

### **III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This chapter describes the City of Albany (City) Draft General Plan (Draft General Plan), the proposed project evaluated in this document. This chapter provides an overview of the regional location and general setting; intended uses of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR); a description of the General Plan's relationship to State law, regional, City and local initiatives; project objectives for EIR analyses; and a detailed description of the Draft General Plan.

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The City of Albany has prepared a Draft General Plan to guide the City's growth and development through 2035. As required by State law, the Draft General Plan addresses land use, transportation, housing, open space, conservation, safety and noise through chapters (called "elements") corresponding to these mandated topics. Albany has also added "optional" General Plan elements on: (a) community services and facilities and (b) the waterfront. Each element of the General Plan includes narrative text, maps and tables, and goal, policy, and action statements. The goals, policies and actions are long-range, comprehensive, and internally consistent. The Housing Element is part of the Draft General Plan but is not included within the Draft EIR. The Housing Element was adopted in February 2015, along with a Mitigated Negative Declaration that provided separate environmental review and analysis. The Housing Element goals and policies are consistent with the Draft General Plan, and vice versa.

#### **B. REGIONAL LOCATION AND GENERAL SETTING**

Albany is the northernmost city in Alameda County. The City abuts the Contra Costa County cities of Richmond to the northwest, El Cerrito and the unincorporated community of Kensington to the north, and the Alameda County City of Berkeley to the east and south. San Francisco Bay is located on the western side of Albany. Although Albany is physically defined by creeks on its northern and southern borders, the adjacent areas are heavily urbanized and the political boundaries are subtle. Land uses, building types, and densities are similar to those in the adjacent cities. The immediate landscape is distinguished primarily by Albany Hill, which rises to approximately 330 feet in the western part of the City. Figure III-1 shows the City's regional location.

Albany's incorporated area is 5.5 square miles. However, 67.2 percent (3.7 square miles) of this total area is under water, and just 1.8 square miles (or roughly 1,140 acres) is land. Most of the East Bay plain in the Albany vicinity was subdivided and developed in the early part of the 20th Century.

The area of the City consisting of approximately 180 acres west of Interstate 80 (I-80) and Interstate 580 (I-580) freeways includes waterfront open space and the Golden Gate Fields racetrack and parking. The I-80 and I-580 freeways are a significant land use and physical presence in the City, cutting a wide swath across Albany's west side and separating the City's neighborhoods from the waterfront. A relatively narrow industrial area sits alongside the freeway, running north-south and parallel to the Union Pacific railroad. Albany Hill rises in the northwest quadrant, while the southwest quadrant

includes large-scale public land uses. The eastern two-thirds of the City contain residential neighborhoods of varying densities, with single-family uses predominating. Two major commercial corridors cross through this area: San Pablo Avenue runs north-south from El Cerrito on the north to Berkeley on the south, while the Solano Avenue commercial district runs east-west from San Pablo Avenue eastward into Berkeley. The elevated BART tracks also cross through the eastern part of the City, along a north-south alignment and “greenway” running parallel to Masonic Avenue.

Most of Albany’s neighborhoods are developed along a rectilinear street grid, although the grid shifts slightly in orientation in the eastern third of the City. There are roughly 25 north-south streets and fewer than ten major east-west streets, forming blocks that are generally 200 feet wide and 400 to 600 feet long. Most of this area was subdivided in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with rectangular lots of 25 to 50 feet in width and 100 feet in depth. The street grid is interrupted in places by schools, parks, and a former streetcar alignment along Key Route Boulevard, but is mostly continuous.

### **C. INTENDED USES OF THE DRAFT EIR**

This Draft EIR is designed to fully inform City decision-makers, in addition to other responsible agencies, persons, and the general public of the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the Draft General Plan.

This Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA (PRC Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.). The CEQA Guidelines used are those that were in effect at the time of the Notice of Preparation in 2014. This Draft EIR is an informational document that informs public agency decision-makers and the public of the significant environmental effects and the ways in which those impacts could be reduced to less-than-significant levels, either through the imposition of mitigation measures or through the implementation of specific alternatives to the project as proposed. In compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125, this EIR includes a description of the physical environmental conditions as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) was published (2014), unless otherwise noted.

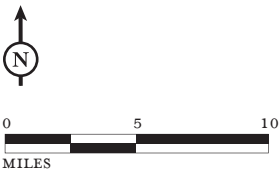
This Draft EIR can be characterized either as a Program EIR prepared pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, or as a first-tier EIR prepared pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152. The document is intended to act as an analytical superstructure for subsequent, more detailed analyses associated with individual project applications consistent with the Draft General Plan. One of the City’s goals in preparing the current document is to minimize the amount of new information that would be required in the future at the “project level” of planning and environmental review by dealing as comprehensively as possible in this document with cumulative impacts, regional considerations, and similar big-picture issues.

According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)(5), “[a] program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible.” Later environmental documents (EIRs, Mitigated Negative Declarations, or Negative Declarations) can incorporate by reference materials from the Program EIR regarding regional influences, secondary impacts, cumulative impacts, broad alternatives, and other factors (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[d][2]). These later documents need only focus on new impacts that have not been considered before (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[d][3]).



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FIGURE III-1



City of Albany General Plan EIR  
Regional Location Map

SOURCE: LSA ASSOCIATES, INC., 2015.

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The City anticipates preparing Notices of Exemption or Categorical Exemptions for most smaller projects, and Initial Studies where larger projects are submitted for site-specific approvals. The Initial Study process may be used to determine how much the environmental review for such applications may rely on this EIR. The City's intent is that new analyses for these site-specific actions will focus on issues and impacts regarding detailed site-specific information, which this Program EIR by definition has not evaluated. Subsequent CEQA documents may include Categorical Exemptions, Negative Declarations, Mitigated Negative Declarations, or Environmental Impact Reports as determined by the City as lead agency.

Future site-specific approvals may also be narrowed pursuant to the rules for tiering set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152: "Tiering" refers to using the analysis of general matters contained in a broader EIR (such as one prepared for a general plan or policy statement) with later EIRs and negative declarations on narrower projects; incorporating by reference the general discussions from the broader EIR; and concentrating the later EIR or negative declaration solely on issues specific to the later project." Before deciding to rely in part on a first-tier EIR in connection with a site-specific project, a lead agency must prepare an "initial study or other analysis" to assist it in determining whether the project may cause any significant impacts that were not "adequately addressed" in a prior EIR (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152[f]).

Second- and third-tier documents may limit the examination of impacts to those that "were not examined as significant effects" in the prior EIR or "[a]re susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance by the choice of specific revisions in the project, by the imposition of conditions, or other means." As described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15152[f]e,

Significant environmental effects have been "adequately addressed" if the lead agency determines that:

- (A) They have been mitigated or avoided as a result of the prior environmental impact report and findings adopted in connection with that prior environmental impact report; or
- (B) They have been examined at a sufficient level of detail in the prior environmental impact report to enable those effects to be mitigated or avoided by site specific revisions, the imposition of conditions, or by other means in connection with the approval of the later project.

As noted above, the City generally will require Initial Studies be prepared for larger, non-exempt projects when landowners submit applications for site-specific approvals in order to determine how much new information will be required for the environmental review for such proposals. In preparing these analyses, the City will assess, among other things, whether any of the significant environmental impacts identified in this program/first-tier EIR have been "adequately addressed." Thus, the new analyses for these site-specific actions will focus on impacts that cannot be "avoided or mitigated" by mitigation measures that either: (1) were adopted in connection with the Draft General Plan; or, (2) were formulated based on information in this Draft EIR. Subsequent CEQA documents may include Categorical Exemptions, Negative Declarations, Mitigated Negative Declarations, or Environmental Impact Reports as determined by the City as lead agency.

**a. Notice of Preparation.** The City of Albany is the Lead Agency of environmental review of this Draft EIR. An NOP was submitted to the State Clearinghouse and appropriate agencies to identify any issues of concern prior to preparation of this Draft EIR. The NOP, circulated to public agencies

and persons considered likely to be interested in the project and its potential impacts, included a comment period from March 14 to April 14, 2014. The City then extended the comment period until May 23, 2014. The NOP, and the notice of extended public review, are included in Appendix A of this Draft EIR.

**b. Review by Other Agencies.** The City of Albany is also responsible for submitting the Draft EIR to appropriate public agencies and for submitting the document to the State Clearinghouse.

## **D. RELATIONSHIP TO CALIFORNIA STATE LAW AND REGIONAL AND CITY INITIATIVES**

An overview of California law and regional, City, and local initiatives, as they pertain to the Draft General Plan update process, are provided in this section. These initiatives are briefly described below.

### **1. State Law**

The following provides a summary of State laws or initiatives that relate to the development of the General Plan or the Draft EIR.

