A. INTRODUCING THE SAN LEANDRO GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan for San Leandro presents a vision for the city’s future and a strategy to make that vision a reality. The Plan represents the collective efforts of individuals from throughout the community who have articulated their hopes and expectations for San Leandro.

Since its incorporation in 1872, San Leandro has experienced several waves of transformative change. In the early 20th Century, the community evolved from a small town into a bustling agricultural center. After World War II, the agricultural center was transformed into a booming suburb, fulfilling the American Dream for tens of thousands of families. As these families matured, the city was transformed again, becoming one of the most diverse communities in America. With each wave, the city experienced social and economic transformation as well as physical transformation. Its neighborhoods, industrial areas, Downtown, and shopping areas have evolved and adapted as times have changed.

This General Plan is intended to guide San Leandro’s next wave of change. The city is on the cusp of a new transformation driven by its location at the center of the most dynamic region in the country. The San Francisco Bay Area sets the pace for technology, research, and

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1 Throughout this document, the lower case “city” is used when referring to San Leandro as a place and the upper case “City” is used when referring to the City of San Leandro as a governmental entity.
innovation on a global scale. San Leandro sits at the heart of this region. It is a city blessed with beautiful scenery and mild weather, an excellent transportation system, diverse housing choices, and an engaged populace that is committed to sustaining an excellent quality of life. San Leandro is a city that works.

At the same time, San Leandro must address the challenges that come with growth. The Bay Area is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis affecting millions of residents. San Leandro is affected directly, as fewer households can afford to buy or rent a home in the city, and indirectly, as residents priced out of more expensive parts of the Bay Area migrate to San Leandro. The region continues to face transportation challenges, including congestion, deteriorating infrastructure, long commutes, and rising transit costs. It faces environmental challenges, including sea level rise, drought, and the threat of earthquakes, floods, and wildfires. San Leandro also faces the challenge of retaining the quality of its neighborhoods and shopping areas as they age and face competition from newer development.

The General Plan addresses the issues that must be resolved as San Leandro faces the future. It is comprehensive—providing a framework for the city’s physical, economic, social, and environmental development and addressing all geographic areas in the city. It is long-range—looking ahead to 2035, while at the same time presenting policies to guide day-to-day decisions. It is general enough to respond to new trends and unexpected changes, but specific enough to inform residents, businesses, staff, and city leaders on how individual properties should be used and managed.

While the General Plan strives to be aspirational, it also strives to be realistic. The Plan recognizes that local government revenues are limited, making it imperative to clarify priorities and invest strategically. It also recognizes that most San Leandro neighborhoods are built out, with limited potential for additional growth. Policies are presented to conserve and improve these areas as the city evolves, and to ensure excellent community services, a healthy environment, and quality shopping. The most significant changes are envisioned around the city’s two BART stations, in its industrial districts, and along some of its major arterial streets such as East 14th Street and Marina Boulevard. Development around the BART stations in particular will redefine San Leandro’s image while creating dynamic new neighborhoods, workplaces, and destinations.
This General Plan also seeks to make San Leandro a greener, healthier, and more sustainable city. It does so by including new policies that will make the city more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, add street trees and enhanced open spaces, reduce dependence on motorized vehicles, and expand the use of renewable energy resources. Focusing new growth around transit stations and along transit corridors is an important part of these policies. The General Plan also incorporates climate action measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, encouraging energy efficiency and conservation, and preparing for rising sea level and other impacts of climate change. Real time data will be used to address these challenges, fully leveraging the local fiber optic network and other emerging technologies.

