

## 3 Environmental Setting

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According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15125, an EIR must include a description of the existing physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project to provide the baseline condition against which project-related impacts are compared. In order to fulfill this requirement, and to inform the reader of the context in which the 2040 General Plan would be carried out, this section describes current environmental conditions in and around Union City. More detailed setting information is included within the impact analysis for each issue area (as detailed in Sections 4.1 through 4.18).

### 3.1 Regional Setting

Union City is located in western Alameda County on the east side of the San Francisco Bay Area, west of the Diablo Range, at the edge of Silicon Valley. The City limits are roughly bounded by the city of Hayward to the north and west, the unincorporated Alameda County lands to the east, and the City of Fremont to the south.

The western half of Union City lies on a flat coastal plain and is intensely developed, while the eastern half comprises hillside areas which are primarily undeveloped and mostly designated as open space and agriculture.

Surface drainage through the area flows toward the San Francisco Bay. Elevations within Union City range from about 0 feet to 1,850 feet above sea level. The Mediterranean climate of the region and coastal influence produce moderate temperatures year round, with rainfall concentrated in the winter months. The region is subject to various natural hazards, including: earthquakes, landslides, dam failure, drought, extreme heat, fault rupture, flood, liquefaction, and wildfires.

### 3.2 Physical Setting

#### 3.2.1 General Geographic Setting

Union City encompasses approximately 18 square miles, and according to the 2040 General Plan approximately 58 percent of the City's land area is open space/agriculture. Union City is located between the City of Hayward to the north and west, a salt marsh to the west, and the City of Fremont to the south. Unincorporated lands of Alameda County form the eastern boundary of the City in the vicinity of Palomares Road. Union City is located approximately 20 miles north of the city of San Jose and 20 miles south of the City of Oakland, the Alameda County seat. The foothills of the Coastal Range are located east of the Highway 238 (Mission Boulevard) and form a scenic backdrop for the urbanized area of the City.

Interstate 880 (I-880), an eight-lane freeway, bisects Union City from north to south, providing regional access to Union City and connecting it to the rest of the San Francisco Bay Area. State Route 238 (Mission Boulevard) also connects Union City to the regional transportation system. Three active railroads and a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) line traverse Union City, which is also served by Union City Transit, Dumbarton Express and AC Transit bus lines. Figure 2-1 in Section 2, *Project Description*, shows Union City's regional location.

Union City is a residential community where most of the development consists of 1- or 2-story buildings, and is dominated by low-density residential neighborhoods connected by an automobile-oriented street pattern. Most of Union City's urban development is located west of State Route 238, which is also called Mission Boulevard.

### 3.2.2 Topography and Drainage

Union City is within the Alameda Creek watershed, and the area drains west toward the San Francisco Bay. The western, urbanized half of Union City is characterized by low-lying, nearly level land around the San Francisco Bay. The eastern half of Union City is characterized by strongly sloping topography that is part of the northwest-trending Coastal Range.

### 3.2.3 Climate

The climate of Union City is a cold-summer Mediterranean climate, characterized by dry, mild summers and moderately moist, cool winters. Temperatures in Union City have historically averaged about 58 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) and are projected to rise between 3.2 and 5.5°F by 2090 (Union City 2015). Union City receives most of its precipitation during the months of October through May, though rainfall is most heavily concentrated between December and February.

## 3.3 Demographics

Union City's population has grown rapidly since incorporation of the Alvarado and Decoto neighborhoods in 1959. Growth in Union City has outpaced that of Alameda County and the State of California as a whole. Since 1990 Union City population has increased 32.7 percent, resulting in an estimated city population of approximately 73,000 people in 2018 (Union City 2015).

Union City has a higher percent of families and married couples than Alameda County. However, the population of Union City is aging, and there is currently an increasing percentage of residents over age 45 and a decreasing percentage of residents younger than 45.

Compared to Alameda County, Union City is more ethnically diverse, with about half the percentage of white non-Hispanic residents compared to Alameda County, and over 45 percent of City residents were born outside the U.S.

As of 2018, household size in Union City is 3.51 persons per household (DOF 2018). As shown in Table 2-2, in Section 2, *Project Description*, there are an estimated 20,498 dwelling units in Union City. These consist of 14,918 single family units and 5,580 multifamily units (Mintier Harnish 2018).

## 3.4 Cumulative Development

CEQA defines cumulative impacts as two or more individual actions that, when considered together, are considerable or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be insignificant when analyzed separately, but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. Cumulative impact analysis allows an EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

Because the proposed project is comprised of a General Plan, cumulative impacts are treated somewhat differently than would be the case for a project-specific development. CEQA Guidelines

Section 15130 provides the following direction relative to cumulative impact analysis and states that the following elements are necessary for an adequate discussion of environmental impacts:

A summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include: a general plan, regional transportation plan, or plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A summary of projections may also be contained in an adopted or certified prior environmental document for such a plan. Such projections may be supplemented with additional information such as a regional modeling program. Any such document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City limits. In addition, the General Plan analysis considers cumulative traffic impacts from a regional perspective because traffic modeling was based on regional trips and includes vehicle trips that pass through Union City. The regional trip estimates are incorporated into the air quality, greenhouse gas, noise, and traffic EIR sections to incorporate cumulative impacts in General Plan analysis for traffic growth occurring outside the City. Other impacts, such as geology and soils and cultural resources impacts, are site specific and would not result in an overall cumulative impact from growth outside of the City. Therefore, the analysis of project impacts also constitutes the cumulative analysis.

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