

# 1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Pittsburg's General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 1988. To respond to growth and planning challenges, the City began the process to update its General Plan in September of 1997. Key objectives of this update process include:

- Articulating a strategy for growth and development that provides a sound basis for decision-making for detailed studies (such as specific plans), annexations, and project approvals;
- Supporting the City's objectives for economic development, and outlining strategies for revitalizing Downtown and other infill areas;
- Balancing development and conservation in the hillsides;
- Effectively utilizing regional transit expansion opportunities; and
- Ensuring that Plan policies are mutually supportive, internally consistent and in accordance with State law.

## **1.1 EVOLUTION OF PITTSBURG**

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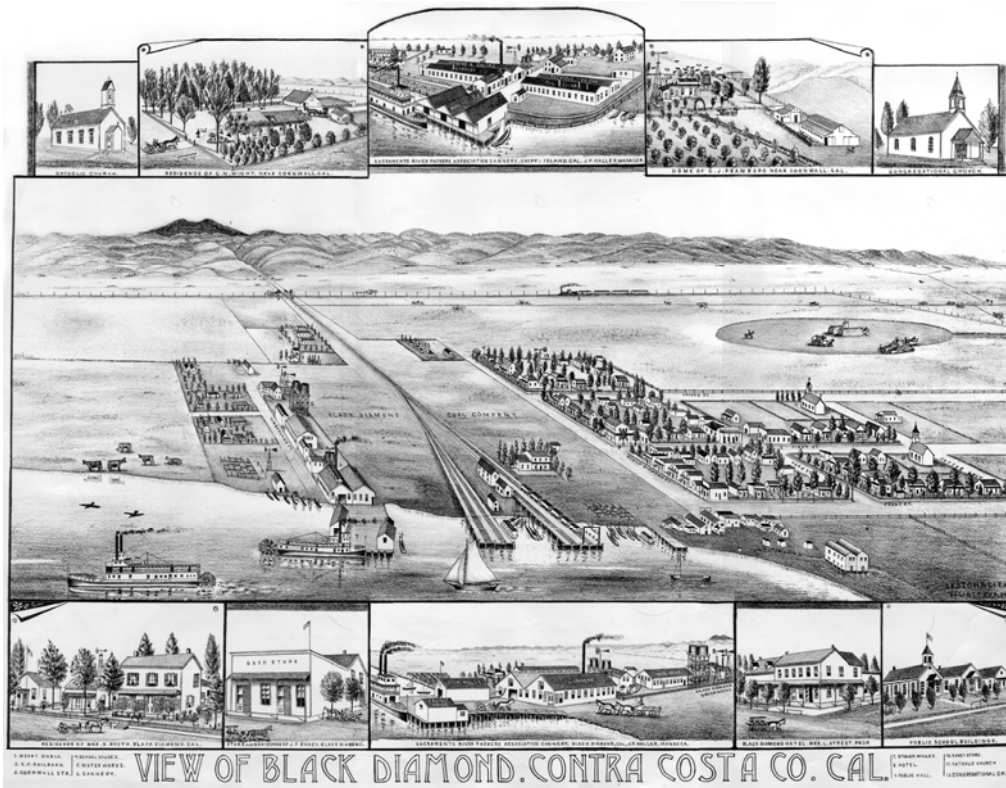
Pittsburg began along the Suisun Bay/Delta shoreline as a 10,000-acre land grant from the government of Mexico in 1839, and grew into a settlement. Originally named New York of the Pacific, the City's name was changed to New York Landing when it was a way station during the Gold Rush days. The City's reputation as an industrial area was established in 1855 when coal was discovered in the southern hills, and its name changed to Black Diamond. However, the prime industrial base of the City came in 1911 with the opening of the first steel mill, and the final name change to Pittsburg (after the hub of the steel industry on the east coast: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania).

During World War II, Camp Stoneman was built in Pittsburg. Forty-five thousand servicemen were stationed at the camp, which was a major point of embarkation for the Pacific Theater. At the end of the war, the level of activity declined in Pittsburg as it did in other wartime boomtowns, signaling an end to much of the prosperity the City had known. There was a slight resurgence of activity at Camp Stoneman during the Korean Conflict, but after the end of the Conflict in 1954, the camp was placed on inactive status and many local businesses closed or relocated, often to neighboring communities where commercial development was occurring.

