



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes background information that provides context for the rest of the Plan. It describes the purpose of the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan, existing conditions in the Planning Area, the planning process and resulting vision, relationship to other plans, and an overview of the document's organization. This chapter concludes with instruction on how to use this Plan to guide private and public development within the Isabel Neighborhood over the next 20 years.



1.1 BACKGROUND

The Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan (Plan) establishes a new regulatory framework for guiding private and public development within the Isabel Neighborhood over the next 20 years. The Plan's regulatory framework replaces the existing land use designations of the General Plan as well as the zoning regulations of the Livermore Development Code. The three primary objectives of the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan are to:

- Create a safe, vibrant neighborhood that includes amenities for residents, workers, and students and that is compatible with existing development and community character.
- Support citywide goals for increased transportation options, housing choices, and economic vitality.
- Support the Valley Link rail project through development of a complete neighborhood.

The Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan will guide future development of the area surrounding the Isabel Valley Link station in the I-580 median at Isabel Avenue. The Plan is a “Specific Plan,” which has been an effective tool used by the City of Livermore to meet community goals for and guide the transformation of several specific areas within the city. In the Isabel Neighborhood area, the abundance of vacant land near the proposed Valley Link station is a major opportunity for

shaping a new neighborhood for the city centered around a major transit hub.

1.2 PLANNING AREA

The City of Livermore encompasses approximately 25 square miles in eastern Alameda County. Rolling hills surround Livermore to the south, east, and north, while the cities of Pleasanton and Dublin lie to the west (see Figure 1-1). The Livermore, San Ramon, and Amador Valleys together comprise the Tri-Valley, a major population and employment area within the nine-county Bay Area region.

The Planning Area for the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan covers approximately 1,138 acres, or about 6.6 percent of the city. It is located in the northwest part of the city, approximately 2.5 miles from Downtown. The Planning Area is entirely within the city's urban growth boundary (UGB). It is also within the city limits, with the exception of an approximately 21-acre property that is currently within unincorporated Alameda County.

The focus of the planning effort is the area within a half-mile of the proposed Valley Link station, shown with a yellow circle on Figure 1-2. This area is generally within a ten-minute walking distance of the proposed Valley Link station and nearby bus stops.

EXISTING LAND USE

The Planning Area is currently developed with a range of residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, and open space uses (see Figure 1-3). The Planning Area currently has about 1,380 housing units, including those under construction. Existing residential units include townhomes, condominiums, and single-family units. Non-residential uses within the Planning Area currently support about 10,500 jobs. About 5,800 jobs (55%) are north of I-580, while the remaining 4,700 (45%) are south of I-580. There is currently only one public park within the Planning Area—the 11.8-acre Cayetano Park on Portola Avenue. About 257 acres, or 28% of the developable land within the Planning Area, is currently vacant or undeveloped.

EXISTING URBAN DESIGN

The Planning Area is divided into four quadrants by the I-580 corridor and Isabel Avenue. Development north of I-580 is generally accessed from the east-west North Canyons Parkway/Portola Avenue arterial roadway, and development south of I-580 is generally accessed from Airway Boulevard. The majority of commercial and retail uses are located along the I-580 corridor, with a hotel/motel/extended stay district near the Airway Boulevard exit, and industrial and business park uses that are located throughout the Planning Area. The Planning Area is effectively

cut off from the adjacent single-family neighborhood southeast by sound walls along Sutter Street, Stetson Way, and Stealth Street.

Apart from the hillsides to the north, the major topographical feature that lends character and structure to the Planning Area is the creeks system. Collier Canyon Creek and Cayetano Creek flow north-south across the Planning Area, and the Arroyo Las Positas runs east-west roughly along Airway Boulevard.

The majority of existing commercial development in the Planning Area has an auto-oriented design with large setbacks and surface parking lots. The residential developments in the Planning Area are more oriented to pedestrians, with shorter block sizes and setbacks. The majority of buildings are in the 16- to 25-foot height range.

The freeway is the largest source of noise and effectively creates a barrier for the neighborhood, as there are few crossings, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists. The creek system also poses constraints related to connectivity, developable land, and environmental resource protection. The abundant landscaping, pathway network, creeks, and scenic views are positive features that contribute to the neighborhood's identity.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Public landowners within the Planning Area include the City of Livermore, Las Positas College, BART, and a limited area along Arroyo Las Positas owned by Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (see Figure 1-4). Within the half-mile radius of the proposed station location, BART owns approximately 55 acres, which includes 20 acres on three contiguous parcels north of I-580 east of Isabel Avenue and 35 acres south of I-580 near the trailway/creek areas. There are seven private owners of the vacant lands within the half-mile radius of the proposed station.

