



CHAPTER

1

# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCING THE SUNNYVALE GENERAL PLAN

The City of Sunnyvale has a colorful history spanning almost 100 years since its incorporation. It began as a train stop in the agricultural promised land known as “The Valley of Hearts Delights” and with planning and foresight has transitioned into its current form as a desirable residential community and strategically located high-tech job center known as the “Heart of Silicon Valley.”

The Sunnyvale General Plan has been a fundamental tool in guiding the City through change and growth. It addresses the physical development of the City and, when used together with a larger body of City Council policies, provides direction for decision-making on City services and resources. It is both a long-range and a strategic planning document, containing long-term goals and policies for the next 10-20 years and strategic actions for the next five to ten years.

The past has shown us that change is constant and will occur whether planned for or not. While the future is still unknown, the General Plan provides guiding goals and policies that have been selected to be both transforming yet realistic and practical so that Sunnyvale successfully emerges as a vibrant, innovative and attractive community in which both residents and businesses can thrive.

### Topics in the General Plan

The state requires all cities to prepare and maintain a General Plan. Seven elements (topics) are required by state law: land use, circulation (transportation and utilities), housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Communities have the ability to rename or combine these required elements as they choose as long as there is consistency within and among the documents. Communities may also incorporate within their General Plan other matters which are believed to be of particular local concern.

Sunnyvale’s General Plan consists of a Community Vision and five supporting chapters addressing the physical development of the City. These chapters group related topics together such as Community Character, Safety and Noise, and Environmental Management. The following is a summary of the topics found in this General Plan. Mandated elements are noted.

**Chapter 1 Introduction**

- Overview of General Plan organization and topics

**Chapter 2 Community Vision**

- Sunnyvale History
- Community Conditions
- Assets and Issues
- Citywide Vision Goals
- Balanced Growth
- Looking Forward

**Chapter 3 Land Use and Transportation**

*(state-mandated Land Use, Open Space and Circulation Element, transportation section)*

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Economy
- Open Space

**Chapter 4 Community Character**

- The Built Environment
- Heritage Preservation
- Public Facility Adequacy and Design
- City Programs

**Chapter 5 Housing**

*(state-mandated Housing Element)*

**Chapter 6 Safety and Noise**

*(state-mandated Safety and Noise Elements)*

- Hazards and Disaster Preparedness
- Police, Fire and Emergency Services
- Noise

**Chapter 7 Environmental Management**

*(state-mandated Conservation Element and Circulation Element, public utilities section)*

- Water Supply
- Wastewater Collection and Treatment
- Urban Runoff
- Air Quality
- Solid Waste

These elements address the areas within the boundaries of the City, including the sphere of influence (see Figure 1-1, Sunnyvale Planning Area).

### The Consolidation of the General Plan

This General Plan was assembled from 22 separate General Plan elements and sub-elements that were adopted at different times. This consolidated and streamlined General Plan contains all necessary goal and policy language to address the required elements in a concise and easy-to use fashion. Goals reference the year of the original adoption as well as the original goal or policy number. Narrative has been condensed and the original General Plan text is still available on the City’s website at <http://generalplan.inSunnyvale.com> for reference.

### How to Use the General Plan

The General Plan provides both basic information about our community and goals and policies to help us achieve our desired future. The General Plan can be understood on a broad citywide level and also on an individual level. Citywide, the General Plan provides demographic information, including population, housing, transportation and public works improvements that describe the City’s residents and businesses and future changes that will affect them. Land use plans, growth areas and projections and future infrastructure improvements are described. On an individual level, the General Plan also can provide information specific to a resident or business. Individuals can find general types of uses that are permitted in and near a home or business, long-range plans and changes that may affect a neighborhood or business area and actions the City will take to retain and improve the quality of life in Sunnyvale.

This General Plan is organized around a set of goals. **Goals** are long-range, broad and comprehensive targets. They are not necessarily measurable or achievable in the lifespan of this General Plan; rather, they describe the overall future outcome the community would like to achieve. Each goal is accompanied by a context for the goal, related community conditions, future trends or issues and supporting policies.

**Policies** indicate ways to achieve the goal. Policies are focused and specific instructional guidelines. This General Plan contains an Executive Summary of only goals and policies for ease of use.

### Translating the General Plan into Action

Goals and policies are used by the community, staff and decision-makers to guide decisions relating to the physical development of the City including land use, infrastructure and related budgetary decisions. Future development decisions must be consistent with the General Plan. To assist community members and decision-makers, goals and policies are referenced in all staff reports and findings related to the development of the City. Goals and policies are also carried out through two types of activities: actions and implementation programs.

Actions are specific proactive steps to achieve the goals following the instructional guidelines. Action steps are short range in nature. They are the critical link between

*Sphere of Influence* — A geographic area established by the Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission as “a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local government agency.” (Government Code Section 56076)

The online version of the General Plan provides easy-to-use links to other sections of the document, supporting information, and outside agencies and programs. Please visit [GeneralPlan.inSunnyvale.com](http://GeneralPlan.inSunnyvale.com) to view the online version of this document.

