

STAFF REPORT

City Council Consent Item

DATE: March 18, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Shari Meads, Community Development Director

THROUGH: Merritt Perry, City Manager

SUBJECT: **2023 General Plan Annual Report**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Accept the 2023 General Plan Annual Report and direct staff to submit the report to the California Department of Housing and Community Development and Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A general plan is each local government's blueprint for meeting the community's long-term vision for the future. The City of Fortuna General Plan (hereafter referenced as General Plan), adopted by Council on October 26, 2010, formalizes policies, standards, and programs to guide day-to-day decisions concerning the City's growth and change through the year 2030.

Each year staff is required to prepare a General Plan Annual Report to provide the public and City decision-makers with information on the City's progress toward achieving General Plan goals during the prior calendar year. Additionally, pursuant to Government Code Sections 65400 and 65700, the General Plan Annual Report must be submitted to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) prior to April 1st of each year. This General Plan Annual Report summarizes the City's General Plan implementation progress for calendar year 2023.

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS:

California Code Section 65358 allows a legislative body to amend all or part of an adopted general plan as many as four times per calendar year with additional general plan amendments allowed to accommodate residential development meeting certain requirements. A general plan amendment may be initiated by a jurisdiction, or by a member of the public. General Plan amendments requires public hearings before the Planning Commission and the City Council.

There were no City-initiated or public applications for General Plan Amendments in 2023.

GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Plan is the City’s highest level policy document. Like a book, the General Plan consists of chapters, which HCD calls “elements.” Each element covers a different aspect of the urban environment, such as land use, housing, open space, or conservation. The City’s General Plan consists of nine elements that address both state-mandated subject matter and optional topics of concern to Fortuna.

Land Use Element (Chapter One):

The Land Use Element outlines proposed land use patterns, policies and standards for future development and redevelopment. City progress toward Land Use Element goals, policies, and programs includes:

- Implementation of OpenGov online permitting software on July 5, 2023 to streamline building and planning permit submittal, review, and tracking. Additionally, staff continues to utilize ParcelQuest for real-time ownership, boundary, and graphic layer information to assist property owners in developing compliant and complete applications.
- Evaluating all proposed projects for General Plan consistency including land use designation, use type, and density or floor-area ratio (FAR) where applicable.
- Continued participation in local and regional planning and land use efforts to achieve maximum jurisdictional and agency coordination including the Humboldt County Association of Governments, and various regional planning roundtables.
- Continued to make progress on the Mill District Specific Plan project including drafting infrastructure and phased development plans, design and development standards, and progress on environmental review. The Mill District Specific Plan includes the transformation of an approximately 73-acre vacant former lumber mill site with a broad range of land uses including retail, office, service, commercial, industrial, recreation, and medium and high-density residential. The Mill District Specific Plan also includes adjacent currently developed parcels.

Economic Development Element (Chapter Two):

The Economic Development element provides goals, policy guidance, and implementation measures to promote long-term job creation, business opportunities, and prosperity. The City implements Economic Development Element goals, policies, and programs by:

- Continuing to promote business growth and diversification, a conducive business climate and a supportive economic foundation.
- Continuing to work closely with, and provide support to the Chamber of Commerce.
- Participating in Redwood Region Economic Development Commission meetings

The City’s Business Improvement District (FBID) continued to promote public events in 2023 including coordinating the Shop Fortuna program, Al Gray Lighted Holiday Parade, Kids Holiday Movie, and annual Wedding Show which showcased local vendors.

Housing Element (Chapter Three):

The Housing Element identifies demographic information, existing and projected housing needs, and establishes goals, policies, standards, and implementation measures for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing in the City of Fortuna. The Housing Element must include a residential land inventory and identify ways the City will meet its share of regional housing needs at all affordability levels. The Housing Element must be updated and certified by the State every eight years. Fortuna's Housing Element covers the period of 2019 through 2027. The following three sections provide information related to Housing Element components. A separate Housing Element Annual Progress Report is required by HCD and will be provided as a separate item.

Population

The California Department of Finance (DOF) estimates that Fortuna had 12,256 residents as of January 1, 2023, representing a 0.7 percent decrease from the 2022 population of 12,339.

Residential Growth and Development

The City of Fortuna continues to encourage development of a variety of housing choices, including diverse residential types, tenancies, sizes, locations, and prices. In 2023, 25 building permits were issued for 25 new residential units. Of the 25 issued building permits:

- Twenty-one permits are for new single family dwellings including both attached and detached units.
- Four permits are for accessory dwelling units and junior accessory dwelling units (ADUs and JADUs)
- No building permits were issued for manufactured homes or multi-family dwellings

Housing Needs and Affordability

The City reviews and maintains an inventory of sites zoned to allow multi-family residential housing which per market analysis tends to support lower rental prices.

