

I INTRODUCTION

The General Plan process provides an opportunity to ask a major question: How does Livermore want to develop? Change is inevitable, but through the goals, objectives, policies, and actions established in the General Plan, Livermore can steer that change in a desired direction.

A. Purpose of this 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 this General Plan is to guide development and conservation in the City through 2025.

California Government Code Section 65300 requires that the General Plan must be comprehensive, internally consistent and long-term. 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 Plan should be clearly written, available to all those concerned with the community's development, and easy to administer.

The Livermore General Plan meets these requirements while also articulating a vision for the City's long term physical form and development. It serves as a basis for future decision-making by municipal officials, including City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council.

This document supersedes the previous General Plan, adopted in 1976. However, this document includes much of the policy language from the 1976 Plan, except where policy initiatives have been accomplished or have been redefined through this update process. Its implementation will include actions to update other planning documents so that they can be adjusted to development projections contained in the 2003 General Plan.

B. The City and Its Planning Area

Livermore is situated in the Livermore Valley, in eastern Alameda County. As shown in Figure 1-1, Livermore is located in the easternmost portion of Alameda County and is part of the nine-county Bay Area region. The Livermore Valley is edged 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 runs east-west through Alameda County. Livermore consists of a total area of approximately 24 square miles.

The State 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 an area known as the Planning Area, which is larger than the City limits. The Planning Area is mapped in Figure 1-2. It encompasses land in Alameda County surrounding the City extending up to four miles beyond the City limit to the north and south.

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 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.

Besides its city limits and Planning Area, every city in California has a Sphere of Influence (SOI), which is the term used for the area outside of the city limits which the city expects to annex in future years. Livermore's Sphere of Influence (SOI) lies within the Planning Area and is coterminous with the City limits on the west and northwest edges of the City and extends approximately one mile beyond the City limits to the northeast, east and south.

