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GLOSSARY


This glossary defines acronyms and abbreviations used in the General Plan and explains the technical terms used. Definitions come from several sources, including the California Office of Planning and Research; the California Institute for Local Government; and the American Planning Association Glossary of Zoning, Development, and Planning Terms.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AB:	Assembly Bill	CAL OES:	California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
ABAG:	Association of Bay Area Governments	CAO:	County Administrator's Office
ADA:	Americans with Disabilities Act	CAAP:	Climate Action and Adaptation Plan
ALUC:	Airport Land Use Commission (Contra Costa County)	CARB:	California Air Resources Board
ALUCP:	Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (Contra Costa County)	CARE:	Community Air Risk Evaluation
ARPD:	Ambrose Recreation and Park District	CCCCD:	Contra Costa Community College District
BAAQMD:	Bay Area Air Quality Management District	CCCOE:	Contra Costa County Office of Education
BART:	Bay Area Rapid Transit	CCCSD:	Central Contra Costa Sanitary District
BBID:	Byron-Bethany Irrigation District	CCCSO:	Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office
BIPOC:	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	CCCFCWCD:	Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
BOS:	Board of Supervisors	CCCFPD:	Contra Costa County Fire Protection District
BSD:	Byron Sanitary District	CCFPD:	Crockett-Carquinez Fire Protection District
BUSD:	Byron Union School District	CCHS:	Contra Costa Health Services Department
CAL FIRE:	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection	CCHMP:	Contra Costa Health Services Hazardous Materials Programs
		CCWD:	Contra Costa Water District
		CDPR:	California Department of Parks and Recreation
		CEQA:	California Environmental Quality Act
		CERT:	Community Emergency Response Team



CIP:	Capital Improvement Program	EPA:	Environmental Protection Agency (US)
CNEL:	Community Noise Equivalent Level	EV:	Electric Vehicle
CSA:	County Service Area	FAR:	Floor Area Ratio
CSD:	Community Services District or Canyon School District	FEMA:	Federal Emergency Management Agency
CUPA:	Certified Unified Program Agency	FHSZ:	Fire Hazard Severity Zone
dB:	Decibel	FMMP:	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
dba:	A-Weighted Sound Level	GHG:	Greenhouse Gas
DCD:	Department of Conservation and Development (Contra Costa County)	GPA:	General Plan Amendment
DNL:	Day/Night Average Sound Level	GSA:	Groundwater Sustainability Agency
DOC:	Department of Conservation (State)	GSP:	Groundwater Sustainability Plan
DPC:	Delta Protection Commission	HCP/NCCP:	East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan
DTSC:	Department of Toxic Substances Control (State)	HHW:	Household Hazardous Waste
du:	Dwelling Unit	HOV:	High-Occupancy Vehicle
du/acre:	Dwelling Units Per Acre	HUB Zone:	Historically Underutilized Business Zone
DWD:	Diablo Water District	I-:	Interstate
DWR:	Department of Water Resources (State)	IPM:	Integrated Pest Management
EBMUD:	East Bay Municipal Utility District	ISD:	Ironhouse Sanitary District
EBRPD:	East Bay Regional Park District	JSUSD:	John Swett Unified School District
ECCID:	East Contra Costa Irrigation District	KESD:	Knightsen Elementary School District
EIR:	Environmental Impact Report	KFPD:	Kensington Fire Protection District
EMS:	Emergency Medical Service	LAFCO:	Local Agency Formation Commission
EOC:	Emergency Operations Center (Contra Costa County)	LEED:	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
EOP:	Emergency Operations Plan (Contra Costa County)	Leq:	Equivalent Sound Level



LHMP	Local Hazard Mitigation Plan	RTP:	Regional Transportation Plan
LOS:	Level of Service	RWQCB:	Regional Water Quality Control Board
LUHSD:	Liberty Union High School District	SB:	Senate Bill
MAC:	Municipal Advisory Council	SMARA:	Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (State)
MDUSD:	Mt. Diablo Unified School District	SMGB:	State Mining and Geology Board
MOA:	Military Operations Area	SOI:	Sphere of Influence
MOFD:	Moraga-Orinda Fire District	SR-:	State Route
MOTCO:	Military Ocean Terminal Concord	SRVFPD:	San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding	SSD:	Stege Sanitary District
MRA:	Mineral Resource Area	SWRCB:	State Water Resources Control Board
MTC:	Metropolitan Transportation Commission	TAC:	Toxic Air Contaminant
MVSD:	Mt. View Sanitary District	TDM:	Transportation Demand Management
NAHC:	Native American Heritage Commission	ULL:	Urban Limit Line
NHA:	National Heritage Area	USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture
NPDES:	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System	USFWS:	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
OES:	Office of Emergency Services (Contra Costa County)	USGS:	United States Geological Survey
PCA:	Priority Conservation Area	VMT:	Vehicle Miles Traveled
PDA:	Priority Development Area	WCCUSD:	West Contra Costa Unified School District
PPA:	Priority Production Area	WCWD:	West County Wastewater District
PG&E:	Pacific Gas and Electric Company	ZEV:	Zero-Emissions Vehicle
RCD:	Resource Conservation District (Contra Costa County)		
RHNA:	Regional Housing Needs Allocation		
RHFPD:	Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District		
RSD:	Rodeo Sanitary District		



