORTS

As the General Plan discussions evolved, the City of Pinole recognized the need to comprehensively employ a variety of planning tools to ensure sound land use decisions for the future. In conjunction with the General Plan Update, the City also embarked on the preparation of a Specific Plan to govern land use, circulation, and economic development on portions of San Pablo Avenue, Pinole Valley Road and Appian Way as well as a comprehensive Zoning Code Update to make zoning regulations more useful to the community and incorporate performance-based standards. Ultimately, the General Plan is to be consistent with, and will be implemented by, a planning tool kit that includes the following.

CITY OF PINOLE HOUSING ELEMENT

California Government Code Sections 65580–65589.8 require that all municipalities adopt and implement a Housing Element as part of their General Plan, identify and review existing and projected housing needs, and form a plan for meeting those needs. The Housing Element is required to be updated every five years or as specified by state law.

The City of Pinole adopted its current Housing Element in May 2003. It contains all policies and actions as required by the State of California and is certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development as complying with state legal requirements.

SPECIFIC PLAN

The Three Corridors Specific Plan implements the General Plan and guides development within the defined General Plan sub-areas of San Pablo Avenue, Pinole Valley Road and Appian Way. While the General Plan is the primary guide for growth and development in a community, the Specific Plan is able to focus on the unique characteristics of these areas to customize the

planning process and land use regulations to support economic development and create an identifiable sense of place.

CITY OF PINOLE ZONING CODE

The Zoning Code of the City of Pinole (Municipal Code Title 17) enacts land use regulations to create districts or zones that establish permitted and special uses within those zones. It also includes physical development standards and procedures for changing the status of land use.

Adoption of the General Plan will require amendments to the Zoning Code for consistency with the General Plan land use designations and various General Plan policies.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT

As discussed above, the Sustainability Element will serve as a guiding document to identify ways in which the City can have a positive impact on, and adapt to the inevitable effects of, climate change, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing other negative impacts on natural resources. Sustainable policies throughout the General Plan will be marked with a leaf symbol.

WEST COUNTY ACTION PLAN

The cities of Pinole, El Cerrito, Richmond, Hercules and San Pablo and Contra Costa County comprise the planning jurisdictions in the West County Planning Area as defined in the Contra Costa County General Plan. The County General Plan addresses future travel needs in Pinole and the West Contra Costa County/Interstate 80 travel corridor through Regional Transportation Planning and Growth Management.

DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

As mandated by state law, the City of Pinole General Plan contains the seven required elements to form a comprehensive set of planning policies (Government Code Section 65302). In addition, the Land Use Element contains policies to comply with the requirements of the Contra Costa County voter-approved Measure C and a Sustainability Element to respond to community input. The General Plan is organized into ten separate but interrelated sections and includes an Introduction and a Summary section as identified below.

1. General Plan Introduction
2. General Plan Vision and Summary
3. Community Character
4. Growth Management
5. Land Use and Economic Development
6. Housing

7. Circulation
8. Community Services and Facilities
9. Health and Safety
10. Natural Resources and Open Space
11. Sustainability

Within each chapter, an introduction is provided to identify the general purpose of the chapter. The regulatory framework for the chapter is provided, and then specific issue areas are discussed. Each chapter includes goals, policies and actions for the issue areas addressed by that chapter.

DEFINING USE OF GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The Pinole General Plan includes nine elements that are supported by goals, policies and actions to guide future land use decisions and are located at the end of each chapter. These components of the General Plan are defined and shown in the following diagram. Each of the components, in descending order, provides more detail about how the City of Pinole will achieve the components above it.

GOAL

A broad statement reflecting community values, community intents, and ideal future vision. It describes in general terms a desired future condition and acts as a general direction setter.

⇓

POLICY

A clear and specific statement that guides decision making in order to support the achievement of a goal. In some instances, a policy may be specific enough so as to include a clear sense of how implementation will occur.

⇓

ACTION

An action, program or procedure that carries out a General Plan policy. Each policy typically has one or more corresponding actions.

An example of this format is provided below, using the Land Use and Economic Development Element.

GOAL LU.1 Preserve and enhance the existing natural resources, high-quality residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, and small-town (semi-rural) character of Pinole.

POLICY LU.1.1 Increase land use diversity along the San Pablo Avenue, Pinole Valley Road and Appian Way corridors; reduce residential density on large land holdings designated for Suburban Residential land use; and maintain other land use designations for a variety of residential, commercial, light industrial, recreational, open space and public purposes which (1) protect environmental resources; (2) provide a mix of housing types, densities and tenure; (3) ensure that a variety of commercial and industrial goods, services and employment opportunities are available; and (4) offer a range of recreational and public facilities to meet the needs of residents.

Action LU.1.1.1 Adopt and implement the Three Corridors Specific Plan for the San Pablo Avenue, Pinole Valley Road and Appian Way corridors.

USING AND INTERPRETING THIS GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is intended to be used by a broad range of persons, including:

- The City Council and Planning Commission in decision-making activities;
- City staff in developing programs and projects;
- The development community in preparing development proposals; and
- Residents and citizens interested in the future of Pinole and the City's policies.

When using this General Plan, the following basic rules should be kept in mind:

- Only those statements specifically listed as "Goal" are to be interpreted as stating the City's goals. Only those statements specifically listed as "Policy" or "Action" are to be interpreted as statements of City policy. Narrative descriptions and discussions not preceded by a Goal, Policy, or Action designation are provided for information and background only. Narrative and/or discussion items may assist decision-makers with the interpretation of policies but do not themselves establish City policy.
- Unless specifically defined by policy, the standard definitions of words and terms shall be used. The Glossary to this General Plan provides definitions of many commonly used planning terms; these definitions may be used as a starting point in resolving disputes about the meanings of words in goals or policies.

- General plans ordinarily do not state specific mandates or prohibitions. Rather they state policies and set forth goals. Introductory statements in the General Plan stress the flexibility of the policies described and the ability of decision-makers to balance competing policies when necessary. Thus the General Plan states that the classifications for development serve as a guide for zoning, and zoning regulations, while they must be consistent with the plan, need not be identical to it. The policies allow for flexibility and require interpretation by staff and the decision-makers.

- Some information in this General Plan (e.g., population figures) is expected to become outdated in the normal course of events. Where this information is critical to the interpretation of goals or policies, the most up-to-date information should be used, including the Background Report.

AMENDMENTS TO THIS GENERAL PLAN

Recognizing the need for the General Plan to remain up to date and reflective of local issues and policies, state law allows the City to amend the General Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the conditions, values, expectations and needs of the community. The General Plan may be amended only by action of the City Council or by voter-approved initiative.

Periodic updates to the Housing Element are required by state law (generally every five years), but there is no required regular update for any other portion of the General Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS GENERAL PLAN

This General Plan is not intended to be a step-by-step guidebook for its own implementation. It is not intended to answer every question which will be faced by the City over the lifetime of the plan. Future work will be needed to fully implement this General Plan. This work, shown in the form of “actions,” is listed in each element and in the Implementation section of this General Plan (to be added when the final General Plan is prepared). Some of these actions may occur in the short term; others will require more time and resources and may not be completed for some time.

Many of the goals, policies, and actions in this General Plan are achieved through zoning, which regulates public and private development. The City is responsible for ensuring that its Zoning Code and this General Plan are in conformity. In most instances, this will mean that land is designated in the General Plan and zoned for similar uses with similar development standards (i.e., similar densities). Where zoning and General Plan land use designations are not identical, policies of this General Plan should be consulted carefully for guidance.