

Introduction and Overview

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The City of San Ramon General Plan 2035 articulates a long-term vision for the City. Plan policies focus on what is achievable in the next 20 years and set forth actions to be undertaken by the City. Broad objectives such as “quality of life” and “community character” are meaningful only if translated into actions that are tangible and can be implemented. State law requires that City actions be consistent with the General Plan; as such, regular ongoing use of the General Plan will be essential. There will be circumstances and instances when detailed studies will be necessary before General Plan policies can be implemented.

GENERAL PLAN 2030 BACKGROUND

In 1999, San Ramon voters approved Measure “G” which (1) established a two-year moratorium on General Plan or Zoning Ordinance amendments, (2) provided for a General Plan Review Commission (GPRC) consisting of 32 San Ramon residents to recommend a new General Plan, and (3) required voter approval of the GPRC’s new General Plan. Through Measure G (1999), the GPRC was formed; the General Plan 2020 was drafted; and in March 2002, San Ramon voters approved General Plan 2020.

The voter-approved General Plan 2020 established the City’s first Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to encourage smart growth by promoting infill development and discouraging urban sprawl. Since 2002, the City has been proactively implementing many of the policies of General Plan 2020 such as acquiring open space, creating affordable housing, and providing opportunities for mixed use development.

Two implementing policies within General Plan 2020 initiated the need for voter review of the General Plan in the year 2010. General Plan 2020 Land Use Element Policy 4.6-1-3 required voter review of the UGB and Open Space and Conservation Policy 8.4-1-15 required voter review of an extension to Ordinance 197 (1990), the “Save Our Hills” Ordinance. Consequently, in the summer of 2009, the City of San Ramon began the public review process to update the entire General Plan to keep the plan current, ensure internal consistency, and address changes in community trends and attitudes.

In July 2010, the City placed Measure “W” on the November 2010 ballot with the intent of providing greater certainty over the future planning process within the Planning Area. In part, Measure W sought to add a portion of the Tassajara Valley and lands in the westside of the City into the City’s UGB as well as to extend Ordinance 197 (1990) to 2015. In November 2010, with the loss of Measure W, the UGB remains in its current location and Ordinance 197 expired on December 31, 2010. While still part of the City’s Planning Area, the Tassajara

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Valley remains outside the City's UGB and Sphere of Influence (SOI) and under the jurisdiction of Contra Costa County for land use decisions.

After the election, the City of San Ramon incorporated changes into the General Plan 2030, and the Planning Commission and City Council adopted the Plan. Key changes to the General Plan 2020 encompassed by the General Plan 2030 Update include reduction of the Planning Area, the designation of the North Camino Ramon planning area, the addition of an Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element, text revisions to strengthen conservation and open space preservation policies, clarification of programs and policies within each Element, and the inclusion of Complete Streets policies to meet Assembly Bill 1358 (see Traffic and Circulation Element).

The General Plan 2035 update largely maintains the land use concepts and policy language set forth in General Plan 2030 with updates to City demographic, State mandated Housing Element update for the 2014-2022 planning cycle, minor policy language revisions, narrative text and mapping updates to reflect changes that have occurred since the last update.

The period following 2008-09 recession and the adoption of the General Plan 2030 (based on 2009 baseline projections) have resulted in a period of slower growth than would be normally expected. As such, physical development has not kept pace with the growth assumptions of the General Plan 2030. Additionally, based on the 2010 Census information some of the growth anticipated by the General Plan 2030 has already been reflected in current conditions (population, housing etc.). The General Plan 2035 updates the demographic estimates for the current conditions (January 1, 2014) and provides year 2035 buildout projections based on the revised demographics and the current local land use assumptions.

GENERAL PLAN 2035 PURPOSE

The San Ramon General Plan 2035 largely maintains the land use patterns and growth strategies set forth by the voter approved General Plan 2020. The San Ramon General Plan 2035 serves several purposes:

- It outlines a vision for San Ramon's long-range physical and economic development and resource conservation that reflects the aspirations of the community and the smart growth mandate of Measure G (1999);
- It provides strategies and specific implementing actions that will allow this vision to be accomplished;
- It establishes a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are in harmony with Plan policies and standards;
- It 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
- It provides the basis for establishing and setting priorities for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the Zoning Ordinance, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), specific plans, etc.

