

Thousand Friends of Martinez

February 12, 2020

Re: Martinez General Plan Update (GPU) and Our Future

Martinez Citizens:

The General Plan Update (GPU) will control growth in our town for the next several decades. Yet it fails to answer the important questions.

How many houses will developers put into your neighborhood? Will 4-5-6 story buildings go up in our Downtown? How will we cope with flooding at the Marina? Will we lose open space? Where will our new parks and schools go?

We need real answers to these real questions. But the GPU just states lofty-sounding goals---and leaves all the big decisions in the hands of the City Council.

The GPU fails as a plan. Martinez needs a true plan, a clear blueprint for how our City Council will protect, maintain and grow what citizens repeatedly state is important:

- a safe, vibrant place to live and work
- preservation of our existing neighborhoods throughout Martinez
- growth in our Downtown that retains our historic, small-town character
- protection and improvement of our parks, open spaces and waterfront

We believe the Martinez City Council needs to scrap the GPU and develop a new General Plan Update that represents the citizens of Martinez.

Our concerns include the following (based upon reviewing the GPU posted on the City of Martinez website until last October---it has not been on the website since then).

The General Plan Update (GPU):

1. leaves out a whole series of current important issues

- There is no plan for sea level rise, yet the Waterfront and Marina will see frequent flooding (and submergence in some areas) due to climate change.
- There is no plan for fire prevention despite recent history of massive fires in Northern California and dangerous local fires.
- How are we planning to attract good jobs to our town?
- What is the plan to address homelessness in Martinez?

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- How do we plan to respond to the never-ending demand for more housing without undermining our neighborhoods and Downtown?

2. does not address the adoption of Measure I

- Measure I must be incorporated into the GPU. There is currently no information on how the City plans to do that.
- Measure I *map* must be included in the GPU. A different map is in the GPU now, one showing changes to some land uses.

3. fails to contain public input

- The primary source of public input, the General Plan Task Force, was **dissolved** in the middle of the GPU process, and never produced any written report or recommendations. Several Task Force members have expressed their dissatisfaction with the public process.
- The GPU does not identify community priorities or concerns because the community was not involved.

4. is stale and outdated

- The GPU was set aside five years ago.
- It was started over ten years ago.
- The last public input is five years old.
- Much has changed in Martinez and the world in recent years. For instance, we now know parts of our Marina will be constantly flooded in years to come.

5. is hard to read and confusing

- The GPU is over 400 pages long (and the EIR is 650 pages)---too long to be useful to the public.
- It is confusing to read, and filled with pages of superfluous and extraneous verbiage, but no real plan.
- The important questions are not even addressed.

6. leaves the public defenseless and makes the City Council all-powerful

- Almost all decisions are left to the interpretation of the Council.
- There are few mandatory protections for our neighborhoods or the Downtown or the Marina.

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- Strong protections that are included in our current General Plan may have been deleted or changed in the GPU.
- The GPU leaves the public virtually powerless to contest Council decisions.

7. is not a plan and shows no vision for our future

- There is no “plan” in this General **Plan** Update.
- It is basically a long list of weak goals, policies and guidelines with no substantiation or coherence or “teeth”.
- It is filled with confusing definitions and history that should be in an appendix or glossary.
- It has no vision of Martinez in the future, or any plan for us to achieve a vision.

8. throws out our current General Plan which contains strong public protections and policies

- The current General Plan has served us well. It
 - is easy to read and understand.
 - spells out its intent and executes it.
 - gives real protections to citizens and places limits on the City Council.
 - identifies community concerns and priorities, and how it meets them.
- The current General Plan has been updated numerous times.
- It contains real protections, policies and guidelines for our neighborhoods, Downtown and the Marina that need to be reflected in the GPU.
- The City Council must show us how the current General Plan compares to the GPU---both what has been dropped that is in the current General Plan, and what has been added that is not in the current General Plan.

This is just a short list of defects in the GPU.

The severe flaws in the GPU and the process used to develop it are fatal. We believe the only way to proceed is to start over, and develop a plan that truly meets the needs of Martinez citizens for the decades to come.

We urge the City Council to discard the GPU and restart the process. We encourage all Martinez citizens to demand they do so.

Martinez is renowned for its sense of community and shared values. Working together, we can succeed in developing a truly community-wide General Plan Update to guide us for the decades ahead.

Respectfully,
Thousand Friends of Martinez