

CHAPTER

11

IMPLEMENTATION

**A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter addresses implementation of the General Plan. The Plan’s seven elements include 217 individual actions.<sup>1</sup> Many are already underway or are on-going. Others will require a future commitment of time and resources.

Implementation of all actions is a long-term goal that will take many years to accomplish. Although every effort has been made to present realistic recommendations in this Plan, some actions may be constrained by funding or staff limitations.

The General Plan should be periodically reviewed and amended as actions are completed and as new priorities arise. An annual review of the General Plan is required by State law and provides such an opportunity. The review may identify new issues requiring attention, as well as possible Plan amendments.

While the General Plan is principally about guiding long-term growth and change, it is also a management tool to guide City operations. The Plan should inform the annual budget and the capital improvement program. It should shape future work plans for City departments, particularly for staff in planning, transportation, sustainability, parks, and public works.

This chapter includes a summary of the ways in which the General Plan is implemented. It is organized using the following ten categories:

- Zoning
- Capital Improvements
- CEQA
- Operations and Maintenance
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Design Review and Guidelines
- Follow-up Plans and Studies
- Ordinances and Initiatives
- Intergovernmental Coordination
- Public Outreach and Education

---

<sup>1</sup> Excludes the Housing Element, which has its own implementation program.

## B. ZONING

Zoning is one the most important tools for implementing the General Plan. The Zoning Map depicts a series of districts that correspond to General Plan categories. The Zoning Code identifies the permitted uses and development standards in each of those districts. Zoning also identifies the procedures, levels of review, and other requirements associated with buildings and activities on each parcel in the city.

A comprehensive update of Albany's Zoning Code took place in 2004. Since that time, the Code has been amended in response to state and federal laws, new issues and policies, and changing local conditions. Recommended amendments to the Code are discussed in this General Plan, particularly in the Housing Element and the Land Use Element. At the time this General Plan was adopted in 2016, many of the Housing Element zoning actions had already been completed.

Most of the zoning actions in the Land Use Element relate to potential changes to be studied in the future, rather than changes that “must” be made for General Plan consistency. For example, the Plan suggests that the City “consider” developing special zoning standards for lots smaller than 3,750 square feet (LU-2.A). It also suggests that the City consider restoring the 45-foot height limit near the San Pablo Avenue/Solano Avenue commercial node (Action LU-3.E) and consider special regulations for commercial properties on the perpendicular side streets that intersect Solano Avenue (LU-3.F). The decision to actually amend the zoning code to make these changes will be based on further study and community input.

Because this General Plan does not propose substantial changes to the General Plan Map, the Zoning Map will remain consistent with the General Plan Map upon General Plan adoption. Minor Map changes may be considered to more closely align General Plan and zoning boundaries and to reflect the correct status of public properties such as Albany Middle School and the proposed Pierce Street Park.

## C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) helps implement the General Plan in two ways. First, the General Plan calls for specific projects, which can be placed in the CIP for prioritization, funding, and construction. Second, the General Plan identifies areas where future development is encouraged. The CIP should support the desired growth pattern by directing needed improvements to these areas. For example, public investment along San Pablo Avenue can help incentivize and support private investment along the corridor.

Among the capital improvements identified by the General Plan are the new Public Works Maintenance Center on Cleveland Avenue, the new Pierce Street Park, a new Senior Center, improvements to the Ohlone Greenway and Key Route median, wayfinding signage for bicyclists, sidewalk improvements, and playground improvements. The Plan also identifies longer-term and more expensive projects that would require further study, including potential construction of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge from the area east of the Union Pacific Railroad to the waterfront, and acquisition and refurbishment of the Veterans Building in Memorial Park.

Some of the capital improvement projects referenced in the General Plan are embedded in other master plans. For example, the General Plan calls for implementation of the Sewer Master Plan, the Creekside Master Plan (vegetation management), and the Active Transportation Plan. Each of these plans includes its own set of capital improvements.

The City adopted a CIP for 2016-2020 in September 2015. Many of the projects referenced by the General Plan are also referenced in that document. Other capital projects may be programmed in future CIPs, or funded through other sources as opportunities arise.

## D. CEQA

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is an important tool for General Plan implementation. CEQA provides the vehicle for carrying out many of the General Plan policies to protect the natural environment and reduce exposure to environmental hazards. It also helps ensure that development “pays its way” by evaluating potential impacts on traffic, schools, parks, and other services. The General Plan should be a benchmark throughout this process.

Many of the General Plan policies address factors to be considered during environmental review. For example, the Plan indicates that construction impacts on wildlife should be mitigated by requiring field surveys, pre-construction measures, and post-construction measures in environmentally sensitive areas (CON-1.E). It also requires that greenhouse gas emissions be evaluated for future development proposals (CON-3.B). The Plan also indicates when air pollution health risk assessments are required (CON-3.H) and when noise studies are required (EH-5.B).

## E. OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The General Plan provides guidance on operations and maintenance activities carried out by City departments. Typical activities addressed by the Plan include sidewalk repair, pavement management, street sweeping, storm drain clean-out, tree trimming, and regular inspections and energy audits of public facilities. These activities should continue to be funded through the annual budget. Most of the operations and maintenance activities identified by the General Plan are implemented by the Public Works Department.