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The San Ramon General Plan 2035 builds upon the accomplishments of the past while looking to the future and ensures that the City continues to evolve and mature while maintaining its sense of community.

LOOKING AHEAD

San Ramon will face several planning challenges over the next 20 years. Included in these challenges are managing the City's urban growth boundaries, open space preservation, and addressing forecasts for increased population and employment growth for the 2035 planning horizon.

The General Plan 2035 anticipates a buildout population of 96,174 and a buildout labor force (jobs) of 57,667 for the San Ramon Planning Area. In comparison, San Ramon's 2014 Planning Area population is estimated at 78,820 with a labor force 45,994. Much of this population and employment growth will be accommodated by development that has already been programmed or approved for the San Ramon Planning Area. This includes buildout of the Dougherty Valley, the San Ramon City Center Project, Faria Preserve and North Camino Ramon Specific Plan. The extent to which this demand is fulfilled at a project level is addressed in the General Plan policies and is based upon the public input on how best to accommodate growth based on the smart growth mandate of Measure G (1999).

1.2 REGIONAL SETTING AND PLANNING AREA

REGIONAL LOCATION

San Ramon is located in southern Contra Costa County in the East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area. The City of San Ramon is surrounded by unincorporated Alameda County (west), the Town of Danville and unincorporated Contra Costa County (north), unincorporated Contra Costa County (east), and the City of Dublin (south). The San Ramon Valley, Dougherty Hills, and the Dougherty Valley are within the City limits, while the East Bay foothills are located to the west. Figure 1-1 shows the City's regional location.

PLANNING BOUNDARIES

According to state law, the City must consider a Planning Area that consists of land within the City and "any land outside its boundaries which, in the planning agency's judgment, bears relation to its planning." The inclusion of land outside City limits does not necessarily mean that the City is contemplating annexation.

The San Ramon Planning Area encompasses 23,297 acres or 36.4 square miles. The General Plan 2030 Planning Area is smaller in land area when compared to the General Plan 2020, which totaled 24,733 acres (38.6 square miles). This reduction is the result of removing the upper Tassajara Valley from the Planning Area.

Within the Planning Area are the City limits, Sphere of Influence, and Urban Growth Boundary. The current City limits total 11,917 acres (18.62 square miles) and represents the corporate limits of the City of San Ramon. The Sphere of Influence totals 19,639 acres (30.7 square miles) and encompasses both the City limits and unincorporated areas that are within the future, probable limits of the City. The Urban Growth Boundary totals 13,706 acres (21.4 square miles) and encompasses existing urban development or undeveloped areas adjacent

to urban development anticipated to be developed over the life of the General Plan. No changes to the Sphere of Influence or Urban Growth Boundary have occurred as part of the General Plan 2030 or are proposed as part of the General Plan 2035 update.

The General Plan is legally binding within the City limits and advisory outside of the City limits. The City's boundaries, the existing Sphere of Influence, and the Planning Area are shown in Figure 1-2.