- In 2023, entitlements were approved for 70 multi-family units designated for moderate-income households.
- On December 4, 2023, the Council adopted Ordinance 2023-764 to amend Fortuna Municipal Code Chapters 17.03, 17.06, and 17.08 to enact multifamily design standards and to allow agricultural employee housing.

Transportation & Circulation Element (Chapter Four):

The Transportation & Circulation Element is divided into two major sections. The first section, Circulation Diagram & Standards, describes the Circulation Diagram and the roadway classification system and standards. The second section includes the goals, policies, and implementation programs related to the various forms of transportation. City progress implementing Transportation & Circulation Element goals, policies, and programs includes:

- Upgrading and enhancing transportation and infrastructure facilities within the City that are necessary for facilitating economic growth and development.
- Implementing circulation improvements for existing streets and new development.

- Ensuring that proposed parking lots of 10 spaces or more are visually buffered from any existing or proposed residential uses by trees and vegetation, and that proposed parking lots of 20 spaces or more include islands with tree plantings (at least one tree for every 20 parking spaces) to reduce visual impacts and solar radiation.

Natural & Cultural Resources Element (Chapter Five):

This element addresses the City’s natural and cultural resources, including mineral, energy conservation, agricultural, biological, historical, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources. The General Plan must ensure that long-term growth is compatible with these resources.

Implementation of Natural & Cultural Resources Element goals, policies, and programs includes:

- Maintaining and repairing streams with high sedimentation by installing habitat restoration and fish passage structures, restoring gravel beds, and creating deep ponds.
- Codification of a Water Efficiency Landscaping Ordinance
- Codification of a Construction and Demolition Debris Diversion Ordinance.
- Maintaining relationships, consultations, and exchange of information with nearby Tribal Entities and Tribal leaders including the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria and the Wiyot Tribe.

Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Element (Chapter Six):

Fortuna has a large, multifaceted system of parks, recreational facilities, and open space. Parks provide venues for Fortuna’s annual festivals, and the recreational facilities and open space corridors allow for active and passive uses by community members and visitors. The Parks, Recreation, & Open Space chapter provides goals, policies, and programs to ensure that Fortuna’s parkland, recreational facility, and open space provisions match future growth. City progress toward meeting Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Element goals, policies, and programs includes:

- Expansion and renovation of Rohner Park basketball courts to add an additional court and pickleball striping.
- Acquisition of 2.66 acres of land to expand Newburg Park.
- Continuing to work with the Rohner Community Recreation and Parks District to develop funding for and construction of a Community Pool.

Public Services & Facilities Element (Chapter Seven):

The City is responsible for the development and day-to-day operations of public services and facilities. The Public Facilities & Services Element describes the City’s existing and planned public facilities and services and details emergency response capabilities. The City implements Public Services & Facilities Element goals, policies, and programs by:

- Preparing and annually reviewing public facility master plans (e.g., water, wastewater, drainage).
- Updating public facility master plans every five years to ensure compliance with appropriate State and Federal laws, use of modern and cost- effective technologies, and compatibility with current land use policy.

- Monitoring water, wastewater and storm drain system capacities on an annual basis, and making needed capacity improvements.
- Ensuring through the development review process that adequate public facilities and services are available to serve new development.
- Continuing to update the Capital Improvement Program to address the City's existing and projected public facility needs.
- Establishing and implementing a fair-share fee program for new development to help pay for system-wide water, wastewater, and storm drainage improvements that are required to serve the proposed development and maintain existing levels of service through 2030.
- Ensuring the adequate, reliable, and safe provision of water to all existing and future development within the City.
- Providing police and fire facilities, equipment, and personnel to maintain adopted service standards using new law enforcement and fire technologies.

Police

The Fortuna Police Department is comprised of 30 dedicated fulltime and part-time employees who provide twenty-four-hour public safety service. The department's many divisions and specialized positions offer a wide variety of services; some of which are highlighted below:

- *Police Administration* manages and oversees public safety operations and ensures the department works across all City departments and the community to increase public safety.
- *Patrol* patrols the community proactively enforcing crime and investigating calls for service.
- The *Investigations* team is comprised of three fulltime Detectives. Two detectives investigate crimes within our community and one Detective is assigned as a Humboldt County Drug Task Force Agent working to combat drug trafficking operations within Fortuna and throughout the county.
- The City's *K-9 Team* is comprised of two Police Canines and their handlers trained in patrol operations, narcotics detection, and tracking.
- The *School Resource Officer* works with schools, youth and families.
- *Communications* handles Public Safety Dispatching services for our community, Fortuna Volunteer Fire Department, and the cities of Ferndale and Rio Dell.
- *Community Services* includes two Community Services Officers and one Kennel Attendant. The Community Services team maintains our animal control facility, responds to animal related calls, conducts parking enforcement, handles misdemeanor crime reports, maintains department evidence, and much more.
- A part-time *Code Compliance Officer* addresses Fortuna Municipal Code violations, blighted properties, and abandoned vehicles.
- *Records* maintains and routes records for prosecution, conducts live scan services for the community, and much more.

