

1. Introduction

This Livermore General Plan Update Existing Conditions Reports include this introduction and 18 additional chapters, providing an overview of existing physical, environmental, economic, and other conditions in and around Livermore. The existing conditions reports are intended to serve as a comprehensive reference and resource for community members, policy makers, staff, and the consultant team throughout the development of the Livermore General Plan Update.

This document is being released as a Public Draft. Livermore Planning Division staff and the General Plan consultant, PlaceWorks, their subconsultants, and many other City departments and agencies have worked together to ensure that an accurate and reliable source of information is provided to serve the General Plan Update process. The release of this Public Draft provides an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the existing conditions reports. The existing conditions reports will act as a working document to serve the General Plan Update process until formal adoption of the General Plan by the Livermore City Council, which is expected in spring of 2024.

The General Plan Update will take place over a two and a half-year period by City staff and the consultant team, with regular and extensive input from the community, a General Plan Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, and the City Council. The process will also include robust community outreach to ensure that the updated General Plan is a community-driven process. The General Plan Update process will also include preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), that investigates the possible impacts of this policy document on the physical environment. The existing conditions reports provide the existing setting for the future EIR and are therefore primarily organized to respond to the required contents of the EIR.

This introductory chapter describes the purpose of the General Plan; introduces Livermore and its planning boundaries; introduces the General Plan itself, including the General Plan's basis in State planning law and its required contents and structure; and outlines the existing conditions report contents.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan is the City of Livermore's fundamental land use and development policy document, which shows how the City will grow and conserve its resources. The purpose of the General Plan is to guide decisions about development and conservation in the city through 2045. The current 2003-2025 General Plan was adopted in 2004 and looks to a horizon year of 2025. The updated General Plan will reflect the issues, ideas, and aspirations of today and plan ahead for the next 20 years. Although the updated General Plan will supersede the Livermore 2003-2025 General Plan, the updated General Plan may carry forward existing policy language that is still serving the City well. Policies and actions that have been accomplished, are no longer relevant, or have been redefined through the update process will be deleted or revised.

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1.2 LIVERMORE LOCATION AND PLANNING BOUNDARIES

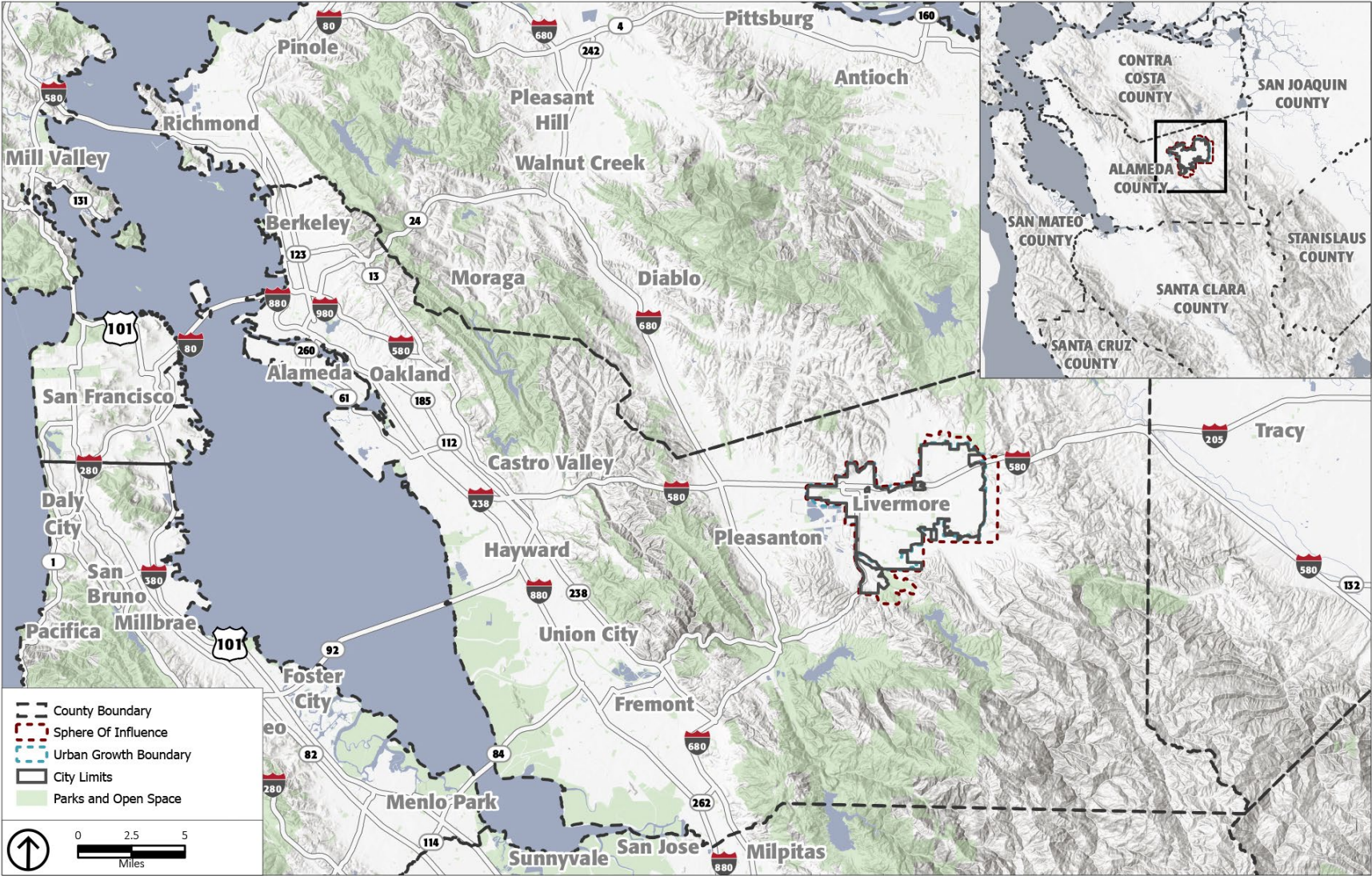
Livermore is situated in the Livermore Valley, in eastern Alameda County. As shown in Figure 1-1, Livermore is in the easternmost portion of Alameda County and is part of the nine-county Bay Area region. The Livermore Valley is framed to the north, south, and east by rolling hills and to the west by the Cities of Dublin and Pleasanton. Livermore is bisected by Interstate 580 (I-580), which aligns east to west through Alameda County. Livermore consists of a total area of approximately 27 square miles.

