

An aerial photograph of a coastal region, showing a large bay on the left and a complex network of roads and terrain on the right. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'THE VISION' is centered in the upper right quadrant.

# THE VISION

Despite the vast differences in climate and topography within this 7,000-square-mile region, from its fog-shrouded coastlines to hot, inland valleys, and despite a wide variety of lifestyles, ethnic backgrounds and communities in which we live — from urban to suburban to rural — participants in two rounds of Smart Growth/ Footprint Project public workshops shared common views and concerns about the region’s future. They took a hard look at the Bay Area’s projected future: 1 million more residents by 2020 and the likelihood — if present trends continue — of longer commutes, continued outward sprawl and further encroachment on open space. They recognized the need to provide enough housing for future residents and workers through more intense development, but at the same time insisted on retaining the character and uniqueness of their part of the region. They also recognized that their county is part of the whole and that the pattern of growth they were proposing for their county must be linked to others to form a cohesive vision that will sustain and improve quality of life throughout the entire region.



PHOTOS — NASA COLLAGE — MTC

## PICTURE OF THE BAY AREA, CIRCA 2020

What does this collective vision of smart growth for the Bay Area hold in store? What would it be like to live here two decades from now? What changes would take place in the region’s cities, towns and neighborhoods? And how would following the path of smart growth envisioned by 2,000 workshop participants differ from our present course of growth? Imagine, if you could, fast-forwarding to the year 2020 and viewing the Bay Area through the lens of smart growth, based on the vision of residents back in 2001 and 2002.

San Francisco Bay — the magnificent natural resource that gives the region its unique identity — continues to be protected, with Bay wetlands restored, more shoreline parks opened, and attractive new development built in the vibrant waterfront communities. Ribbons of rail lines stretch from northern Sonoma County to southern Santa Clara County, and from San Francisco to the far eastern reaches of Alameda, Solano and Contra Costa counties. The rail lines extend existing public transit systems with more frequent service and include a new North Bay rail line. Numerous new stations dot each line. Commercial corridors on major thoroughfares throughout the region bustle with buses and light-rail vehicles.

Adjacent to the rail stations — within a half-mile radius — and in older downtown areas, there is intensified development of various kinds: multi-family and mixed-use buildings, many with retail stores and shops on the street level offering services from cafes to dry cleaning and childcare, with residential quarters above. Significantly more housing is being constructed to match the income levels of increasing numbers of Bay Area workers. The racial mix of the Bay Area reported in the 2000 Census is even more diverse in 2020. Many more second units, townhouses and apartments have arisen in new, mixed-income neighborhoods and in communities once devoted to only one type of housing.

Local governments, aided by new state and federal policies, have been making major strides in solving the Bay Area’s housing crisis, actually housing the quarter of a million Bay Area workers

who would otherwise be commuting into the region each day. These cities offer developers financial incentives to provide housing affordable to families on the lowest income rung; they enable higher densities than previously existed, including a new wave of once discouraged “granny” units built into or as additions to existing single family homes. Declining neighborhoods are revitalized and have become healthy, vibrant communities — attracting new residents and businesses, while maintaining a place for longtime inhabitants.

Collectively, these changes mean many more workers live in the Bay Area — rather than commuting from outside the region — in 2020 than would have if growth trends prevalent in 2000 had continued. In fact, there has not been an increase in daily in-commuting to the region since 2002. But, despite this shift in population to the Bay Area, traffic on the region’s freeways and major roadways is no worse than it would have been had these in-commuters been living outside the Bay Area. How can this be? By living in more compact communities, with stores, services, housing and jobs mixed in closer proximity to each other, Bay Area residents of the smart growth future often walk and bicycle to their destinations. Locating more housing and job centers near bus stops and rail stations also lures commuters out of their cars. This trend greatly improves economic opportunities, particularly for residents of the region’s inner city communities. Due to the much greater convenience of transit, walking and cycling, air pollutant levels will be slightly lower under the smart growth vision, even while accommodating more housing in the region.

