



*Moraga pear trees.*



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

#### A SHARED VISION FOR MORAGA'S FUTURE

General Plan 2040 outlines a unified vision for Moraga's future. It aims to preserve the qualities that make Moraga unique today, while also enhancing the community's vibrancy, sustainability, and resilience for the future. The Plan includes goals, policies, and actions needed to achieve this vision.

Although the General Plan is ambitious, it's not just a "wish list." It serves as a strategic guide for shaping Moraga's development. Developed with input from hundreds of residents over several years, the Plan addresses key issues, evaluates options, and offers data-driven guidance to navigate a complex and changing future.

#### A REQUIREMENT OF STATE LAW

In California, all counties, cities, and towns are required to adopt a general plan for their future development. The plan must be regularly updated to reflect changing conditions, new laws, and emerging issues. The State Government Code specifies that general plans must cover certain topics (known as "elements") and must be comprehensive, long-range, and internally consistent.

Moraga has a legacy of long-range planning. The Town was incorporated in 1974 to chart its own future, especially local land use decisions. It adopted its first General Plan in 1979, updated it in 1990, and again in 2002, with each update extending the Plan's time horizon. This edition, prepared between 2022 and 2024, looks ahead to 2040.





Ascot Drive

## A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION

The General Plan directs Moraga's long-term growth by establishing a legal framework for development and conservation. It influences daily operations, future plans, ordinances, and programs.

The General Plan forms the basis for the Town's zoning regulations, which define permissible land uses and development standards for each property. It also underpins the Capital Improvement Program, which aligns infrastructure, road, and public facility projects with areas designated for growth. This comprehensive document shapes Moraga's future in areas such as housing, transportation, safety, parks, urban design, and economic development. Additionally, it guides service providers like school districts and utility agencies in planning their facilities and investments.

## A PLAN FOR ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE

The General Plan aims to improve the experience of living and working in Moraga. It addresses housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental protection in ways that are complementary and mutually beneficial. For instance, focusing future development in Moraga's two commercial centers helps preserve open space and natural areas, boosts the local economy, provides workforce housing, expands shopping options for residents, and creates a more vibrant community.

The Plan is crafted to balance community needs while maintaining public health, safety, and welfare. It considers market trends, property rights, regional issues, and State law. As Moraga grows, the Plan ensures that public services and facilities evolve accordingly. Ultimately, it seeks to maintain what makes Moraga unique while strengthening the community.





## A STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

General Plan 2040 addresses the effects of global climate change on a local scale. It begins with a land use and transportation strategy aimed at fostering a more sustainable community with less reliance on fossil fuels. Key components of this strategy include increasing density in town centers, improving walkability, using renewable energy, enhancing water and energy efficiency, minimizing waste, and adopting environmentally friendly development practices.

Additionally, climate and sustainability concerns influence the town's approaches to conservation, open space, safety, and housing. The General Plan also highlights the importance of resilience and emergency preparedness as Moraga adapts to climate change impacts.

## A LIVING DOCUMENT

The Moraga General Plan is intended to be a clear and accessible guide for Town staff, elected and appointed officials, property owners, developers, businesses, and residents. It offers direction for daily operations and specific projects, showing how everyday actions can align with the Plan's goals. It is designed as a blueprint for the continued managed growth of the Town.

The Plan looks ahead to the year 2040, but it is periodically amended to keep it current and relevant. Under State law, amendments may be considered up to four times a year, responding to new data, completed actions, and emerging issues or opportunities. Additionally, an annual report to the Town Council is required to review progress, set new priorities, and outline future programs.

## 1.2 AREA COVERED BY THE PLAN

The area covered by the General Plan is shown in **Figure 1.1**. The Plan covers all lands located within the Town limits as well as the Town's Sphere of Influence. The Sphere of Influence is defined as "the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency" (Government Code Section 56076). In other words, it represents the potential ultimate Moraga Town limits. Changes to the Sphere of Influence boundary must be approved by the Contra Costa County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), an independent regulatory commission.