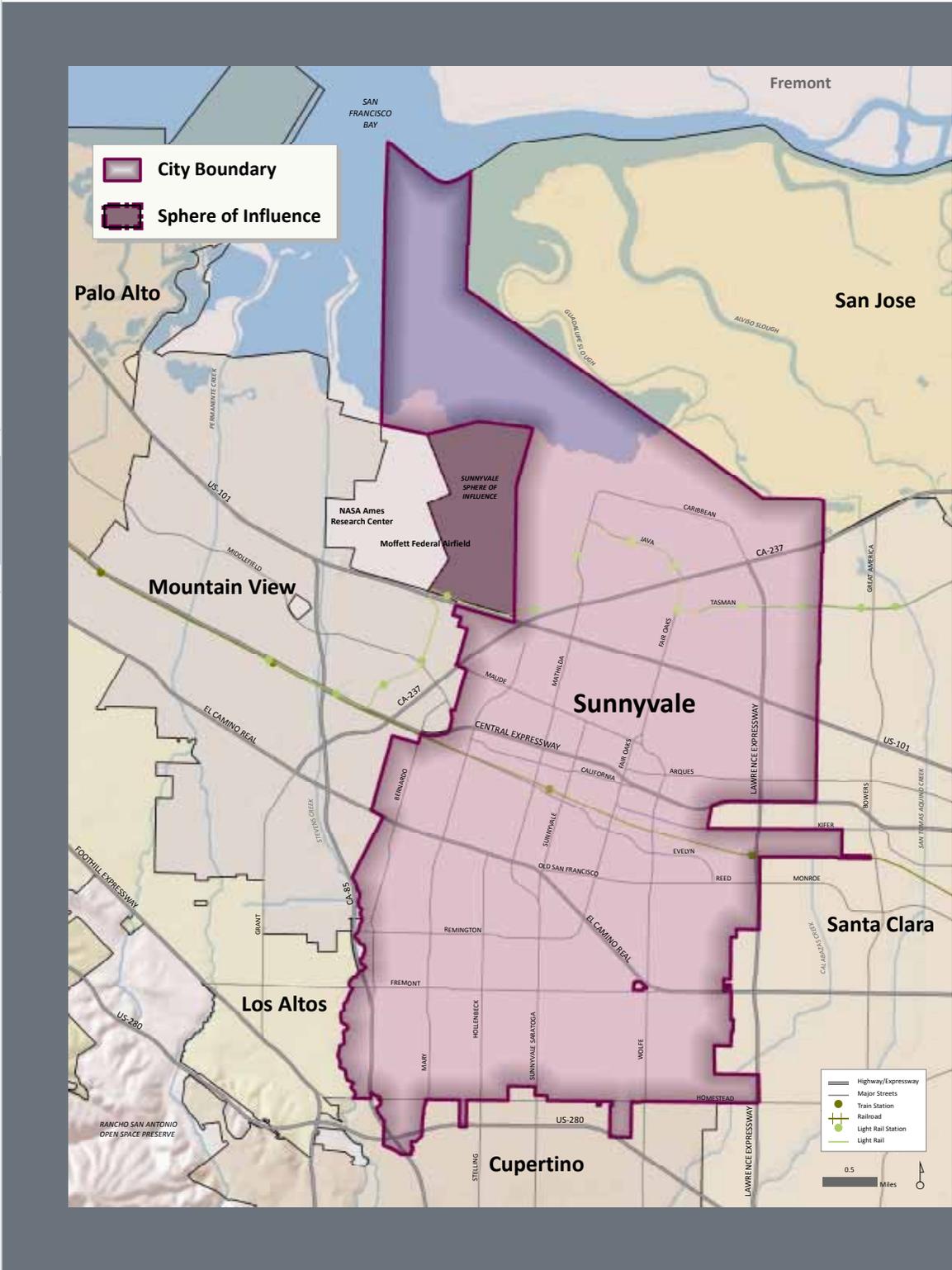


Figure 1-1. Sunnyvale Planning Area

long-range planning and current decision making. Action steps are not needed for each policy. Actions, when applicable, are listed below each related policy throughout the document. City staff is primarily responsible for carrying out the action steps.

Implementation programs are longer-range procedures, programs or activities that also carry out the goals and policies. Implementation programs can be included in Sunnyvale Municipal Code regulations, specific plans, capital improvement projects, or subdivision ordinances, as examples. A list of implementation programs is located in Appendix A.

### Public Participation

This General Plan was consolidated with input from the community and an Advisory Committee made up of City Boards and Commissions members. Any future amendments of the General Plan will be subject to further community input and public hearings.

### Steps Forward

Future incremental updates of the General Plan may be needed as community conditions change. In approximately 10 years (2021) a comprehensive update of this document will be undertaken, updating the community's conditions and all the goals, policies, and actions within the document.