



Town Leaders Contemplate a New Vision for Windsor in 2040



Developed in 1996 as part of the Town's first General Plan, the Vision set forth a framework and direction for Windsor through 2015. If the Town's General Plan is a roadmap for future growth and change in Windsor, the General Plan Vision is its destination. The Town Council and Planning Commissioners will set the course for Windsor's next 25 years in their March 24th

study session when they review revisions to the Town's Vision statement that was established nearly 20 years ago.

In 1996 the Vision of Windsor was crafted by a community that had just incorporated. The town's identity was not clearly established and the Downtown and Town Green were unrealized

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What makes Windsor great and what needs to change?

Windsor has a wide range of characteristics, some of which residents value, some they want to change, and others they want to improve upon. The General Plan Update will help the Town preserve or enhance the characteristics residents value, address the issues that require change, and capitalize on the favorable conditions unique to Windsor. In an effort to synthesize these ideas, the Town prepared the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report, which captures the ideas and input from the community and summarizes key findings from research and analysis conducted as part of the Update effort.

The Report describes key issues and opportunities that have major policy implications as Windsor considers how to grow and change over the next 25 years.

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Windsor's Youth Talk about Planning and the Future

Nearly 20 students from northern Sonoma County put their city planner hats on for a day as part of a Tomorrow's Leaders Today (TLT) forum hosted at the Windsor Town Hall. TLT is a 9-month program for high school juniors in Sonoma County that gives students an inside look at Sonoma County and its issues through hands-on learning, critical thinking, and communication. The program gives students a local perspective on

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Taking the Community's Pulse

As part of the General Plan Update, the Town will be conducting a telephone survey in April 2015 to gauge the views of residents on Windsor's future. Building from a survey conducted in 1994 as part

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What Makes Windsor Great...

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It is organized around 11 topics, each containing at least one asset, issue, and opportunity. The 11 topics are: community image, economic development, downtown/town green, housing and neighborhoods, transportation and mobility, sustainability and resiliency, health and wellness, hazards and safety, school and education, development and growth, and infrastructure and services.

One key issue affecting several topics was finding a way to improve connectivity within the town. Highway 101 divides the town both physically and socially. The limited number of highway crossings often create traffic bottlenecks, impede cross-town mobility, and create safety hazards for bicyclists and pedestrians. School-related congestion, discontinuous bikeways, and a lack of bus/transit service will also require attention through the General Plan process.

Another take-away from the Report is that Windsor residents value their health and quality of life. The Town has taken strides towards becoming a healthier community by investing in active transportation facilities and the Town Green Community Garden. And, residents established the Windsor Wellness Partnership. The General Plan Update provides a great opportunity to support these efforts by incorporating health into its policies, and promote healthy foods and active living. Many of the ideas covered in the report are intertwined with solutions that address key issues from multiple topics. For example, Windsor can encourage active living by further improving its bike and trail network and embedding opportunities for active transportation in new development.

Many of the report topics touched upon Windsor's emerging Downtown centered around both the Train Depot/Transit Center and the Town Green. It is evident that residents support the work the Town has done to revitalize the Downtown area. Windsor's Downtown is now the heart of Windsor and will continue to be a key cultural center moving forward. However, the development around the Town Green is incomplete and there are still too few people living downtown. The future is bright with SMART transit service and potential new development projects. The downtown will no doubt be a point of emphasis in the General Plan Update.

The Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report is available on the Town's General Plan Update website: www.windsor2040.com.

Development Review Process Takes Center Stage

The on-going General Plan Update process has highlighted the need to revisit the Town's process for reviewing and approving new residential development projects. For over a decade, the Town has relied upon a competitive Merit Process to evaluate potential development projects and approve allocations for new residential units on an annual basis. In the coming months, the Town Council and Planning Commission will be holding joint study sessions to discuss the Merit Process and how it might be refined as a more effective tool in the development review process.

Since 1997, the Town of Windsor has managed its growth and development under the guidance of the Growth Control Ordinance, which voters adopted to ensure an adequate supply of land and public utility infrastructure for potential development through 2017. The Ordinance established an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) around the town and limited population growth to two to three percent per year. It also allowed the Town Council to establish a Merit Process to review residential development and allocate resources according to urban planning and design principles deemed important to local residents.

