

CITY OF ALBANY  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT

Agenda date: July 11, 2013

**TO:** Albany Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Barry Miller, Planning Consultant  
Penelope Leach, Recreation and Community Services Director

**SUBJECT:** General Plan Update

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

This is an informational report for discussion only.

**BACKGROUND**

Every city and county in California is required by State law to prepare a General Plan guiding its future growth and development. The General Plan is organized into chapters (called “elements”) addressing seven mandated topics: land use, transportation, housing, safety, conservation, open space, and noise. Cities may also include optional elements in their plans, addressing topics such as parks and recreation, sustainability, and historic preservation. Each chapter of the General Plan includes maps, background text, goals, policies, and actions.

Once a city adopts a General Plan, it provides the legal framework for future decisions relating to land use, zoning, and capital improvements. It also provides the policy framework for other city plans, including the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. General Plans are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Major plan updates typically require preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

General Plans must be periodically updated to ensure that they remain relevant and reflect current issues. Albany’s existing General Plan was adopted in 1992 and had a horizon year of 2010. The Plan is being updated now to respond to new legal requirements, incorporate current data, reflect physical changes in the City over the last 20 years, and address emerging issues. Another important aspect of the Plan update is to incorporate direction provided by recent planning efforts such as the Voices to Vision initiative for the Albany shoreline. The new General Plan will have a horizon year of 2035.

The City’s Community Development Department is leading the update of Albany’s General Plan. A consultant (Barry Miller) has been retained to manage the process and prepare the Plan. The Planning and Zoning Commission is taking the lead role in facilitating public input. For the next 14 months, they will hold monthly or bi-monthly study sessions to discuss General Plan topics, consider edits to existing policies, and receive public input.

Input from other City commissions is also critical to the process, particularly as it pertains to the different topics covered by the Plan. For example, the Traffic and Safety Commission will help shape

transportation policies and the Sustainability Committee will shape conservation policies. Input from the Parks and Recreation Commission will be very important in shaping park and recreation policies.

At the July 11 Park and Rec Commission meeting, the General Plan consultant will provide a PowerPoint presentation on General Plan requirements, a synopsis of how the existing (1992) Albany General Plan addresses parks and recreation, and an overview of the park-related issues that might be addressed in the new General Plan. Commissioners are encouraged to visit the project website prior to the meeting to familiarize themselves with the project (URL: [www.albany2035.org](http://www.albany2035.org))

## **DISCUSSION**

The 1992 Albany General Plan includes a “Conservation, Recreation, and Open Space Element” which addresses the protection of natural resources such as creeks and hillsides, as well as parks and recreation. The Element provides an inventory of parks in Albany (as of 1992) and discusses opportunities to expand the City’s park system through improvements on Albany Hill and the Albany waterfront. The Element also profiles City recreational facilities and describes the recreational and community programs offered by the Recreation and Community Services Department. The Element describes plans for the Eastshore State Park, the University Village property, the Bay Trail, and citywide bikeways, as of 1992.

The 1992 General Plan provided a number of park-related policy recommendations for Albany. These are paraphrased below:

- Policy 6.1: Update the 1974 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Policy 6.2: Promote joint planning, acquisition, development, and maintenance of new parks with other service providers, especially at UC Village
- Policy 6.3: Develop a bikeway plan
- Policy 6.4: Provide linear pathways such as the BART linear park
- Policy 6.5: Improve operations and management of the Veteran’s Memorial Building and increase community access to the facility
- Policy 7.1: Implement the Bay Trail along the shoreline
- Policy 7.2: Protect wildlife and vegetation when developing the Bay Trail

In addition:

- Policies 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, and 7.6 address planning for the Eastshore State Park
- Policies 8.1 and 8.2 address the improvement of child care programs
- Policies 9.1 and 9.2 address the improvement of senior services and senior programs
- Policies 10.1 and 10.2 address public art

Some of the policies are outdated and some may still be relevant. Some may require updating and expanding. The City may also wish to add new topics which are not covered by the existing Plan.

The General Plan Update provides an opportunity to incorporate some of the direction provided by the Albany’s 2004 Parks Master Plan. The Parks Master Plan is more detailed than the General Plan, but still provides important direction regarding park facilities. Some of the park-related topics that might be carried into the General Plan relate to:

- Level of service standards for parks (acres per 1,000 residents)
- Plans for specific neighborhood and community parks
- Plans for new parks (e.g., Pierce Street)

- Waterfront park improvements
- Cultural arts programs and outdoor cultural space
- Park beautification and landscaping
- Improvement of sports fields
- Services for specific groups, including children, teens, and seniors
- Greenways, trails, and linear parks
- Park maintenance
- Funding strategies

The General Plan would not prescribe detailed recommendations on these topics. Rather, it would express the City's overall philosophy and long-term objectives.

Other topics and issues may have emerged in the nine years since the Parks Master Plan was adopted. Policies on these issues also may be considered through the General Plan Update. Given the comprehensive nature of the General Plan, any direction provided would need to be very broad and long-range. The General Plan is intended to be a framework for subsequent plans and policies that address the many topics it covers.