Pittsburg experienced rapid population growth during the 1970s and 1980s, evolving into a bedroom community for employment centers in west and central Contra Costa County. Population in the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) grew 43 percent between 1985 and 1995, about 70 percent faster than Contra Costa County's already rapid growth rate. In the last five years, as development has extended to City limits, the pace of Pittsburg's growth has slowed, even as other east and central county cities such as Brentwood, Antioch, and Clayton continue their dramatic growth.

Many other changes have also occurred in the last decade. Extension of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) service to Bay Point has given Pittsburg a new transportation option. Redevelopment of the City's Downtown has provided residents with a more vital historic activity center and increased waterfront access.

Residential growth in southwestern Pittsburg has expanded local housing opportunities and altered views of and within the City.



## **1.2 PURPOSE AND REQUIREMENTS OF GENERAL PLAN**

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### **GENERAL PLAN PURPOSE**

The Pittsburg General Plan addresses issues related to physical development, growth, and conservation of resources in the City’s Planning Area. The General Plan:

- Outlines a vision of long-range physical and economic development and hillside and resource conservation that reflects the aspirations of the community;
- Provides strategies and specific implementing actions that will allow this vision to be accomplished;
- Establishes a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are in harmony with Plan policies and standards;
- Allows City departments, other public agencies, and private developers to design projects that will enhance the character of the community, preserve and enhance critical environmental resources, and minimize hazards; and
- Provides the basis for establishing and setting priorities for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the Zoning Ordinance, specific plans, and the Capital Improvement Program.

### **GENERAL PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

State law (California Government Code Sec. 65300) requires each California city and county to prepare a general plan. A general plan is defined as “a comprehensive, long-term plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning.” State requirements call for general plans that “comprise

an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency.”

A city's general plan has been described as its constitution for development – the framework within which decisions on how to grow, provide public services and facilities, and protect and enhance the environment must be made. California's tradition of allowing local authority over land use decisions means that the state's cities have considerable flexibility in preparing their general plans.

While State planning laws allow considerable flexibility, they do establish some requirements for the issues that general plans must address. California Government Code Sec. 65302 establishes both the content of general plans and rules for their adoption and subsequent amendment. Together, state law and judicial decisions establish three overall guidelines for general plans.

- *The General Plan Must Be Comprehensive.* This requirement has two aspects. First, the general plan must be geographically comprehensive. That is, it must apply throughout the entire incorporated area and it should include other areas that the City determines are relevant to its planning. Second, the general plan must address the full range of issues that affects the City's physical development.
- *The General Plan Must Be Internally Consistent.* This requirement means that the general plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. “Horizontal” consistency applies as much to figures and diagrams as to the general plan text. It also applies to data and analysis as well as policies. All adopted portions of the general plan, whether required by state law or not, have equal legal weight. None may supersede another, so the general plan must resolve conflicts among the provisions of each element.
- *The General Plan Must Be Long-range.* Because anticipated development will affect the City and the people who live or work there for years to come, state law requires every general plan to take a long-term perspective.

## **GENERAL PLAN FORMAT**

California Government Code Sec. 65302 requires that a general plan address seven mandatory elements listed as: land use, circulation, conservation, open space (includes recreation), safety, noise, and housing. Specific issue areas are prescribed for each mandatory element. California Government Code Sec. 65303 gives local legislative bodies the authority to also incorporate into the General Plan any optional elements that relate to the physical development of the jurisdiction. This General Plan includes five optional elements listed as: growth management, urban design, downtown, economic development, and public facilities. The Pittsburg General Plan is organized as follows, addressing each of the mandatory elements and several optional elements:

### ***Mandatory Elements***

#### *Land Use (Chapter 2)*

This element includes proposed use classifications, distribution of land uses via the General Plan diagram, buildout projections, and land use and subarea policies. Location of public facilities is addressed in Chapter 11: Public Facilities and areas subject to flooding hazards are defined in Chapter 10: Health and Safety. Timber production does not occur within the Planning Area, and is therefore not addressed in the Land Use Element.

#### *Circulation (Chapter 7: Transportation)*

This element includes existing and proposed locations of the roadway system, transit, bikeways and pedestrian paths, as well as transportation demand management programs.

#### *Conservation (Chapter 9: Resource Conservation)*

This element includes analysis of biological resources, drainage and erosion, water quality, air quality, and historical resources. Flood control is addressed in Chapter 10: Health and Safety, and water supply is discussed in Chapter 11:

Public Facilities. Access to the Suisun Bay waterfront is addressed in Chapter 8: Open Space, Youth and Recreation.