**a. General Plans in California.** California Government Code Section 65300 requires that all cities and counties must adopt a General Plan. The General Plan must be comprehensive, internally consistent and long-term. The General Plan must provide for the physical development of the City and guide all land use and public improvement decisions. All General Plans must include land use, transportation, housing, open space, conservation, noise, and safety components, and may also include optional chapters in response to specific community issues, values, needs, or local conditions. Although required to address the issues specified in State law, the General Plan may be organized in a way that best suits the City. The City of Albany’s Draft General Plan has incorporated State required chapters into the following elements:

<u>State Required Chapter</u>	<u>Albany Draft General Plan Element</u>
Land Use	Land Use
Housing	Housing (provided as a separate document)
Circulation	Transportation
Open Space	Parks, Recreation and Open Space
Conservation	Conservation and Sustainability
Safety	Environmental Hazards
Noise	Environmental Hazards

The Draft General Plan also includes optional elements covering Community Services and Facilities and the Waterfront.

The Draft General Plan meets State requirements and contains goals, policies and actions aimed at achieving the City’s vision for its long-term physical form and development. The Draft General Plan will serve as a basis for future decision-making by municipal officials, including the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council and City Boards and Commissions. When adopted, the Draft General Plan will supersede the 1992 General Plan. The Draft General Plan contains actions that

require the City to update other planning and implementation documents and programs to reflect the future growth and development projections contained in the Draft General Plan.

**b. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).** As described above, this document is a Program EIR for the Draft General Plan. The preparation, content, and processing of this document is primarily covered by CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. A Program EIR is one that may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project, and that are related: (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar effects that can be mitigated in similar ways.

The Draft General Plan satisfies each of these criteria. The Draft General Plan governs land use and development within the entire City of Albany. The Draft General Plan includes maps, goals, policies, and actions that are logical parts of a chain of contemplated actions governing future land uses and allowed development. The policies and actions either directly establish, or will govern future plans that will establish, rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria governing implementation of the Draft General Plan. The Draft General Plan will be carried out under the authority and approval of the City of Albany. Many of the specific projects and actions carried out pursuant to the Draft General Plan would have similar environmental impacts which could be mitigated in similar ways.

**c. Assembly Bill 32: Global Warming Solutions Act.** The 2006 Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) requires specific actions for California to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020, a reduction of approximately 25 percent statewide. A key focus of the measures is the reduction of total vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and a potential corresponding shift to alternative travel modes, including transit and bicycling. The Draft General Plan is consistent with AB 32 and encourages a transit-oriented development pattern which would reduce VMT.

**d. Senate Bill 375: Sustainable Communities Act.** SB 375 implements the goals of AB 32 by directly linking land use planning with greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The California Air Resources Board (ARB) is required to set specific emissions reduction goals for metropolitan planning organizations, which in the Bay Area is the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). The GHG reduction targets for the Bay Area include a 7 percent reduction in per capita emissions by 2020 and a 15 percent reduction by 2035. SB 375 requires regional planning agencies to create a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that includes a land use and transportation plan to meet the GHG targets. AB 32 and SB 375 have a direct influence on the future of public and multi-modal transportation and land use planning through State and regional mandates and funding programs. The Draft General Plan supports SB 375 implementation at the local level.

**e. Senate Bill 18: Local and Tribal Intergovernmental Consultation.** Governor Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill 18 (SB 18) into law in September 2004. The purpose of SB 18 is to preserve and protect the cultural resources of California Native Americans and provide California Native American tribes the opportunity to participate in local land use decisions early in the planning process. SB 18 requires local jurisdictions to engage and consult with California Native American tribes prior to the adoption or amendment of a General Plan or Specific Plan. Local jurisdictions must notify appropriate California Native American tribes (found on the Native American Heritage Commission's contact list) of changes in land use policy and allow 90 days for the tribes to request a consultation. Consultations are required to be made if a tribe submits a request or before a local

jurisdiction can designate land as open space if the affected land contains a cultural place and if the tribe has requested public notice. In addition, SB 18 allows for the protection of cultural places in the open space element of the General Plan and enables California Native American tribes to acquire and hold conservation easements.

**f. Assembly Bill 1358: California Complete Streets Act.** General plans are required to include a circulation element consisting of the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, and other transportation related facilities. AB 1358 requires that upon any substantive revision of the circulation element of a general plan, jurisdictions modify the circulation element to plan for a balanced, multi-modal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, seniors, and users of public transportation.

## 2. Regional Initiatives

The following provides a summary of regional initiatives that relate to the development of the Draft General Plan or the Draft EIR.

**a. Sustainable Communities Strategy/Plan Bay Area.** Pursuant to SB 375, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), in partnership with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), have prepared the Bay Area’s Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). The SCS titled “Plan Bay Area,” adopted in July 2013,<sup>1</sup> will serve as the regional blueprint for transportation, housing and land use focused on reducing driving and associated GHG emissions.

Plan Bay Area is a long-range plan that specifies the strategies and investments to maintain, manage, and improve the region’s transportation network – which includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities, local streets and roads, public transit systems, and highways. Plan Bay Area also calls for focused housing and job growth around high-quality transit corridors, particularly within areas identified by local jurisdictions as Priority Development Areas. Priority Development Areas in Albany are identified along San Pablo and Solano Avenues. This land use strategy is anticipated to enhance mobility and economic growth by linking the location of housing and jobs with transit, thus offering a more efficient land use pattern around transit and a greater return on existing and planned transit investments.

**b. Eastshore State Park General Plan.** The Eastshore State Park extends 8.5 miles along the East Bay shoreline from the Bay Bridge to Richmond. Eastshore State Park was acquired from the State by the East Bay Regional Park District, which manages and operates its facilities. The Eastshore State Park General Plan<sup>2</sup> identifies the future preservation, conservation, and recreation uses and improvements for the park and establishes goals and Guidelines for the Albany Area Management

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<sup>1</sup> Association of Bay Area Governments, 2013. Metropolitan Transportation Commission, *Draft Plan Bay Area, Strategy for a Sustainable Region*. March. Adopted with revisions July 18, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> East Bay Regional Parks District and California State Coastal Conservancy, 2002. *Eastshore State Park General Plan*.



Zone. Guidelines are specific to the areas in the Albany Area Management Zone and include Albany Beach, Albany Plateau, Albany Neck/Bulb and Albany State Marine Reserve.

**c. Bay Trail Plan.** ABAG prepared the Bay Trail Plan, pursuant to Senate Bill 100, which was adopted in July 1989.<sup>3</sup> The Bay Trail Plan proposes the development of a 500-mile network of recreational hiking and biking trails that would wrap around the edge of the San Francisco Bay. Policies and design guidelines are established to guide the implementation of the trail system in order to reflect the goals of the Bay Trail program, provide accessibility to a variety of users, protect the Bay's natural environment, and create access on Bay Area toll bridges for cyclists and hikers. Portions of the Bay Trail are located along the Albany waterfront.

**d. Regional Housing Needs.** As required by State law, Albany's General Plan Housing Element<sup>4</sup> discusses the ABAG regional housing needs (RHNA) plan. ABAG's determination of the local share of RHNA takes into consideration the following factors: market demand for housing, employment opportunities, availability of suitable sites and public facilities, loss of existing affordable units, transportation, and special housing needs. Albany's Regional Housing Needs Allocation for 2014-2022 totals 335 housing units including 80 very low income units; 53 low income units; 57 moderate income units; and 145 above moderate income units. The Albany General Plan Housing Element demonstrates sufficient capacity to accommodate this quantity of housing and was adopted February 2, 2015. A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared for the Housing Element and adopted on February 2, 2015 as well. CEQA documentation for the complete Albany General Plan includes this MND, by reference, as well as this DEIR.

### 3. City of Albany

The City of Albany initiatives that relate to the Draft General Plan update process are described below.

**a. Albany Active Transportation Plan.** Adopted in April 2012, the Albany Active Transportation Plan<sup>5</sup> assesses the unmet needs for bicycle and pedestrian access in the City and prioritizes future projects. This Plan ensures that active transportation is both accommodated and encouraged. The Plan sets forth key goals and policy objectives that apply to walking and bicycling facilities directly and also seeks to institutionalize the accommodation for these modes through City policies and practices. Key goals identified in the Plan include:

- Goal 1: Safety. Improve safety for those that choose to walk and bike.
- Goal 2: Accessibility. Provide the citizens of Albany with a citywide network of trails and routes that are accessible to a wide variety of users including pedestrians, bicyclists, and the physically disabled.
- Goal 3: Connectivity. Develop bicycling and walking networks that meet the needs of all bicyclists and pedestrians, help reduce vehicle trips, link residential neighborhoods with

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<sup>3</sup> Association of Bay Area Governments, 1989. *Bay Trail Plan*.

