

Alviso, California

Community Assessment & Urban Design Analysis



San José State University

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Executive Summary	iv
Map List	viii
Figures List	ix
Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Environment	10
Chapter 2: History	32
Chapter 3: Demographics	46
Chapter 4: Land Use	58
Chapter 5: Community Organizations	88
Chapter 6: Urban Design Analysis	108
Chapter 7: Charrette	146
Contact List	192
Reference List	193



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And everyone from Alviso who shared with us their stories and opinions...

Thank you.



Executive Summary

This Alviso, California Community Assessment and Urban Design Analysis Report represents the culmination of over eight months of intensive study focused on this unique northern San José community perched at the southern tip of San Francisco Bay. Twenty-four Masters degree candidates in San José State University's Department of Urban and Regional Planning conducted the assessment of Alviso through statistical analyses, interviews with community members, photographs and extensive field research. Our overarching goal was to conduct the type of foundational community analysis essential to the practice of professional urban planning: the documentation of existing conditions and



historical context. It is our hope that readers of the Community Assessment - laypersons and professional planners alike - will develop a new appreciation for Alviso and its unique qualities as a result of our committed work.



Student teams viewed Alviso from a wide range of angles - as statisticians, historians, social documentarians, information design specialists and ecologists - under the guidance of our instructor, Richard M. Kos, AICP. Each team produced one chapter in this report: Demographics and Housing, Environmental Context, Transportation and Land Use, Alviso History, Community Organizations, and Urban Design Analysis.



In addition to our focus on these topics, each student played an additional role in one of three support teams - map design, report layout and production, and community meeting planning.

Throughout this two-semester effort, members of the community generously provided time to assist us in reaching below the surface and understanding Alviso as comprehensively



as they do. Looking to the distant past, we learned of the community's rich agricultural heritage, its important role as a major port in the nineteenth century, subsequent economic decline and the ways in which prominent and ordinary Alvisans shaped the small village and whose descendants still proudly live in Alviso to this day. Looking to the recent past, we learned of the series of tragic floods that inundated the community yet failed to extinguish its spirit. We

discovered the visual, environmental and psychological effects of government decisions which introduced many controversial land uses to Alviso including a massive water pollution control plant, a number of substantial and unsightly landfills and new residential development which is of an entirely different scale and design than that of the historic village.

Despite the lingering tension that has arisen between the community and public officials due to these decisions, we also enjoyed the experience of discovering the qualities of Alviso which trump these setbacks and continue to make it a desirable place to live. Alviso is surrounded on much of its northern boundary by the peace and solitude offered by the adjacent



Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, meandering sloughs and tidal marshes. The hospitality of settled families beaming with fierce pride in their community and its accomplishments was immediately evident to us from our first visit to the community. The pervasive sense of calm that one feels in Alviso, aided by gentle Bay breezes and stunning water views, offers sensory and visual counterbalances to the hectic atmosphere of relentless change in the Silicon Valley.



The reader of this report will discover a wealth of information including detailed demographic analyses of Alviso’s populace, then-and-now pairings of photographs capturing the community’s rich history as reflected in its buildings, and snapshots of the myriad and passionate community organizations that have a direct bearing on the daily lives of residents. The reader will also witness the fruits of significant work converting geospatial data via GIS technology into a rich series of maps that document existing and planned land uses in Alviso as well as local circulation patterns, the housing stock in the community, flood-related conditions and religious, business and cultural amenities.

A fascinating examination of the “tidal prism” is included in the Environmental Context chapter. The term refers to the massive volumes of water pulsing daily through Alviso’s sloughs and encapsulates the complex interplay between San Francisco Bay, tidal marshes, sloughs and lowlands. Alviso’s stunningly lovely, yet dangerously precarious location at the intersection of these water features and powerful tidal forces has directly shaped the community for centuries and will continue to do so in the future as global warming emerges as a growing threat, especially to vulnerable, low-lying communities.

When pertinent to the topic, most chapters conclude with an examination of the rich opportunities possessed by Alvisans as well as the challenging constraints they may face as the



small community prepares to enter a new decade surrounded - ever closer, it seems - by the rapid conversion of land to homes, offices and roadways designed to fuel Silicon Valley's insatiable appetite for change and innovation.

That Alviso persists in 2009 as a quietly breezy, tangibly historic and modest community of proud and settled residents is a testament to pride of place in a region notable for its transience.

While we have endeavored to be as rigorous and accurate in our research as possible, we welcome corrections and comments. These may be addressed to Professor Richard Kos at rickkos@gmail.com



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Map List

Map 1: Alviso lies on the southern end of the San Francisco Bay	5
Map 2: Historic shape of tidal marshes and sloughs	14
Map 3: Salt ponds near Alviso	21
Map 4: Alviso's National Register Historic District	37
Map 5: Community Amenities in Alviso	53
Map 6: Zoning Districts in Alviso	61
Map 7: General Plan Land Use Designations in Alviso	65
Map 8: Public Transit Options in Alviso	72
Map 9: Trails and Bike Routes in and around Alviso	74
Map 10: Sanitary Sewer Service in the Alviso Vicinity	76
Map 11: Water Supply	77
Map 12: Storm Drainage	79
Map 13: Vacant Parcels and Underlying Zoning	82
Map 14: Street Improvements	85
Map 15: Organizations and facilities profiled in Chapter 5	92
Map 16: San José Council District 4 compared to Alviso	104



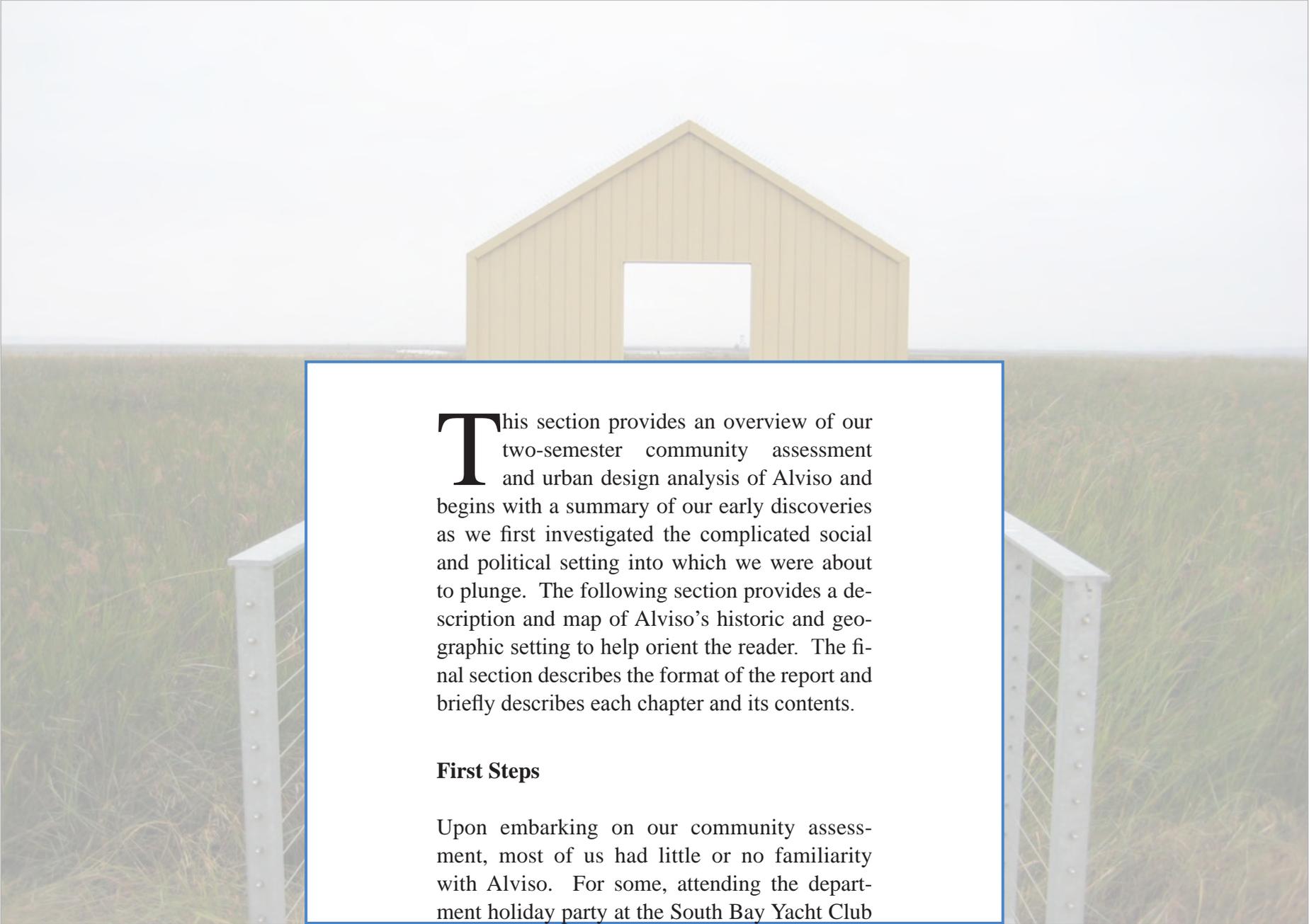
Figures List

Figure 1: Population of Santa Clara County, City of San José & Alviso 1990/2000	48
Figure 2: Alviso population 1970-2000	48
Figure 3: Average Household Income, 1999	49
Figure 4: Start Date of Residency, an indicator of housing tenure	49
Figure 5: Age Distribution (2000)	50
Figure 6: Ethnicity (2000)	50
Figure 7: Education Levels for Persons more than 25 Years of Age (2000)	51
Figure 8: Median Housing Price, 1990 & 2000	51
Figure 9: Median Rent, 1990 & 2000	51
Figure 10: Housing Structure Types, 2000	52
Figure 11: Vacancy Rates, 2000	52
Figure 12: Average salary of people who work in Alviso, 1998 - 2006	100
Figure 13: Business Establishments in Alviso 1998 - 2006	101
Figure 14: Critical Analysis of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan	122-123
Figure 15: Urban Design "Dissection" of Alviso	127-128
Figure 16: Aerial photo of study area	129
Figure 17: Significant views (positive or negative) from and towards the study area	130
Figure 18: Activity nodes and destinations within the study area	131
Figure 19: Building setbacks from public streets, and side yard setbacks	132
Figure 20: Land cover categorization and calculation per street block	133
Figure 21: Edges within the study area	134
Figure 22: Tree canopy within the study area	135
Figure 23: Barriers to movement, both vehicular and pedestrian	136
Figure 24: Existing parcel pattern in the study area	137
Figure 25: Historic parcels per recorded assessor maps	138
Figure 26: Street improvements	139
Figure 27: Paved surfaces	140
Figure 28: Building footprints	141
Figure 29: Street Cross-Section Analysis: Catherine St.	142
Figure 30: Street Cross-Section Analysis: Gold St.	143
Figure 31: Historic Preservation Samples	144
Figure 32: Results of DCP student opinions of Alviso	152-155
Figure 33: Charrette Display Board: Welcome Board	157
Figure 34: Charrette Display Board: Bayside Character	158-161
Figure 35: Charrette Display Board: Historic Preservation	162-166
Figure 36: Charrette Display Board: Pedestrian Activity/Community Interaction	167-170
Figure 37: Charrette Display Board: Beautification	171-175
Figure 38: Charrette Display Board: Vibrant Streetscape	176-180
Figure 39: Charrette Display Board: Gateway Feel	181-185
Figure 40: Close-ups of post-it note comments from charrette participants	186



Introduction





This section provides an overview of our two-semester community assessment and urban design analysis of Alviso and begins with a summary of our early discoveries as we first investigated the complicated social and political setting into which we were about to plunge. The following section provides a description and map of Alviso’s historic and geographic setting to help orient the reader. The final section describes the format of the report and briefly describes each chapter and its contents.

First Steps

Upon embarking on our community assessment, most of us had little or no familiarity with Alviso. For some, attending the department holiday party at the South Bay Yacht Club

- under the cover of winter darkness - was our only exposure to Alviso. Some of us had visited briefly, just long enough to appreciate the scenic views, recreational amenities and sense of time standing still for which Alviso is known in the southern San Francisco Bay region.

As we began to learn more about the community during the first weeks of the fall semester, we quickly realized that a study of Alviso in 2008 must begin with an appreciation of the factors which have divided and physically separated the community over the course of the twentieth century. Through interviews with longtime residents, discussions with city planners and newspaper articles we learned that relations between the community and public officials have oftentimes been strained. A sense of being “dumped upon” or “neglected,” or views that the community has been consistently treated as the “wrong side of the tracks” are common refrains that emerge when speaking with Alvisans who feel passionately about their community.

Evidence of the tension surfaced in discussions with city staff members and officials; while all appeared more than well-meaning in their hopes for Alviso’s betterment, some expressed a sense of caution when the conversation turned to di-

rect engagement with the community. Stories of combative - occasionally violent - multi-year planning efforts emerged along with anecdotes about a small and vocal faction asserting itself as the “voice of the community” that, as a whole, tends to shun public meetings out of a sense that little is accomplished with such approaches. It was suggested by a cautious city staff member that by engaging the community we would open a “can of worms” that could never be shut.

It must be admitted that these negative-leaning sentiments created a degree of anxiety as we commenced our assessment, accompanied by a feeling that could best be summarized as, “what are we getting ourselves into here?” However, as time passed and as we engaged with members of the community from all walks of life, we realized that we were being warmly welcomed into a community eager to share their setbacks and aspirations with well-intentioned, objective, rising urban planners who were genuinely eager to learn as much as they could about Alviso.

Likewise, in our discussions with public officials we discovered a commitment to sound land use planning, community empowerment and self-determination, and - encouragingly - plans to abandon previous “top-down” community



engagement approaches in favor of grassroots-based relationship-building and the restoration of trust in city government. Taken together, these discoveries suggested to us that intelligent, passionate people will play a mutually-supportive role in establishing future partnerships between the community and the city.

Alviso's Setting

The community of Alviso is located in northern San José, California and perched at the southernmost point of San Francisco Bay where the vast, unbroken expanse of the bay's waters transition to a complex maze of sloughs, salt evaporation ponds, tidal marshes, mudflats and rivers that are fed by drainage from the Santa Clara Valley. Alviso's setting within this water-centered environment has shaped - literally - the community's past and present form.

First eyed for settlement by non-native settlers and explorers in the 1770s, Alviso was founded in 1845 and incorporated in 1852. It remained one of the oldest towns in Santa Clara County until it was consolidated with the City of San José in 1968. Alviso's location on the edge of San Francisco Bay and navigable rivers enabled

it to flourish as a major port in the nineteenth century until the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad which offered more efficient transportation between San José and San Francisco.

For a significant part of its history, Alviso was known for its agriculture-centered businesses, particularly canneries; in fact, the third largest cannery in the United States was located in Alviso until the mid-1930s. The Great Depression ushered in a lengthy period of economic decline as canneries ceased operations and the community became better known for its dance halls and gambling establishments than for the hard-working and industrious citizens that continued to reside there.

In recent decades, Alviso bore witness to the explosive growth and global prominence of Silicon Valley within a stone's throw, characterized primarily by the low-density, suburban settlement patterns, sprawling office parks and tract homes that rapidly appeared where farms once flourished. State Highway 237, which runs in an east-west direction just south of Alviso, became



Map 1: Alviso lies on the southern end of the San Francisco Bay.





Alviso's aura of stillness remains, despite being within the limits of the country's tenth largest city. New office development, pictured here, lies at Alviso's doorstep.

a dividing line of sorts between the gleaming office parks bustling with high-tech workers and the subdued, modestly-scaled, historic village of Alviso.

Today, Alviso still presents an aura of stillness, stability and permanence in a region known for its transience and devotion to innovation and technological progress. Small businesses cater to community residents and lunchtime crowds that fill the local restaurants. George Mayne Elementary and Downtown College Prep Schools are a source of immense pride in Alviso as are the gentle bay breezes that create an enviable climate while neighboring communities bake in the summer sun. Recreational amenities abound near Alviso and many South Bay residents come to enjoy the marina, national wildlife refuge, jogging paths, bird-watching and peaceful vistas.

The somewhat sleepy appearance of Alviso, though, belies a number of active, natural and manmade events that continue to shape its physical form, relationships between residents and city government, and the impression of the community held by those with only a minimal understanding of its complexities. Tragic flooding and

the subsequent construction of massive levees are the primary factors which have shaped the physical form of Alviso. In fact, much like New Orleans, Alviso sits below sea level and is protected - for now - by the levees which hold back the tides.

Building codes mandate that new homes be constructed with living space a minimum of nine feet above ground - a testament to the subsidence which contributed to at least ten massive floods in Alviso's history, the most recent occurring in the 1980s and 1995. Additionally, Alviso's less-than-welcome neighbors include a massive water pollution control plant, landfills, encroaching and large-scale housing developments and office parks, and the choking off of local waterways by invasive plant species.

Alviso's stunningly lovely, yet dangerously precarious location at the intersection of tidal forces, a powerful, regional economic growth engine and encroaching urbanization causes one to wonder if the Alviso of 2009 can remain in its present form, as many locals fervently hope. That Alviso persists in this new century as a quietly breezy, tangibly historic and modest community of proud and settled residents is a testament to pride of place in a region notable for its transience.



Report Overview

This Alviso Community Assessment Report features seven chapters on a range of topics commonly analyzed by urban planners and necessary for understanding the multi-faceted nature of any community: Demographics and Housing, Environmental Context, Transportation and Land Use, History, Community Organizations and Urban Design. Throughout this two-semester effort, members of the community generously provided time to assist us in reaching below the surface and understanding Alviso as comprehensively as they do. We are most indebted to them.

When pertinent to the topic, most chapters conclude with an examination of the rich opportunities possessed by Alvisans as well as the challenging constraints they may face as the small community prepares to enter a new decade surrounded - ever closer, it seems - by the rapid conversion of land to homes, offices and roadways designed to fuel Silicon Valley's insatiable appetite for change and innovation.

Community Meetings

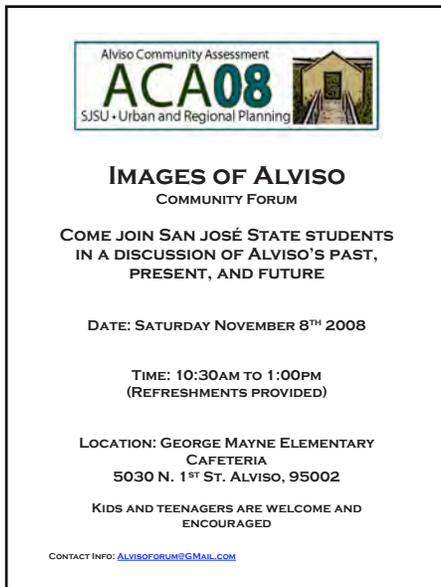
An integral and essential component of any community assessment undertaken by urban

planners is to step away from behind computer screens, statistical charts, maps and cameras, and personally engage with the people who live and work in the community. On November 8, 2008 the students did just this by conducting a public meeting at the George Mayne Elementary School. Prior to the meeting, a team of students secured the location, handled publicity and invitations, prepared meeting activities, purchased refreshments and trained other students in the best practices of active listening.

While not as many Alvisans attended the meeting as was hoped, those that did join us on the brisk Saturday morning offered extremely valuable first-hand accounts of the pleasures and challenges of living in Alviso. The information collected that day rounded out and clarified many of the observations the students had made during the preceding two months of field work and analysis. Much of the information provided by meeting participants has been incorporated into this report.

After an introduction in English by Richard Kos, and in Spanish by student Susana Flores, participants were asked to meet in small groups where teams of students facilitated the discussion. One group was comprised of children who engaged





The flyer that invited the Alviso community to participate.



Students and stakeholders discussed the past, present, and future of the community.

in drawing activities to elicit their thoughts about life in Alviso. Other groups of adults participated in discussions and parcel map-based activities designed to draw out their aspirations for the community as well as areas of concern. One of the unique activities that the students prepared involved the use of magazine covers onto which Alvisans were asked to write an aspirational headline that would trumpet a major community success in the year 2030. This proved to be a very popular activity with the participants.

Each of the five study topic teams prepared a short list of questions to be asked of meeting participants to help fill in research gaps, including:

- What is it about Alviso that causes many families to settle here for generations?
- What community services do you use?
- What local businesses do you frequent?
- What are the organizations that most influence daily life in Alviso?
- What is your primary mode of transportation - do you use VTA bus service?
- What areas of Alviso are well lit and poorly lit? Are there areas where crime is prevalent?

Would you like to see historic preservation efforts undertaken in Alviso Village?

Student involvement in Alviso continued into the spring, 2009 semester with an urban design charrette in May. Details of charrette preparations and findings are presented in Chapter Seven.

The Seven Chapters

We begin with a description of Alviso's environmental setting since no other factor has shaped the community more than a location so inextricably linked to the opportunities and dangers inherent in the water that surrounds it.

The second chapter describes Alviso's history in text, maps and then-and-now photo pairings of historic structures. Included is a discussion of the federal, state and local regulations which impact the preservation of historic resources in the community.

The third chapter provides a detailed statistical analysis of Alviso's demographic qualities using data from the U.S. Census and supplemented by interviews with community residents. The



chapter also includes an assessment and map of Alviso's religious, business and cultural amenities.

Next is a chapter devoted to an analysis of land use and circulation in Alviso, including a series of GIS-derived maps that explain existing land uses, future possibilities as suggested by the land use designations within the 1998 Alviso Master Plan, transportation modes and infrastructure improvements.

The fifth chapter provides snapshots of the myriad community organizations that shape the daily lives of Alviso residents. The information gathered by the student team in charge of this effort rounds out the quantitative, statistical, map-based information that is the focus of the preceding chapters. Their research reinforced our early observations that Alviso is a community that thrives with passion despite its outwardly subdued appearance.

Chapter Six is devoted to a thorough analysis of Alviso's urban form, also an important aspect of a community assessment. Student teams examined the architecture, massing and public areas of Alviso, along with a critical analysis

of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan which contains numerous guidelines to shape the community's future growth.

The final chapter describes the preparations for a community charrette where students presented the results of their urban design analysis and sought community input. Rounding out the chapter are urban design recommendations the students urge the city planners and redevelopment officials to consider as they embark on future efforts in Alviso.

It is our hope that readers of this Community Assessment - laypersons and professional planners alike - will develop a new appreciation for Alviso and its unique qualities as a result of our committed work. Furthermore, we as urban planners hope that this work will be a valuable resource to the community of Alviso and to the city planners who will partner with residents to shape its future growth.



The foundation for the headline-writing exercise at the November, 2008 community meeting.



Local youths took part in the community meetings.



1 Environment



Image from Google Earth





Meandering slough near Petaluma.¹

by the railroad, the construction of salt ponds, the subsidance of lands, and then choked by invasive plants. The slow choking of the sloughs was one of the results of extensive levee building over decades that gradually destroyed the local environment's ability to do as it had done for hundreds of thousands of years – mediate between the sea and the mountains.

Tidal prism

In 1850, as Americans flooded into the Bay Area, what is now Alviso was the tip of a peninsula of relatively solid land just beyond the influence of the average high tide. This relatively solid land was at the shore of what biologists call “tidal marshes” -- the zone between solid land and deep sea that is affected by the tides.² Salt and fresh water meet and mix in the tidal marshes, one of the things that make it so unique. The volume of water that flowed into the sloughs and over the marshes is called the “Tidal Prism”. In Alviso, fresh water from the surrounding hills arrives via Coyote Creek and the Guadalupe River and flows towards the bay where it is met by the tide.

Rivers and creeks carry more silt and sediment when they flow quickly and less when they flow slowly. As rivers and creeks approach sea level, they slow down and deposit their sediments, creating deltas – hundreds of branches of a river or creek that meander to the ocean. On the Pacific side of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the deltas are very small or non-existent because the sediment is whisked away by rapid currents. In the San Francisco Bay, however, deltas are protected from the rapid currents of the Pacific Ocean by the coastal range, allowing large deltas to form.

Even though more than 50 miles separate Alviso from the Golden Gate, the Pacific Ocean still has a significant impact on Alviso. Two high tides and two low tides every day bring in nutrient-rich, salty, sea water and mix with fresh water. Since Alviso is at or near sea level, gravity-pulled water moves through this environment very slowly, creating meanders; however, the tides in Alviso are strong, with a tidal range of over 8 feet. Water drains from capillary-like micro channels into gradually larger and larger channels until the largest of the channels (called sloughs) empty into rivers or the open bay where the water is exchanged through the Golden Gate. Sloughs are just larger versions of channels –



they meander too, but their channels are typically deep enough for boats to move in. The patterns of all of the channels are fractal in nature (micro channels and macro channels have the same shape). Water channels develop in this way because of the manner in which water interacts with level land.

Since the 1850s, humans have tended to see the tidal marshes as an obstacle to dreams of development. We have not taken the time to understand their complexity. We use terms like ‘swamp’ or ‘marsh’ or ‘bog’ and find these areas generally disagreeable because they are difficult to walk across, build on, or boat through. However, before the 1850s, Native Americans were drawn to the bounty of the tidal marshes and created slough-side villages whose middens (clam shell dumps) grew to be quite large around Alviso.

The tidal zone has several types of environments depending on the intensity of the tide’s influence: *open water and sloughs* where salt water and brackish water move freely, if shallowly, all the time; *mud flats* which are alternatively exposed to the air and submerged beneath brackish or sea water; *salt marshes*, which are distin-

guished by their plant life that has roots in mud above the average high tide; *brackish marshes*, where brackish means water that is a mix of sea water and fresh water from creeks and rivers; *freshwater marshes* dominated by low salinity conditions; and *river habitats*, home to anadromous fish, who live in both sea water and fresh water depending on their stage of life. Just beyond the “shore” of the tidal zone begins the walkable zone known as *uplands* – the land on which Alviso is situated.

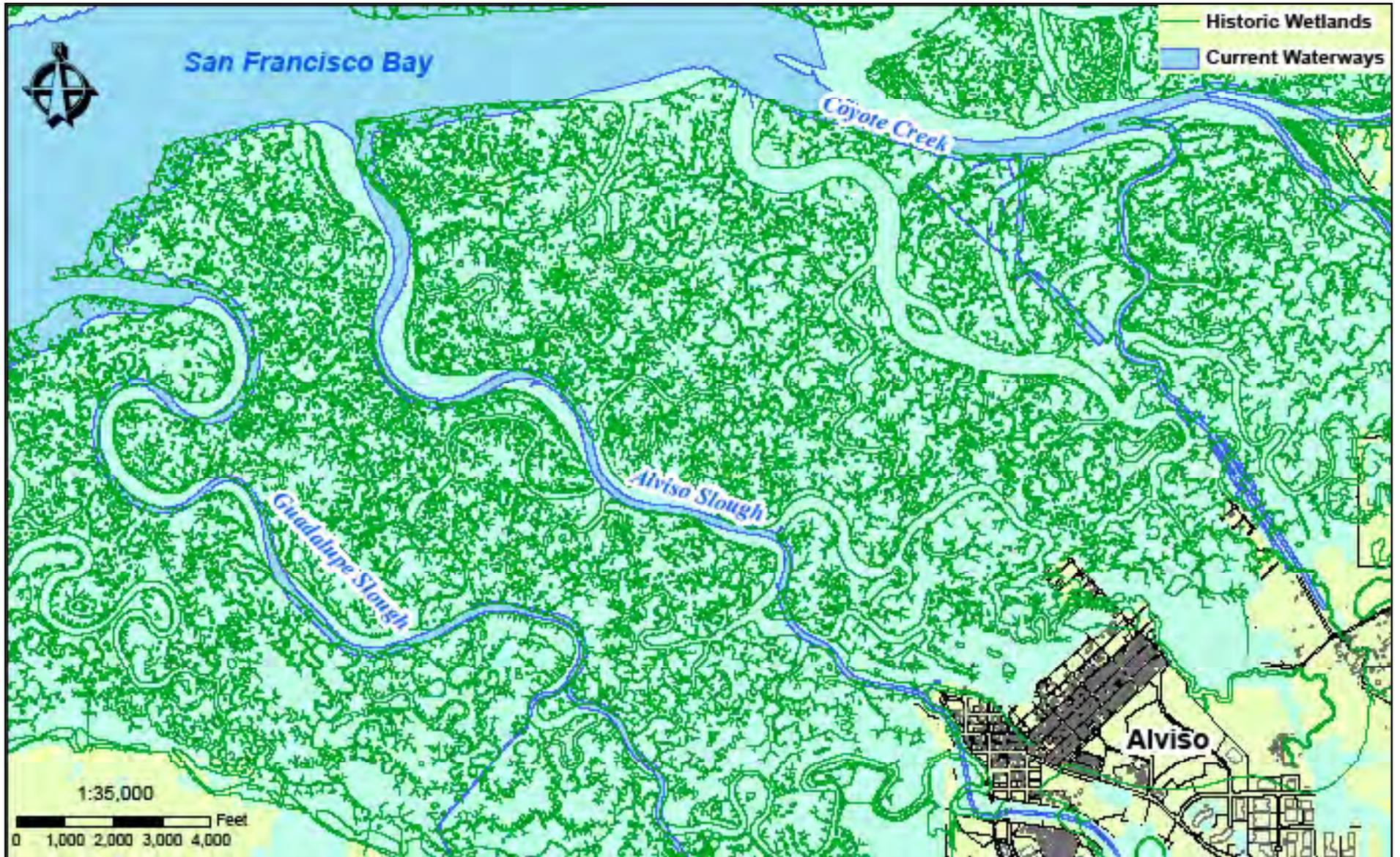
Open Water and Sloughs

During high tides, seawater rushes into the tidal zone and fills sloughs and small water channels with saltier water. At the highest tides, islands of vegetation form, sometimes marooning creatures dependent on land. As the tide crests and begins to recede, sediments are deposited from the bay.

Alviso currently sits on the shores of the Alviso Slough, where the Guadalupe River currently enters San Francisco Bay, but it was not always that way. In the 1850s Alviso was a small but prosperous port that served as the main transportation connection between San Francisco



Map 2: Historic shape of tidal marshes and sloughs



and San José. During that time, the Guadalupe Slough was the preferred route. Later, a man-made connection between the Alviso Slough and the Guadalupe River was constructed at what is today the Alviso Marina; this was a faster route since it was not direct and straight, not meandering as were the natural water features in this area.³ The completion of the San Francisco-San José Railroad in 1864, however, meant that goods and passengers could be more efficiently transported by rail – and the port became obsolete.

Since then, the port has functioned predominantly as a marina used by fishermen. Over time, the Alviso Slough has silted up – especially after flooding like the disastrous event in 1983. Sedimentation happened because of changes to the tidal prism dating to the 1940s when the freshwater flow to Guadalupe Slough was severed by dikes to create salt ponds. This resulted in a “reduc[ed] area of tidal marsh that drained into Alviso Slough [which reduced] the tidal prism of that channel, thereby reducing the natural scouring action of the channel.”⁴

The ecology of the intertwined water system also changed dramatically. Fresh water marsh habi-

tat formed in areas that had once been saltwater habitat.⁵ Specifically, the tule (“*too lee*”) plant (also called California bulrush) has taken over the Alviso Slough and restricted the width and depth of the navigable channel. To combat this problem, the Santa Clara Water Valley District recently recommended one of six alternatives that would remove all vegetation and root mass to a level such that two-way boat traffic could again be accommodated.⁶

Open water areas habitat provide important habitat for large numbers of bottom-dwelling and open water invertebrates and fish. Tidal sloughs and channels that carry water between salt ponds, marsh remnants, and through marshes provide important habitat for large numbers of invertebrates and fish. These nutrient-rich channels serve as important nurseries and feeding areas for a variety of species of fish.

Mudflats

Intertidal mudflats appear lifeless and forbidding at first, but they actually teem with microscopic life that feeds creatures on both land and sea. The mudflats typically have little if any noticeable vegetation because they are completely





Slough mud near Alviso

submerged twice per day. At low tide there is often a distinct odor of biotic material releasing gases. When the high tide comes in and covers the mudflats, this odor abates. Most mudflat habitat occurs just at the edge of salt marshes and at the mouths of sloughs, but also occurs along the sides of sloughs and water channels. Mudflats are “dynamic depositional features” meaning that they change in extent and location depending on the force of water and the nature of the sediments of which they are composed -- mostly fine-grained silts and clays. These support a community of diatoms, worms, and shellfish, as well as algal flora.⁷ During high tides, fish sweep the mudflats, feeding on these invertebrates.⁸

Salt marsh

While you might not know it to walk across them, the salt marshes are some of the most biologically productive lands on earth. Acre for acre, more plants grow here than on the most productive farms.⁹ They are also home to many microorganisms and small creatures that are the foundation of several food webs. Nutrients produced in the salt marshes feed the plants and animals in both the bay and the deeper ocean.

Salt marshes serve critical functions as fish nurseries and pollutant filters. Since the introduction of massive industrial-scale salt evaporation ponds, however, the salt marshes have been in decline (less than 15% of the original salt marshes have survived). Those that remain provide habitat for endangered species such as the salt marsh harvest mouse, and are an important source of nutrients for invertebrates living in shallow sub-tidal areas.¹⁰ These nutrients sustain an abundance of invertebrates, which in turn sustain large populations of fishes, both of which are a major food source for the myriad shorebirds, waterfowl, herons, egrets, gulls, terns, grebes, and other water birds that use the South Bay.¹¹ The South Bay is vital as a habitat for breeding, migrating, and wintering shorebirds.

In healthy salt marshes, vegetation is dominated by pickleweed and cordgrass. Pickleweed gets its name from its small pickle-like appearance and its salty taste. Salt crystals form on the outside of the plant. Pickleweed belongs to a larger group of plants called halophytes, which are plants that have fresh water attributes but can grow in areas that have higher salinities.



Salt marsh habitat at Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge



Cordgrass grows along the sides of marsh creeks and in places flooded by the tides. Cordgrass survives in salty environments because its regulatory system excretes unneeded salt on the leaf edges. The root system of saltmarsh cordgrass stabilizes the marsh mud and creates a home for several species.

Other salt marsh plants include alkali heath and the introduction of slender-leaved ice plant.

It is important to note that the vegetation composition within the salt marshes is dynamic; shifts in species commonly occur even from year to year. However, the overall trend in vegetation composition around the Alviso Marina over recent decades has been a shift toward freshwater marsh types due to manmade changes in the nature of the tidal prism.

The salt marsh harvest mouse is an endangered species with the highest legal protection. It lives in salt marsh habitat dominated by pickleweed. It is also found in mature brackish marshes. The marshes near the Alviso Marina lack pickleweed and are thus not considered prime habitat. The harvest mouse has recently been discovered in brackish marsh dominated by alkali bulrush. There is a small possibility that the

salt marsh harvest mouse resides in similar habitat along the lower reaches of Alviso Slough. New Chicago Marsh, north and east of Alviso, supports a substantial population of salt marsh harvest mice.¹²

Brackish Marsh

Brackish marshes occur in the low-to-mid intertidal reaches of sloughs and creeks draining into the bay, where vegetation is subject to tidal waters that are diluted by freshwater flows from upstream. The soil, therefore, is moderately salty. Like salt marshes, brackish marshes may be highly biologically productive, and are important sources of organic matter to tidal sloughs, channels, mudflats, and the bay. Salmon and shrimp depend on brackish marshes during their migrations between saline and freshwater habitats. Brackish marsh vegetation around Alviso is dominated by alkali bulrush and increasingly by invasive plants - perennial peppergrass, and spearscale.¹⁴

California clapper rail is an endangered species and year-round resident of the brackish marsh, making its home in pickleweed and cordgrass. The population declined precipitously between



The endangered salt marsh harvest mouse clings to pickleweed.¹³





Endangered California clapper rail.¹⁵



Fields of invasive tule grass

1850 and 1900 when hunters killed thousands of the slow-moving birds every week. Since then, habitat loss has been the major factor in population declines. Furthermore, upstream portions of Alviso Slough, formerly prime habitat, has shifted from a brackish water to a freshwater environment.¹⁶

Freshwater Marsh

Freshwater wetlands are also very productive wildlife habitats. They are typically found in the upper reaches of sloughs and creeks farthest from the bay and closest to solid land. These upper reaches may still be subject to tidal influence; however, because they are flushed with fresh water on a daily basis, they mostly support freshwater vegetation such as broad-leaf cattail, California bulrush, and hard-stem bulrush. Freshwater marshes provide important nursery grounds for juvenile trout and salmon. They provide shelter for more than 160 species of birds and numerous mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Considered notorious because of its role in choking shipping channels and impeding boaters' access to the Alviso Marina, California bulrush

(or tule) is common in the freshwater marshes of Alviso. While it may not be popular with fishermen, the bulrush is a good source of food for wildlife.¹⁷

Broad-leaf or common cattail is usually found in shallower water than narrow leaf cattail. Native Americans ate the rhizomes (the leaf bases) and the young flower spikes. Like tule, however, it is not native to the area around the Alviso Marina and makes the channel less navigable.

River Habitats

Alviso has two fresh waterways impacting its environment. Both the Guadalupe River and Coyote Creek are fed by tributaries that begin as coldwater streams in the mountains ringing the Santa Clara Valley. These waters pass through the foothills, level out in the flatlands and warm up as they near Alviso and enter the bay through the slough system. The fish and invertebrate communities living in these environments are composed of freshwater species that inhabit the river their entire lives and *anadromous* species (like salmon) that are born in fresh water, migrate to salt water habitats when young, and return to freshwater as adults to spawn. A combination of



salt pond creation and agricultural activity have made several species of fish extinct in the Alviso area.

Uplands

Uplands are walkable lands just beyond the marshes, and much of Alviso is built upon these lands. They do not have tidal influence, but because they are at or near sea level, water does not drain rapidly from them. Uplands are thus home to yet another unique aquatic habitat, *seasonal wetlands*. Like the other habitats discussed in this chapter, seasonal wetlands have been severely damaged by human use and abuse. They are seasonal pools of water which occur in soil types found just north of Alviso in the Warm Springs section of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, that evaporate in the dry season. Some species live in vernal pools year round; the endangered tadpole shrimp, for example, lays eggs which remain dormant through the dry season and hatch only after a rain. Other animals, such as tiger salamanders, are more likely to leave the pool altogether and find moister lodging. Other species of concern are Contra Costa yellow goldfields and Purple downingias which are colorful presences in springtime.

The burrowing owl is the signature species of the uplands, and is so named because it lives underground in burrows dug out by ground squirrels. These owls have long legs and sport distinctive white “eyebrows” above bright yellow eyes. They are one of the smallest owls in North America.¹⁸

This species of owl prefers open areas with low ground cover. They can often be found perching near their burrow on fence posts or trees. The biggest threat to their existence is development of the uplands. Even parks and open space can be a threat as the burrows are tilled up. A substantial population lives just east of Alviso in what was once a horse farm.²⁰

Salt Ponds

Even though the area around Alviso contains an intensity of infrastructure and toxic substances, by far the biggest environmental impact on Alviso has been the harvesting of salt.

Salt is a valuable mineral. In addition to being required by all living beings, salt is useful in food storage. Before refrigeration this was the



Pair of endangered burrowing owls.¹⁹



predominant way of storing food because microbes and bacteria generally cannot live in salty environments. This is how humans developed a taste for salted and pickled foods – sausages, salted fishes, beef jerky, etc.

Salt is a naturally occurring compound found in most of earth's water. Generally speaking, salt is produced either by mining it or by evaporating water containing it. San Francisco Bay, with tens of thousands of acres of salt marsh, is an ideal place to produce salt by evaporation.²¹ The salt ponds created along San Francisco Bay are some of the largest facilities of their kind in the world.

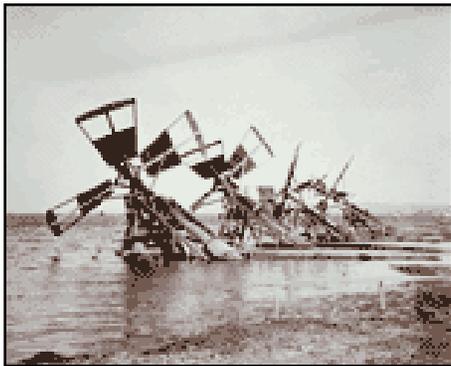
Salt harvesting was one of the first major businesses in the Bay Area.²² In the 1850s, following in the footsteps of Native Americans and later the Spanish missionaries, American businessmen created companies that harvested salt along the bay's edge and sold it (at high prices) to gold mining communities in the Sierra. They relied on the evaporator pond technique, a labor-intensive effort that required men to use picks and shovels to first build levees and then to break up the salt to be processed at nearby mills. To pump water between salt ponds, salt companies relied upon windmills, known as Archimedes screw

pumps, a familiar site in the Alviso area prior to the 1950s when electric pumps began to be used.

Along with increasingly mechanized and electrified salt production, and the rapidly growing human population of California, an increasing amount of the salt marsh was turned into salt ponds. By the 1970s, 85% of the salt marsh that once ringed San Francisco and San Pablo Bays had been destroyed by salt pond conversions.

In the early 1990s, Cargill Corporation (which had purchased Leslie Salt Company in 1979) transformed the salt harvesting process yet again. Instead of scraping the salt all the way down to the mud bottoms of the salt ponds, they allowed an eight-inch salt floor to build up. Relying on salt beds meant that the salt on top dried quicker and had higher-quality crystallization. This, in turn, meant that more salt could be produced from fewer salt ponds.

Because they could do more with less, Cargill sold 15,100 acres of salt ponds to the federal government and the State of California for \$100 million in cash plus \$143 million in tax credits in a 2003 deal brokered by U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein.



Archimedes screw pump moving water between South Bay salt ponds.



Map 3: Salt ponds near Alviso





Pillars of salt at Cargill ponds across from Alviso in Newark

South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

The salt ponds of southern San Francisco Bay will take on new responsibilities in the future – habitat, flood protection, and recreation. Six agencies now manage this area: the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS - which owns and manages the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge), the California Department of Fish and Game, the US Army Corps of Engineers (responsible for building and repairing dikes, dams, and locks), the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the Alameda County Water District, and the California Coastal Commission.²³ These agencies are working together to restore the benefits of a functioning tidal prism through the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project (SBSPRP), the largest wetland restoration on the West Coast.

The first study performed by the SBSPRP determined that the best way to proceed with the newly acquired lands (equivalent in size to half the city of San Francisco) was a gradual restoration of original habitat. After 50 to 100 years of living with the salt ponds, many animals have become dependent on the environment. Therefore, instead of trying to restore original habitats all at once, they are proceeding slowly by

using pilot projects. These are small, reversible test projects that can be carefully yet affordably monitored to determine the effects of any changes on a small scale before anything is attempted on a large scale.

The future shape of the wetlands will be determined gradually over the next 50 years. The goal is to restore 50 – 90 percent of the salt ponds to tidal influence (that is, to restore the tidal prism) by the year 2057. Those ponds not returned to tidal influence will be managed for the benefit of migrating birds and other animals that have become dependent on the salt ponds for survival. The actual percentage of restoration will depend on the results of the pilot projects.