TERMINOLOGY

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). A dwelling unit that provides complete independent living facilities and is located on the same lot as, and is subordinate to, a primary residence. ADUs include permanent provisions for living, sleeping, cooking and sanitation.

Acreage, Gross. The land area of a development site that exists prior to any dedications for public use, health, and safety purposes.

Acreage, Net. The portion of a development site that remains after dedication of land for public facilities, parks and open space, rights-of-way, and easements.

Action. A measure, procedure, or activity that helps the County achieve a specific goal. An action is something concrete that can and will be completed. (see “Goal”)

Active Transportation Plan. A plan to enhance safety and mode share for active transportation, which comprises any self-propelled, human-powered travel, such as walking and bicycling.

Adaptation. Making changes in response to current or anticipated future conditions (such as the increased frequency and intensity of climate-related hazards), usually to reduce harm and take advantage of new opportunities.

Adapting to Rising Tides. A program of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission to “provide staff support, guidance, tools, and information to help agencies and organizations understand, communicate, and begin to resolve complex climate change issues.”¹

Adaptive Capacity. The “combination of the strengths, attributes, and resources available to an individual, community, society, or organization that can be used to prepare for and undertake actions to reduce adverse impacts, moderate harm, or exploit beneficial opportunities.”²

Adverse Impact. A negative consequence for the physical, social, or economic environment resulting from an action or project.

Agricultural Tourism. A form of tourism, also known as agritourism, that involves guests visiting working farms and ranches to observe, and sometimes participate in, farming practices and purchase locally grown products.

Air Quality Index. An index used by the US Environmental Protection Agency to report daily air quality for five major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act: ground-level ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide.


Archaeological Resource. Material evidence of past human activity found below the surface of ground or water, portions of which may be visible above the surface.

Asset. A valued feature of a community. Assets may include buildings and institutions, infrastructure, community services, ecosystems, and economic drivers.

Benefit Assessment District. A financing mechanism established to provide public infrastructure to a defined area. Property owners within the district (i.e., the area that receives the benefit) pay an assessment to cover the cost of constructing and/or maintaining the public facility.

¹ Adapting to Rising Tides, “About Us,” <https://www.adaptingtorisingtides.org/about/>, accessed June 15, 2023.

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Annex II: Glossary,” ed. K. J. Mach, S. Planton, and C. von Stechow, in *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*, ed. Core Writing Team, R. K. Pachauri, and L. A. Meyer (Geneva, Switzerland: IPCC, 2014), p. 117–130, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>.



Bike Lane (Class II facility). A corridor for exclusive use by bicycles and micromobility devices, existing on a street or roadway in addition to vehicular lanes used by automobiles. Bicycle lanes are identified by signage and pavement markings.

Bike Path (Class I facility). A paved route, not on a street or roadway, expressly reserved for bicycles and micromobility devices traversing an otherwise unpaved area. Bicycle paths typically provide travel routes not provided by the road system.

Bike Route (Class III facility). A facility shared with automobiles and identified only by signage. Bicycle routes have no pavement markings.

Bikeway (Separated) (Class IV facility). A facility for exclusive use by bicycles and micromobility devices that is physically separated from vehicular lanes by islands, curbs, flexible or inflexible posts, on-street parking spaces, or other delineators.

Buffer. An area established between potentially conflicting land uses, which, depending on the potential impact, may use setbacks, landscaping, or structural barriers such as buildings to minimize the conflict.

Building. A type of structure with a roof supported by walls or columns that is permanently or semi-permanently attached to the ground and intended for shelter of people, animals, or property. (see “Structure”)

Building Code. Standards adopted by the State of California governing construction, alteration, demolition, occupancy, or other use of buildings and structures. The State regulations are substantially the same as those contained in the most recent editions of the Uniform Building Code, Uniform Housing Code, Uniform Plumbing Code, Uniform Mechanical Code, and the National Electric Code. Local governments may adopt stricter standards under certain circumstances.

Buildout. Development of land to its full potential, or theoretical capacity, as permitted under current or proposed planning or zoning designations.