FIGURE 1-1: REGIONAL CONTEXT

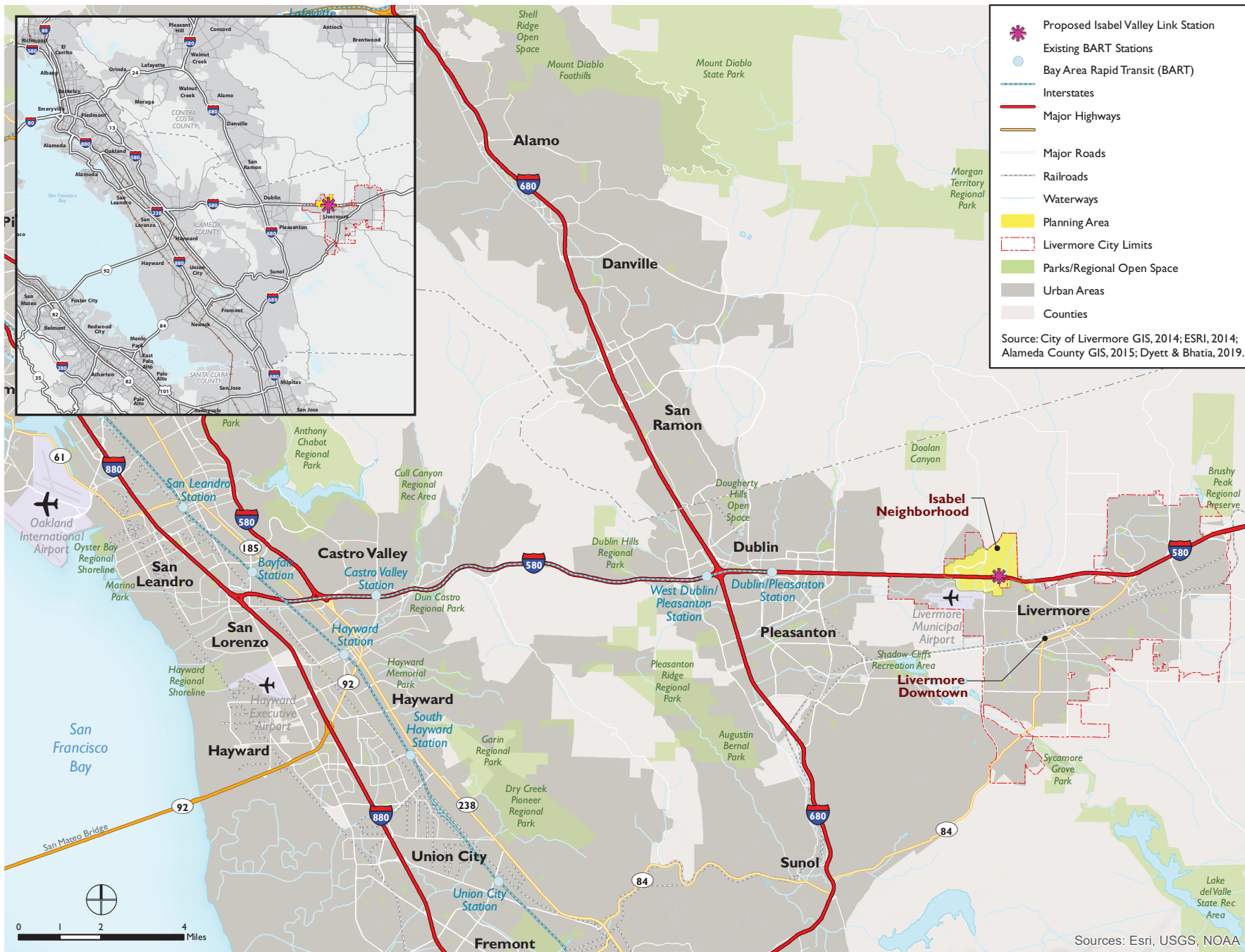


FIGURE 1-2: PLANNING AREA

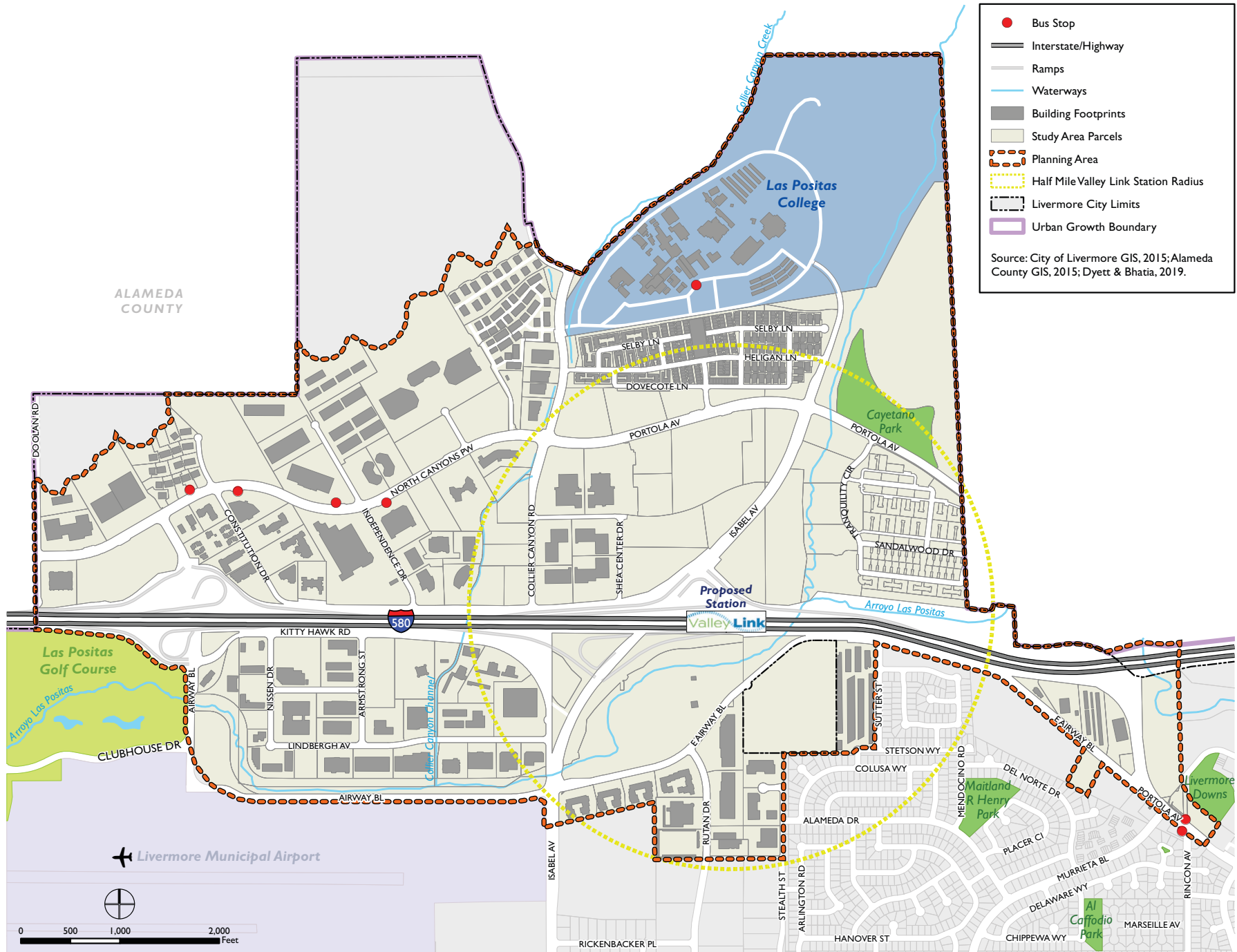


FIGURE 1-3: EXISTING LAND USES