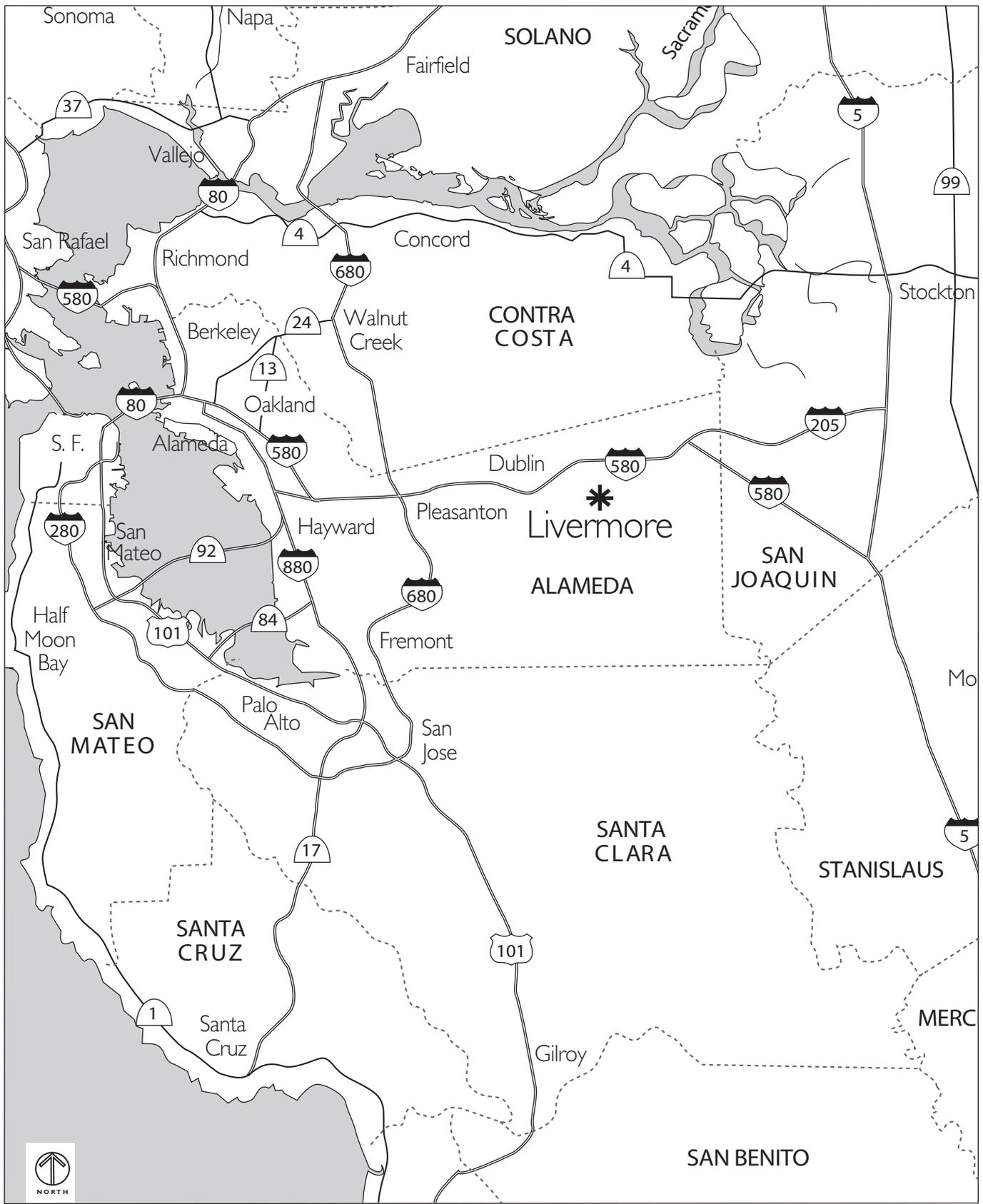


FIGURE 1-1

REGIONAL LOCATION

C. Plan Contents

This General Plan includes this introduction and a brief overview of Livermore, as well as ten separate “elements” that set goals, objectives, policies, and actions for each given subject. Six of these elements cover the seven topics required by Government Code Section 65302, while the remaining three elements, the Community Character Element, the Economic Development and Fiscal Element, and the Climate Change Element have been prepared by the City to meet local needs and concerns. The seventh required element is the Housing Element, which was updated by the City in 2003, and is incorporated as such in this document. A brief explanation of the topics included in Livermore’s General Plan is provided here.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element designates all lands within the City for specific uses such as housing, business, industry, open space, recreation, or institutional uses. The Land Use Element provides overall land use policies for each land use category in the City. The Land Use Element is one of the seven State-required General Plan elements.

