

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 What is a General Plan?

A general plan is a town's road map for the future. It describes a community's long-term vision and sets forth goals, policies, and programs to manage growth, direct land use decision making, and preserve the environment and character of the community. The State of California requires every town, city, and county to have a general plan to guide future development, preserve open space, conserve resources, and provide for public health, safety, and welfare. Local ordinances and other plans must be generally consistent with the general plan and applicable policies and programs.

This comprehensive update of the *Tiburon 2020 General Plan* provides goals and policies that reflect present-day community values and priorities and compliance with current State laws and local ordinances.

## 1.2 Setting and Planning Area

Tiburon is a town in southern Marin County located on the Tiburon Peninsula and includes Angel Island and portions of the Raccoon Strait and San Francisco Bay. As shown in Figure IN-1, Tiburon is generally bordered by unincorporated Marin County to the west, east and north; the City of Belvedere to the west and southwest; and San Francisco and Richardson Bays.

The Tiburon Peninsula is accessible by ferry from downtown San Francisco, by road from Highway 101 and Highway 131 (Tiburon Boulevard), and by bicycle through the San Francisco Bay Trail. Apart from San Francisco, other nearby cities include Belvedere, Corte Madera, Mill Valley, and Sausalito.

The modern history of Tiburon began in 1834 when John Thomas Reed was formally granted permission by the Mexican authorities to occupy the Rancho Corte de Madera del Presidio, which was a vast area of redwood groves and grassland that included the Tiburon Peninsula, Belvedere, and major portions of Mill Valley, Corte Madera, and Larkspur.

The area which currently contains the Town of Tiburon began to grow with the establishment of a railroad line in 1884 between Tiburon Point and San Rafael with a ferry connection to San Francisco. Early growth centered around marine, commercial, and industrial development. In the 1940s, growth occurred in association with World War II and the presence of Navy and Army facilities on the Tiburon Peninsula and Angel Island. Beginning in the 1950s, Tiburon's growth became that of a bedroom community of San Francisco, with the development of residential subdivisions and a transition to commercially-oriented development along Tiburon Boulevard and Main Street. By the beginning of the 2000s, the majority of the developable land in the Tiburon had been developed. Growth from the last two decades has been limited to the redevelopment and/or expansion of existing properties,

development of infill properties, and development of planned development properties with site challenges, such as steep slopes, ridgelines, wildlife habitats, and trees and woodlands.

Elevations on the Tiburon Peninsula range from sea level to about 650 feet, and it is drained by multiple small watersheds on the north and south sides. Vegetation occurring within the planning area primarily consists of agricultural, ruderal, riparian, and landscaping vegetation.

### **Town Limits and Planning Area**

The Town of Tiburon comprises approximately 4.5 square miles of land area and 8.75 square miles of submerged land. The Town limits are shown in Figure IN-2.

The “Planning Area” for the General Plan update is greater than the Town limits and includes the Town’s sphere of influence (SOI), which defines the probable future physical boundaries and service area of the Town as determined by the Marin Local Agency Formation Commission. The SOI includes the unincorporated areas along Paradise Drive, Paradise Cay, and land near the Highway 101/Tiburon Boulevard interchange. The Town’s planning area also includes open space land on Ring Mountain, as shown on Figure IN-2.

[infographic:

Our Town by the Numbers

Land area: 4.5 square miles

Population: 9,146 (2020 US Census)

Number of Housing Units: 4,051 (CA Dept of Finance, 2022)

Seniors 65 and older: 25% of the population

Children under 18: 23% of the population

Median Age: 49.1 years

**Figure IN-1 Regional Setting**

[to come]

**Figure IN-2 Town Limits and Planning Area**

[to come]

### **1.3 The General Plan Legacy**

*General Plan 2040* is the third such plan in the Town's history.

The 1970 General Plan included a plan to transform the former Northwest Pacific railyard into a development with a boat basin, museum, restaurant, and shops; an inn and conference center with shops and a 300-car garage; another extensive shopping area with parking for 550 cars; an office center; several new streets, and three housing developments. By 1973, there was concern that the Town would be overwhelmed with commercial development. A petition signed by almost one-third of the population requested that the Town maintain the small town character of Tiburon; limit automobile traffic and visitors; preserve the waterfront; and retain the downtown area primarily for residents, rather than visitors. Eventually, the Point Tiburon condominiums and commercial plaza and Shoreline Park were developed in the early 1980s.

The 1989 General Plan was adopted following a bitter and divisive political battle over the appropriate amount of new development that should be allowed in the community. The 1989 General Plan made sweeping reductions in allowable densities on the planning area's major undeveloped residential properties, and the stringent limitations of commercial intensity in Downtown Tiburon, first set forth in the 1975 Downtown Plan, were carried over and strengthened.