*Open Space (Chapter 8: Open Space, Youth and Recreation)*

This element addresses public parks, trails and open space, waterfront access, recreational and cultural programs, and educational facilities. Policies requiring preservation of open space for natural resources are contained within Chapter 9: Resource Conservation, and policies requiring open space for health and safety are contained within Chapter 10: Health and Safety.

*Safety (Chapter 10: Health and Safety)*

Geology and seismicity, flood control, hazardous materials, and emergency management are all addressed in this element. Geologic, seismic, and flooding hazards are mapped. Fire protection and water supply are addressed in Chapter 11: Public Facilities.

*Noise (Chapter 12)*

This element includes discussion of noise measurement, existing and projected noise contours, and noise mitigation policies.

*Housing (Chapter 13)*

This element consists of updated information on demographic trends, housing characteristics, housing costs, development potential, constraints, and special housing needs. The Housing Element also includes goals, plans and programs for housing development in the City, and a summary of accomplishments of the last Housing Element in 1990.

***Optional Elements***

*Growth Management (Chapter 3)*

This element addresses growth and expansion, traffic standards, and public facility standards, pursuant to the Contra Costa County Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan (Measure J) adopted by County voters in 2004, as amended by the Contra Costa County Transportation Authority. This element also addresses the Voter Approved Urban Limit Line passed by the voters of the City of Pittsburg.

*Urban Design (Chapter 4)*

Views and ridges, hillside development policies, key corridors, mixed-use districts, and neighborhood design are all addressed in this element.

*Downtown (Chapter 5)*

This element is intended to replace the 1986 Downtown Specific Plan, and addresses Downtown development strategies, streetscape and waterfront design, access and parking.

*Economic Development (Chapter 6)*

Economic development opportunities, trends and prospects, and an economic development strategy are presented in this element.

*Public Facilities (Chapter 11)*

Water supply, wastewater collection, solid waste, fire protection, and public utilities are all addressed in this element.

***Goals and Policies***

Each Element of the General Plan is organized to provide a short description of existing conditions, followed by goals and policies.



- **Goals** present broad policy direction, a larger end-state the City is hoping to achieve.
- **Policies** provide more specific direction on how to achieve goals. Policies outline actions, procedures, programs, or techniques to attain the goals. Some policies include quantitative statements that can be implemented by City staff.
- **Text** below various policies simply provides further discussion of and potential implementation for the policy statement.

In some elements, such as Land Use, growth projections are also included.