During the General Plan Update, many have cited the Merit Process as a useful tool that promotes community education and involvement in the development review process and results in well-designed projects. It also helps to ensure that new development contributes positively to the community. However, others have noted that the conceptual



nature of the project proposals result in unrealistic or infeasible projects that, once approved for allocations, cannot be developed according to the proposals presented during the merit process. As a result, the expectations of the Town and the developer are out of synch, and the resulting negotiations add time and costs to an already expensive process.

From the Town's perspective, while competition between potential projects brings out the best designs, the Merit Process could benefit from a greater focus on financial feasibility as well as other Town goals, such as urban design excellence, water conservation, renewable energy, or health and wellness. In this way, the Merit Process could be used as a very effective tool in implementing the General Plan. While the recent recession limited the number of projects reviewed through the Merit Process and reduced interest in changing it, recent renewed demand for new housing development has refocused attention on refining the process to address its challenges.

The Town hopes to use the General Plan Update process to assess how the Merit Process has been an effective tool in evaluating development projects and in implementing the Growth Control Ordinance. At the same time, Town officials and the development community are looking to identify ways in which the process can be refined to be a more effective and efficient method for creating well-designed projects that reinforce Windsor's character and provide public benefits to the community. The current effort is timely since the Growth Control Ordinance will sunset in 2017. Before that time, residents will be asked to decide whether to continue managing growth using the Growth Control Ordinance or choose a different path. Please visit www.windsor2040.com for more information about the General Plan Update.

For More Information:

www.windsor2040.com
[Growth Control Ordinance at](http://www.windsor2040.com)
ci.windsor.ca.us



Making Windsor's Streets More Complete

In order to ensure that Windsor remains eligible for grant funding through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission One Bay Area Grant program, on January 7, 2015, the Town Council amended the 1996 General Plan Community Development Element for consistency with State Complete Streets mandates. Complete streets aren't new for Windsor. In January 2013 the Town adopted a Complete Streets Policy and Complete Streets Design Guidelines. The General Plan Amendment reflects the Town's previously adopted policy and guidelines.

Complete streets are intended to meet the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, seniors, movers of commercial goods, and users of

public transportation, in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan. The California Complete Streets Act of 2008 (AB 1358) required that cities and counties modify the circulation element of their general plans to address a balanced, multimodal transportation network of complete streets.

The General Plan Amendment included introductory language describing a transportation system that serves both regional and local travel needs across a broad spectrum of modes. It addresses the SMART commuter rail system that will ultimately connect Windsor to other communities in Sonoma and Marin Counties. The amendments added 17 new policies to the General Plan that address a multimodal transportation

system, development of complete streets, commuter safety, and the SMART train. It also revised the definitions of streets to include all modes of travel from pedestrian, bike, and transit to vehicles. Finally, the amendments removed implementation programs that have been completed and added two new programs related to prioritizing complete streets upgrades and using underutilized rights-of-way.

For More Information:

Complete Streets Guidelines:
windsor2040.com/documents/

SMART Commuter Train:
www.sonomamarintrain.org

A New Vision for Windsor

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goals. Fast-forward 20 years and the Town has progressed. A mixed-use Downtown has been developed around a vibrant Town Green. They are the heart of Windsor and a regional gathering place. The residential make-up of Windsor has also changed, and the community's values and priorities have evolved.

The Town Council is not drafting a new Vision from scratch; they are refining the existing Vision based on community input from the current Update effort. The draft Vision includes topics such as town identity, culture and recreation, economic vitality, and sustainability. Decision-makers and community members shared their ideas for Windsor's vision at meetings and on the Update online town hall forum. The online forum helped community members

share their opinions about Windsor's quality of life, transportation, housing, and economy.

The Vision will remain a draft until the Town Council adopts it, along with the completed General Plan, at the end of the Update process. The Vision will be a foundational document in the General Plan Update process. The Vision expresses the aspirations of the Town and describes an ideal Windsor in 2040. All of the goals, policies, and implementation programs in the General Plan must be consistent with the Vision and describe the actions necessary to achieve the Vision. The draft Vision the Town Council and Planning Commission formulate at their study session will be posted on the Windsor 2040 website (www.windsor2040.com) after March 25th.

