

Introduction

Chapter 1



1.1 Introduction and Report Purpose

The City of Fairfield is preparing an update of its General Plan which will establish the City's overall approach to development, transportation, environmental quality, and other key topics through 2050. The City's current General Plan dates back to 2002 and needs to be updated to reflect opportunities, challenges, and approaches that have emerged in recent years. The Housing Element, one of seven State-required general

plan elements, was last updated in 2014, and will be updated as part of this process as well.

This Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Challenges Report (ECR) represents the first major technical step in the process of updating the City of Fairfield's General Plan. This report provides spatial information on existing conditions in the city and surrounding areas

as well as an analysis of opportunities that will impact physical development. This report will subsequently be used as a basis for:

- Facilitating community input on planning issues, priorities, and visions for the future;
- Preparing alternative land use and transportation planning scenarios;
- Formulating policies and implementation actions for the General Plan; and
- Creating the environmental setting portion of the Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan.

The focus of this report is on mappable resources, trends, and concerns that will frame choices for the long-term physical development of the city. Topics addressed include land uses; sustainability; economic and market conditions; public health; circulation; environmental conditions; public facilities; utilities; and public health and equity. Information on economic and market conditions is available as a separate report. This report provides information on conditions that existed as of January 2021.

Separately from this ECR, a Market Analysis provides an overview of the existing demographic and economic conditions, local real estate market conditions and trends, and factors that will drive demand in various land use categories over the General Plan planning horizon.



1.2 General Plan Purpose & Process

Purpose Of The General Plan

A general plan is a statement of the community's vision of its long-term or ultimate physical form and development policies. The State of California mandates that "...each county and city shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning." (Govt. Code 65300). A city's general plan has been described as its development constitution—the set of policies within which development regulations and decisions must fit.

The State mandates that all general plans cover at least seven "elements": land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addition, a city or county may include other "optional" elements; examples of these that jurisdictions have adopted include air quality, health, sustainability, community design, economic development, energy, water and wastewater, and parks and recreation. All elements, regardless of whether they are mandatory or optional, carry equal weight.

The general plan must be "internally consistent;" that is, it should "...comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency." (Govt. Code 65300.5). Furthermore, all actions relating to physical development need to be consistent with an adopted general plan. This requirement implying "vertical consistency" means that subdivisions, capital improvements, development

agreements, specific plans, zoning, and other land use regulatory actions must be consistent with the general plan.

The purpose of the Fairfield General Plan update is to:

- Establish a long-range vision that reflects the aspirations of the community and outlines steps to achieve this vision;
- Establish development policies that will guide City departments, as well as Planning Commission and City Council decision-making;
- Ensure that the General Plan reflects the needs of the community and reflects community priorities, such as for housing and affordability, mobility/ transportation, and parks and recreation;
- Plan in a manner that meets future land needs based on the projected population and job growth;
- Provide the basis for establishing and setting priorities for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, specific and master plans, and the Capital Improvement Program.