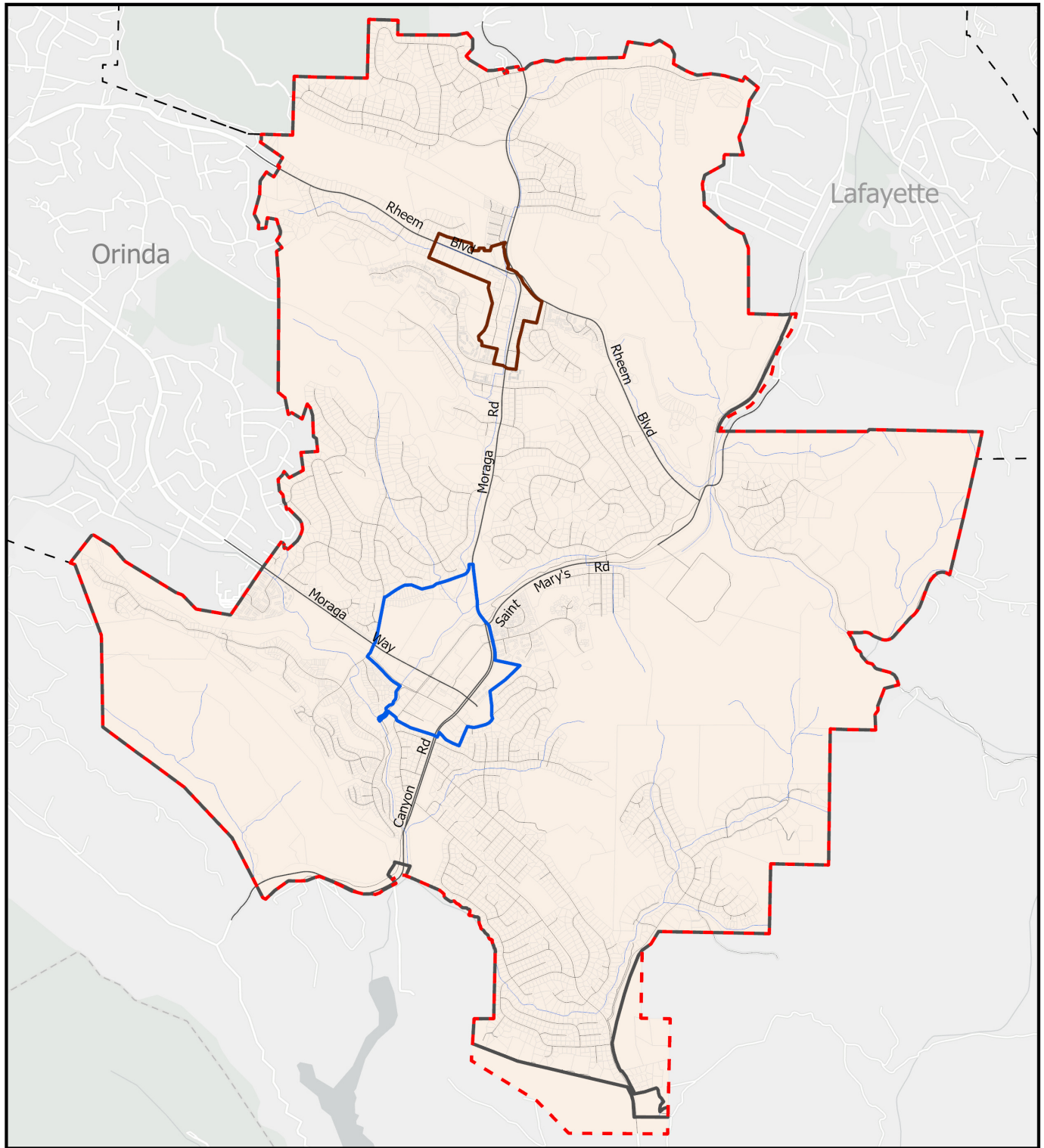
The Town of Moraga covers 9.442 square miles (6,042 acres). The Sphere of Influence is 0.221 square miles (141 acres), bringing the Planning Area total to 9.663 square miles (6,184 acres).

Many policies in the General Plan are regional in nature and consider Moraga's relationship to nearby cities. In particular, Lafayette and Orinda provide access to and from Moraga and contain land uses and activities that affect Moraga's quality of life. The unincorporated community of Canyon also relies on Moraga. Although Moraga does not have planning authority beyond its own border, it actively engages in issues that cross jurisdictional lines. Similarly, the General Plan guides coordination between the Town and partner agencies, including Contra Costa County, East Bay Municipal Utilities District, East Bay Regional Park District, Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority, Moraga-Orinda Fire District, and the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.