California Environmental Quality Act. Legislation and corresponding procedural components established in 1970 by the State of California to require environmental review for projects anticipated to result in adverse impacts to the environment. (see “Environmental Impact Report”)

Capital Improvement Program. A program that schedules infrastructure improvements, usually over a minimum period of five years into the future, that fits the needs, priorities, and projected fiscal capability of the local jurisdiction. The program typically is reviewed on an annual basis for conformance to and consistency with the General Plan.

Carbon Neutral. Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to zero, either by entirely eliminating all GHG emissions or by balancing out all remaining GHG emissions through carbon removal practices so that the “net” emissions are zero.

Carbon Sequestration. The process of storing carbon dioxide in locations other than the atmosphere, where it cannot contribute to climate change or ocean acidification. For the purposes of this plan, carbon sequestration refers to the storage of atmospheric carbon in vegetation, soils, woody products, and aquatic environments.

Class 1 Soil: Soil with slight limitations that restrict its use for agriculture, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Land Use Capability Classification. This ranking represents both irrigated and non-irrigated land, unless otherwise specified as such in the ranking.

Class 2 Soil: Soil with moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants or require moderate conservation practices for agriculture, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Land



Use Capability Classification. This ranking represents both irrigated and non-irrigated land, unless otherwise specified as such in the ranking.

Clean Air Refuge. A building with efficient air filtration and improved air quality that is opened to community members during poor air quality days.

Climate Change. A change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. In the context of this plan, this term refers to changes brought on by human activities.

Climate Justice. The concept that no group of people should disproportionately bear the burden of climate change impacts or the costs of mitigation and adaptation.

Climate Sensitivity. The level to which a species, natural system, community, or government would be affected by changing climate conditions.

Community Facilities District. A special district established by a local agency to finance tax-exempt bonds for public services or the planning, design, acquisition, construction, and/or operation of public facilities. Special taxes levied within the district are used to repay the bonds.

Community Noise Equivalent Level. A 24-hour energy equivalent level derived from a variety of single-noise events, with weighting factors of 5 and 10 A-weighted decibels (dBA) applied to the evening (7 p.m. to 10 p.m.) and nighttime (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.) periods, respectively, to allow for the greater sensitivity to noise during these hours.

Community Resource Centers. Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) facilities that are open to the public during Public Safety Power Shutoff events, offering air-conditioning or heating, ice, restrooms and hand-washing stations, medical equipment charging, device charging, Wi-Fi, bottled water, and snacks.

Community-Supported Agriculture. A community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or cooperatively, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or "share-holders" of the farm pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary.


Compatible. Capable of existing together without significant conflict or ill effects.

Complete Street. A transportation facility that is planned, designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to provide comfortable and convenient mobility, and improve accessibility and connectivity to essential community destinations for all users and abilities, regardless of whether they are traveling as pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, or drivers. Complete streets are especially attuned to the needs of people walking, using assistive mobility devices, rolling, biking, and riding transit.

Conservation. The management and use of natural resources in a sustainable manner. Conservation results in land and water areas that are durably protected and managed to sustain functional ecosystems, whether intact and restored, and the diversity of life they support.

Conserve. To manage natural resources sustainably.

County Service Area. A special district in an unincorporated area formed to fund a public service that the County would not otherwise be able to fund through traditional sources, like property or sales tax. County Service Areas are governed by the County Board of Supervisors and funded by a direct assessment paid by property owners who benefit from the services provided.



Critical Facility. A facility whose continued functioning is necessary to maintain public health and safety following a disaster, and where damage or failure could pose hazards to life and property well beyond their immediate vicinity. Examples include hospitals, fire stations, and water treatment plants.

Cultural Resource. A historic, archaeological, tribal, or paleontological resource or human remains. Cultural resources include tribal cultural resources, as defined in California Public Resources Code Section 21074, regardless of whether a tribe is federally recognized.

Cumulative Impact. As used in CEQA, the total environmental impact resulting from the accumulated impacts of individual projects or programs over time.

Decibel. A unit used to express the relative intensity of a sound as it is heard by the human ear. The lowest volume a normal ear can detect under laboratory conditions is 0 decibel (dB), the threshold of human hearing. Since the decibel scale is logarithmic, 10 decibels are 10 times more intense, and 20 decibels are 100 times more intense, than 1 db.

dBA. The “A-weighted” scale for measuring sound in decibels, which weighs or reduces the effects of low and high frequencies to simulate human hearing. Every increase of 10 dBA doubles the perceived loudness, even though the noise is actually 10 times more intense.