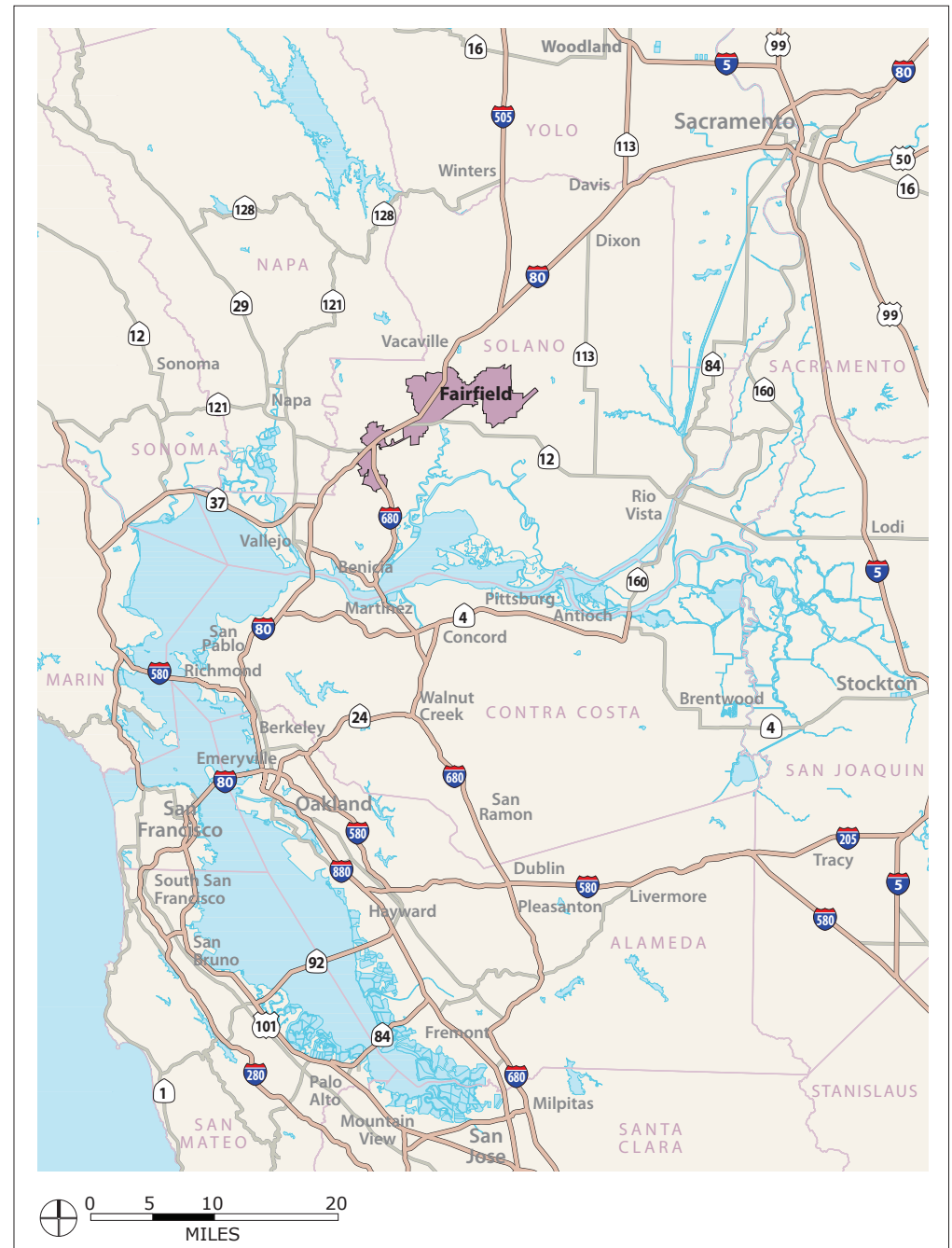
1.3 Planning Area

Regional Location

Fairfield is located in central Solano County in the Bay Area within the California Coastal Ranges at the south-western edge of the Sacramento Valley, just north of the Suisun Bay and salt marsh. The city is located at strategic transportation crossroads at the convergence of interstates 680 and 80 (I-680 and I-80), two of the Bay Area's largest freeways, and at a mid-point between Sacramento and San Francisco (each 45 miles away). Fairfield also provides the eastern gateway to Napa Valley, which lies 15 miles to the west and is easily accessed via Highway 12. In addition, Fairfield is accessible via public transportation, including Fairfield and Suisun Transit (FAST) and Solano Express bus lines, and two Capital Corridor train stations that connect Fairfield to Auburn and San Jose via Sacramento and Oakland. The city is also home to Travis Air Force Base, which is located four miles east of downtown. Known as the "Gateway to the Pacific," Travis handles more cargo and passenger traffic through its airport than any other military air terminal in the United States.