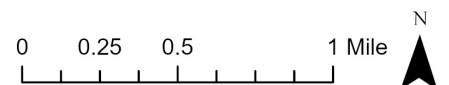
**Figure 1.1: Planning Area Boundary**



- Town Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Streams
- Streets
- Parcels

- Moraga Center Specific Plan Area
- Rheem Center Priority Development Area
- Neighboring Jurisdictions

Town of Moraga, California  
General Plan Update





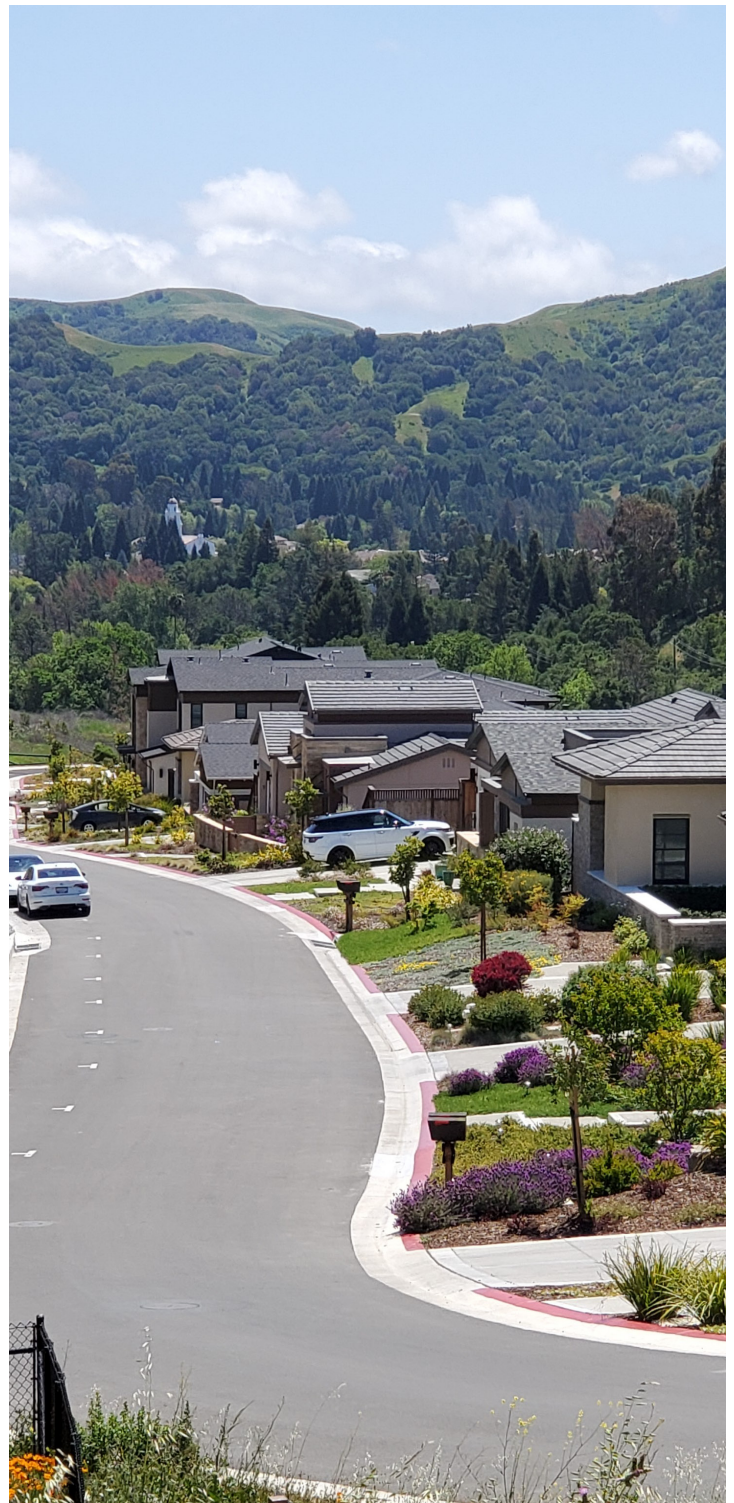
## 1.3 ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN

Under California law, cities are required to address seven issue areas or ‘elements’ in their general plans: land use, transportation, housing, open space, conservation, safety, and noise. Recent changes to State law also require that cities and towns with disadvantaged communities, as defined by the State of California, include an environmental justice component in their General Plans. No disadvantaged communities have been identified in Moraga.