**B. CONTEXT FOR THE GENERAL PLAN**

This General Plan has been prepared to comply with the requirements of California Government Code Sections 65302 and 65303. The Government Code mandates that each California city and county have a comprehensive, long-range, internally consistent plan for its future development. The plan must address seven topics, usually referred to as elements. The required elements are land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety, and noise. Local governments are given a great deal of flexibility in the organization of these elements and may address other topics of local importance.
San Leandro’s first General Plan was prepared in 1958. It consisted of a simple poster, with a map on one side and a narrative description of how the city would grow on the other. A technical report, consisting mostly of population, traffic, and economic projections, accompanied that Plan. The 1958 General Plan envisioned that San Leandro would annex large sections of unincorporated Alameda County, and would grow from a population of about 65,000 to almost 150,000 by the 1970s. While such forecasts never came to pass, many of the concepts in the 1958 Plan shaped the city’s growth during the 1960s and 70s. Among the legacies of the 1958 Plan are the San Leandro shoreline park and marina, and much of the current roadway network.

The City updated its General Plan in the 1960s and 70s, keeping the focus on land use and transportation. By the 1980s, the scope of the General Plan had expanded to include other topics such as housing, conservation, safety, noise, and open space. In 1989, the City adopted a Plan for the Year 2000 that divided the city into “major change,” “trend change,” and “no change” areas. This Plan guided the development and conservation of the Roberts Landing area (Heron Bay/Marina Vista and the adjoining wetlands), the re-use of several former school sites, and the redevelopment of key industrial and publicly owned sites.

Ten years after the 1989 Plan was adopted, the City launched a major Plan Update, looking ahead to the new millennium. The City took a broad and inclusive approach to the Update process, appointing a 59-member General Plan Advisory Committee, sending mass-mailings and
surveys to every household and business in the city, and convening several large community workshops. New elements were added to the Plan covering topics such as historic preservation, community design, and community facilities. A brand new Land Use Map was created, providing a framework for future zoning changes and subsequent area plans and specific plans. The Plan’s horizon year was 2015.

Following adoption of the its new Plan in April 2002, the City received the “Award of Excellence” in Comprehensive Planning from the California Chapter of the American Planning Association. The San Leandro General Plan was acknowledged for its user-friendly format, inclusive planning process, and insightful approaches to managing growth and change. The 2002 Plan provided the foundation for the East 14th Street South Area Development Strategy (2004), the Downtown San Leandro Transit Oriented Development Strategy (2007), and numerous implementation programs relating to land use, transportation, historic preservation, and other Plan topics.

The City amended its General Plan a number of times between 2002 and 2015. Amendments were made to adopt the 2007-2014 and 2015-2023 Housing Elements, as required by State law. Amendments were also made to incorporate the Downtown TOD Strategy, accommodate the Kaiser Permanente development near I-880 and Marina Boulevard, and reflect the Shoreline Development Program.
The State General Plan Guidelines recommend that general plans be updated every ten years or so to ensure that they remain relevant. This is important not only to reflect local physical and demographic changes, but also broader changes in culture and technology. Updates are also necessary to reflect new planning laws and legislative changes. The City of San Leandro initiated this Update in 2014, 12 years after the previous plan was adopted. In keeping with best practices in comprehensive planning, a roughly 20-year horizon (2035) was established for the updated Plan.

California law also requires that other local government programs are consistent with the general plan. The City’s zoning and subdivision regulations, its capital improvement program, its specific plans, its development agreements, its community standards and housing programs, and its economic development activities, should further the achievement of general plan goals. Thus, this Plan provides guidance on how other City programs and activities should be changed or strengthened to best implement local policies. It also identifies new ordinances and programs to be developed.

Finally, the Government Code states that the general plan must cover the entire area within the city limits and any land outside its boundaries which “bears relation to its planning.” This provides cities with an opportunity to indicate their concerns for nearby unincorporated areas, particularly areas that may someday be annexed. In San Leandro, the General Plan covers all 15 square miles within the city limits (including two square miles of water). It also provides an overview of Alameda County’s plans for the San Leandro “sphere of influence.” The sphere is a 2.5 square-mile area including the unincorporated communities of Ashland, Hillcrest Knolls, and parts of Castro Valley, as well as the open lands east of the city. Many properties in this area have San Leandro addresses, but are governed by County land use regulations.

