

Introduction 1

The Hillsdale Station Area Plan (Plan) has evolved from principles developed during many years of planning by City officials, designers, and local citizens to make San Mateo a better place to live and work. Taking its cue from local planning efforts such as the General Plan, the San Mateo Rail Corridor Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan, the El Camino Real Master Plan, and regional planning frameworks provided by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), this Plan provides the regulatory framework for compact and sustainable development in the area surrounding the Hillsdale Caltrain Station. The Station Area Plan integrates a planned transportation hub into existing and new urban and circulation systems, and develops strong connections to the approved Bay Meadows Phase II transit-oriented development and surrounding established residential neighborhoods.

The Station Area Plan is funded through MTC's FOCUS Station Area Planning Grant program. This program provides funding for infill development surrounding transit stations, with the intent of fulfilling regional goals to increase housing near transit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Station Area is located within the 600-acre Rail Corridor Priority Development Area (PDA), which is a part of another MTC program that provides incentives for infill development. PDA program makes the area eligible for additional funding for infrastructure, housing, and other improvements to attract development. MTC has identified two other Priority Development Areas in San Mateo, bolstering the opportunities for long-term housing, walkability, and transit improvements along the Caltrain corridor.

MTC's Station Area Planning Manual, one of the many planning documents that have helped shaped this Plan, aids jurisdictions and decision-makers in planning around transit hubs and corridors by defining seven Bay Area TOD Place Types and quantifying development guidelines suitable for each type. The Place Types are derived from common characteristics of successful station areas in the Bay Area such as economic base, land use mix, and transit mode, and enable cities and neighborhoods to self-assess existing strengths and weaknesses. Because they are based on a cross-section of successful station areas, the Place Types offer a realistic outlook for the future of Bay Area station areas.

According to the Manual, the existing Hillsdale Station Area closely resembles a Transit Town Center, a local center of economic and community activity served by commuter rail and buses with a moderate-density mix of residential, commercial, and employment uses. Transit Town Centers are not Regional, City, or Suburban Centers because they are not primary or significant centers of economic and cultural activities and do not have a mix of high-density land uses. San Mateo's downtown could be considered a Regional, City, or Suburban Center. Transit Town Centers have both destination retail and commuter rail, distinguishing them from Urban or Transit Neighborhoods and Mixed Use Neighborhoods.

A. Station Area

Encompassing roughly 150 acres, the Station Area addressed by this document is based on the area within walking distance of the preferred location, pending further technical and financial evaluation, of the future relocated Caltrain Hillsdale Station, excluding the Bay Meadows Phase II project area which has already been planned and is currently under construction as an 83-acre Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) with residential, office, retail, restaurant, and open space uses, and single-family residential neighborhoods beyond Flores and Edison Streets. As a result, the Plan boundary is roughly a mile from north to south, but is significantly less than a mile to the east and