<sup>4</sup> Albany, City of, 2015. *Albany General Plan Housing Element. February 2*.

<sup>5</sup> Fehr & Peers, Bicycle Solutions, and Questa Engineering, 2012. *Albany Active Transportation Plan*. April.

regional destinations, and make walking and biking realistic ways to travel throughout the City and region.

- Goal 4: Public Health. Increase frequency and types of walking and bicycling trips in Albany to promote public health and improve the environment.
- Goal 5: Other. Maximize funding available to multi-modal projects, plans, and programs that support this Plan.

**b. Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan.** The Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan<sup>6</sup> was adopted March 5, 2012. This Plan identifies and describes options and techniques for vegetation management, as well as access and circulation improvements for Albany Hill and Creekside Park. The vision for vegetation management is to address high-risk issues related to fire, declining trees, flooding and other physical hazards throughout the park. The Plan includes techniques to manage the hilltop eucalyptus forest to slowly remove eucalyptus as the trees age and decline resulting in the dominance of the existing understory vegetation (grassland, toyon, oak, north coastal scrub).

The access and circulation portion of this plan aims to maintain the existing trails (with no additional trails recommended), improve circulation with relatively minor improvements to existing trails, and develop a maintenance plan that includes an annual inspection of the trails and trail amenities such as benches, steps, and signs. Nearly all of the recommendations from the 1991 Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan remain in the 2012 Plan with the addition of more detailed trail maintenance and erosion control recommendations.

**c. Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan.** The City of Albany Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan<sup>7</sup> provides policies for improving and maintaining the existing park system; acquiring additional properties for future park, recreation and open space areas; a strategy for meeting the need for managing and maintaining sport fields; and an approach for financing future improvements and long term maintenance requirements. Goals identified in this Master Plan include:

- Goal 1: Preserve, enhance and, where possible, expand park and open space areas in Albany. Make Albany a green environment that integrates nature with neighborhoods, protects and supports native habitat and educates residents about local vegetation and wildlife.
- Goal 2: Make Albany a center for cultural and arts activities, with open space for art displays and musical performances. Beautify public space through public arts programs, landscaped boulevards and community gardens. Promote arts related activities.
- Goal 3: Provide high quality sports and recreation facilities that accommodate children, youth, families and seniors year-round and at all times of day. Increase the range of City sponsored programs for all age groups, including childcare and senior citizen programs.
- Goal 4: Promote public uses of the waterfront, providing for maximum natural open space and recreation.

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<sup>6</sup> Albany, City of, 2012. *Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan*. January 31.

<sup>7</sup> MIG, 2004. *City of Albany Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan*. October 18.

- Goal 5: Establish an integrated, comprehensive system of pedestrian and bike routes linking all neighborhoods and schools to recreational facilities throughout the City, including the waterfront.
- Goal 6: Make Albany a City that provides high quality services and inviting, well-kept facilities that foster public enjoyment.

**d. City of Albany Climate Action Plan.** The City of Albany Climate Action Plan<sup>8</sup> (CAP) was adopted in 2010 and is intended to reduce GHG emissions generated in municipal and community-wide activities. GHG reductions will be achieved in the areas of building and community energy use, transportation and land use, waste reduction and diversion, water conservation, and green infrastructure enhancement. The CAP contains strategies, objectives, measures, and actions that will direct the City's reduction efforts. The timeframe for the CAP extends from the date of adoption through December 31, 2020.

The CAP outlines a course of action for the City and the Albany community to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and combat global climate change. The CAP has been designed to support three primary functions:

- Provide clear guidance to City staff regarding when and how to implement key provisions of the plan;
- Inspire residents and businesses to participate in community efforts to reduce GHG emissions; and
- Demonstrate Albany's commitment to comply with State GHG reduction efforts.

**e. Public Arts Master Plan.** The Public Arts Master Plan<sup>9</sup> was prepared in 2010 to assist in the implementation of Albany Art Committee's (AAC) goals. The preparation of this Plan was a result of the need to prepare a vision for public art in the City in accordance with the Public Art Ordinance. Adopted by City Council in 2007, the Public Art Ordinance requires that private development include a public art element in their design (1.75 percent of construction cost for projects of \$300,000 or more) or provide an in-lieu fee for public art. The fee is calculated based on rates in the City's Master Fee Schedule. The Plan describes public art opportunity sites and prioritizes them based on the AAC's recommendations. Programs pursued or managed by the ACC including the Community Art Gallery and Mural Program are also discussed in the Master Plan.

**f. Complete Streets Conceptual Design and Plan for San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan Street.** The Complete Streets Plan provides conceptual designs for San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan Street, the gateways into Albany. The goal of the Plan is to help create a safer, more comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing environment to accommodate all users and all abilities. This Plan describes existing conditions at the two identified streets and the extensive public outreach conducted which informed the designs. The Plan provides detailed designs and visioning graphics for San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan Street including landscaping, traffic calming elements, bike lanes, and

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<sup>8</sup> AECOM, 2010. *City of Albany Climate Action Plan*. April.

<sup>9</sup> Albany, City of, 2010. *City of Albany Public Arts Master Plan*.

pedestrian crosswalks. Potential funding sources to implement the Plan are also identified. The Plan and a Complete Streets policy was adopted by City Council in January 2013.<sup>10</sup>

**g. Albany Sewer Master Plan.** Adopted in April 2014, the Sewer Master Plan<sup>11</sup> evaluates the capacity and existing conditions of the City's sanitary sewer system. The Sewer Master Plan is used as the basis for the City's 10-year sewer system Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The primary objectives of the Plan are to:

- Confirm that the system has adequate capacity to handle peak wet weather flows, as required for the System Evaluation and Capacity Assurance Plan Element of the Sewer System Management Plan (SSMP);
- Satisfy the Rehabilitation and Replacement Plan requirements of the SSMP;
- Provide for capital improvements as required to satisfy the work requirements of the anticipated Consent Decree; and
- Establish a firm basis for project priorities and budgets in the City's 10-year CIP.

**h. Albany Capital Improvement Plan.** The Capital Improvement Project Plan provides an outline of upcoming capital improvement projects. An update to the CIP was adopted on September 21, 2015 and will cover improvements through the end of FY 2020. Prior to the recent update, the CIP identified 32 capital improvement projects that were being planned or implemented through the end of the 2017-18 fiscal year with an estimated cost that exceeds \$57 million. The following major projects have been completed over the past two years: the Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan; the Buchanan Jackson Signal and Intersection Improvements; the Codornices Creek Restoration and Trail Project– Phase 3; the Pierce Street Paving Rehabilitation and Trail; the Marin Santa Fe Signal and Pedestrian Improvements; and the purchase of the Pierce Street parcel.

**i. Voices to Vision.** In March of 2008, the City of Albany began a public engagement process to learn more about the residents' vision for the future of the Albany waterfront. The findings within the Voices to Vision<sup>12</sup> document were the culmination of over 40 community meetings and responses to an online questionnaire. While not adopted as official City policy with regards to the future of the waterfront, the document does summarize the general opinion and vision of those who participated in the process. The document was considered during preparation of the Draft General Plan update.

**j. Residential Design Guidelines.** The City of Albany Design Guidelines for Residential Homes and New Additions<sup>13</sup> was adopted by the City Council in 2009. The design guidelines were created to assist applicants, neighbors, staff and commissioners in understanding and applying Albany's Planning and Zoning Code while also communicating the City's design goals through explanations and examples of solutions to high quality design. The intent of the guidelines is to provide specific

<sup>10</sup> Albany, City of, 2012. *City of Albany San Pablo and Buchanan Complete Streets Report*.

<sup>11</sup> RMC Water and Environment, 2014. *City of Albany Sewer Master Plan Final Report*. May.

<sup>12</sup> Fern Tiger Associates, 2010. *Albany Waterfront Voices to Vision, A Community Vision for Albany's Waterfront*. April 5.

<sup>13</sup> Albany, City of, 2009. *City of Albany Design Guidelines for Residential Homes and New Additions*. April 20.

design elements that encourage thoughtful development, interaction between neighbors and a sense of community in an urban environment.

**k. San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Concept Plan.** The San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Concept Plan<sup>14</sup> published in 1989 establishes a vision for San Pablo Avenue as a “Retail Boulevard.” It provides an urban design and revitalization strategy, design guidelines for private development, and recommendations for street design. The Plan recommends designing buildings along San Pablo Avenue in a way that is more pedestrian oriented, and that creates a stronger sense of place.

**l. San Pablo Avenue Streetscape Master Plan.** The San Pablo Avenue Streetscape Master Plan<sup>15</sup> adopted in 2001 establishes a schematic design plan for the San Pablo Avenue Corridor within the City of Albany.