Dedication. Transfer of private land for public use. Dedications for roads, parks, school sites, or other public uses are often required by cities and counties as conditions for approval of development. (see “In-Lieu Fee”)

Density. The number of permanent residential dwelling units per acre of land (du/acre). Densities specified in this General Plan are expressed in dwelling units per net acre, which excludes any land dedications, and not per gross acre. (see “Acreage, Gross,” “Acreage, Net,” and “Dedication”)

Development Review; Design Review. The comprehensive evaluation of a development and its impact on neighboring properties and the community as a whole, from the standpoint of site and landscape design, architecture, materials, colors, lighting, and signs, in accordance with a set of adopted criteria and standards.

Development. The physical extension and/or construction of non-farmland uses. Development activities include subdivision of land; construction or alteration of buildings, structures, roads, utilities, and other facilities; installation of septic systems; grading; deposit of refuse, debris, or fill materials; and clearing of natural vegetative cover (with the exception of agricultural activities). Routine repair and maintenance activities are not considered development.

Duplex. A free-standing building divided into two separate living units or residences, usually having separate entrances. Duplexes are not synonymous with ADUs.

Dwelling Unit. The place of customary residence of a person or household, which is either considered to be real property under State law or cannot be easily moved.

Ecologically Significant Resource Area. Land containing unique, representative, and/or sensitive habitats, communities, or ecological processes.

Ecosystem. An interacting system formed by a biotic community and its physical environment.

Emergency Shelter. A facility that provides immediate short-term housing and supplemental services for homeless people. Supplemental services may include food, counseling, and access to other programs.



Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts. An economic development district that uses local property taxes to fund public and private projects that provide a benefit to the district. The district obtains funding for community projects through incremental tax. Tax increment financing works by “freezing tax revenues from a tax rate area in the interim base year and diverting forecasted tax revenue in future years (known as increment) to pay for improvements and/or pay back bonds.”³

Environmental Impact Report (EIR). A comprehensive study required pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act that assesses all the environmental characteristics of an area, determines what effects or impacts will result if the area is altered or disturbed by a proposed action, and identifies alternatives or other measures to avoid or reduce those impacts. (see “California Environmental Quality Act”)

Equity. The state in which each individual or group is allocated the resources needed to reach an equal outcome.

Evacuation Route. A roadway designated in the General Plan or a disaster/ emergency planning document as a potential recommended route to travel when evacuating from a hazardous condition.

Explosive. Any substance or combination of substances, the primary purpose of which is detonation or rapid combustion. (California Health and Safety Code)

Extreme Event. When a weather or climate variable exceeds the upper or lower thresholds of its observed range.

Extreme Heat. Temperatures that are hotter than 98 percent of the historical high temperatures for the area, as measured between the months of April and October during the period between 1961 and 1990. For Contra Costa

County the extreme heat threshold is 96.6 degrees Fahrenheit (°F), though it varies from 87.1°F in Kensington to 102.4°F in Byron.

Farmers Market. A mobile or non-mobile market: (1) operated by a local government agency, one or more certified producers, or a nonprofit organization; (2) certified by and operating in a location approved by the County Agricultural Commissioner; and (3) where farmers sell directly to consumers agricultural products or processed products made from agricultural products (also known as “value-added products”) that the farmers grow themselves.


Fault. A fracture or zone of fractures in Earth’s crust that forms a boundary between rock masses that have shifted.

Fee, Impact. A fee charged to a developer by a jurisdiction according to the proposed development project, typically by number of units, square footage, or acreage. The fee is often used to offset costs incurred by the agency for services and infrastructure such as schools, roads, police and fire protection, and parks.

Fee, In-Lieu. Payments that may be required of a property owner or developer as a substitute for a dedication of land for public use or construction of a public facility, usually calculated in dollars per lot, unit, or square foot. Also referred to as in-lieu contributions. (see “Dedication”)

Fire Hazard Severity Zone. An area of significant fire hazard based on fuels, terrain, weather, and other relevant hazards. There are three levels of severity for these zones: Moderate, High, and Very High. CAL FIRE designates these zones, and local fire protection agencies may expand these zones or increase their severity within areas where they have responsibility for fire protection services (i.e., Local Responsibility Areas).

³ State of California, “Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs),” <https://opzones.ca.gov/enhanced-infrastructure-financing-districts-eifds/>, accessed June 15, 2023.



Flood, 100-Year. In any given year, a flood that has a 1 percent likelihood (a 1 in 100 chance) of occurring. Also known as the “base flood.”

Flood, 200-Year. In any given year, a flood that has a 0.5 percent likelihood (a 1 in 200 chance) of occurring. Senate Bill 5 requires a 200-year level of flood protection for urban communities in the Central Valley.

Flood, 500-Year. In any given year, a flood that has a 0.2 percent likelihood (a 1 in 500 chance) of occurring.