The boundaries of the City, the sphere of influence, and the City’s Planning Area are shown in Figure 1-1.
San Leandro Planning Area

Source: San Leandro General Plan Update, 2002; PlaceWorks, 2016.

Figure 1-1
The San Leandro General Plan is intended for use by all members of the community.

If you are a San Leandro resident, the Plan indicates the general types of uses that are permitted around your home, the long-range plans and changes that may affect your neighborhood, and the policies the City will use to evaluate development applications that might affect you and your neighbors. The Plan identifies the actions the City will take to ensure that your neighborhood remains a great place to live.
If you are a San Leandro business, the Plan outlines the measures the City will take to protect your investment and encourage your future success. Expectations for the city’s business districts are spelled out, while policies ensure that business operations will be compatible with other businesses and nearby residential areas.

If you are interested in moving your home or business to San Leandro or developing land within the city, the General Plan will introduce you to the community. The Plan contains extensive background information about San Leandro, including long-range population and economic forecasts. The City Structure Diagram and the Land Use Diagram (Figures 3-2 and 3-3) are useful starting points. However, it is important to review maps and policies throughout this document and the San Leandro Zoning Code to get a complete perspective on how and where development may take place.

The General Plan is also a tool to help City staff, City Boards and Commissions, and the City Council make land use and public investment decisions. It provides the framework for the City’s Zoning Code. It identifies the transportation improvements, community service and facility needs, and environmental programs needed to sustain and improve the quality of life in the city. Future development decisions must be consistent with the Plan. Finally, the Plan is intended to help other public agencies, from Caltrans to local school districts, as they contemplate future actions in San Leandro.

While the Plan’s narrative text and maps frame the key issues and proposals, the essence of the Plan lies in its goals, policies, and actions. These are declarative statements which set forth the City’s approach to various issues. Goals, policies, and actions are described below:

- **Goals** describe ideal future conditions for a particular topic, such as traffic congestion or affordable housing. Goals tend to be very general and broad.

- **Policies** provide guidance to assist the City as it makes decisions relating to each goal. Some policies include standards or guidelines against which decisions can be evaluated.

- **Actions** identify specific steps to be taken by the City to implement the policies. They include new ordinances, capital improvements, programs, plans and studies, and other measures which can be assigned to different City departments after the General Plan is adopted.
The Plan is a legal document and much of its content is dictated by legal requirements relating to background data, analysis, maps, and exhibits. The legal adequacy of the General Plan is critical, since City land use decisions are subject to legal challenge if the Plan is found to be deficient.

D. THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

This update of the San Leandro General Plan was initiated in March 2014. The City retained a consulting team to undertake the project, including the 2015-2023 Housing Element, the update of all other General Plan elements, and an Environmental Impact Report. One of the objectives of the Update was to carry forward significant portions of the prior General Plan. The policy direction provided in 2002 was still applicable in many cases, and the Update effort was to focus primarily on recently completed area plans, direction for key “change areas,” and policies on new topics such as economic development and sustainability.

Study sessions with the City Council and Planning Commission were held to launch the project, and a website (sanleandro2035.org) was created to provide project information. The website included a “Virtual City Hall” page in which the public could weigh in on policy questions through open-ended responses. An email list of more than 425 stakeholders was compiled, including advocacy groups, interested residents and businesses, City Commissioners, and neighborhood and community organizations. Email “blasts” were sent prior to every public meeting and upon the release of major work products. Outreach strategies recognized the need for multi-lingual materials, and included web content in Spanish and Chinese, translators at public meetings, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters at meetings.
The first eight months of the work program focused on the Housing Element Update. This aspect of the General Plan was time-sensitive, as all jurisdictions in the Bay Area were under a legislative mandate to adopt new Housing Elements by January 31, 2015. A Town Hall meeting on housing was convened in July, 2014. Three study sessions with the Planning Commission also were held. The City also conducted Housing Element study sessions with the Board of Zoning Adjustments, the Rent Review Board, and the Human Services Commission. It also convened a housing stakeholder roundtable meeting, one-on-one interviews, and two public hearings each before the Planning Commission and City Council.