Some SBSPRP proposals could potentially solve two problems at once. For example, currently, the Alviso Slough is clogged with invasive freshwater species of tule. Restoration of a more navigable channel would allow more maritime uses for the Alviso Marina, a goal of many residents. Plus, it could also restore habitat for endangered species such as the salt marsh harvest mouse and the clapper rail.

To accomplish this, a first phase project of the restoration will be to open Pond A-8 to tidal in-



fluence. It is hoped that this will both restore salt marsh habitat and begin a process of scouring the Alviso Slough of tule. Slough restoration and the problems relating to dead salt marshes have the same root – the blocking of the tidal prism by salt pond levees. The former slough has been denied its drainage role because levees for the salt ponds prevent the slough from draining all of the marsh as it once had. The less marsh area drained by a slough, the less volume of water it can collect; in turn, the less volume of water collected, the slower the movement of the water and the corresponding increase in sedimentation - the main cause of channel choking.

Mercury

Mercury, once known as “quicksilver”, was an essential ingredient in the mining of gold and silver. It was used to separate the precious metals from crushed ore and was in high demand during California’s Gold Rush of the mid 1800s. Beginning in the late 1700s but then increasing dramatically after 1846, the New Almaden mines (located in the foothills south of San José) produced large amounts of mercury. Unfortunately, mercury is highly toxic to living creatures and tailings from the quicksilver mines leached into the Guadalupe River where they were carried

downstream, eventually settling within sediments in the sloughs around Alviso.²⁴

Although making the Alviso Slough a navigable channel is highly desirable, the mercury-contaminated sediments located at the bottom of Alviso Slough are cause for concern. The levels of mercury in the water in the local sloughs and salt ponds have been tested by state and federal agencies responsible for the well-being of the bay. Research indicates that current levels of mercury in the Alviso Slough are high but not hazardous.²⁵ However, it is possible that sediments disturbed by dredging could release hazardous amounts of mercury.²⁶

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

A great place to explore the environment in and around Alviso is the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge – less than two miles from the Alviso Marina. The Refuge houses the Environmental Education Center, a facility for learning about the area’s unique species of plants and animals. In addition to a short trail with exhibits that traverses the restored New Chicago Marsh,



the Refuge features miles of trails that follow the salt pond levees out into the tidelands where visitors can see and hear some of the 260 species of birds that make this a temporary or permanent home.

In the late 1960s, as environmental consciousness was being raised in America, Bay Area residents became alarmed at the rapidly deteriorating health of San Francisco Bay. Proposals to fill the bay and urbanize large parts of it were frequently offered, while research showed that the southern portion of San Francisco Bay had a number of environmental problems including the potential extinction of several species of animals unique to the area. Researchers also uncovered toxic dumps from the early 20th century and tested for the mercury pollution mentioned above.²⁷ In 1974, U.S. Senator Don Edwards wrote and helped pass federal legislation to purchase some of these tidal lands and keep them from being further damaged.

The resulting National Wildlife Refuge was the first urban wildlife refuge in the nation. Today six wildlife refuges ring the greater San Francisco / San Pablo Bays and seek to protect what remains of the original tidelands. The Refuge currently covers 30,000 acres of open bay, salt

pond, salt marsh, mudflat, upland, and vernal pools. In 2003, the federal Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) which manages the refuge added 8,000 acres in tidelands northwest of Alviso, by a co-purchase with the State of California and Hewlett Packard. These tidelands and 7,000 acres now managed by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) are part of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, discussed above.²⁸

The Great Pacific Flyway Migration

The Pacific Flyway is often described as a “highway in the sky.” To picture this, visualize a four-lane freeway in the sky, traveled by millions of birds fluttering wings of many different colors, patterns and sizes! The Pacific Flyway migration is the most visible seasonal movement of wildlife in the state. Four to six million water birds fly up and down the California coast, traveling from their summer breeding grounds in arctic or sub-arctic areas such as Alaska and Canada.

Some of these long distance migrants will spend the winter along the California coast, while others will stop only briefly to rest and feed before continuing south to Mexico, Central America or even as far as South America. December is



a peak time to see these migratory and resident water birds, including great egrets, snowy egrets, great blue herons, long-billed curlew, marbled godwits, avocets, black-necked stilts, white pelicans, least sandpipers, willets, pelagic cormorants, western grebes, and many more. Of these birds, many pass through the Alviso marshes to feed, breed, roost, and re-energize. Common to the Alviso marshes are the Salt marsh common yellowthroat, Western snowy plover, Alameda song sparrow, California brown pelican, California gull, and the American white pelican.²⁹ These species are briefly described below.

Salt marsh common yellowthroat breeds in brackish marshes, tall grass, and tules. It is a “California Species of Special Concern.” In the winter it prefers salt marshes. The bird forages in all three marsh types during the non-breeding season. It nests in tules bordering Alviso Slough and lives in the South Bay year-round.

Western Snowy Plover is a small, threatened shorebird similar in size to a sparrow. During the breeding season (March to September), plovers nest along the shores of the Pacific coast. Plover nests usually contain three tiny eggs, which are camouflaged to look like sand and nearly invisible, even to the trained eye. Plovers will use

almost any small protected enclosure to make their nests, including shells, driftwood, rocks, and even human footprints.

Alameda song sparrow The Alameda song sparrow is a year-round resident of the South Bay. It breeds in salt marshes, primarily in marsh gumpland and cordgrass along channels. Because this habitat has been severely diminished, it is a California Species of Special Concern. It is rarely seen in Alviso, although it may breed in vegetation bordering Alviso Slough.

California brown pelican is both a federal and state-listed endangered species with the highest legal protection. It lives near the shore in marine habitats and coastal bays. The brown pelican is a regular visitor of the Alviso slough but not abundant during non-breeding season (summer and fall). It roosts on levees in the interiors of pond complexes and forages in salt ponds and in the open bay.

American white pelican is also a species of special concern that forages in freshwater lakes and rivers, and nests on islands in lakes and salt ponds. The common non-breeder forages primarily in salt ponds in Alviso. It is a regular visitor from late summer to spring.



Salt marsh common yellowthroat, a “species of special concern.”³⁰



Western snowy plover nesting in a human footprint.³¹





Alameda song sparrow, a species of special concern.³²

California gull has special status only when breeding. It nests on inland lakes and around San Francisco Bay, especially in the salt ponds around Alviso. The colony in Pond A-6 (see map on pg. 21) is the second largest in California. It forages throughout the Alviso Slough and in the neighboring landfills. The gull lives year-round in Alviso and breeds from May through August.

In spite of its partially protected status, California gulls are a problem in the South Bay. A scientific report on gulls found that “California gull populations have increased . . . over the past two decades in south San Francisco Bay, from less than 1,000 breeding birds in 1982 to over 33,000 in 2006.”³⁴ This dramatic population increase negatively impacts native breeding water birds. Gulls are predators that feed on the eggs and chicks of nesting water birds like stilts and terns, further exacerbating their population declines. More study on this problem is required before an appropriate solution can be found.



Adult and juvenile American white pelicans on levees near Alviso.³³

Flooding and Water Management

Since the late 1700’s, when Spanish missionaries settled in the Santa Clara Valley, seasonal flooding has been a problem in and around Alvi-

so. Floods regularly washed away crops and adobe houses. Oftentimes, much of the flattest lands remained as bogs for months out of every year and dried out in May or June. Alviso in the 1850s was situated between the Guadalupe River and Coyote Creek at the point where the waterways entered the tidal prism of San Francisco Bay. The community was built on relatively high ground and flooded infrequently, in part because it was protected by the tidal marshes’ vast drainage network, which could easily absorb excess waters.³⁵

In the early days of Alviso, the slough/river complex was up to 150 feet wide and 40 feet deep, and was navigable by steamboats traveling south from San Francisco. Because it was the first high ground accessible to shipping, Alviso became the main port where goods came and went from the Santa Clara Valley. But the sloughs were crooked and their meandering courses meant that boat travel was much longer than a straight-line distance so, to shorten it, the early settlers dredged a connection between the Guadalupe River and what is now known as Alviso Slough.

Prior to urbanization, the economy of the South Bay was dependent on agriculture and



many orchards flourished. Initially, farmers could rely on artesian wells that dotted the landscape, but over time these wells went dry and farmers switched to mechanical pumps to access the aquifer below Alviso. The drained aquifer, combined with the weight of agricultural machines and orchard trees, compacted the land in Alviso and caused it to subside. Between the late 1800s and 1970, Alviso subsided as much as six feet. In Alviso, subsidence meant that a great area of land was now at or even below sea level, which in turn meant that small seasonal floods turned into destructive floods. In 1929, to combat three problems (the lack of freshwater, land subsidence, and the increasing threat of floods), local authorities created the Santa Clara Valley Water Conservation District (SCVWCD).³⁶

From the 1930s through the 1960s, the SCVWCD built steep concrete channels to keep surface water moving quickly. In the 1970s, to deal with subsidence, the SCVWCD built percolation ponds to artificially recharge the aquifer. By the 1980's the water table had returned to its original level, and subsidence stopped. But Alviso had already sunk; today Alviso ranges from one foot below sea level to fifteen feet above sea level.³⁷

Along with subsidence, a primary cause of Alviso's increased risk for flooding is the destruction of the tidal prism - nature's water management technique. When levees were built to protect the salt evaporation ponds, the connection between the sloughs and the wetlands was severed. This meant that the Guadalupe River and Coyote Creek now had sole responsibility for transporting water and sediments all the way to the bay. The levees also reduced the amount of saltwater that entered the slough, shifting the sloughs from salt and brackish water habitats to freshwater habitats. A vicious cycle began where sediment would build up in the sloughs, then freshwater vegetation would take root where it had not before, then more sediment would build up around the roots. This left the waterways higher than their surroundings and dramatically increased the chance of catastrophic flooding. To combat the rising waterways, levees were raised several times so that now they sit nine to fifteen feet above Alviso.

In spite of the levee building and raising, severe flooding hit Alviso in 1955, 1958, 1963, 1969, and 1982. The most catastrophic event occurred in 1983 when a devastating flood kept the town under water for over a week. To prevent a repeat of





Satellite image showing meanders of tidal prism cut off by levees. The colors are produced by algal blooms.³⁸

this disaster, levees were again raised along both rivers and a new levee was built around the north side of town, although the major floods of 1986 and 1995 damaged Alviso further. Once again, the SCVWCD raised levees along the waterways in response.

Between 1997 and 2007, the ring levee around Alviso was replaced. As part of the flood protection strategy, a gated opening was cut into a levee separating the river/slough's west bank from salt pond A-8, opposite Alviso. This means that flood waters would drain into pond A-8 and not Alviso. As a result of the SCVWCD's efforts, Alviso now has protection against a 100-year flood.³⁹

Additional steps have been taken to protect new developments within Alviso from flooding. The City of San José's Flood Hazard Area Ordinance mandates that any new residential development within Alviso must have its living space situated above the 100-year flood elevation, which means nine feet above sea level.⁴⁰ Therefore, new homes built in Alviso are either built on earth mounds nine feet high or are prevented from having legal living space on the first floor.

The levee building method of flood control has had its own impacts. Levees have, for example, drastically altered the saltwater environment in the sloughs of the South Bay. Over time, these alterations have cut the carrying capacity of the slough by up to 66% and diminished the width of the slough from 150 feet to 30 feet within the last fifty years.⁴¹

To restore the flood protection properties of the tidal prism, two projects are currently in the works: the Alviso Slough Restoration Project and South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. The goal of the former is to restore Alviso Slough's width, depth, and habitat to pre-1983 conditions.

The Alviso Marina is virtually unusable now because the slough is only navigable for a few hours each day during high tides; at low tide, the slough is only six inches deep.⁴² The Alviso Slough Restoration Project calls for dredging the slough to a depth of ten feet and removing the freshwater vegetation and their root mass down to four feet. In total, 237,000 cubic yards of sediment would be removed within the slough, restoring the physical conditions, and allowing for greater use of the marina.⁴³ However, the dredg-



ing of the slough would have limited permanent success in restoring the natural saltwater environment of the slough. Without the twice-daily intrusion of saltwater and stronger tidal forces to flush the sediments out of the slough, it will likely refill with sediment and vegetation within ten years.

The levees that separate the salt ponds from each other and from the San Francisco Bay and Alviso Slough stand between 12 and 13 feet above sea level, but will be lowered to the mean high tide level as part of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. This will allow saltwater to reach the ponds and help to restore their salt marsh vegetation. This will also reconnect the Alviso Slough to a more fully functioning tidal prism which allows for increased tidal scouring of sediment within the waterway and better drainage of the sloughs. The tidal scouring will help to remove sediment within the slough, creating a deeper and wider channel that is able to transport more water without requiring costly and disruptive dredging every few years. Reconnecting the sloughs with their watersheds will also allow for greater floodwater storage and movement.⁴⁴

Due to changes proposed by SBSRP, Alviso could have protection even beyond the 100-year

flood event. If flood waters were to exceed one pond's storage capacity, they would top internal levees and flow into the surroundings ponds.⁴⁵

In the past, salt pond levees have provided protection from tidal flooding, which can occur during El Nino events when tides can rise up to two feet higher than normal.⁴⁶ Worries over rising sea levels, however, have prompted the need for more flood protection. Future flood protection plans focus on the possibility of tidal flooding and include the construction of a new shoreline levee from Coyote Creek to the Alviso Slough.

Opportunities and Constraints

While the environment imposes many constraints upon development in Alviso, there are also many opportunities.

Opportunities

Alviso is rich in opportunities. Its unique natural beauty should be paired with intelligently designed buildings and carefully planned commerce that allows human culture to coexist within the natural environment.



The historic core of Alviso sits below sea level. While this adds to the cost of building, it is an opportunity to create structures that are unique to Alviso. For example, new housing built on stilts would be unique in the South Bay. Walkways that are also off the ground could give the neighborhood a “tree house” quality that could charm residents and visitors alike.

Instead of turning its back on the wetlands as it has done for most of its existence, development in Alviso could feature the wetlands and its plant and animal inhabitants as points of pride. A marina built on a restored slough with healthy populations of steelhead trout and salmon could attract recreational fishermen and retailers to support and capitalize upon them. Perhaps seafood restaurants featuring local catches and locally produced oysters could be the core of a modestly-scaled entertainment district. Aerial viewing decks could attract birds and the people who like to observe them.

Constraints

There are three significant environmental constraints in the Alviso vicinity: flooding, earthquake liquefaction, and toxic substances.

Flooding, as discussed above, is a very serious constraint for development in Alviso. Because of flooding risk, all new development in Alviso must adhere to strict building codes that limit living spaces to nine feet above ground (meaning that people actually live above sea level rather than below). Below that level, only storage is permitted. This increases the cost of constructing housing. It also means that acquiring home insurance is more expensive than in areas not prone to flooding.

Earthquake liquefaction is also a serious constraint: Alviso is located on the edge of the tidal prism and its solid land was created from sediments being deposited by Coyote Creek and the Guadalupe River. Unfortunately, sedimentary lands are prone to liquefaction in an earthquake. Liquefaction means that solid land turns to mud with entry of underground water caused by cracks generated from earthquakes. Because of liquefaction, structures above shake more violently than similar structures built on bedrock. Structures can still be built on sedimentary soils but they must be engineered to respond to the effects of liquefaction – this, in turn, increases their cost.

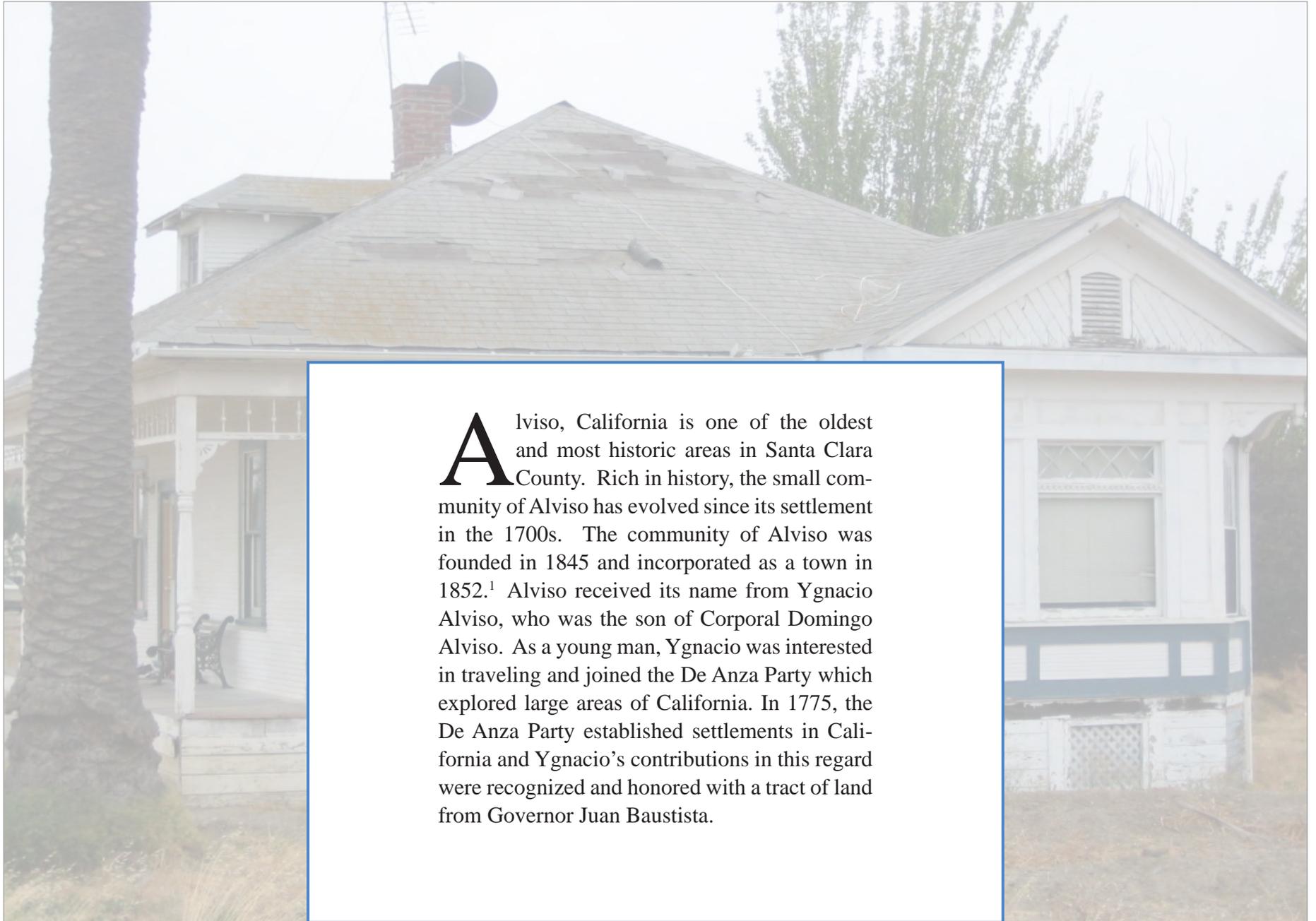


The third major constraint to building in Alviso is the legacy of toxic substances mined in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mercury and asbestos are the primary culprits although traces of other toxins such as selenium and nickel are also hazards. These toxic substances can be stirred up when the soil is disturbed for construction projects – like building levees, houses, or factories or dredging sloughs, restoring watercourses, or constructing habitat islands. Toxic substances are known to cause cancers and birth defects in all animals, including humans. All development must be carefully examined for its potential to release toxic substances into the environment.

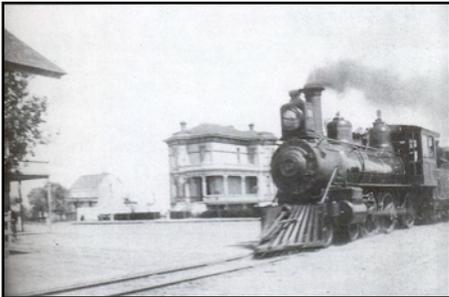


2 History





Alviso, California is one of the oldest and most historic areas in Santa Clara County. Rich in history, the small community of Alviso has evolved since its settlement in the 1700s. The community of Alviso was founded in 1845 and incorporated as a town in 1852.¹ Alviso received its name from Ygnacio Alviso, who was the son of Corporal Domingo Alviso. As a young man, Ygnacio was interested in traveling and joined the De Anza Party which explored large areas of California. In 1775, the De Anza Party established settlements in California and Ygnacio's contributions in this regard were recognized and honored with a tract of land from Governor Juan Baustista.



The South Pacific Coast Railroad carried passengers across the marshlands from San Francisco to Santa Cruz.⁵



During World War II, Edith Brown helped maintain the Brown family pear orchard.⁷

Alviso is situated in the heart of southern San Francisco Bay and the area once was known for its prosperous port, which received its water from the Guadalupe River. The United States Congress established the port in 1862.² Although the port is no longer functioning, it still serves the community as a historical landmark that is full of natural history and wildlife. Although Alviso has been dramatically transformed since its founding, it has continued to stay true to its small town roots and retains its environmental beauty. A place of peace and sanctuary, Alviso is truly a place to escape from the busy Bay Area atmosphere.

History of Alviso

1860 – 1875: The Railroad's Influence

Alviso, located at the southernmost portion of the San Francisco Bay, became a shipping point for the south bay in 1860. The United States Congress declared Alviso a port of entry in 1862, designating Alviso a port where foreign goods were received.³ Alviso supported four shipping companies and accommodated lumber, grain, and hay businesses. Additional accommo-

dations, such as warehouses, hotels, houses and stores were built to support business growth in the small town. In 1864, railroad service connecting San Francisco to San José commenced, but this route bypassed the town of Alviso because shipping by rail versus steamship was much less expensive. The railroad led to the decline of Alviso as a major port and trade center, but the waterfront continued to serve as an outlet for boats to the Bay.⁴

1875 – 1890: Orchards

In the 1870s, Alviso was a flourishing farming area with humus-rich soil and low-hanging fog. Production shifted from grains to fruit and orchards stretched as far as the eye could see. The orchards supported strawberries, apples, peaches, prunes, and currants. For irrigation, growers tapped artesian wells instead of relying on the periodic flooding of the Guadalupe River. During this period, Santa Clara County was noted as the “Garden of the World.”⁶ The prosperity of the orchards gave rise to a peaceful and productive Alviso. As the artesian wells dried up, growers pumped groundwater, causing the Alviso-valley to subside. Around this time, Alviso experienced an economic decline from which it did not recover fully.



1890 – 1905: New Chicago

Alviso witnessed land speculation in the early 1890s. P.H. Wheeler, a businessman with a vision, left a bankrupt San Diego watch factory and moved to Alviso with a plan to transform the port town into “New Chicago.” A large tract on the northeast side of town was subdivided into 4,000 lots and sold to investors from all over the country. Lot sizes were small, 40 to a block, and prices ranged from \$5 to \$200.⁸ Wheeler’s plan also included turning Alviso into a new manufacturing center. In 1891, Wheeler built the San José Watch Factory in the New Chicago area in an attempt to spur industrial growth, but unfortunately financial hardships forced Wheeler to close shop.

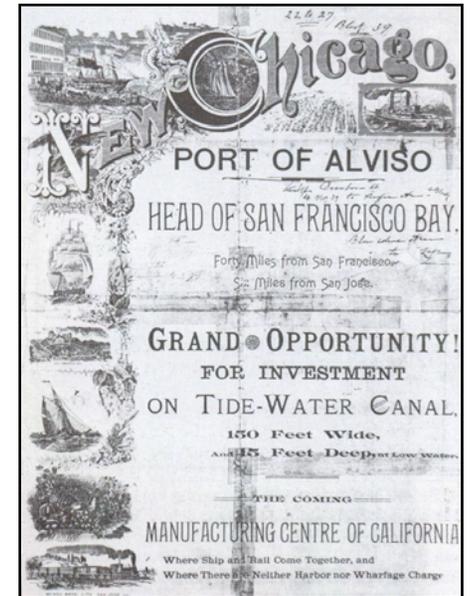
1905 – 1930: The Cannery

A few years after the unsuccessful attempt at revitalization, Alviso experienced a renaissance. In 1906, a Chinese businessman named Thomas Foon Chew took over his father’s cannery and established the Bayside Canning Company, which successfully revived the local economy. The Cannery became the largest employer in Alviso; it employed 80% of Alviso’s labor force,

and during canning season it would run buses on several routes in the valley in order to supply the necessary 500 employees to run the cannery.¹⁰ At its height of production, the Bayside Company was the third largest cannery in the world. After a couple decades of prosperity and growth, the Cannery closed in 1936 due to the Great Depression and the unexpected death of Chew in 1931.

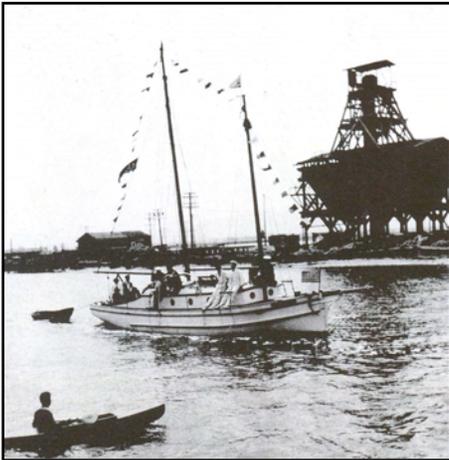
1930-1960: Economic Decline

During the 1930s, Alviso’s economy was driven by a prominent flour mill, Standard Oil, the Lesile Salt Company and, until its demise in 1936, the Bayside Cannery. During this period, Alviso featured an active port, with yachts mooring at the South Bay Yacht Club. After the realignment of the Guadalupe River to the Alviso Slough, the Club became a prominent recreational resource and its new clubhouse was built in 1903.¹¹ Until the 1940s, Alviso featured a number of casinos and dance halls. Alviso experienced an economic downturn throughout the Great Depression in which commercial activity sank, leading to the closure of the Bayside Cannery.¹² Compared to the prosperous times of Alviso serving as a major port, rich farming



Alviso’s New Chicago subdivision was promoted as the “New Chicago of the Far West.”⁹





Boats of the South Bay Yacht Club in 1938.

area, and canning district, Alviso's vitality as an economic hub in Santa Clara Valley began to weaken.

The post-World War II era brought changes to Santa Clara County. Between 1940 to 1950, Alviso experienced a decline in population from 677 to 652, while the county population nearly doubled.¹³ A growing technology-based economy led to the development of high-tech institutions such as General Electric, Lockheed Martin and IBM near Alviso. The prevalence of high-tech industries led to an increase in population for Santa Clara County as well as Alviso. Between 1950 and 1960 Alviso's population grew at a rate of 78%, climbing to 1,165.¹⁴ While Alviso maintained its small-town character, Silicon Valley technology companies developed around Alviso.

1968: Consolidation

Alviso, a general law city, consolidated with the City of San José on January 9, 1968. Residents of Alviso were divided on the decision to consolidate; two previous votes failed and the final vote passed with a nine-vote margin.¹⁶ The decision to consolidate was thereby approved by the

residents of Alviso.¹⁷ Consolidation promised services to be provided by the City of San José such as paved streets, lighting, sewage, and police and fire protection. After consolidation, the City of San José gained access to the southernmost end of the San Francisco Bay, allowing for the expansion of sewage treatment operations.

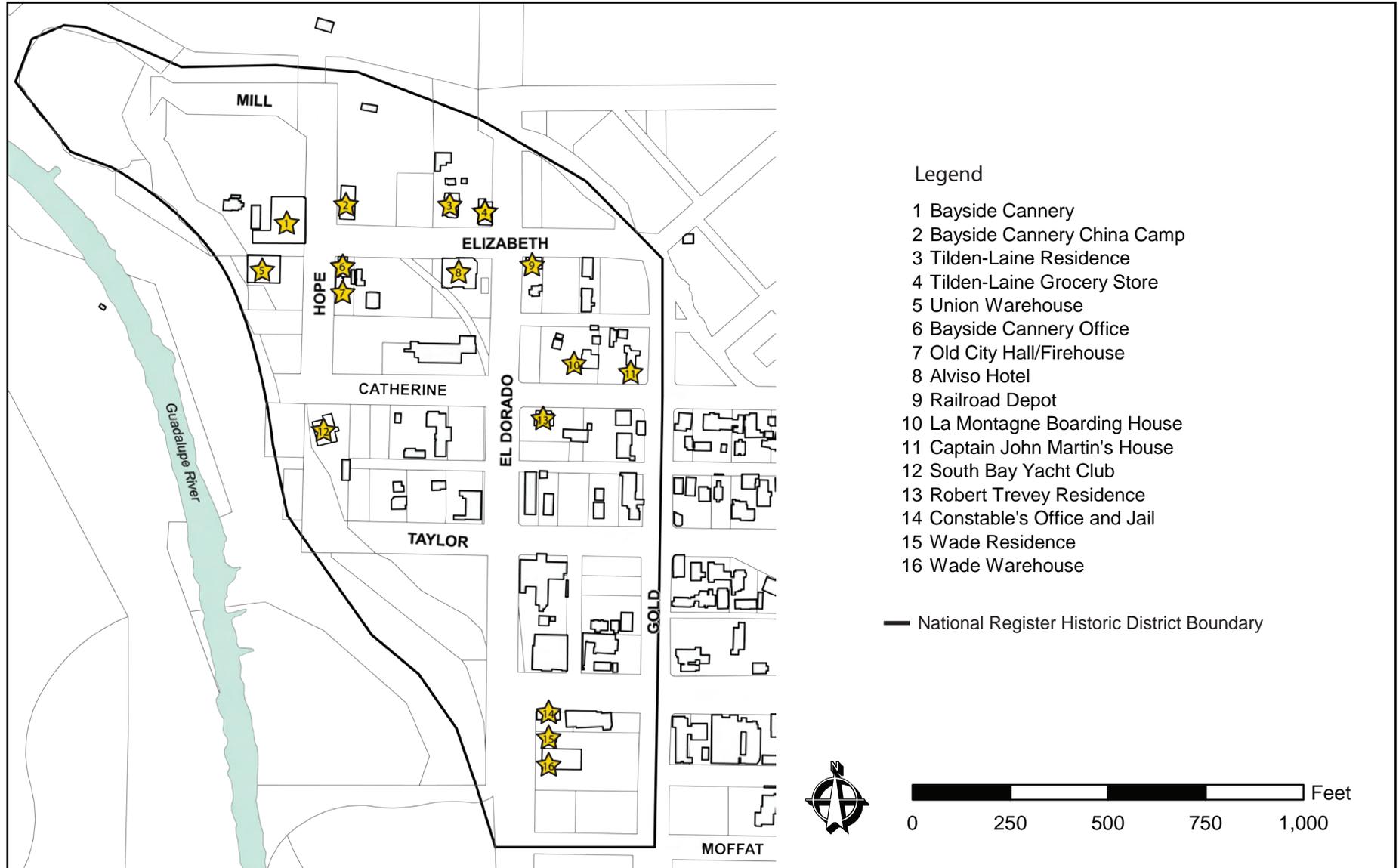
Historical Significance

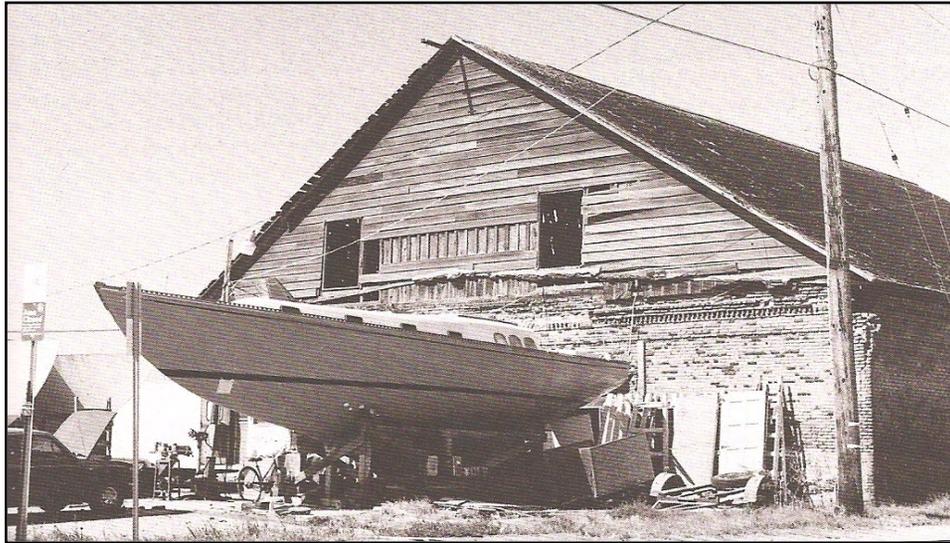
The community of Alviso has a number of historic buildings that date back to the late 19th century and early 20th century. As a result, Alviso has an opportunity to preserve a unique character which sets it apart from the rest of Santa Clara Valley, whose bustling economy continuously shapes and reshapes the area's development patterns.

The City of San José has identified historic resources in Alviso that possess historical and architectural significance. This list of historic resources serves as a reference for actions to be taken regarding historic structures. The actions include the promotion of historic preservation concerning individual structures, as well as en-

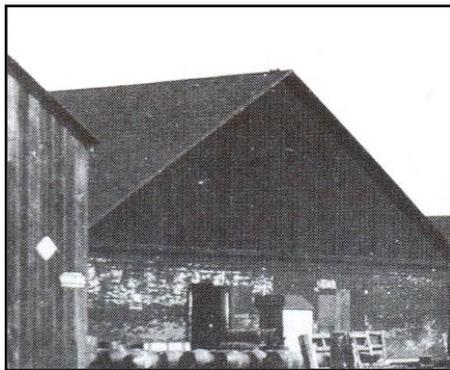


Map 4: Alviso's National Register Historic District





Union Warehouse in 1970.²²



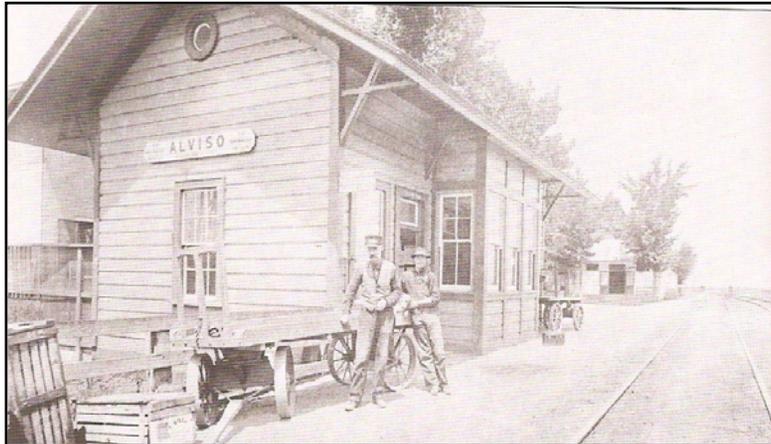
Union Warehouse circa 1895 - 1920.²³ Union Warehouse in 2008.

environmental impact reporting in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act.¹⁸ All of Alviso's historic structures lie within the federally designated National Register Historic District, which was established to preserve the character of the community. Regulations limit alterations and development of existing properties as well as vacant parcels within the boundaries of the district. Policies are implemented through the requirement of environmental impact reporting, as well as design guidelines through the US Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Historic Preservation.¹⁹ The boundaries of this district, along with historic resources, are illustrated in Map 4.

Historic Resources

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 declared that "the spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage," and that "the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people."²⁰ Preservation of historic resources not only commemorates history, but establishes connections between the past, present,





Train depot in 1910.²⁵



Train depot in 2008.

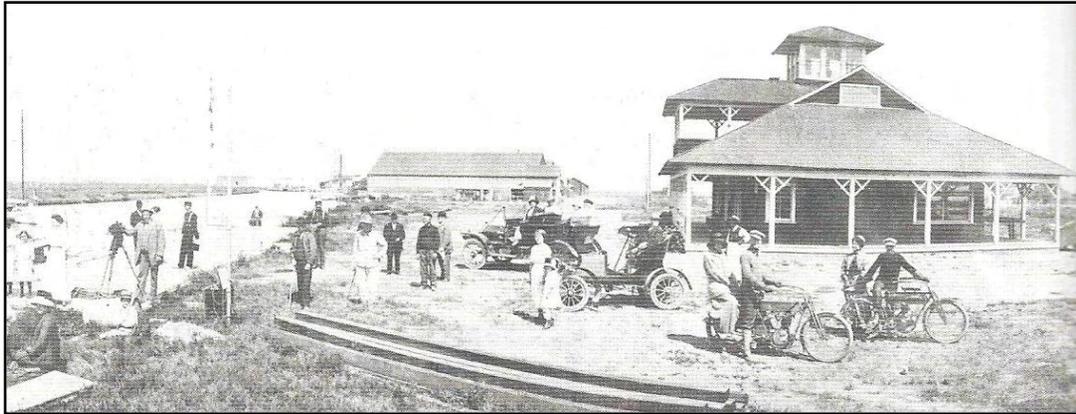


Tilden-Laine house and store in 1890.²⁶



Tilden-Laine house and store 2008.





South Bay Yacht Club in 1915.²⁸



South Bay Yacht Club in 2008.

and future of a community. Throughout Alviso's long standing history many buildings and structures have changed. Some of the historic resources have maintained their historic significance while others have been adapted for different uses. This section will look at the adaptive reuses of a few historic structures.

Union Warehouse (Mudflat)

The Union Warehouse was built in 1858 and was owned by John Jacob Ortley. The structure was actually an icehouse with eight-foot-thick, brick walls packed with sawdust for cold storage.²¹ It was used for union meetings, and during the early 1900s it was used as a cold storage warehouse by the Bayside Canning Company.

In more recent years, the privately owned warehouse has been restored as an office and reception facility.

Railroad Depot

In 1884, the South Pacific Coast Railroad provided high-speed rail service that connected San Francisco to Santa Cruz, via Alviso. In 1888, Southern Pacific purchased the railroad and the train depot was remodeled. The wooden deck was removed, the roof was extended and a bay ticket window was added.²⁴ In 1960 Major Willis Laine bought the depot and relocated it eastward across the railroad tracks. The former depot now serves as a single-family home.

Tilden-Laine Residence and Store

The Tilden-Laine residence was built in 1887 by Susan Ortley Tilden. The house is still owned by the Laine family, and is the last of the Italianate Victorian homes that once lined Elizabeth Street. Built prior to the residence, the Tilden-Laine store located adjacent to the house was owned and operated by the Tilden family from 1865 to 1912. During the 1920's and 1930's the store became a saloon, then a



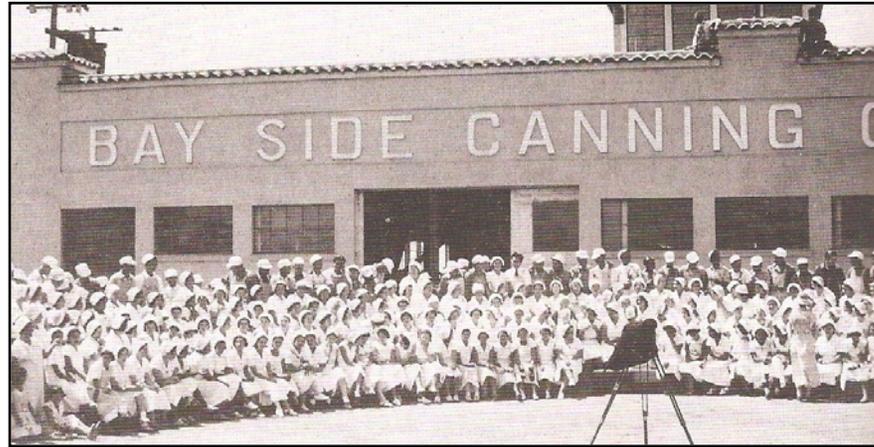
Chinese gambling hall. From 1940 to 1960, it was used as the Laine Grocery store. In more recent years, the Tilden store was used as an antique store and tattoo parlor. Both structures have survived through major floods and time, although the former store is in a significant state of decay.

South Bay Yacht Club

The South Bay Yacht Club was built in 1903 and was known as “The Blue Lady.” During the flood of 1983, the Club was almost completely submerged and its roof remained above the floodwaters. The flood prompted the relocation of the Club to higher ground: it was lifted 13 feet and moved 100 yards north.²⁷ In 1985, over 300 people celebrated the clubhouse’s restoration and new location. Today, the South Bay Yacht Club still serves the community of Alviso as a group meeting location.

Bayside Cannery

The main building of the Bayside Canning Company was built and occupied by the San José Watch Factory in 1891. In 1906, Thomas Foon Chew took over and opened the Bayside Cannery



Bayside Canning Co. in the early 1900's.²⁹



Bayside Canning Co. in 2008.





City Hall in 1935.³¹



Old City Hall in 2008.

which canned fruits and vegetables including asparagus, spinach, tomatoes, apricots, plums, pears, cherries, and peaches. As the cannery expanded, an additional building was built in 1929. Presently owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, all that remains of the original building are the ruins of a once successful cannery. The addition that was built as part of the Cannery's expansion is now abandoned and features a mural of Alviso's colorful past.

City Hall

In 1935, volunteers built Alviso City Hall with donated land and materials. This building has served as a community center, boat dock headquarters, economic opportunity center, library, community policing center, and post office.³⁰ Currently the former City Hall is serving as a police sub-station.

Regulatory Setting for Historic Resources

City Regulations

Alviso contains many historic resources within the National Historic District Boundary that encompasses Alviso Village. According to the City of San José, only six of the historic resources are recognized as city landmarks:

- Bayside Canning Company
- Tilden-Laine House and Grocery
- Bayside Cannery Office
- Old City Hall and Firehouse
- Wade Warehouse
- Wade Residence³²



Any historic property can be nominated for designation as a city landmark. Property owners can apply for nomination and the structure is considered for inclusion by the Historic Landmark Commission. To apply, the following information must be submitted to the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement: assessor's parcel number (APN), state historic inventory form, historic landmark nomination form, and photographs of the historic resource. After a historic resource is nominated for city landmark designation, the Historic Landmark Commission recommends that the City Council commence the process for designation as a city landmark. A designated city landmark must conform to the General Plan and possess unique historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic, or engineering value of historic nature.

The City of San José seeks to maintain the historic character of Alviso through preservation and rehabilitation. "Your Old House: Guide for Preserving San José Homes" provides design guidelines for historic preservation and was prepared through collaborative efforts by the San José Redevelopment Agency, Housing Department, the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, and the community

at large. The design guidelines are recommended for use by property owners and architects when developing plans for rehabilitation or repair projects. Property owners seeking to make changes to historic structures must apply for a Historic Preservation Permit from the City of San José Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement. The City of San José's design guidelines are an effort to maintain historic character within the historic district of Alviso.

The City of San José offers property owners incentive programs for rehabilitating city landmarks, with foundations in the Mills Act. It was enacted in 1972 and provides incentives for the preservation of residential neighborhoods and the revitalization of downtown commercial districts for qualified historic buildings by private property owners. The Mills Act is administered and implemented by the City of San José, which established eligibility criteria, application procedures, and terms of contract.³³ The Act provides qualified owners of historic properties/city landmarks property tax relief if they commit to rehabilitate and maintain the historic and architectural character of their properties for at least a ten-year period.³⁴ Incentive programs offered by the city provide owners of historic properties opportunities for preservation and rehabilitation.