The State provides flexibility in how these elements are organized and encourages the inclusion of “optional” elements that address issues of local importance. Once they are adopted, optional elements carry the same legal weight as mandatory elements. No one element supersedes another.

In addition to the State requirements, all communities in Contra Costa County are required to adopt a Growth Management Element. This requirement has been in effect since 1990, when County voters approved a half-cent transportation sales tax. The purpose of the Growth Management Element is to ensure that transportation, infrastructure, and services are improved as growth occurs.

The Government Code includes special requirements for Housing Elements. The Housing Element must be updated on an eight-year cycle set by the State legislature and is subject to certification by the California Department of Housing and Community Development. State law also requires that Housing Elements meet rigorous standards for data, analysis, and maps. For readability, the Housing Element is formatted as a separate document, but it has been adopted as part of this General Plan. Moraga adopted its 2023-2031 (“Sixth Cycle”) Housing Element on January 25, 2023.



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**Table 1-1: Legal Requirements and Moraga General Plan Elements**

| MANDATED ELEMENTS                    | MORAGA 2040 GENERAL PLAN                 |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Land Use                             | Land Use Element                         |
| Circulation                          | Transportation Element                   |
| Housing                              | Housing Element (separate volume)        |
| Open Space                           | Open Space and Parks Element             |
| Conservation                         | Conservation Element                     |
| Safety                               | Safety and Resilience Element            |
| Noise                                |  |
| Environmental Justice (*)            | N/A                                      |
| N/A                                  | Community Design Element                 |
| N/A                                  | Economic Vitality Element                |
| CONTRA COSTA COUNTY MANDATED ELEMENT |  |
| Growth Management                    | Growth Management and Governance Element |

(\*) applicable in jurisdictions with “disadvantaged communities” as defined by the State.

The Moraga General Plan includes the mandated elements as well as several optional elements. Table 1-1 identifies where mandated and optional elements are covered in this document. The Town has included the Noise Element within its Safety Element and expanded its Open Space Element to also cover parks and recreation. The Growth Management Element also addresses governance issues, including Town operations and schools.

Following is an overview of the Moraga 2040 General Plan’s organization and contents.

## **INTRODUCTION (CHAPTER 1)**

The Introduction explains the purpose of the Plan, how it is organized, and how it was prepared.

## **FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES (CHAPTER 2)**

This chapter provides the context for the General Plan, including Moraga’s history and current conditions, and long-range forecasts. It also presents guiding principles for the Town’s future, which serve as the foundation for the Plan.

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE (CHAPTER 3)**

This chapter highlights greenhouse gas reduction and climate resilience as overarching goals that underpin the entire General Plan. It describes the ways in which Plan policies and maps respond to the climate crisis and will make Moraga a more sustainable and resilient community.

## **LAND USE ELEMENT (CHAPTER 4)**

The Land Use Element provides overall guidance on the use of land, including the physical form of Moraga over the next 15 years. The Element identifies growth and conservation areas, as well as policies for specific land uses. The General Plan Diagram is included in this Element.

## **COMMUNITY CHARACTER ELEMENT (CHAPTER 5)**

The Community Character Element includes policies on the design of neighborhoods, infill housing, town centers, and natural areas, as well as policies to improve public spaces and protect historic resources.







*Residents celebrate Moraga's 50th birthday*

## **HOUSING ELEMENT SUMMARY (CHAPTER 6)**

The Moraga Housing Element is a separate volume of the General Plan. Chapter 6 is intended only as an electronic link to the full document.

## **TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT (CHAPTER 7)**

The Transportation Element covers all modes of travel in Moraga, including driving, walking, bicycling, and transit use. It also addresses transportation issues such as safety and parking.

## **ECONOMIC VITALITY ELEMENT (CHAPTER 8)**

The Economic Vitality Element strives to maintain Moraga's fiscal health, support the success of local businesses, provide more retail and service choices for Moraga residents, and recognize Saint Mary's College as an essential community partner.