Youth Talk Planning

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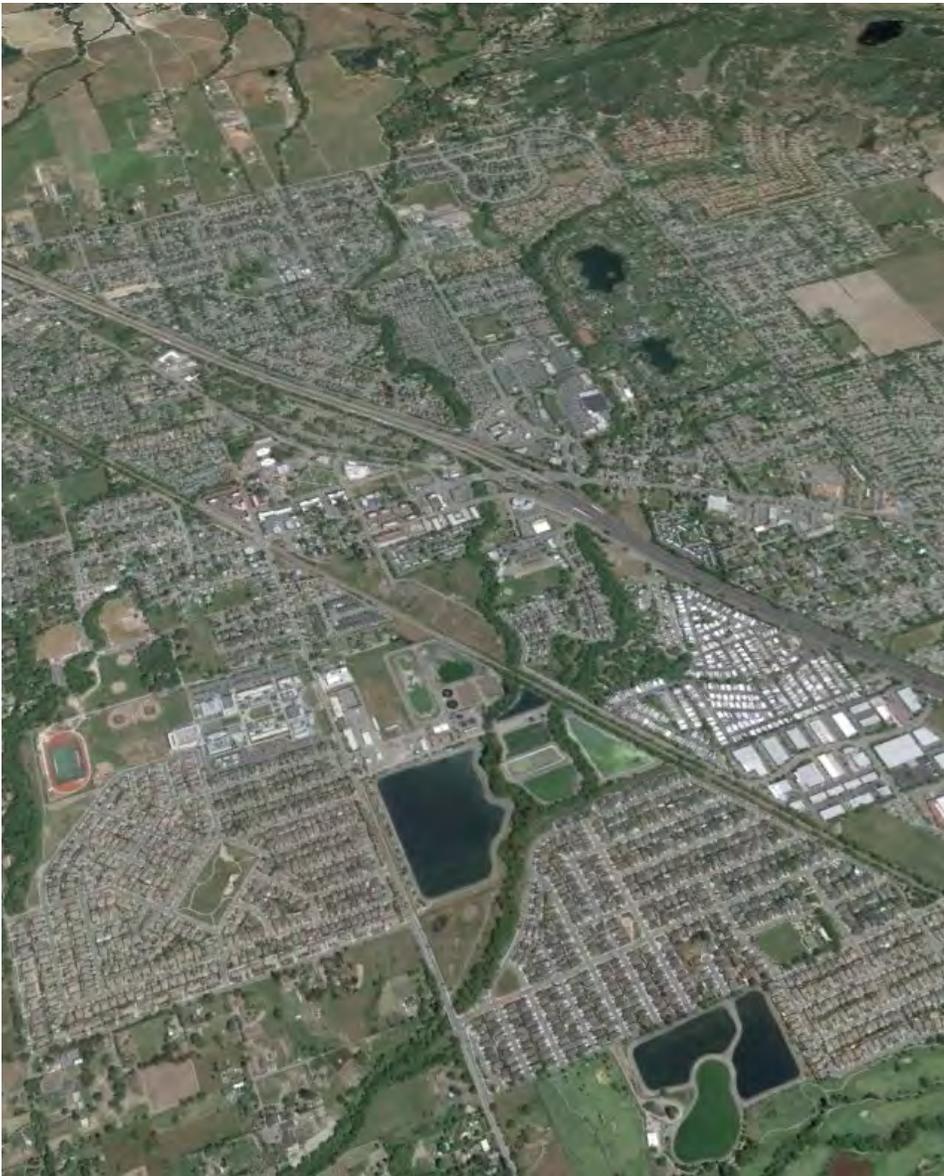
their current issues and interests, as well as opportunities to meet local community leaders.

The theme for the March TLT forum was Planning and Development. The topics discussed included the local planning and development process, new trends and ideas in the planning field (e.g., sustainability), and the role of citizen participation. During the full-day program the students participated in exercises to identify what they valued and what they wanted to change about their community. They also learned about how future growth and development are planned within a community.

The students heard from several planning and development professionals throughout the day. Ned Thomas, Community Development Director, led the group on a walking tour of the Windsor Town Green and Old Redwood Highway improvements adjacent to Bell Village. During the tour Ned discussed issues related to urban development and recreation planning. Peter Stanley and Mitch Connor of ArchiLOGIX gave presentations on planning and described the process of community engagement. The Town's General Plan Update consultants presented an overview of Windsor's General Plan Update project. Following the presentation, Donna Legge, Recreation Director from the Windsor Parks and Recreation Department, discussed the new Parks and Recreation Master Plan currently being prepared by the Town.



