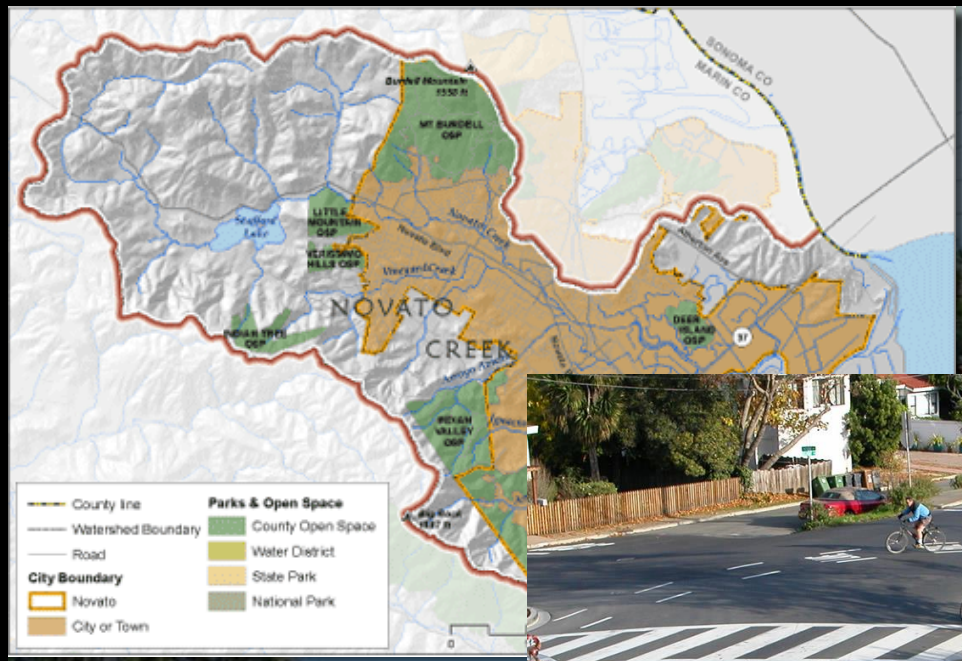
What is a General Plan and Why does it Matter?


SONOMA CO
MARIN CO
MT BURDELL OSP
LITTLE MOUNTAIN OSP
VERISSIMO HILLS OSP
INDIAN TREE OSP
DEER ISLAND OSP
NOVATO
CREEK
County line
Watershed Boundary
Road
City Boundary
Novato
City or Town
Parks & Open Space
County Open Space
Water District
State Park
National Park

STOP

Toys
BAKERY

It articulates a community's VISION for its future

But isn't Novato essentially built out?

“It’s not the plan that is important, it’s the planning.”

"It's not the plan that is important, it's the planning."

Managing Change to Benefit the Community

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

- Charles Darwin

Managing Change to Benefit the Community

"If you want to make enemies, try to change something."

- Woodrow Wilson

It’s a Question of Balance

It's a Question of Balance

Development vs. **Preservation**

- Upgrading tired properties
- Creating new jobs
- Offering new services
- Increasing property values and tax base

- Retaining community character
- Retaining quality of life
- Preserving environmental attributes

It's a Question of Balance

Visionary vs. **Practical**

- Future focused
- New ideas to respond to new challenges & opportunities
- Innovative

- Able to be implemented
- Fiscally sustainable
- Bread-and-butter issues

What's a General Plan?

- It's the "blueprint" for the future development of a community
- 7 required "Elements": Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, Safety
- Optional Elements: Parks & Rec. (within Environment), Economic Development, Human Services, Public Facilities
- Typically addresses a 10-20 year timeframe
- Contains goals, policies and implementing programs
- Approvals of new development projects, public projects and capital improvements require findings of consistency with the General Plan

Novato's 1996 General Plan

Major Issues addressed in 1996 Plan:

- **Environmental Protection**
  - Urban Limit Line
  - Hillside Ordinance
- **Economic Vitality**
  - Downtown Specific Plan
- **"Small Town Character"**
  - Design Guidelines
  - Public Art Program

How Will We Update Our Plan?

