

# INTRODUCTION



*Aerial photo of Union City's urbanized area with the hills to the east (right) and the baylands to the west (left).*

This General Plan formalizes a long-term vision for the physical, economic, and social evolution of Union City and outlines policies, standards, and programs to guide day-to-day decisions concerning Union City's development. Designed to meet State general plan requirements, the General Plan consists of two documents: this *General Plan Policy Document* and a *General Plan Background Report*.

## **MAJOR THEMES IN THE GENERAL PLAN**

The Union City General Plan is guided by three overarching themes: the Prosperous and Compassionate City, Making Places in Union City, and Services and Support for a Quality Future. These themes are described in the following paragraphs.

### **THE PROSPEROUS AND COMPASSIONATE CITY**

In order for a city to be a compassionate community and support quality of life facilities and programs, it must be economically healthy. Economic prosperity helps support the community programs that citizens value. Likewise, good community services and programs can serve as an economic development tool in attracting and retaining businesses and residents.

The economic vitality and social welfare of a community are clearly linked. An important part of the General Plan Update was spent ensuring that this linkage is reflected in the General Plan.

The "Prosperous and Compassionate City" theme is supported by two elements: the Economic Development Element and Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Element.

## **MAKING PLACES IN UNION CITY**

As Union City nears buildout and begins to redevelop, the community has placed a priority on high quality design of new developments and the enhancement of existing places. The community recognizes the importance of preserving neighborhoods, strengthening the identity of retail and business districts, and enhancing connections throughout the city for pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles and transit. These “place making” elements include architectural richness, beautiful streets and parks, the creation of civic spaces, connections between districts, and the recognition of the natural landscape (the hills and the bay lands) that frames the community.

The “Making Places in Union City” theme is supported by three elements: Land Use Element, Community Design Element, and Transportation Element.

## **SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR A QUALITY FUTURE**

The City must provide services and infrastructure investments to support economic, social and community design goals. High quality urban services (e.g., police and fire protection) are needed to protect the population from possible hazards and to respond during emergencies (e.g., earthquake or floods). A strong infrastructure framework includes transportation, water and sanitation, communication, and energy delivery and conservation. Public health and safety concerns such as nuisances (e.g., noise, odor, hazardous materials) are also addressed.

The “Services and Support for a Quality Future” theme is supported by four elements: Public Facilities and Services Element; Natural and Cultural Resources Element, Health and Safety Element, and Housing Element.

## **SPECIFIC VISIONS**

Within the three major themes, there are more specific visions for the future of Union City. These visions provide the foundation upon which the policies and programs were developed. The visions were generated through an extensive, two-year public participation program. The public’s input was gained from a series of community workshops, public hearings, and three documents that supplemented the General Plan — the Economic Development Strategy; Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Strategy; and Concept Framework Plan (see page 3 for a detailed account of this public participation program). These visions are described below.

### **Economic Development**

- # To create more employment opportunities in the city by intensifying industrial land uses (i.e., transitioning from warehousing to manufacturing and high-tech/R&D development);
- # To redefine Union City as a vital part of Silicon Valley by taking advantage of the city’s many locational assets (i.e., its proximity to I-880, the Dumbarton and San Mateo Bridges, BART and other public transit systems, elite universities, and venture capitalists);

- # To enhance the quality of the city's amenities to make Union City an attractive location for high-tech and corporate offices; and
- # To strengthen the city's job base by enhancing existing commercial centers and business districts.

**Youth, Family, Seniors, & Health**

- # To continue to place a high priority on programs and facilities that serve youth, families and seniors, including recreational, sports, educational, housing, childcare and health services; and
- # To encourage expanded health services and childcare/adult care in the community through private and non-profit organizations.

**Visual Quality**

- # To enhance the distinctive districts within Union City through the preservation of older neighborhoods (such as Old Alvarado and the Decoto) and to enrich the identity of other districts such as the Marketplace and the Station District;
- # To improve Union City's appearance by creating attractive corridors including street, rail lines, and pedestrian pathways; enhancing gateways into the community; and, where urban development skirts the city's hillside and wetland areas, blend the built environment into the community's natural setting;
- # To enhance Union City's neighborhood and community identity by creating a cohesive urban design structure and moving away from automobile-oriented, walled subdivisions; and
- # To ensure the high quality appearance of the city's built environment by encouraging variety in architecture, public arts programs, thematic signage, and streetscape improvements.