## F. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The largest category of General Plan implementation measures consists of the standard operating procedures of the City of Albany. Many of these measures are already in place and are noted as activities to be “continued” in the future. Their appearance in the General Plan is intended to support their continued funding and to recognize their importance to achieving key General Plan goals. These actions include code enforcement activities carried out by the Police and Fire Departments, the Public Works Department, and others. Other actions represent the ongoing responsibilities of City Commissions and the City Council.

Examples of Standard Operating Procedures rooted in the General Plan include building code enforcement (EH-1.F), solid waste reduction and recycling programs (CON-7.B), and emergency management drills (EH-4.E). Other examples include day-to-day activities such as requiring soils and geologic reports for new hillside development, collecting crime statistics, monitoring traffic volumes, and maintaining child care and after-school programs. Collectively, these operations move the City toward its long-range planning goals.

A number of new operating procedures are recommended by the General Plan; these should be implemented in the coming years, with input from the City Council and Albany residents.

## G. DESIGN REVIEW AND GUIDELINES

The administration of design guidelines for new construction, additions, and alterations is an essential part of Albany’s planning program. The General Plan includes recommendations for new and amended guidelines to achieve the City’s land use and community design goals. It calls for new design guidelines for multi-family housing and mixed use development (LU-2.B), guidelines for activity nodes (LU-3.B), updated guidelines for San Pablo Avenue (LU-3.D), and revised street design standards (T-1.A). The Plan also suggests that guidelines be prepared for rooftop open space and roof decks, and that “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” principles be incorporated in building design.

## H. FOLLOW-UP PLANS AND STUDIES

Because the General Plan is a broad policy document, it does not provide the “final answer” on every issue. A number of more specific and focused plans will be needed in the future. In addition, previously adopted plans on specific topics (parks, climate action, public art, etc.) will need to be updated as conditions change.

The General Plan calls for additional studies of parking supply and demand in the city (LU-3.C, T-7.A), a street tree master plan (LU-6.C), a “Green Albany” Plan (CON-2.E), an inventory of soft-story apartment buildings (EH-1.C), exploration of renewable energy programs (CON-6.C), a transit gap study (T-3.H), and a parking management plan for Solano Avenue (T-7.E). It recommends an update of the Memorial Park Master Plan (PROS-3.B), the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PROS-2.D), the City’s emergency preparedness plan (EH-4.A), and the San Pablo Avenue streetscape plan (LU-6.A). The Plan also recommends that the City explore options for a more robust historic preservation program (LU-6.D, LU-2.C), and the expanded use of reclaimed water (PROS-3.G).

## I. ORDINANCES AND INITIATIVES

The Albany Municipal Code is another important tool for implementing the General Plan. The Code addresses many of the quality of life issues covered by the General Plan such as noise control, blight reduction, vegetation management, parking regulation, storm drainage, and abatement of nuisances.

The General Plan includes recommendations to modify existing City ordinances, along with proposals for new ordinances. Many of these recommendations refer to ideas to be studied in the future, while others call for specific action. Examples of the former include consideration of a Dark Skies Ordinance to reduce light pollution (CON-6.G). Examples of the latter include recommendations related to bicycle parking requirements (T-3.B), Code amendments for hillside sidewalks (T-5.E), and updates to the Trip Reduction Ordinance (T-2.C). The Plan also calls for a ballot measure which would facilitate more flexible parking standards in the Municipal Code (T-7.B).



Photo: Doug Davidson

*Albany's Commissions and Committees are an important part of General Plan implementation*

## J. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Much of the General Plan's success depends on communication and coordination between the City of Albany and other agencies such as the Albany Unified School District (AUSD), the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), and East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). The Plan calls for a number of joint efforts with these and other agencies. Such efforts are especially important in Albany due to the City's relatively small size, compact land area, and limited staff and budget resources.

Among the major intergovernmental coordination actions are encouraging the University of California to update the University Village Master Plan (LU-4.A), working with Caltrans on the I-80 Integrated Corridor Mobility Project (T-6.A), working with AC Transit on bus stop locations (T-3.I), and working with BART on mitigating train noise impacts (EH-5.D). The Plan also encourages additional monitoring by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (CON-3.E), and supports EBMUD's update of its Urban Water Management Plan (CSF-6.E).

There are several programs involving the City and AUSD, including collaboration on enrollment projections (CSF-1.A), Facility Master Plan implementation (CSF-1.D), joint use agreements (PROS-5.D), and Safe Routes to School (CSF-1.E)

The General Plan also recognizes the collaborative relationship between the City and EBRPD in planning for the waterfront. This includes completion of the transition planning effort, and implementation of follow-up measures such as Bay Trail construction (W-3.A and W-3.B), wayfinding signage (W-3.C), restoration of Albany Beach (W-4.B), habitat restoration (W-4.C), and shoreline armoring (W-5.A).

## **K. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

Each City department has a responsibility to inform the public of the services it provides, the issues it addresses, and opportunities for public input. The General Plan supports this mission through actions related to civic engagement, community events, public meetings, and social media. Activities such as Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), citywide park and recreation user surveys, and community-wide creek clean-ups are an important part of building trust in local government while also creating a stronger sense of community.

The General Plan particularly emphasizes environmental education, including programs to increase awareness of climate change, improve water quality, protect the City's creeks, reduce fossil fuel consumption, and increase solid waste diversion and recycling. It also emphasizes a broader understanding of Albany's history and the benefits of historic preservation to the city. The Plan expresses Albany's commitment to be responsive to resident feedback provided through surveys, letters, email, and testimony at public meetings.