Growth Projections

- Traffic modeling
- Infrastructure needs
- Water & wastewater treatment needs
- Greenhouse gas & air quality modeling
- Noise modeling
- Urban Growth Boundary extension?

How Will We Update Our Plan?

Demographic Trends

- City service changes
- Public outreach strategies
- Mobility needs
- Changing housing needs

How Will We Update Our Plan?

Evaluation of Previous General Plan

- What was accomplished/implemented?
- What wasn't accomplished and why?
- What goals, policies and programs should be retained?
- What new issues have arisen that should be addressed?

How Will We Update Our Plan?

White Papers Addressing New Issues/Policy Considerations

- Bel Marin Keys Industrial Parks land use
- Urban Growth Boundary
- Junior Second Units
- Water Availability and Conservation
- Sea Level Rise and Climate Change
- Hillside/Ridgeline Protection
- Downtown Parking & Ground Floor Land Use
- Traffic Levels of Service and Complete Streets
- Healthy Eating/Active Living

How Will We Update Our Plan?

Focus Areas of Potential Change

- North Redwood Boulevard Corridor
  (DeLong to San Marin)
- North, North Redwood Boulevard Corridor
  (north of San Marin)
- Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood
  (north of Downtown)
- Hamilton

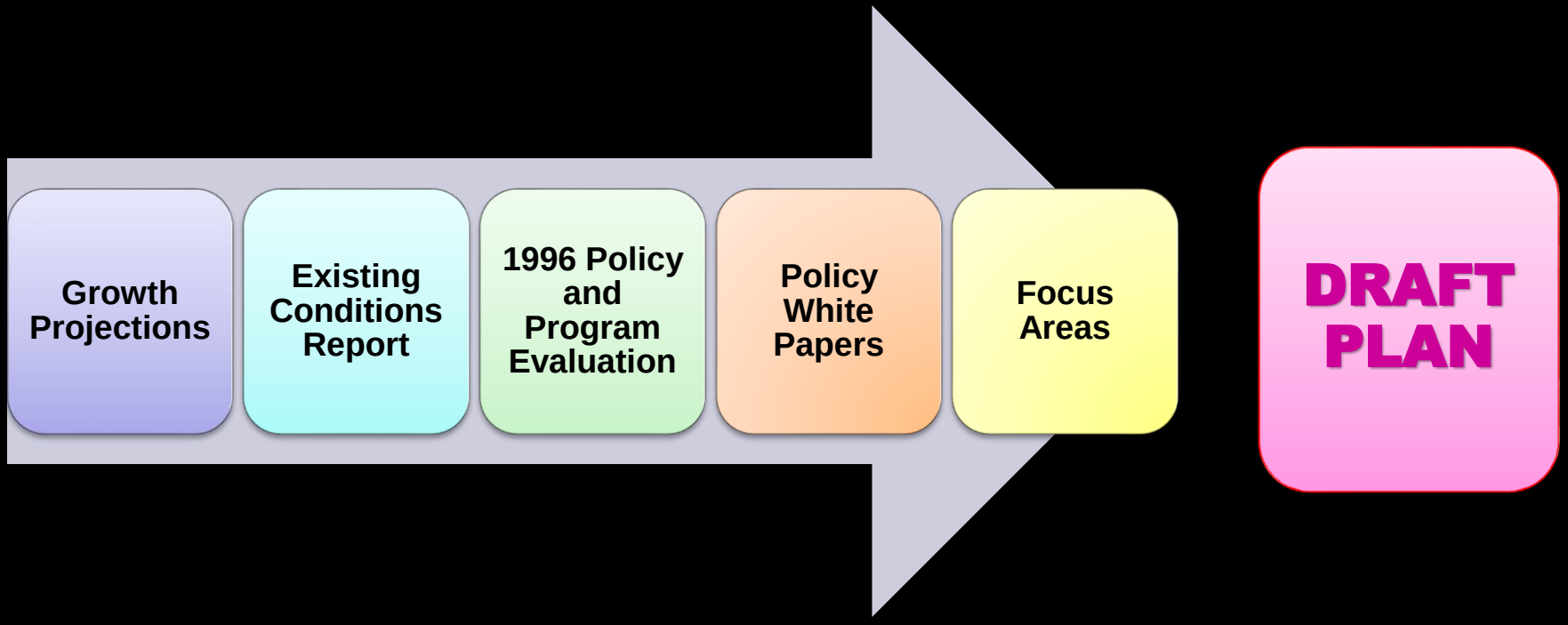
North Redwood Corridor

North, North Redwood

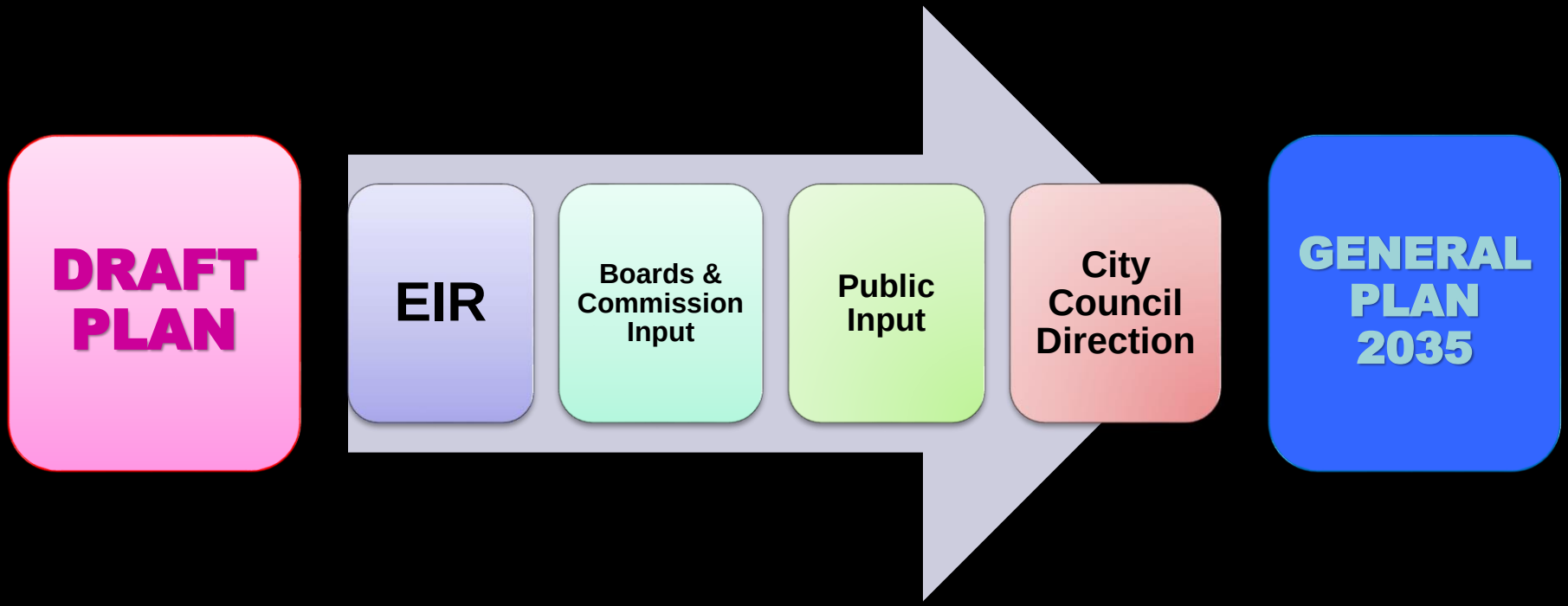
Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood

HAMILTON

How Will We Update Our Plan?