The State of California encourages cities to look beyond their borders when undertaking the sort of comprehensive planning required of a General Plan. For this reason, the General Plan assesses several different boundaries, illustrated in Figure 1-2. The boundaries assessed in the General Plan include:

- **City Limits.** The City Limits encompass all land that is incorporated as the City of Livermore and that is under regulatory control of the City government and elected officials. All land outside of the City Limits is part of unincorporated Alameda County and is under County jurisdiction. The City Limits cover approximately 17,019 acres of land.
- **Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB).** The UGB is defined as the area for which urban development is contained and not intended to go past. The intent of this boundary is to preserve the open space and agricultural land outside of it. There are two UGBs in Livermore. The South Livermore Urban Growth Boundary Initiative, passed by local voters in March 2000, established the UGB around the southern edge of the City. In December 2002, the City Council passed the North Livermore Urban Growth Boundary Initiative, which completed the UGB around the northern edge of the City. The UGBs cover approximately 16,593 acres of land.
- **Sphere of Influence (SOI).** SOI is the term used for the area outside of the City Limits, which the City could reasonably expect to annex in future years. Livermore's SOI lies largely along the lines of the City Limits but includes additional land in the north past Raymond Road, to the east past Greenville Road, to the south extending to Tesla Road, past Marina Avenue, and including certain portions of South Livermore Valley. The SOI covers approximately 21,468 acres of land. The existing conditions reports use the SOI as the boundary for their information and analysis.
- **Planning Area.** While the Planning Area does not give the City any regulatory power, it signals to the County and to other nearby local and regional authorities that Livermore recognizes that development within this area has an impact on the future of the city. Under state law, the City is invited to comment on development or policy changes within the Planning Area that is subject to review by the County. However, the unincorporated portion of the Livermore Planning Area will remain under the jurisdiction of Alameda County. The Planning Area encompasses land in Alameda County surrounding the City extending up to four miles beyond the City limit to the north and south.