Community Character Element

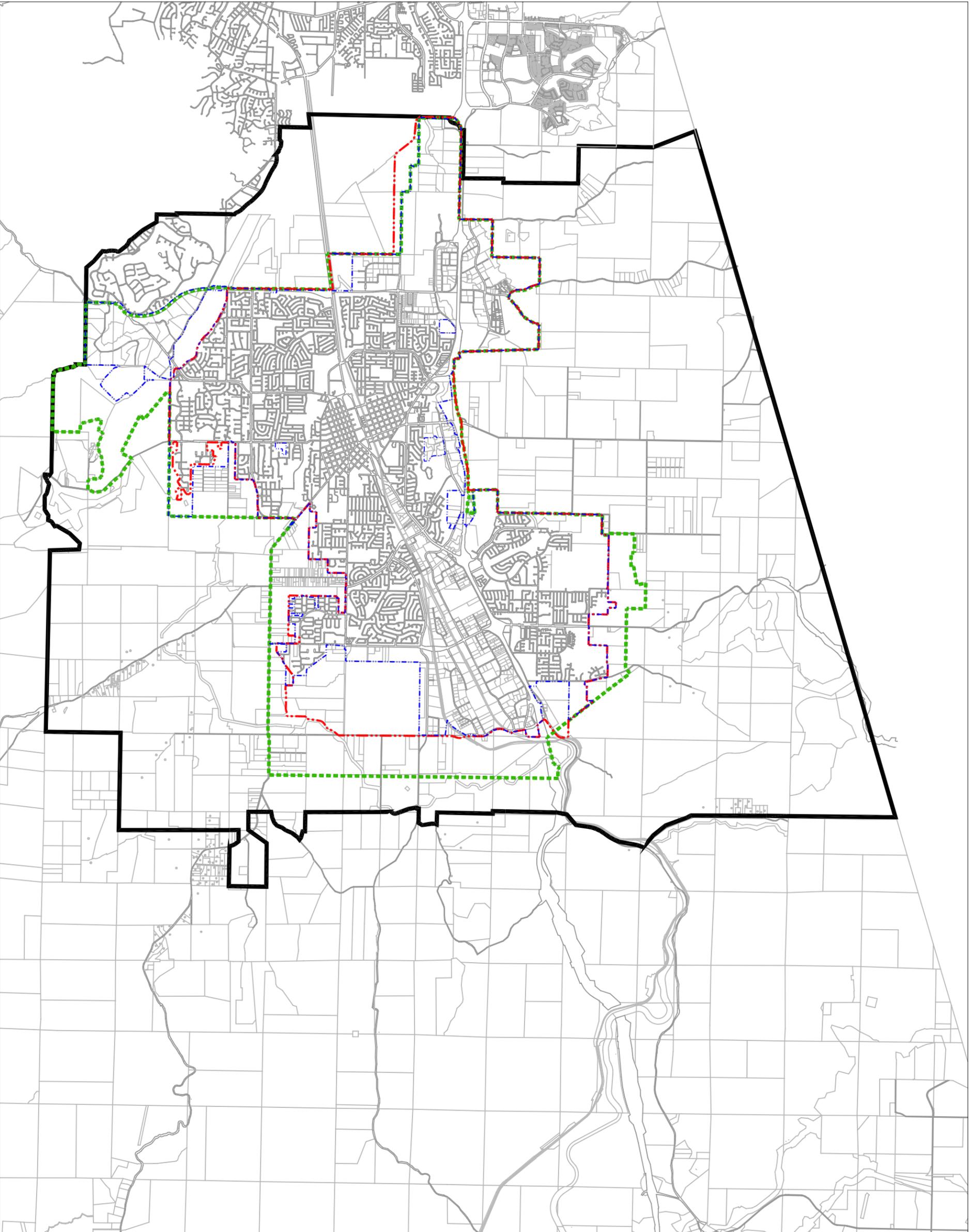
The Community Character Element is not required by State law. However, due to the importance of Livermore’s unique physical and visual resources, the community has decided to include a Community Character Element to identify, protect and enhance these features. The Community Character Element provides information on visual and urban design resources, natural setting, and cultural resources.

Circulation Element

State law requires that a Circulation Element specify the general location and extent of existing and proposed major streets and other transportation facilities. As required by law, all facilities in the Circulation Element are correlated with the land uses foreseen in the Land Use Element.

FIGURE 1-2

PLANNING AREA



— Planning Area Boundary

- - - Sphere of Influence

- . - . City Limit Line

- . . - Urban Growth Boundary

BACK OF Fig 1-2

Infrastructure and Public Services Element

The Infrastructure and Public Services Element covers existing conditions, issues and goals, objectives, policies, and actions related to infrastructure systems such as water facilities and service, wastewater collection and treatment, water reclamation and storm water collection facilities as well as public services such as schools, parks, and recreation. Under State law, infrastructure and public services may be addressed as part of the Circulation Element, but these services have been included as a separate element by the City due to the importance of these services.

Open Space and Conservation Element

This element combines two elements required under State law; the Open Space Element and the Conservation Element. It addresses the preservation of open space and the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources.

Noise Element

State law requires a General Plan to include a Noise Element that addresses noise problems in the community and analyzes and quantifies current and projected noise levels from a variety of sources. The Noise Element includes goals, objectives, policies, and actions to address current and foreseeable noise problems.

Public Safety Element

State law requires the development of a Public Safety Element to protect the community from risks associated with the effects of seismic hazards, other geologic hazards, flooding, and wildland and urban fires.

Economic Development and Fiscal Element

Although not mandated by State law, this element is included to facilitate and maintain a balanced mix of economic activity and to encourage the development of particular economic sectors in Livermore. The Economic Development and Fiscal Element contain goals, objectives, policies, and actions to encourage the development of desired economic activities throughout the City, as well as ensure the fiscal vitality of the community.

Housing Element

As stated previously, the City's Housing Element was updated under a separate process in 2003. Government Code §65588 requires Housing Elements to be updated every five years and to include specific components such as analysis of the existing housing stock, analysis of existing and projected housing needs, and quantification of the number of housing units that will be developed, preserved, and improved through its policies and actions.