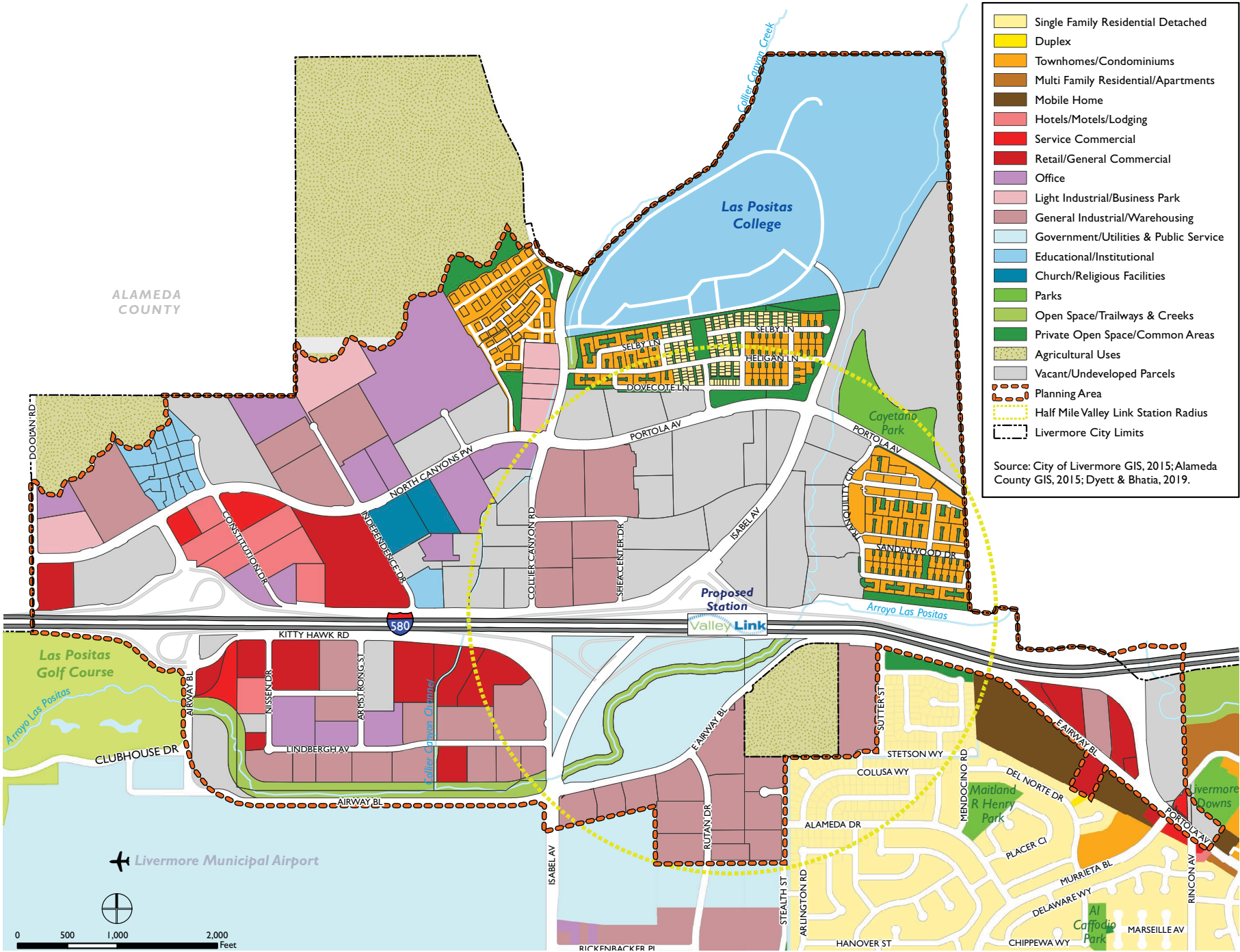
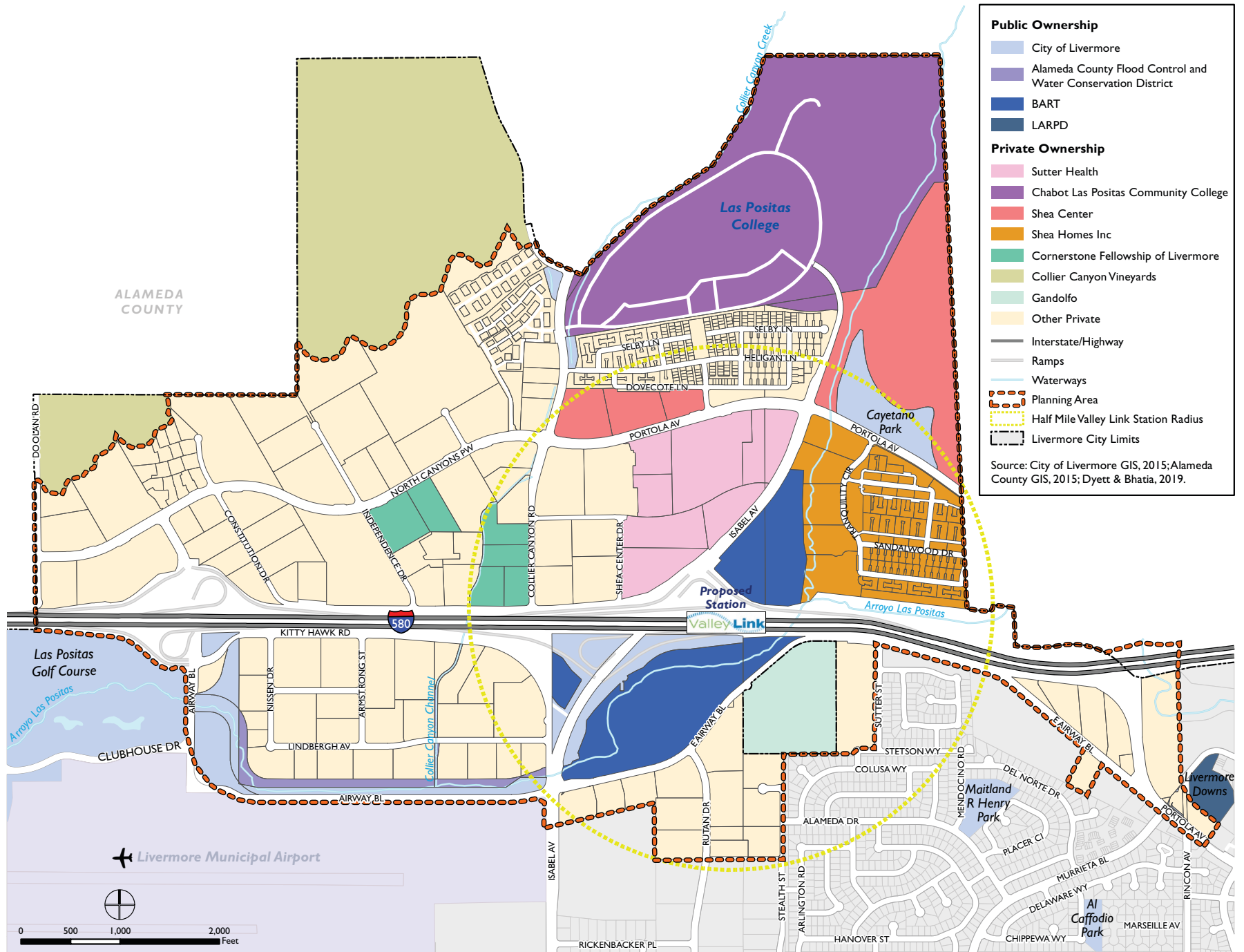