The smart growth map of the Bay Area in 2020 shows nearly the same amount of open, undeveloped land that existed in 2002, despite two decades of population increase. Again, this reflects the concept of increasing density in already developed areas and focusing growth in existing cities and town centers and along transit corridors (including some expanded transit hubs and corridors that did not exist in 2002). New compact development also occurs in some areas that were vacant and undeveloped in 2002. Such efficient development within the region provides housing and transit access to people who otherwise would have been commuting into the region. At the same

time as preserving open space within the region, the new pattern of compact growth has reduced the need to house the Bay Area workforce outside the region, thus helping protect farmland and critical habitat beyond the Bay Area.

Traveling in the Bay Area from county to county in 2020, you find that you still recognize familiar landmarks and scenic vistas and know where you are. You realize that things have not changed drastically because the growth that has taken place in the past two decades consists primarily of more intense development in existing areas. Nonetheless, vibrant communities abound throughout each of the Bay Area’s nine counties. Moving from south to north, here are some highlights:

In **Santa Clara County**, growth is focused around Caltrain and new BART stations — from Palo Alto and Milpitas south to Gilroy — as well as adjacent to Valley Transportation Authority light-rail stations. A new light-rail corridor between Milpitas and Mountain View is lined with two- and three-story retail, office and light industrial buildings as well as some housing. Downtown San Jose has matured into a taller city, with many high-rise office and residential buildings near the new downtown BART stations. Mountain View and Sunnyvale have fairly high-density downtown centers with a mix of housing types for a wide range of wage earners. A new Caltrain station serves an adjacent employment center in Blossom Hill, and more jobs can be found farther south in the Morgan Hill business park. To accommodate employees in the business park, Morgan Hill has created a high-density town center with a mix of residential and commercial buildings oriented around its Caltrain station. Sunnyvale as well as some of the county’s smaller cities, such as Gilroy and Los Gatos, have added apartments and townhouses in their downtown centers, creating compact neighborhoods centered around lively plazas.

**San Mateo County** has intensified growth along the El Camino Real corridor, parallel to the Caltrain line, and fostered higher-density development in cities along that corridor: East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Redwood City, San Carlos and San Mateo. On the coast, the small communities of Montara, El Granada and Half

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the magnificent  
natural resource  
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UNIQUE IDENTITY —  
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**PROTECTED**,  
with Bay wetlands  
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SHORELINE PARKS  
opened, and attractive  
new development built  
in the vibrant  
waterfront  
communities.*