State Regulations

Within the state regulations for historic preservation there are a few that directly affect the national registered historic district of Alviso. One of the main governing documents at the state level is the California Historic Building Code, which contains policies for the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, relocation or reconstruction of qualified historic buildings or properties.³⁵ In order for a building or site to be eligible, it must possess an important connection to the local history, culture or architecture.³⁶ The goal of the California Historic Building Code is to set forth guidelines that would address issues dealing with construction and rehabilitation, while maintaining a building's architectural and historic value.³⁷

Federal Regulations

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 articulates the Federal policy regarding historic preservation. Rather than mandating preservation of historic resources, the NHPA is in place to support and encourage preservation by requiring Federal agencies to consider the impact of their actions on historic properties.³⁸

The NHPA established the National Register of Historic Places, which is an inventory that lists historically significant districts, sites, and structures. It is the responsibility of the Secretary of the Interior to determine eligibility for listing, and for maintaining the National Register.³⁹ The NHPA also encourages states to establish local preservation programs that oversee historic resources within each state. A state preservation program requires the state to establish a state historic preservation review board, and to designate a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) whose responsibility is to administer the state program.⁴⁰

The Historic Preservation Fund is a funding program which grants federal money to State Historic Preservation offices for the purpose of historic preservation. Projects which may receive grants from this funding source include those which are included in the National Federal Register. Funds may be used for the planning of sites and historic preservation programs by the State, as well as for the physical rehabilitation of historic structures.⁴¹ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is the Federal Agency which oversees activities regarding national historic resources and the release of federal fund-



ing for projects under the Historic Preservation Fund, and, in Alviso's case, activities that take place within the National Historic District. In accordance with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation must review and take into account adverse effects which may impact historic resources.⁴² The mechanism for this is an environmental impact report, which is also compliant with the California Environmental Quality Act.⁴³

Opportunities and Constraints

The preservation and restoration of Alviso's historic structures will help maintain the historic, cultural, and aesthetic qualities that define Alviso's unique character.

Alviso, one of the oldest communities in California, has significantly transformed throughout its history. Historic structures embody Alviso's unique past, and the preservation of these structures creates potential opportunities. By taking advantage of local, state, and federal historic preservation grant programs, historic resources can be restored to their original form and char-

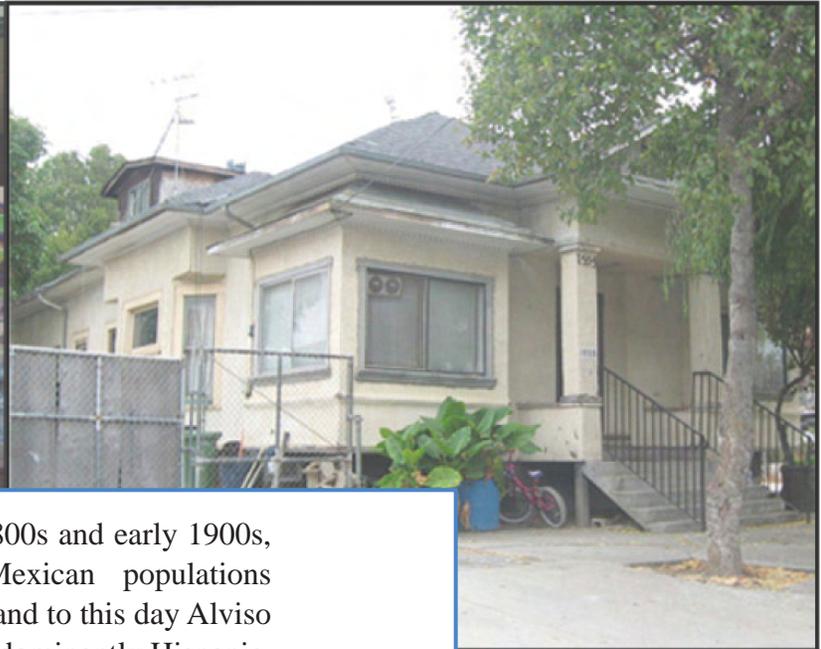
acter. Rehabilitation projects can raise awareness of the historical significance of Alviso and create opportunities to bring tourism to the area. The historic structures can be physically rehabilitated for adaptive reuse, which can positively benefit the community of Alviso. The rehabilitation of decaying structures can also enhance the aesthetic appeal of the community. There are many opportunities for the preservation and restoration of historic structures within Alviso that could benefit the community.

Although local, state and federal programs create opportunities, certain aspects of the programs also create challenges for historic preservation in Alviso. For example, regulations require that structures undergoing significant rehabilitation adhere to stringent codes and undergo a lengthy review process prior to approval. Lack of financial resources is also major obstacle faced by owners of historic properties. Creating more funding programs for private property owners to preserve or rehabilitate historically significant structures will alleviate some of the financial burden. Addressing some of the challenges faced by private property owners will make preservation a more achievable goal in Alviso.



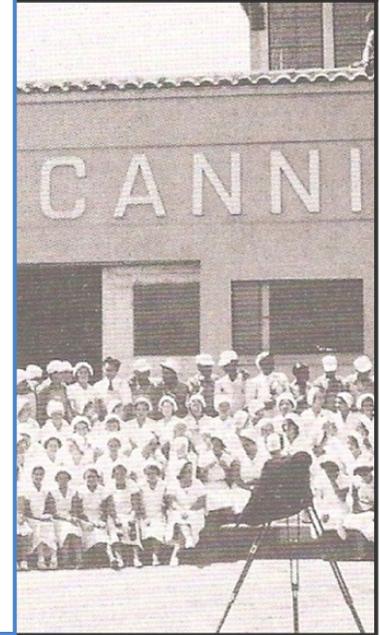
3 Demographics





Starting in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Portuguese and Mexican populations moved into Alviso, and to this day Alviso has a population that is predominantly Hispanic, most of whom are of Mexican origin. The majority of residents live in traditional single family homes, with a small portion of the housing consisting of small apartment buildings of 2 to 9 units.

Alviso's unique character derives from a distinct sense of attachment that one feels in the community. The people of Alviso settled and remained here for many generations, in contrast to the overall population of San José where residents tend to have been much more transient. Additionally, some of the local businesses are family owned and operated, and have remained in the same families for many generations.



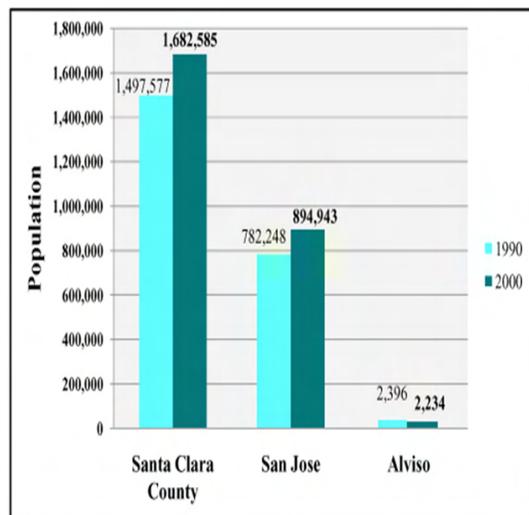


Figure 1: Population of Santa Clara County, City of San José and Alviso in 1990 and 2000.

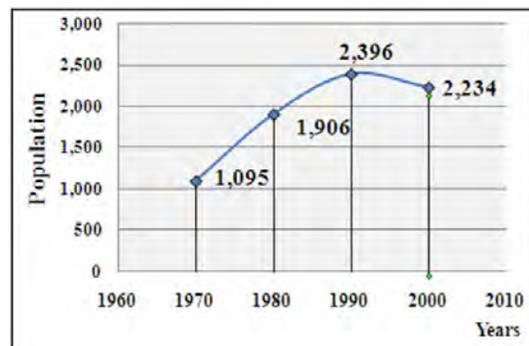


Figure 2: Alviso population 1970-2000.

This chapter will cover the demographic patterns that have occurred in Alviso in the past decades, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Historical Geographic Information System website, as well as accounts from Alviso residents.

Historical Demographics

Alviso’s population has fluctuated and persons from different ethnicities have come and gone as time and industries have evolved. The first census data available for the area was the 1970 census, shortly after Alviso was consolidated with San José. Prior to this, the census geographic units in the Alviso area had larger boundaries that included nearby cities within Alviso’s census tract.

The population of Alviso has always been small, but grew fairly quickly until a slight decline in the 1990s. In 1970, the population was 1,095 and grew to 1,906 by 1980, a 74% increase in residents.

In the 1970s, there were only 3 categories in the census data that distinguished race; “Black,” “White” and “Other.” “White” and “Hispanic” were categorized together and represented 96% of Alviso’s population. No “Black” residents were listed and 4% were classified as “Other.” The 1980 census stated that 62% of Alviso’s population was Hispanic, 35% was “White, non-Hispanic,” and 3% was classified as “Other.”

Demographic Analysis

The following charts and graphs compare demographic variables in Santa Clara County, the City of San José, and the neighborhood of Alviso. In each of these figures, Alviso’s data is included in the statistics for San José, and San José’s statistics are included in the statistics for Santa Clara County.



Population

In figure 1, Alviso's population is compared to the city of San José as well as Santa Clara County. Alviso comprises a very small portion of the overall San José population and declined 7%, from 2,396 in 1990 to 2,234 in 2000 (see figure 2). Conversely, the population of both the City and County has grown substantially. The overall population of the City of San José increased 14% from 782,248 in 1990 to 894,943 in 2000. The overall population of Santa Clara County also increased 12% from 1,497,577 in 1990 to 1,682,585 in 2000.

Income

Alviso's residents earn substantially less than the average for residents of San José and Santa Clara County. Alviso's average salaries are 81% of San José's average salaries and 77% of the average salaries of Santa Clara County. Figure 3 shows the differences in median household income in 1999 in Alviso, the City of San José and

Santa Clara County. In 2000, approximately 7% of Alviso residents were living below the federal poverty level.

In 2000, manufacturing was the largest occupational industry, employing 23% of Alviso residents. Following manufacturing, 14% of residents were employed in construction. Retail comprised 12% of Alviso's workforce and another 11% were involved in professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services.

Start Date of Residency

Figure 4 shows the housing tenure of residents in the three geographic areas. According to several residents of Alviso, there are more than 20 families that have lived in Alviso for up to five generations. Many say there is a very strong sense of community in Alviso, which is possibly why residents have stayed in the community for so long, and which might explain the data shown in Figure 4.

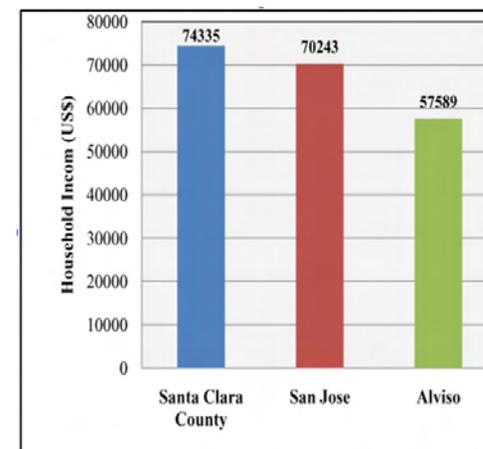


Figure 3: Average Household Income, 1999.

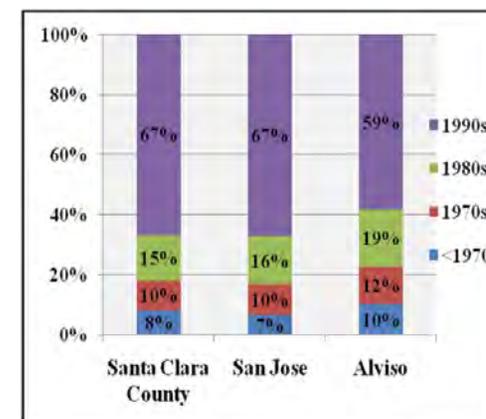


Figure 4: Start Date of Residency, an indicator of housing tenure.



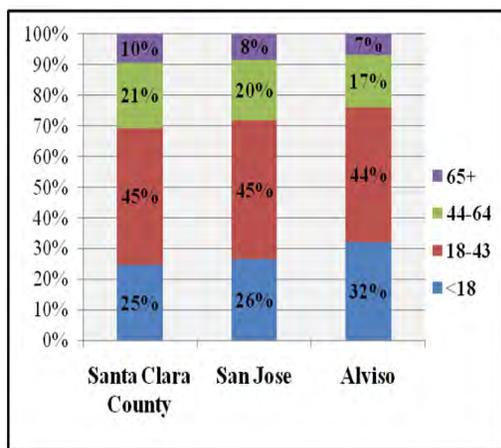


Figure 5: Age Distribution, 2000

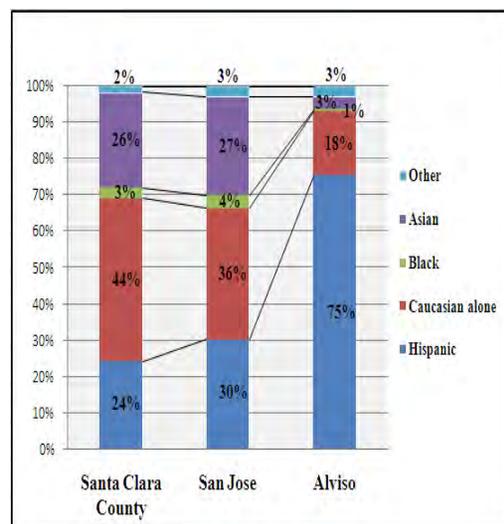


Figure 6: Ethnicity, 2000

Age Distribution

The median age of Alviso residents, 28, is remarkably younger than that of San José, 33, and Santa Clara County, 34. Overall, the age distribution of population within the four major age cohorts remained fairly consistent between the County, City and neighborhood, as shown in figure 5.

Ethnicity

Alviso has been a primarily Hispanic community for many years. The overall Alviso population is 76% Hispanic, compared to San José’s which is 30% Hispanic and Santa Clara County’s which is only 24% Hispanic. Figure 6 shows the racial make-up of Alviso, the City of San José and Santa Clara County.

Languages Spoken in Alviso

While both Spanish and English are the dominant languages in Alviso, 93% of the

population spoke Spanish in 2000. Within the community, only 37% categorize themselves as speaking English “very well.” Additionally, 9% of the Spanish speakers stated that they did not speak English at all.

Education

Education levels in Alviso are substantially lower than San José and Santa Clara County. Fewer than 58% of the residents that are 25 years of age or older have less than a high school education. On the other hand, 26% of the residents have attended some college or more, which is comparable to the figures of the City and County, as shown in figure 7.

Housing

There are several factors that our assessment examined pertaining to housing. The following figures display these factors in Alviso and are compared to the city of San José and Santa Clara County. We focused on the years 1990 and 2000.



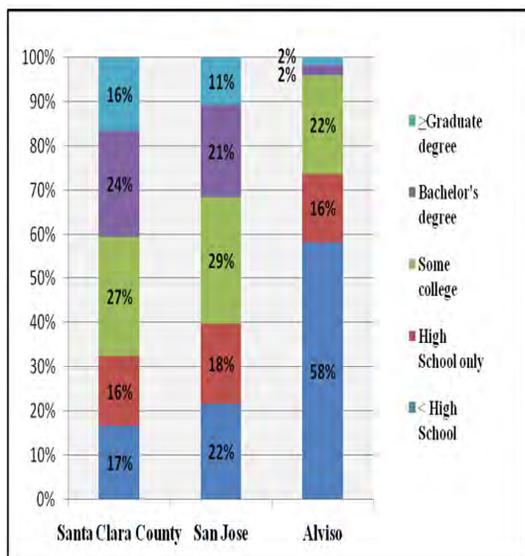


Figure 7: Education Levels for Persons more than 25 Years of Age, 2000

Median Home Price of Owner Occupied Units

As shown in figure 8, in 1990, Alviso housing prices were 39% less than the housing prices of San José and 46% less than that of Santa Clara County. In 2000, the prices were 46% less than the housing prices of San José and 47% less than that of Santa Clara County.



Figure 8: Median Housing Price, 1990 & 2000

Median Rent

In 1990 Alviso rental prices were 23% less than the housing prices of San José and 25% less than that of Santa Clara County prices. In 2000, the prices were 15% less than the housing prices of San José and 19% less than that of Santa Clara County. This is shown in figure 9.

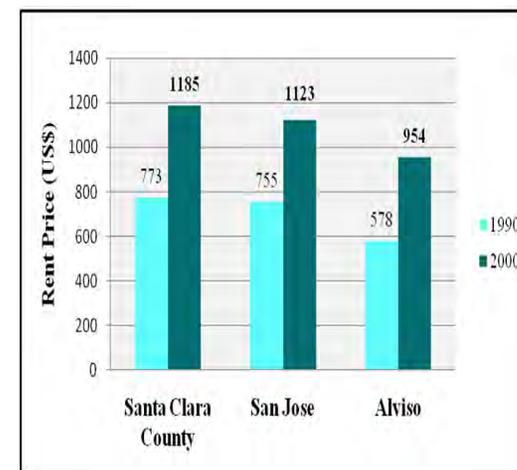


Figure 9: Median Rent, 1990 & 2000

Year Housing Built

In 2000, the median year housing was built in Alviso was 1963, compared to



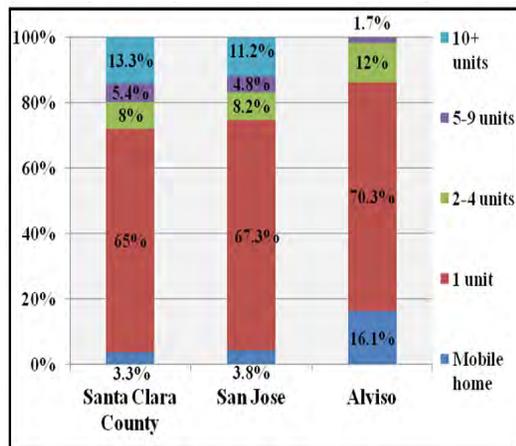


Figure 10: Housing Structure Types, 2000

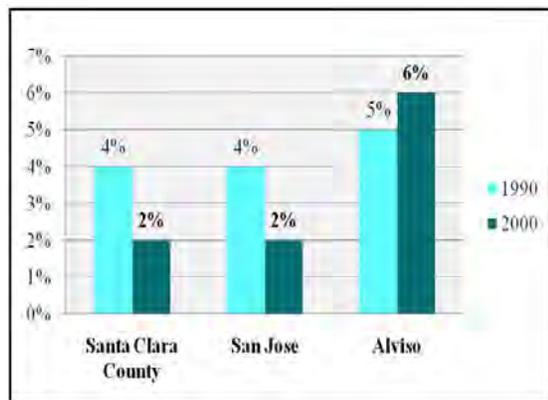


Figure 11: Vacancy Rates, 2000

1973 in San José, and 1970 in Santa Clara County. Of all the housing built in Alviso, 45% of the housing was built before 1960.

Housing Structure Type

As shown in figure 10, the residential units in Alviso are mainly single family homes. Mobile homes are second in number to single family homes in Alviso.

Average Persons per Household

As of 2000, Alviso had an average of 4.2 people living in each household. Alviso had 24% more people living in each household than that of San José and 31% more than households in Santa Clara County.

Housing Vacancy Rate

As shown in figure 11, Alviso had a higher vacancy rate in both 1990 and 2000 than both San José and Santa Clara County. In

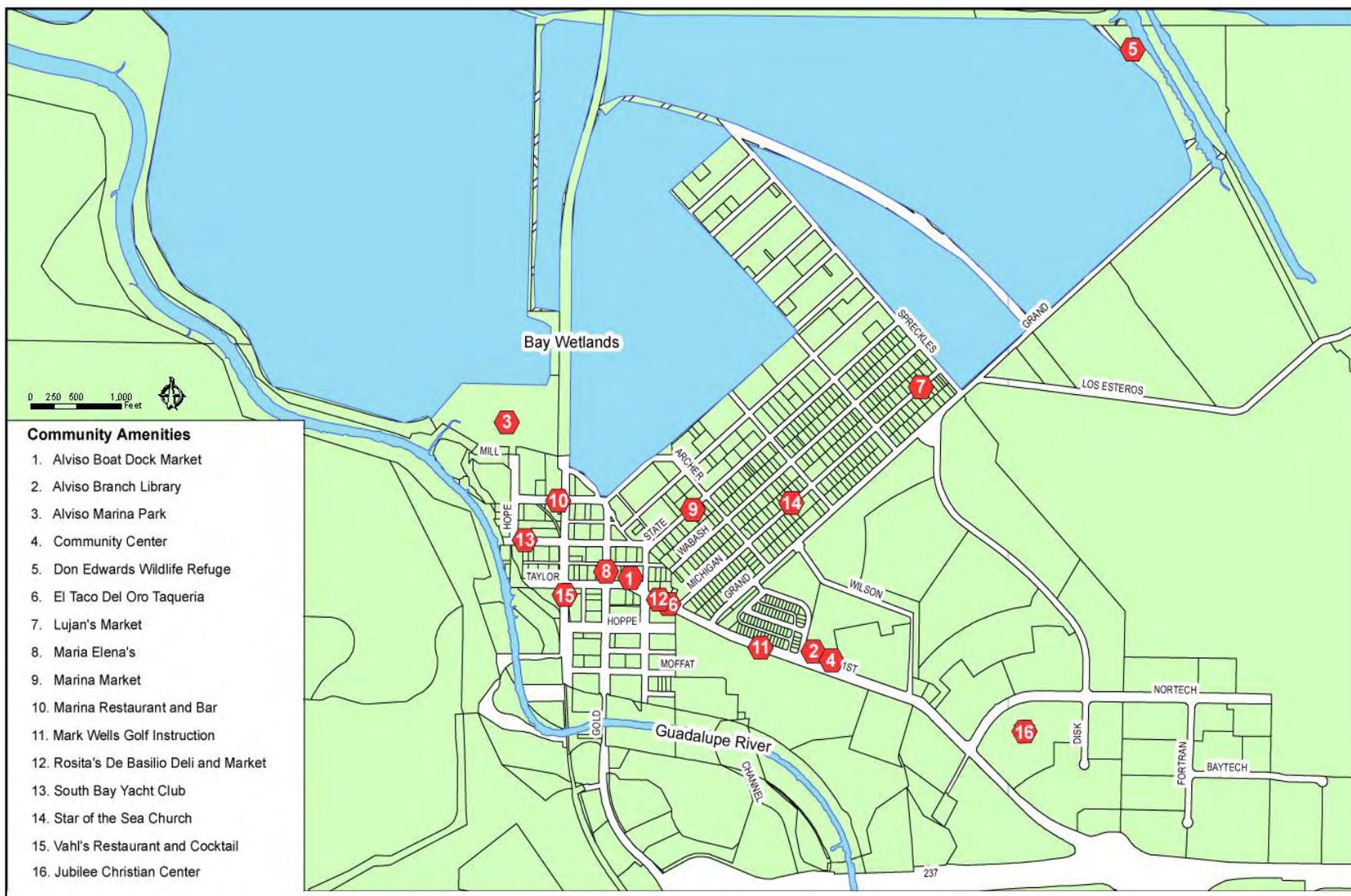
2000, Alviso’s was 2.5 times higher than San José’s vacancy rate, and twice as high as Santa Clara County’s vacancy rate. By comparison, the national vacancy rate was 9% in 2000, double than that of Alviso.

Community Amenities

There are a number of community amenities in Alviso that meet the community’s basic needs (see Map 5: Community Amenities) such as restaurants, markets and the community center. However, the area lacks other amenities such as a major grocery store or gas station. Most of these establishments have been in Alviso for a century or more, while only a few have been built within the last decade. Many residents have expressed that additional stores need to be built in Alviso to help fulfill a broader spectrum of daily needs within the community, including access to healthy food sources.



Map 5: Community Amenities in Alviso





Alviso Boat Dock Market

Community Involvement

Since a large portion of the Alviso population has lived in the community for several generations, residents tend to want change to be gradual. Representative of this, there are many of community-related organizations in Alviso with deep roots. Gathering places such as the library or smaller recreation rooms have been used regularly for the various organizations in Alviso. A brand new library and community center was built in the 1990s and has been a central focal point for the community. The library's services include a technology area, a language center and a local history collection. Additionally, the Community Center has an after school program that many of the residents partake in (see Map 5 for the location of the community center). On the other side of town is the South Bay Yacht Club that was built in 1903, which remains an important part of the history of Alviso.

Markets

While Alviso lacks a major grocery store, there are three smaller markets that pro-

vide basic items for the residents: Alviso Boat Dock Market, Lujan Market, and Marina Market. Alviso residents must drive 2.6 miles to Santa Clara for the nearest full-service grocery store.

Recreation

There are several recreational amenities in Alviso. Alviso Marina County Park provides a number of walking and biking trails, and leads to the sloughs of Alviso. Additionally, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge provides interpretative services to help visitors learn about the surrounding natural environment and the endangered species inhabiting the area. The Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge Center is located about 2/3 of a mile from Alviso Village. The Mark Wells Golf Instruction Range on North 1st Street provides other recreation options. For the younger population, there is a playground housed within the elementary school's grounds with a large playing field. The Youth Center at the Community Center, adjacent to the Elementary School is a popular destination.



Religion

Religion plays an important role in the life of many residents of Alviso. Star of the Sea Catholic Church appears to be the prominent church in Alviso and is also a popular place for outdoor gatherings because of the large courtyard area. The other church within the Alviso area is the Jubilee Christian Center, about a mile away from Alviso located on Nortech Parkway in North San José. The center provides many different programs including alcohol and drug abuse recovery and bible study for children.

Restaurants

Most of the restaurants in Alviso have been there as long as many of the residents have. Additionally, most are owned by the original families that opened them. Rosita's is a locally owned Mexican restaurant located on North 1st Street. Further up the street from Rosita's is El Taco De Oro y Mini, a taqueria along First Street. There are a few taco trucks associated with this

taqueria which is open during lunch. Maria Elena's Restaurant is also a Mexican restaurant located on Gold Street. One of the older restaurants is Vahl's, located on El Dorado Street. This restaurant has old time charm and serves basic American comfort food. Lastly, Marina Restaurant & Bar is located on Elizabeth Street and serves Korean food.

Opportunities and Constraints

There are both opportunities and constraints within Alviso revealed by our analysis for this chapter. Most Alviso residents drive approximately three miles to get to both the closest grocery store and gas station. The addition of these services in Alviso would be very beneficial to the residents. However, not everyone in Alviso wants the growth and it could be challenging to bring new businesses into the area. Furthermore, there is also a percentage of residents that do not have cars to get to areas outside of Alviso, therefore they must ride the bus. With limited schedules, connecting residents to the necessities that



Star of the Sea Church



Maria Elena's Restaurant



the area doesn't currently provide can be challenging.

Alviso also has an increasingly high vacancy rate, whereas vacancy is declining in both the City of San José and in Santa Clara County. Housing programs providing more support and opportunities could be beneficial to the residents of Alviso.

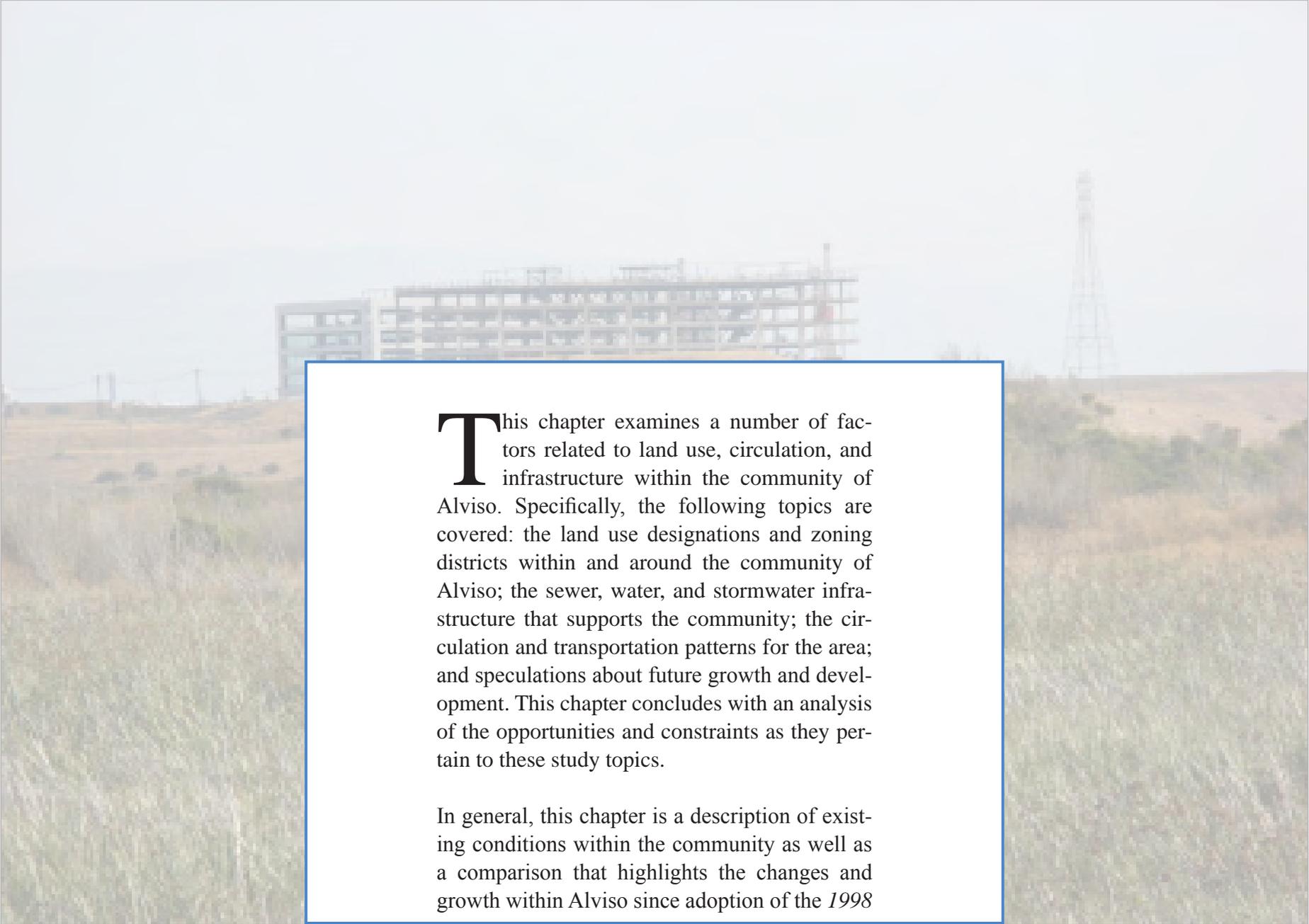
Lastly, more than half of the residents in Alviso do not have a high school diploma. An education program to assist and encourage residents to complete high school or go back to school could be implemented.





4 Land Use





This chapter examines a number of factors related to land use, circulation, and infrastructure within the community of Alviso. Specifically, the following topics are covered: the land use designations and zoning districts within and around the community of Alviso; the sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure that supports the community; the circulation and transportation patterns for the area; and speculations about future growth and development. This chapter concludes with an analysis of the opportunities and constraints as they pertain to these study topics.

In general, this chapter is a description of existing conditions within the community as well as a comparison that highlights the changes and growth within Alviso since adoption of the 1998

Alviso Master Plan. However, little in the way of significant development has occurred since adoption.

One factor contributing to the complexity of growth and development in Alviso is the numerous agencies & stakeholders that own and regulate land within and around Alviso. These groups include private landowners and myriad public entities and agencies at the local, County, State, and Federal levels.

The community of Alviso falls primarily under the jurisdiction of the City of San José. The County of Santa Clara manages the Alviso Marina Park, and wetlands that comprise it. At the state level, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) oversees development adjacent to the San Francisco Bay. The Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge and much of the salt pond restoration activities surrounding Alviso are governed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The United States Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for the levee system that contains the Guadalupe River and Coyote Creek. The Santa Clara Valley Water District regulates the waterways and riparian buffers within the region, including the Guadalupe River.

Regulation of Land Use in Alviso

For the purposes of this study, Alviso is defined by the boundary shown on the City of San José's Zoning and General Plan Maps. The total area is 409 gross acres, 87 acres of which are dedicated public right of way including streets and sidewalks. The remaining buildable area is 322 acres, featuring varying zoning and General Plan designations.

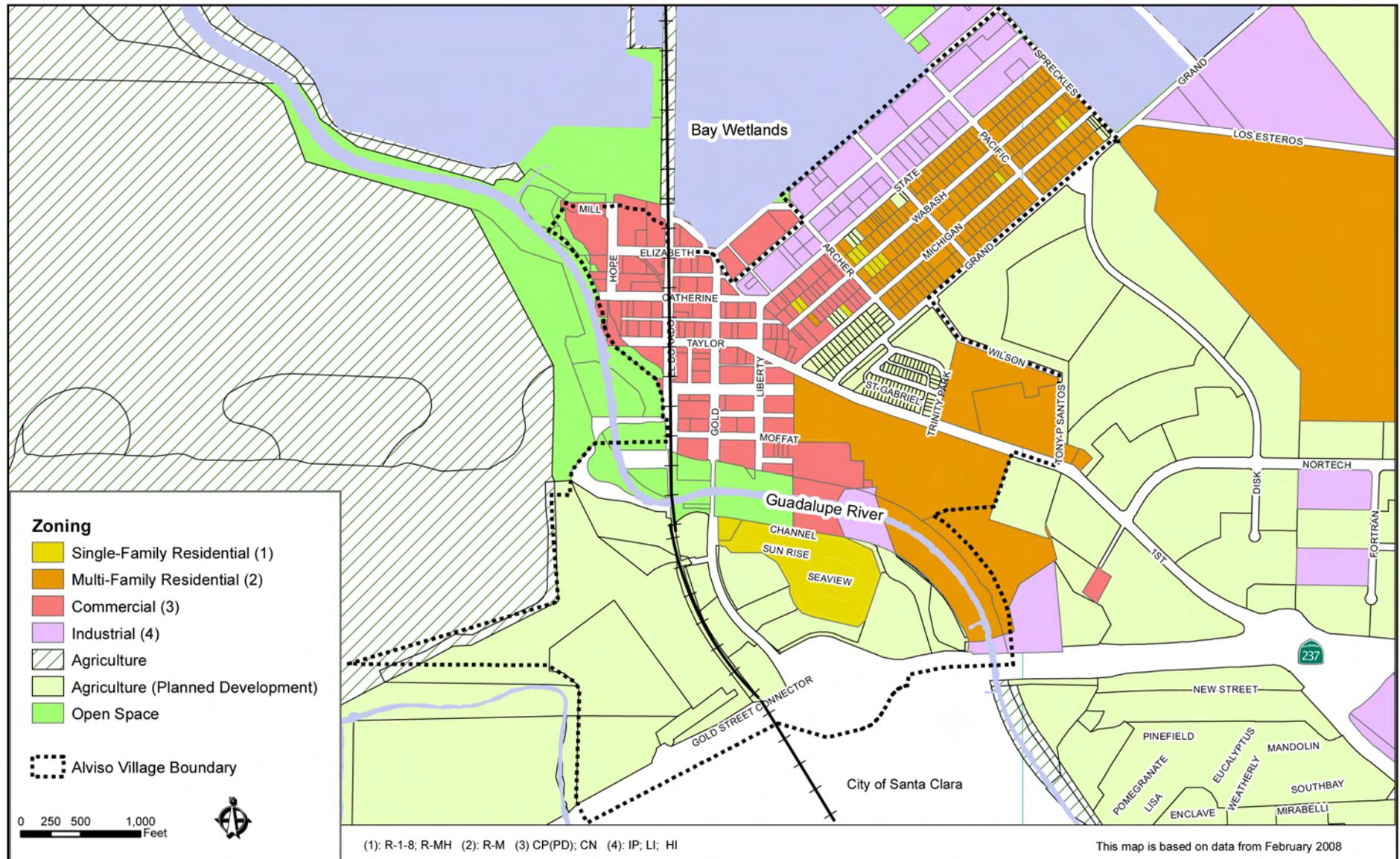
The City of San José Zoning Ordinance and General Plan establish the policies that govern land use in and around Alviso. "General law cities" in California must maintain consistency between their zoning codes and General Plan. San José, however, is a Charter City, and is exempt from this requirement which has led to discrepancies between the zoning districts and General Plan designations that apply to Alviso. Where such discrepancies exist, the General Plan takes precedence.

Zoning

The following zoning districts comprise the area in the community of Alviso and are defined according to the City of San José Zoning Ordinance¹



Map 6: Zoning Districts in Alviso



(see Map 6: Zoning). For cartographic purposes the zoning districts have been aggregated where many sub-categories exist and include the following descriptions:

A Agricultural District provides for areas where agricultural uses are desirable. An Agricultural district is located to the south of Alviso Village and to the west Guadalupe River. Total acreage of this district in Alviso is 4.2 acres.

CN Commercial Neighborhood District is intended to provide for neighborhood-serving commercial uses without an emphasis on pedestrian orientation (except within the context of a single development). The type of development supported by this district includes neighborhood centers, multi-tenant commercial development along major arterials, and small corner commercial establishments. CN is the underlying zoning district for a portion of the New Chicago neighborhood in the area between State Street to the northwest, Michigan Street to the southeast, Archer to the northeast, Liberty Street to the west, and North First Street to the southwest. It is also the underlying zoning district for some parcels south of Alviso Village along the Guadalupe River. Total acreage of this district in Alviso is 19.5 acres.

CP Commercial Pedestrian District is intended to support pedestrian-oriented retail activity at a scale compatible with surrounding residential neighborhoods. This district is designed to support the goals and policies of the General Plan related to neighborhood business districts. The CP District also encourages mixed residential/commercial development, where appropriate. CP is the underlying zoning district for the Historic District with PD overlay (described later). The total acreage of this district in Alviso is 30.1 acres.

HI Heavy Industrial District is intended for industrial uses with nuisance or hazardous characteristics which, for reasons of health, safety, environmental effects, or general welfare, are best segregated from other uses. Extractive and primary processing industries are permitted in this district. Very limited scale retail sales and service establishments serving nearby businesses and their employees may be considered appropriate where such establishments do not restrict or preclude the ability of surrounding Heavy Industrial land from being used to its fullest extent and are not of a scale or design that depends on customers from beyond normal walking distances. Any such uses should



be clearly incidental to the industrial user on the property and integrated within an industrial building. The Heavy Industrial district is found south of the Alviso Village on the north and south banks of the Guadalupe River. Total acreage of this district in Alviso is 4.8 acres.

LI Light Industrial District is intended for a wide variety of industrial uses and excludes uses with unmitigated hazardous or nuisance effects. The design controls are less stringent than those for the Industrial Park Zoning District. Examples of typical uses are warehousing, wholesaling, and light manufacturing. Sites designated LI may also contain service establishments that serve only employees of businesses located in the industrial areas. When located within a Combined Industrial/Commercial General Plan Designation, a broader range of uses will be considered including uses such as retail, church/religious assembly, social and community centers, recreational uses, or similar uses but only when the non-industrial use does not result in the imposition of additional constraints on neighboring industrial users in the exclusively industrial areas. LI is the underlying zoning district for the parcels found northwest of the New Chicago neighborhood along State Street. The total acreage of this district in Alviso is 28.7 acres.

Open Space District designates land for public peace, health, safety, and welfare by conserving open space to ensure the continued availability of land for the preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, and the enjoyment of scenic resources. This district also protects people and property against physical environmental hazards. Open Space is the underlying district for areas to the west and south of the Alviso Village along the Guadalupe River. The total acreage of this district in Alviso is 17.5 acres.

PD Planned Development District is an overlay district that is combined with one of the conventional zoning districts listed above that allows specifically approved uses. PD-A zoning districts are denoted in Map 6 and includes residential developments such as Trinity Park. Other PDs exist in Residential and Commercial districts but are not identified in Map 6. Such districts are aggregated into the underlying zoning district. PD-A total acreage in Alviso is 114.3 acres.

R-1 Single-Family Residence District reserves land for the construction, use and occupancy of single-family subdivisions. The allowable density range for the R-1 Districts is 1 to 8 dwell-



ing units per acre. There are only a handful of parcels within the New Chicago neighborhood with R-1 as the underlying zoning district. Total acreage of this district in Alviso is 1.8 acres.

R-M Multiple Residence District reserves land for the construction, use and occupancy of higher density residential development. The maximum allowable density range for the R-M District is 25 dwelling units per acre. R-M is the underlying zoning district for the majority of the New Chicago neighborhood and for large areas along the north and south sides of North First Street. Total acreage of this district in Alviso is 86.3 acres.

R-MH Mobile Home Park District reserves land for the construction, use and occupancy of mobile home development. The R-MH District is the underlying zoning for a small portion of Alviso located on Gold Street, south of the Alviso Village and the Guadalupe River. Total acreage of this district in Alviso is 15.2 acres.

General Plan Designations

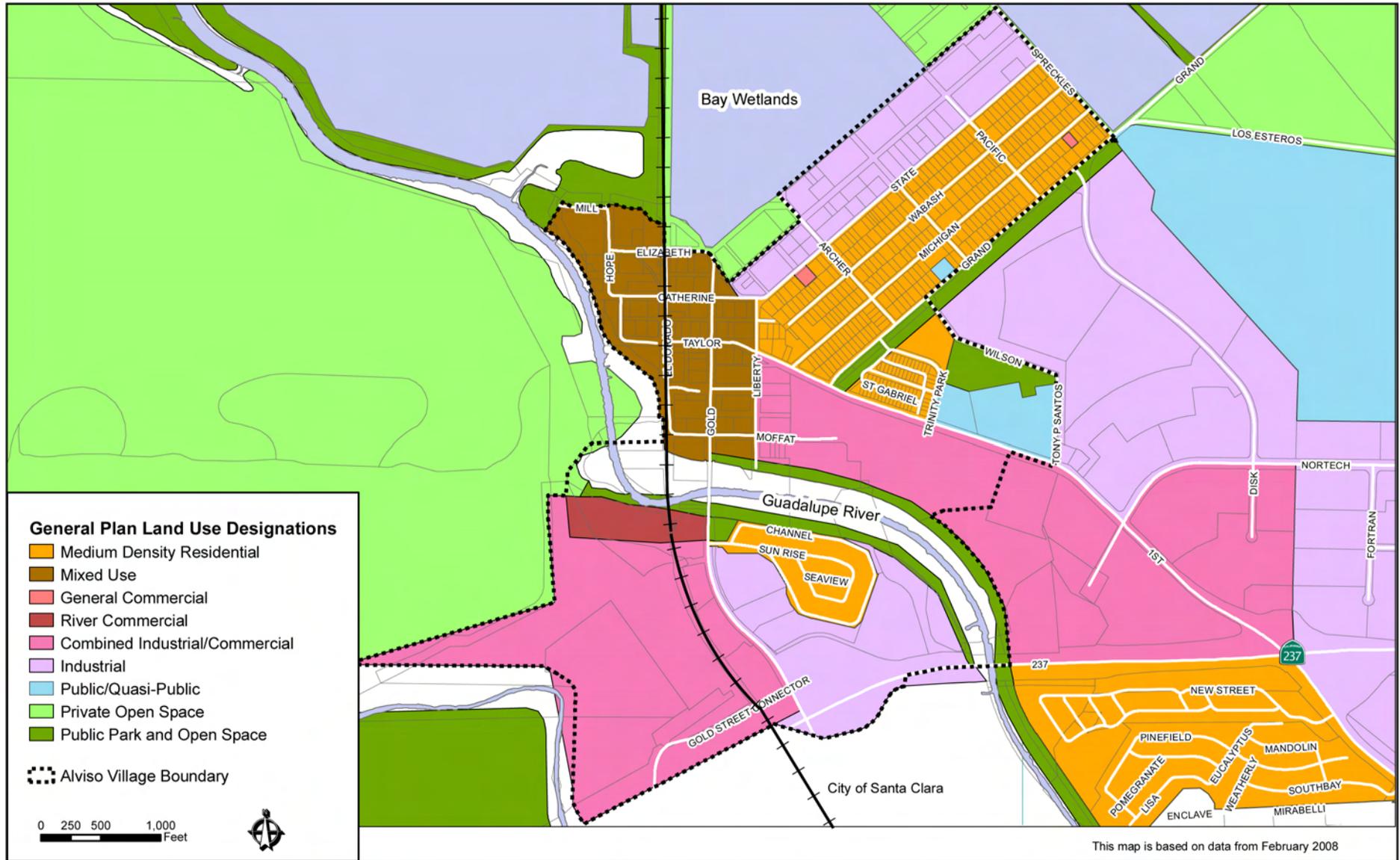
The following General Plan designations comprise the area in and around the community of

Alviso and are defined according the *1998 Alviso Master Plan* which is part of the City of San José's 2020 General Plan² (see Map 7).