FIGURE 1-4: PUBLIC AND MAJOR PRIVATE LAND OWNERSHIP



1.3 RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER PLANS AND PROGRAMS

PLAN BAY AREA

Plan Bay Area is the blueprint for integrating long-range regional transportation, land use, and open space throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. It is released by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and is updated every four years. As part of the original 2013 Plan Bay Area, cities voluntarily identified Priority Development Areas (PDAs) as desirable locations to target projected housing and job growth. PDAs are eligible to receive regional grant funds for land use planning and certain transportation projects. The City of Livermore identified three PDAs: Downtown, the Eastside (between Vasco and Greenville roads south of I-580), and the Isabel Neighborhood. MTC and ABAG adopted the original Plan Bay Area in 2013 and its first update was adopted in July 2017. MTC and ABAG are actively working on Plan Bay Area 2050. The City is adjusting some Planned Development Areas but the Isabel Planned Development Area remains intact.

VALLEY LINK RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT

The Valley Link Rail Transit Project will replace the BART to Livermore Extension. The Valley Link project will connect Northern San Joaquin County communities to the Tri-Valley and BART through frequent and fast rail service via the route of historic Transcontinental Railroad right-of-way through the Altamont Pass. The project will include a station at Isabel Avenue.

The project extends initially from the planned ACE North Lathrop Station in the San Joaquin Valley through the Altamont Pass, then readily connects with the Dublin/Pleasanton BART terminus station in the Tri-Valley, with additional stations in River Islands, Downtown Tracy, Mountain House, Greenville Road/I-580 in Livermore, and Isabel Avenue/I-580 in Livermore. A station at Southfront Road in Livermore between First Street and South Vasco Road is also being evaluated

Altamont Corridor Express completed an initial analysis which found Valley Link to have competitive travel time (73 minutes from planned ACE North Lathrop Station to BART). The study also identified significant emissions reduction, and environmental benefits. Initial travel demand forecasting projects approximately 25,000 riders per day on Valley Link in 2040.

Current plans for initial service levels on weekdays in the Tri-Valley will have trains operating every

12 minutes during peak hours to match BART service frequency and the off peak trains in the Tri-Valley will operate every 30 minutes. Trains from the San Joaquin Valley trains would operate on 24 minute service intervals during peak hours that will meet every other BART train and in the off peak trains in San Joaquin Valley will operate on an hourly frequency. Trains will operate from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. both weekdays and weekends with peak hours from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekdays.