## **1.3 REGIONAL LOCATION AND PLANNING BOUNDARIES**

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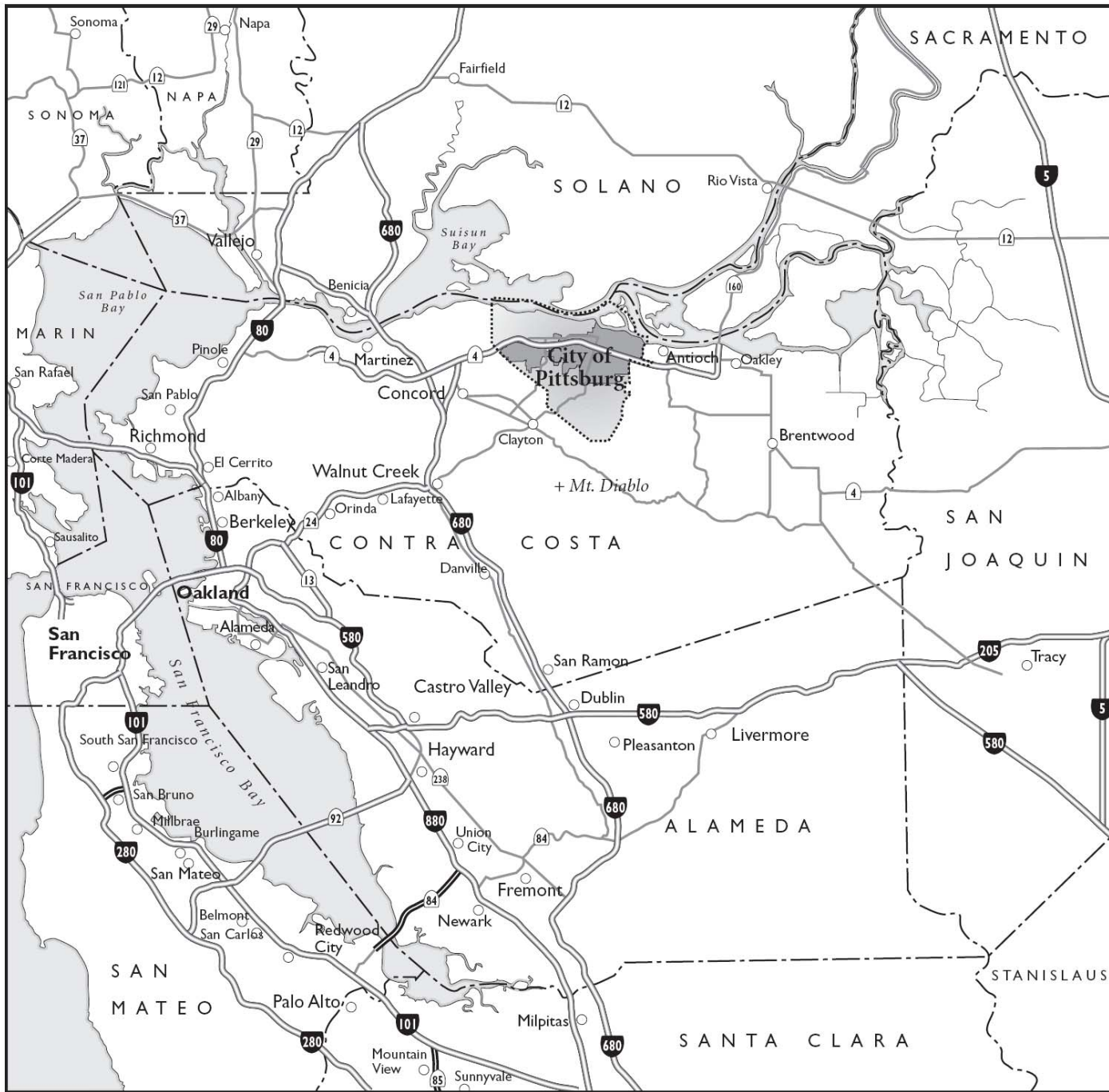
### **REGIONAL LOCATION**

Pittsburg is located along the Sacramento River in eastern Contra Costa County. The northern portion of the City is relatively flat, increasing in elevation as it expands into the southern hills. The hills form the northern tip of the Diablo Range, which extends from Contra Costa County to Santa Clara County. Major transportation corridors include State Route 4, the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad, and the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) rail line. Figure 1-1 shows the City's regional location.

### **PLANNING BOUNDARIES**

Pittsburg's Planning Area includes 41.1 square miles of land, within which lie both the SOI and the City corporate limits. The inclusion of land within the Planning Area but outside City limits does not necessarily mean that the City is contemplating annexation of those lands. Pittsburg's SOI extends over 18.2 square miles and includes the unincorporated community of Bay Point, northwest of the City. Certain unincorporated lands lying outside the current SOI—such as undeveloped areas adjacent to Bay Point and Antioch—may be considered for annexation to the City, upon request by the landowner or developer. City limits spanned 15.6 square miles in year 2000. The Planning Area boundaries coincide with those of Antioch and Clayton, and with the Concord Naval Weapons Station, which is within Concord City limits.

Several geographic features distinguish the Planning Area. The Sacramento River forms the northern boundary; Browns Island, located across New York Slough, is visible from the waterfront. Steep hills—reaching an elevation of almost 1,900 feet—provide a distinctive backdrop to the south, and define the limits of urban development. The Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve marks the southeastern limits of the Planning Area. Figure 1-2 shows the Planning Area and planning boundaries in physical relief.