Tiburon's *General Plan 2020*, adopted in 2005, emphasized planning for the future while preserving the characteristics that make Tiburon unique and special, including its views and natural beauty, small-town village character, and network of open space. *General Plan 2020* acknowledged that the Town was predominately built out. The Land Use element focused on limiting development and preserving important environmental characteristics on the remaining 21 large parcels of vacant land within the Town's planning area. Of these properties, six located within the Town limits remain undeveloped.

In response to State law requirements, the Town adopted updated versions of the General Plan's circulation and housing elements in 2016. The Town adopted an updated Tiburon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2016), which provides guidance and programs for enhancing the pedestrian and bicycle network and facilities in Tiburon. Other adopted plans include the Open Space Resource Management Plan (2010), the Marin County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018), and the Town of Tiburon Climate Action Plan (2022) with measures aimed at reducing community and municipal greenhouse gas emissions. These plans have been incorporated in this General Plan Update.

### **1.4 The General Plan Update Process**

The General Plan Updates process, known as "Create Tiburon 2040," was a community-wide journey to ensure that Tiburon retains its unique character well into the future. It was a two-year planning process used to help define community values and explore future options. It was a public process, one that has sought to engage the community.

Each step of the Create Tiburon 2040 process was supported by extensive community outreach and participation. Community members provided their input and feedback through a series of public

workshops, meetings, and surveys. The Town created a website dedicated to the Create Tiburon 2040 effort and provided online surveys and virtual workshops to expand community participation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town utilized the Town’s website, newsletter, mailing, banners, email, social media, local newspapers, and printed materials to publicize community workshops and public meetings.

**Surveys and Workshops.** The Create Tiburon 2040 process began with a series of stakeholder interviews and a “Setting Priorities” survey to identify special characteristics about the Town, key issues to address, and potential areas for change or improvement. Residents said they prized Tiburon’s scenic beauty, natural environment, and location. The Town’s excellent schools, historic downtown, abundance of open space, and small-town feel were also noted. Key issues facing the Town included: ensuring the vitality of the downtown; managing tourism; emergency preparedness; climate change and sea level rise; traffic; downtown parking; bicycle and pedestrian mobility and safety; diversity and inclusion; affordable housing; and protection of open space.

A series of seven community workshops were held between February 2021 and March 2022. Workshops focused on specific elements of the General Plan as follows:

- Safety, Parks, and Open Space
- Sea Level Rise
- Downtown
- Housing I and II
- Sustainability
- Mobility and Noise

Online surveys were provided after each workshop to engage community members who could not participate during the scheduled event.

**Board and Commission Meetings.** Throughout the update process, the Town’s boards and commissions reviewed existing General Plan policies and programs related to their area of expertise, considered public input, and provided recommendations. These commissions and boards included the Planning Commission; Parks, Open Space, and Trails Commission; Heritage & Arts Commission; and the Diversity Inclusion Task Force. The Design Review Board was instrumental in developing objective design and development standards for Downtown zoning districts, a key piece to ensuring housing sites identified in the Housing chapter will complement and improve the look and feel of the Downtown.

## **1.5 General Plan Guiding Principles**

The Create Tiburon 2040 planning process was shaped by the following guiding principles which defined the major themes for the General Plan update and served as touchstones during the process of developing and refining goals, policies, and programs.

## Livability

### *Sense of Place*

- Preserve and enhance Tiburon's intimate small-town feel and bayside village charm.
- Preserve and enhance access to the Town's scenic public open spaces and bay front.
- Preserve and protect important historic, cultural, and artistic resources that serve as significant, visible reminders of the Town's social and architectural history.

### *Economic Vitality*

- Support a local economy that is vibrant and provides a wide range of services.
- Encourage Downtown vitality and redevelopment with a more diverse array of uses and amenities to serve the local population, while retaining and building upon its unique historic character and attractiveness.
- Gracefully accommodate tourism, balancing it with local needs and retaining the community's character.

### *Balanced Growth*

- Focus new development in Downtown and in areas adjacent to Tiburon Boulevard while preserving existing neighborhoods and open space.

### *Mobility*

- Provide a balanced transportation system, including public transit, that accommodates the needs of automobiles, pedestrians, bicycles, and new transportation technology.
- Reduce dependence on the automobile by providing a complete network of sidewalks, pathways, and transit services that are safe and convenient for all residents.

### *Healthy Lifestyles*

- Promote physical health and wellness by improving outdoor recreational facilities, trail connections and signage, and by providing quality recreation programs to residents of all ages, abilities, and economic means.

## Community

### *Community Connections*

- Strengthen community connections by providing activities and outdoor public gathering places.

### *Equity*

- Promote social equity and inclusiveness in creation of public policies.
- Ensure the just and equitable provision of public facilities and services.

### *Housing*

- Protect and enhance the quality of life within residential neighborhoods.
- Support the development of more diverse and affordable housing opportunities.

### *Safety*

- Provide a safe community through public safety services, resilient infrastructure, and public preparedness.

### *Sustainability*

#### *Environmental Resources*

- Protect and enhance open spaces and natural resources that contribute to Tiburon’s unique identity and scenic beauty.