The Valley Link Rail Project will bridge a significant passenger rail gap, and in addition, it will improve the overall mobility in this key freight movement corridor between the San Francisco Bay Area and the San Joaquin Valley.

LOCAL REGULATIONS

City of Livermore General Plan

The General Plan is the City of Livermore's fundamental land use and development policy document that guides development and conservation in the City through 2025. This Plan advances many of the goals outlined in the General Plan, including to:

- Protect the unique qualities of Livermore, which include a historic Downtown, a variety of residential neighborhoods, vineyards, ranches, natural habitats and open space (General Plan Goal LU-1).

- Provide areas for high-density mixed-use development near transit (General Plan Goal LU-3).
- Maintain high standards of urban design in Livermore (General Plan Goal CC-2).
- Protect and enhance public views within and from established scenic routes, including views of arroyos (General Plan Goal CC-4).
- Provide safe, efficient, comfortable, and convenient mobility for all users (General Plan Goal CIR-1).
- Promote multi-modal transportation (General Plan Goal CIR-2).
- Provide a local roadway system for the safe, efficient, and convenient movement of vehicular traffic (General Plan Goal CIR-4).
- Ensure a well-coordinated regional transportation system that serves Livermore and the surrounding region (General Plan Goal CIR-8).
- Conserve the value and function of Livermore's open space as a biological resource (General Plan Goal OSC-1).
- Develop a full complement of parks and other recreational lands for public use and enjoyment (General Plan Goal OSC-5).

While the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan is consistent with many General Plan goals, this Plan modifies existing General Plan land use

designations, as well as some policies as a means of achieving the General Plan goals and implementing related policies. The General Plan will ultimately be amended to reflect these changes, as described in Chapter 8, Policy and Code Amendments, of this document.

For projects within the Planning Area, policies and standards in the Specific Plan will implement the General Plan policies. Where policies or standards relating to a particular subject have not been provided in the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan, the General Plan's policies and standards continue to apply, as they are today or amended in the future.

Livermore Development Code

The Livermore Development Code implements the General Plan by codifying elements including allowed uses, building size and placement; standards for specific building types, thoroughfare types, and civic space types; and standards for permits and approvals. For projects within the Planning Area, policies and standards in the Plan will take precedence over those in the Livermore Development Code. Where policies or standards relating to a particular subject have not been provided in the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan, the Development Code's policies and standards continue to apply, as they are today or amended in the future.



Related plans and programs, such as Plan Bay Area and the MTC Regional Transit Expansion Program, help shape the type of development planned for the Isabel Neighborhood.



The City of Livermore General Plan and Development Code guide the policies of the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan.

City of Livermore Design Standards and Guidelines

Both a policy document and an implementation tool, the City’s Design Standards and Guidelines provide guidance for private and public projects throughout the city. The goal of the document is to promote the improved aesthetic and functional quality of the community. Design Standards are required, while Design Guidelines are recommendations. Topics addressed include basic principles of design; design of specific building types; historic resources; streets; arroyos and floodplains; parks and trails; and public buildings.

For projects within the Planning Area, the design standards and guidelines listed in Chapter 5, Urban Design, will take precedence over those in the City of Livermore Design Standards and Guidelines. Where standards or guidelines relating to a particular subject have not been provided in the Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan, the City of Livermore Design Standards and Guidelines standards and guidelines continue to apply, as they are today or amended in the future.

Livermore Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan

The Livermore Municipal Airport is adjacent to the Planning Area to the southwest. Development in the Planning Area is subject to the Livermore Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), which aims to promote compatibility between the airport and its environs.

The ALUCP specifies limitations to land uses and building heights based on safety and noise concerns. In general, these limitations are consistent with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) guidance.

The Livermore General Plan incorporates ALUCP policies and establishes an Airport Protection Area (APA), within which new residential development is prohibited. The ALUCP refers to the City’s APA policy and acknowledges that the modification of the APA may be necessary for the purposes of transit-oriented residential development around Isabel Avenue. The General Plan and ALUCP require an amendment to accommodate residential development within the APA, as described in Chapter 8, Policy and Code Amendments, of this document. Otherwise, this Plan is generally consistent with all other ALUCP policies.

Zone 7 Water Agency - Stream Management Master Plan

In August 2006, the Zone 7 Board adopted a new flood control master plan, the Stream Management Master Plan (SMMP). The SMMP included 45 individual multi-benefit projects throughout the Livermore-Amador Valley while focusing mainly on regional storage of flood and storm waters within the Chain of Lakes to limit peak flows downstream. The SMMP also focuses on achieving project goals by incorporating

multi-benefit and environmentally-friendly objectives, while forming partnerships with related agencies.