GENERAL PLAN REQUIREMENTS

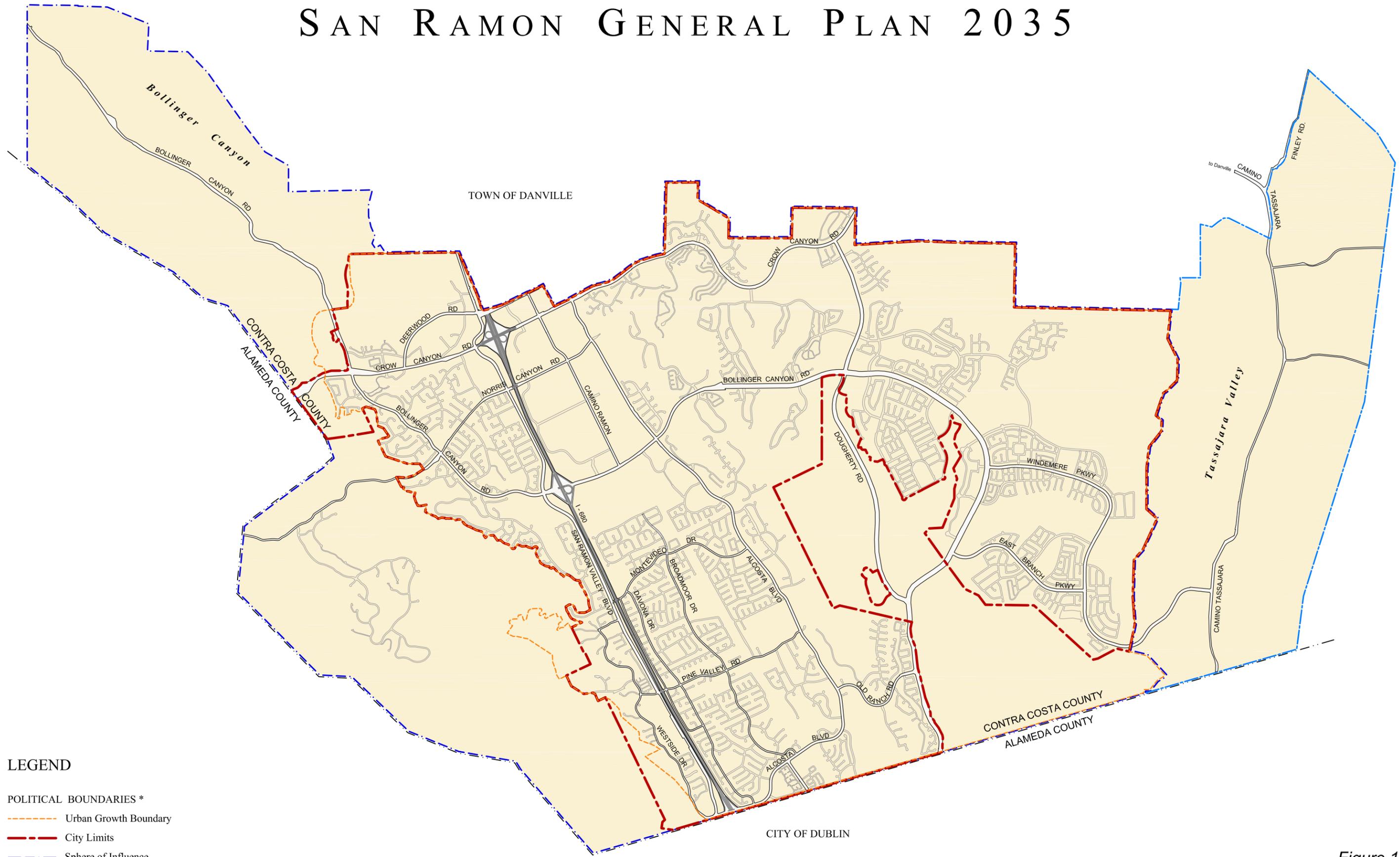
State law requires each California city and county to prepare a general plan. A general plan is defined as “a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning.” 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 allowing considerable flexibility, state planning laws do establish some requirements for the issues that general plans must address. The California Government Code 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.

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LEGEND

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES *

- - - - Urban Growth Boundary
- - - - City Limits
- - - - Sphere of Influence
- - - - Planning Area Boundary
- - - - County Boundary

* The locations of political boundaries are shown adjacent to each other for ease of identification. Actual political boundaries are coterminous when shown as contiguous, parallel, or overlap.



Figure 1-2
Planning Area and Boundaries

1.3 USING THE GENERAL PLAN

GENERAL PLAN STRUCTURE

Plan Organization

The General Plan includes the seven elements required by state law (Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Safety, and Noise) and five other elements that address local concerns and regional requirements (Growth Management, Economic Development, Public Facilities and Utilities, Parks and Recreation, and Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions). Table 1-1 outlines how the required elements correspond with those comprising the General Plan. The General Plan also includes a glossary of terms used in the Plan setting policy and commentary.