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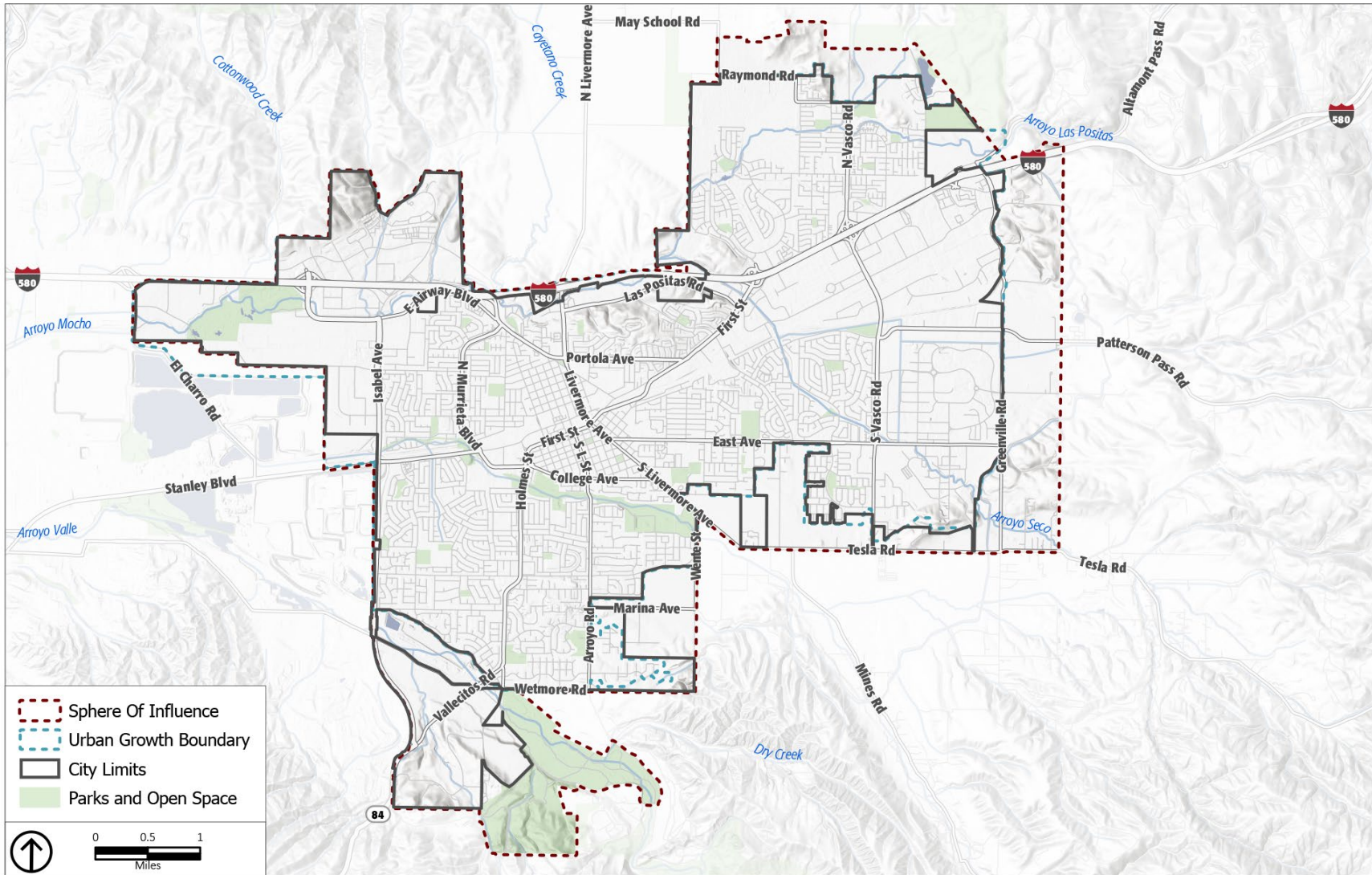
Figure 1-1 Regional Vicinity



Source: City of Livermore, 2021; Esri, 2021.

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Figure 1-2 General Plan Planning Boundaries



Source: City of Livermore, 2021; Esri, 2021.

1.3 LIVERMORE 2003-2025 GENERAL PLAN

Livermore’s 2003-2025 General Plan is the legal document that serves as the city’s “blueprint” or “constitution” for land use and development. State law requires every city and county in California to adopt and maintain a General Plan that is comprehensive and long-term. A General Plan must outline proposals for the physical development of the county or city and any land outside the jurisdiction’s boundaries, which, in the jurisdiction’s judgment, bears relation to its planning.¹ The General Plan must address the range of topics specified in state law, and cities may add additional topics that are relevant to their community.

State law allows communities to determine the most appropriate structure and format for their General Plan. The 2003-2025 General Plan contains the required elements and two additional elements, all comprehensively adopted in 2004, except the Housing Element, which was updated in 2015.