Combined Industrial/Commercial allows commercial activities, industrial uses, or a compatible mixture. On the southwesterly side of North First Street, from Liberty to Tony P. Santos Street, there is a preference for commercial uses which are more compatible with the village residential, school, and park uses. Commercial uses could include retail, restaurant, office, hotel, or other commercial establishments. Under this designation in Alviso, a suburban type shopping center is appropriate, preferably located close to North First Street and Route 237. Other allowed non-industrial uses are primary/secondary schools, freestanding day care centers, churches, and sports, social, or arts centers. All proposed uses should be evaluated in terms of their potential impacts on nearby uses and in terms of nearby uses negatively affecting the proposed uses. A wide range of industrial uses are also allowed under this designation as long as there are no unmitigated hazardous or nuisance effects to adjacent and nearby areas. These uses could be warehousing, office, research and development, light manufacturing, wholesaling,



Map 7: General Plan Land Use Designations in Alviso





Southwest side of North First Street between Liberty and Tony P. Santos Street. This area is designated Combined Commercial/Industrial in the 1998 Alviso Master Plan

and service establishments. All new construction should be attractive and well-landscaped, following more stringent performance and design standards than the Light Industrial designation. In addition, industrial activities that require the storage and handling of acutely hazardous materials are prohibited within a quarter mile of the George Mayne Elementary School and any future day care and school uses. Development under this designation on the former Cargill landfill site should be placed in areas where it can be demonstrated that appropriate construction techniques can be utilized to minimize any and all adverse geotechnical impacts. It is expected that development on this site would include significant amounts of open space and appropriate landscaping, given the configuration of the landfill mound and its steep slopes. Total acreage in Alviso is 102.8 acres.

General Commercial occurs on sites within the existing residential core. In these locations, only small scale retail and office uses are intended. Total acreage in Alviso is 0.6 acres.

Industrial Park with Mixed Industrial Overlay allows a wide variety of industrial uses and some nonindustrial uses. Industrial and office

uses are the primary uses allowed under this designation. Appropriate non-industrial uses are limited retail sales and service establishments, schools, day care facilities, churches, large gymnasiums, sports or arts instruction facilities, and hospitals. Large scale, high volume, single entity commercial uses are not suitable under this designation in Alviso. Such uses are more appropriate under the Combined Industrial/Commercial designation. An Industrial Park development may be either a single use or a development containing several separate uses, which is zoned, planned, and managed as a unit. All new construction should be attractive and well-landscaped, following more stringent performance and design standards than the Light Industrial designation. Under the Industrial Park designation, allowed non-industrial uses are limited to primary and secondary schools, free-standing day care centers, churches, and sports, social, or arts centers. All proposed uses should be evaluated in terms of their potential impacts on nearby uses and in terms of nearby uses negatively affecting the proposed uses. All conflicts between sensitive receptors and hazardous materials must be avoided. Specifically, industrial activities that require the storage and handling of acutely hazardous materials are prohibited with-



in a quarter mile of the George Mayne Elementary School, day care, and other sensitive uses (e.g., housing). Development adjacent to the Summerset Mobilehome Park, George Mayne School, Alviso Park, and the residential core needs to provide a positive interface so as not to negatively impact the quality of life of the community. Total acreage in Alviso is 22.7 acres.

Light Industrial allows a wide variety of industrial uses, excluding any uses with unmitigated hazardous or nuisance effects. Examples of typical uses are warehousing, wholesaling, light manufacturing, and industrial supplier/service businesses (i.e., businesses which provide needed services or supplies to other businesses). Only low intensity uses (i.e., those with low employment densities) are allowed in the Light Industrial area located near Coyote Creek. Appropriate screening and landscaping is required in both light industrial areas. Landscaping and screening along State Street should create a more compatible edge with the adjacent residential neighborhood, and along Route 237, it would protect views of Alviso from the freeway. Uses adjacent to the marshland and Coyote Creek need to be environmentally sensitive by minimizing both point and non-point source

pollution and other potential negative impacts. Total acreage in Alviso is 28.7 acres.

Medium Density Residential (8-12 dwelling units/acre) provides for an expansion of Alviso's existing residential core and allows a mix of housing types within the 8 to 12 units per acre density range, including single-family detached housing, duplexes, and townhouses. To reflect the existing diversity of Alviso's housing stock, new residential development should not be uniform or monotonous. Any new housing should generally replicate the development pattern of the existing neighborhood in terms of building sizes, frontage on a public street, front setbacks and degree of architectural variation among individual buildings. Such architectural variation should include distinctly different architectural details, building materials, building volumes, and colors. New development should occur primarily as single family detached houses. Total acreage in Alviso is 11.6 acres.

Medium Density Residential (8-16 du/ac) is intended to reflect and perpetuate the general character of the existing residential neighborhood, while allowing some small scale development on infill parcels. New development is expected



Example of industrial uses in Alviso, located on the northwesterly side of State Street.





Medium density development known as Trinity Park as seen from North First Street.



Trinity Park is an example of newer medium density housing which departs from the existing traditional single family housing style of the rest of Alviso.

to occur primarily on the few remaining vacant parcels but could also occur as the replacement of existing houses in limited instances. This designation is not intended to preclude lower density development consistent with the character of the neighborhood. Any new housing should generally replicate the development pattern of the existing neighborhood in terms of building sizes, frontage on a public street, front setbacks and degree of architectural variation among individual buildings. This designation is also applied to an existing mobile home park which is expected to remain as a permanent part of the community. Total acreage in Alviso is 60.8 acres.

Mixed Use is applied to the historic western grid (known commonly as “The Alviso Village”), allowing a broad range of uses, including civic/public, residential, office, and/or retail uses. No new industrial uses are permitted in this designation. Any of the allowed uses may occur in single purpose buildings or sites, or may be combined with one or more of the other allowed uses in a single building. Residential development may take any form but should not exceed 16 dwelling units per acre whether in single purpose or multi-use projects. New development should be consistent with the modest scale, front setback

pattern, and street orientation of nearby existing development. Buildings with lower floor commercial uses and upper floor residential uses are encouraged. To the extent feasible, historic buildings should be rehabilitated and reused for a variety of activities. Total acreage in Alviso is 30.6 acres.

Private Open Space is applied to privately owned lands for low intensity, open space activity. On properties outside the Urban Service Area, Private Open Space is applied to the Cargill Salt ponds. Within the Urban Service Area, this designation is found on private vacant land north of Los Esteros Road. Total acreage in Alviso is 4.3 acres.

Public/Quasi-Public identifies public land uses such as libraries, community centers, schools, fire stations, post offices, and the Water Pollution Control Plant and its buffer lands. Lands used by particular private institutions are also designated Public/Quasi-Public, such as churches and the Alviso Family Health Clinic. Total acreage in Alviso is 7.9 acres.

Public Park/Open Space is applied to existing City and County parks, the Don Edwards San



Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, trail corridors along the Guadalupe River, a PG&E easement, and on a wetland mitigation area located adjacent to Route 237. Active and passive recreation activities, as well as libraries, community centers, and other similar public facilities, are suitable within this designation. These lands are owned by public agencies, although facilities and activities developed and operated wholly or partially by concessionaires and other private entities are also appropriate under this designation. Total acreage in Alviso is 10.8 acres.

River Commercial is applied to an area south of the Guadalupe River and west of Gold Street. The designation is intended to promote a positive relationship between the river, adjacent land uses, and public interaction by encouraging project design features and characteristics that connect private development to the public use of the river. Development on this site should be designed to reflect and acknowledge the river environment by orienting seating areas, windows, decks, balconies, walkways, and open space to the river and orienting utility, storage and trash areas away from it. Retail, service, recreational, and some commercial uses are appropriate. Appropriate uses include, but are not limited to,

restaurants, sales of specialty foods, gifts and sundries, boating, hiking, and, bicycle services, museums and galleries, small scale bed and breakfast visitor lodging, hotel and conference facilities, office, software development facilities or industrial design facilities, but not production, and commercial or business services. Total acreage in Alviso is 7.6 acres.

Development Policy

Development standards for new construction within Alviso are significantly affected by environmental factors. For example, Alviso lies within the floodplain of the Guadalupe River and Coyote Creek. In the past, Alviso sat above the banks of the Guadalupe River. Because of subsidence in the early 1900's and continued aquifer depletion, the community has sunk an average of six feet. At present, portions of Alviso are situated anywhere between 15 feet above, to one foot below, sea level.

Currently, the Guadalupe River is channeled by levees and is filling with sediment at a rate of approximately one foot per year. Thus, the river is rising because of the sedimentation and as a result, the levees need to be constructed higher. As





North First Street serves as an alternate route for Highway 237 when the highway becomes congested during peak commuter times.

the cycle repeats, the Guadalupe River continues to rise above much of Alviso. See the Environmental Chapter for more details.

As a result of this phenomenon, new construction in Alviso requires habitable living space to be built nine feet or greater above grade. The entire lower level of a building is required to be constructed of masonry materials that are resistant to damage caused by water. Furthermore, all electrical fixtures are to be placed above flood levels or be made flood resistant.

Circulation

Vehicular Traffic

Alviso is accessed by three surface streets: Gold Street, North First Street and Zanker Road. State Highway 237 is the nearest freeway and serves as the southern boundary for the Alviso area; it intersects with US Highway 101 to the west and Interstate 880 to the east. As State Highway 237 becomes congested during commute hours, North First and Gold Streets are used as an alternate route, which brings an increased volume of vehicles through Alviso.

The speeds and volume of these diverted vehicles are an issue of concern for the local residents, and present both an inconvenience and a potential safety hazard. The increased volume of cars is a nuisance to local residents, adding congestion to the small, quiet neighborhood. Safety is a concern since these diverted vehicles tend to travel through the community at high rates of speed in an attempt to avoid traffic on Highway 237. Additionally, wide streets in Alviso and limited traffic enforcement encourage high speeds through the New Chicago neighborhood. Such incidents create demand by residents for greater police presence.

The availability of street parking is an issue of concern for residents. The perceived lack of code enforcement within Alviso is believed to be an underlying cause for the lack of on street parking; in addition to the excessive number of vehicles parked on private properties and the unsightliness that results. As mentioned earlier, new structures are required to meet development standards that place habitable space above grade in order to mitigate damage from flooding. However, these spaces (garages and storage areas) have sometimes been converted into illegal living units, which reduces the number of off-street parking spaces available. Inhabitants



of these illegal units, in turn, add to the number of vehicles per lot. The result is greater than the permitted number of cars parked on a single lot and a high volume of cars parked on the street.

Public Transit

Alviso is serviced by a single bus route, Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority (VTA) route 58 (see Map 8). The current configuration of the route has buses entering and exiting Alviso via North First Street then making a small loop within Alviso Village. This is not the original route. Traditionally, bus route 58 made several stops within the New Chicago neighborhood, and this old route is the configuration preferred by many local residents.

VTA light rail service can be accessed at the Tasman Station on North First Street, located south of Highway 237 in North San José. Both the green and blue light rail lines can be accessed at this station, providing service to Alum Rock-Santa Teresa and Mountain View-Winchester, respectively. The station is located approximately two miles from Alviso Village on North First Street, requiring an estimated eight to ten minute trip on bus route 58 from the Alviso Village to

reach it. The bus schedule is designed to serve commuter needs since it operates only at peak commute times. This schedule does not conveniently service the community as a whole and does not accommodate those who work non-traditional work hours. The schedule operates from Alviso in approximately 30 minute intervals between 5:57 am and 8:13 am and from 3:15 pm to 7:22 pm, with service to Alviso ending at 7:04 pm. The limited operating schedule inhibits ridership to the connecting light rail station.

Freight and commuter rail lines pass through Alviso; however there is no station for boarding. Both the Amtrak Capital Corridor and Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) operate on the line. The nearest station is the Great America Amtrak/ACE Station, located south of highway 237, approximately two and a half miles from Alviso Village. This translates to an estimated 10 minute drive or a 45 minute walk.

Trails

An extensive network of trails is found within Alviso and offers public access to the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, while providing a spectrum of recreational opportunities. Dedicated bike lanes and



Alviso residents are concerned with the availability of on-street parking and the unsightliness of numerous cars on private property. Residents noted that this trend is linked to the creation of illegal dwelling units and a lack of code enforcement



Map 8: Public Transit Options in Alviso



unmarked bike routes service the community as well (see Map 9). Other trails maintained and operated by the City of San José link the community of Alviso with the rest of San José and the greater South Bay region.

The Coyote Creek and Guadalupe River trails are the City's major trail systems and border the east and west sides of downtown San José. Most of the City's other trails lead to these systems. The two trails are also connected by the Highway 237 bikeway which parallels the highway, providing a direct off-street link through north San José, between the cities of Milpitas and Sunnyvale.

The Guadalupe River trail system offers a direct link from Alviso to high tech and commercial employers in north San José; cultural, recreational, and employment opportunities in downtown San José; and connectivity via additional trail segments to other sections of the City. Approximately 11.5 miles in length, the trail begins at the edge of San Francisco Bay in Alviso and follows the alignment of the river into downtown San José and the Guadalupe River Park and Gardens. The southern end of the trail system connects with Lake Almaden, Los Alamitos Creek

and Guadalupe Creek Trail systems. Currently, completed sections of the system are fragmented. When completed, the trail will be 25 miles of continuous recreational pathways.

The Coyote Creek trail system also begins in Alviso and follows the creek into downtown San José, offering access to parks, open spaces, and residential and commercial developments.

At the regional level, the San Francisco Bay Trail Project is a planned recreational "ring around the bay". The trail, when finished, will connect the nine bay area counties and 47 cities. Depending on the location of its segments, the Bay Trail consists of paved multi-use paths, dirt trails, bike lanes, sidewalks or city streets signed as bike routes. The project was established in 1987 with Senate Bill 100 and is overseen by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). However, ABAG does not own land or construct trail segments; instead, individual segments are built, owned, managed and maintained by cities, counties, park districts and other agencies with land-management responsibilities, often in partnership with local nonprofit organizations, citizens' groups or businesses³. The trail provides transportation benefits, provides a commute al-



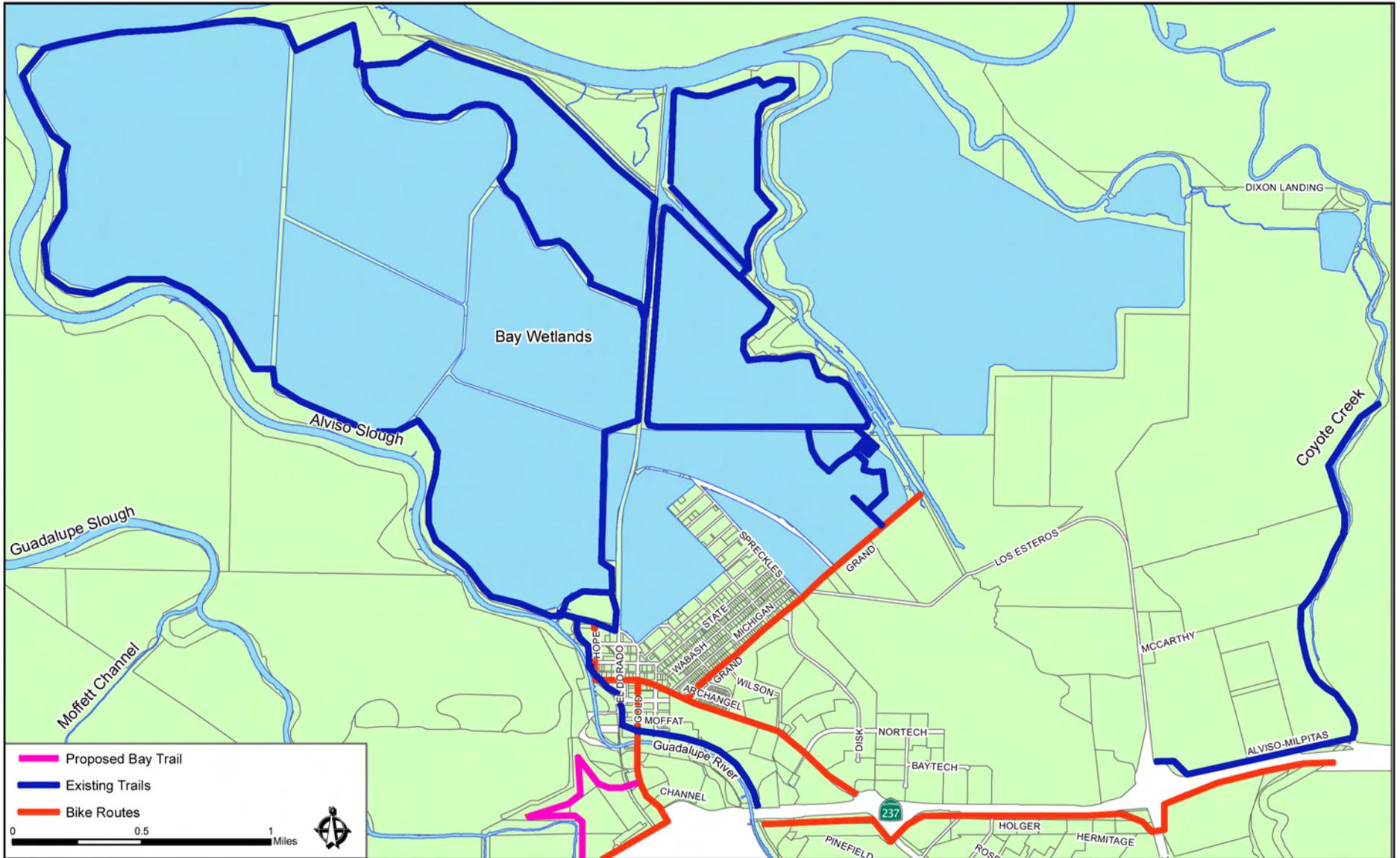
Freight and commuter rail lines run through the community of Alviso.



Amtrak Capitol Corridor train approaching Alviso



Map 9: Trails and Bike Routes in and around Alviso



ternative for cyclists, and connects to numerous public transportation facilities (including ferry terminals, light-rail lines, bus stops and Caltrain, Amtrak, and BART stations)⁴. The Bay Trail's proposed south bay alignment runs through the community of Alviso (see Map 9).

Infrastructure

Sanitary Sewer

The City of San José provides sewer services in Alviso (see Map 10). The sewers are connected to the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) located in Alviso. The WPCP provides primary, secondary, and tertiary treatment of wastewater. There are three pump stations in Alviso that are used to connect to the WPCP. The sanitary sewer network is located underground in Alviso, and is approximately 40 years old. The pipes that carry the wastewater are 10 inches in diameter. The current pipe system is subject to backup from the local sewage mixing with the storm drainage and high levels of groundwater that exist in the area. The pipes need upgrading to prevent backups.

Water Supply

The City of San José also provides drinking water to the Alviso area (see Map 11). The facilities in the area include a 250,000 gallon reservoir tank. The pipes that supply North First Street and the majority of Alviso are 18 inches in diameter. The water pressure is currently approximately 90-95 pounds per square inch. Recent improvements to the water pressure were made along North First Street.

As described below, two different policies related to water services as found on page 105 of the *1998 Alviso Master Plan*:

(1) Water consumption should be reduced through water conservation measures.

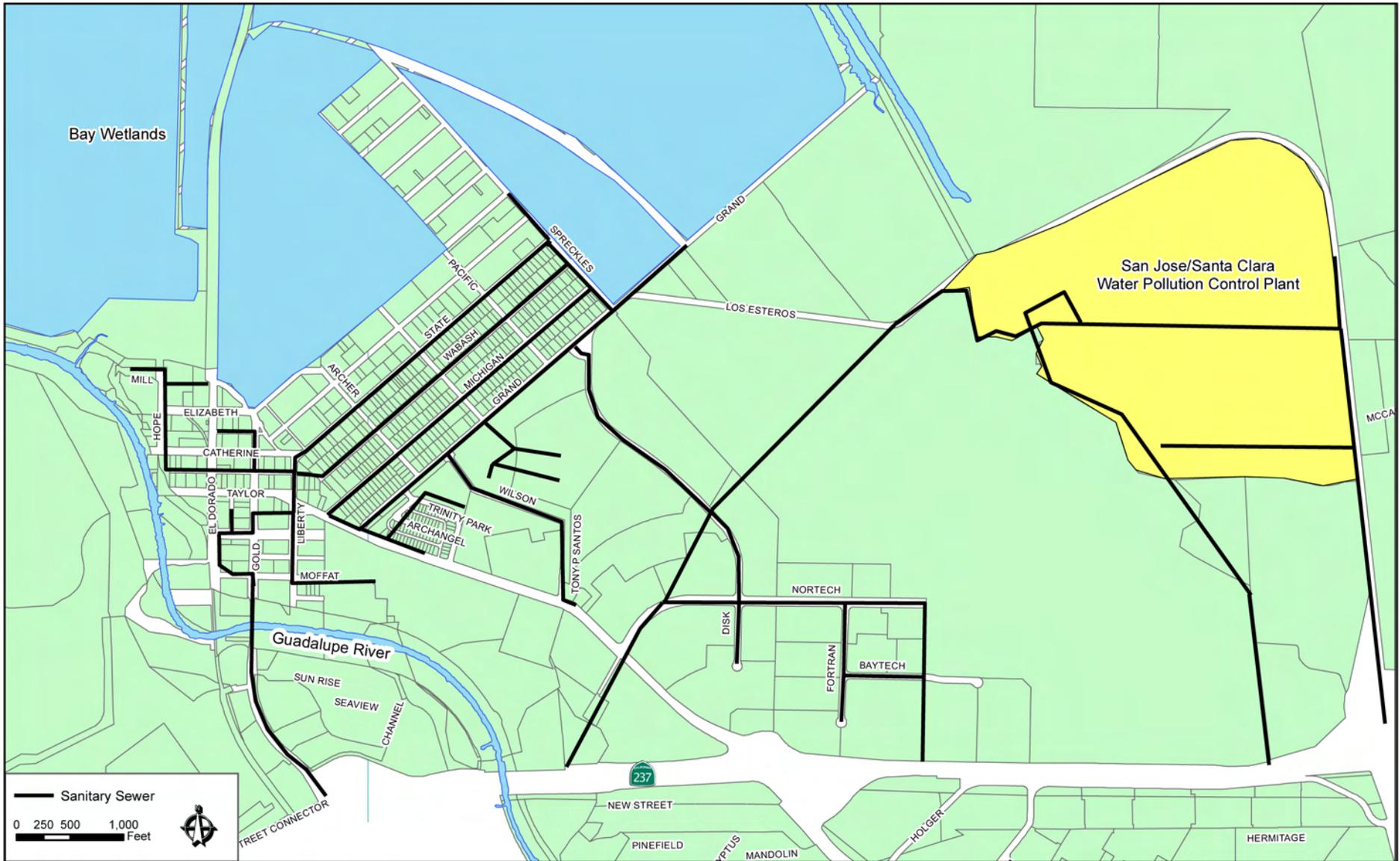
Water conservation measures should be implemented throughout existing and planned development. These measures include the use of low-flow shower heads and toilets, water conserving appliances, and water conservation irrigation methods. In addition, the landscaping guidelines contained in the Alviso Master Plan recommend the use of drought resistant plant. By implementing these measures, there should be a reduction



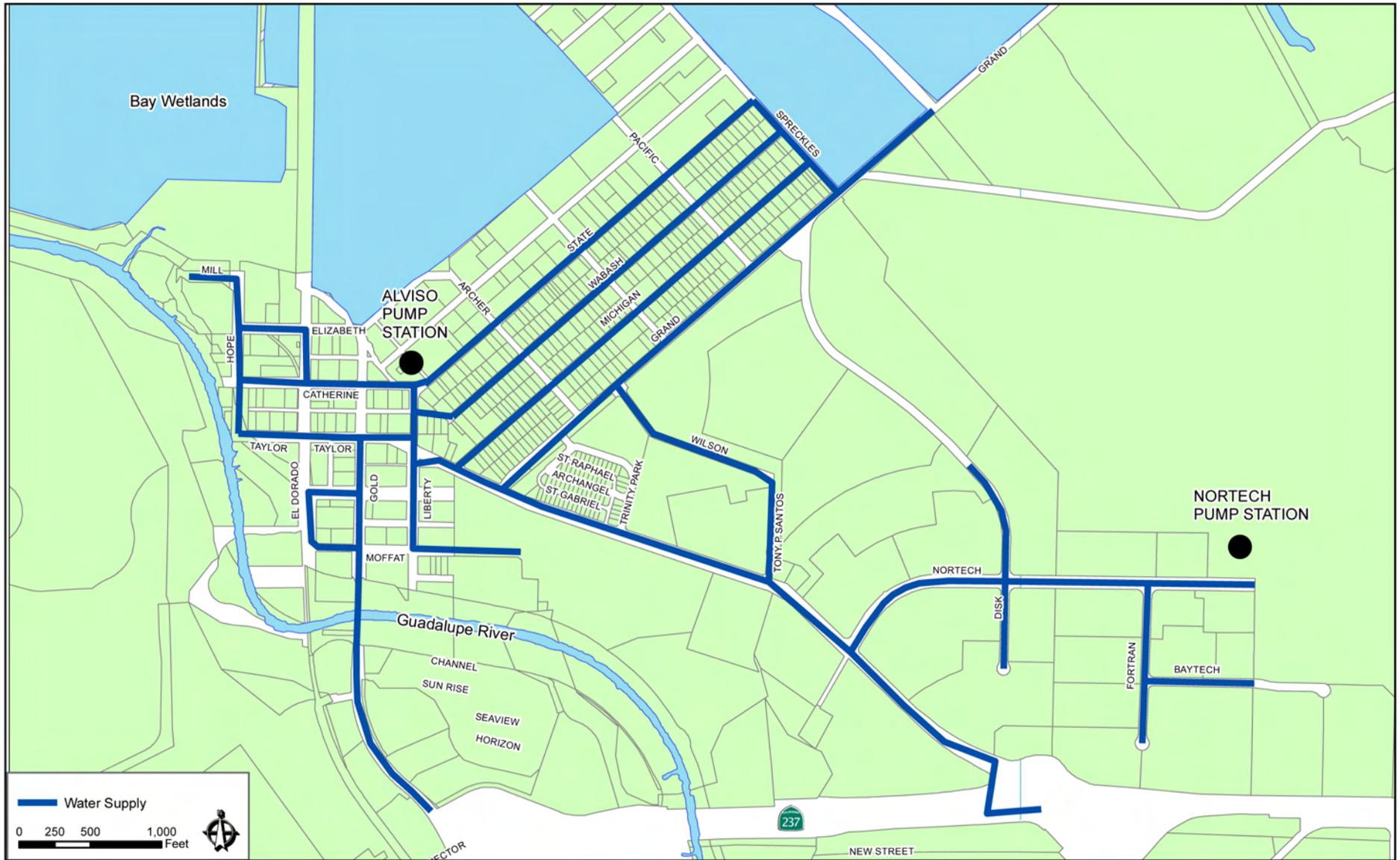
Alviso features an extensive multi-use trail system that provides recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. This local network links with other City of San Jose trails that offer connectivity to other parts of the City and region.



Map 10: Sanitary Sewer Service in the Alviso Vicinity



Map 11: Water Supply



in water consumption and wastewater flowing to the Water Pollution Control Plant.

(2) To the extent feasible, new development should use the City's reclaimed water to irrigate their landscaping.

The City of San José's reclaimed water project makes available treated water from the WPCP for non-potable purposes. Because Alviso is in close proximity to the treatment plant, new development (particularly outside the Alviso village) should utilize reclaimed water from irrigation and other appropriate purposes.

Storm Drainage

Alviso has a history of flooding. Therefore, storm drainage is a vital aspect of the area's infrastructure needs (see Map 12). Many of the developed areas of Alviso are currently equipped with storm sewer service, but Alviso Village does not have upgraded underground sewer lines. This area of town has a higher incidence of drainage problems and would benefit from upgraded storm sewers. Currently, the primary method for the removal of water from the streets in Alviso is through the use of pumps.

As described below, two different policies related to storm drainage as found on page 97 of The 1998 Alviso Master Plan:

(1) All new development projects should be evaluated to determine the possible need for additional storm drainage facilities.

As development occurs, increased runoff enters local storm drains. Since Alviso's storm sewers provide capacity for a three-year storm, it is critical that all proposed development be assessed to determine the specific facilities that would be needed to support the new project.

(2) All storm drainage infrastructure on the former Cargill landfill needs to be built, operated, and maintained by the property owner.

Due to the unusual construction and maintenance techniques that are required for infrastructure on former landfills, it is imperative that the property owner assume all responsibility and liability for infrastructure systems. (Author's note: This policy also applies to the sanitary sewers and water supply.)



Map 12: Storm Drainage



Potential Development

Development Projects

By preference and economic circumstances, Alviso has remained largely unchanged over the course of the last half century. The community places a high degree of value on knowing their neighbors and walking down their quiet streets. Many of the citizens of the area prefer to maintain the small town character and a relatively small population. Most proposed developments have come to a swift halt due to community resistance. For example, proposals for high density subdivisions by K.B. Homes were dropped due to vehement community opposition.

The City of San José Water Pollution Control Plant is operated by the Environmental Services Department. Currently the plant is undergoing the development of a new master plan. This plan will address the plant operations as well as land use on large parcels that are presently within the plant's boundaries. These parcels are located to the south and west of the plant and serve as a buffer area, which protects surrounding downwind residents from the unlikely accidental release of chlorine gas, giving time for it to dissipate and for authorities to take the appropriate measures

to prevent injury to surrounding inhabitants. Chlorine gas has traditionally been used in the process for treating wastewater before it is released into the bay.

The WPC plant is currently transitioning from gaseous chlorine to liquid chlorine, which is less toxic. As the plant becomes more efficient, the need for such a buffer area diminishes; this could make vacant land available for future development. As a result, the land use portion of the plant's master plan will investigate this potential. This plan will have direct impact on the community of Alviso, since some of these parcels have already been slated for future industrial facilities.

In Fall 2008, Tesla Motors Inc. had selected one of the large parcels managed by the Water Pollution Control Plant as a potential site for a new factory. The proposed factory was 600,000 square feet and was estimated to employ a work force of 1,000 people upon opening in 2010. However, in early 2009, the proposed project, due to the poor economic climate, was unable to receive funding. As such, Tesla Motors Inc. began to search for a new location for its factory. Had Tesla been constructed, an estimated total of \$2 billion of revenue to the City of San



José would have been collected annually, which includes a combination of tax revenue and employee spending in the local economy.

The high amount of vacant land in Alviso creates the potential for new development through infill (see Map 13). Residential, commercial, and various industrial opportunities would be developable on a single parcel basis.

Landowner Visions

There is a community preference for keeping Alviso small, but most residents are not opposed to sensitively designed, community supportive, small-scale development. The residents of Alviso are generally in favor of some commercial or industrial development, but they are careful to explain that, in the words of one local resident, “we are fine with some slight infill residential as long as it keeps with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and the rest of Alviso.” It is important that the character of Alviso be maintained as a lower density community.

The main vision that is commonly shared by most Alvisans is the redevelopment and revitalization of the marina. The focus in Alviso seems to be revitalizing the marina and dredging to re-

store it as a port, a main focal point and source of pride for Alviso. The plans are for the marina to have a new boat launching dock to service smaller recreational boats such as kayaks. Plans are being considered for a small renovation of the marina and a new parking lot to help better serve people that visit for recreational uses.

A general sentiment is that residents of Alviso want to avoid the traffic and development that accompany large-scale commercial retail development. Some members of the community have explained that a smaller grocery store or pharmacy would be a welcome addition to the area.

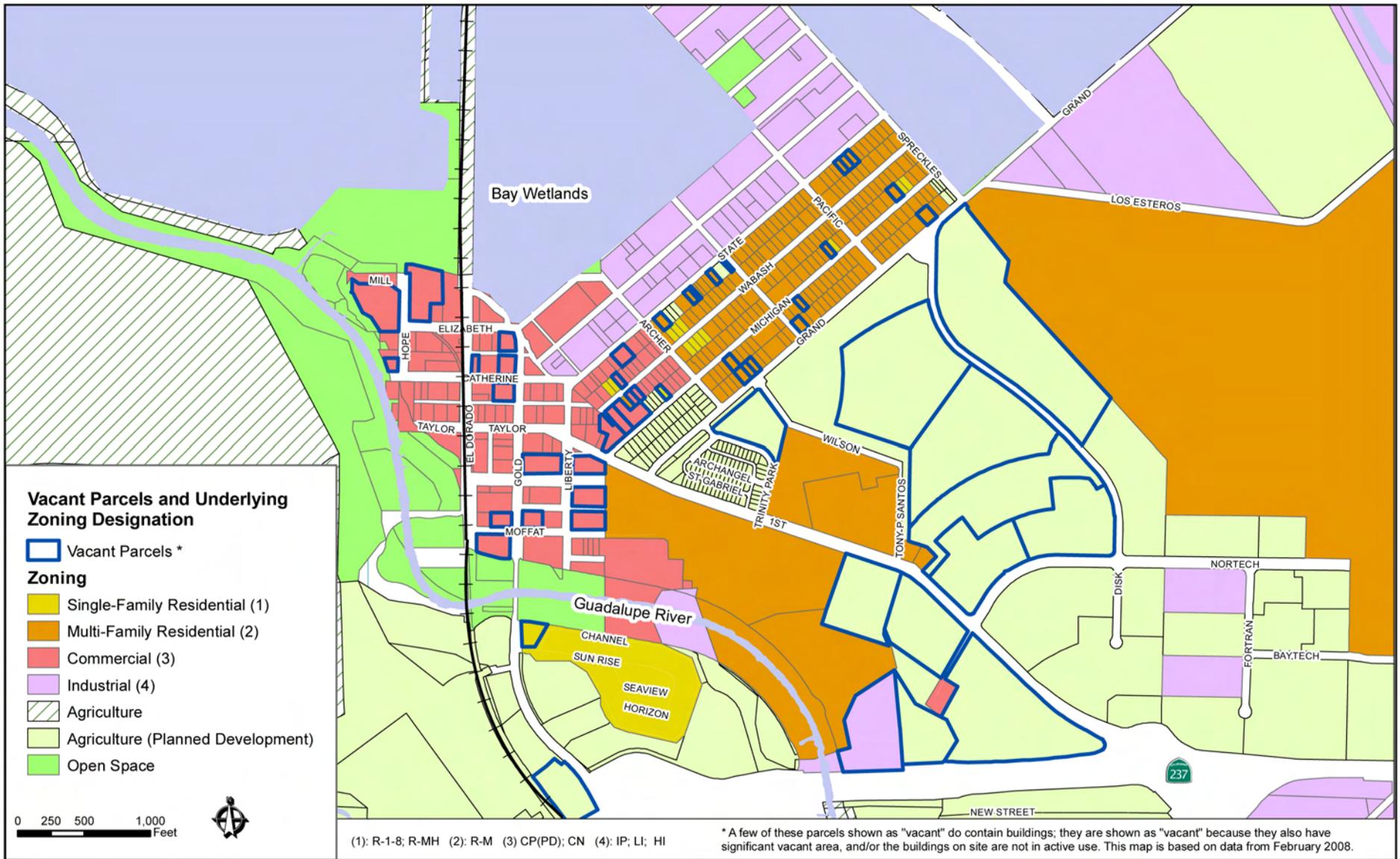
Opportunities and Constraints

Land Use

Scattered inconsistencies between General Plan land use designations and underlying zoning districts is a constraint to development and causes confusion for residents and developers alike, along with the increased costs to create consistency. The City of San José is a Charter City and is exempt from legislation that requires the zoning code and General Plan to be consistent.



Map 13: Vacant Parcels and Underlying Zoning



Code Enforcement

There is an opportunity to address parking problems through vigorous code enforcement by the City of San José. Available street parking and the large number of cars parking on private lots is a concern for Alviso residents and creates aesthetic problems. The increased number of cars (both on and off street) is directly related to the presence of illegal living units built in spaces that are intended to serve as flood mitigation and protect property.

The development standards for Alviso require new construction to be nine feet above grade. Typically, new homes are built upon non habitable space, on garages or storage areas, which are being converted into illegal secondary dwelling units and rented. These units are in violation of the standards, do not have proper permits, and have made no provision for on site parking. As a result, new residents increase the number of cars in the vicinity of the illegal units. Further investigation should be undertaken, in cooperation with concerned residents, to address the issue of illegal units and lack of parking that results.

Circulation

There is a strong desire - and need - for complete, city-standard street improvements throughout the community. These include curbs and gutters, sidewalks and street lighting (see Map 14). Completing these improvements offers opportunities to provide basic services, beautify the streetscape, and address issues pertaining to circulation.

The residents of Alviso acknowledged a need for street improvement in several parts of Alviso Village. In addition to basic curb and gutter, landscaping and street trees can help to enhance the charm and character of Alviso. Furthermore, such features can act as traffic calming measures, slowing traffic speeds to a more appropriate level for the scale of the community. Traffic calming can reduce the need for a stronger police presence expressed by residents of Alviso. Such improvements might include medians, landscape strips and street trees along North First Street, and any traffic calming measures could make this route less desirable as a bypass for Highway 237 at commute hours. Such practices should follow the landscaping principles





The intersection of Moffat and Gold Streets is an example of needed street improvements in Alviso.



North First Street has the opportunity for traffic calming measures such as street trees, medians and landscaping, to discourage the route as a detour to Highway 237.

and design standards established in the *1998 Alviso Master Plan* and as well as guidelines set forth by the City Arborist.

VTA has the opportunity to increase ridership by better serving the neighborhood of New Chicago with more frequent bus service. In the past, the bus route serviced several stops in the New Chicago neighborhood. This is the preferred route by local residents because Alviso residents feel that it would better accommodate an older population and those persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the preferred scheduling is hourly as opposed to the current schedule that runs only at “peak” periods. Alternative route and fiscal feasibility studies should be conducted and considered before realigning bus services.

Trails provide opportunities for greater connectivity within Alviso and the surrounding region. Alviso has ready access to trails that support the local areas and provide recreational and educational opportunities to residents and visitors. In addition, these trails connect the community of Alviso with other areas of San José. The Guadalupe River Trail, when completed, will offer alternative transportation access to downtown San José. The proposed Bay Trail alignment of-

fers transportation opportunities to other parts of the South Bay and the greater San Francisco Bay region.

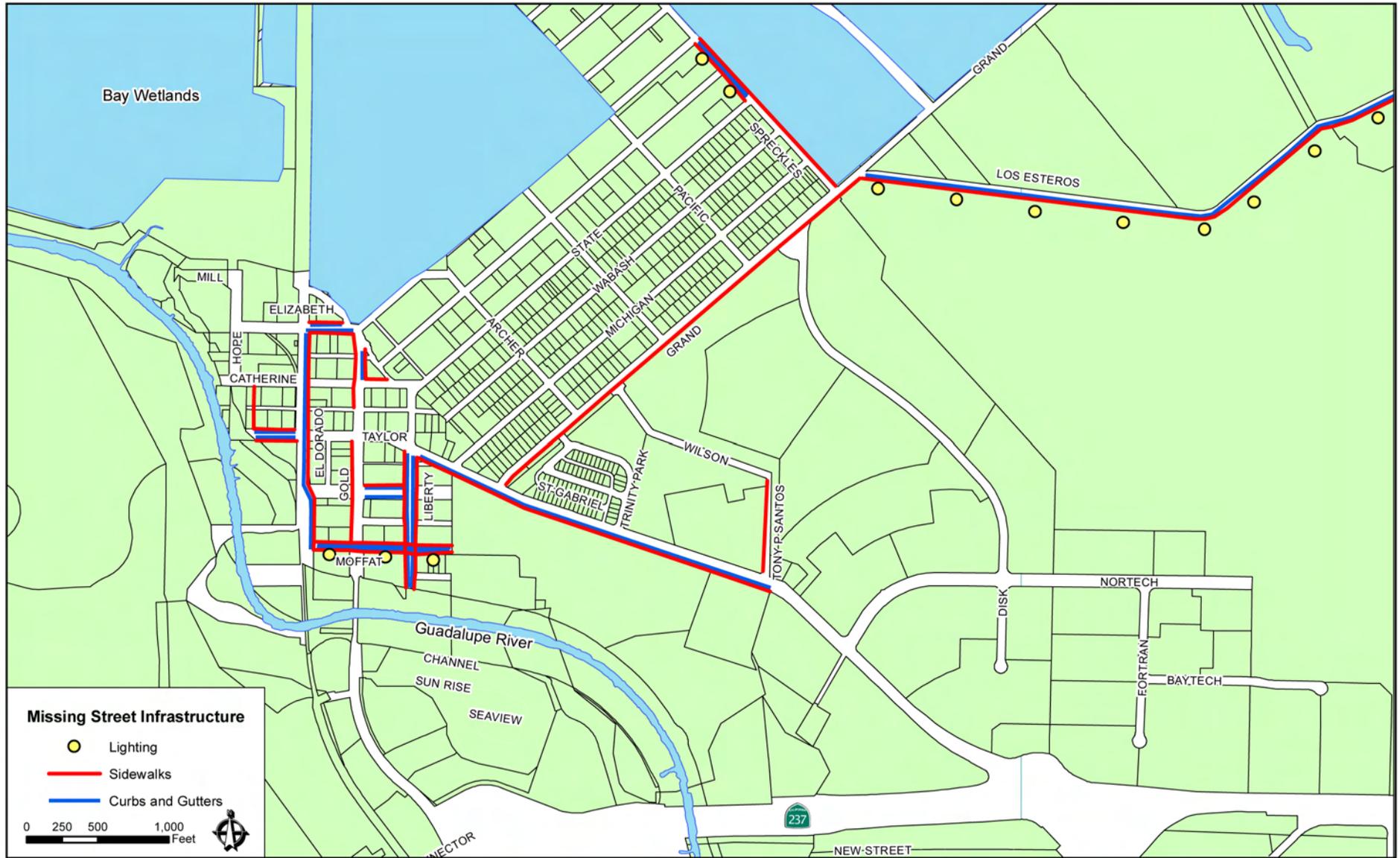
Industrial Development

The Tesla Plant would have represented great economic opportunity for Alviso and offered the potential to reintroduce major industrial activity in Silicon Valley. Even though the proposal for a new factory was not implemented, it illustrates the potential for industrial development within the Alviso area since several parcels are suited for this use. These sites are located at a sufficient distance from central Alviso so that, when developed, they would be unlikely to threaten the quality of life that the residents have grown to know and enjoy.