Table 1-1: Required General Plan Elements and Chapters in the San Ramon General Plan

<i>Required Element</i>	<i>Where Included in the General Plan</i>
Growth Management ¹	Chapter 3: Growth Management
Land Use	Chapter 4: Land Use
Circulation	Chapter 5: Circulation
Open Space	Chapter 8: Open Space and Conservation
Conservation	Chapter 8: Open Space and Conservation
Safety	Chapter 9: Safety
Noise	Chapter 10: Noise
Housing	Chapter 11: Housing

Note:

¹ Required by Contra Costa County Measure J (2004).

POLICY STRUCTURE

Each element of the General Plan includes brief background information to establish the context for policies in the Element. This background material is neither a comprehensive statement of existing conditions nor does it contain adopted information. This background information is followed by two sets of policies:

- *Guiding Policies* are the City’s statements of its goals and philosophy. The policies are identified in the following format: 1.1-G-1, where “1.1” identifies the General Plan Element number and section and “G-1” identifies the guiding policy number.
- *Implementing Policies* represent commitments to specific actions. They may refer to existing programs or call for establishment of new ones and are identified in the following format: 1.1-I-1, where “1.1” identifies the General Plan Element number and section and “I-1” identifies the implementing policy number.

Together, the guiding and implementing policies articulate a vision for San Ramon that the General Plan seeks to achieve. These policies also provide protection for the City's resources by establishing planning requirements, programs, standards, and criteria for project review. Explanatory material or commentary accompanies some policies. Italicized language provides background information or is intended to guide Plan implementation. Note that explanatory material and commentary language is not binding and does not supersede the text of guiding or implementing policies. Furthermore, the use of "should" or "would" indicates that a statement is advisory, not binding; details will need to be resolved in General Plan implementation. Where the same topic is addressed in more than one chapter, sections and policies are cross-referenced.

GENERAL PLAN INTERPRETATION

The General Plan is a statement of the City's policies, objectives and vision for the future. Common sense and reason should be utilized in interpreting the provisions of the General Plan. In doing so, several principal should be observed:

- The General Plan should be read and interpreted to effectuate the policies and principles stated therein. Many statements are general in nature because specific conditions cannot always be foreseen. All relevant aspects of the General Plan should be viewed with no single aspect viewed in isolation.
- Context should be considered in interpreting the General Plan. The clarifying text in italics is intended to assist in understanding the context and intent of the policies and principles.

1.4 DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE GENERAL PLAN

Full development under the General Plan is referred to as "buildout." Although the General Plan applies to a 20-year planning horizon, it is not intended to specify or anticipate when buildout will actually occur; nor does the designation of a site for a certain use necessarily mean the site will be built/redeveloped with that use in the next 20 years. Refer to the Land Use Element for more detailed analysis of General Plan buildout.

GENERAL PLAN BUILDOUT CHARACTERISTICS

Urban Growth Boundaries

This General Plan includes an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), established in response to Measure G (1999), to promote compact development, discourage urban sprawl, and protect rural lands and open space resources within the Planning Area. Refer to the Urban Growth Boundaries policies in Section 4.6 of the Land Use Element.

Rural Conservation

In order to protect the rural character of Bollinger Canyon and the Westside hills, this General Plan includes a Rural Conservation land use classification. This classification is intended to protect natural features and sensitive habitat. Refer to the Rural Conservation Development policies in Section 4.6 of the Land Use Element.

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Residential Development

In 2014, approximately 27,993 dwelling units exist in the San Ramon Planning Area. The General Plan is anticipated to accommodate a total of 35,385 dwelling units within the Planning Area in 2035.

Non-Residential Development

In 2014, approximately 16.4 million square feet of non-residential floor area exists in the San Ramon Planning Area, which includes retail, commercial, office, industrial, and public space. In total, General Plan buildout will result in approximately 21.6 million square feet of non-residential floor area in the Planning Area. Non-residential development for the Planning Area as not significantly changed from the General Plan 2030 assumptions.