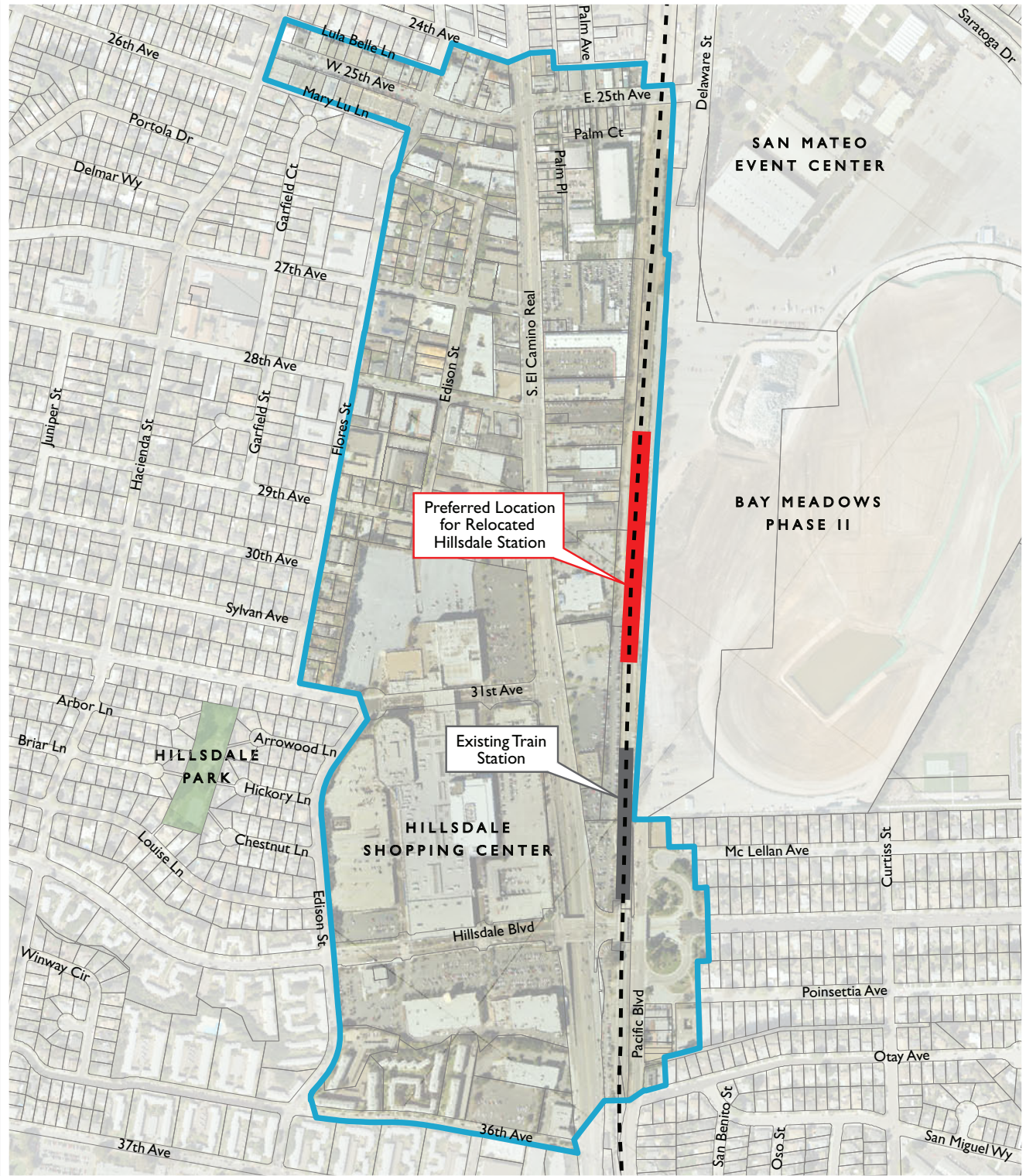
west. The Station Area and surrounding context is shown in Figure 1-1. It includes El Camino Real, the Hillsdale Shopping Center, and the 25th Avenue business district.

The Station Area is bounded on the west by residential neighborhoods, on the north by residential neighborhoods and retail areas along El Camino Real, on the east by the Bay Meadows Phase II project area, and to the south by retail areas and the Hillsdale Gardens development.



Aerial view of Station Area, looking north to the bay.

Figure 1-1: Plan Boundary



B. Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles provide the overarching goals for achieving a vibrant, compact, and sustainable Station Area, and are threaded through the decisions, goals, and policies that provide the foundation of the Plan. They are crafted to coordinate with MTC's principles for the successful development of Station Area Plans, as presented in the Station Area Planning Manual. As the MTC principles provide guidance for the broader Bay Area, the following narrative establishes the local context for these principles for a more area-specific application.

1. Promote Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-Oriented Development will bring multiple benefits to the Hillsdale Station Area. As financial and technological growth continues in the San Francisco Peninsula and Silicon Valley area, public transportation will play a vital role in the health of the region, relieving pressure on roads that are increasingly jammed with traffic. Intensive, transit-supportive uses within walking distance of the relocated Hillsdale Caltrain Station will maximize transit ridership, bring people to their destinations on a daily basis without the use of a vehicle, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. TOD in the Station Area will also help to revitalize the El Camino Real corridor - dominated by auto-oriented uses - by fostering a vibrant, walkable community served by transit.

2. Enhance Connections and Station Access

Connections and direct access to the Hillsdale Caltrain Station are important to the future success of the Station Area. Well-planned connections from the residential neighborhoods to the east and west will provide transit users direct and pleasant routes on their daily trips, increasing the odds that they will use transit as their daily mode of travel. The long, continuous portion of El Camino Real between Hillsdale Boulevard and 25th Avenue and the railroad tracks has long acted as a physical and perceived barrier. New east-west streets will provide more direct, efficient paths of travel, connecting across El Camino Real to the more traditional grid street system of the surrounding neighborhoods. Added points of interest and intersections make walks along the street more interesting and enjoyable. A clear mandate of the Plan is to create attractive, safe, and direct access routes to bolster the Caltrain Station as the heart of a vibrant transit-oriented, mixed-use district.