The 2003-2025 General Plan includes the following elements:

1. **Land Use.** Establishes a comprehensive set of explicit goals, policies, and implementation actions to guide the future use and development of land in Livermore and the unincorporated area within its adjacent SOI.
2. **Community Character.** Provides information on visual and urban design resources, natural setting, and cultural resources and guidance to identify, protect, and enhance these features.
3. **Circulation.** Describes existing and proposed roadways and other means of transportation, such as public transit, bikeways, pedestrian routes, and parking facilities. Analyzes traffic conditions and needed improvements so that existing and projected transportation needs may be adequately met.
4. **Infrastructure and Public Services.** Identifies goals and policies to maintain adequate service levels for water facilities and service, wastewater collection and treatment, water recycling, and stormwater collection facilities as well as public services, such as schools, parks, and recreation.
5. **Open Space and Conservation.** Sets forth the City’s goals and policies regarding the preservation of open space and the conservation, development, and use of natural resources.
6. **Noise.** Addresses noise to ensure land use compatibility in the community and analyzes and quantifies current and projected noise levels from a variety of sources. Includes guidance to address current and foreseeable noise problems.
7. **Public Safety.** Establishes goals and policies to protect the community from risks associated with the effects of seismic hazards, other geologic hazards, flooding, and wildland and urban fires.
8. **Economic Development.** Encourages the development of desired economic activities throughout the city, as well as ensures the fiscal vitality of the community. This element facilitates and maintains a balanced mix of economic activity and encourages the development of particular economic sectors in Livermore.
9. **Climate Change.** Establishes the policy direction to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the community’s resiliency against climate change.

¹ California Government Code Section 65300 et seq.

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For each locally relevant, mandated, or optional issue addressed, the 2003-2025 General Plan includes the following:

- **Background Information** that describes the nature and significance of the issue in the city.
- **Goals and Objectives** that establish the targeted outcome for the issue.
- **Policies** that regulate how the jurisdiction will respond to the issue.
- **Actions** that clearly state steps the City will take to implement policies and achieve goals and objectives.

No General Plan element is deemed to be more important than another; all carry equal weight. All substantive parts of the plan must be consistent with one another (i.e., internally, or “horizontally consistent”). For instance, the policies in the Land Use Element must be consistent with those of the Housing Element and vice versa.

State law also requires subsequent documents drafted to implement the General Plan’s objectives to be consistent with the plan. This “vertical consistency” extends to community and specific planning efforts and General Plan implementation through City ordinances such as zoning and the Livermore Development Code.

1.4 EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

These existing conditions reports analyze and summarize demographic, economic, land use, community character, mobility, natural resources, infrastructure, environmental justice, community health, and other conditions in Livermore, with the goal of helping the community and City planning team understand the issues and opportunities facing the community. The information included in the existing conditions reports is provided at a citywide, regional scale which aligns with the level of detail the General Plan will cover. In the northeast of the city, a portion of the UGB extends beyond the SOI. Therefore, the geographic area covered by these existing conditions reports is the amalgamation of the UGBs and the Sphere of Influence. These reports are not meant to capture granular, site-specific issues, nor will they capture every data point about every topic. Instead, the existing conditions reports provide a big-picture understanding of Livermore today at the level of detail necessary to inform future policy and land use discussions and decisions.

This analysis will be used to support the planning and community engagement process conducted during development of the updated General Plan. The existing conditions report provides an overview of existing conditions in the city, and is organized into the following 19 chapters, which are primarily based on the required contents of the future EIR. Two important exceptions to the EIR format are the Economics and Equity and Community Health chapters. These topics are not currently required by CEQA, so these chapters follow a different outline not based on the EIR.

1. Introduction (this chapter)
2. Aesthetics

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3. Agriculture and Forestry Resources
4. Air Quality
5. Biological Resources
6. Climate Change and Resilience
7. Circulation
8. Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
9. Economics
10. Environmental Justice and Community Health
11. Geology and Soils
12. Hazards and Hazardous Materials
13. Historical Resources
14. Hydrology and Water Quality
15. Land Use
16. Public Services and Recreation
17. Noise and Vibration
18. Utilities and Service Systems
19. Wildfire

To prepare these studies, the consultant team conducted database and archival research and corresponded with City departments and outside agencies. Planning documents, government laws and regulations, and City codes and ordinances were also reviewed. These reports will go to the General Plan Advisory Committee for review and comment.

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