**Land Use and Community Development**

- # To create a high-density, mixed-use (residential and commercial) transit village around the intermodal facility by utilizing vacant and underutilized land and redeveloping existing development around the BART station; and
- # To reinforce economic development goals and community design goals by focusing on specific districts, such as the Station District, Central and Alvarado Technology Districts, and Union Landing.

**Environmental Quality**

- # To protect the diversity of the city's natural resources (i.e., creeks, hills, and marshes) by creating a harmonious coexistence with the urban environment.

## Transportation and Circulation

- # To make Union City a pedestrian-friendly city by encouraging the use trails for walking and bicycles as an alternative to the use of private automobiles;
- # To develop Union City as a major regional transportation hub by redeveloping the BART station as an intermodal facility linking multiple modes of transportation in one location; and
- # To support public transit within the city and reduce single-occupant automobile trips.

## HOW THIS GENERAL PLAN WAS PREPARED

The City of Union City embarked on developing this new general plan in April 1999. This updated plan replaces the previous General Plan that was adopted in 1986. The City used an innovative approach in updating the Plan that included preparation of two strategic plan documents and a Concept Framework Plan to assist the public and decision-makers in developing key policies for the General Plan. These reports, along with an extensive public outreach program led by the Planning Commission, proved to be an effective approach to focusing the community's attention on key policy issues.

### Economic Development and Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Strategy

Early in the General Plan Update process, the City prepared an Economic Development Strategy and a Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Strategy to guide the preparation of the General Plan. The City developed these strategies following a series of public workshops that helped to mold citizen concerns and ideas into building blocks for future policy development. The following is a short description of both strategies:

#### *Economic Development Strategy*

The purpose of the Economic Development Strategy is to assess the potential for various types of future economic activity in Union City, to set out the overall framework for economic growth, and to identify strategic actions for key opportunity sites throughout the city.

In mid-1999, the Planning Commission conducted two economic development workshops. The first workshop was held on July 15, 1999, and focused on economic objectives. The public helped to identify the top economic advantages, challenges, and objectives for Union City. On August 7, 1999, the Planning Commission held a second workshop focusing on land use strategies for the City. The public identified important existing business addresses and opportunity sites, identified the types of uses that should be located in opportunity sites, and evaluated the economic implications of their plans.



*Citizens participate in workshop*

The Planning Commission, City staff, and General Plan consultants took the ideas and input gained from the public and molded them into the Economic Development Strategy, which was endorsed by the City Council in February 2000.

### ***Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Strategy***

The purpose of the Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Strategy is to assess the need for additional facilities and services to address the community by focusing on needs of youths, families, and seniors; to set an overall policy framework for addressing the needs of these groups; and to identify strategic actions for addressing these needs.



*Marsh Hawk day camp General Plan workshop*

In mid-1999, the Planning Commission conducted two public workshops. The goal of the first workshop — held on June 11, 1999 — was to identify needs and assets for youths, seniors, and families. The Planning Commission conducted the second workshop on July 24, 1999, and identified the need for partnerships among the City, nonprofits, businesses, faith organizations, and surrounding jurisdictions. The information gathered from these two workshops served as the foundation for the Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Strategy, which was endorsed by the City Council in February 2000.

### **Concept Framework Plan**

Following direction by the City Council on the two strategy documents in February 2000, the Planning Commission held community workshops to begin to translate the strategy recommendations into physical development proposals. The Planning Commission held the first of these citywide workshops on June 1, 2000. This workshop asked participants to identify how to enhance existing and create new places, and how to support these choices with community services.

The second workshop on July 19, 2000, explored neighborhood planning objectives for Union City's eastside neighborhoods. The participants worked as members of planning teams to identify important existing and future community places; existing and needed connections; and priority public investments.

The third workshop on July 24, 2000, explored neighborhood planning objectives for Union City's westside neighborhoods. Similar to the eastside neighborhood workshop, the participants worked as members of planning teams to identify important existing and future community places; existing and needed connections; and priority public investments. Based on the input from these workshops, the Planning Commission, City staff, and General Plan consultants prepared a Concept Framework Plan. This Plan outlines an integrated set of land use, community design, and circulation concepts, works as a bridge between the Economic Development and Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Strategies, and the Draft General Plan Policy Document.