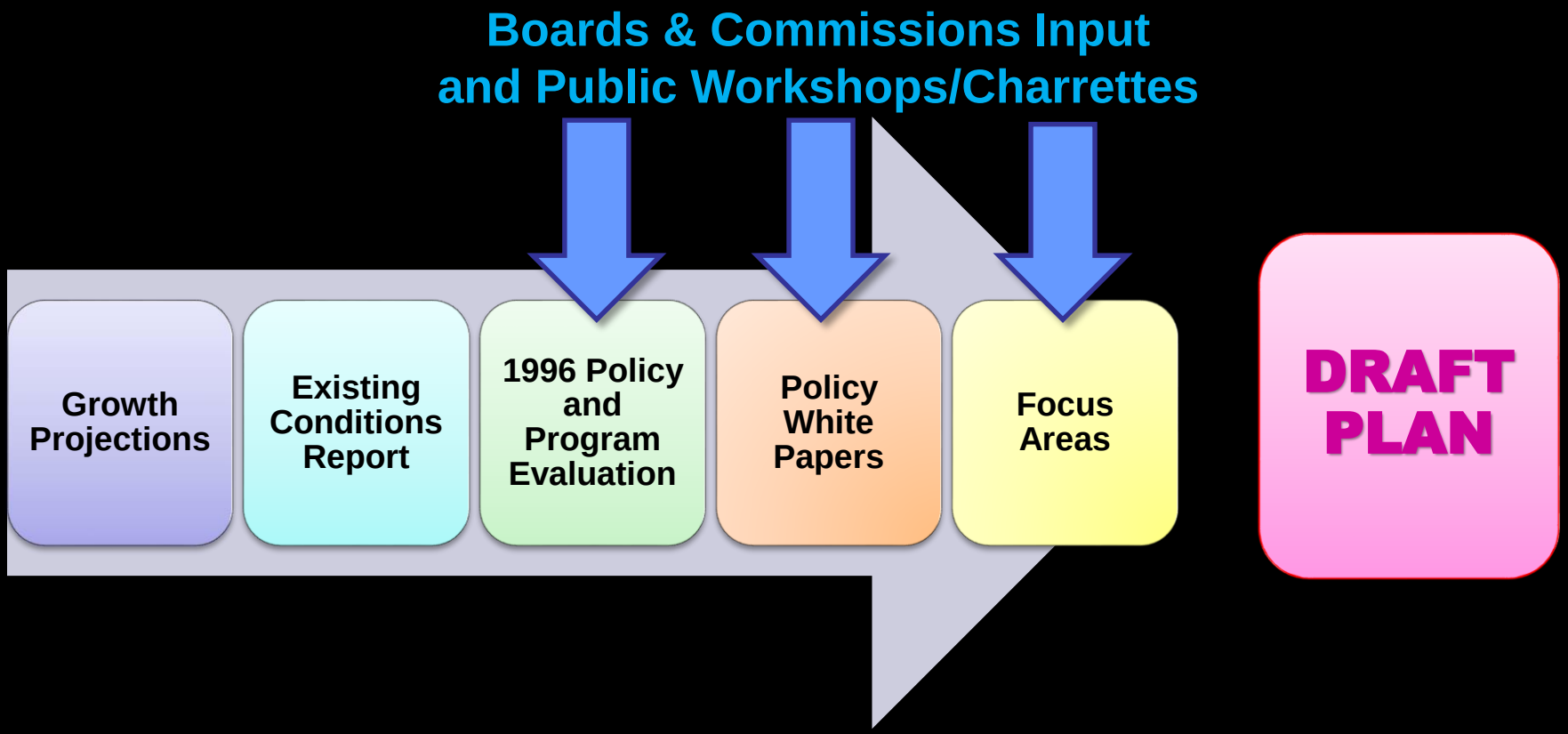


How Will We Update Our Plan?