Milestone Report Documents Windsor's Current Conditions



In order to plan for the future, it's critical that we understand where we are. Before the Town begins its work on developing new policies to guide future decisions, it developed a Background Report of existing conditions. The Background Report is intended to represent a "snapshot" of current conditions and trends in and around town that influence growth and development of the town. It provides a detailed description of a wide range of topics, such as demographics and economic conditions and projections, land use, public facilities, environmental resources, and safety hazards. The Report provides decision-makers context for making policy decisions. Readers get an objective understanding of all aspects of Windsor. The Background Report will also serve as environmental setting sections of existing conditions for the Environmental Impact Analysis that the Town will conduct before adopting the updated General Plan.

Town Council Adopts Housing Element

On January 7, 2015, the Windsor Town Council adopted the 2015-2023 General Plan Housing Element. The Housing Element addresses housing opportunities for present and future residents through 2023. The document has two sections; the Policy Document outlines the Town's goals, policies, and implementation programs for

the preservation, conservation, improvement, and production of housing for the 2015-2023 planning period. The Background Report analyzes the constraints, needs, and sites available for housing. The California Housing and Community Development Department certified the Housing Element on February 12, 2015. As a result, Windsor is

in compliance with State housing law. Due to recent State legislation, the deadline for certification of the Housing Element was January 31, 2015.

For More Information:

Find the Housing Element at
Windsor2040.com/documents



Community Pulse

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of the Town's last General Plan project, the current survey effort will check in with residents to see how views and values have changed over the last 20 years and identify what is important to them. If you receive a phone call asking to take the Town's survey, please support the Update process and tell us what you think. For those of you who don't get a call, don't worry; the Town will post the survey on the General Plan Update website for anyone interested in providing input.

For More Information:

Sign up on our email list at
www.windsor2040.com/contact



Latino Open House

On January 11, 2015, Town staff from Parks and Recreation and Community Development hosted an open house at the Agatha Furth Center to receive community input on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the General Plan Update. Bilingual staff and volunteers guided participants through an interactive process to identify likes of current parks, facilities, programs, and desires for the future. Youth and teens were encouraged to participate, with their responses tracked in different colors on the display boards. Approximately 250 people visited the open house, which was held immediately following the church services on-site.

Get Involved!

Town Council/Planning Commission Study Sessions

The Town Council and Planning Commission will meet several times during the General Plan Update process to review milestone products and provide feedback to Town staff and the General Plan Consultants. Dates and locations will be posted on the project website and published in future newsletters once they are scheduled. Residents, business owners, and community stakeholders are encouraged to attend and participate.

Join Our Mailing List

Stay informed about the Update process by signing up to receive email updates on upcoming meetings, new reports and documents, and opportunities to participate in the process. You can join the General Plan Update mailing list at: <http://www.windsor2040.com/contact/>.

Online Townhall Forum

Throughout the Update process, the Town will be seeking community input on the General Plan Update Online Townhall Forum. The Townhall Forum is an online community engagement tool that allows you to communicate with Town leaders/staff and your friends/neighbors about the issues you care about. Because the Townhall Forum is online, you can participate from home or anywhere you access the internet. Join the forum here: <http://windsor2040.mindmixer.com/>.

General Plan Update Website

The General Plan Update website, www.windsor2040.com, contains up-to-date information on the General Plan, including information about the upcoming workshops, study sessions, and other ways to get involved. Visit the website and click on the “contact” link to provide general feedback.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

The first and current Parks and Recreation Master Plan include standards and criteria to develop parks and recreation facilities. Adopted in 1999, the documents offer vision, objectives, and policies to guide development through 2015. The Master Plan has outlined a goal to develop park and facility improvements that are based on public input and patterns of growth and anticipated program demands. In updating the Master Plan, it is recommended that the Plan parallel accreditation standards identified by the National Recreation and Parks Association and initiatives outlined by the California Parks and Recreation Society, including a focus on trails, recreation program trends, health and wellness, art and culture, economic development, and alternative funding for capital improvements, maintenance, and operations.

As a strategic document, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will provide a long-term vision for the Town’s park system, and specific policies and standards to direct day-to-day decisions. It will set forth a framework that will allow the Town to respond to new opportunities as they arise, and to ensure that adequate parks, facilities, and recreation programs meet the needs of the Town’s future residents, employees, and visitors.

For more information go to the Master Plan Website at www.windsorparcs2030.com.

The Windsor General Plan Process