The Planning Commission held two work sessions on September 28, 2000, and October 19, 2000, to review the Concept Framework Plan. The product of the work sessions was a revised Concept Framework Plan which includes expanded detail, provides recommendations, and outlines public comments. On November 28, 2000, the City Council endorsed the Concept Framework Plan with additional policy directives.



*Planning Commission public workshop at the Ruggieri Senior Center*

After the City Council approval, the Planning Commission held two briefing sessions for other City commissions and committees on December 11 and 14. The Redevelopment Agency Project Area Committee, the Historical Museum Committee, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Seniors Commission, the Human Relations Commission and the Arts Council attended these public sessions. Comments from these two hearings were incorporated into the Policy Document.

### **Draft General Plan**

Following City Council direction, the Planning Commission, City staff, and the General Plan consultants drafted the individual elements of the General Plan. The Planning Commission completed its in-depth review of the General Plan Policy Document in April of 2001, prior to public release. The first public review draft was released in June 2001, followed by a second release in August 2001, and a third release in November 2001. A draft EIR was released in October for a 45-day public review period. The Planning Commission held two public hearings on the EIR in November 2001. The City Council then held three public work sessions in late November and December. In total, there have been nine public workshops, and over 40 public meetings, including work sessions and public hearings prior to the release of the 2002 General Plan.

## **PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE GENERAL PLAN**

A general plan is a legal document that serves as a community's "blue print" or "constitution" for land use and development. State law requires that every city and county in California adopt a general plan that is *comprehensive* and *long-term*. The plans must outline proposals 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 (California Government Code Section 65300 et seq.).

General plans must be comprehensive both in their *geographic coverage* and in the *range of subjects* they cover. The planning area for the Union City General Plan coincides with the city limits.

General plans must be long-term in perspective. General plan time horizons vary, but typically range anywhere from 15 to 25 years into the future. The Union City General Plan time horizon is the year 2020.

Every general plan in California must address seven topics or "elements." The importance of each of the seven required topics varies from community to community. Following are brief descriptions of what State law requires be addressed in each of the seven elements.

1. The ***Land Use Element*** designates the general distribution and intensity of all uses of the land in the community. This includes residential uses, commercial uses, industrial uses, public facilities, and open space, among others.
2. The ***Circulation Element*** identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major transportation facilities, including major roadways, rail and transit, and airports.
3. The ***Housing Element*** is a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all segments of the community and all economic groups, and a set of policies and programs for providing adequate housing.
4. The ***Conservation Element*** addresses the conservation; development; and use of natural resources including water, forests, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits.
5. Overlapping the conservation element, the ***Open Space Element*** details plans and measures for preserving open space for: protection of natural resources—such as wildlife habitat; the managed production of resources—such as agricultural and timber land; outdoor recreation—such as parks, trails, and scenic vistas; and public health and safety—such as areas subject to geologic hazards, tsunamis, flooding, and fires.
6. The ***Noise Element*** identifies and appraises noise problems and includes policies to protect the community from excessive noise.
7. The ***Safety Element*** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards.

The general plan may also address other topics that the community feels are relevant to its development. In Union City these optional topics included economic development; youth, family, seniors and health; and community design.

For each locally-relevant mandated issue or optional issue addressed, the general plan must do the following:

- C Describe the nature and significance of the issue in the community (*Background Information*)
- C Set-out policy in text and maps for how the jurisdiction will respond to the issue (*Policy*)
- C Outline specific programs for implementing policies (*Implementation Programs*)

The format and structure of the general plan is left to local discretion, but regardless of the format or issues addressed, all substantive parts of the plan must be consistent with one another (i.e., *internally consistent*). For instance, the policies in the land use element must be consistent with those of the housing element and vice versa.

The *Union City General Plan* has been prepared specifically to comply with (and as adopted does comply with) State general plan requirements (Government Code Section 65300 et seq.) and related State mandates.