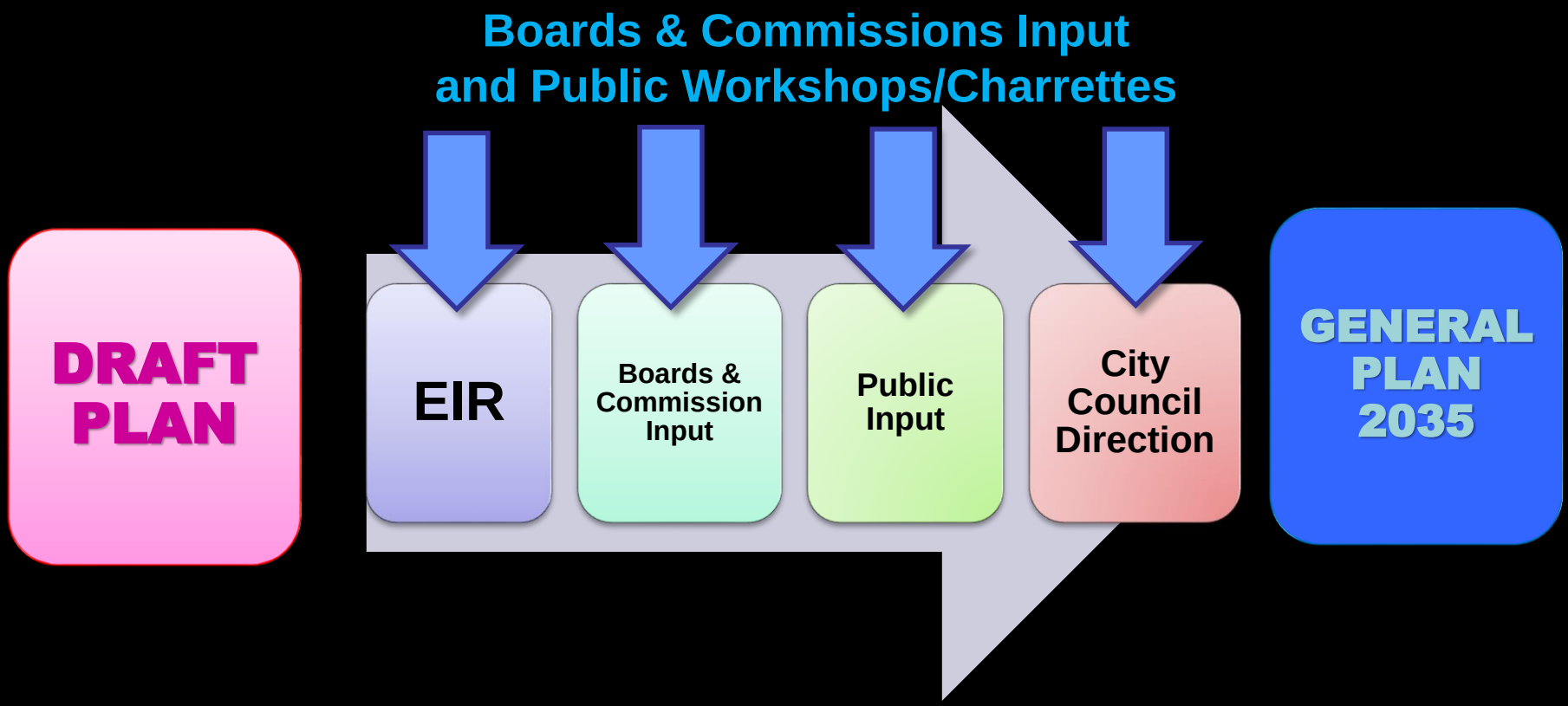
How Will We Update Our Plan?

Community Input



How Will We Update Our Plan?