The city is surrounded by undeveloped hills on its western and northern borders. To its east and north-east are grazing and prairie grasslands. To the south, beyond the neighboring city of Suisun City, is the largest remaining wetland around San Francisco Bay, the Suisun Marsh. Suisun Valley, one of the county's most productive and intensive agricultural regions, adjoins Fairfield and separates the central city from the Cordelia planning area. The regional setting is depicted in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Regional Setting



Planning Boundaries

PLANNING AREA

The General Plan Planning Area (Planning Area), as shown in Figure 1-2, is defined as the land area addressed by the General Plan update. The Planning Area for the General Plan update is the same as that used for the 2002 General Plan, with the exception of the addition of the Pacific Flyway Center in the southern portion of the Planning Area, annexed in 2019. It encompasses 278 square miles including the City of Fairfield (approximately 41 square miles) and its Sphere of Influence (SOI) (approximately 11 square miles) which is generally coterminous with City boundary but includes a handful of areas surrounding the city limits, with the largest section located in the northeast area of the city limits, adjacent to Travis Air Force Base. The Planning Area also includes the surrounding unincorporated areas in Green Valley and Suisun Valley, as in the current General Plan, and the Suisun Marsh Protection Plan area (225 square miles). Although Fairfield does not have jurisdiction in areas outside of its city limits, what happens in those areas bears a relation to the city's planning and must be considered in the General Plan, per California Government Code Section 65300. The Planning Area is bounded by Napa County, the Vacaville mountains, and Cement Hill grazing lands to the north; the Travis Reserve and unincorporated Solano County to the east; the City of Suisun, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, the Suisun Marsh, and I-680 in the southern portion; and unincorporated Solano County open space to the west.