The following table describes the relationship of various elements of the *Union City General Plan* to the seven State-mandated general plan elements.

| <b>Relationship of Union City General Plan Elements to State-Mandated Elements</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>State-Mandated Elements</b>   | <b>General Plan Policy Document</b>  | <b>General Plan Background Report</b>   |
| <b>Land Use Element</b>  | <b>Land Use Element</b>  | <b>Chapter 3 - Land Use and Population</b>  |
| <b>Circulation Element</b>   | <b>Transportation Element<br/>Public Facilities and Services<br/>Element</b>             | <b>Chapter 5 - Transportation/Circulation<br/>Chapter 7 - Public Facilities and Service</b> |
| <b>Housing Element</b>   | <b>Separate Housing Element</b>  |   |
| <b>Conservation Element</b>  | <b>Natural and Cultural Resources</b>  | <b>Chapter 8 - Natural and Cultural Resources</b>   |
| <b>Open Space Element</b>  | <b>Natural and Cultural Resources<br/>Land Use Element<br/>Health and Safety Element</b> | <b>Chapter 8 - Natural and Cultural Resources</b>   |
| <b>Safety Element</b>  | <b>Health and Safety Element</b>   | <b>Chapter 6 - Health and Safety</b>  |
| <b>Noise Element</b>   | <b>Health and Safety Element</b>   | <b>Chapter 6 - Health and Safety</b>  |
| <b>Optional</b>  | <b>Economic Development Element</b>  | <b>Chapter 1 - Economic and Fiscal Conditions</b>   |
| <b>Optional</b>  | <b>Youth, Family, Seniors and Health Element</b>   | <b>Chapter 2 - Youth, Family, Seniors and Health</b>  |
| <b>Optional</b>  | <b>Community Design Element</b>  | <b>Chapter 4 - Community Design</b>   |

## **IMPLEMENTING THE GENERAL PLAN**

Carrying out the plan following its adoption requires numerous individual actions and ongoing programs involving City departments, special districts, non-profit organizations, and many other public agencies and private organizations. The legal authority for City actions and programs derives from two essential powers of local government: corporate and police powers. Using their “corporate power,” local governments collect money through bonds, fees, assessments, and taxes, and spend it to provide services and facilities such as police and fire protection, streets, water systems, sewage disposal facilities, drainage facilities, and parks. Using their “police power,” local governments regulate the use of private property through zoning, subdivision, and building regulations in order “to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the public.” The general plan provides the formal framework for the exercise of these powers by local officials.

To ensure that the policies and proposals of the general plan are systematically implemented, State law since the early 1970s has increasingly insisted that the actions and decisions of local government concerning both its own projects and the private projects it approves are consistent with its adopted general plan. The courts have supported and furthered this trend through their interpretations of State law. Zoning must be consistent with the general plan. Local government approval of subdivisions must be consistent with the general plan. Local public works projects must be consistent with the general plan. The same is true for development agreements, redevelopment plans, specific plans, and many other plans and actions of cities and counties.

## **REVISING AND AMENDING THE GENERAL PLAN**

The general plan is a long-term document with a planning horizon of 15 to 25 years. To achieve its purposes, the plan must be flexible enough to respond to changing conditions and at the same time specific enough to provide predictability and consistency in guiding day-to-day land use and development decisions. Over the years, conditions and community needs change and new opportunities arise; the plan needs to keep up with these changes and new opportunities. Every year the Planning Commission should review the plan’s implementation programs to assess the City’s progress in carrying out the plan. Every five to ten years, the plan should be thoroughly reviewed and updated as necessary. From time to time, the City will be asked to consider proposals for specific amendments to the plan. The City will initiate some of these proposals itself, but most will be initiated by private property owners and developers. Most general plan amendments involve changes in land use designations for individual parcels.

State law limits general plan amendments to four times per year, but each amendment can include multiple changes. Like the adoption of the general plan itself, general amendments are subject to environmental review, public notice, and hearing requirements and must not create inconsistencies with other parts of the plan.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The Union City General Plan consists of two documents: the *Background Report* and the *Policy Document*. The *Background Report*, which inventories and analyzes existing conditions and trends in Union City, provides the formal supporting documentation for general plan policy. It address the following eight subject areas:

- C Economic and Fiscal Conditions
- C Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health
- C Land Use and Demographics
- C Community Design
- C Transportation/Circulation
- C Health and Safety
- C Public Facilities and Services
- C Natural and Cultural Resources
- C Housing

This *Policy Document* contains explicit statements of goals, policies, standards, implementation programs, and quantified objectives that constitute the formal policy of Union City for land use, development, and environmental quality. The *Policy Document* comprises the following eight elements organized under the three General Plan themes:

### *The Prosperous and Compassionate City*

- C Economic Development Element
- C Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Element

### *Making Places in Union City*

- C Land Use Element
- C Community Design Element
- C Transportation Element

### *Services and Support for a Quality Future*

- C Health & Safety Element
- C Public Facilities and Services Element
- C Natural and Cultural Resources Element
- C Housing Element

Each element includes goal statements relating to different sub-issues or different aspects of the issue addressed in the section. Under each goal statement, there are policies which amplify the goal statement. Implementation programs at the end of each section describe briefly the proposed action, the City agencies or departments with primary responsibility for carrying out the program, and the time frame for accomplishing the program. The Land Use Element also describes the designations appearing on the Land Use Diagram and outlines the legally-required standards of density and intensity for these land use designations. The Transportation Element describes the proposed circulation system, including a description of the street classification system.

The following statements define goals, policies, standards, implementation programs, and quantified objectives as they are used in this document:

**Goal:** The ultimate purpose of an effort stated in a way that is general in nature and immeasurable.

**Policy:** A specific statement in text or diagram guiding action and implying clear commitment.

**Standard:** A specific, often quantified, guideline incorporated in a policy or implementation program, defining the relationship between two or more variables. Standards can often translate directly into regulatory controls.

**Implementation Program:** An action, procedure, program, or technique that carries out general plan policy. Implementation programs also specify primary responsibility for carrying out the action and a time frame for its accomplishment.

To interpret and understand the City's overall land use and development philosophy, users of this *Policy Document* should remember that the goals, policies, and programs articulated in the Plan are as important, if not more so, than the Land Use Diagram. Accordingly, any review of development proposals must consider this *Policy Document* as a whole, rather than focusing solely on the Land Use Diagram or on particular policies and programs.

## REGIONAL SETTING AND PLANNING AREA

The city of Union City is located in Alameda County on the east side of the San Francisco Bay. Union City is bounded by the city of Hayward on the north and west sides, the city of Fremont on the south and east sides, and the salt marsh on the west. Incorporated in 1959, Union City encompasses approximately 11,520 acres or 18 square miles. The western half of the city lies on a flat coastal plain and is intensely developed, while the remainder is comprised of hillside areas devoted mainly to agricultural activities (i.e., grazing) and permanent open space. Given the physical constraints in and around the city (i.e., the saltwater marsh, city of Fremont, city of Hayward, and the hilly eastern topography), significant expansion of the current city limits is unlikely.

In 2000, the city had a population of 67,240, making Union City the 9<sup>th</sup> largest incorporated city in Alameda County. Single family residential development is the predominant land use in the city. The community also has a sizable industrial base located primarily in three industrial parks. Commercial activities are limited primarily to those uses serving the immediate needs of residential neighborhoods. Union Landing, now developing, offers regional shopping opportunities which have not been available in Union City until now.

### Planning Area

For the purposes of this General Plan, Union City's Planning Area is coterminous with the city's existing 2001 city limits. Therefore, the term "Planning Area" in this report is used interchangeably with the term "city limits."

## **HISTORY OF UNION CITY**

Union City has a rich and diverse history. The early settlement patterns of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are still visible within Union City today. The small communities of Decoto and Alvarado, respectively, comprise the east and west sides of the city. Alvarado developed around agricultural and grazing practices as well as salt and beet sugar manufacturing established along Alameda Creek. Decoto was developed because of its proximity to the Central Pacific Railroad line. Most of this part of Alameda County retained its rural character into the 1950s.

### **Prehistoric And Native American Inhabitants of The Area**

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish and European settlers, the Native American presence was strong on the eastern shoreline of the San Francisco Bay. The people native to California developed numerous tribal territories that typically consisted of one central and permanent village, as well as additional seasonal villages distributed throughout this area. The Spaniards who explored the area during the late 1700s called the native Indians Costanoans, roughly translated as “coastal people.”

### **The Mission Period And Early Pioneer Settlement**

The missions brought the first permanent settlements to the area. The purpose of the Franciscan missions was to convert the Native American population to the Roman Catholic faith. Mission San Jose was settled on high ground overlooking the San Francisco Bay, approximately eight miles south off present day Decoto. The Mission was constructed between 1797 and 1809 using Indian labor. Indians lived at the Mission performing daily chores until 1834 when the liberation of Indians was enforced by the Governor of California (under Mexico) and administrators were appointed to take charge of all property in Alta California (Northern California).