**m. San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines.** The Design Guidelines<sup>16</sup> provide recommendations for private property development along San Pablo Avenue, based on the Urban Design Concept Plan adopted in 1989. The major objectives of the Design Guidelines include:

- Objective 1: Create a “retail boulevard” that reflects the quality of Albany.
- Objective 2: Define the Solano Avenue intersection as the center of an identifiable commercial district.
- Objective 3: Encourage private development to create special locations and features along the street.

#### 4. Other Local Initiatives

The following describes other local initiatives.

**a. Measure C.** Approved by the citizens of Albany in 1989, Measure C mandated a majority vote of Albany residents for any future change to the existing land use and zoning regulations for all land west of I-80/580 (e.g., the Albany Waterfront). As a result, the approval of Albany voters is required for any plan that differs from the area's current zoning which includes: park and recreation facilities; utilities; commercial recreation; restaurants and bars; marinas; boat-launching ramps; non-residential parking; and waterfront- and sports-related commercial sales and services. Amendments to the Waterfront Master Plan, or any development agreement related to waterfront land, would also require voter approval.

**b. Measure D.** The Measure D ballot initiative was approved by the City of Albany voters on November 7, 1978. Among its provisions were new residential parking requirements for the City. The Measure amended the City's Zoning Ordinance to require two (2) parking spaces per residential dwelling unit. The Planning and Zoning Commission may reduce the parking requirement by conditional use permit on a case by case basis. A parking reduction may not be less than one and one-

<sup>14</sup> Freedman, Tung & Bottomley, 1989. *City of Albany Urban Design Concept Plan*. December.

<sup>15</sup> Design, Community & Environment, 2001. *San Pablo Avenue Streetscape Master Plan*. February 26.

<sup>16</sup> Albany, City of, 1993. *San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines (adopted by City Council Resolution No. 93-4)*. January 19.

half (1.5) spaces per unit, should the Commission find that existing on-street parking is sufficient to justify a reduction.

**c. Measure K.** In April, 1994, Albany voters approved Measure K, which revised the Hillside Zoning District requirements and standards. The purpose of this action was to revise development requirements for Albany Hill to fit better with the environmental constraints and visual importance of the area. The allowable residential density range on most of Albany Hill was reduced from 12-18 dwelling units per acre to 6-9 dwelling units per acre. Approximately 19 acres of land were affected.

**d. Albany Unified School District (AUSD) Facilities Master Plan.** The Facilities Master Plan<sup>17</sup> was published in March 2014 and includes a summary of the planning process, demographic and capacity information for the District, anticipated costs, and potential State funding sources. Each of the nine AUSD facilities is individually analyzed and site specific priorities are defined. The District's 16 largest projects were identified and prioritized on a schedule through 2024. The District staff and consultants note the Facilities Master Plan is a *living document* that will continue to evolve and adapt to the inevitable changes that will occur in the District's future.

**e. University Village Master Plan.** The University Village Master Plan<sup>18</sup> was approved by the UC Regents in 2004. It amended the 1998 Master Plan for the 77-acre University Village project in the southwest area of Albany. University Village is owned and operated by the University of California and provides housing for students at UC Berkeley. The amended Master Plan proposed new land use designations on the site, demolition of the 1940s and 1960s units, and their replacement with new student family housing. A community center, child care center, little league fields, and retail are incorporated into the design of the site. Many of the improvements identified in the Master Plan have been implemented.

**f. Codornices Creek Improvement Plan.** The Codornices Creek Improvement Plan was prepared in 2004 as a joint project between Albany, Berkeley, and the University of California. The Plan includes restoration of the Codornices Creek between San Pablo Avenue and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, and the construction of a pedestrian/bicycle path linking to Berkeley, Albany, and regional trail networks. Many of the improvements in this plan have been implemented.<sup>19</sup>

**g. Albany City Council Strategic Plan.** The City Council conducted a strategic planning process in 2013 to help affirm, revise, and refine its vision, identify strategic issues, and develop new strategic direction, goals, and objectives for the City. Some of the outcomes of this process have informed policy and action recommendations in the Draft General Plan. These include implementation of the Active Transportation Plan and Climate Action Plan, development of the Pierce Street Park, traffic calming solutions for areas such as North Albany, and parking studies in support of a future ballot measure to revise City parking standards.

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<sup>17</sup> WLC Architects, 2014. *Albany Unified School District Facilities Master Plan*. March 25.

<sup>18</sup> University of California, Berkeley, Facilities Services, 2004. *University Village Master Plan*.

<sup>19</sup> Design, Community & Environment, 2004. *Codornices Creek Improvements Plan Draft Initial Study and Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration*. March 4.

**h. Albany Neck and Bulb Transition Plan.** The City is currently working with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) on a transition plan for improving the Albany Neck and Bulb to enable this area to become part of McLaughlin Eastshore State Park. The plan will be used by the City and EBRPD to create an agreement on what improvements/modifications will be made to the area. It will help form the basis for subsequent agreements to transfer property and will facilitate budgeting and applications for funding to abate hazards and complete planned improvements. The plan will also establish a phasing schedule for construction. Work on the plan began in November 2014, and a community engagement process is underway. The plan is scheduled for 2016 completion.

## **E. PROJECT OBJECTIVES FOR EIR ANALYSIS**

The primary purpose of the Draft General Plan is to establish the policy direction for future development and preservation within the City of Albany. The following are the primary objectives of the Draft General Plan:

- Preserve and enhance the high quality of life enjoyed by Albany residents.
- Create new housing opportunities for persons of all incomes and physical abilities.
- Direct future growth to appropriate locations, including the San Pablo Avenue and Solano Avenue corridors and key opportunity sites.
- Ensure that infill development, including major residential alternations and additions, is sensitive to its surroundings and mitigates its impacts.
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled by enhancing opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
- Improve transportation safety and reduce the adverse effects of vehicle traffic on neighborhoods.
- Grow more sustainably, and in a manner that reduces non-renewable resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Continue to provide high quality parks and recreational facilities.
- Reduce the potential for loss of life and property due to a natural or man-made disaster.
- Promote public health and safety.
- Create a positive environment for local business, and foster business retention and improvement.
- Improve access to the shoreline while protecting and restoring the waterfront environment.
- Provide outstanding public services.

## **F. DRAFT GENERAL PLAN**

This section provides a description of the planning process, a summary of the Draft General Plan elements and goals, and the 2035 growth projections analyzed in this Draft EIR. The Draft General Plan is hereby incorporated by reference into this Project Description and should be referred to for more detailed description. It is available through the City's website ([www.albanyca.org](http://www.albanyca.org)).

## 1. The Draft General Plan Update Process

In 2012, City staff initiated discussions about the General Plan Update with the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission. Several study sessions were convened to identify the scope of the project and the primary objectives. A Request for Proposals was issued in Fall 2012. In February 2013, a consultant was retained to manage the project, including drafting the updated Draft General Plan. The Planning and Zoning Commission (Commission) served as the steering committee and provided opportunities for public input. The Commission convened more than 20 study sessions on the Draft General Plan update over a 28-month period. Each study session included a topical presentation by the consultant followed by a discussion with the Commission. The public was invited to attend and actively participate in these study sessions. In April 2013, a project website was established ([www.albany2035.org](http://www.albany2035.org)) and a video was made to announce the start of the project. The website was regularly updated throughout the project, with agendas and staff reports posted prior to Commission and City Council meetings.

The Draft General Plan update process prioritized completion of the City's Housing Element for the 2007-2014 planning period, since it is the only chapter subject to State-mandated deadlines. In 2013, several study sessions were specifically dedicated to the Housing Element, and a community meeting was held in October 2013. Public hearings before the Commission and City Council occurred as the Housing Element was adopted on March 3, 2014.

Shortly after the 2007-2014 Housing Element was certified in June 2014, the City engaged the public in the preparation of the 2015-2023 Housing Element. Another community meeting was held on July 22, 2014, and a symposium on Affordable Housing was convened in September 2014. Study sessions with the Commission continued during this period, and the City worked collaboratively with housing advocacy groups to develop new solutions to housing challenges. Additional public hearings on the Housing Element took place on January 14, 2015 and February 2, 2015.

While the two Housing Elements were being prepared, work on other elements of the Draft General Plan continued. A Land Use Map was prepared in 2013 and refined through 2014 and early 2015. Policies for each element of the Draft General Plan were prepared and vetted through the Commission. Study sessions with other City Commissions also took place, including the Traffic and Safety Commission, the Waterfront Committee, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Sustainability Committee. Several briefings to the City Council also took place.

## 2. Draft General Plan Elements

The Draft General Plan includes eight separate "elements" or chapters that set goals, policies and actions for a given subject. As previously described, the chapters cover the following topics required by Government Code Section 65302: land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, noise and safety. The additional topics of Community Services and Facilities and Waterfront are also included to address local needs and concerns.