Floodplain. The relatively level land area adjacent to a natural watercourse that is regularly subject to flooding.

Floodway. The part of the floodplain capable of conveying the 100-year flood with no more than a 1-foot rise in water. The floodway includes the natural watercourse itself and adjacent land areas.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The gross floor area of a building in square feet divided by gross land area, expressed as a decimal number. For example, a 60,000-square-foot building on a 120,000-square-foot parcel would have a floor area ratio of 0.50. The FAR is used in calculating the building intensity of nonresidential development.

Garden, Demonstration or Educational. Gardens operated by community organizations or educational institutions to serve an educational function, such as teaching school children about vegetables or agriculture, or assisting property owners with drought-tolerant or fire-resistant landscaping choices.

Gateway. A unique transition point in topography or land use that serves as an entrance to a region of the county or an individual community.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Inventory. A quantified list of a community's GHG emissions and sources.

Gleaning. Food recovery through collecting or harvesting of otherwise unused food for distribution to those in need.

Goal. A description of the general desired result sought by the County. Each goal has one or more policies and/or actions associated with the goal. (see “Policy” and “Action”)

Graywater. Untreated wastewater that has not been affected by infectious, contaminated, or unhealthy bodily wastes and does not present a threat from contamination by unhealthful processing, manufacturing, or operating wastes.

Green Benefit District. A special district that provides additional maintenance and capital improvements for a variety of neighborhood enhancements, such as parks and open space, beautification, and sidewalks, beyond what is already provided by the local agency. Green Benefit Districts are funded by a direct assessment paid by property owners who benefit from the services provided.

Green Infrastructure. Stormwater management systems that filter and absorb stormwater where it falls. These systems use plants, soil, and stormwater capture and reuse to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to wastewater systems or surface waters.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG). A gas that allows sunlight to pass through but reflects heat radiated from the earth's surface, trapping heat in the lower atmosphere. Common GHGs include water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). They may be emitted by natural or human processes.

Groundwater. Water that exists beneath the earth's surface, typically found between saturated soils and rock, and is used to supply wells and springs.



Growth Management. Ensuring that future residential, commercial, and industrial growth pays for the facilities required to meet the demands resulting from that growth.

Habitat. The physical location or type of environment in which an organism or biological population lives or occurs.

Hazard. An event or physical condition that has the potential to cause fatalities, injuries, property damage, infrastructure damage, agricultural losses, damage to the environment, interruption of business, or other types of harm or loss.

Hazard Mitigation. Sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property, by means of efforts that reduce hazards, exposure, and vulnerability.

Hazardous Material, Hazardous Waste: A substance or waste that, because of its physical, chemical, or other characteristics, may pose a risk of endangering human health or safety or degrading the environment. This does not include household hazardous waste, universal waste, or electronic waste, as they do not contain the quantity, concentration, and/or types of compounds significant enough to pose a substantial risk to human health and safety or the environment.

Hazardous Waste Facility. All contiguous land and structures, or other appurtenances, and improvements on land used for the treatment, transfer, storage, resource recovery, disposal, or recycling of hazardous waste that require a Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) permit for treatment, storage, and disposal facilities (i.e., treatment, storage, and disposal facility [TSDF] permit).

Health Equity. The state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health.⁴

Heat Wave. A weather event with five extreme heat days in a row.

Household. All persons occupying one dwelling unit. Persons comprising a household need not be related.


HUB Zone. A program that helps small businesses gain preferential access to federal supportive services and opportunities.

Impact, Climate. The effects (especially the negative effects) of a hazard or other condition associated with climate change.

Impacted Community. An area, typically low-income, that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation. This is the term Contra Costa County uses in place of “disadvantaged communities,” as named in Senate Bill (SB) 1000. SB 1000 defines disadvantaged communities per Health and Safety Code Section 39711, specifying CalEnviroScreen as the primary screening method for identifying these communities. In this General Plan, Census tracts with a cumulative CalEnviroScreen score of 72 or higher are identified as Impacted Communities.

Impervious Surface. Surface through which water cannot penetrate, such as a roof, road, sidewalk, or paved parking lot. The amount of impervious surface increases with development and establishes the need for drainage facilities to carry the increased runoff.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Health Equity,” <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/whatis/index.html#:~:text=Health%20equity%20is%20the%20state.health%20and%20health%20care%3B%20and>, accessed June 15, 2023.



Implementation. Actions, procedures, programs, or techniques that carry out a plan.

Infill Development. Development that occurs on vacant or underutilized land within areas that are already largely developed.

Land Use. The occupation or use of an area of land for any human activity or purpose.

Land Use Designation. A land classification established by the General Plan Land Use Element that broadly determines the types and intensities of land uses that may exist on a given property.