Historically, economic prosperity in Alviso was directly linked to the canneries that served as the town’s main source of employment. Similarly, manufacturing facilities like the ones proposed by Tesla would have brought many job opportunities to the local area. The local economy will benefit from the increase in new jobs in the area from spin-off economic activity such as increased patronization of local shops and restau-



Map 14: Street Improvements





Traditional single-family residential housing in Alviso, representative of the small town character that is valued by residents



Upgrades to the existing Marina would provide recreational and economic opportunity.

rants. Many Alviso residents felt that the Tesla plant helped to make Alviso a priority for the City of San José.

Commercial Development

There is opportunity for re-development within the industrial corridor of State Street, which might allow increased access to goods, effectively mitigating the long travel times now required by local residents in order to reach daily goods and services.

A major constraint to the redevelopment of the area is opposition by local residents, many of whom hold negative opinions of any new development proposed within Alviso. Many of the residents cite the unique small town feel as a draw to the area and would like to keep the community small and intimate. To support development such as larger grocery stores and pharmacies, a substantial customer base is needed. Most of the general/grocery stores operate on small profit margins and buy in bulk. To be in a viable location, a larger retail store would need to attract people from surrounding areas or the residents of Alviso would need to support further residential development that would be able to maintain demand for those amenities.

A larger grocery or pharmacy/general store also has the potential to compete with the local shops. Since the few general stores that exist in Alviso are very reliant on the small customer base that exists within the community, a larger national chain could detract severely from their business. Preserving the local business and economy may prove difficult with a national retail chain in the vicinity.

Investment in marina improvements, including a new boat launch will serve as a great opportunity for Alviso. Local sentiment is that the marina development will offer recreational and economic opportunities for Alviso. The new boat launch, will serve as a source of recreation for not only residents of Alviso, but also for greater Santa Clara County. Currently, the South Bay has limited access to the bay. Many residents of Alviso believe a marina will increase local revenues by drawing in economic activity that can support tourism and day-trippers, servicing restaurants and small shops within Alviso Village. The feasibility, environmental and jurisdictional concerns that are related to the Marina's development are still left to be determined.

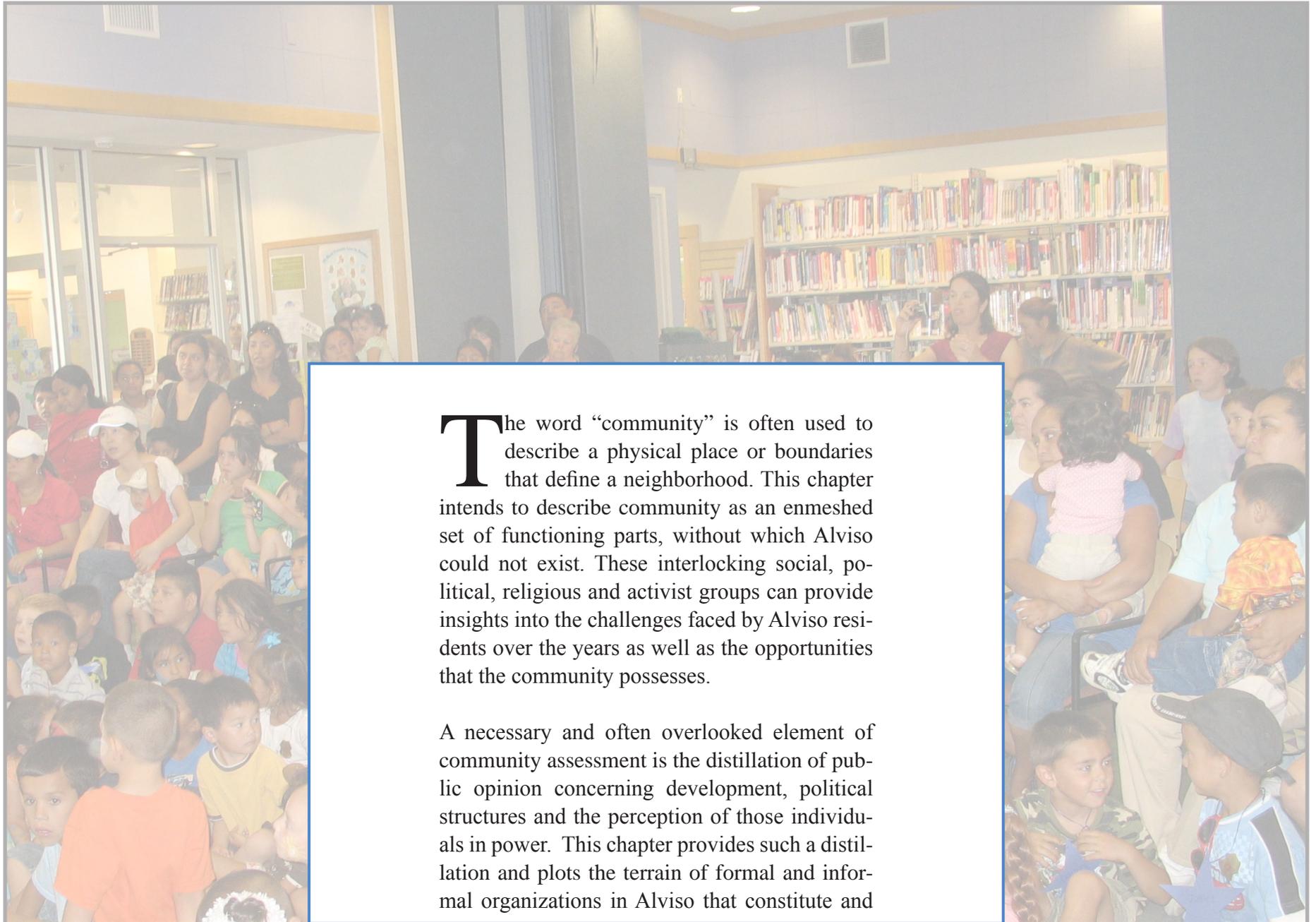




5 Community Organizations



Photo courtesy of Santa Visits Alviso Foundation



The word “community” is often used to describe a physical place or boundaries that define a neighborhood. This chapter intends to describe community as an enmeshed set of functioning parts, without which Alviso could not exist. These interlocking social, political, religious and activist groups can provide insights into the challenges faced by Alviso residents over the years as well as the opportunities that the community possesses.

A necessary and often overlooked element of community assessment is the distillation of public opinion concerning development, political structures and the perception of those individuals in power. This chapter provides such a distillation and plots the terrain of formal and informal organizations in Alviso that constitute and



Star of the Sea Church

give action to public opinion. Some of the questions that are addressed include: What are these groups' priorities? What are their concerns? What have they successfully achieved through cooperation and mutual support? What changes to the community might enhance or threaten these achievements? The answers to the questions have profound ramifications on planning efforts everywhere communities exist.

Alviso has a long history of community participation and organization. Its past status as an independent city still lingers in the hearts of many of its residents. This history of coming together as a community to tackle problems, address concerns, and raise the quality of life for residents has given rise to numerous community organizations that remain active to this day. Alviso's citizen involvement is commendable, although uneven and inconsistent involvement among residents is also an issue that must be faced when engaged in planning and outreach efforts in the community.

This chapter is organized by religious, community, educational, safety, business, government and quasi-government groups in Alviso. Map 15, on the following page, shows the location of many of the groups profiled. Within each of

these groups, their constituents, their roles, their opinions and their achievements are described. Through interviews and research, several salient issues emerged: trust in past and proposed flooding mitigations, youth safety and opportunity, city vs. local visions of Alviso, the ramifications of development, and the fractures and holes in community cooperation and involvement.

When possible, discussions of individual groups will revolve around one or more of these issues. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the opportunities and constraints of Alviso's current social and organizational landscape.

Religious Organizations

Star of the Sea Catholic Church

The only church in Alviso with a connection to a large segment of residents is the Our Lady Star of the Sea, the smallest parish of the San José Roman Catholic Diocese. Formerly a mission of Our Lady of Peace in Santa Clara, it was built by the community in the 1950's. It is located at 1385 Michigan Avenue, near the center of the New Chicago Neighborhood. After the devastating flood of 1983, a local priest, the Reverend



John Coleman, took interest in the community and convinced the local diocese to found a parish there. Fr. Coleman served thirteen years as priest, and was followed by the Reverend Steven Brown, who served seven years, until 2004. Fr. Brown was instrumental in creating popular and constructive youth programs in Alviso and providing a constructive place for teens to congregate. In 2004, the Reverend Francisco Rios assumed leadership, but was shortly thereafter relocated because of need elsewhere in the diocese. The current pastor is the Reverend Luis Vargas.

Besides being a place of worship for approximately 450 local residents, only a handful of whom are English-speakers, the church is a networking and social gathering place, and an outreach arm of the local social activist group, PACT, described later in this section.

Currently, the parish is troubled by a pronounced lack of resources (which come from collections). The priest is the only paid position, though there is a part-time volunteer who must do the full-time work of a church administrator. The lack of resources has meant a perilous decline in social and youth services offered over the last several years.

In 2003, KB Homes proposed a substantial new residential development across the street from the church; tied to it was a promise to help the church rebuild some of its debilitated buildings. The development never made it past the proposal stage, however, in part because of vehement rejection of the plan by community members, including some active in the church.

Church leadership is very knowledgeable about local concerns in Alviso. One major issue is the disinterest in the services offered to the community, such as a Bible camp, parental education (offered by George Mayne Elementary), swimming classes, bus service, local entry-level jobs (Great America, Rivermark) and the Gardner Clinic. The lack of street cleanliness and problems with park safety were other concerns.

On the whole, though, according to church leadership, Alviso is getting better in many ways, and the church is appreciative that the local residents retain their culture and stay faithful.

Other Religious Institutions

There are at least three other churches in and around Alviso, as well as a Shia Muslim organi-



Jubilee Christian Center



Map 15: Organizations and facilities profiled in Chapter 5



zation. Most of these religious institutions are located in this area, not because of Alviso, its residents or its local character, but because of its central location in the South Bay, where land for parking and large meeting halls was available. Chief among these are two large Christian churches, one of which – the Korean Emmanuel Presbyterian Church – serves much of the region’s Korean community. The other, called Jubilee Christian Center, is a large, non-denominational “mega-church,” that serves a congregation from all across the region; the primary effect it has on Alviso is the traffic it brings on Sundays (though this traffic, according to many sources, is well diverted away from streets that local residents might use).

Community Groups and Facilities

Santa Visits Alviso Foundation

Founded in 1983 by Mrs. Judy Santiago and the late Mr. Joe Guadalupe Santiago, the Santa Visits Alviso Foundation is a local non-profit organization that focuses on providing support for the education and life enrichment of Alviso’s youth. The volunteer members of Santa Visits Alviso

Foundation are made up of community members and partnerships with local service providers, including: George Mayne Elementary School, Alviso Public Library, Alviso Community Center, Alviso Youth Center, and Rotary of Alviso.

Santa Visits Alviso Foundation sponsors a wide range of events and programs aimed at youth. During their largest event, the Holiday Program, they provide gifts and other treats to attending Alviso children and provide a Christmas Santa for them to meet. Santa Visits Alviso Foundation is also well known for its scholarship program. Awarded to graduating high school students and continuing college students, this annual program provides financial assistance to Alviso youth as they pursue higher education. Santa Visits Alviso Foundation has also raised funds for local programs and facilities, which include: field trips for students at George Mayne Elementary School, coaching and soccer clinics for the Alviso Youth Soccer Program, Wilcox High Schools JV and Varsity Soccer Program, and reading programs at the Alviso Public Library.

Santa Visits Alviso Foundation has been highly successful for many years because of its strong volunteer base and community ties. The orga-



Santa Visits Alviso Foundation.¹





Alviso Rotary Club.²
(pictured with Santa Clara Rotary)

nization relies on the assistance of volunteers and donations from individuals, corporations, and other organizations. Although Santa Visits Alviso Foundation has enjoyed generous donations in the past, funding has been a constant challenge.

Rotary Club of Alviso

Founded in 1990, the Rotary Club is an organization of business professionals and community leaders who volunteer for community service in Alviso. Their goals are to determine and meet the changing needs of the Alviso community, to build and nurture relationships with other organizations also serving the Alviso community, and to recruit quality members to maintain and strengthen their ability to serve the community in the future. As of 2007, there are 10 members, called Rotarians, with 3 officers (President, Secretary, and a Treasurer). This group is one chapter of the parent organization, Rotary International, which has over a million members worldwide.

Alviso Rotary has a long history of providing for and assisting in community service functions that serve the entire Alviso community. They have been particularly active in projects that support education for Alviso youth. They have held

an event called “Steps for Success” where they partner with the Santa Clara Rotary Club to hand out shoes, socks, pencils, books, and lollipops to underprivileged children before the school year.

Rotarians volunteer with other community organizations, including the Santa Visits Alviso Foundation’s annual Holiday Program. Alviso Rotary also strives to raise financial support for education. Rotarians have organized fundraisers, including crab feeds and spaghetti feeds, to raise money for teachers at George Mayne Elementary School to purchase classroom supplies and to raise funds for Alviso Rotary’s own scholarship program, David B. Hoxie Scholarships.

Alviso Rotary is a small organization in terms of membership but they hope to gain more active members and more support from local neighborhoods as they continue their efforts to serve the Alviso community.

Alviso Community and Youth Centers

Both the Community Center and the Youth Center are operated by the San José Department of Parks and Recreation; the Alviso Public Library shares responsibility for the Community Center and George Mayne Elementary School shares



responsibility for the Youth Center. Each organization shares facility use. For the Youth Center, George Mayne Elementary School may use the facility while their classes are in session and the Department of Parks and Recreation uses the facility after class, generally 4PM-6PM on weekdays.

The Alviso Community Center is located in the same building as the Alviso Public Library. The center includes a multi-purpose room with a kitchenette, tables, and chairs. It houses a substantial display of Alviso's history as well as other local information. The Community Center is the site for many community services sponsored by the Library and the Department of Parks and Recreation which include: English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes, meals programs for seniors, nutrition classes, youth education, recreation, and tutoring activities, community meetings, and special events.

The Alviso Youth Center provides recreational and educational services to local youth. It offers a safe place to do homework, participate in creative projects, and enjoy recreational activities, which include basketball, volleyball, and electronic gaming. The Youth Center is also the site

for Alviso's largest community events, the Santa Visits Alviso Foundation's Holiday Program and the annual Alviso Egg Hunt. A newly renovated swimming pool designed for youth is located close by.

Despite the wide range of services offered between the Community Center and the Youth Center, community participation has been low and there is concern that the low attendance may adversely affect program funding. Some have speculated that Alviso's older youth (middle and high school ages) are not interested in the programs currently being provided, which they perceive to be more appropriate for elementary school youth. Some programs are well used but their funding has been limited and so those programs cannot be extended to meet local demands. There has been demand for more and different types of services, especially more services for older youth, but necessary funding and resources have not been provided.

People Acting in Community Together (PACT)

Founded in 1985, People Acting in Community Together (PACT) is an inter-faith, grassroots



Alviso Community Center



Alviso Youth Center.³



group that works to organize communities and advocate for community needs. PACT is a larger organization that operates throughout San José; its operations in Alviso are conducted with cooperation from the Our Lady Star of the Sea Church.

PACT often partners with religious institutions to offer training in community organization. One of the PACT's largest operations took place in 2003 when KB Homes was proposing a large condominium development on land owned by Cisco near New Chicago. PACT organized a community meeting where residents aired their concerns about the project. Residents were concerned that the proposal did not fit with the small-town character of Alviso, that local infrastructure and services would be adversely impacted, that noise would increase, and that the resulting economic change to the community would be destabilizing.

PACT is currently reinvigorating local community organization efforts in Alviso by working with Our Lady Star of the Sea Church and other community members to identify community issues and recruit volunteers.



Trinity Park

Trinity Park Neighborhood Association

The Trinity Park neighborhood association represents the Trinity Park neighborhood, located between North First Street, Grand St. and Trinity Park Dr. It is situated across from the Alviso Public Library. In all, there are 59 single family homes in the neighborhood and over 150 residents. They meet on a quarterly basis and elect a chairperson to lead all meetings once per year.

The neighborhood association is primarily concerned with the welfare of the Trinity Park neighborhood. Situated in the middle of the neighborhood is a message board that displays upcoming events, concerns, and meeting schedules. Safety does not seem to be a major concern for Trinity Park residents. In fact, some residents highlighted safety as a key reason for moving to Alviso. Also, during an October 2008 meeting, the members did not express concerns for flooding and, in fact, stated that they felt safe from flooding due to the improvements of the levees by the city.

Trinity Park was created in 1998 and is mostly comprised of newcomers to Alviso. While most of the members cite Alviso's climate, remote setting, and advantageous location for commuting



as a reason for moving there, many of the association's members expressed the desire for more commercial development in Alviso. Another concern was the lack of a nearby high school.

Education

George Mayne Elementary School

George Mayne Elementary, locally referred to as Mayne School, serves over 500 preschool and kindergarten through fifth grade students with 24 teachers, 1 principal, 4 office staff, and 3 custodians. Mayne School is looked upon very highly by the Alviso community for its exceptional education services; in fact, the school exceeds Santa Clara School District's Academic Performance Index score goal of 800 with a score of 833. Mayne School's student population is predominantly Latino with Vietnamese, white, and black students making up the remainder. Students mainly come from Alviso and nearby mobile home parks in San José and Sunnyvale. Over half of Mayne school's students are non-native English speakers.

Mayne School provides a wide range of services

and events for its students. With a high proportion of non-native English speaking students, the school offers ESL classes and provides many of its services in Spanish as well as in English. The school holds many community events including spring carnivals, walkathons, parent-teacher association events, and parent education nights. Mayne School is also a participant in the Santa Visits Alviso Foundation's Holiday Program. Volunteers are welcome to help during school events. Mayne School also partners with nearby businesses - including Cisco, Environmental Volunteers, Nortel, and Costco - to recruit volunteers and to obtain business donations of school supplies.

Although Mayne School has become a positive educational resource in Alviso, the presence of poverty in Alviso has made education attainment difficult. Mayne School strives to provide as many services and resources as it can to its students.

Alviso Public Library

The library measures 4,460 square feet (not including the Community Center) and features adequate parking, wheelchair accessibility, a tech-



George Mayne
Elementary School



Alviso Public Library





Grand opening of Downtown College Prep - Alviso.⁴

nology area, language center, tutoring room, and a local history collection located in the Community Center.

Library staffing is 1 full-time librarian, 2 full-time assistants, and 2 part-time assistants.

The library offers many educational services to youth and to adults. ESL classes are provided twice a week to youth as well as adults. The library holds story times for children Tuesdays through Thursdays. The library sponsors “Opinando Sobre Libros”, a Spanish book club that meets once per month. It also sponsors numerous seasonal events such as pumpkin carving contests, summer reading clubs, and cultural craft classes.

The library provides a wide range of services to Alviso, considering its limited resources. The library itself is not large and is more oriented toward youth use than adult use, which may explain reported low library usage. Although the library already provides many community services, there is desire to expand services to meet community needs. Library staff has reported demand for parenting workshops, more ESL training, and family nutrition classes. There is also

demand to tailor services to accommodate Chinese and Vietnamese speakers.

Downtown College Prep – Alviso

Downtown College Prep (DCP) is a charter high school organization based in San José. Its program aims to prepare underachieving students who will be the first in their families to attend college and to be successful while in college. DCP opened its Alviso branch in August 2008 and currently offers 6th and 7th grade education. DCP plans to expand to 8th grade in 2009 and ultimately expand up to 12th grade education in the future. There are currently 87 students at the Alviso branch with 4 teachers, 1 administrator, and 1 principal. Students are selected through either (1) an open application process or (2) through recruitment by the Santa Clara Unified School District, which identifies underperforming students who may benefit from DCP’s education program.

DCP provides more intensive academic support to its students than ordinary high schools. In addition to providing classes in math, English, science, and social studies, DCP offers music programs and physical education classes to its



students. Classroom sizes are capped at 25 to ensure teaching quality and attention. Students are held strictly accountable to a code of conduct which includes the wearing of uniforms and the expectation of disciplined academic behavior. DCP involves parents in their children's education by bringing them in as tutors and class supervisors. Students are introduced to college early in the program and visit college campuses later in their DCP academic careers. The school provides a College Alumni Counselor to graduates of its program to ensure continued success in college.

The Alviso branch has just commenced its operations and currently faces some organizational issues. The branch is still working to become a 6th-12th grade school and is currently working to add 8th graders in 2009. The branch currently does not have outdoor space and its buildings are still changing hands from its previous occupant (Gardner Health Clinic). There is high optimism from DCP staff and community members that DCP will become a valued education resource for Alviso. The hope of the staff is that DCP can help end concerns of low education attainment in the local area (especially for older youth) by providing convenient access to safe and quality education.

Safety

The Alviso Community Policing Center

The Alviso Community Policing Center located on Taylor St. serves to fill the void of police presence in Alviso. It is one of three community policing centers in San José and was created as part of San José's Public Safety Capital Improvement Program in 2002. Although it is listed as being open six days a week, according to interviewed Alvisans, it is typically only open for a few days a week and only for a few hours. The policing center is primarily focused on providing safety information, relaying emergency calls, and being a resource for the community during emergencies.

Alviso is patrolled by San José Police Department's Central Division. The Central Division is also responsible for Downtown San José which sometimes leads to delayed response times to emergency calls. Although Alviso is located 10 miles away from the central San José Police Station, crime is not a significant problem. Two years ago there was a rash of car break-ins. This, however, was halted quickly and there has not been an incident of that magnitude since.



Alviso Community Policing Center





Gardner Health Center

Fire Station No. 25

Fire Station No.25 is located between Grand Avenue and Wilson Way and was completed in 2007 on lands donated by Cisco. It services Alviso and parts of North San José and is one of 31 stations in San José’s Fire Department. Similar to the community policing center, station No. 25 was created as a part of San José’s Public Safety Capital Improvement Program. As with other fire stations, No. 25 is focused

on fire prevention and response, and response to emergencies located in their jurisdiction.

Gardner Health Center

The Alviso Health Center offers medical, dental, optometry, pharmacy, and health education programs in Alviso. It provides primary care to patients regardless of their financial situation and ability to pay. The Alviso Health Center is a member of the Gardner Health Center medical establishment. Its primarily outpatient practice offers Alvisans a close and accessible health facility.

The health center, as the case with many Gardner facilities, caters to the demographics of Alviso. The health center plans to expand some programs due to the recent increase in use by the community.

Businesses

New Mid-rise Offices

The office space along Gold Street constitutes the most fundamental visual change to the Al-

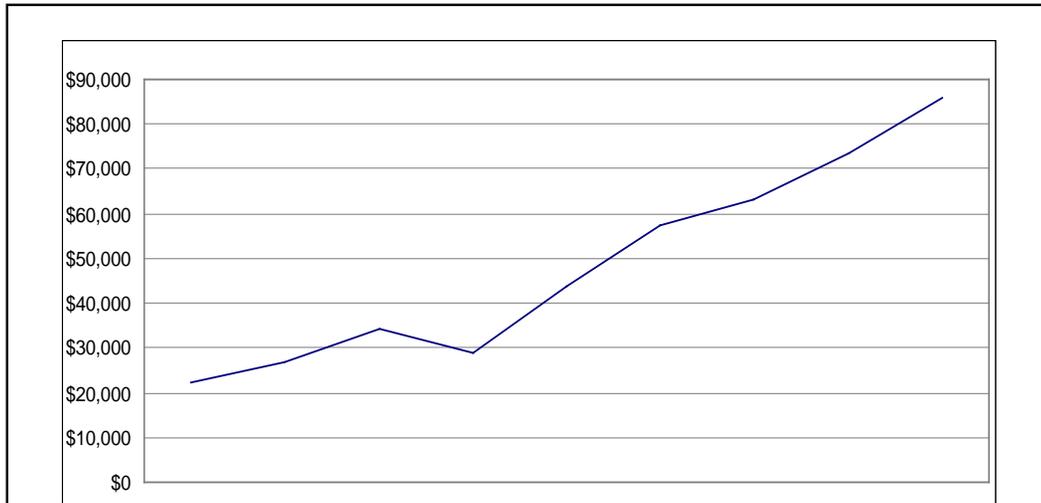


Figure 12: Average salary of people who work in Alviso, 1998 - 2006. The Gold Street mid-rise offices were built in 2001.⁶



viso community in the last ten years. Employment tallies from the Census show a pronounced increase in average salaries of those who work in Alviso over the last ten years (Figure 12) as well as an obvious shift from blue-collar to white-collar jobs (Figure 13) even as total employment has remained level. This has led to a trickle-down effect on the retail and restaurant businesses, many of whom boast of packed houses on weekdays during lunch times.

These developments have few detractors in the community: they are close enough to bring dollars, but, being on the other side of the Alviso Slough, do not fundamentally alter Alviso's small-town charm and peaceful atmosphere. The newest addition to these office parks is a pair of large buildings, to be called the America Center, erected on an old landfill mound along the Gold Street Connector, making them visible from almost every point in Alviso.

Restaurants and Convenience Stores

Three convenience stores exist in New Chicago: one on the west side of the neighborhood, one near the easternmost corner, and one on First Street, close to Alviso Village. While the stores are Alvi-

	1998 Businesses	2006 Businesses	Difference
Total (Employees)	34 (1532)	46 (1620)	12 (88)
Forestry, fishing, hunting, etc.	1	1	0
Construction	6	5	-1
Manufacturing	2	2	0
Wholesale trade	4	2	-2
Retail trade	2	1	-1
Transportation & warehousing	6	4	-2
Information	0	1	1
Finance & insurance	0	1	1
Real estate & rental & leasing	1	3	2
Scientific & technical services	4	9	5
Management of companies	1	1	0
Admin, support, waste mgt, etc.	2	5	3
Educational services	0	1	1
Health care and social assistance	1	2	1
Arts, entertainment & recreation	1	1	0
Accommodation & food services	2	6	4
Other services	1	1	0

Figure 13: Business Establishments in Alviso 1998 - 2006.⁵



so mainstays and seem to garner enough business to sustain them, each only serves a small local population meaning that some residents are doing more everyday shopping at these stores than at more regional grocery stores such as Safeway in Rivermark. One resident made the observation that by electing to sell only a portion of what a larger grocery would sell, and by making their wares non-redundant, these convenience stores are potentially able to serve Alviso with the equivalent of a small grocery market.

Restaurants, which mostly line First Street, have generally been profiting from the growth in workers in nearby office parks. The largest are three Mexican restaurants – El Taco Del Oro, Maria Elena’s and Rosita’s – and two American restaurants – Vahl’s and Marina Restaurant. The new office development has brought optimism to one restaurant owner, who says that more growth and development, both residential and industrial, make Alviso good for his business.

Restaurants, in particular, function as important meeting places for the community. For example, Vahl’s Restaurant has acted as a site for Rotary

Club meetings and sponsored various local charity events. El Taco Del Oro is the current site of the Rotary Club meetings.

Heavy Industrial Businesses

About a dozen or so businesses in Alviso specialize in heavy industrial operations, including drywall, cement, trucking, towing, storage, and hazardous waste management. These are located primarily along the edge of the marshlands, along the Guadalupe River and among the historic buildings in Alviso Village. The wide open and (once) inexpensive land, the central Bay Area location, and the lack of regulatory oversight by the city were all reasons given why this was, and continues to be, such an ideal place for these businesses.

These are generally the largest employers in Alviso and some businesses have 50-100 workers. Some are fairly well integrated with the Alviso community and social networks, but one business executive admitted that the only interaction he had with Alviso was the Mexican food. Many of these businesses have worked with or donated to the Rotary Club or Santa Visits Alviso and so have become integral and necessary parts of the community, both socially and economically.



Government and Quasi-Government Agencies

Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD)

The Santa Clara Valley Water District has a vested interest in the welfare of Alviso. Its stated mission is to provide stream, marsh and slough, stewardship, wholesale water supply, and flood protection for Santa Clara County. Flooding concerns have prompted the District to embark on multiple flood mitigation initiatives, the most notable being the Alviso Slough Restoration Project.

The district operates as a state of California Special District, with jurisdiction throughout Santa Clara County. It is governed by a board of directors whose members are either elected or appointed.

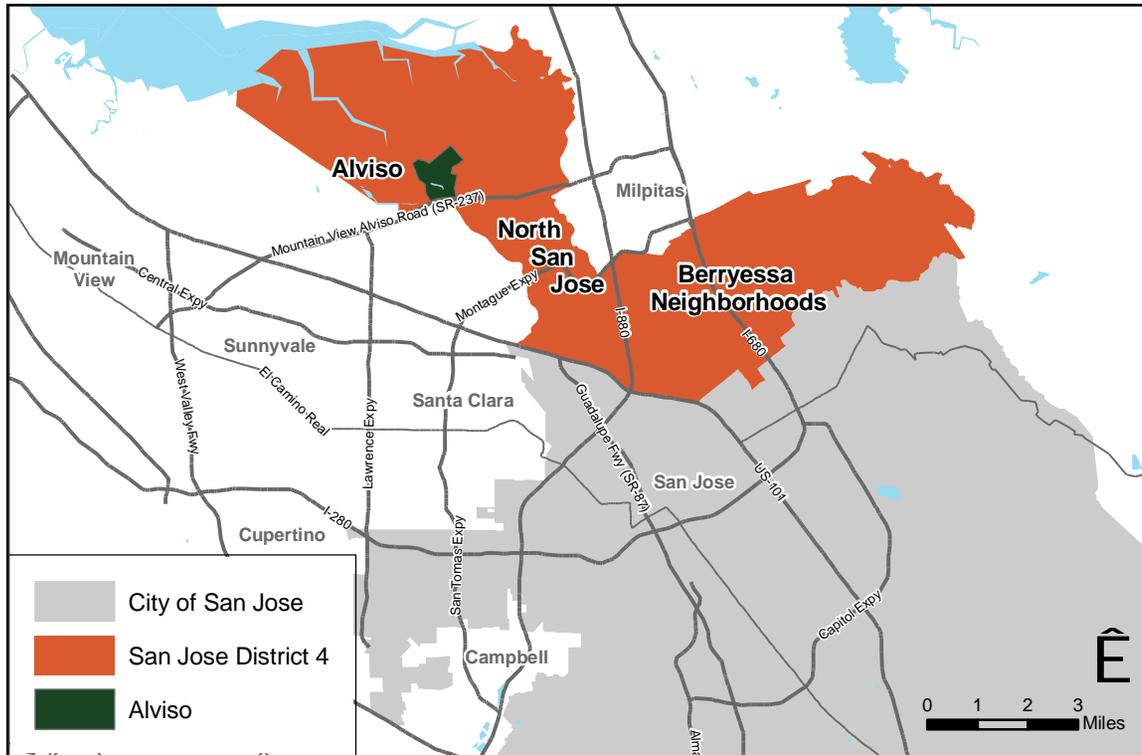
Alviso Water Task Force

The Alviso Water Task Force was formed in 2004 primarily to address flood concerns in Alviso. The group is very active and holds meetings regularly. Many of its members are active in other community organizations and share a

deep passion for Alviso. Its mission is to advocate for effective flood protection, wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration, and increased boating, hiking, and recreational opportunities. Some other areas in which the task force is involved are: managing vegetation debris, leading in the Alviso Slough Restoration project and facilitating public outreach meetings regarding water issues in Alviso, particularly those that involve the Alviso Slough. Some of the Task Force's past initiatives include the creation of an educational gazebo highlighting Alviso's history, providing a tidal connection between the Alviso Slough and Pond A8, the removal of non-permitted vessels in the Guadalupe River, and the restoration of the Alviso Slough in a manner that will reclaim its historic and economic value.

The Alviso Water Task Force also aims to educate Alvisans about flood protection and projects regarding the Alviso Slough and these efforts extend beyond Alviso. The Task Force also reaches out to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the City of San José, and Santa Clara Water District.





Map 16: San José Council District 4 compared to Alviso

As with many Alvisans, the Water Task Force would like to see further development of the marina since much time and resources have been spent on developing creative and effective solutions to developing and restoring the Alviso Slough.

The Councilman’s Office: Kansan Chu

In general, the role of the councilperson is policy director for the city. The councilperson is elected from and represents the interests of one of ten districts in the city; Alviso lies within District 4, which also includes large swaths of industrial North San José and the large and diverse suburban area of Berryessa (Map 16). Both areas dwarf Alviso in terms of population and political clout (the total population of the district in 2000 was over 93,000). The current councilman of District 4 is Kansan Chu, a former Berryessa School District Board member and IBM engineer.

One important example of policy work that the Councilman has been engaged in is his role as chair of the North San José Neighborhoods Planning Task Force, a team of North San José stakeholders with a mandate to de-



velop an implementation strategy for planned development. Residents of Alviso have expressed concern over the scale of proposed development at their doorstep, and that the 30,000 new residences might overload the sewage and storm run-off infrastructure that affect Alviso. However, one of the Task Force’s guiding principles is to “consider the impact on Alviso.”

In other policy areas, Councilman Chu has been instrumental in the negotiations between the Santa Clara Unified School District and the City of San José to build a high school in Alviso.

Councilman Chu has made himself available to Alviso residents, holding office hours in the community four times over the last year, and attending events including the opening of Downtown College Prep. According to the councilman, concerns from residents include police protection and traffic infraction issues.

Opportunities and Constraints

The considerable number and wide range of organizations in Alviso presents many opportunities for its residents and neighborhoods. Existing

community facilities, especially the Alviso Community Center and Youth Center, provide space for community organization efforts and meetings. Also, private venues such as the Our Lady Star of the Sea Church, George Mayne Elementary School, and the Alviso Yacht Club, have the capacity to hold meetings and other community functions. Alviso also has new opportunities coming soon, including the expansion of DCP to support 6th to 8th grade students and add student capacity, and efforts by the Santa Clara Unified School District to provide a new high school in close proximity to the area.

In addition to facilities, Alviso has substantial human capital for community support. Active community members are highly interested in supporting and advocating for community interests and needs. The individuals in Alviso are aided by myriad community service groups. These groups are made possible by the presence of community-members with unwavering commitment to local needs. The diversity of these groups also ensures that, given the unique variations of opinion, values and personal histories in Alviso, almost everyone will likely find a supportive venue.



Although Alviso's facilities and communities have much potential to meet community needs, they also face challenges and constraints. One of the most consistently identified challenges to the community is the issue of poverty in Alviso's older neighborhoods. Community organizations have identified poverty as a contributor to local problems along with gang-related crimes and low education attainment.

Local service providers have found that working-class families and individuals are usually unable and unwilling to participate in community services because they may be too busy with financial and familial issues. As a result, many service providers desire to better tailor their services to meet the needs of local families but have not received the necessary funding to do so. For many community organizations and facilities in Alviso, there are currently no substantial plans to expand services or infrastructure due to budget constraints. Another challenge to meeting community needs is the plethora of diverse and sometimes conflicting agendas and interests among Alviso's residents and stakeholders. This lack of unity in defining common interests has made it difficult to organize community development efforts. Complicated by a rocky rela-

tionship, historically, with the City of San José, some residents have evidently become pessimistic of City efforts to support the Alviso community and, as a result, become disenchanted with community organization and development efforts in general.

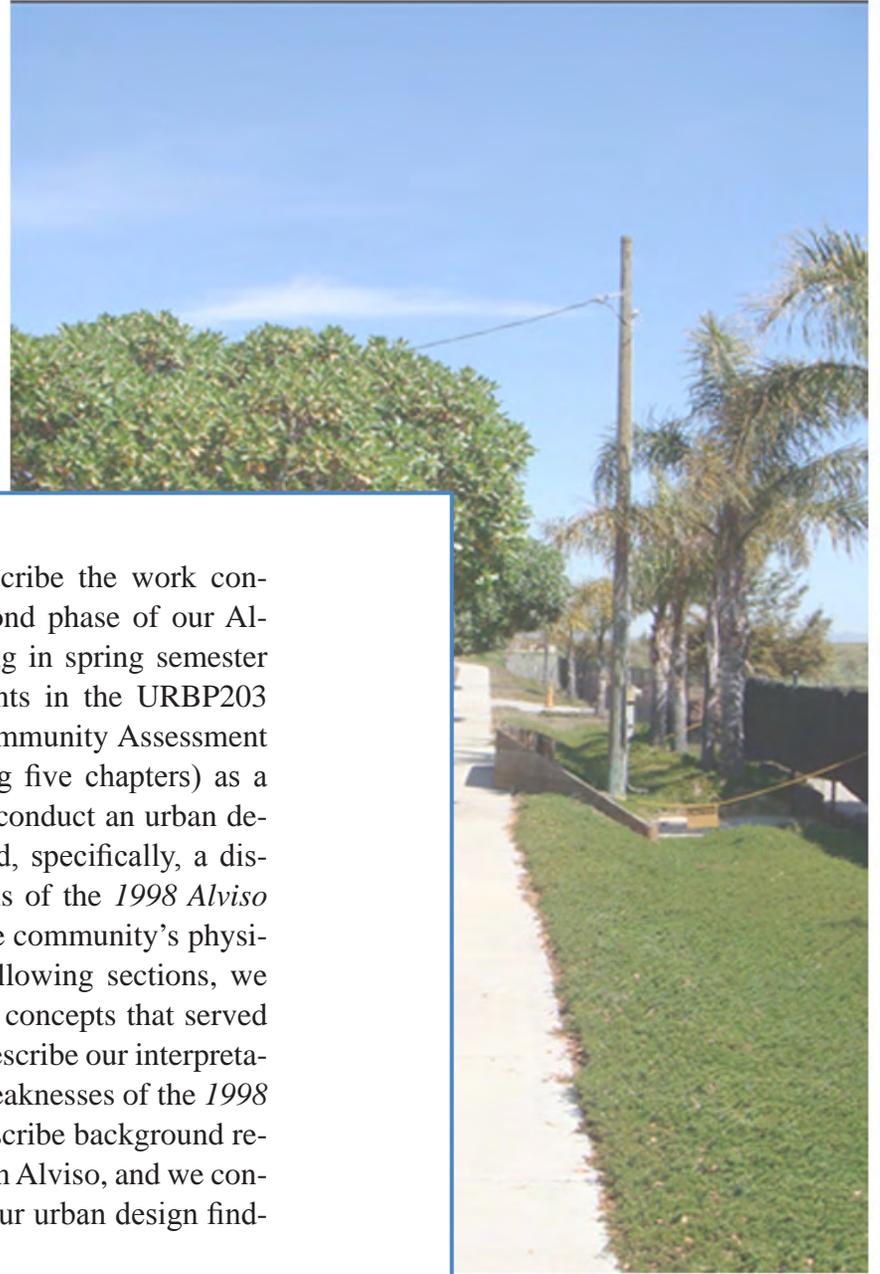
Despite the many challenges the Alviso community faces, its strong base of community members and activists presents great opportunity and resources for future community successes. A contact list of many of the organization profiled can be found in the Contact List on page 192.





6 Urban Design Analysis





In this chapter, we describe the work conducted during the second phase of our Alviso analysis, beginning in spring semester 2009. The thirteen students in the URBP203 course used the Alviso Community Assessment (the focus of the preceding five chapters) as a foundation upon which to conduct an urban design analysis of Alviso and, specifically, a dissection and critical analysis of the *1998 Alviso Master Plan* that guides the community's physical appearance. In the following sections, we chronicle the urban design concepts that served to organize our work, we describe our interpretation of the strengths and weaknesses of the *1998 Alviso Master Plan*, we describe background research related to our work in Alviso, and we conclude with a summary of our urban design find-

ings. Along the way, we will describe and present examples of our graphic products, including public street cross-sections, visual simulations of possible future development, and materials used in a community charrette.

Consideration of Community and Staff Member Comments

On the first day of class, the “veteran” students who completed last semester’s community assessment described the project and its outcomes to the new students in the spring semester’s class. After summarizing the presentation the students made to city staff on December 12, 2008, the class considered the comments offered by staff as well as those received at a subsequent presentation to the Alviso Rotary Club in January, 2009. In general, the community assessment was praised by city staff for both its depth and breadth of research. However, it was noted that we neglected to mention a few topics, including the influence of Chinese immigrants on Alviso’s development, and the fact that State Highway 9 once ran through Alviso and passed Vahl’s restaurant, a notable mid-century destination in this region. Others noted that while his-

toric preservation is a worthy goal espoused by our report, the securing of funding for these efforts is difficult at best – a fact that we glossed over. Rotary Club members suggested that we investigate the provision of a community meeting venue in Alviso.

We also received constructive criticism in terms of the tone of our report. A few city staff members felt that the introduction contained too much “drama” that tended to paint the city’s efforts in an overly negative light. Others felt that we neglected the complicated realities of multi-jurisdictional overlap in Alviso. Finally, it was suggested that the Demographics chapter include mention of vacancy rates and unemployment rates.

We thanked all individuals for their comments and promised to investigate these matters as our time permitted.

Urban Design Concepts

Urban design is a subject that is not easily defined, since it embraces a variety of topics including architecture, city planning, landscape architecture, real estate economics and others.



To assist us with clarifying the term – and to help guide our urban design work this semester – we were ably assisted by Walter Rask, AIA, AICP, principal architect for the City of San José’s Redevelopment Agency. Walter explained that whereas the field of urban planning is devoted broadly to the study and improvement of the human habitat, urban design is more narrowly focused on the physical qualities of the public realm and how best to make these qualities aesthetically pleasing and functional.

The public realm is defined as those areas in a community that are publicly accessible, such as public streets and sidewalks – and the larger streetscape – as well as plazas and paths, parks and open spaces, public facilities, utilities and public services. The private realm that surrounds them directly impacts these areas, and includes the pattern of parcels, private streets and private open space, site layout, the siting of buildings, building height and bulk, and architectural design. Urban designers are also interested in the transitional spaces that link public and private realms, such as yards, gateways, pathways and porches.

Both realms are shaped and governed by their own set of factors. The public realm assumes

its form through the design of street geometrics, municipal and county-level policies, and the construction of public facilities such as water and sewer infrastructure and other utilities. The private realm is shaped to a large degree via subdivision regulations, zoning ordinances and design guidelines. In short, all elements of the urban landscape exist deliberately.