Each Draft General Plan Element provides goals, policies, and actions to address key City issues. Some of these goals, policies and actions are related to the review of new development; others are directed to the City's own activities. In the Draft General Plan, a "goal" is a description of the general desired result that the City seeks to create through the implementation of its General Plan. A "policy" is a specific statement that guides decision-making when working toward achieving a goal. Such policies, once adopted, represent statements of City regulation and require no further implementation.



An “action” is a program, implementation measure, procedure, or technique intended to help achieve a specified objective.

The goals, policies, and actions in each Element are based on background information, key findings, the 1992 General Plan, more recently adopted plans, and input from the public, the City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Boards and Commissions, State law, and the technical expertise of City staff and the consultant team. In general, the philosophy underpinning the Draft General Plan was to build upon the numerous policy documents that have been adopted since the last General Plan – particularly those documents completed between 2000 and 2014. Rather than creating new policies, the Draft General Plan provides an overarching framework for existing city policies on a variety of topics, from parks to transportation to the waterfront.

The Housing Element and its associated Mitigated Negative Declaration was adopted in February 2015 and is a stand-alone document that is not included in the Draft General Plan. It is hereby incorporated by reference. It can be viewed in an on-line format, and is available through the City’s website ([www.albanyca.org](http://www.albanyca.org)).

A summary of the Draft General Plan Elements are provided below.

**a. Land Use Element.** The Land Use Element encourages new high density transit-oriented mixed use development along commercial corridors, and seeks to sustain walkable neighborhoods and shopping districts, improve access to the waterfront, and maintain thriving parks and open spaces. The Land Use Element also includes policies that provide guidance for maintaining the character of single-family neighborhoods, including the regulation of home-based businesses, limits on non-residential uses in residential areas, guidance for second story additions, and development on non-conforming small lots.

Most growth in the City is anticipated to occur in mixed use projects along San Pablo Avenue (and secondarily along Solano Avenue). The Solano Avenue/San Pablo Avenue intersection is identified as a “node” where more intense development may be appropriate. Policies address the transition between commercial uses and nearby residential areas, and seek to improve the quality of commercial architecture. Policies also support lot consolidation (to create more viable development sites), improved parking management, improved urban open spaces, and the development of additional local-serving office space.

Special attention is given to the Albany Bowl site, recognizing its location at the City’s northern gateway and the fact that it is the largest development opportunity on San Pablo Avenue (excluding University Village).

Policies support working with major institutional uses in the City to reduce their off-site impacts and to collaboratively address long-term facility planning. There is a focus on working with the University of California to ensure that University Village remains an integral part of the community.

The Draft General Plan encourages the sensitive development of the remaining 11-acre vacant parcel on the west side of Albany Hill, consistent with the existing 1992 General Plan. It also encourages protection of creeks across the City.

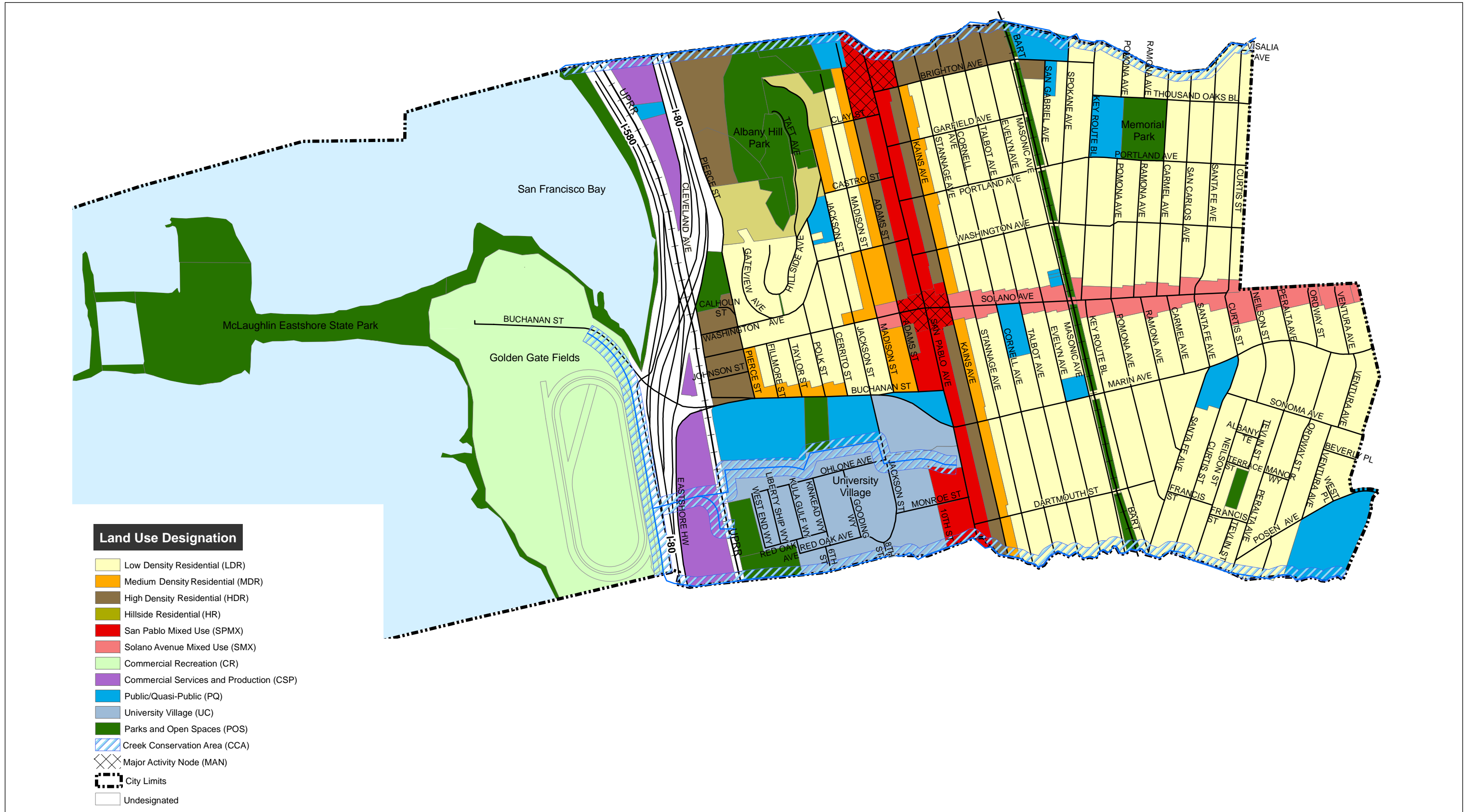
A Draft General Plan goal addresses Community Character and includes policies encouraging historic preservation, the enhancement of City gateways, protection of views and vistas, and improvements to streetscapes and commercial properties. A new policy under this goal provides guidance on the siting of wireless communication facilities.

Notable future actions recommended by this chapter include the development of multi-family design guidelines, special standards for small lots, an update to the San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines, a comprehensive street tree program, a feasibility study for a historic preservation program, future consideration to allow construction of four-story buildings in the Solano Avenue/San Pablo Avenue commercial node, changes to the PRC zoning district, and market studies of the Solano Avenue/San Pablo Avenue business districts.

**(1) New Land Use Designations and Policy and Map Changes.** The Land Use Element identifies General Plan land use designations for the entire City based on policies of the Draft General Plan. The land use designations generally relate to the designations shown in the 1992 General Plan; however, some land use categories have been refined. Key changes to land use designations and the General Plan land use map are summarized below. Figure III-2 shows the Draft General Plan land use map.

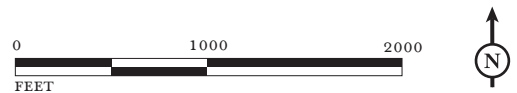
**Residential.** The 1992 General Plan identified three residential land use designations (Low, Medium, High), plus two “Planned Development” land use designations on Albany Hill. A 2004 General Plan Amendment added a “Tower Residential” land use designation which applied to only one parcel (the Gateview condominiums), since the existing density on that site exceeded the “high density” range.

- The Draft General Plan identifies four residential land use designations: Low Density Residential; Medium Density Residential; High Density Residential; and Hillside Residential.
- The Low Density Residential category is equivalent to the existing low density category (0-17 units/acre).
- The Medium Density Residential category is equivalent to the existing medium density category (17-35 units/acre).
- The High Density category (35-87 units/acre) merges the “High” and “Tower” categories included in the 1992 General Plan, but the definition notes that the top (Tower) end of the density range is only permitted on the Gateview site; everywhere else, the high end of the range is 63 units/acre, which is consistent with the existing high density category.
- The Hillside Residential category merges the two “Planned Development” categories included in the 1992 General Plan. The definition notes that two zoning districts apply in this General Plan designation, with one applying to the west side of Albany Hill and the other applying to the east side.