Land Use Permit. A discretionary, usually conditional, permit issued to allow specific buildings or activities, at a specific location. Review of a land use permit application typically focuses on assessing the environmental impacts of a proposed land use and its compatibility with its surroundings.

Landslide. Movement of soil and/or rock down a slope, which typically occurs during an earthquake or following heavy rainfall.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). A voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing and rating high-performance, sustainable “green” buildings. LEED provides a complete framework for assessing building performance and meeting sustainability goals, such as water savings, energy-efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. LEED standards are currently available or under development for new commercial construction and major renovation projects, existing building operations, commercial interiors projects, core and shell projects, and homes.

Leq, Equivalent Sound Level. The average of sound energy occurring over a specified period. The Leq is equivalent to the same average acoustical energy as the time-varying sound that actually occurs during a specified period.

Level of Service (Traffic). A scale that measures the amount of traffic that a roadway or intersection can accommodate, based on such factors as maneuverability, driver dissatisfaction, and delay.

Liquefaction. The transformation of loose, wet soil from a solid to liquid state, often as a result of ground shaking during an earthquake.

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). A five- or seven-member commission within each county that reviews and evaluates all proposals for formation of special districts, incorporation of cities, annexation to special districts or cities, consolidation of districts, and merger of districts with cities. Each county’s LAFCO is empowered to approve, disapprove, or conditionally approve such proposals.

Local Responsibility Area (LRA). Areas where a local government, such as a city, county, or district, has the primary financial responsibility of preventing and suppressing fires. (California Fire Code Section 4902.1)

Major Project. A General Plan amendment or rezoning to increase intensity of use, residential development exceeding 30 units, nonresidential development of 25,000 square feet or more, or a project requiring a land use permit pursuant to the Industrial Safety Ordinance.

Micromobility/Microtransit. Transportation via small, lightweight vehicles operated by the driver, such as electric scooters and bicycles. Vehicles typically do not exceed 15 miles per hour and are often available for rent for short-range travel within a defined area.



Military Operations Areas. A three-dimensional airspace designated for military training and transport activities that has a defined floor (minimum altitude) and ceiling (maximum altitude).

Mitigation. Modification to avoid, reduce, minimize, or eliminate a negative impact. There are various types of mitigation, including environmental impact mitigation, hazard mitigation, GHG emissions mitigation, and more.

Mixed Use. A type of development that combines different land uses, such as residential and commercial uses, within the same building (vertical mixed use) or site (horizontal mixed use).

Mobile Home. A structure, transportable in one or more sections, built on a permanent chassis and designed for use as a single-family dwelling unit and which: (1) has a minimum of 400 square feet of living space; (2) has a minimum width of 102 inches; (3) is connected to all available permanent utilities; and (4) is tied down (a) to a permanent foundation on a lot either owned or leased by the homeowner or (b) is set on piers, with wheels removed and skirted, in a mobile home park.

Mobile Home Park. Any area of land or property that has at least two mobile homes and/or lots that are held out for rent or lease for non-transient use.

Mode Share. The percentage of travelers using a certain type of transportation, such as walking, biking, taking transit, or driving a vehicle.

Municipality. An incorporated city or town.

Mutual-Aid Agreement. An agreement between two or more agencies to provide resources, facilities, and services in the event of a disaster or other emergency if the affected agency does not have the capability to adequately respond to the emergency with its own means.

Natural Watercourse. A naturally occurring body of water, such as a river, creek, or stream, flowing in a natural or artificial channel. Does not include canals, irrigation ditches, or similar structures built to convey water to or from a natural watercourse or other water body.

Natural and Working Lands. Lands not covered by buildings or structures, including forests, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, rangelands, farmlands, wetlands, coastal areas, and the green spaces in urban and built environments. These lands provide food and fiber, clean air, water, and other resources and benefits.


Near Zero-Emissions. A building, vehicle, or other type of operation that uses zero-emission technologies, enables technologies that provide a pathway to zero-emissions operations, or incorporates other technologies that significantly reduce criteria pollutants, toxic air contaminants, and GHG emissions. (California Health and Safety Code Section 44258(c))

Neighborhood. A residential area defined by shared characteristics such as history, physical appearance (development pattern, architectural style, etc.), common facilities such as schools and parks, intangible characteristics (e.g., a psychological sense of place or cohesion), or clear physical boundaries like waterways or major roads.

Neighborhood Kitchen. A shared, commercial-scale kitchen space that is organized by a neighborhood or community group to facilitate safe food production by community members, such as for soup kitchens, community events, or small-scale cottage food industry operations.