In addition to paid staff, the department hosts a wide variety of volunteer programs which allow community members to work alongside employees to enhance public safety services. Some of the department's volunteer programs include:

- *Chaplin* Program which provides services to employees and community members in times of need.
- *Citizen's on Patrol* Program consisting of volunteers who have undergone a Citizen's Academy. These volunteers patrol the community, report suspicious activity, conduct vacation house checks, assist with community events, and much more.
- *Police Explorer* Program which engages youth and young adults interested in public safety. Explorers attend monthly meetings, assist with community events, and ride-along with patrol officers, gaining knowledge and providing assistance when appropriate.

Last year the Department handled 17,150 incidents, made 754 arrests, issued 778 citations, received 6,572 911 calls, and 31,663 business calls. The department utilizes the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to track and report crime statistics. In 2023 there was a reduction in most "Group A" crimes, which are the major crimes tracked and reported, some of which include, homicide, sex crimes, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson.

In 2023 the City began construction on a new police facility that will be completed in 2024. This new facility will allow the department to enhance its services to the community and provide room for future growth.

Fire

The Fortuna Fire Protection District (District) provides fire protection services including prevention, public education, preparedness, and emergency response to the City of Fortuna and the communities of Alton, Hydesville, Metropolitan, Fernbridge, and Palmer Creek. The District encompasses 26 square miles with a population of 15,000. The District equips the Fortuna Volunteer Fire Department (Department) with essential resources, including five fire engines, one ladder truck, two water tenders, and three rescue trucks.

In addition to providing emergency response, the Department actively participates in Fortuna community events. Firefighters volunteer to set up and remove event banners and seasonal decorations, take part in parades with their fire trucks, and offer free rides on their antique fire engine. During rodeo week, they organize entertaining water games for kids and engage in friendly competitions for the enjoyment of the crowd.

In 2023 the Department responded to a total of 1,461 requests for service including:

- 81 fires (including 21 structure fires)
- 910 rescue & medical incidents (828 medical incidents and 82 traffic collisions)
- 39 hazardous conditions
- 118 service calls
- 208 good intent calls (including 78 smoke checks)
- 105 false alarms and false calls

Health & Safety Element (Chapter Eight):

The Health and Safety Element provides goals and policies to protect and enhance public safety by addressing potential hazards the City may face. The City implements Health & Safety Element goals, policies, and programs through:

- Ensuring that all new buildings (except as otherwise allowed by State law) intended for human habitation are designed to comply with the most recent edition of the California Building Code, California Fire code, and other adopted standards
- Continuing to review new development proposals for compliance with the City's noise standards

Community Design Element (Chapter Nine):

The Community Design Element provides goals, policies, and programs to ensure all stakeholders (e.g., developers, the City, community members) share a common understanding of what constitutes good design in Fortuna and includes requirements that individual project design is evaluated for consistency with community character as a whole. Progress toward implementing Community Design Element goals, policies, and programs includes:

- Continuing to encourage new development along major corridors to comply with the following minimum standards:
 - All outdoor storage of goods, materials, and equipment and loading dock areas shall be screened from major roadways;
 - Developments with multiple buildings should have a uniform design theme and sign program;
 - Earth tones shall be used as the dominant color; colors such as white, black, blue, and red should be used as accents. Building surfaces should have color schemes that reduce their apparent size;
 - Metal buildings shall be allowed only with enhanced architectural and landscaping treatment (such as use of trim bands, wing walls, parapets, and reveals); and
 - All exterior elevations visible from major roadways should have architectural treatment to alleviate long void surfaces. This can be accomplished through varying setbacks, breaking buildings into segments, pitched roof elements, columns, indentations, patios, and incorporating landscaping into architectural design.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff will submit the 2023 General Plan Annual Report to OPR and HCD upon Council acceptance and direction.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The 2023 General Plan Annual Report is not a project pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 21065 definition of "project" and is exempt from additional environmental review pursuant to Section 153378(b)(5).

FISCAL IMPACT:

Staff costs related to preparation of the 2023 General Plan Annual Report and its submittal to HCD and OPR are accounted for in the General Fund budget.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

Accept the 2023 General Plan Annual Report and direct staff to submit the report to the California Department of Housing and Community Development and Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. Consent Agenda vote.