Current City Limits  
 Planning Area



Source: City of Pittsburg, Dyett & Bhatia

Figure 1-1  
Regional Location

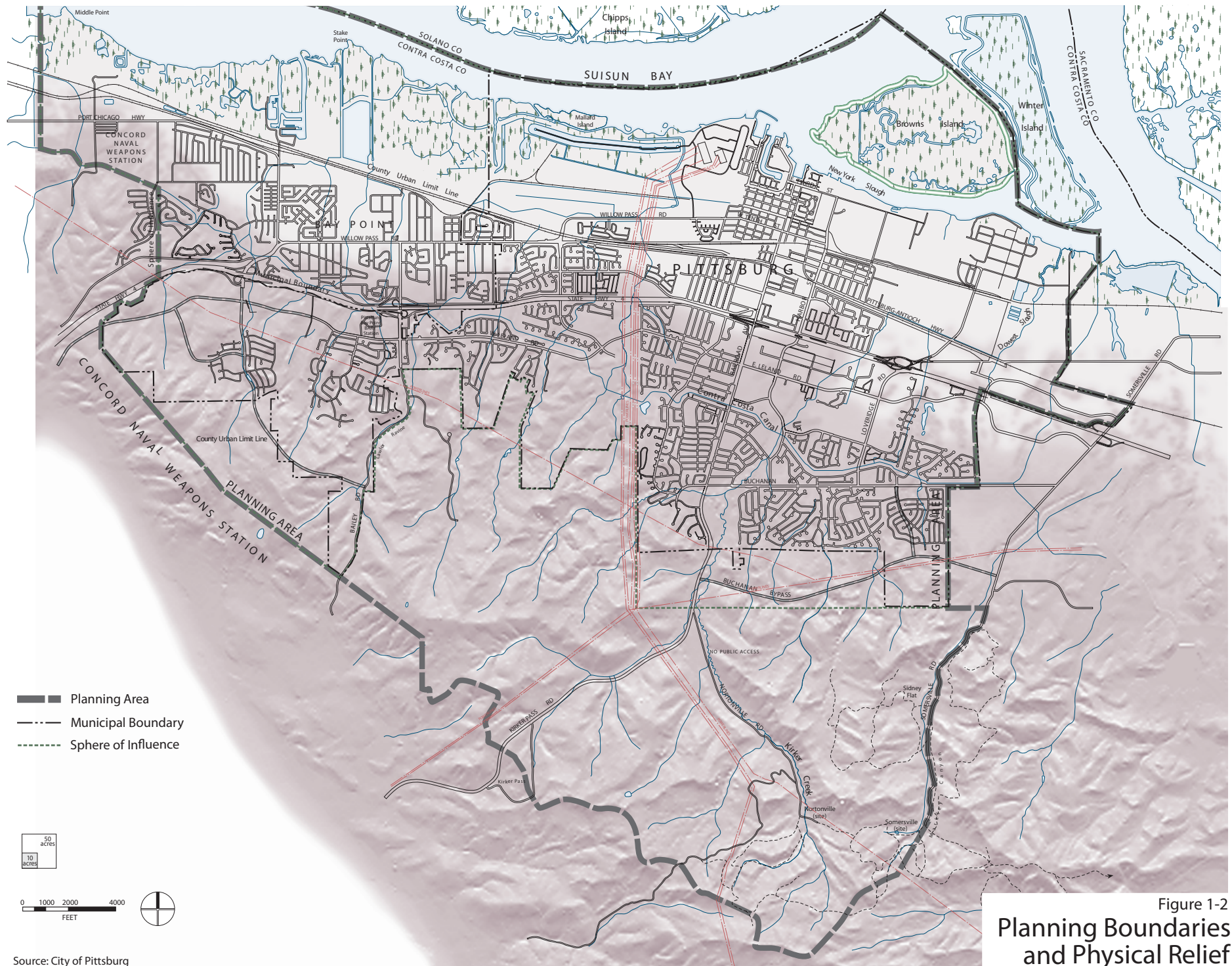


Figure 1-2  
 Planning Boundaries  
 and Physical Relief

Source: City of Pittsburg

## 1.4 GENERAL PLAN THEMES

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Responding to the objectives and issues raised during the community participation process, the General Plan is structured around several themes, which form the basis of goals and policies included in the various elements:

- ***Employment Growth.*** While industrial activity in Pittsburg continues to be strong, the City's economy is in transition from manufacturing to services. Existing large industrial uses are far more efficient and less labor-intensive than in the past. Job-growth in the heavy industry sector may be limited due to more efficient production methods, strict environmental regulations, and public attitude opposing heavy industry. Retail trade and services are expected to be the fastest-growing employment sectors in the coming decades, and will have positive impacts on the City's fiscal base. Three big-box retail centers have already located along State Route 4, and the General Plan will allow for continued expansion of existing sectors.

