

General Plan Summary



OVERALL INTENT OF THE FOSTER CITY GENERAL PLAN

Foster City is a "Planned Community", constructed and implemented on the basis of an organized program of development that was conceived over 30 years ago. The City was originally designed to be a suburban community with a clear community center (Metro Center) and an industrial base to support required services. While Foster City is a relatively young, yet still developing community, it was anticipated that by the year 2000 the City would reach its build-out in accordance with the concept of the original land use plan. More than ten years later, there is still some vacant land within the City, and other buildings have already seen redevelopment.

The General Plan also recognizes the advantages of Foster City's central Bay Area location and easy access from State Route 92 and Highway 101 as important Foster City assets. As shown on Map GP-1, Foster City is favorably located near employment centers in the San Francisco Peninsula and Central Alameda County areas by its location midway between San Jose and downtown San Francisco and to the East Bay via the San Mateo-Hayward Bridge. In addition, the City itself has developed as a local job center.

The 2025 General Plan continues the intent of the original master plan. In addition, even greater attention has been given to making residential neighborhood preservation a central linchpin of the General Plan. In this way, all decisions will be weighed against their impact on residential neighborhoods and, to further this goal, the General Plan includes neighborhood preservation

THE VISION OF FOSTER CITY AS PRESENTED IN THE FOSTER CITY GENERAL PLAN

The 2025 Foster City General Plan is built around the following three (3) major themes:

(1) Foster City was originally designed to be a full service city with a character defined by residential neighborhoods, supported by commercial and light industrial land uses. The foremost theme of the General Plan is therefore about:

- ❖ **Preserving, protecting and enhancing the physical and social environment of residential neighborhoods.**

(2) Foster City is a relatively young city that has the opportunity to review its development to date, determine what must be done to achieve its historic and future goals and to engage in the task of:

- ❖ **Defining the unmet needs of the City, as a physical entity and as a population, now and in the future, and planning the use of remaining undeveloped and underutilized properties so that they fulfill those unmet needs.**

(3) While it is a young City, over time, Foster City has several significantly sized and located industrial and retail properties showing signs of physical decline. These properties have a significant long-time vacancy rate, use expensive land inefficiently, are too small or inefficiently designed to meet the requirements of the current (and expected future) market or are experiencing difficult financial times. Since their development, markets, the retailing industry and user needs have changed to the point that in order to maximize the use of these properties for the benefit of current residents, the day-time work force and the property owners, the City must set about:

- ❖ **Planning for and anticipating the redevelopment and/or renovation of existing unused, underutilized and failing or likely to fail land uses and/or structures.**

goals and policies to help preserve specific neighborhood qualities and thereby preserve the health of the City.

The General Plan recognizes the advantages of being a relatively young, planned community. These conditions include: (1) Highway 92 separates potentially conflicting uses from residential neighborhoods; (2) the housing stock is in relatively good condition; (3) industrial areas are in relatively good condition and contain mostly "clean" industry; (4) the City has been consistent and diligent in requiring property maintenance - there are no deteriorated areas (although there are scattered properties in need of renovation); and (5) the existing infrastructure has been generally well maintained and regular maintenance is performed on streets, sewer, water mains and other facilities.

The City must make a concerted effort through its property maintenance, design review and planning regulations to maintain or improve current conditions and to plan for renovation as it occurs. Potential problems to be addressed in the future include:

- (2) Changing the original Foster Plan when market conditions change, commercial properties fail and new land uses are appropriate;
- (3) Completing the street network to support build-out as originally and currently planned;
- (4) Maintaining the architectural integrity of the original residential unit designs as people seek to expand houses to accommodate growing families and changing needs;
- (5) Balancing small sites and the need to allow room additions with the impact on surrounding properties;
- (6) Defining the proper role of design in city planning balanced against the needs of people and supporting institutions; and
- (7) Providing some focus and "gathering place" for residents to improve community identity and bringing together unrelated neighborhoods - which is the purpose of Metro Center as envisioned in the original Master Plan.