Development Impact Fee

Developments creating new impervious areas within the Livermore-Amador Valley are subject to the assessment of the Development Impact Fee for Flood Protection and Storm Water Drainage. These fees are collected for Zone 7 by the local governing agency: 1) upon approval of final map for public improvements creating new impervious areas; and/or 2) upon issuance of a building or use permit required for site improvements creating new impervious areas. Fees are dependent on whether post-project impervious area conditions are greater than pre-project conditions and/or whether fees have previously been paid.

Groundwater Management

The project area lies over a groundwater basin (Livermore Valley Groundwater Basin) that is used for municipal, industrial, and domestic and irrigation water supply. To support protection of groundwater quality, the project should be consistent with or comply with appropriate plans and regulations such as Zone 7's Salt and Nutrient Management Plan and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Ordinance, the State's Water Recycling Policy (and associated orders), the State's storm water protection measures, and the County's Water Wells Ordinance.

Any planned new well, well repair or modification, well decommissioning or destruction, or exploratory soil boring that may intersect groundwater within Zone 7's jurisdiction must be permitted by Zone 7 before starting the work. In addition, a Zone 7 drilling permit is required to dig, drill, bore, drive, advance by direct push any exploratory soil boring 10 feet or greater in depth within the groundwater basins of Zone 7 regardless of groundwater depth.

1.4 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The City began the planning process for the Isabel Neighborhood in 2015. The first phase of the planning process involved analyzing the regulatory framework, existing physical conditions, and future market demand. The first phase of the planning process also involved meeting with a broad range of community members to discuss their priorities for the Valley Link to Livermore project and the Isabel Neighborhood. Community feedback from the first planning phase resulted in a “Vision” for the Isabel Neighborhood, described on pages 1-14 and 1-15.

In the second phase, the planning team developed three alternative land use scenarios: 1) Main Street, 2) Two Centers, and 3) Arroyo Plaza. Each alternative was designed to meet the plan’s objectives in terms of overall development levels, but to reflect the vision in different ways. An additional phase of outreach was completed, including an online survey, two workshops, and meetings with community groups.

The third phase involved compiling public feedback into a single plan, referred to as the Preferred Plan. Based on recommendations from the Planning Commission and direction from City Council, Alternative 1 (Main Street) serves as the basis of the Preferred Plan, which incorporates elements from all three alternatives. The Preferred

Plan document lays the foundation for the Plan, building upon the previous phases.

The fourth phase involved preparing the remaining details of this Plan, including implementation and financing strategies, and a Draft Environmental Impact Report to analyze the impacts of implementing the Plan.

The final phase consisted of adoption hearings, which occurred in Fall 2020.

OUTREACH

The key to developing an effective and feasible Preferred Plan has been an effective public outreach program that promotes broad-based understanding and reflects the interests and needs of the community. The planning team has engaged the public widely throughout the process, ensuring that the community has had ample opportunity to provide input throughout the process. The public participation program included:

- Project webpage that provides consistent updates about the planning process, meeting dates and locations, and that seeks feedback via an open-ended comment box;
- A series of visioning outreach events, including stakeholder interviews, focus groups, meetings with advisory committees;
- Outreach and coordination with Valley Link, LAVTA, and other public agencies;

- Two visioning community workshops;
- An online survey;
- Three community workshops on the alternatives;
- Meetings with surrounding neighborhoods; and
- An open house on the Preferred Plan.

The screenshot shows the official city website for Livermore, California, specifically the Isabel Neighborhood Plan page. The page includes a navigation menu with options like 'About the City', 'City Government', 'How Do I', 'Things to Do', 'My Interests', and 'Contact Us'. A search bar is located at the top right. The main content area features a 'NAVIGATION' sidebar with links to 'BART Home', 'Isabel Neighborhood Plan', 'Scenic View Analysis', 'BART Extension Project', 'Get Involved', 'Project History', 'FAQs', and 'Spanish/Español'. The main text area includes an 'UPDATE' section stating that the city has completed the first three phases of the planning process and a 'Background' section describing the 'Plan Area' and existing uses. A 'Question 5 Graphic' is also present, showing two alternatives: 'ALTERNATIVE 1: MAIN STREET' and 'ALTERNATIVE 2: TWO CENTERS'.



Engaging with the public was an integral step in the planning process. The public participation program included a project website, an online survey, community meetings, and community workshops.