#### *Climate Change and Resilience*

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase community resilience by preparing for the effects of climate change, including increased wildfires and sea level rise.

## **1.6 General Plan Organization**

The General Plan is organized into eleven chapters:

1. **Introduction** provides background information on the General Plan.
2. **Land Use** describes land use in Tiburon and how and where new development will occur.
3. **Downtown** describes the Downtown’s geography, history, built character, circulation patterns, and role as a commercial, cultural, and recreational destination.
4. **Housing** describes the need for housing, especially housing affordable to lower and moderate-income households, and sites available for housing.
5. **Diversity, Equity + Inclusion** addresses environmental justice and how the Town will build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive community.
6. **Mobility** provides an overview of the circulation network and traffic operations, and parking, public transportation, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities.
7. **Noise** identifies existing and future noise sources and noise levels in Tiburon.
8. **Sustainability** describes concepts of sustainability, provides an overview of climate change impacts, and addresses how the Town will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become a more sustainable community.
9. **Conservation** covers natural communities and ecological resources, watersheds and waterways, water resources, water and air quality, and cultural and historical resources.
10. **Open Space, Parks + Recreation** addresses the protection, maintenance and enhancement of Tiburon’s open space areas, parks, recreational facilities, and scenic resources.
11. **Safety + Resilience** describes environmental and human-caused hazards, including earthquake, flood, sea level rise, and fire, and addresses potential risks to the community.

Each chapter describes existing conditions and context for the related topic area, followed by goals, policies, and programs to guide the Town’s management and development. State law requires Tiburon’s General Plan to cover eight topics, also known as “elements.” Table IN-1 shows the relationship of the General Plan chapters to the State-mandated elements.

**Table IN-1 Location of State-Mandated Elements**

State-Mandated Element	Tiburon General Plan 2040 Chapter
Land Use	Land Use; Safety + Resilience
Circulation	Mobility
Open Space	Open Space, Parks + Recreation
Conservation	Conservation
Safety	Safety + Resilience
Noise	Noise
Housing	Housing
Environmental Justice <sup>1</sup>	Diversity, Equity + Inclusion

<sup>1</sup> An environmental justice element is required if a local jurisdiction has a disadvantaged community as defined by state law. Although Tiburon does not contain any such disadvantaged communities, environmental justice policies and programs are included in the General Plan.

The General Plan is supported by separately-published documents that provide background information and environmental analysis. The Existing Conditions Report contains detailed information for each of the topic areas covered in the General Plan and was used as a reference document during the development of the Plan. The Environmental Impact Report determines the type and extent of environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the General Plan. It identifies requirements for more detailed environmental analysis that may be required for specific projects considered in the future.

### 1.7 Administering the Plan

The General Plan is used in a variety of ways. Town planning staff use the General Plan when evaluating development proposals to ensure that projects are consistent with the General Plan land use designations and applicable goals, policies, and programs. The Town Council and the Town’s boards and commissions use the document to guide decision making. Importantly, the General Plan empowers the Town, public agencies that work with the Town, and private developers to invest in and plan for a future in accordance with the plan’s goals and policies.

Each chapter of the General Plan contains a series of goals, policies, and programs that provide guidance to the Town on how to direct change, manage growth, and manage resources over the life of the General Plan. The following provides a description and explains the relationship of each:

- A **goal** is a description of the general desired result related to a particular topic or issue that the Town seeks to create through the implementation of the General Plan.
- A **policy** is a specific statement that guides decision-making as the Town works to achieve its goals. The General Plan's policies set out the standards that will be used by Town staff, the Planning Commission, and the Town Council in its review of land development projects, resource protection activities, infrastructure improvements, and other Town actions. Policies are ongoing and require no specific action on behalf of the Town.
- A **program** is an action, procedure, or technique to be undertaken by the Town to help achieve a specified goal or implement an adopted policy.

The following words are used to indicate whether a particular policy or program is mandatory, advisory, or permissive:

- "Must" or "shall" means an action the Town is required to follow.
- "Should" means an action the Town is advised to follow.
- "May" means an action which is left to the discretion of the Town.

The General Plan contains a series of figures and maps depicting existing and proposed or future conditions of areas within and near Tiburon. These maps and diagrams are intended to provide the reader with a general understanding of the extent of land uses and conditions. Figures are not intended to be used for development, permitting, or investment purposes for specific parcels. More detailed printed maps may be available at the Town of Tiburon.

The General Plan's programs set forth a work program for the Town, guide capital improvement projects, and prioritize Town expenditures. Some actions call for additional analysis, studies, and implementing ordinances. Town staff will regularly report to the Town Council on the progress of the Plan's implementation.

The Town should periodically review the entire General Plan to determine whether it still reflects community concerns and goals. The Housing Element is required to be updated according to a schedule established by the State Department of Housing and Community Development. The next revision of the Housing Element is scheduled for 2031.