



Existing Conditions Report

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the role and functions of a General Plan and explains the purpose and structure of the Existing Conditions Report.

1.2 What is a General Plan?

A General Plan is a city's road map for the future. A General Plan describes a community's aspirations and identifies strategies for managing preservation and change. Sometimes referred to as a community's "constitution," it is a comprehensive planning document that provides a city or county with a policy framework to guide decision-making related to land use, growth and development, public safety, mobility, and resource conservation. California state law requires every city and county to prepare and adopt a comprehensive and long range General Plan that includes the following seven mandatory chapters (referred to as "elements"): Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open Space, Conservation, Noise and Safety. State law also allows for the inclusion of optional elements that can be added at the City's discretion. Any optional element has the same policy weight as the required elements.

A General Plan establishes the policy framework to be used and implemented by residents, businesses, developers, City staff, the City Council and appointed boards and commissions. General Plans typically include goals, policies and implementing actions, as well as maps and diagrams. These components work together to convey a long-term vision and to guide local decision-making to achieve that vision. The General Plan and its maps, diagrams and development policies form the basis of a city's zoning and subdivision ordinances and public works projects. Under California law, no specific plan, area plan, community plan, zoning ordinance, subdivision map or public works project may be approved unless the city or county finds that it is consistent with the General Plan.

1.3 How does the City use the General Plan?

Burlingame's General Plan plays the foundational role in regulating land use; it is the top-level planning document, providing direction for all zoning regulations, ordinances, guidelines and plans. The goals and policies throughout the General Plan are interrelated and should be considered together when making decisions related to land use, mobility, growth and development. Since Burlingame last adopted a comprehensive General Plan in 1969, significant shifts have occurred in demographics, land use, transportation, economics, community character and the housing market. As a result, many portions of the 1969 General Plan are outdated and no longer relevant, so the City has initiated a comprehensive update.

The General Plan is a tool to help City staff make decisions related to programs and services, capital improvement projects, and land use and development applications. Staff uses Plan policy to provide direction to applicants and provide land use analysis to the Planning Commission, City Council and other boards and commissions. In addition, the General Plan

provides a detailed implementation program that identifies actions to be completed by City staff and can be used as a guide to establish annual work programs and budgets.

For the City Council and appointed boards and commissions, the General Plan is a tool to guide decisions and capital improvement projects. Future land use and development decisions and infrastructure improvements must be consistent with the General Plan.

1.4 Purpose of the Existing Conditions Report

This Existing Conditions report is the first step in the General Plan update process. This report summarizes and analyzes demographic, economic, land use, community character, mobility, natural resources, infrastructure and other conditions in the City of Burlingame, with the goal of helping the community and City planning team understand the issues and opportunities Burlingame faces. This analysis will be used to support the planning and community engagement process conducted during development of the updated General Plan.

1.5 Format and Contents

The existing conditions report provides an overview of the baseline (year 2015) form and character of Burlingame in the context of the following chapters.

- **Chapter 2: Land Use and Urban Form:** This chapter discusses baseline land use and development patterns, urban form, community character and the regulatory context in Burlingame.
- **Chapter 3: Economics and Market Demand:** The chapter summarizes the population, demographic and employment trends related to economic and market conditions in the city.
- **Chapter 4: Transportation and Mobility:** This chapter discusses the existing transportation network, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit, commute patterns and parking supply.
- **Chapter 5: Public Services and Infrastructure:** This chapter provides an overview of community services, public infrastructure and utilities in Burlingame.
- **Chapter 6: Natural Resources and Hazards:** This chapter provides an overview of Burlingame's natural features and vegetation, cultural resources and natural and human-caused hazards.
- **Chapter 7: Open Space and Recreation:** This chapter discusses open space and recreation resources in the city and immediate surrounds.
- **Chapter 8: Community Indicators:** This chapter discusses community indicators, which are the measurement of specific variables (economic, environmental and social) that reflect slow changes in the community over time and measure community well-being.