3. Encourage Pedestrian-Oriented Development on El Camino Real

A new vision for El Camino Real at Hillsdale came forward in conversations at workshops for the Plan. The desire is to move away from auto-oriented development with set-back buildings and large parking lots, and to encourage more pedestrian-oriented

development. The area around Hillsdale Station should emphasize an environment that is conducive to walking and biking. In addition to providing pedestrian improvements such as wider sidewalks, building design should also contribute to a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Ground-floor uses on El Camino Real should be geared towards serving local residents as well as commuters to foster a round-the-clock vibrancy that enhances the viability of the Station Area. The City acknowledges that the Hillsdale Shopping Center is currently auto-oriented and a valuable asset for the community in San Mateo and throughout the Peninsula. New ground floor uses on Shopping Center property will likely serve a regional market rather than the more local serving uses of other properties in the area.

4. Ensure Quality Development

New development in the Hillsdale Station Area should include qualities that make a neighborhood a pleasurable place to visit, work and live. Buildings should be well made and they should reward attention at the distant as well as the close scale. The Hillsdale area has a rich mix of building types and architectural styles and new buildings should respect their context and their neighbors. Buildings and streets should provide public amenities and spaces that allow for relaxation and conversation. Buildings, streetscape, and public space should be constructed from sustainable materials that come from recycled or renewable resources as much as possible and built to last. Landscapes should be beautiful and conserve water. In summary, all new projects, large or small, public or private, should contribute to a district that residents, workers, and shoppers feel drawn to and happy to inhabit.

5. Improve the Identity of the Station Area

The placeless character of the El Camino Real corridor throughout the Peninsula is largely shaped by its function as a main thoroughfare for regional transportation. The current lack of a strong identity for the Hillsdale Station Area is due to the regional nature of El Camino Real, but this can be counteracted by several existing or potential elements: the Hillsdale Shopping Center, the 25th shopping district, the Caltrain Avenue station, and Bay Meadows II. Tying the many elements of the Station Area together will develop a stronger identity. The creation of improved streetscapes, distinctive TOD, and mixed-use buildings, and combined with a new public space at a relocated Hillsdale Station, provides an opportunity to differentiate the Hillsdale Station Area from other places along the El Camino Real corridor.

6. Provide a Range of Housing Choices

San Mateo is home to households of various sizes, configurations, and income levels. While TOD can improve neighborhoods, ensure better pedestrian access, and increase use of transit, it is important to ensure that these benefits are available to a range of income levels. Revitalization of the Hillsdale Station Area will need to focus on preserving existing affordable residential and commercial districts, and supporting the development of a variety of home sizes and types. These efforts should include both subsidized affordable units and market-rate homes that are more accessible to low- and moderate-income households through their design and pricing.

C. Planning Process

The City of San Mateo led the Station Area Plan project through an extensive public engagement process with community members, stakeholders, and decision-makers. The participation process, centered on issues identification, vision and goal setting, and alternative land use synthesis and evaluation, is described below.

Initial Steps

In early 2010, the City conducted stakeholder interviews with property owners, business owners, residents, community service organizations, housing associations, governmental associations, and transit agencies. Some of these meetings were held with individual organizations, while businesses on 25th Avenue and El Camino Real were solicited through a letter circulated to all business owners on the streets. The broad cross-section of viewpoints provided the City and its consultant team with a better understanding of the key issues and opportunities in the Station Area.

Existing Conditions

The City and the consultant team completed an Existing Conditions Report to understand key opportunities and constraints in the Station Area. The report includes a thorough review of relevant documents that are essential to understanding the economic and social frameworks for the Plan. Opportunity sites were identified to focus the attentions of the community, staff, and consultants to analyze development scenarios. Opportunity sites were selected because they are either already vacant, have older buildings, or buildings that are vacant or underutilized, include large areas dedicated to surface parking, are nearby the relocated Caltrain station, or are adjacent to planned grade-separated railway crossings.

Project Website

The City established a website for the project early on, to provide regular updates on project status, notices of upcoming meetings, and project-related documents as they were created.

Community Workshop 1

The City held its first community workshop in March 2010, to establish broad area-wide goals and develop a vision for the Station Area. Citizens, City staff, and stakeholders explored the benefits of TOD and participated in small groups that mapped out strengths in the Station Area, and identified which areas could use change. For this workshop, and those that followed, the City conducted extensive outreach: newspaper and website notices, mailing to all property owners and residential and commercial tenants inside and within 500 feet of the Station Area, posters at the Hillsdale station, in-person flyers at the station, emails to interested organizations throughout the City, as well as those focused on affordable housing, and a letter to participants in the stakeholder interviews inviting them to attend upcoming workshops.



Community Workshop 1.

Alternatives Analysis

The feedback provided at the first community workshop was used by the consultant team to generate two alternatives for future development in the Station Area, which were each analyzed for their economic and traffic feasibility. Each of the alternatives included a similar level of growth over the next 20 years, although they differed in type and location of development and streetscape designs for El Camino Real.