Historic Development of Foster City

Foster City had its beginning as reclaimed marshlands devoted to dairy farming and evaporation ponds called Brewer Island. During the late 1950s, T. Jack Foster, in association with Bay Area developer Richard Grant, purchased an option to acquire Brewer Island for the development of a complete community. In order to finance the necessary improvements, Foster was successful in obtaining State legislation in 1960 to create the Estero Municipal Improvement District (EMID), California's first such public agency. The district board of directors was granted most of the governing powers associated with an incorporated municipality, except the powers to carry out municipal planning functions, such as the ability to zone land and approve development and certain other police powers.

Because the County of San Mateo retained the authority to approve development permits, T. Jack Foster prepared a master plan for the development of Brewer Island (Foster City) and submitted it to the County in 1961. The plan envisioned a self-contained, balanced community with a variety of housing types, waterfront lots and parks, an internal lagoon for public recreation, marinas, offices, stores, industry and public services. The City was to be developed as a cluster of nine residential neighborhoods, a commercial/governmental center, an industrial area and neighborhood shopping centers. Most of the neighborhoods were planned for a variety of housing, from single-family homes on individual lots to high density apartments. The Town Center, to be focused on an interior lake, was to include a combination of community and regional commercial services, offices, government agencies, entertainment establishments and parks.

The County Board of Supervisors approved the Foster City plan in 1961. By 1964, the first families had moved into Foster City. As the City developed, residents came to realize that their lack of representation on the EMID Board made it difficult to affect Board decisions regarding development and taxation issues. T. Jack Foster & Sons relinquished control of the EMID Board to residents in 1970 and the EMID Board began incorporation proceedings. Foster City was incorporated in April, 1971, with the newly elected City Council assuming the powers of the EMID Board.

RELATIONSHIP OF FOSTER CITY'S PAST PLANNING TO FUTURE PLANNING NEEDS AND ISSUES

Foster City has been committed to continuing the basic intentions of the 1961 master plan and maintaining the qualities, appearance and scale of its residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. The primary concerns of the 2025 Foster City General Plan are:

How does the community preserve the character and quality of the City as it is *today* as the City reaches build-out?

Key issues include: Quality architecture and appearance; waterways and water orientation; continuing the emphasis that Foster City is a "master planned" City; improving the City's tax base to pay for desired services; and assuring that City streets, facilities, parks and other amenities are maintained and improved to respond to City-wide and neighborhood needs.

Where are there likely to be changes in market conditions *in the future* that require the City to respond with new thinking and plans? How does the community reconcile those changes in market conditions with its vision of the City as it is and ought to be? What opportunities exist for the City to guide the market and produce what is most beneficial?

Key issues include: Integrating new development with the design, infrastructure and environmental conditions in the City; establishing a long-term perspective on City service needs; and identifying measures for any changes to assure consistency with City character.

What are the City's *legal obligations* to meet State imposed mandates and goals and how can the City do so in a manner consistent with the community's vision of the City as it is and ought to be? How can the City be "regional" in its planning without sacrificing its sense of what the community wants for the City?

Key issues include: Increasing State mandates; responding to regional needs in a manner consistent with Foster City's goals; and creating a sustainable future.

In 1972, shortly after incorporation, Foster City's first General Plan was adopted which maintained the basic concepts of the original master plan. The Land Use and Circulation Element of the City's first General Plan was adopted in 1974, with other elements adopted at various times thereafter. The dates of adoption of specific elements of the current Foster City General Plan include:

- (1) Land Use and Circulation Element (amended 2013)
- (2) Housing Element (adopted 2015)
- (3) Parks, Open Space and Conservation Element (adopted 2009)
- (4) Noise Element (adopted 1993)
- (5) Safety Element (adopted 1995)
- (6) Conservation Element (adopted 2003)

There have been a number of amendments to the General Plan since it was adopted. These have covered a range of elements, but most of the amendments have been to the Land Use

Element. The Housing Element has been updated and adopted within each required timeframe to comply with State law requirements.

FUTURE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND PLANNING TRENDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Listed below are some of the major planning factors important to Foster City and the assumptions about them, upon which anticipated conditions are based.

(1) Limited Land Supply/High Land Prices. The limited supply of and high demand for land will maintain the very high prices for development sites and existing housing.

(2) Public Funding Capability. A long-standing City goal has been to meet local service needs and maintain high quality public services. Local governments in general are expected to continue to have significantly less funding capability for capital facilities, improvements and maintenance costs.