Office and service establishments in Pittsburg are generally small-scaled, and integrated with strip malls along Railroad Avenue and East Leland Road. Pittsburg lacks larger-scaled office and business parks. However, the General Plan provides sites for these business commercial centers in a variety of locations – near the Bay Point BART station, along State Route 4, as well as on infill and potential redevelopment sites.

- ***Downtown and Waterfront Revitalization.*** Pittsburg's waterfront location has been central to its growth and development. Coal was transported from Black Diamond Mines along Railroad Avenue for shipping; the juncture of Railroad Avenue and the Sacramento River Delta became the natural location for Pittsburg's Downtown. Although Downtown experienced a decline following World War II, redevelopment activities have contributed to the recovery of the historic core.

The General Plan builds on Downtown's many positive attributes and seeks to improve visual and physical connection to the water and access from surrounding neighborhoods, and a development pattern that lends itself to pedestrian scale and comfort. The General Plan delineates a new waterfront park and marine commercial uses east of Downtown along Third Street. It also seeks growth in Downtown's population base from about 4,000 in 1999 to almost 8,000 at Plan buildout.

- ***Hillside/Ridgeline Preservation.*** The range of hills along the City's southern boundary is one of Pittsburg's most distinguishing features. As large tracts of undeveloped land suitable for housing within the City have become scarce, the City must develop planning tools to preserve the aesthetic appearance of the hills and direct development to appropriate locations. Recently, the hillsides have come under increasing development pressure. A majority of new growth in the hillsides will result from development that is already entitled; the General Plan delineates limited new growth in the hillsides. Based on sophisticated computer-based viewshed analysis, the General Plan also delineates areas that merit ridgeline and hillside protection, and includes other policies to ensure that development is in keeping with hillside character and constraints.
- ***Jobs/Employed Residents Balance.*** With over twice as many residents as available jobs, the Pittsburg SOI had a deficit of approximately 10,000 jobs in 2000. Large-scale projects, such as North Park Plaza and Century Plaza, have augmented the City's commercial base, and in the last five years the City has added jobs at a faster rate than population growth. The General Plan seeks a close balance between jobs and employed residents at buildout.
- ***Capitalizing on Regional Transportation Improvements.*** The General Plan seeks to link employment growth to improvements in regional accessibility resulting from widening of State Route 4 and extension of BART. These links will support transit and encourage a reverse commute, as well as minimize impacts of commercial development on neighborhoods.

- ***Enhanced Community Character.*** The General Plan establishes specific urban design policies for major corridors, development in the hillsides, and for Downtown and neighborhood centers. Connections between neighborhoods, transitions between urban and open space areas, city and neighborhood edges, community orientation of development, building massing, and streetscapes are all addressed. Policies are also included for viewshed and ridgeline protection.
- ***Increased linkages between different parts of the City.*** The General Plan includes many improvements that will improve regional access, as well as connections between different neighborhoods. These include extension of Leland Road to the western City limit, San Marco Boulevard from State Route 4 to Bailey Road, Buchanan Bypass along the southeast City limit, and a Range Road/State Route 4 interchange.

## **1.5 THE PLANNING PROCESS**

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The City's planning process includes monitoring and updating the General Plan, implementing Plan policies, updating the Zoning Ordinance, and preparing other implementing ordinances, specific plans, design guidelines, and other studies called for in the General Plan. An annual General Plan Report will provide an overview of the status of the General Plan and its implementation.

Ordinances and documents the City must update or prepare upon adoption of the General Plan include:

- ***Zoning Ordinance.*** The Zoning Ordinance is one of the primary implementation tools of the General Plan, and is required by State law to be consistent with the General Plan. A focused update of the Zoning Ordinance, including a comprehensive revision of hillside development regulations, will be necessary in order to implement the new General Plan Diagram and land use classifications, land use policies, and policies relating to the intensity, bulk, and character of new development.

- *Specific and Area Plans.* The City jointly worked with Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), adjacent cities, and other agencies to develop the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station Area Specific Plan. Should BART chose to extend its rail service to the eastern edge of Pittsburg, the City will also contribute to the drafting of another BART Station Area Specific Plan. Additionally, the City will be contributing to the drafting of the Pittsburg/Antioch Industrial Area Specific Plan.
- *Redevelopment Plan.* The Los Medanos Community Development Project, the redevelopment project area, includes virtually all of the City’s non-residential land. Adopted redevelopment projects within the current 5-year Plan include a senior center, City park facilities, City gateways, roadway improvements, library remodel, Downtown museum, and storm drain improvements. The next update of the Redevelopment Plan will reflect General Plan policies and programs.
- *Capital Improvements Program.* The City’s Capital Improvement Program will identify prioritization, timing, and financing for public projects according to the growth management strategy set forth within the General Plan.