Neighborhood-Serving Retail Use. A small-scale business providing goods and services necessary for the day-to-day maintenance of a household (e.g., corner markets, dry cleaners, coffee shops).

Noise Contours. Lines superimposed on a map that indicate various levels of average noise exposure as measured on the same scale.



Noise-Sensitive Use. A location where people reside or where the presence of unwanted sound could adversely affect the use of land, such as residences, schools, and hospitals.

Non-Conforming Use, Legal. A use that was established legally, but does not conform to subsequently adopted regulations.

Non-Essential Idling. Operation of a vehicle while it is stationary when none of the following circumstances are met: the vehicle is stuck in traffic; idling is necessary to inspect or service the vehicle; the vehicle is transferring power via a power-takeoff device; the vehicle can't move due to adverse weather conditions or mechanical failure; the vehicle is a bus with passengers on board. See California Code of Regulations, Title 13, Section 2485 for a full definition.

Offsets (emissions). Banked air emission reduction credits that compensate for cumulative increases in air emissions, as defined by BAAQMD Regulation 2 Rule 4.

On-Site Wastewater Treatment System. A multi-stage system that collects, treats, and disperses wastewater generated on an individual site. On-site wastewater treatment systems typically include a septic tank and disposal (leach) field.

Open Space. Natural habitat and other undeveloped areas that are usually protected from development by ownership, deed restrictions, conservation easements, land dedications, or other techniques.

Opportunity Zone. Economically distressed communities that have experienced a lack of investment for decades, defined by the federal government by Census tract. These areas may qualify for preferential tax treatment on new investments to incentivize investment in the community.

Overlay. A land use or zoning designation that modifies the basic underlying designation or designations in some specific manner, usually by applying supplemental regulations.

Parcel. A unit of real property, commonly referred to as a “lot.” Differs from an Assessor’s parcel in that the latter is delineated by the County Assessor’s Office solely for the purpose of assessing property taxes on a given area of land.

Planned Unit Development (PUD). A development approach that uses flexible zoning regulations to create projects that would otherwise be impermissible under standard zoning. PUDs often incorporate nontraditional development patterns and different types of residential buildings, and may include commercial, recreational, or public use components.

Pocket Park. A small park, typically less than a quarter acre in size.

Policy. A specific statement that guides decision making as the County works to achieve a goal. Policies represent statements of County regulation and set the standards used by decision makers when considering proposed development and actions. A policy is ongoing and requires no further action (see “Goal”).

Reach Code. A local building code that exceeds the State Building Code requirements. A reach code must be at least as stringent as the State Code, cost-effective, approved by the California Energy Commission, and updated and re-adopted with each State Energy Code update.

Remediation. Restoration of contaminated areas to protect human health and the environment.

Resilience. The capacity of any entity—an individual, community, organization, or natural system—to prepare for disruptions, recover from shocks and stresses, and adapt and grow from a disruptive experience.



Community resilience is the ability of communities to withstand, recover, and learn from past disasters to strengthen future response and recovery efforts.

Resilience Center. A community-serving facility with year-round programming that also provides local communities with water and electricity during hazardous events or disasters.

Riparian. A habitat and vegetation zone that is associated with the banks and floodplains of a river, stream, or lake. Riparian trees and shrubs are typically phreatophytes, plants whose root systems are in constant contact with groundwater.

Risk. The potential for damage or loss created by the interaction of hazards with assets such as buildings, infrastructure, or natural and cultural resources.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS). Federal, State, and local programs that promote walking and bicycling to school through infrastructure improvements, safety education, enforcement, and incentives.

Sea Level Rise. The worldwide average rise in mean sea level, which may be due to a number of different causes, such as the thermal expansion of sea water and the addition of water to the oceans from the melting of glaciers, ice caps, and ice sheets.

Seniors. People 65 years of age or older.

Sensitive Receptor. A use that is highly sensitive to impacts from other uses, including homes, schools, playgrounds, sports fields, childcare centers, senior centers, hospitals, and long-term health care facilities.

Severe Ground Shaking. Intense ground movement resulting from transmission of seismic waves during an earthquake.

Sphere of Influence (SOI). The potential ultimate physical boundaries and service area of a municipality or special district, as determined by the Local Agency Formation Commission of the county. The SOIs for cities and towns include unincorporated land that could be annexed.

State Responsibility Area (SRA). The area where the State of California has primary financial responsibility for prevention and response to wildland fires as delineated on maps prepared by the State Fire Marshall.

Stationary Source. A fixed, non-mobile source of air pollution or noise.

Strip commercial. A linear pattern of retail businesses along a major roadway, usually characterized by single-story buildings with prominent parking lots visible from the roadway, multiple driveways, large signs, and a dependency on automobiles for access and circulation.