(3) Household Characteristics. There will be a continuing trend toward smaller, one-parent households although the decrease in average household size is not expected to be as great as the last ten years. ABAG projects a slight decline from 2.48 persons per household in 2000 to 2.43 persons per household in the year 2025. The persons per household figure has continually decreased from 1980, when it 2.64.

(4) Scale and Density of Development. The City will continue to have typical low scale suburban style buildings south of East Hillsdale Boulevard, with new suburban center style mid-to-high rise buildings north of East Hillsdale and east of Edgewater Boulevard in mixed use developments. The City already has higher than typical suburban densities in residential neighborhoods. In 2010, the percentage of multi-family units (townhouses, condominiums and apartments) was about 62% of the housing units in the City.

(5) Housing Conservation. Conserving the structural aspects and appearance of existing housing units and properties will continue to be a key emphasis of City actions.

(6) Community Character. Even though there are a number of planning choices available to the City, there are basic attributes that future planning should protect, including: (a) the "planned" character of the community; and (b) the integrity and design quality of Foster City's residential neighborhoods.



HOW THE GENERAL PLAN WAS PREPARED

The City encourages a high degree of public awareness and involvement in the consideration of planning issues. Preparation of the Plan was assisted by a number of publicly noticed study sessions with the Foster City Planning Commission. The Planning Commission also reviewed several "Working Drafts" of each chapter of the General Plan.

Staff conducted community surveys resulting in several background reports prepared for the General Plan Update. These reports were compiled into a "snapshot" of Foster City. This report identified trends facing the community, issues and constraints to development, demographic changes and new legislature.

The General Plan is also based on inter-departmental and inter-jurisdictional cooperation and assistance to the fullest extent possible. Through the preparation of a programmatic environmental impact report, meetings, noticing, interviews and review of draft elements, the General Plan work has been coordinated with various City departments, County departments, schools, utilities, City of San Mateo, etc. On a broader scale, the General Plan has been coordinated with regional, state and federal agencies.

GOALS FOR EACH ELEMENT OF THE FOSTER CITY GENERAL PLAN (2025)

The following broad goals provide a "vision" of what the community intends to be like in the future. The goals serve as the basis for more specific policies and implementation programs contained in each element of the General Plan.

LAND USE AND CIRCULATION GOALS

LUC-A Preserve the Quality of the City's Residential Neighborhoods

Preserve and strengthen the identity and qualities of Foster City's residential neighborhoods and assure that: (1) all new development, renovation or remodeling are harmoniously designed and operated to integrate with the existing neighborhood; (2) noise, traffic and other conflicts between residential and non-residential land uses are eliminated or minimized to the extent possible; (3) each residential neighborhood has access to a developed park or park-like recreational area within walking distance to most residents, and that park facilities are well maintained, diverse and adequate to meet the needs of residents; and (4) maintain availability of commercial and retail services.

LUC-B Promote Proper Site Planning, Architectural Design and Property Maintenance

Ensure high quality site planning and architectural design for all new development, renovation or remodeling and require property maintenance to maintain the long-term health, safety, appearance and welfare of the community.

LUC-C Maintain a Variety of Land Uses

Maintain land designated for a variety of residential, commercial, light industrial, recreational and public institutional purposes which: (1) provide a mix of housing types, densities and tenure; (2) ensure that a variety of commercial and industrial goods, services and employment opportunities are available in Foster City; and (3) offer a range of recreational and public facilities to meet the needs Foster City's residents.

LUC-D Assure Safe Commercial and Industrial Uses

Ensure that commercial and industrial uses are safe and strictly control any industrial by-products, odors or emissions which may adversely affect the health or safety of Foster City residents or workers and the overall environment in Foster City, as provided in Chapter 17.68, General Performance Standards of the Foster City Municipal Code.

LUC-E Provide for Diversified Circulation Needs

Develop, improve and maintain a circulation system which provides efficient and safe access for private vehicles, commercial vehicles, public transit, emergency vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

LUC-F Maintain Acceptable Operating Conditions on the City's Road Network

Maintain acceptable operating conditions on the City's road network at or above LOS D, or equivalent measurement, and encourage the maximum effective use of public and private vehicles, reduce the growth in peak hour traffic volumes and reduce single passenger trips.