#### **AMENDMENTS TO THE GENERAL PLAN**

As the City’s guide for development, the General Plan is the heart of the planning process. It is intended to be a living document and, as such, will be subject to more site-specific and comprehensive amendments over time. Amendments also may be needed from time to time to conform to State or federal law passed after adoption, and to eliminate or modify policies that may become obsolete or unrealistic due to changed conditions (such as completion of a task or project, development on a site, or adoption of an ordinance or plan).

State law limits the number of times a jurisdiction can amend its general plan. Generally, no jurisdiction can amend any mandatory element of its general plan more than four times in one year, although each amendment may include more than one change to the general plan. This restriction, however, does not apply to amendments for:



- Optional elements (such as the Growth Management, Urban Design, Downtown, and Economic Development elements of the Pittsburg General Plan);
- Allowing development of affordable housing; or
- Complying with a court decision.

### **DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION**

Per the Delta Protection Act of 1992, the California Delta Protection Commission (DPC) is required to review and approve proposed General Plan amendments affecting land within the Primary Zone, as shown in Figure 1-3. Browns Island, located along the northeastern shore of Suisun Bay, lies within the DPC's Primary Zone. Browns Island is primarily owned by the State Lands Commission, leased to the East Bay Regional Park District; a portion of the Island is owned by the Port of Stockton.

Local governments must ensure that adopted General Plans, and any development approved or proposed under the General Plan, will be consistent with the DPC's Land Use and Resource Management Plan and will NOT:

- result in wetland or riparian loss;
- result in degradation of water quality;
- result in increased nonpoint source pollution;
- result in the degradation or reduction of Pacific Flyway habitat;
- result in reduced public access, provided the access does not infringe on private property rights;
- expose the public to increased flood hazard;
- adversely impact agricultural lands or increase the potential for vandalism, trespassing, or the creation of public private nuisance on public or private land;
- result in the degradation or impairment of levee integrity; and
- adversely impact navigation.

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

The California Government Code requires City staff to “provide an annual report to the legislative body on the status of the general plan and progress in its implementation” (Government Code Section 65400(b)). This report must be submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the Department of Housing and Community Development. It must include an analysis of the progress in meeting the city's share of regional housing needs and local efforts to remove governmental constraints to maintenance, improvement, and development of affordable housing (Government Code Sections 65583, 65584).

In addition, any mitigation monitoring and reporting requirements prescribed by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) identified in the general plan environmental impact report (EIR) should be addressed in the annual report, because they are closely tied to plan implementation. Finally, the annual report should include a summary of all general plan amendments adopted during the preceding year and an outline of upcoming projects and general plan issues to be addressed in the coming year.

The Pittsburg General Plan Annual Report will be prepared by City staff at the beginning of each calendar year and submitted to the Planning Commission and City Council. The report must also be forwarded to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, the state Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Contra Costa Transportation Authority. Members of the public may submit verbal or written comments on the Annual Report at the Planning Commission and City Council public meetings to consider the Report..

### ***Periodic Reviews***

The City may also undertake periodic comprehensive reviews of the General Plan. The periodic review will determine how well the General Plan has performed, and whether policies related to development and conservation have been effective. Staff will analyze the effectiveness of implementation programs and strategies initiated to carry out the Plan, review growth trends since Plan adoption, assess future urban land needs, and review growth phasing. The periodic review will also determine if policy implementation, growth trends, and land demand warrant

revisions to individual elements or a comprehensive General Plan update.

## **1.6 RELATED STUDIES**

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As part of the General Plan preparation, several technical studies were conducted to document environmental conditions, and analyze prospects for economic development, community character and growth, and development alternatives. Studies prepared include:

- Existing Conditions and Planning Issues: June 1998;
- Fiscal Evaluation of Land Uses: January 1998;
- Sketch Plans: February 1998;
- Draft Environmental Impact Report: January 2001; and
- Final Environmental Impact Report: June 2001.

While these background studies and environmental documents have guided Plan preparation, they do not represent adopted City policy.

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