Population

The San Ramon Planning Area's estimated 2014 population is estimated at 78,820 people. The General Plan is anticipated to accommodate a population of approximately 96,174 at buildout. The majority of this new population growth results from the development of housing units already approved, underway, or programmed. The significant increase in current population estimates is based on a population correction associated with the 2010 Census as well as an increase in the average Persons Per Household Citywide.

Employment

The San Ramon Planning Area's estimated 2014 employment is 45,994. The General Plan is expected to accommodate 57,667 jobs at buildout. The majority of these new jobs will result from non-residential development already approved, underway, or programmed.

Jobs/Housing Balance

A city's jobs/housing ratio (jobs to employed residents) would be 1:1 if the number of jobs in the city equaled the number of employed residents. In theory, such a balance would eliminate the need for commuting and would signify a balanced community. A ratio greater than 1.0 indicates a net in-commute (jobs rich); less than 1.0 indicates a net out-commute (housing rich). As shown in Table 1-2, the current jobs/housing ratio in San Ramon is estimated at 1.26, which means that the number of jobs in the City exceeds the number of employed residents by about 26 percent. The addition of significantly more residential units (employed residents) in Dougherty Valley as compared to the relatively flat growth rate in jobs during the same period has resulted in reduction in the jobs-housing ratio dropping from 1.51 to 1.26 since 2000. This positive movement toward and balanced conditions will likely slow as the rate of future residential development decreases with buildout of the General Plan. Absent a change in the existing household employment profile for the number of employed residents per unit, future reductions in the jobs-housing ratio will not keep pace with the historic reductions given the new job growth anticipated by the General Plan.

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Table 1-2: San Ramon Planning Area Jobs – Housing Balance (Employment-Employed Residents)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated Jobs/Employment¹</i>	<i>Estimated Employed Residents/Housing</i>	<i>Estimated Jobs/Housing Ratio</i>
2000	40,030	26,561	1.51
2010	44,350	32,820	1.35
2014	45,994	36,630	1.26
2035	57,667	47,164	1.22

Note:

¹ Estimate of Planning Area employment extrapolated from ABAG jurisdictional Projections 2013 and employed residents extrapolated from the 5-year ACS data for 2012.

1.5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

WORK PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE

Following adoption of the General Plan, City staff will prepare an Implementation Work Program and Schedule for City Council approval. This work program and schedule will be updated annually as part of the budget process and included in the Annual Report on the General Plan (see below). For each implementation policy, the Implementation Schedule will show when it would be implemented, whether it is a high priority action, who would be responsible, what City document would be affected, what the estimated cost would be, and if separate or supplemental funding is needed because the activity is not currently budgeted. In many cases, the General Plan implementation costs would be part of the normal costs of City operations.

LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

The General Plan establishes land use classifications that are broad enough to give the City flexibility in implementing the Plan policy, but clear enough to provide sufficient direction for implementation through zoning, which contains more detailed provisions and standards.

The General Plan includes seven residential land use classifications to provide for development of a full range of housing types. These classifications are based on residential density, or the number of housing units per net acre of developable land, which excludes areas subject to geological, physical, and environmental constraints, as well as areas dedicated to public streets. Nine non-residential land use classifications are included in the General Plan to provide for development of employment and other uses in San Ramon. Additionally, there is a Mixed Use designation that allows both residential and non-residential uses. These classifications are based on development intensity or Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Development in all classifications is required to be within the density/intensity range expressed, although development standards established in the Zoning Ordinance may limit attainment of maximum density or FAR specified in the General Plan.

San Ramon will implement many General Plan policies by means of the City's Zoning Ordinance, and zoning must be consistent with the General Plan if the City's land use, housing, and open space policies are to be realized. A fundamental link between the General

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Plan and the Zoning Ordinance is land use/zoning consistency. Table 1-3 shows how zoning districts in San Ramon are consistent with the land use designations of the General Plan.