COURTESY OF SAVE MOUNT DIABLO. IMAGE BY BOB WALKER@IDG FILMS/OAKLAND MUSEUM



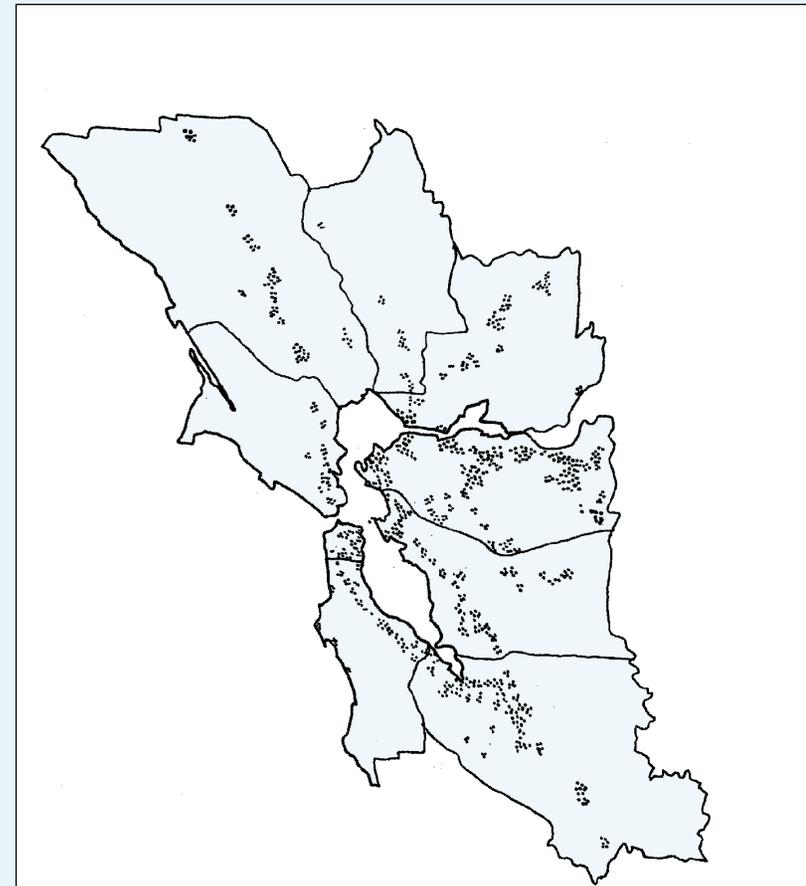
Mount Diablo

*Contra Costa  
County has  
successfully  
**RETAINED**  
roughly two-thirds  
of its land as  
**OPEN SPACE**  
or in  
**agricultural  
production.***

Moon Bay have expanded their job centers and have added more housing for a variety of income levels. Pacifica has created a vibrant downtown center, with a substantial increase of jobs and housing. In northern San Mateo County, the Baylands in Brisbane has been developed into an employment center.

**The City and County of San Francisco**, pursuing a long-standing goal, has created a better jobs/housing balance by building more housing throughout the city, particularly downtown. In some residential areas, the housing increase is slight, while in other areas — extending out from downtown along major transit corridors such as Geary Boulevard and California and Mission streets — a high-density mix of offices, stores and housing is taking shape. Housing and employment have increased along the Church Street corridor, as well as in Dolores Heights and in Bayview/Hunters Point. The city also has created mixed-use centers of office, retail and housing around neighborhood BART stations, along the new Third Street light-rail line that extends from Visitacion Valley and Bayview Hunters Point to Chinatown, and near a Caltrain station relocated from Paul Avenue to Silver and Oakdale avenues. Through new fiscal policies and incentives, the city is ensuring that an adequate supply of housing is affordable to its residents in all income levels, including entry-level office workers, hotel and restaurant workers, gardeners and school teachers.

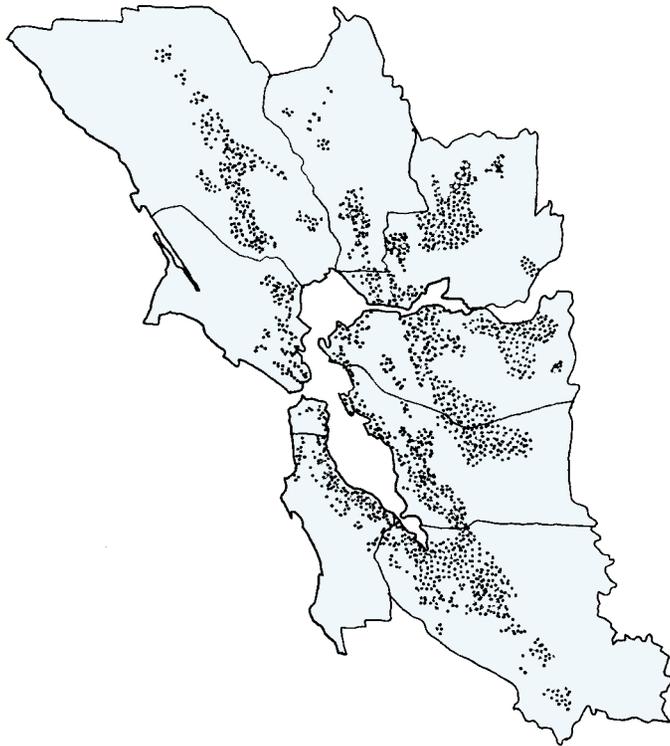
Across the Bay, **Alameda County** communities are accommodating a growing population by encouraging a slight increase in housing density in existing residential areas in close-to-the-Bay cities such as Alameda, Oakland, Berkeley, Piedmont and Emeryville. Some areas have achieved a 5 percent density increase simply by adding one in-law unit on every city block. Downtown Oakland is blossoming with high-density structures of offices, stores and mixed-income housing. Served by greatly improved ferry and bus service, the former Alameda Naval Air Station has become a moderately high-density community with a mix of three- and four-story commercial and retail buildings surrounded by one- to four-story residential buildings. Similar mixed-use development is occurring around BART stations, from Berkeley



Smart Growth Vision

**THE ALTERNATIVES IN BLACK AND WHITE**

These maps show in bold relief the growth patterns foreseen in the Smart Growth Vision and the Current Trends Base Case. They indicate primary areas of change that