At the outset of the semester, we kicked off our study of urban design by reading the pioneering work of Kevin Lynch, author of the 1960 book, *The Image of the City*. Lynch proposed that the physical form of a city could be divided into five types of elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Taken together, these elements form the public image of any given city. One of the first assignments this semester was to locate examples of each element in the local environment, including as many examples from Alviso as we could gather. A field visit was conducted on January 29, 2009 and led by the instructors as well as Craig Parada, an Alviso resident and retired Santa Clara County planner. Following are some of the images collected by the class, as well as a brief definition of each element as proposed by Lynch:



Urban Design Diagram
(provided by Walter S. Rask, AIA AICP)



Paths: the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves (Lynch, pg. 47)



Edges: the linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are the boundaries between two phases; linear breaks in continuity (Lynch, pg. 47)



Districts: medium-to-large sections of the city, conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters “inside of” and which are recognizable as having some common, identifying character. (Lynch, pg. 47)



Nodes: points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which the observer is travelling. They may be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another. (Lynch, pg. 47)



Landmarks: another type of point reference, but in this case the observer does enter within them, they are external. They are usually a rather simply defined physical object: building, sign, store or mountain. (Lynch, pg. 48)



Here is an example of student work that identified, where possible, the five urban design elements stipulated by Lynch.



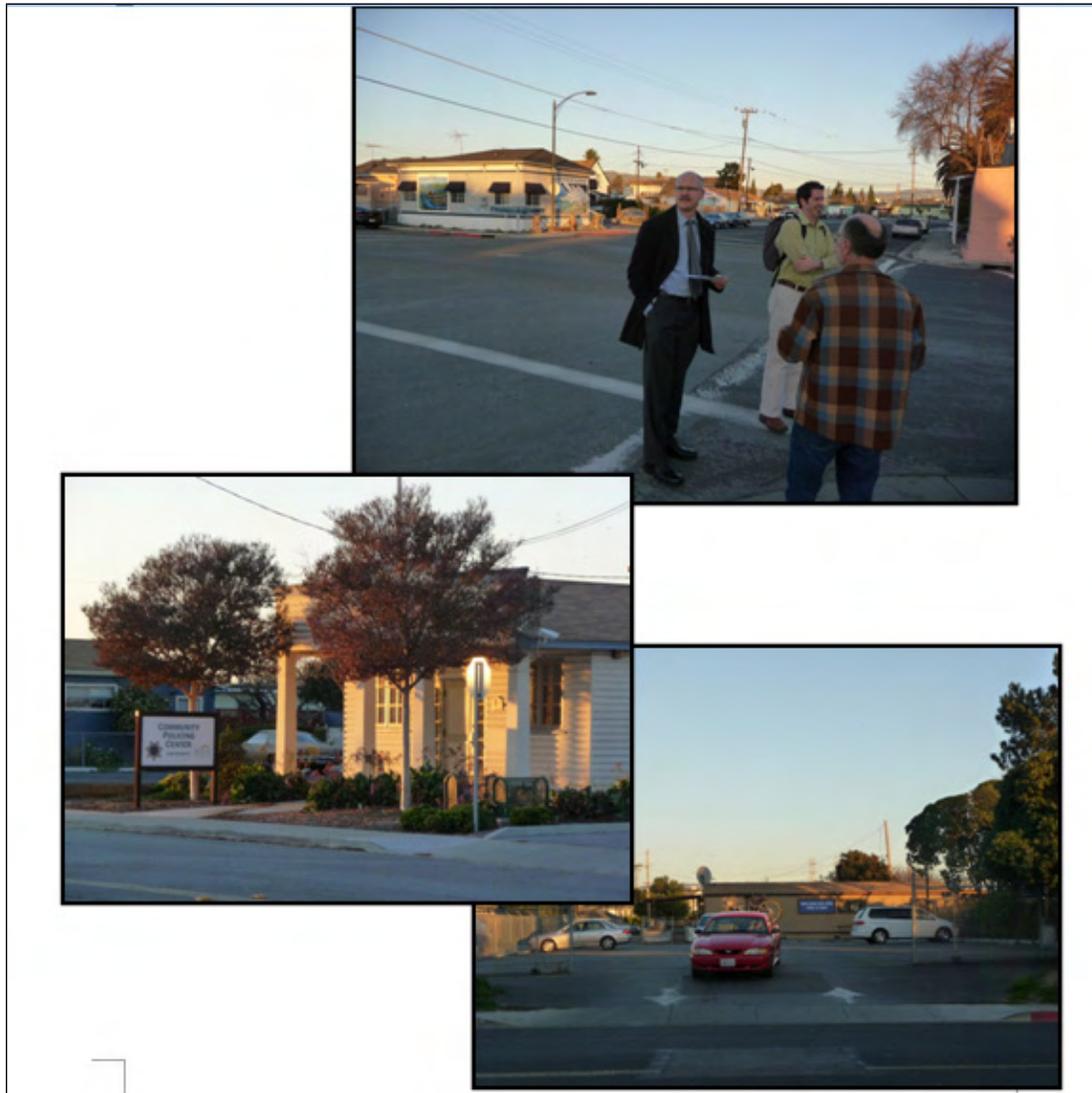
District: Alviso was once an incorporated city, but in 1968 it was consolidated into the City of San José. It has kept its unique character, however, and remains a clearly identifiable district. Some characteristics of the district include its small town feel despite its being part of San José, the strong sense of history found both in the architecture as well as the people who reside here, and the wide buffer of open space surrounding the community that is bordered by bay, marshes, rivers, and open fields.



Path: As the sun sets, the light is reflected on the path of railroad tracks that parallel the auto path of El Dorado Street. A raised levee in the background serves as a hiking path around the historic district and along the marsh and Guadalupe River. The river used to be a path for boats, but now it is clogged by plants and silt, making it a difficult path for boats to utilize.

Student Author: Gail DeVaul





Node: The intersection of Gold and N. Taylor is the heart of “Downtown Alviso” according to long-time residents. Gold and N. Taylor are two primary arteries into Alviso which form a node as the “crossing or convergence of paths”. Key meeting places for the community – the post office and the community policing center – are both located within sight of this corner.

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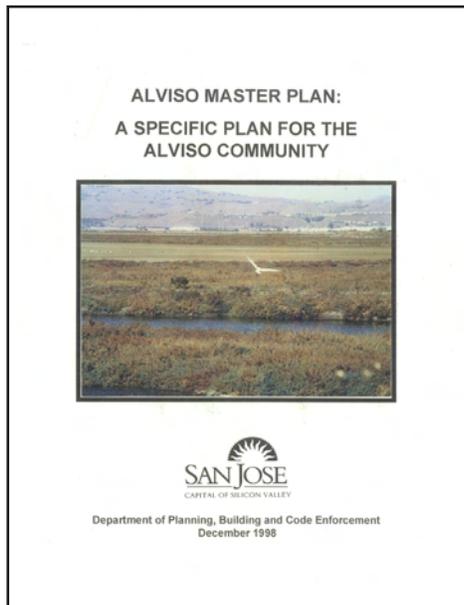
Landmark: The Bayside Canning Company building, located on Hope Street in Alviso, is a landmark due to its uniqueness as a record of the era when Alviso housed the third largest cannery in the United States when it was at its peak. It is unique in that the company was owned and operated exclusively by Chinese immigrants. The cannery also represents the history of Santa Clara Valley when agriculture was central to the economy. The building is in disrepair, and the history it represents is in danger of being lost.



Edge: The community of Alviso is clearly edged on all sides by levees, fields, salt marshes, and rivers. Although the levees also serve as paths, they are primarily edges that define the limits of buildable land on one side and waterways on the other side. The north edge of the community is essentially the San Francisco Bay, though salt marshes prevent the bay water from coming right up to the community's northern limit.

Student Author: Gail DeVaul





The cover of Alviso Master Plan

With this background in urban design firmly established, and examples of urban design elements located in and around Alviso, we were ready to turn our attention to the next phase of our study: a critical examination of the *1998 Alviso Master Plan*.

The 1998 Alviso Master Plan

Development of the Alviso Master Plan was initiated in 1993 under direction from the San José City Council, which appointed a 24-member task force to carry out the work. The task force was comprised of Alviso residents, property owners, renters, interest groups, as well as other community based organizations. Beginning in the autumn of 1993, the task force held a series of public meetings and workshops to help shape the Master Plan. In the initial meetings, Alviso residents were asked broad-based questions to set guiding philosophies throughout the effort, including, “What do you like about Alviso?”, “What do you dislike about Alviso?”, and “What do you want to keep, change or add to the community?”

Participants at the meetings generated passionate discussions which led to a list of pri-

mary objectives for the Master Plan, some of which will be described below. In addition to meetings with adult residents of Alviso, the task force and consultant team also met with students at George Mayne Elementary School. The students reinforced the sentiments of the adults, and added that they desired greater recreational opportunities, a broader range of housing choices, and fast food establishments. As a result of this multi-year and often impassioned process, city staff developed a framework, policies, and development standards with which to address the desired objectives.

Critical Analysis of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan

In the largest sense, the focus of our work in the spring semester was the physical design of Alviso, including urban design, infill development opportunities and historic preservation. In that spirit, we set out to interpret, critique and illustrate the primary city regulations that are designed to shape the physical appearance of Alviso and the public realm therein. Since the *1998 Alviso Master Plan* serves as the guide for future growth in the community, this document became our



primary focus. Our goal was to produce a series of concept drawings, maps and visual simulations that would assist the community in envisioning possible alternatives for its future as described (sometimes vaguely which, we acknowledged later in our analysis, might be deliberate) in the Master Plan.

With this goal established, we began by thoroughly examining the Master Plan. In so doing, we quickly identified a number of well-meaning objectives that touched upon fundamental aspects of Alviso's urban design, but which oftentimes lacked measurable specificity or helpful illustrations to clarify these objectives. This was of concern to us since, by definition, objectives must be worded in such a way that measureable progress towards achieving them can be determined. Examples of these objectives included:

- “new development in the Alviso village area should be functional, attractive, and sensitive to the community's unique bay-side history, character and hydrology”
- “retain the small town character, strong community identity, and neighborliness”
- “maintain the existing pattern of residential development”
- “landscaping should make a strong con-

nection between the natural and built environment and preserve Alviso's existing character”

- “allow for new development at, or at least compatible, with, the scale and intensity of existing development within specific subareas”
- “provide economic development opportunities”
- “celebrate Alviso's history”
- “beautify Alviso”
- “a system of safe and pleasant pedestrian walkways should be created and/or enhanced to improve linkages between residential, commercial and civic areas of Alviso”

Although each of these objectives struck us as entirely worthwhile, and knowing that they reflected strong community consensus at the time the Master Plan was adopted, each objective conjures up mental imagery that is only minimally illustrated and clarified in the official city document. As urban planners – and budding urban designers - many questions occurred to us:

- What does “small town character” actually look and feel like? What contributes to it?



- - What exactly constitutes “community identity” in Alviso? Can we catalog these traits?
- What does “compatible development” mean, exactly? Can it be measured and codified? Can we illustrate what this term means?
- What is the “existing pattern of residential development” in Alviso? How can we depict this graphically in a way that is useful to city staff and community members?

In discussing these concepts as a group, we began to realize that as professional urban planners we directly influence and practice urban design, whether we realize it or not. On a daily basis, professional planners work with documents that have a direct bearing on the physical form of communities, though we might not think of ourselves as urban designers per se while we regulate and enforce the minutiae of building height standards, permissible land uses, zoning policies, setback regulations and General Plan goals. We also recognized that each of the Master Plan objectives, at their core, seeks to implement sound planning and conscientiously applied, context-appropriate urban design principles in Alviso.

During the course of our community assessment work in the previous semester, the refrain we heard many times from Alviso residents and business owners, when asked what the City of San José should do about future development in Alviso, was: “stick to the Master Plan!” Implicit in this statement, we deduced, was a measure of concern over the appropriateness of recent development in and around Alviso, as well as positive acknowledgement that committed city staffers and Alviso residents had developed a clear, shared direction for the community over many years of hard work – and that this work should still be honored, even though more than a decade has passed since the Master Plan’s completion.

We determined that we could provide a service to city staff and Alviso residents by carefully interpreting the textual and numerical-based design guidelines contained in the *1998 Alviso Master Plan*, then translate them into digital and hand-rendered graphics. In so doing, we hope that our work will help people envision possibilities for Alviso’s future physical appearance, using our illustrations as a common point of reference from which interested parties could frame future discussions.



Strengths of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan

In carefully examining the Master Plan, we determined that it possesses some key strengths. First, it clearly acknowledges the **unique character of Alviso**, an important theme that carries through the entire document. The Plan opens with a summary description that identifies Alviso as a community with unique character, thanks to its location, history, and “small town character”. We appreciate the fact that the Plan seeks to enhance these qualities through a combination of targeted land use policies and Alviso-specific design guidelines. The principles concerning the community’s visual character state that “new land-uses should not overwhelm, overpower, or reduce the ‘neighborly’ character of the existing community”. Also, “new land uses should generally reflect or build upon the existing scale and character of the community.” Finally: “new land uses should respect and enhance, not conflict with nor diminish, the historic character of Alviso.”

These principles can be observed in the Land Use Policies section of the plan, where multiple policies are aimed at protecting the community’s character. An overarching objective of the section is to ensure that “new devel-

opment within the village area contributes to community stability and cohesiveness.” To achieve this objective, policies are included to ensure that new buildings of all uses should complement existing structures. For residential buildings, new developments should be consistent with existing single-family homes in terms of scale, design, character, and siting. Also, any new residential buildings should not be separated from the community by any means, such as walls or hedges, and should be developed in small increments in order to not overwhelm the community. By ensuring that new developments within Alviso remain consistent with established development patterns, the character of the community can be perpetuated.

Another strength of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan is the attention it pays to an amenity unique to the community, the **Alviso Slough**. For example, the Plan encourages commercial development along the waterway that provides physical, recreational and visual access to the slough and baylands beyond.

It also is worth mentioning that a major strength of the Plan is that it represents the **outcome of extensive community input over the course of five years**. We learned anec-



dotally from residents and city staff planners that some of the community meetings were quite contentious and emotion-filled, which is understandable given the long-standing tensions between some members of the community and the City of San José, described earlier in this report. Despite this rocky start, it appears that there is general satisfaction with the Plan as it now stands and that no efforts are underway to update it. Even though a comprehensive update of the city's General Plan is underway, the 1998 Alviso Master Plan will effectively be folded into it.

Shortcomings of 1998 Alviso Master Plan

While we found much to like about the Master Plan, a number of its qualities warrant improvement, in our estimation. For example, many **urban design goals are worded in far too general a manner**, almost to the point of being unusable in some cases. Listed below are a few of the key design-related phrases we targeted for further exploration, along with some of the questions that guided our research:

- “Alviso’s unique community character...” (question: how can we illustrate and define this in a way that is specific to Alviso?)
- “...enhance the physical qualities which make Alviso unique...” (question: what really does make Alviso unique, design-wise?)
- “...preserve historic resources...” (question: what are the historic resources in Alviso?)
- “...blighting characteristics should not be tolerated...” (question: can we provide visual documentation of these characteristics?)
- “...resolve interface issues between land uses...” (question: how can the interface between land uses be illustrated?)
- “...encourage attractive, compatible facade improvements...” (question: how can we define/illustrate the subjective terms “attractive” and “compatible”?)
- “...Alviso’s small-town character...” (question: what constitutes this character? how is it different from the rest of San José or another community not considered “small”?)
- “...encourage positive linkages between land uses...” (question: what might such linkages look like in the context of pedestrian, road or bicycle connections?)
- “...ensure that the village streets retain their ‘bicycle friendliness’...” (question: what specific qualities produce this characteristic?)



- “...safe and pleasant pedestrian walkways...” (question: this sounds great, but how do we specifically illustrate it?)
- “All village streets should be “bicycle-friendly” even if the streets are not formally identified as bicycle routes or have dedicated bicycle lanes.” (pg. 78)

Other Plan objectives, which we felt warranted further clarity, include:

- “The design of new buildings in the historic, western grid should include some of the more interesting or attractive architectural design elements or themes of Alviso’s history.” (pg. 42)
- “New development in the Alviso village area should be functional, attractive, and sensitive to the community’s unique bay-side history, character and hydrology.” (pg. 48)
- “The most appropriate styles for commercial buildings in Alviso are traditional seaside styles such as Cape Cod, Sea Ranch with cedar siding and decks; “National Park” (plain rectangular shapes, wide horizontal board siding decks and large single gable roofs with wide overhangs); or a rustic fishing village approach utilizing rough sawn wood, heavy wood members and prominent decks with accent piers.” (pg. 56)
- “Landscaping design should be simple and minimal to reflect Alviso’s open character.” (pg 66)

Additionally, **often-used terms such as “neighborliness,” “façade,” “infill” and “setback” are oftentimes not layperson-accessible**, and not clearly defined or illustrated in the Plan, thus making the document difficult to interpret for those with no training in urban planning or design.

To help explore this issue further, each student was given an assignment to identify ten vaguely-worded or poorly-illustrated design-related objectives in the Master Plan and to write a short critique of each. As part of the assignment, students conducted online research and field work to collect photographs or sketches meant to illustrate each objective. Finally, each graphic was accompanied by the students’ description of how illustrations would have improved the Master Plan by making it more user-friendly and layperson-accessible. An example of student work on this assignment is shown below:



Figure 14: Critical Analysis of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan

Text and Page # in Alviso Master Plan	Evaluation of Chosen Text	Illustration Pertaining to Chosen Text	Explanation of Illustration
<p>“Residential development within the Alviso village area should consist primarily of small scale, single-family detached housing[,] which allows for the individual design and construction of new houses.” (pg. 26)</p>	<p>The aim of this objective is to keep the small town or suburban character of the residential area of Alviso. This statement calls for single-family detached housing as opposed to multi-family housing. It also mentions “individual design and construction of new houses,” which leads me to believe that they do not want housing developments where all of the houses look the same.</p>		<p>This photograph shows a small scale, single-family detached home in a style that would likely be built individually, not in a development.</p>
<p>“Other development in the village should consist of commercial, retail, or civic/public uses at a modest scale, compatible with existing development. Such development could include the reuse of existing buildings or construction of the vacant lots within the village.” (pg. 26)</p>	<p>This design objective encourages reuse of existing buildings. Reusing buildings or adaptive reuse preserves the historic value of the structure while the building is put to use. Reuse also preserves the original character of the village and encourages interesting and creative architectural uses.</p>		<p>These images show an example of adaptive reuse. These are before and after pictures of an old gas station that was remodeled and turned into a coffee shop. Many creative things can be done to reuse buildings while preserving its historic character.</p>

Student Author: Dana Gregg



Figure 14 (continued): Critical Analysis of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan

Text and Page # in Alviso Master Plan	Evaluation of Chosen Text	Illustration Pertaining to Chosen Text	Explanation of Illustration
<p>Restaurant dining should be located at the fronts of buildings and particularly in arcade areas. (pg. 54)</p>	<p>This commercial design guideline’s intent is to attract business from people passing by. This design would enhance the aesthetics and liveliness of the neighborhood by having the public feature of a restaurant in the front.</p>	 <p>Image obtained from http://www.yelp.com/biz_photos/gadSHbP0yi-RUVT4rmN4vQ?select=LoTLnlQkeYwIVb5rOScLbg, posted by Brian S., and accessed on February 11, 2009.</p>	<p>This image shows an example of a restaurant with dining at the front of the building. This restaurant uses both the arcade area and some sidewalk area for dining, which connects the restaurant to the neighborhood.</p>
<p>Retail buildings should be located near the street frontage. Specifically, front setbacks should be no more than 15 feet. Windows and doors should face directly onto the street to facilitate an active and secure pedestrian environment. (pg. 41)</p>	<p>This policy seeks to encourage pedestrian activity and a vibrant retail corridor. Shops that can be seen from the sidewalks are inviting to pedestrians and enhance the safety of pedestrians.</p>	 <p>Image obtained from http://www.insiderpages.com/photos/business/full/020/3711038020/84437.jpg and accessed on February 11, 2009.</p>	<p>This photograph shows pedestrian friendly retail with windows and doors facing the street. There is little or no setback from the street, which encourages unplanned visits from passer byes.</p>

Student Author: Dana Gregg





New Development - Trinity Park

Another shortcoming of the Master Plan – or, more accurately, in adhering to its objectives – is that a few **recently-built projects appear to deviate substantially from the Plan’s design-related objectives**. For example, the Trinity Park rowhome development was often cited by Alviso residents as an example of new development which stands in stark contrast to objectives aimed at preserving a lower-density, small-town atmosphere. While we were not in a position to judge the merits of Trinity Park as a recent addition to Alviso or the circumstances surrounding its review and approval by city officials, we nonetheless felt it important to note the community’s oft-cited contention that the Master Plan is not rigorously and uniformly implemented.

Other residents called our attention to an unusually large, fenced-off, new residence in the National Register historic district, adjacent to the Tilden-Laine house, the last of the Italianate Victorian homes that once lined Elizabeth Street.

With a critical analysis of the Master Plan completed, and with a firm grounding in urban design terminology and principles, the remainder of the semester was devoted to

the execution of our project: an urban design “dissection” of Alviso and preparations for a charrette to gather community input on matters related to the physical design and appearance of Alviso.

Division of Labor

As a group, we developed a project timeline complete with milestones and deliverables. The schedule took into account field work, urban design analysis, the preparation of visual simulations, and the devising, planning and execution of a community charrette. Students volunteered to serve on at least one team listed below. In many cases, students served a role on multiple teams.

1. **Draft Community Assessment Report Edits/Updates**. This team was responsible for submitting one of the chapters prepared by last semester’s students to experts in their respective fields. For example, Professor Shishir Mathur, with expertise in quantitative analysis, was asked to review the demographics chapter (Chapter 3) for clarity, accuracy and the appropriateness of research techniques. Professors Hilary Nixon and Asha Agrawal-Weinstein assisted by reviewing other chapters. Ron Duke, an ecologist



with H.T. Harvey & Associates, provided a wealth of information about Alviso's natural setting, and generously reviewed the environment chapter (Chapter 1). Once all reviewer comments were received, this student team edited the original document as needed.

2. Urban Design and Land Use Planning Visualizations. Although each student ultimately played a role in this work, this team was primarily responsible for preparing diagrams, images and other visual products such as sketches, renderings and visual simulations to illustrate our semester's work. Additionally, this team was charged with identifying opportunity sites in Alviso that we felt were particularly worthy of careful study, since these sites are of local importance to the community, and often are located in areas of high pedestrian activity.

3. Community Charrette Planning, Design and Execution. This team took the lead in developing a set of desired outcomes for the charrette, reviewing best practices for the execution of a charrette, and handling all logistics related to securing a site for the event, preparing publicity materials, and providing refreshments and other materials on the day of the charrette.

4. Final Report Preparation and Presentation to City Staff. Each student played a role on this team, whether it involved writing the text for this document, preparing Powerpoint slides for the presentation, or gathering high-resolution images of completed student work for inclusion in this document. By the end of the semester, the presentation to city staff was cancelled due to time constraints and the need to finish more work on this report during the summer break. Instead, students communicated to staff and other interested parties that the completed document would be sent to them in either hard copy or PDF format. Instructor Rick Kos and three student volunteers finished this document in November, 2009.

Alviso Urban Design Dissection

As a group, we discussed the fact that urban designers are trained to look simultaneously at the minutiae of urban form while remaining mindful of the larger context in which a study area is situated. For example, it is equally important for an urban designer to consider the manner in which a specific building addresses a street AND the qualities of the street itself: its connection to other



parts of the community, its accommodations for vehicles and pedestrians, and the vitally important transition zones between public and private spaces. It is this learned ability to “switch gears”, mentally, between observations at micro and macro scales that helps to define the primary skill sets possessed by urban designers. In this respect, the study and practice of urban design shares common characteristics with urban planning, whose practitioners are also trained to continuously transition between multiple scales of analysis: site, neighborhood, city and region – as well as multiple disciplines: demographics, history, environment, and transportation. Indeed, the concept of scale in all of its many applications is one of the most important topics for urban designers and planners to embrace and articulate.

For the first few weeks of the semester, we examined Alviso at a macro-scale: for example, the “big-picture” urban design objectives embodied in the *1998 Alviso Master Plan*, the broad-brush community assessment prepared by last semester’s students, and maps showing Alviso’s geographic location as a neighborhood within the larger context of the City of San José and the South Bay region. However, for our third assignment, we switched

gears and focused on the micro-scale by “dissecting” the design qualities of Alviso’s historic core. The area was divided into three equally-sized geographic sub-areas and four or five students were assigned to scrutinize each sub-area.

To complete the assignment, students were asked to prepare similarly-scaled renderings of numerous qualities within their study area, then to arrange these in a series of panels on a display board. A description and example of each completed panel begins on the next page.

Students used a wide variety of software applications to complete their work, including Photoshop, Illustrator, and ArcGIS, supplemented by hand-rendering and sketching when appropriate. When the finished, individual panels were assembled onto a display board, the effect was quite striking and facilitated comparisons amongst and between the three study areas that, in total, comprise the historic core of Alviso. This foundational analysis served us very well for the remainder of our work and acted as an often-used point of reference.



Figure 15: Urban Design "Dissection" of Alviso

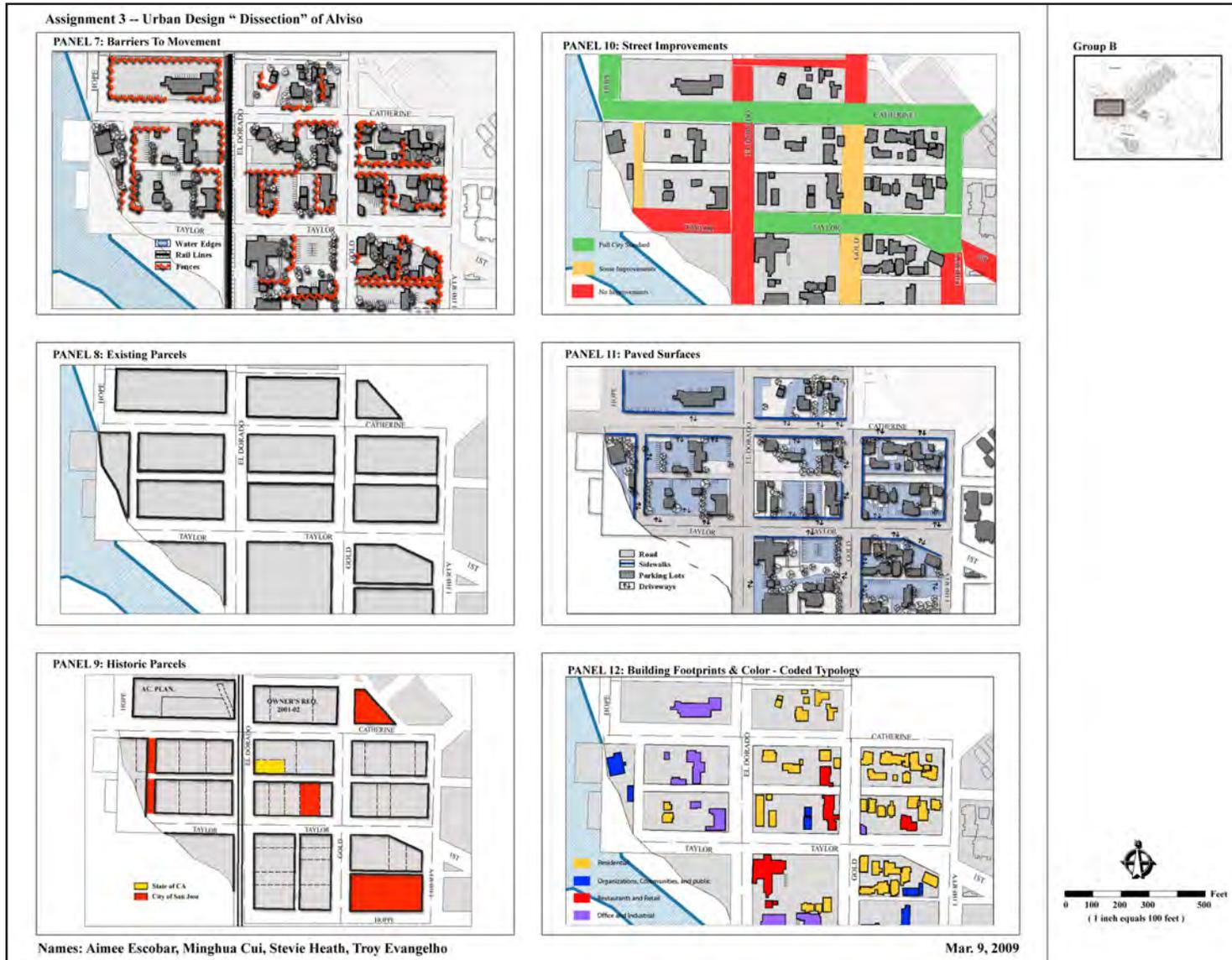


Note: Enlargements of each panel shown here begin with Figure 17

Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 15 (continued): Urban Design "Dissection" of Alviso

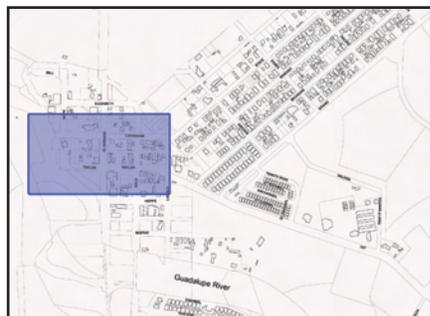


Note: Enlargements of each panel shown here begin with Figure 17

Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 16: Aerial photo of study area



Shaded area enlarged at right



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



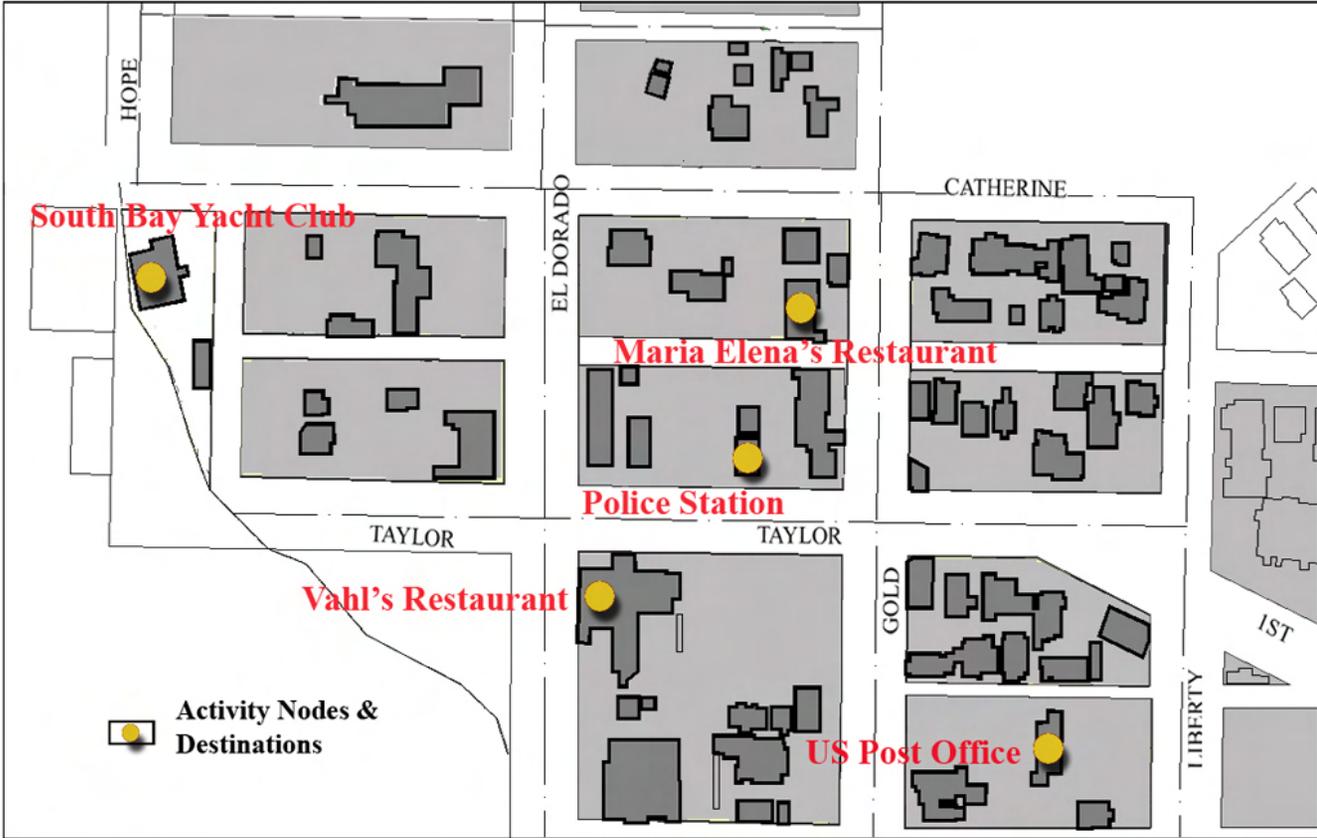
Figure 17: Significant views (positive or negative) from and towards the study area



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 18: Activity nodes and destinations within the study area



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 19: Building setbacks from public streets, and side yard setbacks (i.e. distances between structure and side yards facing streets). Setback distances were to be grouped and color-coded according to distance range (e.g. 0 feet, 1-10 feet, 11-20 feet, etc.)



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 20: Land cover categorization and calculation per street block. At a minimum, this panel needed to include the percent coverage in each street block for: (1) natural/open space areas; and (2) urbanized areas (pavement, structures, driveways, accessory buildings, etc.)



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 21: Edges within the study area (e.g. rail lines, water edges)



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



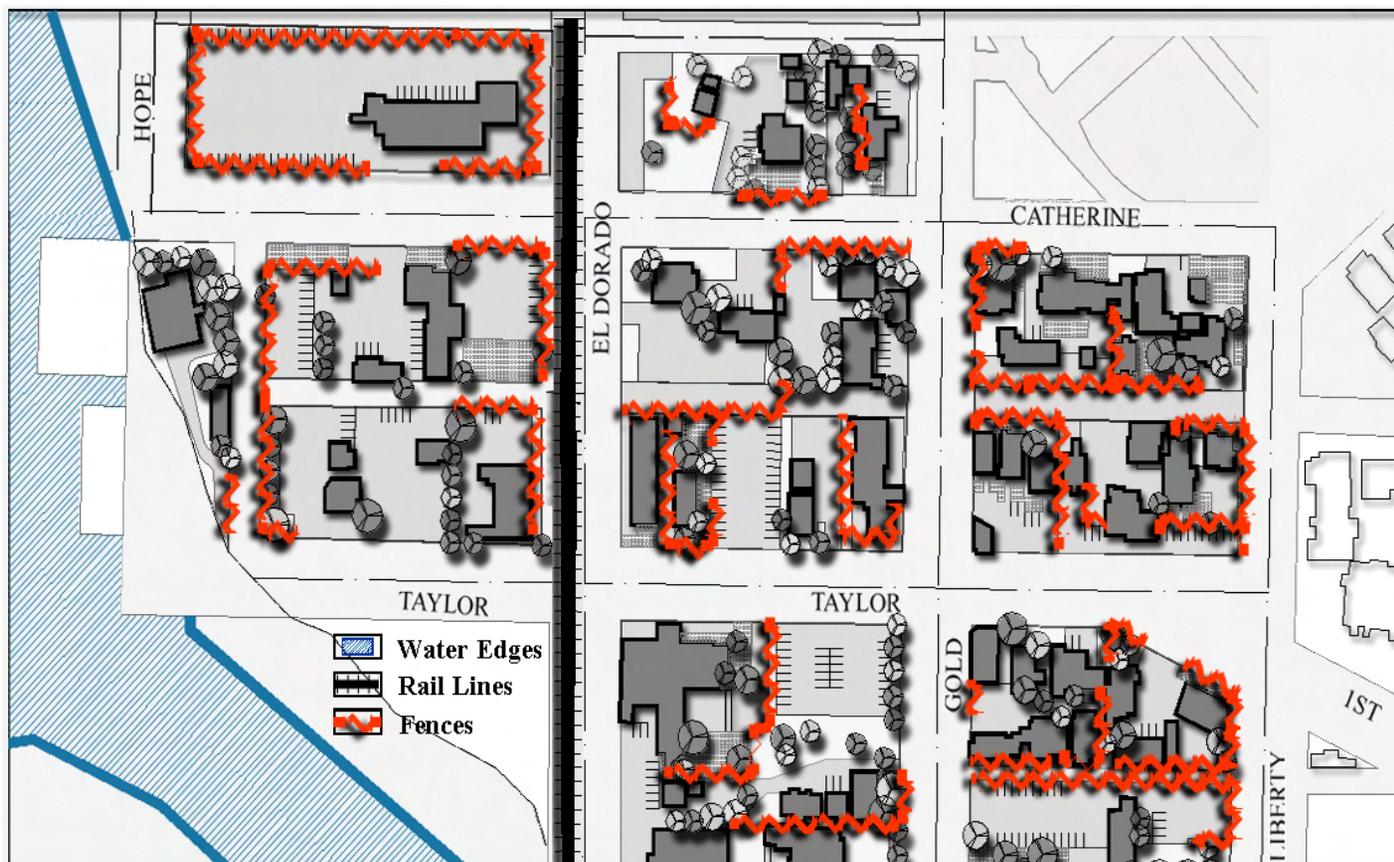
Figure 22: Tree canopy within the study area



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



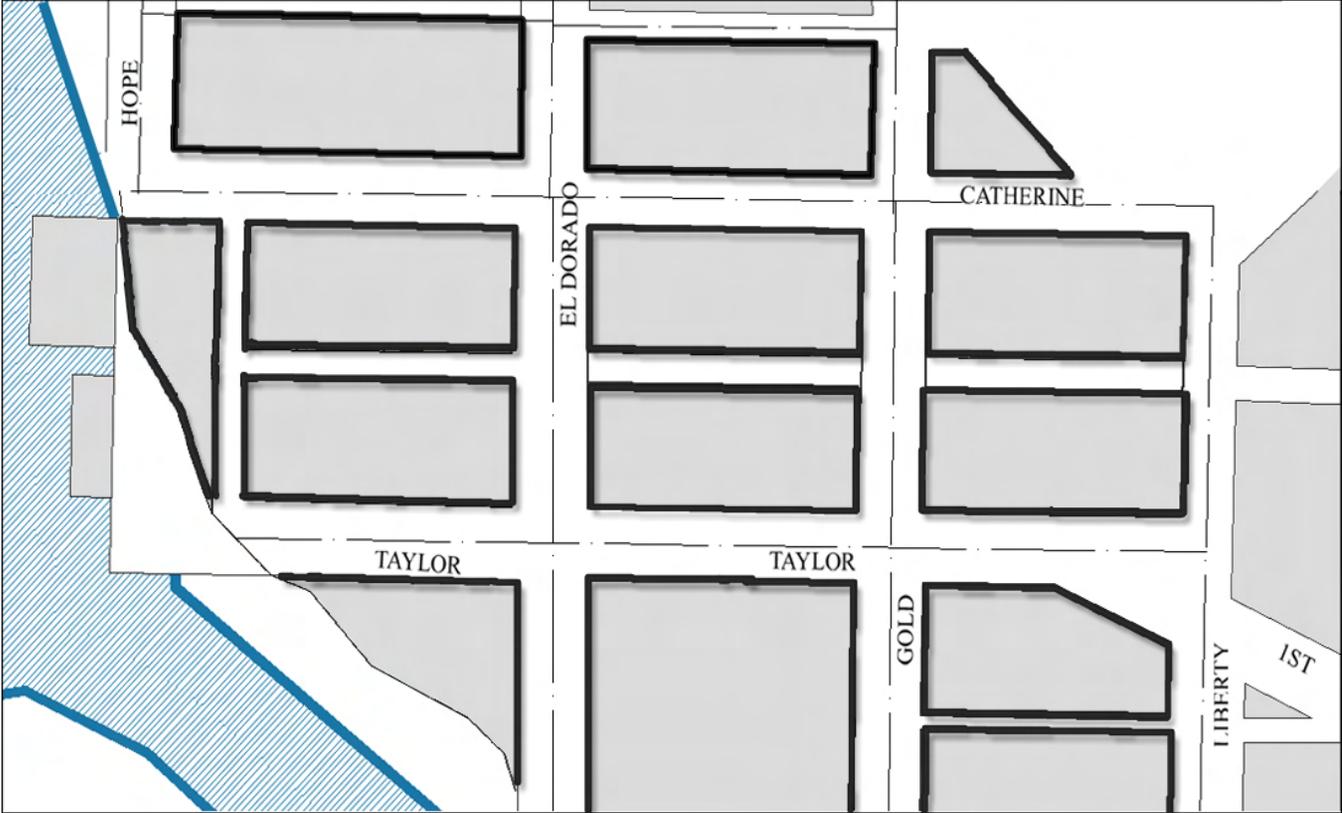
Figure 23: Barriers to movement, both vehicular and pedestrian. This could include fences, water edges, rail lines, etc.



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



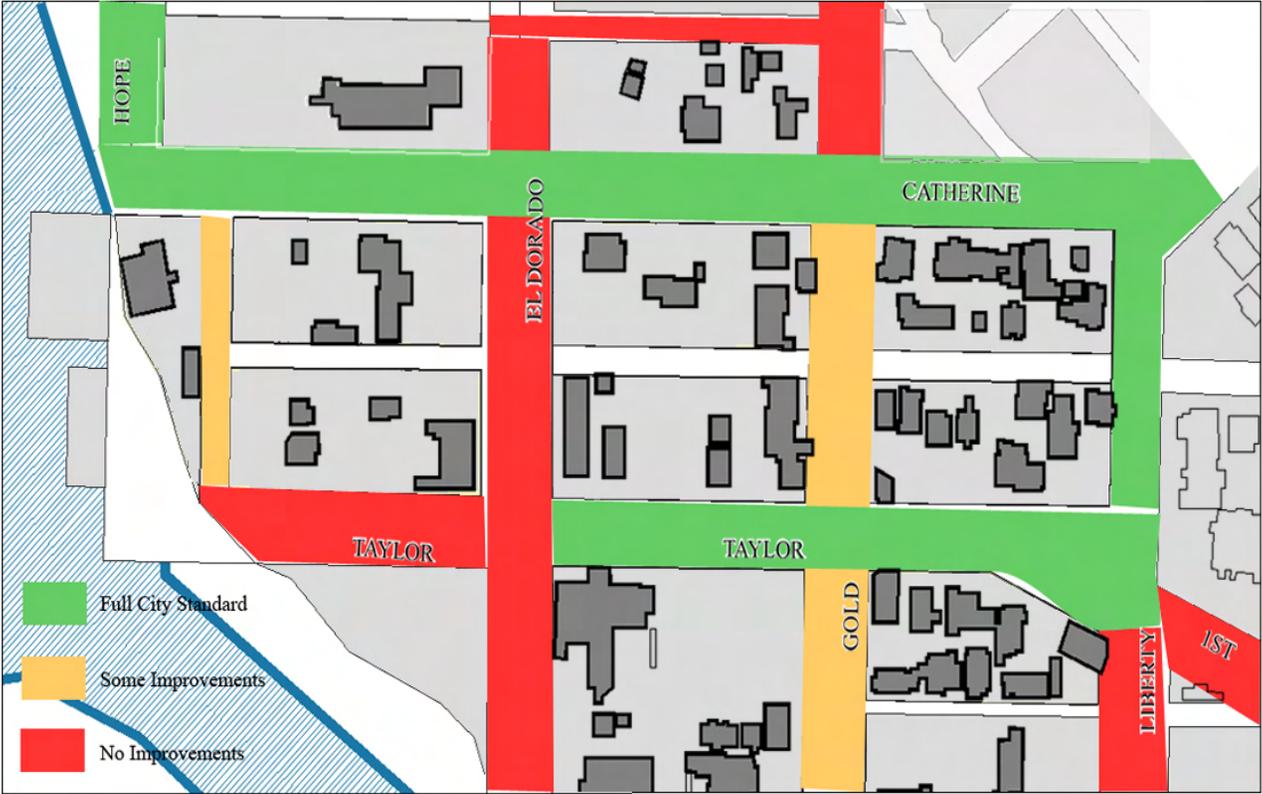
Figure 24: Existing parcel pattern in the study area, along with street names to assist with orientation.