Community Input

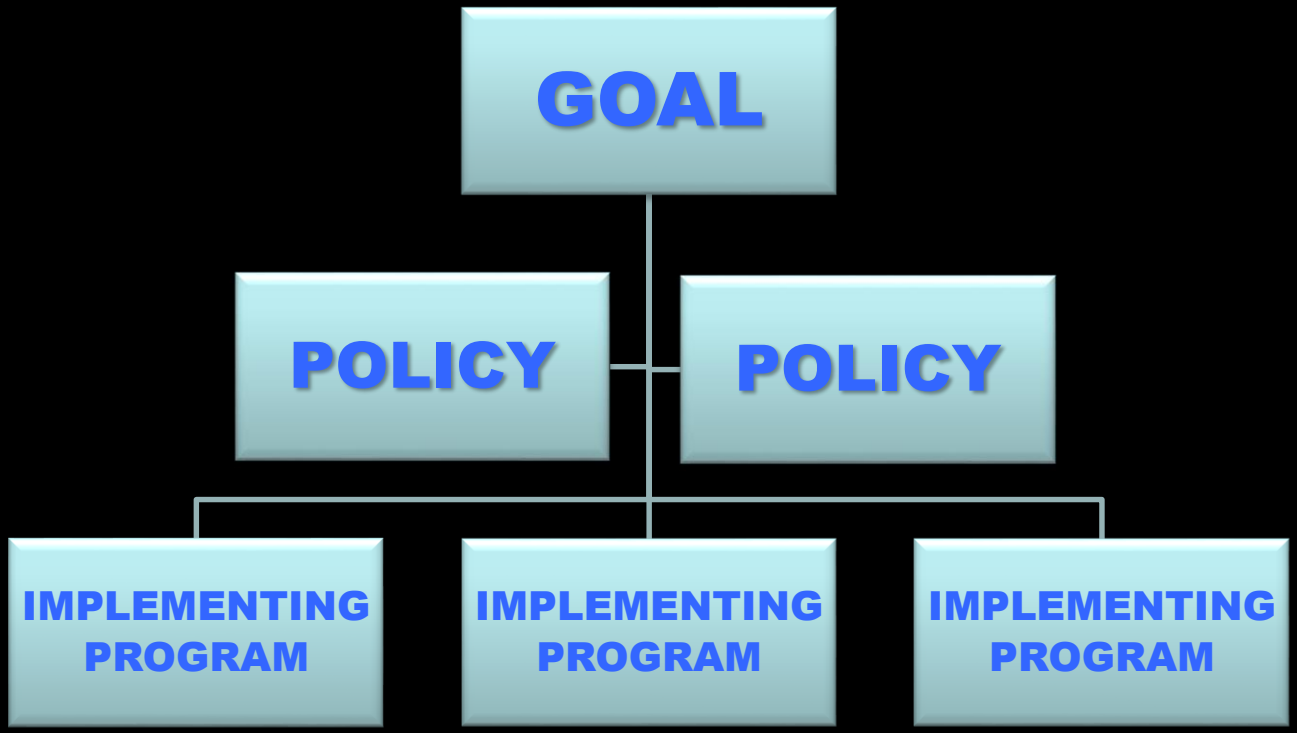


EXIT

EXIT

How Will We Update Our Plan?

The General Plan Hierarchy



A Goal:

A goal is a general statement of values or aspirations held by the community.

It is the end towards which the City will direct its efforts.

A goal is short yet broad in scope.

A Policy:

A policy is a specific statement that guides decision making.

For each goal, one or more policies help define how the goal will be interpreted and implemented.

It indicates a commitment of the City Council to a particular course of action.

For a policy to be useful as a guide to action it must be clear and unambiguous.

A Program:

A program defines exactly what is to be done to put a policy into practice while working towards the goal.

These might include new programs to be undertaken by the City, discrete time-specific actions, or further planning actions.

The departments and/or officials responsible for implementation are to be identified for each program, along with the timeframe for taking action and likely funding sources.

An Example:

Goal 1: Provide an attractive and comprehensive system of parks and trails.

Policy 1: Achieve a park land standard of 10 acres per 1,000 residents.

Policy 2: Locate new parks to ensure park facilities are equitably distributed throughout the City.

An Example:

Program 1.1: Create a master plan for upgrading the Hill Recreation Area.

Responsibility: Community Services Department
Timeframe: Short-term (1-5 years)
Funding: Capital Improvement Program & Staff time

Program 1.2: Develop a funding plan for improvement of undeveloped parkland and acquisition of new land for parks.

Responsibility: Community Services Department
Timeframe: Short-term
Funding: Staff time

Objectives for the New General Plan

- Fewer, more focused policies and programs
- A plan that we can afford to implement
- A readable, engaging plan for the public and decision-makers

What's Outside the Scope of Our Plan?

- Policies and activities of other agencies (School District, County, water & sewer districts, Fire District)
- Regulations or policies affecting properties outside City jurisdiction

What Shouldn't be Included in Policies/Programs?

- Restatement of ongoing City activities or programs and routine functions
- Actions or criteria that are required by State or federal law
- Very specific program direction (should be general enough to allow further study and modification when issue has been evaluated and implementation is proposed)

CITY OF NOVATO
GENERAL PLAN 2035