LUC-G Provide Adequate Parking

Ensure that adequate off-street parking is incorporated into new and modified projects, and designed for safe and effective circulation.

LUC-H Foster a More Sustainable Community

Strive to be a community that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by promoting land use strategies that decrease reliance on automobile use, increase the use of alternative modes of transportation, maximize efficiency provision of services and reduce emissions of GHGs.

LUC-I Provide for Economic Development

Provide for economic development which: (1) maintains the City's ability to finance City services and construction and maintenance of public improvements; (2) offers local employment opportunities for Foster City residents so that inter-city commuting can be reduced; (3) assures the availability and diversity of resident-serving goods and services; and (4) allows for specialized commercial uses, such as automobile service stations, water-oriented commercial uses and day care facilities.

LUC-J Reinforce Metro Center as a City-wide Focal Point

Reinforce Metro Center as a focal point of the City and maintain Metro Center as a competitive business and activity center and specialized mixed use living environment.

LUC-K Encourage Redevelopment of Under-utilized Properties

Encourage the aggregation and redevelopment of under-utilized properties and/or outdated buildings under multiple ownerships in the older commercial/industrial areas of the City, specifically the Chess Drive/Hatch Drive area.

LUC-L Provide Adequate Services and Facilities

Ensure that new and existing developments can be adequately served by municipal services and facilities.

HOUSING GOALS**H-A Reinforce the City's Commitment to Meeting Housing Needs**

Establish and monitor goals, policies and programs to address the City's housing needs, encourage public participation in all housing policy matters and promote equal housing opportunities.

H-B Protect Existing Housing, Community Character and Resources

Maintain the high quality of existing housing and community character and assure energy efficiency in new and existing housing.

H-C Protect the Supply and Affordability of Rental Housing.**H-D Consider Potential Public and Private Redevelopment Opportunities to Increase the Supply of Housing**

Assure excellence in architecture and site planning in all new projects, provide a variety of housing types and tenure and meet the City's "fair share" of regional housing need.

H-E Address Affordable Housing Needs

Meet the City's "fair share" of very low, low and moderate income housing need and the needs of special groups, including the elderly, handicapped, small and large families, extremely low income households and persons, single parents and local workers.

H-F Address Special Housing Needs**PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION GOALS****PC-A Provide Sufficient and Diverse Recreational Opportunities**

Provide sufficient and diverse recreational opportunities for all Foster City residents through the development of new recreation facilities as needed, given available funding and support, and the construction of additional park amenities in existing parks and elsewhere in locations where deficiencies have been identified or opportunities occur.

PC-B Maintain Existing Recreation Facilities

Maintain current park amenities and infrastructure in a safe, attractive and functional recreation environment.

PC-C Maintain and Improve the City's Pedway and Bikeway System

Maintain and improve the pedway system that surrounds the city and the walkway system that provides safe access to parks, schools and other streets.

NOISE GOALS

N-A Assure that the Noise Impacts of New Development or Redevelopment of Property is Done in a Manner that is Compatible with Existing Land Uses

Assure the appropriateness of new development with the noise environment of Foster City and establish mitigation measures for any changes in land use as are reasonably necessary to assure compatibility with the surrounding area.

N-B Preserve and Improve the "Quiet Ambiance" Within Existing Neighborhoods

Protect neighborhoods by providing an acceptable noise level throughout the community and by identifying and alleviating or minimizing existing noise problems where possible.

SAFETY GOALS

S-A Protect from Seismic and Geologic Hazards

Protect the community from unreasonable risk to life and property caused by seismic and geologic hazards.

S-B Protect from Flood Hazards

Protect the community from unreasonable risk to life and property caused by flood hazards.

S-C Protect from Fire and Dangerous Conditions

Protect the community from unreasonable risk to life and property caused by fires and dangerous conditions.

S-D Prepare to Respond to Emergencies

Minimize potential damage to life, environment and property through timely, well-prepared and well-coordinated emergency preparedness, response plans and programs.

S-E Provide Police Services

Reduce criminal activity and instill a feeling of safety and security in the community.

CONSERVATION GOALS

C-A Protect and Conserve Natural Resources

Protect and conserve wildlife habitat, energy resources, land resources air quality, and the quality and quantity of water resources