Structure. Anything constructed or erected on and permanently or semi-permanently attached to land. (see “Building”)

Subdivision. The division of any unit or units of real property, improved or unimproved, for the purpose of sale, lease, or financing. Major subdivisions yield five or more lots, while minor subdivisions yield four lots or fewer.

Substandard Housing. A residential building or living unit whose physical condition endangers the safety, property, or welfare of the occupants or general public.

Sustainability. Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable Streets. “Multimodal rights-of-way designed and operated to create benefits relating to movement, ecology, and community that together



support a broad sustainability agenda embracing the three Es: environment, equity, and economy.”⁵

Townhouse/Townhome. A series of residences on individual parcels, typically two or three stories in height, that are connected side-by-side in a row, each having a separate street-level entrance.

Toxic Air Contaminant (TAC). An air pollutant that may cause or contribute to an increase in serious illness, or that may pose a present or potential hazard to human health, according to California Health and Safety Code Section 39655.

Traffic Calming. Measures designed to reduce motor vehicle speeds, increase safety, and encourage pedestrian use, including narrow streets, tight turning radii, sidewalk bulbouts, parking bays, and textured paving at intersections.

Triplex. A free-standing house divided into three separate living units or residences, usually having separate entrances.

Unincorporated Area. All land and water within a county that is outside the boundaries of incorporated cities and towns. Development in the unincorporated area is subject to County land use regulations.

Universal Waste. Common hazardous wastes that are widely generated by households and many different types of businesses, including batteries, pesticides, paints, lamps, and aerosol cans.

Unstable Slope. A slope that is susceptible to failure due to geologic hazards, steepness, lack of vegetation, or other adverse conditions.

Urban Agriculture/Farming. The practice of farming within an urban environment. Includes cultivation and small-scale processing of agricultural products.

Urban Heat Island. The phenomenon in which large urban areas experience higher temperatures, greater pollution, and more negative health impacts during hot months due to a combination of heat-absorptive surfaces, heat-generating activities, and the absence of vegetation.

Urban Limit Line (ULL). A political boundary approved by Contra Costa County voters to limit urban development to defined areas of the county while preserving farmland, watersheds, and open space outside those areas.

Use. The purpose for which a lot, building, or structure is or may be leased, occupied, maintained, arranged, designed, intended, constructed, erected, moved, altered, and/or enlarged in accordance with the County General Plan land use designations and corresponding zoning districts.

Utility Corridor. Rights-of-way or easements for utility lines on either publicly or privately owned property.

Vertiport. A facility or area designated for use by electric, hydrogen, or hybrid vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft.

Vulnerability. The degree to which natural, built, and human systems are susceptible “...to harm from exposure to stresses associated with environmental and social change and from the absence of capacity to adapt.”⁶

Vulnerability Assessment. An analysis of how a changing climate may harm a community and which elements—people, buildings and structures, resources, ecosystems, and other assets—are most vulnerable to its effects

⁵ Greenberg, Ellen J., “Sustainable Streets: Foundations for an Emerging Practice,” 2009, Washington, DC: Transportation Research Board 88th Annual Meeting.

⁶ Neil Adger, “Vulnerability,” *Global Environmental Change* 16 (2006): 268–281, https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/~nabo/meetings/glthec/materials/simpson/GEC_sdarticle2.pdf



based on an assessment of exposure, sensitivity, the potential impact(s), and the community's adaptive capacity.

Wastewater. Water that has been used in homes, businesses, industrial processes, or other applications. May contain pathogens, organic matter, and contaminants.

Wetland. An area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions, commonly known as hydrophytic vegetation.

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). An area that includes houses and wildland vegetation, creating a significant threat to human life or property from wildfires. The WUI is comprised of three distinct zones:

1. The **intermix zone** contains housing development or improved parcels interspersed in an area dominated by wildland vegetation subject to wildfire.
2. The **interface zone** contains dense housing next to vegetation that can burn in a wildfire, but is not dominated by wildland vegetation.
3. The **influence zone** contains wildfire-susceptible vegetation within 1.5 miles from the intermix and interface zones.

Xeriscape. Landscaping with an emphasis on water conservation and efficiency.

Zero Emission Vehicle/Transportation Device. A vehicle or transportation device (e.g., bicycle or scooter) that does not produce emissions when in operation, including battery-electric vehicles/devices and hydrogen fuel-cell electric vehicles.

Zoning. Ordinances or other regulations adopted by the legislative body of a city or county that divide the jurisdiction into districts or zones that specify allowable uses for real property, impose standards for development (building setbacks, height limitations, landscaping requirements, etc.), and establish procedures for review and approval of development proposals. Zoning implements the land use policies of the General Plan.