## **OPEN SPACE AND PARKS ELEMENT (CHAPTER 9)**

The Open Space and Parks Element includes policies to protect and manage Moraga's open lands, including hillsides and ridgelines. It also includes policies related to parks, trails, and recreation.

## **CONSERVATION ELEMENT (CHAPTER 10)**

The Conservation Element addresses Moraga's natural resources, such as creeks, woodlands, and wildlife habitat. It also addresses air and water quality, energy, and solid waste management.

## **SAFETY AND RESILIENCE ELEMENT (CHAPTER 11)**

The Safety and Resilience Element strives to minimize potential damage to life and property due to natural hazards such as wildfire, earthquakes, flooding, and landslides. It also addresses emergency preparedness and noise. A separate document—the Local Hazard





Mitigation Plan (LHMP)—addresses these topics but is focused on a vulnerability assessment and mitigation of hazards in accordance with federal requirements. The LHMP, which is prepared by Contra Costa County in collaboration with its cities and towns, is adopted by reference as part of the General Plan.

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ELEMENT (CHAPTER 12)

The Growth Management Element is a County-mandated component of the General Plan. It is focused on intergovernmental coordination and also addresses schools, libraries, and infrastructure.

## APPENDICES

A number of technical appendices accompany the General Plan but are not formally adopted as part of the Plan. Updates to the Appendix do not require an amendment to the General Plan and may be added over time.

## 1.4 HOW TO USE THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is intended for use by all members of the community. Residents may consult the Plan to see what changes are planned in their neighborhoods and how development applications are evaluated. Businesses may use the Plan to better understand the Town's strategies for economic vitality. Town staff, Boards and Commissions, and the Town Council use the Plan to make important decisions about budgets, capital improvements, future development proposals, and local regulations. Other agencies, such as the school districts, use the General Plan to shape their own long-range plans and programs.

Each Element of the General Plan presents goals and policies that state the Plan's intent across a range of planning and development issues.

- A **Goal** is a general statement of values or aspirations held by the community in relation to each issue area. It is the end towards which the Town will direct its efforts.
- A **Policy** is a more precise expression regarding the community's position on a particular issue, or how a particular goal will be interpreted or implemented. Policies may include guidelines, standards, objectives, maps, diagrams, or a combination of these components.
- **Implementation measures** are the steps the Town takes (or will take) to carry out its goals and policies. These include ongoing **programs**, such as design review and zoning. They also include specific **actions** or changes to existing practices that should be taken after the General Plan is adopted.

Policies related to sustainability and climate change are specifically called out with a leaf icon. Collectively, these policies lay the groundwork for a Climate Action Plan to be prepared following General Plan adoption. Similarly, policies to make Moraga more resilient and better prepared for emergencies are noted with a climate icon.



### LOOK FOR THE LEAF!

The leaf icon indicates a goal or policy that supports the General Plan's sustainability and climate theme.



### A CLIMATE- RESILIENT COMMUNITY

The weather icon indicates a goal or policy that supports the General Plan's resilience theme.





Policies typically start with a verb, which indicates whether they are mandatory or advisory (e.g., “require” vs “encourage”). As the text box below indicates, the choice of verbs and modifiers is an important part of understanding how a policy should be applied. The use of advisory language (“promote”, “support”, “discourage,” etc.) is intentional and helps to balance competing objectives. While General Plan policies must be internally consistent, there may still be tension between its statements. It is not the intent of the General Plan to predetermine every Town decision, but rather to help guide the process.

The General Plan is a regulatory document, but it is also subject to the laws of the State of California and the United States. As such, the Plan must be interpreted and applied in a manner that would not constitute a taking of property under state and federal Constitutions.

## 1.5 HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The 2040 Moraga General Plan is the product of a three-year planning effort involving residents, businesses, Town Boards and Commissions, and the Moraga Town Council. The Update program occurred in two phases, collectively referred to as the Moraga Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative. Each phase included extensive community workshops and robust outreach to local institutions, major stakeholders, and community groups, as well as web-based information, education, and opportunities for feedback. Each phase also included data collection and analysis, mapping and field work, review of prior plans and documents, assessment of existing and projected conditions, and the development and vetting of new goals, policies, and programs.