1.5 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

Following this introduction, this document is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 2: Land Use** describes proposed land use designations and land use diagram; potential buildout of the Plan; and the Plan's affordable housing strategy. The chapter identifies goals and policies related to land use, as well as development standards for all development within the Planning Area.
- **Chapter 3: Transportation** describes the Neighborhood's streets and trails networks and its parking ratios and strategies. The chapter identifies goals and policies related to circulation and parking.
- **Chapter 4: Parks, Public Services, and Infrastructure** discusses improvements to the public facilities and services. The chapter identifies goals and policies related to parks, public services, and infrastructure.
- **Chapter 5: Urban Design** describes in detail the many features of the Neighborhood's public realm. This chapter also provides a comprehensive list of design standards and design guidelines for all development within the Isabel Neighborhood.
- **Chapter 6: Environmental Resources** addresses environmental and manmade hazards that may affect health and safety within the Planning Area. The chapter discusses the airport influence, noise, air quality, biological resources, hazards and flooding, and cultural resources. The chapter identifies goals and policies related to these environmental resources.
- **Chapter 7: Implementation and Financing Strategies** discusses the public improvements financing strategy and identifies implementation actions, responsible agencies, timeline, and cost.
- **Chapter 8: Policy and Code Amendments** identifies recommended/required changes to the General Plan, Livermore Development Code, and the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Plan Goals and Policies

Chapters 2 through 7 of this Plan all include goals and policies. The goals are intended to advance the Plan's overall objectives and vision for the Neighborhood, and will be used to guide any future revisions to the Plan. In addition, future revisions to this Plan will be in accordance with Valley Link's policies that are consistent with the City's goals and objectives for the Plan. The policies provide specific direction on how to achieve the goals. Policies are requirements directed at the City, partner agencies, or developers. Statements that include "should" or "may" are intended as guidelines, which allow more flexibility in their implementation.

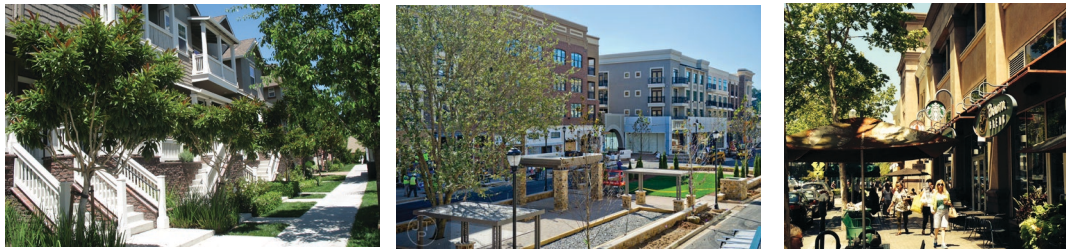
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Community Visioning

Community feedback was compiled into an initial Vision for the Isabel Neighborhood. The Vision includes six key themes, each with guiding principles. Together, these principles describe how the neighborhood should look, feel, and function in the future.

1. COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD

The neighborhood has a complete mix of housing, businesses, and community uses. Residents and workers have easy access to everyday services such as a grocery store and restaurants. A variety of residential types addresses existing housing needs in Livermore and provides convenient transit access to regional jobs.



3. WELL CONNECTED PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK

The neighborhood is easy to get around by walking and biking. There is an interconnected network of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, pathways, and multi-use trails, with safe and convenient access from both sides of I-580 to the Valley Link station, Las Positas College, Cayetano Park, and neighborhood amenities. Streetscapes are inviting and enhanced with landscaping, lighting, bike parking, and other features.



2. ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE, ARROYOS, AND SCENIC VIEWS

The neighborhood celebrates the natural beauty of the area. Creekside trails and parks provide opportunities for recreation and the enjoyment of open spaces. The street network and buildings are designed to frame views of surrounding hills from within the neighborhood.



4. HIGH QUALITY DESIGN

The neighborhood is an attractive place to live, work, and visit. The architecture and landscaping reflect Livermore’s unique identity and create a sense of character for the neighborhood. The core is oriented towards pedestrians, with relatively small-scale retail uses and interesting streetscapes.



5. COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACES

The neighborhood has a variety of parks, plazas, and other public spaces that provide opportunities for social gatherings. A retail area with outdoor seating forms a focal point for the neighborhood. Residential developments integrate shared spaces such as barbecue decks, playgrounds, pool areas, gardens, and courtyards.



6. COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING USES

New development is sensitive to adjacent residential areas. It builds upon and supports the area’s key assets such as Las Positas College, the airport, and existing businesses. The Isabel neighborhood does not compete with Downtown Livermore as a regional destination but draws upon its successful characteristics in creating a neighborhood center for the northwest area of the city.