LSA

FIGURE III-2



SOURCE: CITY OF ALBANY, 2015.

City of Albany General Plan EIR  
Proposed 2035 General Plan Land Use Designations

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**Mixed Use.** The 1992 General Plan identifies two commercial land use designations (San Pablo Avenue General and Solano Avenue Community), one Planned Residential/Commercial land use designations, and a Commercial Node overlay. The Draft General Plan identifies two mixed use land use designations and eliminates the Planned Residential/Commercial category. It retains the Commercial Node overlay.

The General Commercial land use designation in the 1992 General Plan has been retitled the “San Pablo Avenue Mixed Use” designation in the Draft General Plan. The floor area ratio (FAR) and density ranges for this category in the 1992 General Plan have been carried forward to the Draft General Plan with a minimum density of 20 units/acre added.

The Community Commercial land use designation in the 1992 General Plan has been retitled the “Solano Avenue Mixed Use” designation in the Draft General Plan. The FAR and density ranges for this category in the 1992 General Plan have been carried forward to the Draft General Plan with a minimum density of 20 units/acre added.

The Planned Residential/Commercial (PRC) category included in the 1992 General Plan was eliminated because it was not substantively different than the General Commercial designation and was being used only to convey the City’s preference for housing at a handful of sites. These sites continue to be candidate sites for housing, but that is communicated in a different way in the Draft General Plan (through their designation as “Housing Opportunity Sites” in the Housing Element and the continued higher floor area ratio allowance for projects incorporating housing in mixed use zoning districts).

The Commercial Node overlay (which is applied “on top” of other mixed use designations) continues to apply to areas where more ground floor intensity is desired.

**Commercial Recreation.** The 1992 General Plan included a Commercial Recreation category which applied to Golden Gate Fields. The Draft General Plan carries this category forward without any changes. Any changes to this category (or to the map designation) would require voter approval under Measure C.

**Light Industrial.** The 1992 General Plan included a Commercial Service Light Industrial land use designation. The Draft General Plan renames this category Commercial Services and Production. The allowed uses and intensities remain the same.

**Public and Open Space.** The 1992 General Plan included a Public/Quasi-Public land use designation. It further labeled each site with this designation with a symbol indicating whether the use was City Property, a Church, or an “Other” public land use. The Draft General Plan includes the same Public/Quasi-Public designation but drops the convention of specifying the nature of the use. Moreover, the designation no longer includes churches.

The 1992 General Plan identified the University Village/United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) site into four sub-categories. The USDA site was identified as “Research,” and the Village was identified as “Residential/Recreational/Commercial,” “Residential/Commercial,” and “Residential/Recreational.” The Draft General Plan designates the University Village site as its own land use category and does not break the site down into these sub-categories. The USDA site is treated separately as a Public/Quasi-Public use.

The 1992 General Plan includes a Parks and Recreation designation. The Draft General Plan includes a Parks and Open Space designation. The definitions are similar, although the new Parks and Open Space designation is defined so that private open space (such as conservation easements on Albany Hill) and University Village open space (community garden) may be included.

**(2) General Plan Map Changes.** The following discussion briefly describes changes reflected in the Draft General Plan Map.

- *Albany Middle School Site.* The 1992 General Plan identified the Albany Middle School site as High Density Residential. The Draft General Plan map changes the designation to Public/Quasi-Public to reflect the current use.
- *University Village Mixed Use Site.* The San Pablo Avenue frontage of the University Village (from Village Creek to Codornices Creek) has been changed from Institutional: Residential/Commercial to San Pablo Avenue Mixed Use to reflect the approved and anticipated use.
- *Churches.* The 1992 General Plan identified church uses as Public/Quasi-Public: Churches. The Draft General Plan map now identifies current or former church sites (including St. Albans, Albany Methodist, Mosaic Bay Church, and Bright Star Montessori) as Low Density Residential, which is consistent with their zoning and the common convention of mapping such parcels based on the surrounding prevailing uses.
- *AT&T Facility.* The 1992 General Plan mapped the AT&T Facility at Solano Avenue/Ventura Boulevard as Public/Quasi-Public. The Draft General Plan identifies this facility as Solano Avenue Mixed Use.
- *Albany Hill.* The 1992 General Plan included property near Taft Avenue and Jackson Street as Planned Development. These areas are now part of the City-owned park on Albany Hill and have been re-designated as Parks and Open Space
- *University Village Community Garden.* The community garden at University Village was mapped as Commercial Services/Light Industrial in the 1992 General Plan and has been re-designated as Parks and Open Space in the Draft General Plan.
- *University Village Southwest Corner Fields.* The sports fields in the southwest corner of University Village were mapped as Commercial Services/Light Industrial in the 1992 General Plan and have been mapped as Parks and Open Space in the Draft General Plan to reflect the current use and the plans for future use.
- *Village Creek - Creek Conservation Overlay.* The Conservation Overlay on Village Creek has been realigned to reflect the realignment of the creek that took place when the University Village student family housing was reconstructed from 1999-2008.
- *Corporation Yard.* The Corporation Yard at 540 Cleveland Avenue was mapped as Commercial Services/Light Industrial in the 1992 General Plan and has been mapped as Public/Quasi-Public to reflect the planned construction of this facility.
- *Union Pacific Railroad Right-of-Way.* The Draft General Plan Map does not assign a land use designation to the UPRR Right-of-Way (ROW). This is consistent with freeway uses, which are undesignated in the 1992 General Plan and the Draft General Plan.

- *Light Industrial.* The Light Industrial (Commercial Services and Production) category has been updated to reflect the realignment of the I-80 freeway in the 1990s.
- *Pierce Street Park.* Pierce Street Park was mapped as I-80 freeway ROW in the 1992 General Plan and has been mapped as Parks and Open Space to reflect the planned use of the property.
- *Southwest Pierce Street Surplus Property.* Approximately half of the block bounded by Pierce Street, Washington Street, Calhoun Street, and Cleveland Avenue, was designated as part of the I-80 ROW on the 1992 General Plan. The Draft General Plan maps this area as High Density Residential to be consistent with the remainder of the block.
- *Major Activity Node Overlay.* The Major Activity Node designation has been mapped in the Draft General Plan on the west side of San Pablo Avenue from Clay Street extending north to El Cerrito. This change is a reflection of the City's desire for active ground floor uses facing San Pablo Avenue and a pedestrian-oriented environment that is conducive to transit use given the proximity to the El Cerrito BART station.
- *Town Center, Albany Bowl, and Creekside Village.* The Albany Town Center shopping plaza, Albany Bowl, and the Creekside Village sites were mapped as Planned Residential/Commercial in the 1992 General Plan and are mapped as San Pablo Avenue Mixed Use in the Draft General Plan.

**(3) Summary of Acreage Changes.** Table III-1 shows the acreage in each land use category in the 1992 General Plan (as amended through 2004) and the acreage in each land use category in the Draft General Plan. A number of footnotes are provided to further elaborate on the differences.

**b. Transportation Element.** The Transportation Element is based on the principles of Complete Streets and the City's existing Complete Street policy. It incorporates the adopted Albany Active Transportation Plan and focuses on the link between transportation and land use. The Transportation Element seeks to balance the mobility needs of all users of the transportation system including: pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motorists, and persons with different mobility levels. It establishes Complete Streets operating procedures and design standards. Sustainability is emphasized through policies which seek to reduce vehicle miles traveled and improve connectivity. Examples of these policies include improvements to public transit and supporting infrastructure for car sharing, bike sharing, and low emission vehicles.

The Transportation Element emphasizes the concept of transportation choice including improvements to the bikeway systems consistent with previously adopted plans, maintenance of bike routes, improvements to sidewalks and paths, and more reliable public transit.

Transportation safety has been prioritized through policies that include enforcement, preventative maintenance, traffic safety education, improved street lighting, the development of cross-walks, the collection of better data on accidents, and improved school safety and security.

Policies are included to minimize the effects of vehicular traffic on the City's neighborhoods including reductions in cut-through traffic, traffic calming, ongoing pavement maintenance, and streetscape improvements. Vehicle flow is also addressed, including the continued designation of a network of local, collector, and arterial streets, regular monitoring of traffic conditions, ongoing pavement maintenance, and improvements which keep the road system operating safely and efficiently.