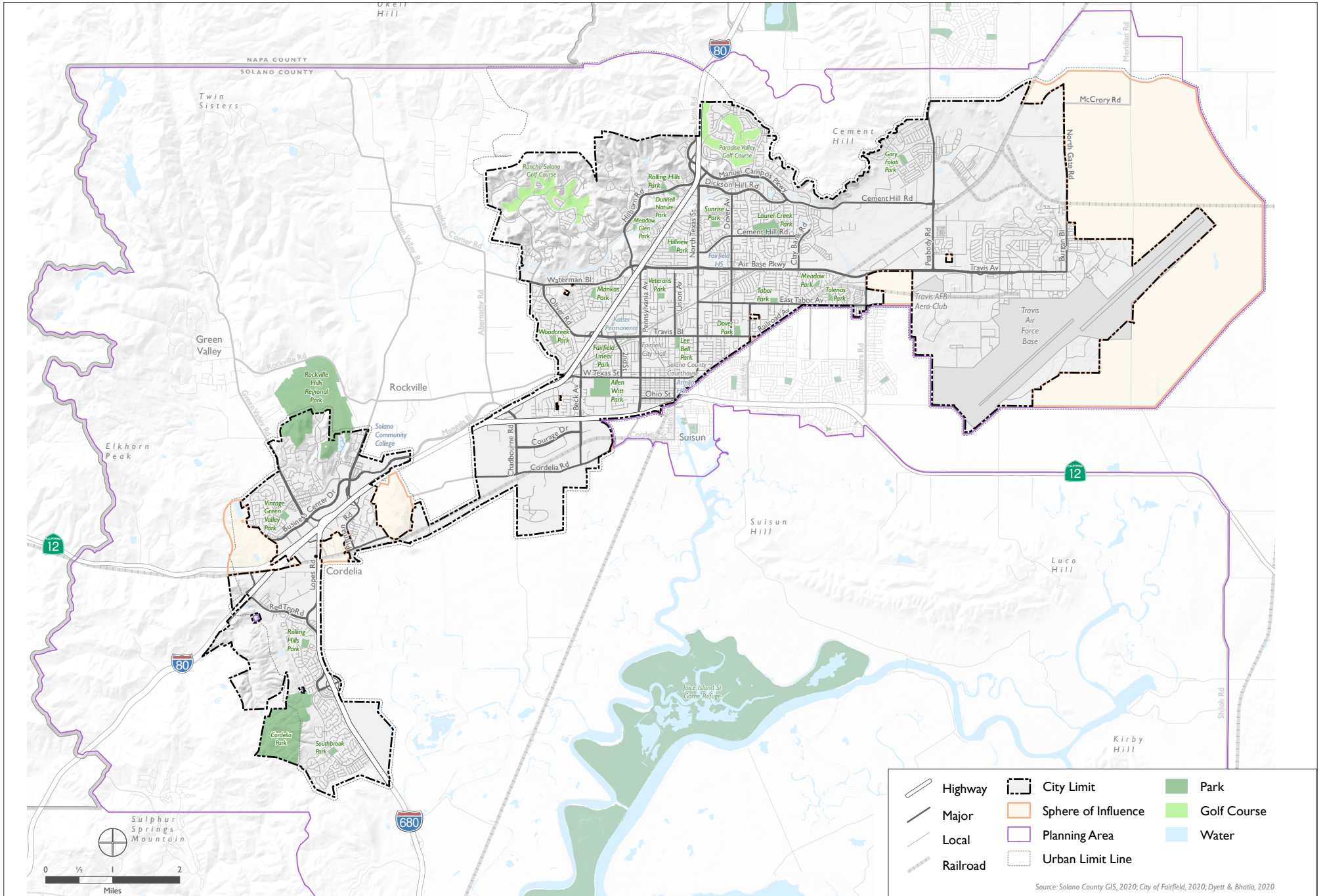
URBAN LIMIT LINE

The current General Plan is based on a “Livable City” concept, which envisions the city developing in a relatively compact and efficient land use pattern. To implement this concept, the City established an “Urban Limit Line.” The Urban Limit Line policy represents the ultimate limit of the city's urban growth, but may also include certain open space areas over which the City wishes to have direct control. The Urban Limit Line thus represents a commitment on the part of Fairfield to respecting the surrounding non-urban areas, which are integral to the identity of Solano County. It helps to ensure the maintenance of the “greenbelt” buffers of open space between Fairfield and other urbanized areas in the county and to protect the agricultural resources vital to the regional economy. The Urban Limit Line is generally coterminous with the City's designated Sphere of Influence, except for the Rancho Solano North area.

In 2003, the voters of the City of Fairfield approved Measure L, an Initiative which affirmed the Urban Limit Line established in the new General Plan until December 2020. Through this date, amendments to the Urban Limit Line generally required approval of the voters. In lieu of placing Measure L on the ballot again, the City Council proposed establishing a moratorium on new land annexations until the completion of this General Plan update.



Figure 1-2: Planning Area



1.4 Report Organization

The Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Challenges Report is divided into 13 chapters. Chapters in the report are organized by topic. Analysis on each topic is communicated through text, tables, and maps. Key findings and planning implications are summarized at the end of each chapter. Chapters are as follows:

- 1 Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview** explains the General Plan's purpose and process; describes the Planning Area and regional setting; and provides an overview of the atlas' organization.
- 2 Chapter 2: Land Use and Community Design** discusses existing land uses in the Planning Area, describes the existing General Plan and other planning efforts, examines urban design and community character of the Planning Area, and gives an overview of major development projects and potential opportunity areas.
- 3 Chapter 3: Circulation** discusses the Planning Area's existing transportation infrastructure, including roadways, transit, railways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and planned transportation improvements.
- 4 Chapter 4: Air Quality, Greenhouse Gases and Energy** provides an overview of climate conditions in the Planning Area, linking land use, transportation, and air quality. Further detail on environmental conditions will be provided in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of the General Plan.
- 5 Chapter 5: Geology and Soils** discusses geology, seismicity, and soils.
- 6 Chapter 6: Biological Resources** describes vegetation community types, special status species, sensitive biological communities, and special habitat types within the Planning Area.
- 7 Chapter 7: Hydrology and Water Quality** discusses hydrology, hydrogeology, and water quality within the Planning Area.
- 8 Chapter 8: Hazards and Hazardous Materials** describes hazardous materials and hazardous waste within the Planning Area.
- 9 Chapter 9: Airport Hazards** discusses airport hazards including noise, safety, and land use compatibility.
- 10 Chapter 10: Wildfires** provides an overview of wildfire conditions and wildfire hazard ratings.
- 11 Chapter 11: Public Facilities** describes key public services, including parks, recreation and trails; emergency services; libraries; and schools.
- 12 Chapter 12: Utilities and Flooding** assesses water supply, wastewater, storm water, flooding, and solid waste in the Planning Area.
- 13 Chapter 13: Public Health and Equity** discusses environmental justice conditions in the Planning Area; health outcomes; social determinants of health including poverty, linguistic isolation, housing, and homelessness; physical and environmental determinants of health including pollution, walkability, internet access, and access to healthy food and healthcare services.