### Encourage vs Require: What’s the Difference?

The terms “encourage,” “strongly encourage,” and “require” indicate varying levels of obligation or recommendation for compliance with certain guidelines or regulations:

- **Encourage:** This suggests that the subject party (Town Council, staff, developers, etc.) is urged to consider a particular action or guideline favorably. It implies a recommendation or suggestion without strict enforcement. Compliance is often voluntary, though there might be incentives or benefits for following the encouragement. Similarly used verbs include support and promote.
- **Strongly Encourage:** This term indicates a higher level of recommendation compared to “encourage.” It implies a stronger suggestion or directive, often with an expectation that the recommended action will be seriously considered and implemented. While compliance may still be voluntary, there may be more substantial reasons or benefits provided for adherence.
- **Require:** When something is “required” in a planning document, it means that compliance is mandatory and legally binding. There are no options to opt out or ignore the stipulated guideline or regulation, although there may be different ways to achieve or measure compliance. Requirements are typically enforced through provisions of the Moraga Municipal Code or the codes and regulations of other government agencies.

These terms help clarify the expectations and regulatory framework within planning documents, guiding developers, architects, and town officials in the decision-making and implementation processes.





The 2040 Plan continued Moraga's tradition of engaging its residents in long-range planning at the grass roots level. It built on the success of the previous General Plan Update two decades earlier in 1999-2002. That process included a steering committee, exhibits, surveys, and nearly two dozen workshops and town meetings prior to formal public hearings. As appropriate, goals and policies from the 2002 Plan have been updated and carried forward into this Plan.

## PHASE ONE

In August 2021, the Town launched Phase One of its Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative, catalyzed by the State-mandated Housing Element Update. Components of the program included:

- 2023-2031 Housing Element Update
- General Plan and zoning amendments for the 423-acre Bollinger Canyon Study Area
- Amendments to the Circulation and Safety Elements
- Conforming amendments to the General Plan for internal consistency
- Zoning changes to meet the Town's Regional Housing Needs Allocation

As required by State Housing Element law, Phase One included an assessment of the 2002 Moraga General Plan. The assessment found that the existing Moraga General Plan did not address some of the emerging issues facing the Town, including the increased threat of climate-related natural disasters such as wildfire, underperforming commercial centers in need of revitalization, and declining housing affordability. Further, the existing Plan did not address some of the State requirements for General Plans that had been adopted since 2002.

Moraga's regional housing assignment for the 2023-2031 period was 1,118 units, including 501 units of low and very low-income housing. This was nearly five times the previous (2015-2023)

assignment, which was 229 units. As part of Phase One, the Town increased allowable densities in its two commercial districts, allowed multi-family housing in areas previously zoned for commercial uses only, and rezoned several parcels to facilitate multi-family and mixed-use housing. It also adopted a slate of policies and programs to affirmatively further fair housing, support accessory dwelling units; and facilitate housing construction for seniors, college students, and the local workforce.

The Housing Element Update involved an unprecedented level of public outreach. Over 1,200 residents provided direct input, many through surveys, on-line exercises, or participation in interactive virtual and real-time workshops. Components of the outreach program included the "Make Moraga Home" project website and branding, social media and traditional media (including news stories and press releases), seven community workshops, a walking tour, a mobile booth for Town fairs and special events, and more than a dozen Planning Commission and Town Council study sessions.

The Housing Element was adopted on January 25, 2023, prior to the State-mandated deadline. It was certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development on September 14, 2023.

Other components of Phase One occurred concurrently with the Housing Element. Amendments to the Circulation Element added "Vehicle Miles Traveled" standards for transportation, while the Safety Element amendments responded to State laws relating to wildfire and resilience. These amendments, plus conforming amendments to the rest of the Plan, also were adopted on January 25, 2023. Zoning amendments also were adopted at that time.

Bollinger Canyon Study Area amendments were adopted on April 25, 2023. This area had been designated as a "Study Area" in the 2002 Plan and prior plans. The April 2023 amendments replaced this designation with Rural Residential,





Open Space, and Low-Density Residential (1 DUA) designations, and updated policy language on the former Study Area.