**Table III-1: Acreage Comparison Between 1992 General Plan and Draft General Plan**

Land Use Category	1992 General Plan Acreage	Draft General Plan Acreage	Difference
Low Density Residential <sup>a</sup>	466	467	+1
Medium Density Residential	37	37	0
High Density Residential (including “Tower”) <sup>b</sup>	65	63	-2
Hillside Residential (formerly Planned Development 1 and 2) <sup>c</sup>	26	19	-7
San Pablo Avenue Mixed Use <sup>d</sup>	33	44	+11
Planned Residential-Commercial	6		-6
Solano Avenue Mixed Use <sup>e</sup>	29	30	+1
Commercial Recreation	137	137	0
Commercial Services and Production (formerly Commercial Service/ Light Industrial) <sup>f</sup>	35	30	-5
Public/Quasi-Public <sup>g</sup>	62	65	+3
Parks/Open Space <sup>h</sup>	132	150	+18
University Village (formerly three different categories)	75	80	+5
Undesignated (Freeway/Railroad ROW)	72	53	-19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,175</b>	<b>1,175</b>	<b>0</b>

<sup>a</sup> Increase due to the addition of several churches to this category

<sup>b</sup> Decrease partially due to removal of Albany Middle School from the High Density Residential category, offset by increase of 1.0 acre at Pierce Street parcel

<sup>c</sup> Decrease due to acquisition of parcels on the east side of Albany Hill as parkland

<sup>d</sup> Increase due to University Village mixed use development

<sup>e</sup> Increase due to designation of AT&T facility as Solano Mixed Use

<sup>f</sup> Decrease due to freeway realignment, Corporation Yard addition, removal of University Village ball field

<sup>g</sup> Increase due to Albany Middle School and Corporation Yard addition

<sup>h</sup> Increase due to Albany Hill, Pierce Street, University Village area addition

Notes:

– 1992 General Plan column includes General Plan Map Amendments made through 2004.

– Total excludes the Creek Conservation Overlay and the Major Activity Node overlay, to avoid double counting.

Source: Barry Miller, Planning Consultant to the City of Albany, 2015.

A new goal addresses parking management, with policies supporting shared parking, mechanical lifts, more attractive parking lots, un-bundling of multi-family residential units from their parking spaces, car-share spaces, and parking standards which are more compatible with other Draft General Plan goals. The Draft Plan also updates an existing action from the 1992 General Plan which called for a ballot measure to modify the Measure D parking standards. The revised action calls for such a ballot measure in 2016, with the aim of providing context-sensitive parking standards that consider factors such as zoning district, the number of bedrooms in each dwelling unit and proximity to transit.

Other follow-up actions also are identified in the Element, including revisions to the street standards, an update of the Trip Reduction Ordinance, consideration of a Transportation Management Association, a Bike Parking Ordinance, additional bikeway signage, sidewalk improvements, a transit gap study, improvement of bus shelters, preparation of an annual safety report, improvements to school pick-up and drop-off areas, a safe routes to school program, adoption of multi-modal levels of service, and a traffic calming program for the streets near El Cerrito Plaza.



**c. Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element.** Previously part of the Conservation Element, Parks and Recreation topics are treated in a separate Draft General Plan Element. The new Element builds on the adopted Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, as well as policies carried forward from the 1992 General Plan.

A broad goal is included that advocates open space protection with a focus on the waterfront, Albany Hill, and the City's creeks. The Element supports the use of other types of open space in the City, such as courtyards, rooftops, yards, community gardens, and "public realm" areas such as plazas and streetscapes.

The Element advances a recommendation from the adopted Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan that the majority of the 11-acre private parcel on the west side of Albany Hill (the largest developable site in the City) be set aside in a conservation easement, with the allowable density transferred to the least sensitive part of the site. A park "hierarchy" is defined in the Element, including mini-parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks and a per capita service standard is established for parkland.

Policies in the Element support maintenance of existing parks, and the development of new types of parks to meet increased demand, such as linear parks, regional open spaces, and improvements to school yards. Policies also address the siting of new facilities in parks, the preservation of natural resources in parks, and the compatibility of park activities with surrounding uses, these topics were not included in the 1992 General Plan. The pending development of the Pierce Street Park on former Caltrans ROW is specifically mentioned.

Policies also address park management and maintenance, including the modernization of existing facilities, planning for diverse user groups, renovation of sports fields, and the provision of outdoor cultural space.

The Element calls for an update of the 2004 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, and an update to the 1998 Memorial Park Master Plan. Policies on recreational programming are included, with an emphasis on responding to demographic change and meeting the needs of persons in different age groups. Policies on joint use are included, addressing public access to recreational facilities operated by the school district, the University of California, and adjacent cities. Most of the content is carried forward from the 2004 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan. A new goal on trails has been added to the Draft General Plan, with policies emphasizing connectivity, better signage, user safety, and improved connections to the shoreline

**d. Conservation and Sustainability Element.** The scope of the 1992 Conservation Element has been expanded. While the 1992 General Plan included just a few policies on natural features, street trees, the waterfront, and Albany Hill, the Draft General Plan systematically addresses the City's uplands, wetlands, "urban forest," biological resources, and air and water quality conditions. It also addresses energy and water conservation, climate change, and waste reduction topics that were not addressed in the prior plan. There is a broader focus on sustainability, a planning concept that was still emerging when the 1992 General Plan was adopted.

Policies address soil management and erosion control, protection of Albany Hill, preservation of the waterfront, creek conservation, and respect for natural features in the development process. Several policies and actions also address the restoration of Cerrito and Codornices Creeks, although no specific projects are referenced.

A strong emphasis is placed on expanding the City's tree canopy, including tree preservation, tree planting, and improved tree maintenance programs. Bay-friendly landscaping is supported. The Draft General Plan also incorporates vegetation management recommendations for Albany Hill from the adopted Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan.

Policies to reduce air pollution are principally focused on reducing vehicle emissions and implementation of the Bay Area Clean Air Plan. The Element also addresses reduction of construction-related air pollution.

The Conservation and Sustainability Element provides a framework for ongoing stormwater management programs and water quality improvements, including elimination of stormwater discharges to the sanitary sewer system, elimination of sewer discharges to the storm drainage system, water quality education, low impact development, and implementation of best management practices to reduce runoff. The Element builds on existing General Plan policies to protect habitat and enhance wildlife diversity, and adds new policies to reduce light intrusion.

New policies are included that call for greener construction methods, measures to improve energy efficiency and maximize the use of renewable energy, and efforts to reduce potable water use and increase reclaimed water use. The use of cool roofs and photovoltaic energy systems is supported, and a number of energy-related action measures are included, such as a zero-emissions target for City buildings, consideration of Community Choice Aggregation, consideration of energy efficiency assessment and upgrade requirements, and an update to the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

Policies which are consistent with the adopted CAP acknowledge climate change and outline strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The greenhouse gas reduction target in the CAP is proposed to be updated to 2035 and 2050, although a CAP update will be required to identify the strategies needed to achieve that target. The Element sets the goal of eventually eliminating the landfilled disposal of solid waste, with a 90 percent diversion target by 2030.

**e. Environmental Hazards Element.** The Environmental Hazards Element carries forward policies from the 1992 General Plan to a greater extent than the other elements, as conditions have not changed substantially for this topic area. The policies continue to focus on hazard reduction, emergency preparedness, and noise. New policies address topics such as wildfire prevention, sea level rise, resilience of utilities, and hazardous building materials.

Policies in the Environmental Hazards Element support the siting, design and retrofitting of structures to reduce damage and the potential for casualties during an earthquake. Policies also recommend using soil properties as a design factor. A program to inventory and retrofit soft-story buildings is included.

The Element addresses flood hazards, including sound management of flood plain areas, and environmentally sensitive flood control projects. The vegetation management initiatives from the Albany Hill Creekside Master Plan are highlighted, with an emphasis on wildfire prevention. Defensible space and peak load water supply policies are included.

The Element seeks to reduce exposure of residents and employees to hazardous materials. This includes policies to consider past uses on commercial and industrial sites as part of the development review process, to design hazardous materials handling areas to minimize the risk of accidents, to support transportation safety, and to coordinate with appropriate regional, State and federal agencies to reduce risk levels.

An active and effective emergency response program is supported. This program would include maintenance of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC), citizen training programs (CERT), and a disaster recovery program. The Element suggests that the City update its Standard Emergency Management Systems Plan and its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The Noise Goal from the 1992 Plan has been carried forward and updated. Policies call for noise-sensitive design, maintenance of a noise ordinance to address domestic noise, and measures to reduce noise exposure associated with freeways, the railroad, and BART. A noise compatibility table that indicates which land uses are acceptable, conditionally acceptable, and unacceptable based on ambient noise levels is included in the Element.

**f. Community Services and Facilities Element.** This is a new Element of the Draft General Plan, although some of the topics are addressed in the 1992 General Plan.