Community Workshop 2

In June 2010, the alternatives were presented to the public and their differences and similarities were discussed. Working in small groups again, participants prioritized concepts of each plan and synthesized them into one map that represents aspects that the group agreed should be included in the final preferred alternative. In addition to the outreach described above, the City placed posters advertising this workshop and the next in public gathering places and multi-family residences in and near the Station Area, and sent postcards regarding the workshop to City Council and Planning and Public Works Commission members.

Planning Commission/City Council Study Session 1

The consultant team incorporated the suggestions and clear direction from the second community workshop into a final, preferred alternative which was presented to the City Council and Planning Commission in a joint study session in July, 2010. The Council and Commission provided valuable input for finalizing a Preferred Alternative.

Community Workshop 3

In November 2010, the public review draft Hillsdale Station Area Plan was presented to the community. An open house was held to allow participants to view the Illustrative Plan and other key figures from the Station Area Plan and ask questions about those figures. Following the open house, a more formal presentation summarized the Plan. Participants asked questions and provided comments on additional ideas to be considered as the Plan went through the review process. Outreach for this workshop was the same as that for Workshop 2.

Planning Commission/City Council Study Session 2

City staff and consultants summarized the input provided at Community Workshop 3. A meeting summary was prepared and provided to the Planning Commission and City Council at a joint study session held in January 2011. Additional public comments were also made at the Study Session. The Council and Commission asked questions regarding the Plan and provided input on modifications to be made to the public review draft Plan. Those modifications were made and are included in this final Plan.

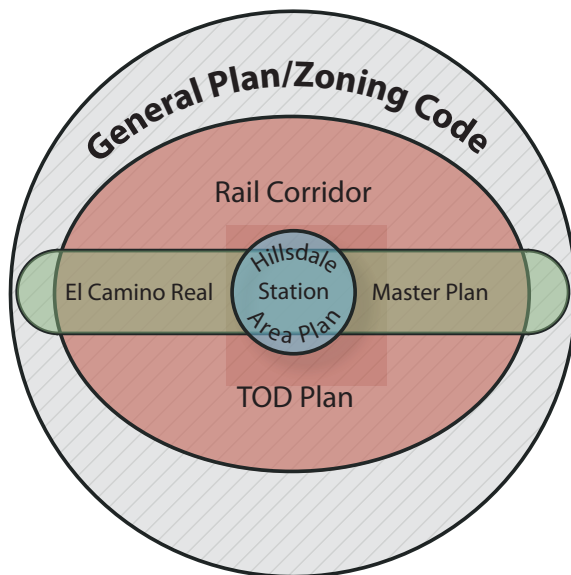
D. Relationship to Existing Plans and Policies

The Hillsdale Station Area Plan is created within a regulatory context of existing plans and documents. Goals, policies, and standards contained within this Plan are an extension and refinement of goals, policies, and standards found within the following documents:

- General Plan Vision 2030
- City of San Mateo Zoning Code
- San Mateo Rail Corridor Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan
- El Camino Real Master Plan

These plans were developed at an earlier time and with different, broader goals. This Station Area Plan looks at a smaller area, and therefore proposes more specific development standards and guidelines that are tailored to the Hillsdale Station Area. Although there is no intentional conflict between this Station Area Plan and existing plans and documents, the Hillsdale Station Area Plan takes precedence if a conflict were to arise. Figure 1-2 shows how the Station Area Plan spatially and functionally relates to these other plans. The shape reflects a general, conceptualized sphere of influence of each plan while color intensity represents the scale of each plan: the darker the color, the more specific and detailed are the vision, goals, and policies of each plan.

Figure 1-2: Regulatory Framework



E. Plan Contents and Organization

The Station Area Plan includes the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter includes a description of the planning process and the Guiding Principles.

Chapter Two: Site and Context

This chapter provides an overview of the physical context of the site and a brief description of existing conditions and policies that shape the future development in the Station Area.

Chapter Three: Vision

This chapter presents the vision of a future Hillsdale Station Area by discussing the main organizing concepts for proposed change.

Chapter Four: Land Use

This chapter provides the land use framework and designations for the Station Area.

Chapter Five: Urban Design

This chapter describes the development guidelines and streetscape standards for the Station Area.

Chapter Six: Transportation

This chapter discusses the proposed circulation improvements in the Station Area, including vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements.

Chapter Seven: Infrastructure

This chapter describes potential improvements to public facilities needed to meet increased demand for services.

Chapter Eight: Implementation

This chapter provides specific strategies for implementing the Station Area Plan.