An Administrative Draft Housing Element was completed in September 2014, and submitted to the State Department of Housing and Community Development for their initial review. The document was revised in November to incorporate State comments and was adopted by the San Leandro City Council on January 20, 2015. It was subsequently certified by the State.

Following completion of the Draft Housing Element in September 2014, the focus of the General Plan Update shifted to land use and transportation. A series of community workshops was convened in October 2014, with public input solicited on key issues and the “vision” for the city’s future. Revisions to the General Plan Map (and land use categories) were considered through the Fall and Winter, and a new General Plan Land Use Map was developed in Spring, 2015.
The consultant team prepared a “policy audit” of the existing General Plan in early 2015. This included a detailed review of each goal, policy and action in the existing Plan, with a determination of its continued relevance. The audit also included a review of other recent plans. The Planning Commission convened study sessions approximately every two months in Spring and Summer 2015, with different elements of the Plan discussed at each meeting. A “Policy Options” workshop was convened in April 2015, with participants using electronic voting devices to select their preferences on different policy choices. Meanwhile, staff and the consultants continued to meet with City Commissions and other community groups to provide updates on the Plan.

In April 2015, the City Council authorized the addition of an “Economic Development Element” to the General Plan. Issues related to San Leandro’s economy had been on the forefront during community discussions, and the need for clear policies on topics such as business attraction, retail gaps, and workforce development became evident. The Element also provided an opportunity to incorporate the Next Generation Workplace Districts study (from 2013) into the General Plan; as well the City’s Economic Development Strategy. A number of roundtable discussions and presentations to business advocacy groups took place through during Summer 2015.
By the end of 2015, the consultant team began assembling the policies and actions that would form the bulk of the new Plan. Further refinements to the Land Use Map were made, and additional presentations were made to community groups and City Commissions. By early 2016, more than 70 General Plan-related meetings had been convened.

In January 2016, the City conducted its fourth general plan workshop. Preliminary policies were arranged around the room in an “open house” format, and participants were encouraged to offer feedback. A complete set of General Plan policies and actions was prepared following the completion of this meeting. The compendium was posted for public review in April 2016.

A complete Draft General Plan was published in June 2016. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released concurrently. A 45-day review and comment period followed the publication, with opportunities for oral testimony to the Planning Commission provided during this period. A DEIR Response to Comments document and General Plan Addendum were prepared in August 2016, and the General Plan was then brought forward for adoption. The Plan was adopted by the San Leandro City Council on September 19, 2016.
E. ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This General Plan is organized into 11 chapters. The first two chapters provide the context for the rest of the document. The next eight chapters constitute the Plan’s “elements,” including elements required by State law, and several optional elements that address issues of local importance. Each element contains goals, policies, and actions. The final chapter addresses Plan implementation. Chart 1-1 indicates how each chapter corresponds to the state-mandated general plan elements.

An overview of the chapters is provided below.

- **Introduction (Chapter 1)** describes the General Plan process and introduces the reader to the document.

- **San Leandro in Perspective (Chapter 2)** includes background data on San Leandro. This chapter describes San Leandro’s history and development, its role within the region, and the trends shaping its future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHART 1-1</th>
<th>CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN STATE-MANDATED GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS AND SAN LEANDRO GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State-Mandated Element</td>
<td>Chapter Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Noise</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>10</td>
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The Land Use Element (Chapter 3) is comprised of the following “sub-elements”:

- An overall framework for the city’s development, including the General Plan Map.
- Residential Neighborhoods, profiling the city’s neighborhoods, major issues, and goals for the future.
- Employment and Mixed Use Districts, profiling the city’s mixed use and industrial areas, major issues, and goals for the future.
- Strategies for eight “focus areas,” which are parts of the city where the most substantial changes are anticipated during the next 15 years.
- An overview of land use designations and policies for the unincorporated San Leandro Planning Area.