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



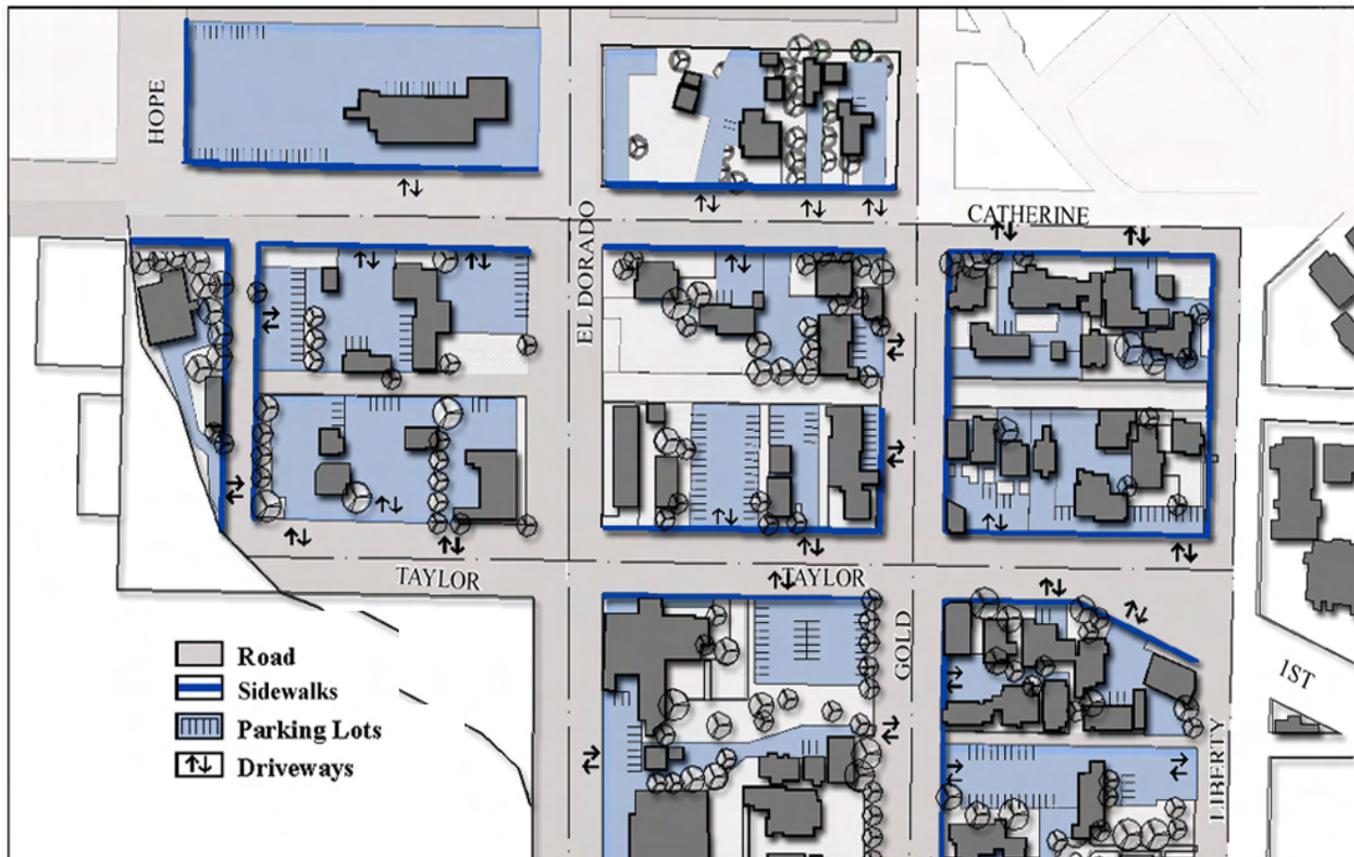
Figure 26: Street improvements, including color-coded street sections based on degree of improvements such as sidewalks, curbs, gutters and street trees (full city-standards, partial improvements, or no improvements)



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 27: Paved surfaces, highlighting all areas with paved/impervious surface cover (streets, sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, etc.)



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



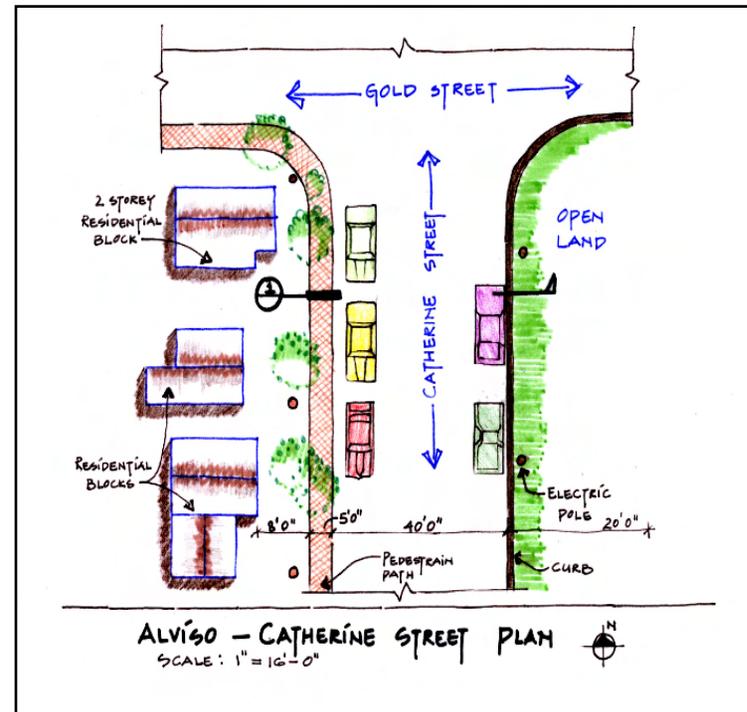
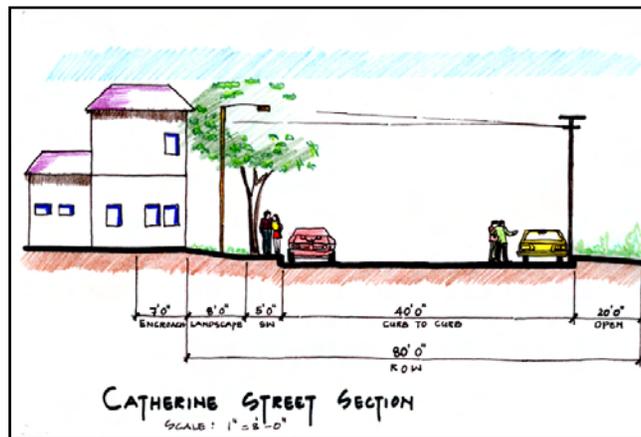
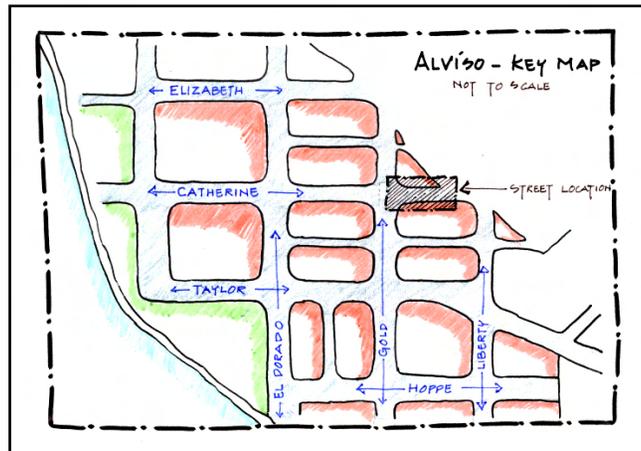
Figure 28: Building footprints, with buildings color-coded according to their typology



Team 2: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



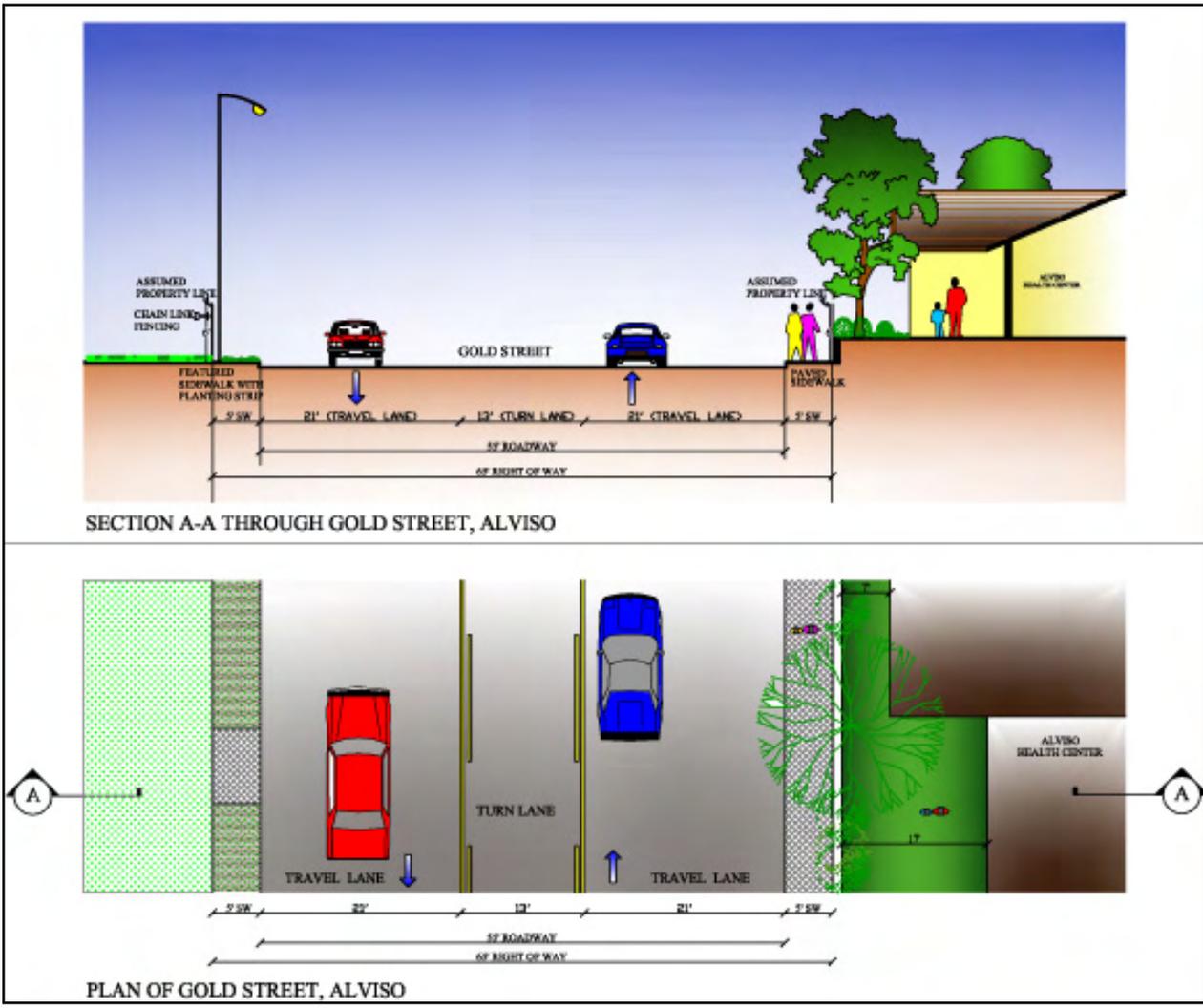
Figure 29: Street Cross-Section Analysis: Catherine St.



Student Author: Chethana Dhananjaya



Figure 30: Street Cross-Section Analysis: Gold St.



Student Author: Tejasvi Ursal



Figure 31: Historic Preservation Samples



Student Author: Chethana Dhananjaya



Conclusions and Findings

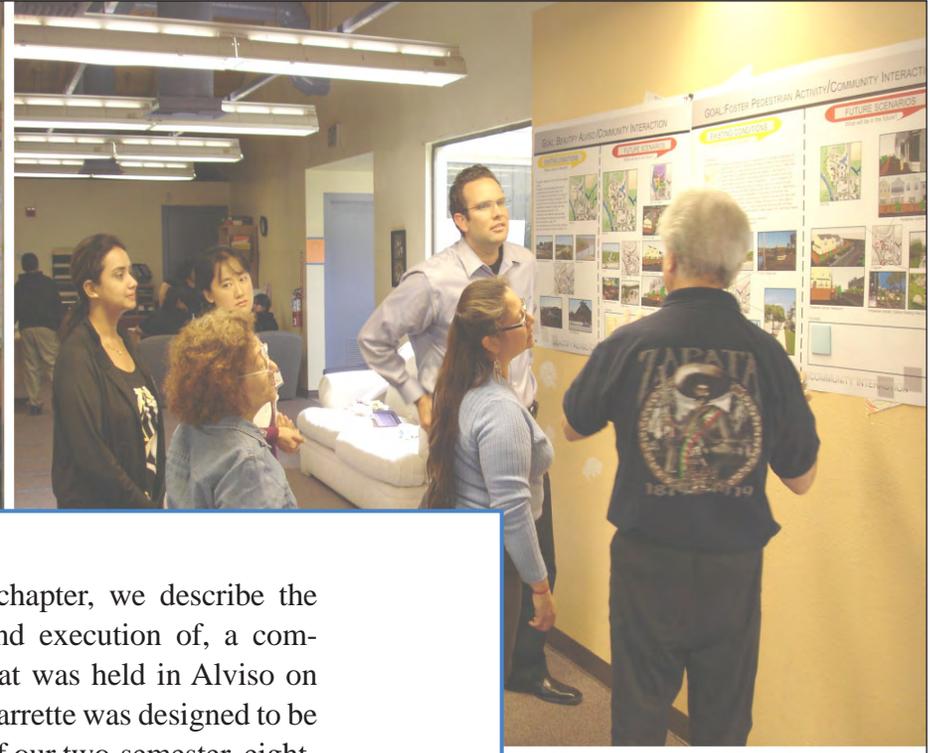
As a result of our initial analysis, we produced a list of our primary findings related to the physical design and appearance of Alviso's historic core:

1. **There is an abundance of public space in Alviso.** However, it exists primarily in the form of rights-of-way and parking areas along excessively wide streets. There are very few public parks and open spaces, aside from the County's Marina Park (with few amenities for local residents) and the Alviso Slough's levee trail.
2. **Many Alviso streets seem unnecessarily wide** and therefore encourage speeding. The very wide streets also present challenges for creating a cohesive community feel over time.
3. Unlike significant portions of the City of San José, **many Alviso streets lack full city-standard improvements**, a long-time complaint of the Alviso community.
4. There are a number of **important gathering places in the community**, including popular restaurants, a few churches, and convenience stores.
5. There are a number of 19th and early 20th century historic structures in close proximity, a rarity in the South Bay. Taken together, these structures begin to create a **feeling of timelessness in central Alviso**, another rarity in a region accustomed to rapid change and modernity.
6. Alviso is blessed with an abundance of **pleasing views** towards sweeping vistas of sloughs, mountains and baylands. These features also contribute to cooling breezes throughout the year which are especially appreciated during the summer months.
7. **A wide range of building setbacks and styles in Alviso** contributes to the "organic" feel of the community – one that grew incrementally and slowly over time – unlike large sections of San José which were master planned and developed with look-alike buildings. On the other hand, the wide range of setbacks presents challenges for creating visually-cohesive streets.
8. **Numerous barriers to movement can be found in Alviso**, including many chain-link fences and excessively wide streets that discourage pedestrian activity.
9. Parcel maps reveal **the presence of "paper alleys"** which appear in official parcel map books, but do not appear on the ground in Alviso. In some places, buildings and parking lots are located within these alleys. Also, a prominent rail spur parcel appears on the parcel maps, curving northwestward from the active rail line near Elizabeth Street. These features might present complications for parcel assembly in the future.



7 Charrette





In this concluding chapter, we describe the preparations for, and execution of, a community charrette that was held in Alviso on April 30, 2009. The charrette was designed to be the culminating event of our two-semester, eight-month involvement in Alviso. At this event, we gathered feedback and opinions from community residents on the accuracy and quality of our community assessment and urban design work, with the understanding that we would forward their observations to city staff.

The chapter begins with a description of the traditional charrette process and how we modified it a bit to suit our objectives and time constraints. We also describe our collaboration with students of the Downtown College Prep School in Alviso and the photomurals they produced. The stu-





dents' work called our attention to areas of concern and community pride from the perspective of sixth and seventh graders – an age group that is often left out of traditional planning processes. Next, we describe publicity, setup, execution and outcomes of the charrette. The chapter concludes with a number of urban design recommendations for the City of San José's planners to consider as they engage in future collaboration with the Alviso community.

Charrette Definition - and the Alviso Version

A charrette is an intensive, focused, short-term session where community residents, designers, and other stakeholders collaborate on a vision for the future of a specific area. These events place great emphasis on open-mindedness and creativity, a democratic process in which all voices and viewpoints are considered, high energy, and direct collaboration between designers and participants. Charrettes typically span several consecutive days and provide a forum for ideas, with many graphics and illustrations constituting the end products. The primary advantage of this technique is that all participants receive immediate feedback on their work as it evolves. As the participants watch their sugges-

tions and local knowledge take visual form, the designers can alter and enhance the illustrations according to what the community members offer. While designers play a significant role in the process, it is understood that the end result is a vision authored by all participants and one in which the community members can hold a vested interest. Ultimately, the purpose of the charrette is to give all the participants enough information to make good decisions during the planning process.

The Alviso charrette process differed from the traditional process in a few ways. First, considering the limited time we had to complete our work this semester, we decided to conduct the charrette in one four-hour session, rather than over the span of multiple days. This required very careful preparation on our part so that desired outcomes could be achieved in a very short time period. Also, whereas a traditional charrette focuses on the development for a specified area, our goal was broader: to provide Alviso residents with our interpretation of the design-related objectives contained in the *1998 Master Plan*. Despite these deviations from the strict definition of a charrette, we felt that the event nonetheless embraced the core principles: an



emphasis on visual techniques, an interactive and collaborative process, and active listening.

Division of Labor

In order to prepare for the charrette, we organized ourselves into four teams:

1. **Schedule and Content:** this team was in charge of ensuring that everyone remained on task, met milestones, and submitted deliverables according to the project schedule. Additionally, this team developed an order of events for the charrette, as well as a list of desired outcomes.
2. **Publicity and Outreach:** this team played an active role in publicizing the charrette within the Alviso community. Members visited Alviso on a few occasions to distribute flyers in English and in Spanish, and to chat with interested participants. Members of the team also attended a meeting of parents at the Downtown College Prep (DCP) School to explain the charrette process and to encourage participation. Additional outreach targeted students and faculty at the George Mayne Elementary School and residents from the Trinity Park Homeowners Association.

3. **Site Preparations:** this team investigated two possible sites for the charrette, including the Alviso Public Library and the campus of the DCP School. Ultimately, we chose the latter since we had already collaborated with many of the DCP students, there was no cost to rent a space at the school, and the principal, José Arreola, eagerly encouraged us to hold the event at his school. The other major task assigned to this team was the purchase of charrette refreshments and to prepare the charrette venue for active participation.

4. **Materials:** this team ensured that all materials needed for the charrette, such as the mural boards created by the DCP students (described next), markers, pens and post-its, were collected and ready for use.

Engagement with Alviso Students

In early April, 2009 we organized and participated in a delightful community mural-building project with sixth and seventh-grade students in Ms. Helene Ehrlich's art class at the DCP school. The primary goals were to (1) actively listen to the students in order to ascertain the qualities of Alviso which were important to them, (2) to

Envisioning Alviso

What should Alviso look like in the future?

Please join the urban planning students from San José State University for a workshop about the future of Alviso

When:

Thursday, April 30th
3:30 – 7:00pm

(Refreshments will be provided)

Where:

Downtown College Prep - Alviso
(Across from the Alviso Post Office)
1621 Gold St.
San José, CA 95113

Why:

- Help shape the future of your community
- Help interested students learn what makes Alviso unique
- See the photo mural of Alviso, created by Downtown College Prep students
- Your input will be included in a community assessment report which we will present to San José city planners

Questions? Please contact Rick Kos, San José State Urban Planning Instructor, at rickkos@gmail.com

Vision de Alviso

Que debe parecer Alviso en el futuro?

Por favor vengan a un taller con los estudiantes del programa planificación urbana de la Universidad de San Jose sobre el futuro de Alviso.

Cuando:

Jueves el 30 de abril
3:30 – 7:30 p.m.

(refrescos complementarios)

Donde:

Downtown College Prep – Alviso
(atraves de la oficina postal Alviso)
1621 Gold St.
San Jose, Ca 95113

Porque:

- Ayuda en formar el futuro de Alviso
- Ayuda estudiantes interesados aprendan lo que hace unico Alviso
- Ver el mural del fotos de los estudiantes de Downtown College Prep
- Su opinion será incluida en el reporte de evaluación de la comunidad que presentaremos a los planeadores de la Ciudad de San Jose

Preguntas? Por favor escribe a Rick Kos, San José State Urban Planning Instructor, at rickkos@gmail.com

Flyer distributed to inform residents and stakeholders of the Alviso Community Charrette.





Community mural-building project with students at the DCP school.

engage the students in the production of photo murals which would provide material for the community charrette later in the month, and (3) to reinforce our discussion in class that children are often under-represented in the community planning process and our desire to see the opposite occur. Working closely with Helene and Principal Arreola, we visited the DCP campus on two occasions.

On our first visit, we asked the class to tell us what they think urban planners do. We were pleasantly surprised that many of them understood the role of planners in a community. One student noted that “planners help figure out where things get built in a city” while another suggested that “planners help keep cities green and think ahead to the future”. We then asked them to describe the qualities of Alviso about which they were proud, and others that they would like to see changed. It was here that we learned that about one-third of the students live in towns outside of Alviso but, nonetheless, we wanted their input since they spend much of their weekdays in the community.

Following this discussion, we gave a disposable camera to each student and then divided them

into six small groups, each led by a student in our class. The groups spent approximately 45 minutes walking through the historic center of Alviso, taking photographs of objects, views, buildings and details that were of interest or concern to them. Along the way, the children were encouraged to tell us why they photographed the things they did, so that we could begin to see the community through their eyes. Some of the themes that emerged were: concern about the dilapidated nature of many buildings, concern over the amount of dirt and litter in Alviso, pride in the beautiful views from the community, and enjoyment of the quiet atmosphere in the community. Some students noted that they felt Alviso was a “boring” place with “nothing to do”, and a number of the boys felt that the construction of a skateboard park would be an immense improvement!

After we returned to the school and engaged the students in a short discussion about their observations in the field, we collected their cameras and told them that we would return in two weeks. In the intervening two weeks, we developed the photos and shared our experience at the DCP School with those of us who were not able to attend.



We returned to the school in mid-April and distributed the developed photos to the excited students. Next, we again divided the class into small groups. Each group was given two large sheets of paper and glue. Under our direction, each group was asked to organize the photos into two murals – one devoted to aspects of Alviso that they liked, and another for aspects that they disliked or wanted to see changed. In order to make the assignment more complete, the students were asked to write a short caption for each photo.

Overall, it was a high-energy, amusing and very revealing experience for all. The students reiterated many of the themes they shared with us on our previous visit: concerns about litter and lack of activities for children, concerns about the perceived lack of open space for them to play, an appreciation for the area’s history, and an appreciation for the tasty food offered by local restaurants. When the murals were finished, each group presented their mural to the class and explained their observations. It was a very enjoyable time for everyone. The resulting photo murals were at once amusing, profound, surprising and informative. We were most appreciative of the students’ help.

After thanking the students for their help, we collected the murals and encouraged them (and, by extension, their parents) to attend the upcoming community charrette that we were in the midst of planning.

Examples of the student murals are presented on the following four pages.



Community mural-building project with students at the DCP school.



Figure 32: Results of DCP student opinions of Alviso

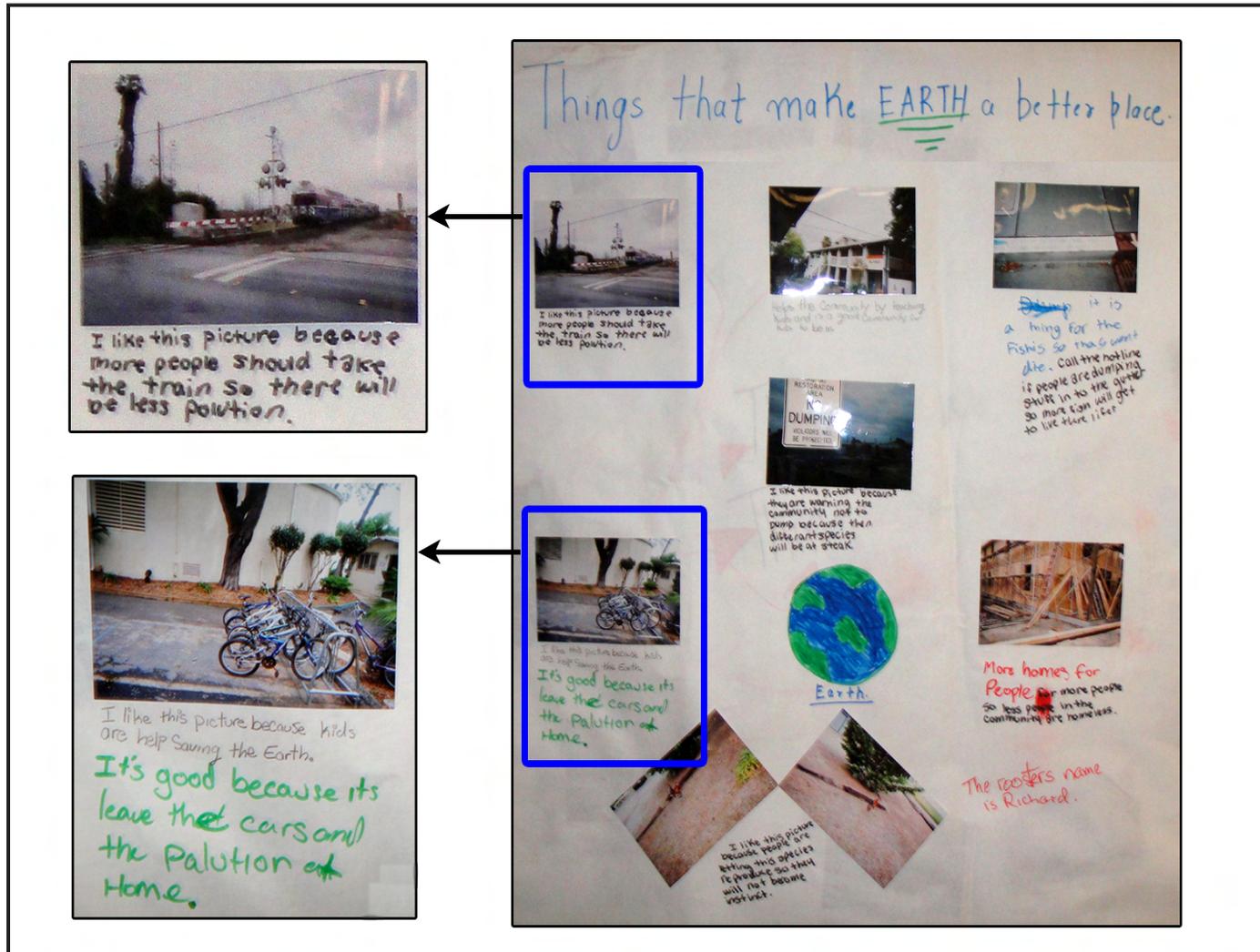


Figure 32 (continued): Results of DCP student opinions of Alviso

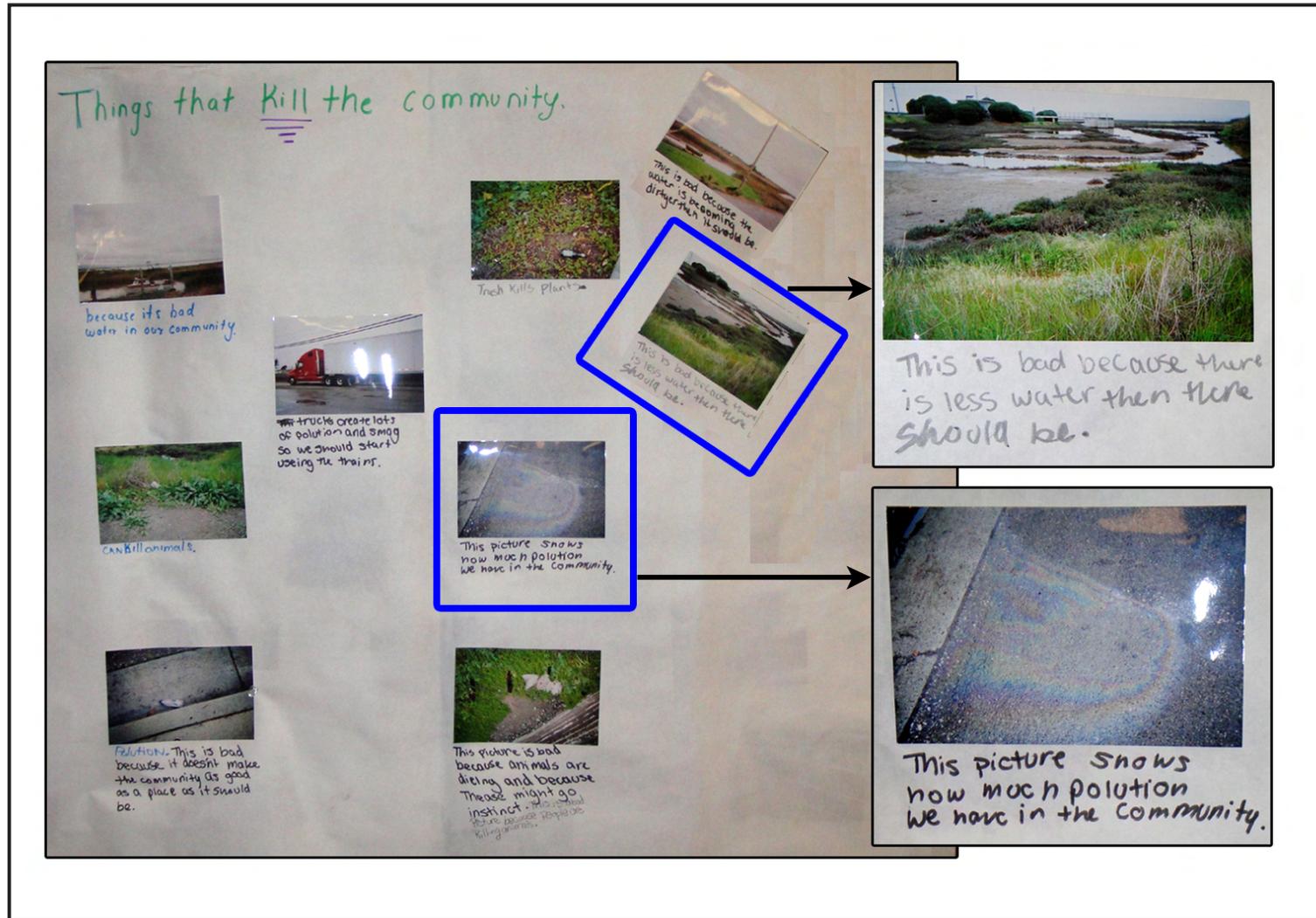


Figure 32 (continued): Results of DCP student opinions of Alviso

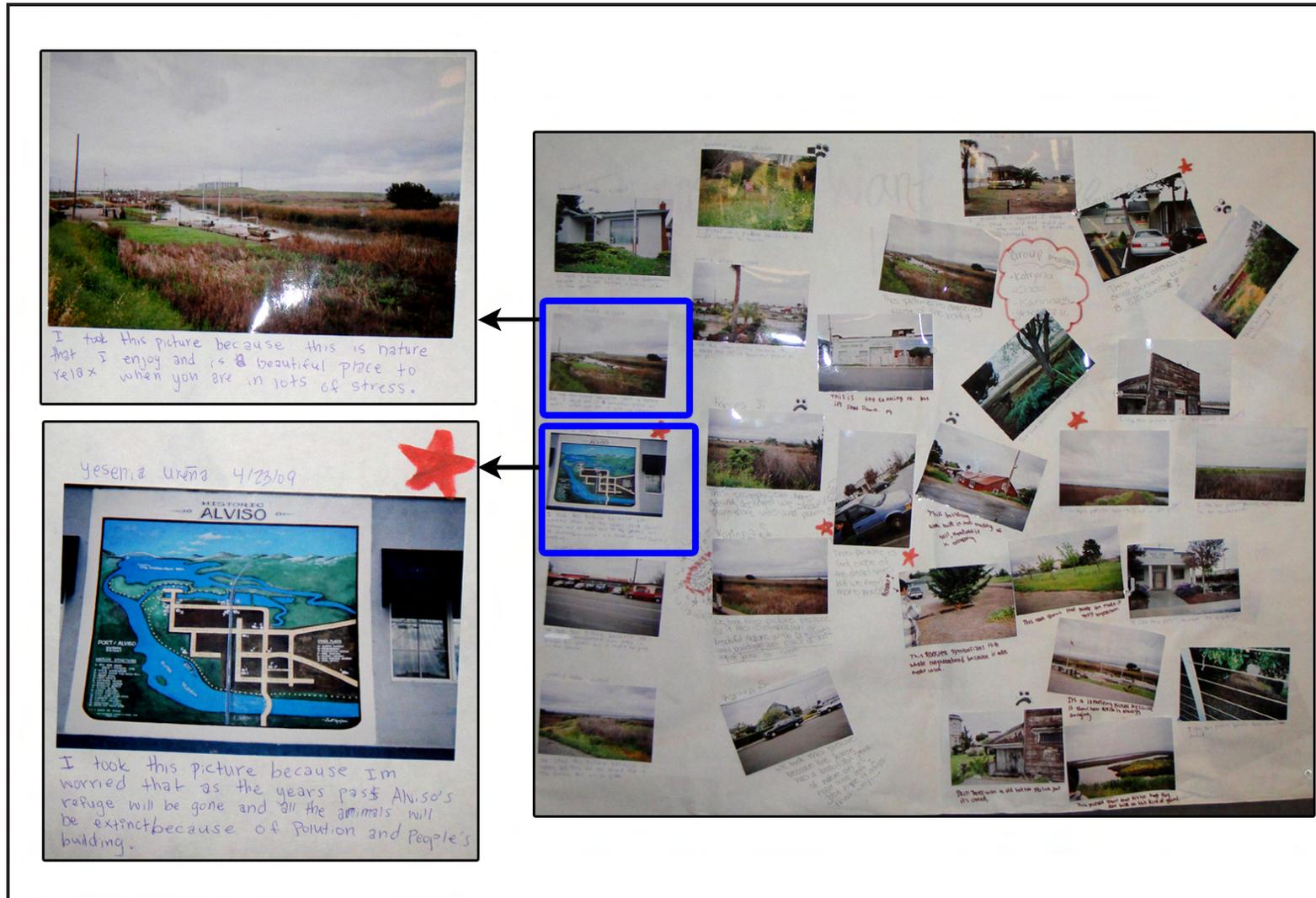
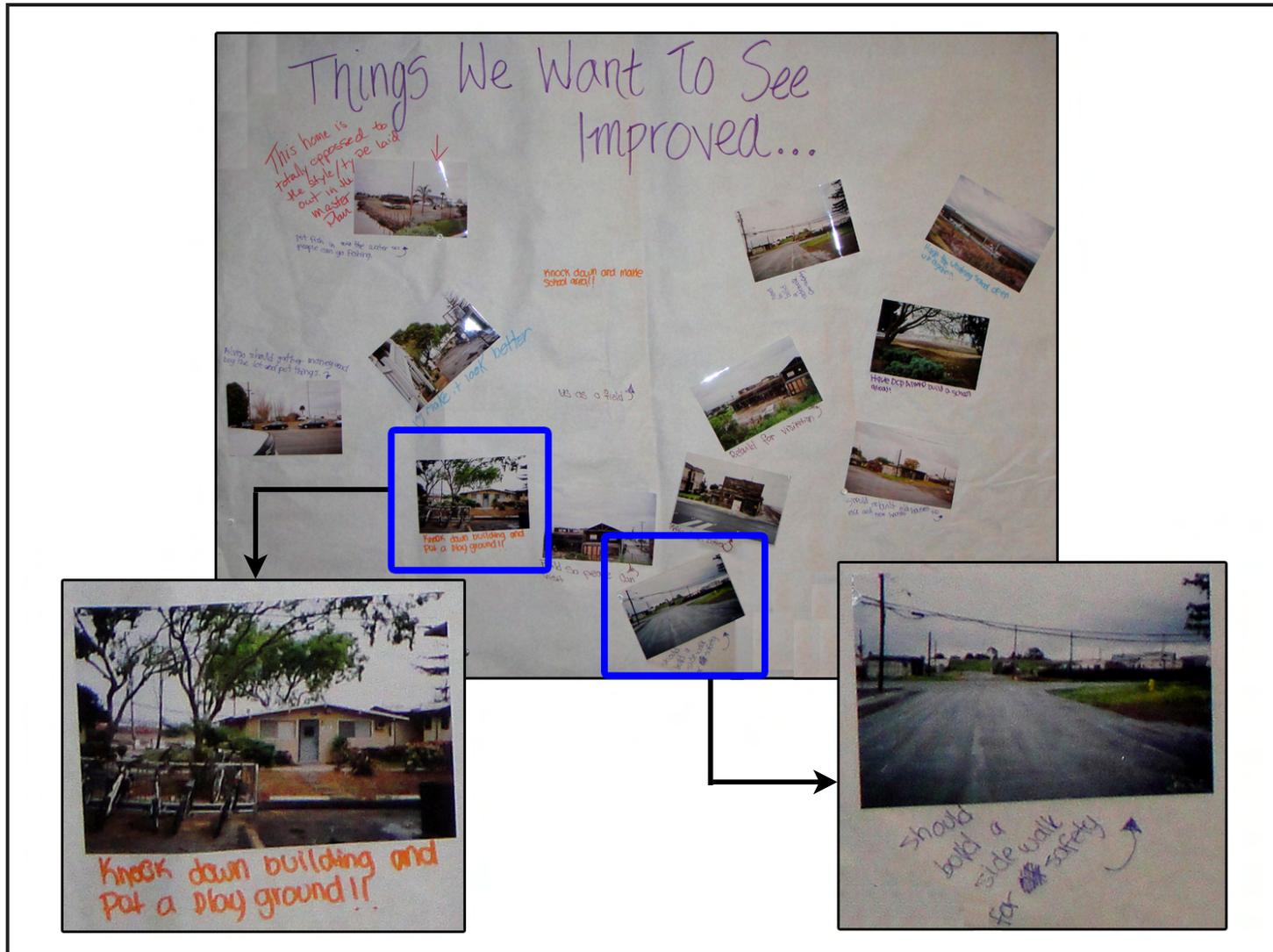


Figure 32 (continued): Results of DCP student opinions of Alviso





The Day of the Charrette

The Alviso Community Charrette was held on Thursday, April 30th, at the Downtown College Prep School, located at 1621 Gold Street. The charrette took place in the school's multi-purpose room and commenced at 3:30 pm. We designed the event to end at 7:00 p.m. in order to make it convenient for community residents to attend after work and school. Over the course of this period, approximately 25-30 participants attended and offered their impressions of our work, which was arranged on the walls of the multi-purpose room in a series of themed "stations".

Our urban design work was displayed on a series of six large posters, each with post-it notes attached so that participants could write comments. The posters reflected the six main themes of our analysis, drawn from prominent objectives contained in the 1998 Alviso Master Plan:

- Preservation and enhancement of Alviso's bayside character
- Historic character and historic preservation
- Beautification of Alviso

- Community interaction and pedestrian activity
- Establishing a "gateway feel" for entryways into Alviso
- Fostering vibrant streetscapes

The complete display boards are shown on the following pages, accompanied by enlargements of key sections of each board.



Figure 33: Charrette Display Board: Welcome Board Displayed at the Entrance to the Event

Alviso: A Discussion with City Planning Students about Your Community's Future



Help us identify what makes Alviso unique.

Welcome!
 Thank you for joining the Masters Degree candidates in San Jose State University's Urban & Regional Planning Department today. Since August, 2008 we have been studying Alviso and learning as much as we can about the community from the people who live and work here. Our goal today is to hear your concerns and hopes for Alviso so that we can share our findings with the City of San Jose's planners. We have prepared many drawings and illustrations which you will see today - these are only ideas, and reflect our interpretation of the 1998 Alviso Master Plan, the city document which guides growth and development in Alviso. Please let us know how you feel about our work - what you like, what you don't like, and other ideas for us to consider. This will help us convey your ideas to the city staff in May, 2009. Help yourself to refreshments, please chat with us, and thank you again for joining us today!

¡"Bienvenidos!"
 Gracias por reunirse hoy con los candidatos de Maestría en Planificación Urbana y Regional de la Universidad Estatal de San José. Desde Agosto 2008 hemos estado estudiando Alviso y aprendiendo tanto como podemos acerca de la comunidad a través de las personas que viven y trabajan aquí. Nuestro objetivo hoy es oír sus preocupaciones y objetivos para Alviso para que podamos compartir nuestras conclusiones con los planificadores de la Ciudad de San José. Hemos preparado muchos dibujos e ilustraciones que usted verá hoy - éstos son sólo ideas y reflejan nuestra interpretación del Plan maestro de Alviso de 1998, el documento de la ciudad que guía el crecimiento y desarrollo en Alviso. Por favor, permítanos saber cómo se siente usted acerca de nuestro trabajo - lo que le gusta, lo que no le gusta, y otras ideas para nosotros considerar. Esto nos ayudará a que transmitamos sus ideas al personal de la ciudad en mayo, 2009. ¡Refreshcos disponibles, charle por favor con nosotros, y gracias otra vez por atendernos hoy!