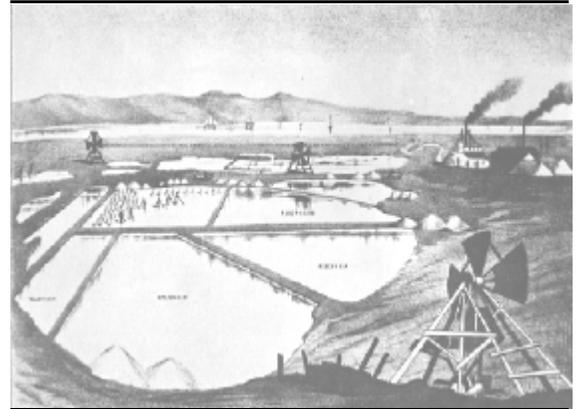
The area surrounding present-day Union City developed slowly after the Mission’s establishment. Juan Babbit Alvarado was the governor of Alta California in 1836. Under his tenure as governor, Alvarado gave away much of Mission San Jose grazing land in the form of grants. The two Mexican land grants that made up what is today Union City include Rancho Potrero del los Cerritos in the Alvarado area and the second, near Decoto, was Rancho Arroyo del Alameda. The Rancho Potrero del Los Cerritos spanned the present areas of Alvarado, Centerville and Irvington, and encompassed 10,610 acres.

In 1846, a group of Mormons, including John Horner, moved into the abandoned Mission San Jose barracks. Horner started a general store with Henry and Napoleon Smith. Within the next few years, Horner was instrumental in expanding the area by building wharves, warehouses, farms, and irrigation systems, as well as developing a town of eight blocks. He also purchased a Sacramento Steamer named “The Union” to transport crops and passengers to San Francisco from the new town of Union City, named after the steamer. The small town was later renamed New Haven and then Alvarado. The use of the name Union City came full circle when this portion of Southern Alameda County incorporated in 1959 and was renamed Union City.

## Agricultural Development

Agriculture has been a constant and often profitable prospect in Alameda County. With its fertile soil, marshes, and proximity to San Francisco, farmers were able to easily exploit the resources located in the county. Cattle ranching was the center of life in the early 1800s along with garden crops, fruits, and grain. Since the area had an abundance of water, feed, and land, raising cattle, poultry, and sheep was profitable for local farmers. In the 1930s, the area was the largest producer of rhubarb in the United States.

The area was also ranked as the highest producer of mushrooms and currants in California. In addition, this section of the county produced peas, potatoes, string beans, sweet corn, spinach, cabbage, carrots, hay barley, wheat, and oats. Beginning in the 1920s, floriculture and fruits become an important agricultural industry for Southern Alameda County. Alvarado was specifically known for salt harvesting, as well as the first and largest production of sugar from sugar-beets.

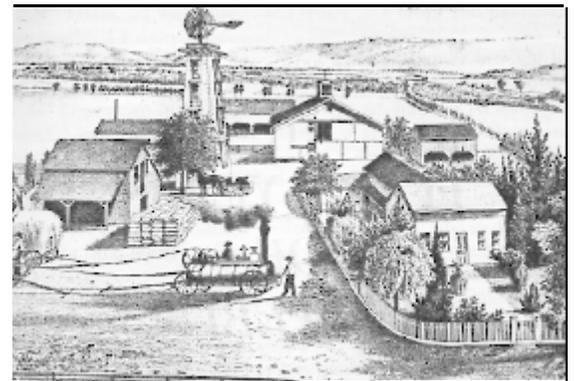


*Salt works near Alvarado*

## Development of Alvarado

Named after the Mexican governor from 1836 to 1842, John B. Alvarado, the town of Alvarado was one of the early settlements in Southern Alameda County. Alvarado grew around the creek and was laid out in a traditional grid iron pattern. During the early 1850s the town included a tavern, store, two warehouses, and several homes. In 1853 New Haven (adjacent to Alvarado) was made the county seat. However, once the county seat moved to San Leandro in 1856 (then Oakland in 1873), Alvarado dwindled in political importance. Nonetheless, Alvarado remained important during the nineteenth century for its contributions to the salt and sugar-beet industry.