Climate Change Element

Although not mandated by State law, the Climate Change Element was added to the General Plan in 2009. This element acknowledges and establishes the City's goals, policies, and implementation programs for Green House Gas (GHG) reductions consistent with the goals of State Assembly Bill 32 which mandates Statewide GHG emissions reduced to 1990 levels by the year 2020.

D. The General Plan Update Process

This General Plan was prepared over a one-year period by City staff and a consultant team under the direction of a fifteen-member Steering Committee appointed by the City Council. The Steering Committee held a total of 12 meetings and one, all-day workshop to prepare this Plan.

The Steering Committee process began in July 2002 with the preparation of a series of reports on existing conditions in Livermore and the Planning Area. The issues discussed were:

- ◆ Land Use
- ◆ Community Character
- ◆ Environmental Conditions
- ◆ Traffic

- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Economic and Fiscal Conditions
- ◆ Assessment of the 1976 General Plan

To prepare these studies, the consultant team conducted field observations, interviews, and database and archival research. Planning documents, government laws and regulations, and City codes and ordinances were also reviewed. Once drafted, the Steering Committee held two meetings to review and discuss the issues presented in the existing conditions reports. Based on their knowledge of Livermore and its planning issues, Committee members generated a list of topics that they determined were significant and merited particular attention during policy development.

Once a list of key issues was identified through the existing conditions work, City staff and consultants presented policy options for each issue to be included in the General Plan. These policy option discussions occurred at Steering Committee meetings held from July to December, 2002. In meetings held in October and December 2002, and in January 2003, the Steering Committee considered potential land use alternatives, ultimately recommending a Preferred Land Use Alternative on January 30, 2003. On February 25, 2003, the City Council amended and approved the Preferred Land Use Alternative. Based on the policy direction provided by the Steering Committee and the Preferred Land Use Alternative, staff and consultants drafted this General Plan.

In considering this General Plan, the City's Planning Commission and City Council reviewed this document and its accompanying Environmental Impact Report (EIR). After public review, comment, and hearings on these documents, the City Council certified the EIR, and subsequently adopted this General Plan to guide development in Livermore.

E. The Contents of Each Element

Each element of this General Plan consists of the two sections described below, which in most elements are Sections A and B, respectively.

- ◆ The **background information** section describes current conditions, as of 2002, in the City relative to the subject of the element. The background information is taken from existing conditions analysis conducted in 2002 and from other sources, such as the 1976 General Plan and the 2000 Census. Additional background information can be found in the Master Environmental Assessment (Volume I of General Plan EIR), which consists of all of the existing conditions, by topic, reviewed by the Steering Committee in 2002. This information was updated, as necessary, to provide the most current and accurate data available in Spring 2003.
- ◆ Each element contains a section that presents a series of **goals, objectives, policies, and actions** to address the identified key issues. Some of these goals, objectives, policies, and actions are related to the review of new development; others are directed to the City's own activities. The goals, objectives, policies, and actions in each element are based on the background information and key findings, the goals, objectives, policies, and actions in the previous General Plan, input from the Steering Committee, State law, and the technical expertise of the consultant team.

Goals, objectives, policies and actions, as articulated in this General Plan, are defined as follows:

- ◆ **Goal.** A goal is a description of the general desired result that the City seeks to create through the implementation of its General Plan. One or more goals are provided in each General Plan element.
- ◆ **Objective.** An objective is a specific condition or end that serves as a concrete step toward attaining a goal. Objectives are intended to be clearly achievable and, when possible, measurable. There are one or more objectives for each General Plan goal.
- ◆ **Policy.** A policy is a specific statement that guides decision-making in working to achieve an objective. Policies, once adopted, represent statements of City regulation and

require no further implementation. This General Plan establishes policies that will be used by City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council in their review of land development projects and in decision-making about City actions.

- ◆ **Action.** An action is a program, implementation measure, procedure, or technique intended to help to achieve a specified objective.

FIGURE 1-3 GENERAL PLAN COMPONENTS



As noted in Figure 1-3, above, policies and actions are at the same level; both policies and actions are intended to implement objectives. In most cases, objectives have both implementing policies and actions. However, it is also possible for an objective to be implemented exclusively through either policies or actions.

Some elements have additional sections other than the three described above that are specific to them. For example, the Land Use Element contains a series of Land Use Designations that guide overall development in the City.

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