A new Draft General Plan goal related to schools has been added that focuses on coordination with the Albany Unified School District (AUSD) to maintain exceptional schools and high-quality facilities, and address physical planning issues, such as parking and student pick-up/drop-off. The policies in the Community Services and Facilities Element support joint use agreements for public access to school facilities during non-school hours, and further support the role of schools as neighborhood centers. Action programs call for additional discussions with the AUSD on the future of Albany Children's Center and the now vacant San Gabriel site. Action programs also call for working with AUSD as Marin School and Ocean View School are reconstructed to meet current seismic standards and technology needs.

Policies address provision of high quality police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS). Some of these policies are carried forward from the 1992 General Plan Safety Element; however, most of the content, including policies on community policing, youth relations, crime prevention through environmental design, traffic safety, and mutual aid, are new.

A new goal addressing civic facilities has been added. Policies cover City-owned buildings such as the senior center, the community center, and City Hall. The intent is to promote coordinated facility planning and anticipate physical needs based on expected growth forecasts.

The co-location of different services in the same facilities is supported for efficiency and economies of scale. The Element also supports pursuit of new funding sources, periodic facility assessments, and coordination with the University of California on facility development. Policies specifically highlight the need for services for children, youth, and seniors. Existing 1992 General Plan policies on child care and senior care are carried forward.

A new goal related to Arts and Culture has been developed. Policies to increase the visibility of the arts, provide programmed outdoor space for arts, recognize art as an economic development tool, and sustain support for public art have been adapted from the Public Arts Master Plan for this Element. A new goal related to Infrastructure has been added. Policies address the adequacy of the water, sewer, drainage, and telecommunication systems, and the need to maintain, and in some cases expand, these systems as development takes place. Reclaimed water and green infrastructure are also addressed. The Element supports development of the approved City maintenance center at the Corporation Yard (540 Cleveland Avenue).

**g. Waterfront Element.** This new Element is based largely on the 2002 Eastshore State Park Plan and the 1992 Albany General Plan. Other policies affecting the waterfront are included and referenced in this Element. Under the provisions of voter-approved Measure C, the City cannot change land use designations at the waterfront without a citywide vote. Thus, the Waterfront Element is largely a summary of existing policies governing the area. No changes to existing policies are proposed, although some policies are articulated in slightly different language for clarification.

Consistent with existing planning documents, a goal has been included to transform the waterfront, including the Albany Bulb, Neck, and Plateau areas, into a State park. The policies in the Waterfront Element emphasize environmental sensitivity, environmental education, view protection, and hazard remediation and support the transition planning activities that are now underway. Another goal, also drawn from existing planning documents, focuses on enhanced recreational opportunities at the waterfront. Land uses and activities that are envisioned by the State Park Plan are addressed in the Element and include hiking, picnicking, and swimming.

Other existing goals and policies have been carried forward in this Element, including the improvement of access to and along the shoreline, and the protection of shoreline natural resources. Policies address the development of new trails and water access points, and better connections between Albany's neighborhoods and the shoreline.

Natural resource policies focus on the unique plant and animal communities in the waterfront area. Marine habitat protection also is addressed and policies that cover the buffering of sensitive habitat areas from recreational improvements are included.

A related goal calls for sustainable park planning and includes acknowledgment of the area's limited carrying capacity, consideration of sea level rise, and the application of green building principles to any future structural improvements that may be considered.

Goal and policies related to Golden Gate Fields are drawn from the 1992 General Plan. The policies propose no changes to the existing racetrack. The Element notes that in the event such changes are proposed, a citywide planning process and vote will be required.

### 3. Housing, Employment and Population Projections

For the purposes of evaluating in this Draft EIR the potential effects of the proposed Draft General Plan land use designations, goals, policies and actions, the City has prepared estimated 2035 growth projections for new housing units, jobs, and population and likely levels of development of the proposed Draft General Plan. The future projections were identified by the City based on a combination of sources, including approved development plans, the inventory of housing sites in the 2015-2023 Housing Element, and the most current Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) projections for jobs and households.

**a. Citywide Growth Projections.** The following describes the process and assumptions concerning Citywide growth that are included in Table III-2. The process of preparing the year 2035 projections included an understanding and accounting of existing development and land utilization patterns. The 2015-2023 Housing Element included an extensive analysis of vacant and underutilized land, taking into consideration such factors as zoning, structure coverage, and land to improvement value ratio. Twenty sites zoned for either high density mixed use or high density residential development were identified, with an expected yield of 406 housing units. It should be noted that the “expected yield” is based on recent projects in the City (roughly 32 units/acre) rather than the maximum allowable yield (63 units/acre). The Housing Element also identified the capacity for 10 single-family units on vacant lots, and 32 second units (assuming four per year for the next eight years).

**Table III-2: Population, Housing and Jobs Baseline (2014) and 2035 Draft General Plan Summary**

Unit	2014 Existing	2035 Draft General Plan	Net Difference
Population	18,585	20,385	1,800
Housing Units	7,845	8,660	815
Jobs	5,070	5,920	850

Note: Housing units include vacant and occupied units.

Source: City of Albany, 2015; Barry Miller, Planning Consultant to the City of Albany, 2015; LSA Associates, Inc., 2015.

Assumptions were made about likely housing opportunities during 2023-2035. Approximately 365 additional housing units beyond those identified on Housing Element sites were added to the projections. These units were assigned to various sub-areas of the City based on land utilization patterns and Draft General Plan policies.

For employment, ABAG’s Projections 2040 was used to establish a control total for the incremental job growth expected between 2010 and 2035.<sup>20</sup> This job growth was distributed to sites in the City based on known plans (for instance the approved retail center at the University Village Mixed Use project), assumptions about ground floor commercial space in future mixed use projects along San

<sup>20</sup> The Draft General Plan horizon year is 2035, but the Alameda County Transportation Commission traffic model is based on a horizon year of 2040. Accordingly, the traffic projections in this Draft EIR extrapolate the 2035 job and household forecasts to the year 2040 for traffic forecasting purposes, resulting in slightly higher trip generation forecasts and traffic volumes, as local and regional growth in 2035-2040 has been included.

Pablo and Solano Avenues, and Draft General Plan policies supporting additional employment growth in the industrial/commercial service area along the Union Pacific Railroad.

The projections assume no change from the existing conditions at Golden Gate Fields, consistent with Measure C.

The Citywide projections are the basis for measuring the environmental effects of the Draft General Plan. As shown in Table III-2, the City has determined that proposed land use designations in the Draft General Plan would theoretically allow for the development of 850 new jobs and 815 new housing units, for a total of 5,920 jobs and 8,660 housing units in the City by 2035. These housing projections include Albany’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation prepared by ABAG of 335 units for the City’s current Housing Element planning cycle of 2014-2022. Table III-3 summarizes the projected 2015-2035 development potential in Albany by subarea.

**Table III-3: Estimated Development Potential by Subarea**

Subarea	Housing Units	Jobs
University Village	275	270
<i>San Pablo Avenue frontage</i>	<i>(175)</i>	<i>(190)</i>
<i>Interior areas</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>(80)</i>
San Pablo Avenue corridor	300	250
Solano Avenue corridor	50	100
Albany Hill west side/Pierce Street	100	0
North of Brighton	30	0
Cleveland/Eastshore	0	150
Waterfront	0	0
Scattered infill, including second units	60	80
<b>Totals</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>850</b>

Source: Barry Miller Consulting, 2014.

**b. Comparison of General Plan Projections to Plan Bay Area Projections.** The official demographic forecasts for the San Francisco Bay Area are the Plan Bay Area projections (also called Projections 2013) developed by ABAG. The focus of the projections is the 30-year growth increment from 2010-2040. However, the projections include five-year intervals, allowing a comparison of growth assumptions for 2015-2035 between Plan Bay Area and the Albany Draft General Plan.

The Draft General Plan growth projections are slightly lower than the Plan Bay Area population and households projections, but match the employment projections (850 new jobs). Plan Bay Area shows 890 new households in Albany between 2015 and 2035 (with another 230 households between 2035 and 2040), compared to the Draft General Plan total of 775 households (assuming a 5 percent vacancy rate, the 815 additional housing units equates to approximately 775 new households). The City’s projections are believed to be more accurate than Plan Bay Area projections and are used for the purposes of this CEQA analysis, as they consider detailed site-specific information on land availability and constraints.

## **G. ANTICIPATED ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Albany Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council will review this Draft EIR along with the accompanying draft version of the General Plan. The Planning and Zoning Commission will first review the Final EIR and consider whether to recommend certification to the City Council. The Planning and Zoning Commission will then provide a recommendation on the Final EIR and the Draft General Plan to the City Council, who will consider certification of the Final EIR and adoption of the Draft General Plan. The City will be responsible for implementing the General Plan through the development review process and the monitoring and issuance of permits.

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