Sugar manufacturing was begun in the 1870's by Ebenezer (E. H.) Dyer, who at the request of his brother moved to California to help manage a farm. The plant continued operating till 1914, when it closed. It reopened one year later to help supply troops during World War I, and continued to produce sugar under different owners till 1975. The sugar processing factory was a significant contributor to the region's economy. All buildings associated with the sugar company were demolished in the late 1970s.



*Residence of C. J. Whipple, Alvarado*

## Development of Decoto

The development of Decoto can be attributed to its proximity to the railroad lines and the efforts of a French-Canadian named Ezra Decoto. In 1867, Decoto and his brothers, Adolphus and John, purchased land along the old Mission Road when they heard rumors of impending railroad development. After the Central Pacific Railroad right-of-way was determined, the brothers sold 284 acres to a group of local land promoters who called themselves the Decoto Land Company. A contract was made with Oakland and the Decoto Land Company to plant 37,000 evergreens and lay out the railroad town of Decoto. In addition, the Decoto Land Company purchased land from Ezra Decoto to establish a station for the railroad. Both the Western Pacific Line and the Central Pacific rail lines came through Decoto. With two rail lines passing through this small town, prosperity for Decoto was predicted; however, a large scale development at Decoto never materialized. After several years a small town formed around the central railroad station.

The small town of Decoto was laid out on a strict grid that fit into a triangular-shaped town plan. The town had a diverse business sector, including a concrete mixer, a repair shop for equipment, two large storage warehouses, and an auto storage facility. Warehouses for grain and hay are also known to have existed, along with produce warehouses. These facilities were located near the railroad tracks between H and J Streets, for easy transfer of goods.

In the hills above the town of Decoto is the Masonic Home, which has been a landmark for over 100 years. Just outside of Decoto, southeasterly of Decoto Road, the Pacific States Steel Corporation (PSSC) began operation in 1937. PSSC was a major local employer for Union City and the vicinity until its closure in 1977. The PSSC facilities were demolished over the course of several years from 1992-1997 and the land is now being redeveloped for residential and commercial industrial uses.



*Historic Masonic Home in the hills above Union City*

## The 1920's to 40's

As the 20<sup>th</sup> Century progressed and the population of the Bay Area increased, Southern Alameda expanded both economically and residentially to accommodate this growth. Land in this Bay Area region remained relatively inexpensive, attracting a number of immigrant communities to the region including those of Spanish, Mexican, Japanese, and Portuguese descent. These immigrants established their homes in and near Decoto and Alvarado, and worked for local farmers, salt and sugar production facilities, as well as mill and other industrial work that came to dominate Southern Alameda County.

## The 1950's to The 1990's

After World War II, Southern Alameda County flourished in population and industry. Until the war, the towns of Alvarado and Decoto were small with approximately 2,000 people in each community. By 1955 the towns of Hayward, Newark, and Fremont became incorporated with interest in expansion into Alvarado and Decoto.

Fearing annexation from Hayward, the citizens of Decoto and Alvarado petitioned the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to incorporate New Haven, Alvarado, and Decoto into one town. On January 13, 1959, the Board approved the incorporation of Union City. Originally, the incorporated town had approximately 6,000 residents.



*New home construction*

In 1962, the surrounding hills to the east were annexed into the city, increasing the population of Union City to approximately 7,000. At this time, Union City was still predominantly agricultural with residential development focused in the historic establishments of Alvarado and Decoto. Some industrial lands had begun to develop in the areas we now call the Alvarado Business Park and the DIPSA industrial area. During the 1960s and 70s, the land use pattern that is dominated by suburban, single-family home developments and industrial parks shaped much of Union City's land use pattern. By 1983 the population had grown to roughly 45,000. In 2000, Union City is the home to more than 67,000 residents.



*Willowbrook Business Center*

**Present Day Union City**

Growth in the last ten years has been continuous in Union City. Between 1997 and 1999, 1,426 new homes have been approved and built. The area known as the Union Landing has been redeveloped in recent years to be a sub-regional entertainment and retail center along I-880. New development has continued to infill in the industrial parks and several local businesses have expanded significantly. A major planning effort is redefining the BART station area as a transit village with office, R & D, and residential uses.



*Kaiser Permanente campus expansion of medical office building*