*Residents participate in a workshop during Phase One of the Plan Update*

## PHASE TWO

Phase Two of the Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative began in July 2023. Its objective was to update the remaining elements of the General Plan, moving the Plan's time horizon forward to 2040. Since changes to the Land Use Map were completed in Phase One, the focus was on the other elements of the Plan, such as Transportation, Open Space, and Conservation. Phase Two did not change the Town's "buildout" potential or development pattern; rather, it refreshed the Plan's policies to be future-focused.

While all elements of the Plan were reviewed in Phase Two, several topics emerged as particularly

important, including sustainability, community design, economic vitality, and transportation. Much of the community engagement that occurred during Phase Two centered on these four topics. A community workshop on April 30, 2024 was expressly focused on these subjects. Joint Planning Commission/ Town Council study sessions also were convened on these four focused topics. Planning Commission and Town Council study sessions also were held on the Plan's Guiding Principles, which were updated to reflect current topics.

At the same time, Phase Two offered an opportunity for continued education and outreach on recently adopted housing policies, as well as the zoning changes made during Phase One. This outreach occurred in many different formats, including more than 20 meetings with civic organizations, homeowner associations, stakeholder groups, and Town Boards and Commissions in early 2024. Phase Two also saw expanded outreach to Saint Mary's College, the Chamber of Commerce, community service groups, and partner agencies such as the cities of Orinda and Lafayette.

Data collection and analysis continued to be an important part of the planning process. Phase Two tasks included existing land use mapping, traffic counts, noise monitoring, as well as a "policy audit" covering the Town's prior General

*Phase Two of the Update included a "Town Hall" style meeting at Saint Mary's College*





Plan and other long-range planning documents. The Town also participated in the countywide update of its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan during this period, and refined its strategy for addressing evacuation needs and potential improvements.

A Draft General Plan was published in September 2024. The Plan was considered at public hearings before the Planning Commission and Town Council and was adopted on November 13, 2024.

## 1.6 RELATION TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

The 2040 Moraga General Plan provides a framework for other plans, regulations, and planning activities focused on particular topics or geographic areas in Moraga. Internal consistency across all plans and regulations is required.

### CODES AND ORDINANCES

**Zoning.** The Zoning Ordinance provides parcel-specific regulations pertaining to development standards, permissible activities, and the process

for development approval. Government Code Section 65860 requires that the Town's Zoning Ordinance be consistent with its General Plan. Consistency means that the land uses authorized by the Zoning Ordinance, and the distribution of these uses, must serve to implement the goals and policies of the General Plan.

**Subdivisions.** Subdivision regulations control the division of property into two or more parcels. Government Code Section 66410 et seq. requires that local jurisdictions regulate and control subdivision activity through adoption and use of a Subdivision Ordinance. The Town may not approve a proposed subdivision unless the design and proposed use are consistent with the General Plan.

**Building.** California Health and Safety Code (Section 17910 et seq.) requires the Town to adopt regulations imposing standards for buildings and construction. The Town of Moraga may adopt standards that are more restrictive than those mandated by State law, if justified by local conditions. The General Plan can serve as the vehicle for documenting local conditions and specifying the necessary code changes.

*Aerial view of Moraga looking northwest from Rancho Laguna Park, Larch neighborhood in foreground*





**Open Space, Hillside, and Ridgelines.** This General Plan incorporates specific policies approved by Moraga voters in 1986 as part of the Moraga Open Space Ordinance. It also carries forward amendments made in 2018 as part of the Town’s adoption of a Hillside and Ridgeline Ordinance. Exemptions from the Hillside and Ridgeline regulations are specified in the Ordinance and are referenced in the General Plan as appropriate. The General Plan also includes definitions, maps, and standards established in the 1986 and 2018 Ordinances.

## **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS AND BUDGET**

Government Code Section 65401 requires the Town Council to obtain from Town officials and staff, and from special districts operating within the Town limits, lists of all public works projects recommended for study, design, or construction during each ensuing year. In Moraga, the Town’s capital improvement programs are set forth in the Town budget. The Town must ensure that the budget and its components are consistent with the General Plan.

## **MORAGA CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN**

In 2010, the Town adopted a Specific Plan for the 187-acre Moraga Center area. The Plan included policies, guidelines, and standards that address land use, urban design, circulation, and public services. Land use designations and policies in the General Plan are consistent with the Specific Plan and help advance its vision of a revitalized town center with new housing, office, shopping, dining, and recreational opportunities.