The Transportation Element (Chapter 4) addresses the movement of people and goods in and around San Leandro. It is organized by topical headings corresponding to different modes of travel (e.g., bicycles, transit, autos, etc.) and transportation issues (e.g., traffic safety, parking, etc.). The Element chronicles existing conditions and describes anticipated conditions in 2035. Maps identifying the city’s future circulation system are included.

The Economic Development Element (Chapter 5) is a new addition to the San Leandro General Plan. It identifies policies and actions to attract business and strengthen the local economy, support the success of existing businesses, embrace innovation, create vibrant retail centers, and create pathways to jobs for San Leandro residents.

The Open Space, Parks, and Conservation, Element (Chapter 6) addresses the management of open space and the conservation of natural resources such as soil, water, plants and animals, air, and energy. The Element establishes guidelines for the management and maintenance of parks, priorities for park improvement, and strategies to increase the amount of parkland in the city. It also addresses climate change and sustainability.

The Environmental Hazards Element (Chapter 7) describes natural and manmade hazards in San Leandro. The Element describes current hazards, anticipates future hazards, and presents policies and programs to minimize future loss of life and property. The first part of the Element addresses earthquakes, landslides, flooding,
The second part of the Element—Noise—describes the existing noise environment, projected noise conditions, and policies and programs to mitigate noise conflicts in the community.

- The Historic Preservation and Community Design Element (Chapter 8) addresses the character of the city and establishes priorities for the preservation of historic structures and sites. Its policies and programs strive to ensure that new development makes a positive aesthetic contribution to the community, protects historic landmarks, and builds a stronger sense of local identity.

- The Community Services and Facilities Element (Chapter 9) addresses the provision of police, fire, school, library, and human services, as well as water, sewer, and drainage services to San Leandro residents and businesses. It is organized under topical headings corresponding to major service categories. Where appropriate, the Element includes projections for future service demand and identifies the capital improvements that may be needed to meet these demands.

- The Housing Element (Chapter 10) identifies the steps the City will take to create opportunities for new affordable housing, conserve existing housing, and meet the needs of the elderly, disabled, and other groups with special housing needs. Chapter 10 of this document provides only a brief summary of the adopted Housing Element—the Element itself is a separate free-standing document that is much more comprehensive.

- Implementation (Chapter 11) summarizes the activities and programs the City will undertake to implement the General Plan. These programs include zoning and development review, environmental review, design review, code enforcement, and capital improvements programming, among others. This chapter contains no policies and is a summary of the actions in Chapter 3-9.

Finally, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared for the General Plan. The EIR is a separate document which describes environmental conditions in the city and assesses the possible effects that General Plan adoption will have on these conditions. The document is considered a “program-level” EIR, meaning that it examines the general nature of impacts at a citywide scale. The findings of the EIR help determine the appropriate level of environmental review that should be
performed when subsequent projects consistent with the Plan are proposed. Although the EIR will be certified by the City Council, it is not intended to be a policy document.

F. IMPLEMENTING AND AMENDING THE PLAN

After the General Plan is adopted, it will be implemented through a variety of ordinances, programs, and activities. Each element of the Plan identifies specific action steps and Chapter 11 summarizes the steps to be taken to put the Plan to work. It will be especially important to review local land use regulations and procedures to ensure that they are consistent with the General Plan. The zoning map should be consistent with the General Plan Land Use Diagram, and the Zoning Code should be consistent with the land use classification system and development policies contained in the Plan. Some of the zoning changes are being made concurrently with Plan adoption so that there is a seamless transition to the new Plan.

The General Plan is intended to be a dynamic document and must be periodically updated to respond to changing community needs. An annual review of the Plan is required to ensure that it remains relevant. Moreover, the Plan may be amended up to four times a year. Requests for amendments may be submitted by individuals or may be initiated by the City itself. Most amendments propose a change in the land use designation for a particular property. Policy and text amendments also may occur. Any proposed amendment will be reviewed to ensure that the change is in the public interest and would not be detrimental to public health, safety, and welfare. Environmental review is required for all General Plan amendments.