Current Trends Base Case

include both redevelopment of already developed areas ("infill") and construction on currently undeveloped lands ("greenfields").

south to the new Irvington and Warm Springs BART stations. Mixed-use development of housing, retail and offices also is appearing along major transit corridors, such as San Pablo Avenue and Mission, Hesperian and International boulevards, and a multimodal transit center has recently opened in Union City. The city of Fremont has created a downtown center with high-rise office and residential buildings, while in the eastern part of the county, mixed-use, mixed-income development is occurring near the BART and Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) stations. The Tri-Valley cities of Dublin, Pleasanton and Livermore are preserving their surrounding areas of open land by developing compact neighborhoods within walking distance of schools, stores, services and public transit.

**Contra Costa County** has successfully retained roughly two-thirds of its land as open space or in agricultural production. Much of the new housing is located in and around the existing cities, with continually improving access to transportation options. New transportation linkages between Central and West County have opened the door to significant reinvestment in the downtowns and surrounding areas. The creation of new housing opportunities through creative integration with existing towns and neighborhoods has increased both housing choices and affordability. Job growth has been strong along the Interstate 80 and Interstate 680 corridors, bringing a diversity of jobs closer to Contra Costa's residents.

In an attempt to allow more residents to work near where they live, **Solano County** has sought to strengthen its employment centers. While there has been a slight increase in density in residential areas, the county has encouraged development of three- and four-story commercial buildings along portions of the I-80 corridor and mixed-use development around Capitol Corridor rail stations. Two new Capitol Corridor stations have been built, one adjacent to Travis Air Force Base and another in Dixon. Solano County has preserved its strong agricultural industry and character by focusing new development within its incorporated cities. The downtowns of Vallejo (including adjacent Mare Island), Benicia, Fairfield, Suisun City, Vacaville

**WORKING TOGETHER**  
*to create a vision*  
*of a more*  
**SUSTAINABLE**  
**FUTURE**  
*is a critical component*  
*of the*  
**Smart Growth/Footprint**  
**Project,**  
*but it is just the*  
*first step.*



GENE PISCIA

*Sonoma County,  
like Napa,  
**STRIVES** to retain its  
historic rural and  
agricultural  
character.*

and Dixon have become bustling centers of employment and housing, where people walk and bicycle from home to work and to downtown stores and restaurants.

In **Napa County**, growth is occurring primarily in the southern part of the county, while the rest of the county maintains its traditional rural and agricultural character. American Canyon has developed shops and stores to serve suburban housing developments. More people work at the nearby Airport Industrial Park, which has added thousands of new jobs in the past 20 years. The city of Napa has intensified development of offices, stores and housing in its downtown core and added a mix of uses on a low-density scale in surrounding neighborhoods. New mixed-use development also is occurring at the site of the former State Hospital in the city of Napa. Housing has increased slightly in St. Helena outside the downtown area, and Calistoga has added more housing and shops in its downtown. Using a number of creative policies, Napa County and its cities are generating new housing to meet the needs of their lowest wage earners.

In **Sonoma County**, the primary new feature is a rail line that extends along the old Northwestern Pacific railroad right of way all the way from Cloverdale south into Marin County. As the line was built, new stations were added in Healdsburg, Windsor, Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati and Petaluma. Along the line and particularly around the stations, mixed-use communities, mostly on a low-density scale, are being built for a wide range of income levels. Sonoma County, like Napa, strives to retain its historic rural and agricultural character, in part by encouraging increased housing densities in existing residential areas, primarily through the addition of second units.

In **Marin County**, as in neighboring Sonoma and Napa counties, new growth is occurring primarily in already developed areas. The Northwestern Pacific rail line continues south through the towns of Novato and San Rafael, with housing, shops and offices cropping up adjacent to the new stations. San Rafael con-

tinues revitalizing its downtown with intensified, mixed-use development, including a large percentage of affordable housing units, and a large urban office campus. The downtown areas of Fairfax, Larkspur and Marin City have seen slight increases in their residential populations, as housing units for a range of income levels are built above stores and offices. And the populations of existing residential communities are increasing slightly, primarily due to the addition of second units.