The Zoning, Subdivision, and Grading Ordinances will be reviewed and may need to be amended to be consistent with General Plan policies. Other City codes and regulations will also be reviewed for Plan consistency and amended where needed. This effort should be completed within 18 months of Plan adoption. Work on specific area plans and, where appropriate, Planned Development Plans also is expected to be initiated within the first year or two of Plan implementation. Scheduling of this work will depend on individual property owners' development plans and real estate market conditions. The City cannot mandate the timing of private development.

Table 1-3: Consistency Between the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance

<i>General Plan Land Use Designations</i>	<i>Consistent Base Zoning Districts</i>
<i>Residential</i>	
Rural Conservation	RC
Hillside Residential	HR
Single Family Low Density	RE-A, RE-B, RS-12, RS-10
Single Family Low Medium Density	RS-10, RS-7, RS-6
Single Family Medium Density	RS-6, RS-D
Multiple Family High Density	RM, RMH
Multiple Family Very High Density	RH, RVH
<i>Office, Commercial, Industrial</i>	
Office	OL, OA, M-1, M-2
Retail Shopping	CC
Thoroughfare Commercial	CT
<i>Mixed Use</i>	
Mixed Use	CC, MU, CCMU
<i>Community Facilities /Open Space</i>	
Commercial Recreation	CR, P
Golf Course	GC
Public and Semipublic	PS, CR, M-1, M-2
Parks	P
Open Space	OS-1, OS-2, AG, RC

The City's Capital Improvement Program will be the primary means of scheduling and funding infrastructure improvements of citywide benefit. Special benefit assessment districts or other means of financing improvements benefiting specific areas may be used. San Ramon also will

participate in funding infrastructure improvements and, through the City's Housing Trust Fund, affordable housing programs (also known as workforce housing programs) as available.

In many areas, General Plan implementation will depend on actions of other public agencies and of the private sector, which will fund most development expected in the Planning Area. The General Plan will serve a coordinating function for private sector decisions; it will also provide a basis for action on individual development applications.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The City Council has created a number of boards and commissions to advise the Council on policy issues. Some of these boards and commissions also have specific responsibilities for development review and approval. Implementation of the General Plan will involve the Planning Commission, the Parks and Community Services Commission, the Architectural Review Board and the City's eight advisory committees (Arts, Economic Development, Open Space Housing, Library, Senior Citizen, Transportation, and Transportation Demand Management).

The General Plan does not envision any substantive change in the responsibilities assigned to these boards, commissions, and committees. They will be administering new or amended regulations adopted pursuant to Plan policies, and their actions will need to be consistent with the new General Plan.

1.6 KEEPING THE GENERAL PLAN CURRENT

The General Plan is intended to be a dynamic document. As such, the Plan may be subject to more site-specific and comprehensive amendments over time. These amendments may be needed to conform to state or federal law passed after adoption, or to eliminate or modify policies that may become obsolete or unrealistic over time, due to changed conditions, such as the completion of a task or project, development on a site, or adoption of an ordinance or plan.

AMENDMENTS

State law limits the number of times a jurisdiction can amend its general plan to generally no more than four times in one year for a mandatory element (Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise and Safety), although each amendment may include more than one change to the same or multiple general plan elements. This restriction does not apply to optional general plan elements (Growth Management, Economic Development, Public Facilities and Utilities, Parks and Recreation, and Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions), or if the amendment is necessary to allow for the development of workforce housing or to comply with a court decision.

ANNUAL REPORT

The California Government Code requires General Law cities and applicable Charter cities "provide an annual report to the legislative body on the status of the general plan and progress in its implementation" (Government Code § 65400(b)). This report must also 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

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maintenance, improvement, and development of workforce housing (Government Code § 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, along with a work program.

2022 REVIEW

Policy 4.6-1-3 of the Land Use Element provides the opportunity for review of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in the year 2022. If the City determines a review is necessary to assess the City's future needs for housing and employment, this review would be by means of a City voter review to consider the maintenance or amendment of the UGB and related policy. Any amendment to the UGB, greater than 25 acres, would also require City voter approval.