## **SYSTEM PLANS**

System plans include those related to particular topics or issues covered by the General Plan. Examples include the Moraga Walk | Bike Plan, the Local Roadway Safety Plan, the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. These plans must be consistent

with the General Plan. This means they must use the same assumptions about the amount and location of future growth, and reflect the policies embodied by the General Plan. The 2040 General Plan calls for several new system plans, including a Climate Action Plan and an Economic Development Strategy.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR)**

A General Plan Update is considered a “project” under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), since it accommodates growth and change and includes policies that may impact the environment. The level of CEQA review and documentation depends on the nature and extent of the impacts.

As noted in the previous section, Phase One of the General Plan Update covered the Housing Element and amendments for the Bollinger Canyon Study Area. This included changes to the General Plan Map, which resulted in increased development potential in the Moraga Center and Rheem Park areas. To assess these changes, a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared. A Program EIR evaluates the impacts of a broad development pattern (or program) over a specific time frame (e.g., through 2040) rather than the impacts of a specific project on an individual site.

In addition to evaluating impacts, the EIR established mitigation measures for those impacts deemed to be potentially significant. It also identified impacts that would remain significant and unavoidable even after mitigation. The EIR was finalized and certified in January 2023, along with a Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Phase Two of the Plan Update extended the Plan’s time horizon to 2040, revised its goals, policies, and programs, and reorganized its contents and themes. No further changes to the Land Use Map, including allowable densities, were made during this phase. An Addendum to



the January 2023 EIR was prepared to cover the second phase.

Future projects that are consistent with the growth assumptions and land use designations in the General Plan may rely on the EIR for its analysis of impacts on specific topic areas. This is referred to as “tiering.” Tiering does not entirely relieve these projects of environmental review requirements, but it may streamline the process. Traffic studies, geologic studies, biological studies, and other analyses may still be required to evaluate localized, site-specific impacts.

### “Town” vs. “town”

Throughout this document, the word “town” is capitalized (“Town”) when it specifically refers to the government of the Town of Moraga. A lower case “t” is used when describing aspects of the community, such as its population or topography.

## 1.7 REVIEWING, AMENDING AND MANAGING THE PLAN

To remain a viable and effective planning tool, the Moraga General Plan must be reviewed on an annual basis and modified over time in response to changing conditions, needs, and priorities.

### ANNUAL REVIEW

The General Plan is the Town’s most significant policy document and, therefore, must receive regular, annual appraisal to ensure that its policies remain relevant and appropriate. Staff prepares an annual report for review by the Planning Commission and Town Council regarding the status of the General Plan and progress in implementing its action programs.

## AMENDMENTS TO THE GENERAL PLAN

The Town may consider amendments to the General Plan in response to the annual review, changes in the planning context and State law, or requests from property owners. The following provisions apply to the amendment process:

**Types of Amendments.** Amendments to the General Plan may take the form of either text changes (revisions to the Plan’s goals, policies, programs, or narrative text) or map changes (revisions to the General Plan Diagram).

**Consideration of Amendments.** State law (Government Code Section 65358) allows the General Plan to be amended up to four times per year. This process typically requires initial direction from the Town Council, followed by at least one public hearing by the Planning Commission and a final hearing by the Town Council to act on the amendment request. Amendments may be requested by members of the general public, property owners, or the Town itself. Fees for amendment requests are prescribed by resolution of the Town Council.

**Environmental Review.** Each amendment application must be accompanied by statements and data justifying the application, including an environmental assessment when necessary. The application is reviewed by staff and the Planning Commission to ensure compliance with the Town’s environmental review guidelines and the California Environmental Quality Act.





## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Before approving a General Plan amendment, the Town must find that:

- A balanced and logical land use pattern will be maintained.
- The social, economic and physical well-being of the community will generally be improved.
- The Town and other affected governmental agencies will be able to maintain levels of service consistent with their abilities and financial capacity.

## ONGOING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The General Plan is designed to be a flexible document that encourages continuous community involvement. As the Plan is put into action, the Town will ensure open and transparent processes, allowing all residents, businesses, and stakeholders to have a voice. To facilitate meaningful participation, the Town provides timely, accurate, and comprehensive information about planning issues, limitations, resources, opportunities, options, and important decisions.