How do you think city policies will affect the future development of Alviso?





ALVISO'S SMALL TOWN CHARACTER



San José State University
 Urban & Regional Planning Department

April 30, 2009

Rick Kos & Student Author: Minghua Cui



Figure 34: Charrette Display Board: Bayside Character

GOAL: TO REFLECT ALVISO'S BAYSIDE CHARACTER

"Its bayside character gives the Alviso village the look and feel of a seaside community." p. 26

ALVISO MARINA

Alviso Slough after dredging and widening

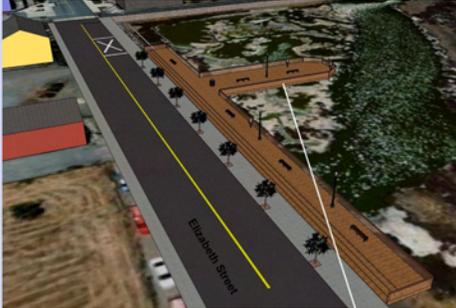


Alviso Slough with enhanced levee, walkways, and piers



(Image source: Santa Clara Valley Water District, Draft Environmental Impact Report, Alviso Slough Restoration Project, May 2008.)

BOARDWALK



Does the "Sea Ranch" style fit your image of Alviso?

The Master Plan's design guidelines for architecture fitting the bayside character of Alviso include:
- "For residential developments... "Sea Ranch" styles are encouraged, as are wood siding..."; pg. 49
- "The most appropriate design for commercial buildings are traditional seaside styles such as
- "Sea Ranch with cedar siding..."; pg. 56



Wood siding, natural finish



Asymmetrical shapes, "Modern" architecture



Living Space is upstairs



Large Windows, views to open spaces



Tall ceilings, airiness



Minimal landscaping

Comments

Note: Enlargements of this display board's sections are provided on the following three pages

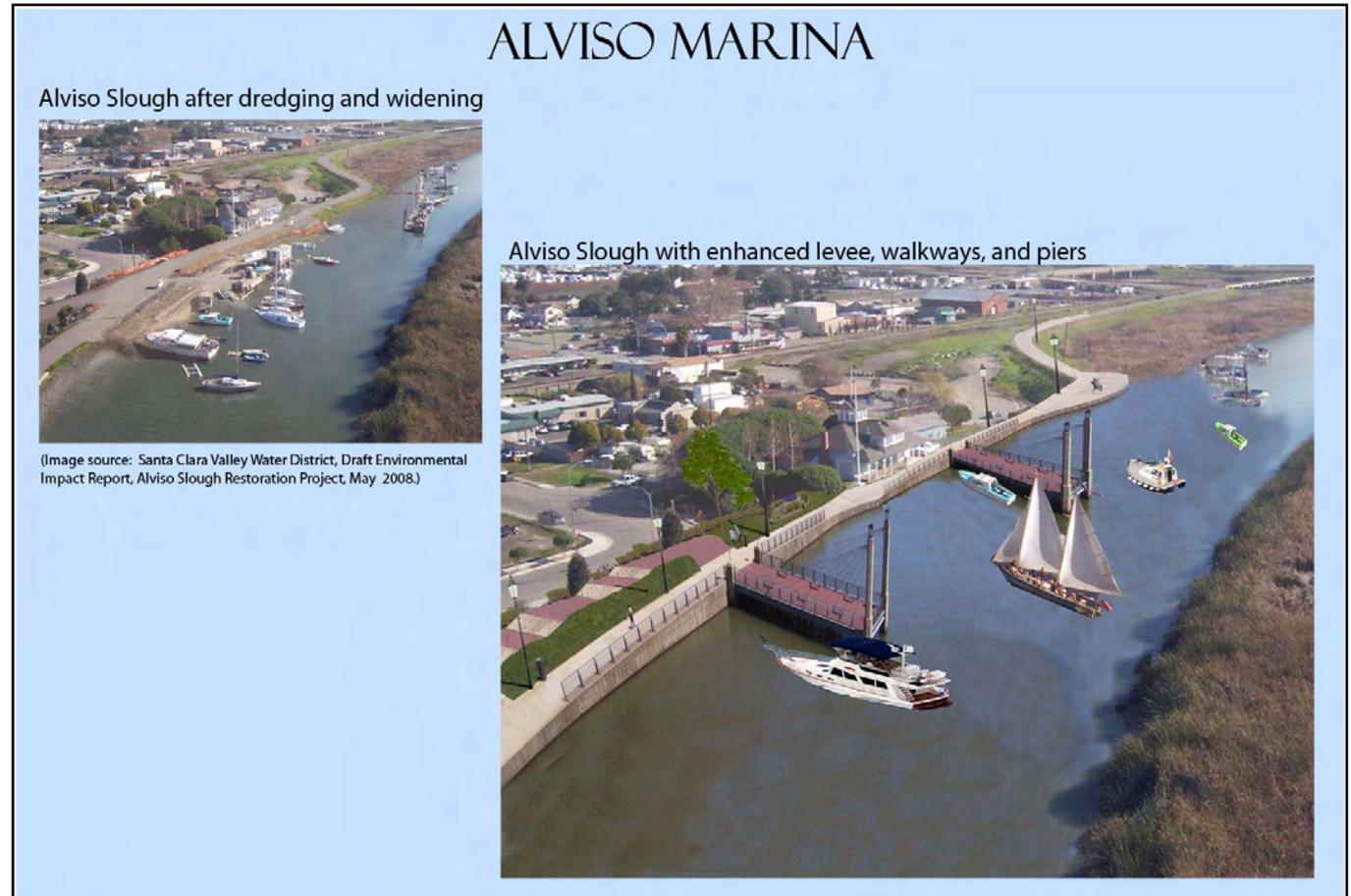
Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 34 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Bayside Character



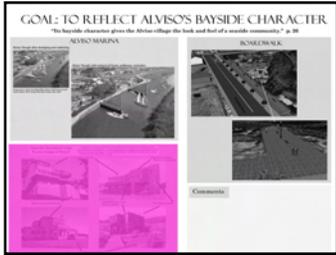
Enlarged portion shown at right



Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 34 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Bayside Character



Enlarged portion shown at right

Does the "Sea Ranch" style fit your image of Alviso?

The Master Plan's design guidelines for architecture fitting the bayside character of Alviso include:

- "For residential developments... "Sea Ranch" styles are encouraged, as are wood siding..." pg. 49
- "The most appropriate design for commercial buildings are traditional seaside styles such as ... Sea Ranch with cedar siding..." pg. 56

Living Space is upstairs

Assymetrical shapes, "Modern" architecture

Wood siding, natural finish

Large Windows, views to open spaces

Tall ceilings, airiness

Minimal landscaping

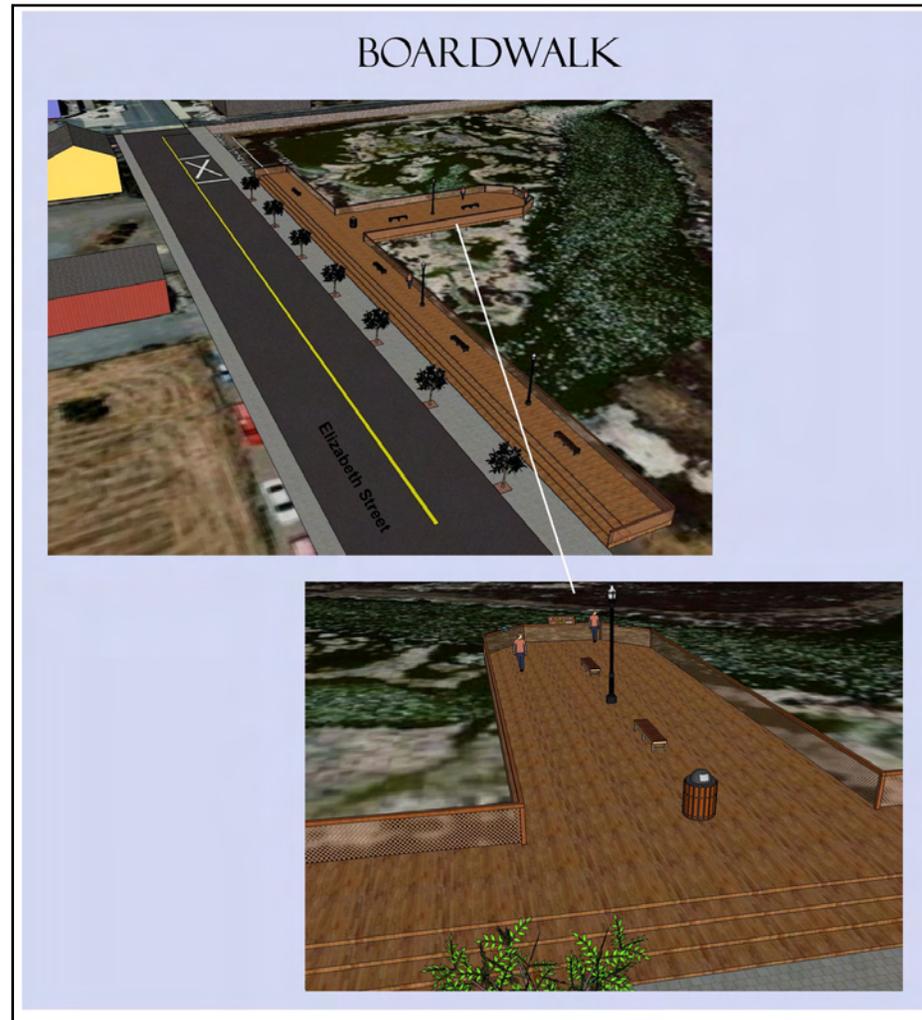
Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 34 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Bayside Character



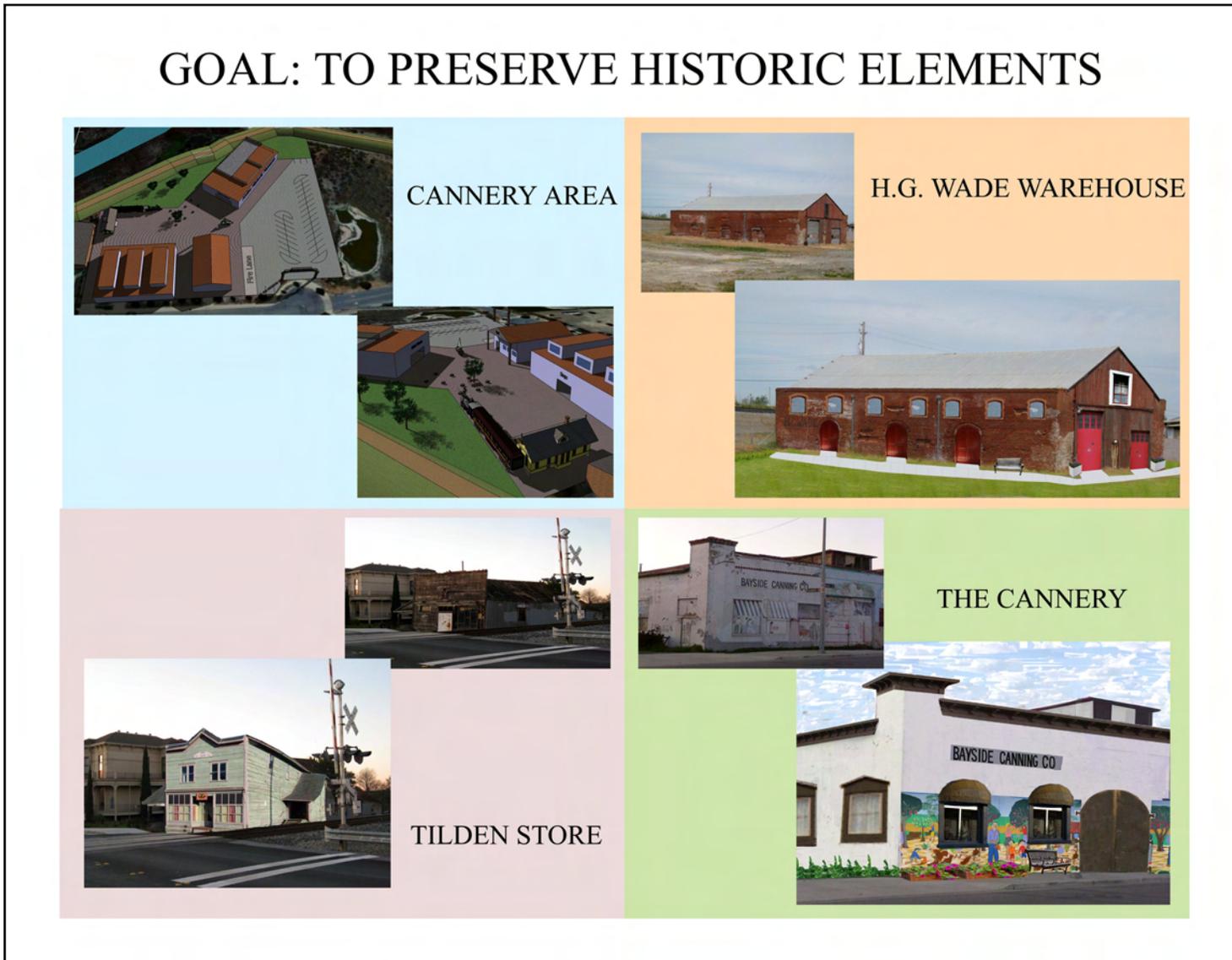
Enlarged portion shown at right



Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 35: Charrette Display Board: Historic Preservation

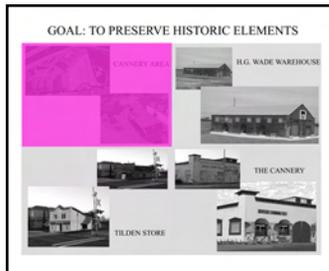


Note: Enlargements of this display board's sections are provided on the following four pages

Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 35 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Historic Preservation



Enlarged portion shown at right

ALVISO MARINA

Alviso Slough after dredging and widening



Alviso Slough with enhanced levee, walkways, and piers

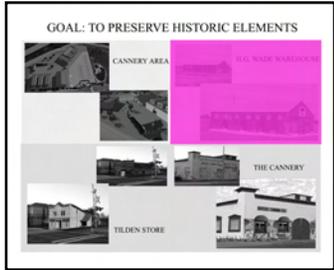


(Image source: Santa Clara Valley Water District, Draft Environmental Impact Report, Alviso Slough Restoration Project, May 2008.)

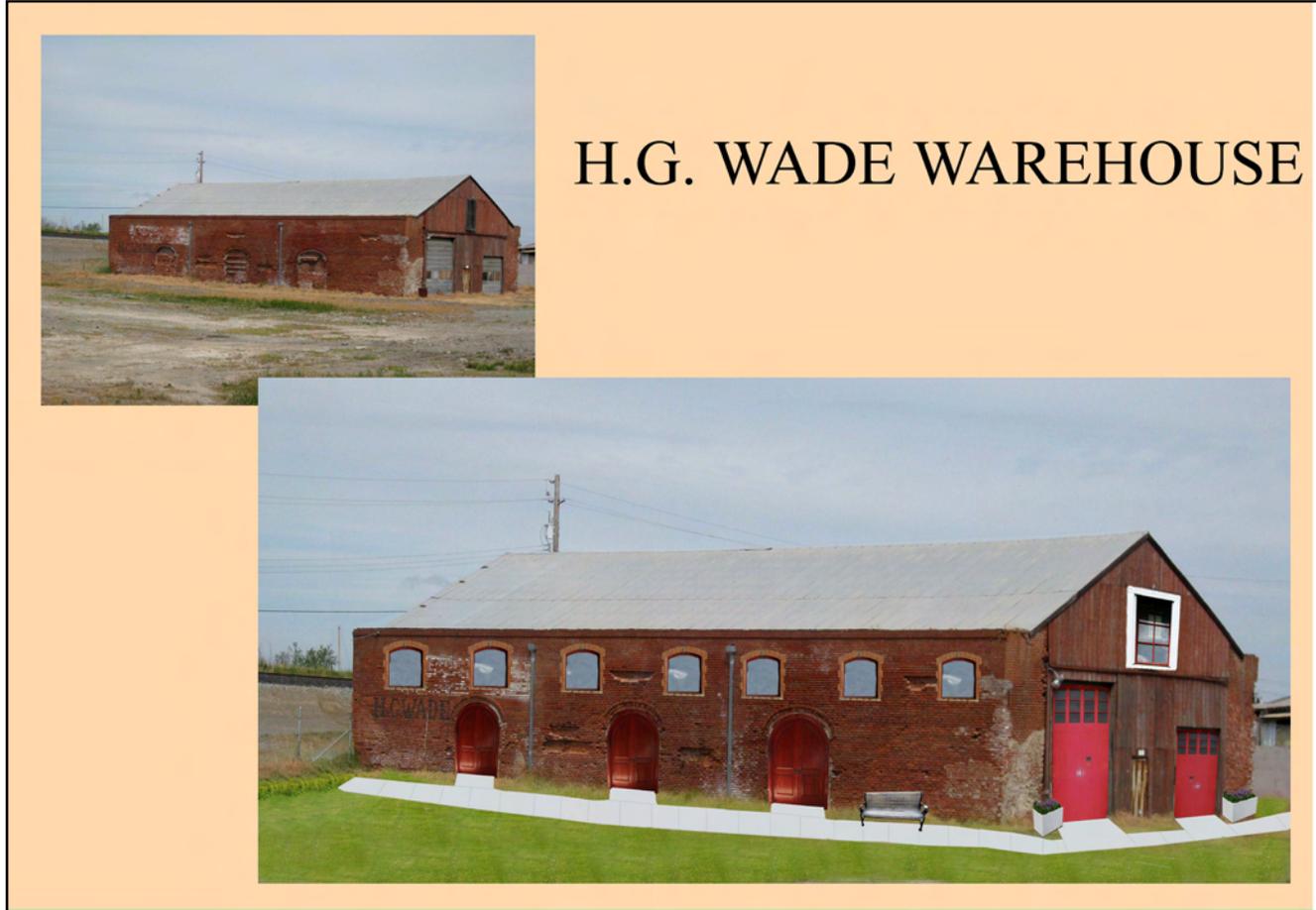
Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 35 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Historic Preservation



Enlarged portion shown at right



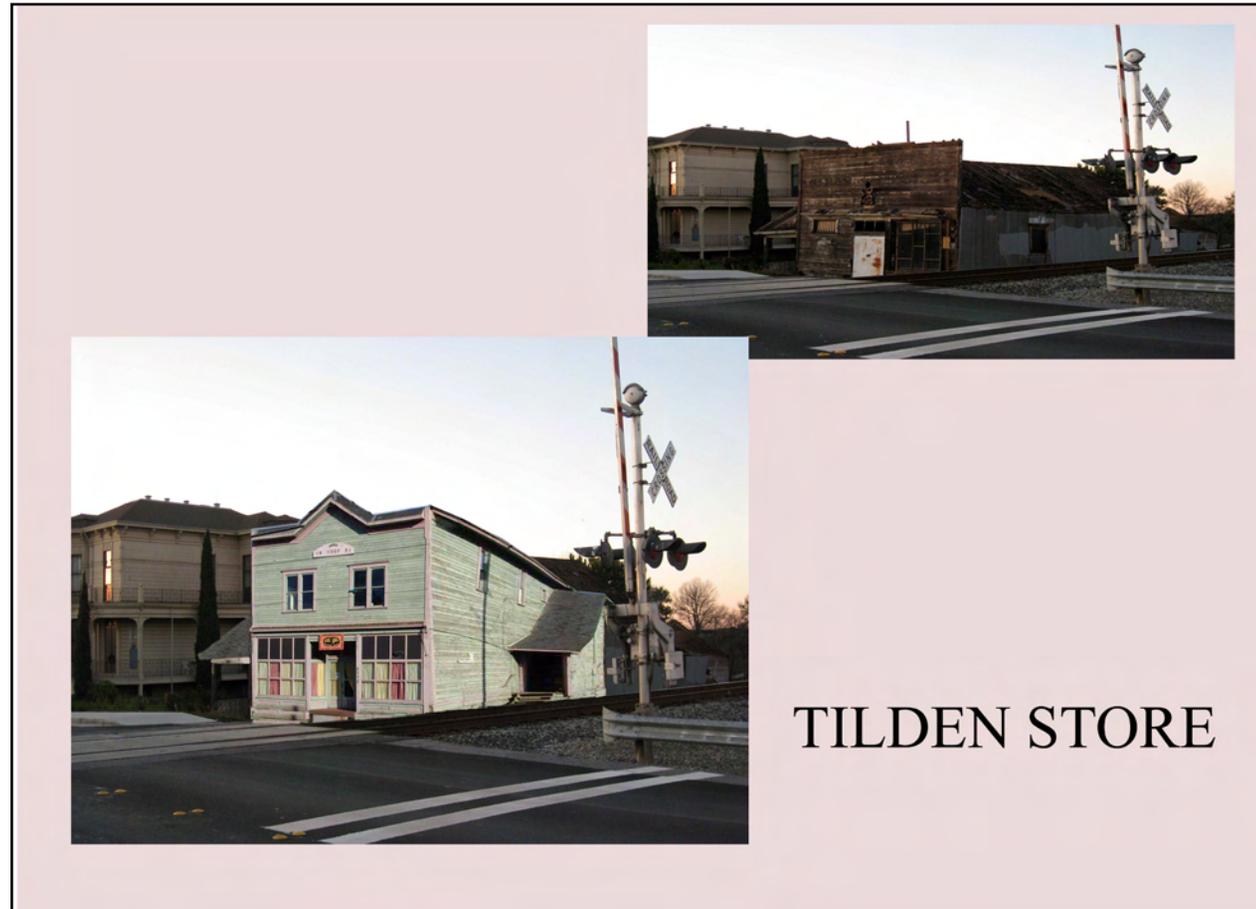
Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 35 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Historic Preservation



Enlarged portion shown at right



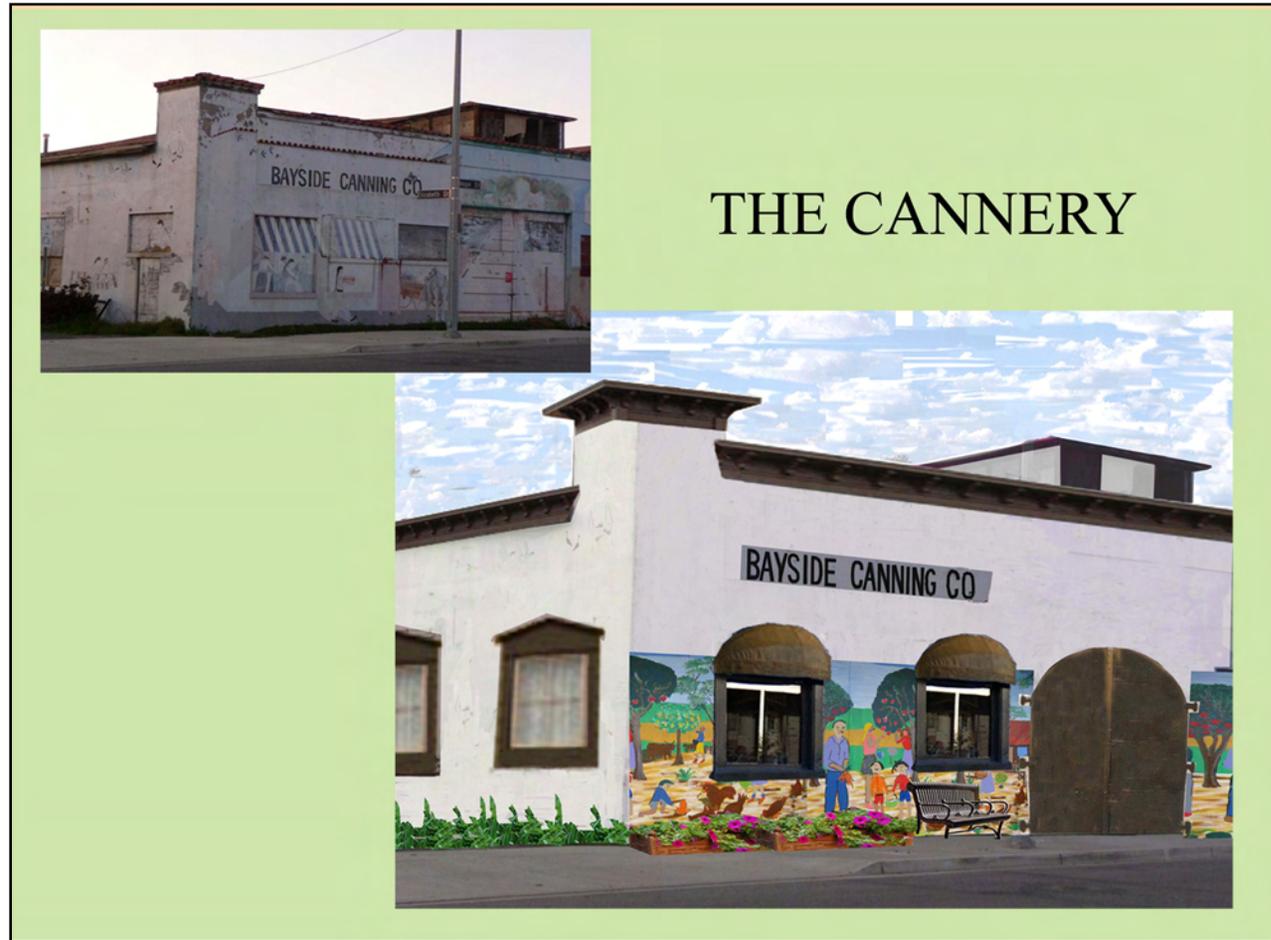
Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 35 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Historic Preservation



Enlarged portion shown at right



Group A: Chethana Dhananjaya, Dana Gregg, Gail DeVaul, Zachary Alexander.



Figure 36: Charrette Display Board: Pedestrian Activity/Community Interaction

GOAL: FOSTER PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY/COMMUNITY INTERACTION

EXISTING CONDITIONS

What is Alviso's Character?

Introduction



Location

The Marina area was chosen for development as it is already a destination for residents and visitors. By extending the Marina's draw into the neighborhood with the addition of small restaurants and boutique shops, Alviso is better able to retain visitors and residents alike who will partake in light shopping or in having a meal. Additionally, the buildings that border the Marina's entry are currently deteriorating and in need of rehabilitation. Through the addition of this mixed use development, existing buildings may be converted into light retail and restaurant use while maintaining the charm of the town. Beautifying the neighborhood through rehabilitation of its existing buildings and new landscaping while adding a small amount of like structures will both retain and invite new visitors to Alviso thereby increasing the amount of dollars spent in the town which may be used to further improve the charming town of Alviso. We are attempting to illustrate the specific, stated goals in the 1998 Alviso Master Plan in the two display boards:
 "Foster Pedestrian Activity /Community Interaction",
 "Beautify Alviso /Community Interaction".



Street View



Former Restaurant



Diagram



Hope Street



Landscape



Sidewalks

FUTURE SCENARIOS

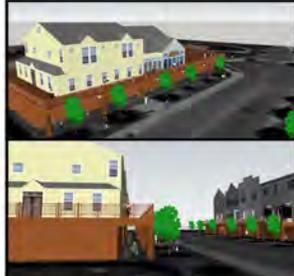
What might be in the future?



Site-Plan



Pedestrian Activity- Mixed Use



Pedestrian Activity- Restaurant



Diagram



Pedestrian Activity- Outdoor Seating Area & Levee

Comments

FOSTER PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY/COMMUNITY INTERACTION

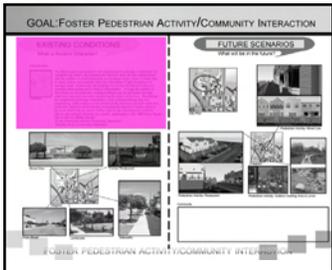
Note: Enlargements of this display board's sections are provided on the following three pages

Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 36 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Pedestrian Activity/Community Interaction

Existing Conditions

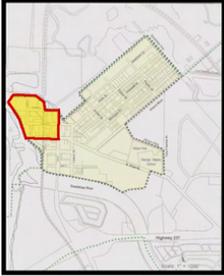


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EXISTING CONDITIONS

What is Alviso's Character?

Introduction



Location

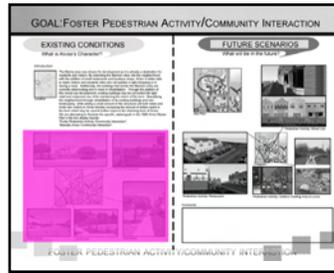
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Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.

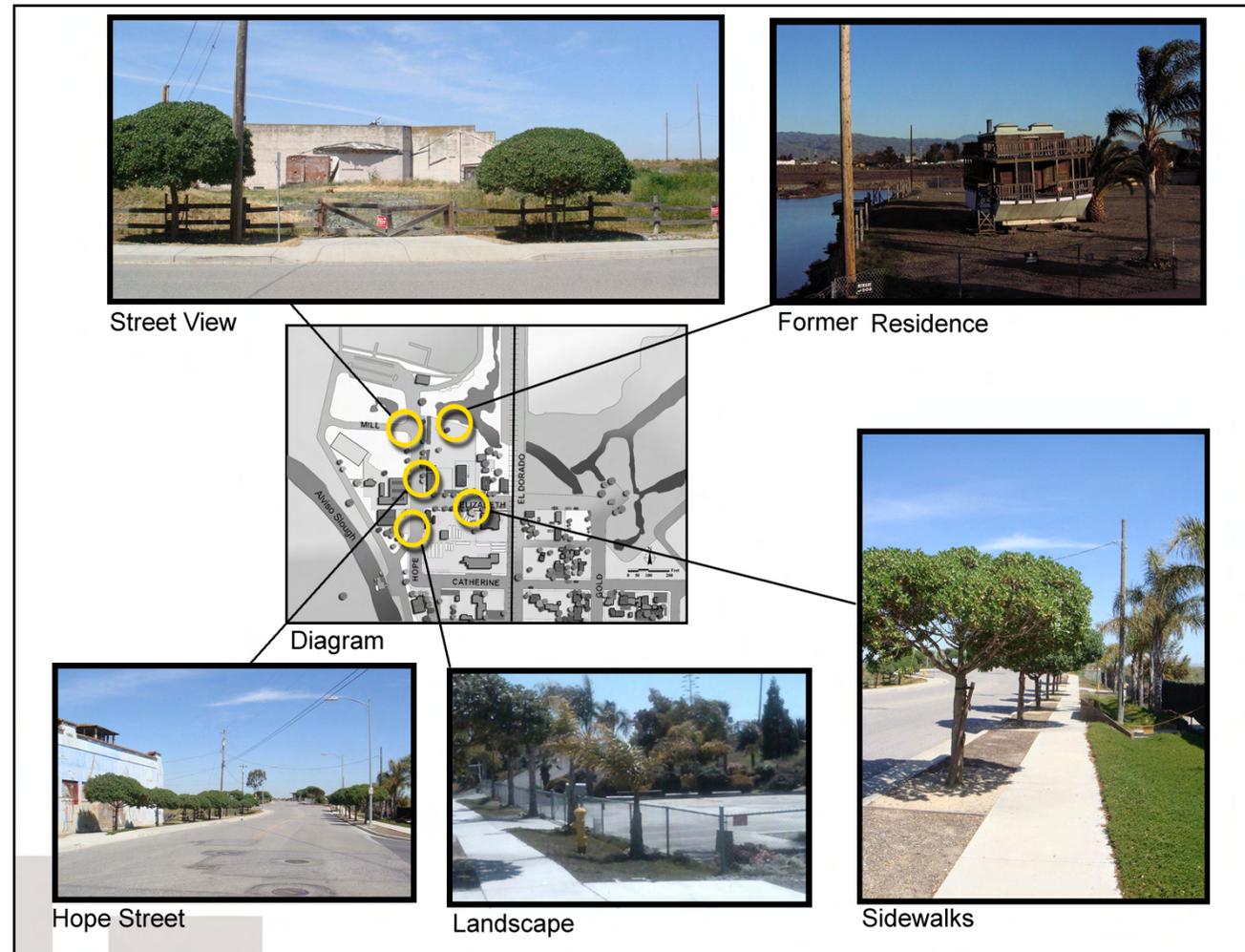


Figure 36 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Pedestrian Activity/Community Interaction

Existing Conditions



Enlarged portion shown at right

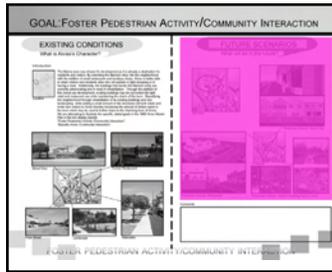


Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 36 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Pedestrian Activity/Community Interaction

Future Scenarios



Enlarged portion shown at right

Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 37: Charrette Display Board: Beautification

GOAL: BEAUTIFY ALVISO /COMMUNITY INTERACTION

EXISTING CONDITIONS

What is Alviso's Character?

The specific, stated goals in the 1998 Alviso Master Plan are:

- Restaurants and retail establishments should have their entrances facing the street. P.38
- A mix of building uses should add to the vitality of the historic area by attracting more people. P.40
- Ground floor fronts of commercial buildings should be substantially recessed to create open stalls under overhanging upper floors. P.55
- To contribute to the street life, certain activities (such as parking and loading) should be located away from pedestrian routes. P.57
- To promote pedestrian travel street trees, benches, signs, and other features should be installed. P.38



Site-Plan





Former Cannery Buildings
Mill Street
Water View



Diagram




Levee
Union Warehouse

FUTURE SCENARIOS

What might be in the future?



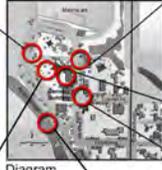
Site-Plan



Land Use Diagram



Bird's-Eye View


Levee
Diagram
Gift Shop & Restaurant





Outdoor Seating Area
Water View
Mixed-use Building

Comments

BEAUTIFY ALVISO /COMMUNITY INTERACTION

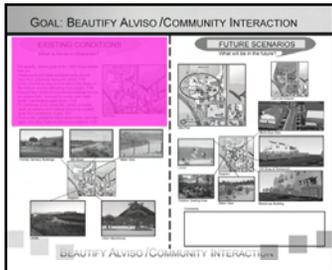
Note: Enlargements of this display board's sections are provided on the following four pages

Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 37 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Beautification

Existing Conditions



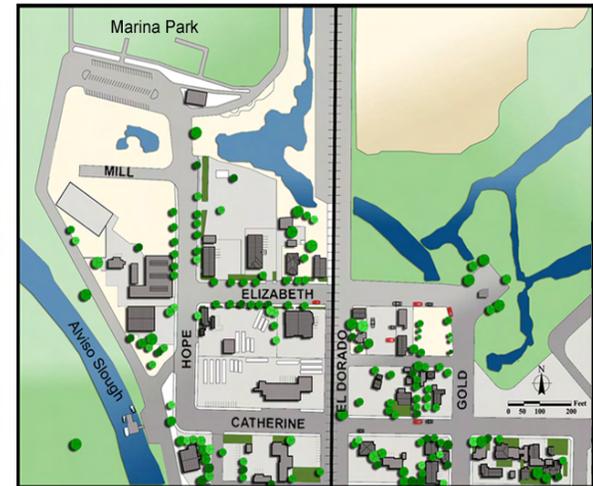
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EXISTING CONDITIONS

What is Alviso's Character?

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Site-Plan

Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 37 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Beautification



Enlarged portion shown at right

Existing Conditions

Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 37 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Beautification

Future Scenarios



Enlarged portion shown at right

Levee

Diagram

Water View

Outdoor Seating Area

Bird's-Eye View

Gift Shop & Restaurant

Mixed-use Building

Group B: Aimee Escobar, Minghua Cui, Stevie Heath, Troy Evangelho.



Figure 38: Charrette Display Board: Vibrant Streetscape

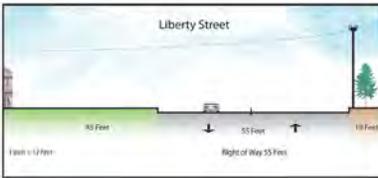
GOAL: Creating Vibrant Streetscape in Alviso

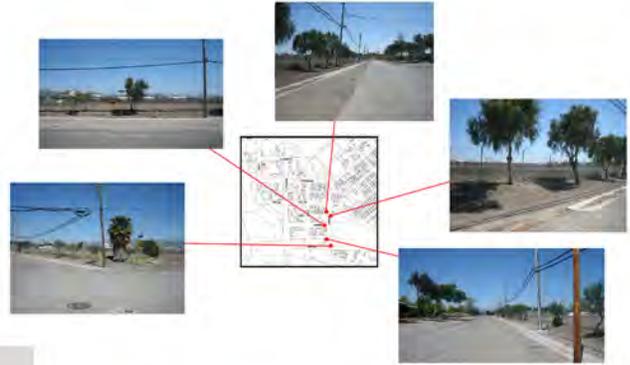
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Quote from the Alviso Master Plan: A Specific Plan for the Alviso Community

*Pedestrian Activity Policy 3:
To promote pedestrian travel, street trees, benches, signs, and other amenities should be installed throughout the developed western third of the Alviso Master Plan area.

While most neighborhood services and businesses are within walking distance of the residential area, the pedestrian environment can be improved with street amenities and business entries oriented to the street. In this way, the sidewalk becomes more attractive to community members and should encourage greater pedestrian use. The three primary objectives of an improved streetscape are: (1) Stronger pedestrian linkage between the outer areas, such as the mobile home park, with other areas of Alviso; (2) All services become more accessible to residents; and (3) People may be encouraged to walk a short distance rather than drive their cars." Page 38





FUTURE SCENARIOS







- 1 Street Parking - On street parking provides parking for local businesses, as well as, serves as a street traffic calming measure.
- 2 Wide Sidewalks - Wide sidewalks with a planting strip on both sides make pedestrians feel safe while providing local retailers with the opportunity for sidewalk displays.
- 3 Vendors - Vendors transform the street into a destination rather than a place that is driven through.
- 4 Bollards - Bollards are short vertical posts that protect pedestrians at dangerous intersections and prevent cars from parking on the sidewalks.
- 5 Raised and Textured Crosswalks - These crosswalks serve as a natural speed bump, while increasing pedestrian visibility for motorists.
- 6 Curb Extensions - Curb extensions decrease pedestrians' exposure to traffic by reducing crossing distance. By narrowing the street they help reduce drivers' speed.
- 7 Street Trees and Planting - Trees and plants provide shade and oxygen and make the street look nice. It has been shown that street trees increase traffic safety and improve business.
- 8 Courtyard - A courtyard serves as a gathering place for the local community, and could host events such as a farmer's market and music in the courtyard.

Comments

Alviso's vibrant streetscape

Note: Enlargements of this display board's sections are provided on the following four pages

Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 38 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Vibrant Streetscape

Existing Conditions



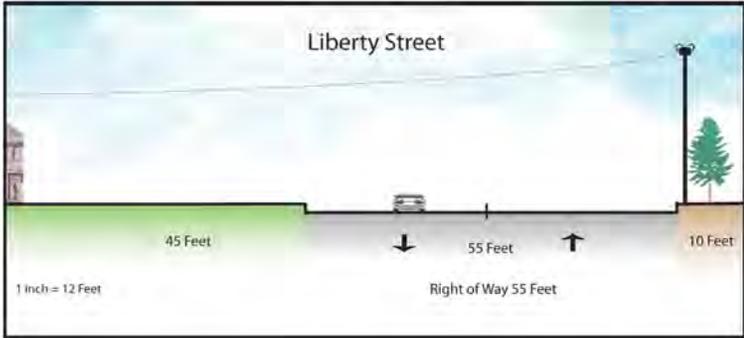
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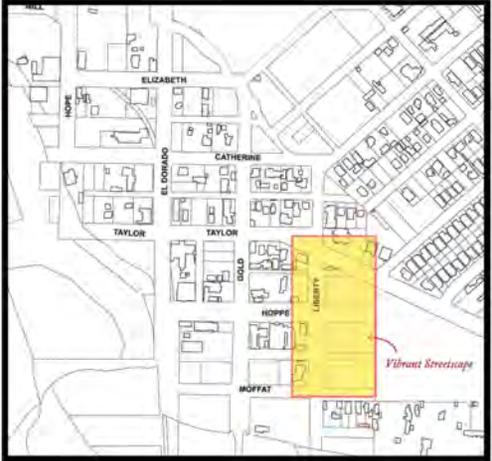


Quote from the Alviso Master Plan: A Specific Plan for the Alviso Community

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To promote pedestrian travel, street trees, benches, signs, and other features should be installed throughout the developed western third of the Alviso Master Plan area.

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Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 38 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Vibrant Streetscape

Existing Conditions



Enlarged portion shown at right



Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 38 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Vibrant Streetscape

Future Scenarios



Enlarged portion shown at right

FUTURE SCENARIOS

- 1 Street Parking – On street parking provides parking for local businesses, as well as, serves as a street traffic calming measure.
- 2 Wide Sidewalks – Wide sidewalks with a planting strip on both sides make pedestrians feel safe while providing local retailers with the opportunity for sidewalk displays.
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- 8 Courtyard – A courtyard serves as a gathering place for the local community, and could host events such as a farmer’s market and music in the courtyard.

Comments

Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 38 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Vibrant Streetscape

Future Scenarios



Enlarged portion shown at right



Aerial view of the future scenario



Examples of the types of plants and flowers that be used along Liberty Street

Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 39: Charrette Display Board: Gateway Feel

GOAL: Creating a Gateway Feel into Alviso

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Quotes from the Alviso Master Plan: A Specific Plan for the Alviso Community

*Along Gold Street any new development should contribute a "gateway feel" to those entrances to Alviso through landscaping, signage, building placement, or other features." Page 34

*The following objectives and policies address land use issues throughout Alviso and include: community character, pedestrian activity, housing, missed use development, retail on First Street, historic preservation, river orientation, industrial/non-industrial relationships, environmental protection, gateway entrances, and landfills." Page 37



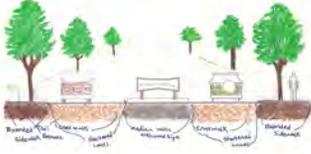
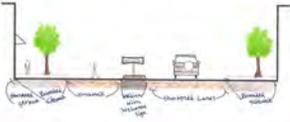


FUTURE SCENARIOS




In order to create a "gateway feel" at the Gold Street gateway to Alviso, the following enhancements can be made to improve livability and walkability:

- Install a welcome sign at the intersection of Gold Street and the trail paralleling the river
- Incorporate trees, shrubs, lampposts, benches and other pedestrian amenities
- Add a bike path along the river, complete with safe railroad crossing enhancements

Elements in the Gold Street and First Street Illustration:

- Cross hatches on the crosswalk will slow down cars and make an easier crossing for pedestrians using the trail.
- Extended sidewalks and street furniture (trees, benches, etc) will establish a change in scenery that will help foster a gateway feel.
- A median will help shorten lanes and slow down cars.
- A specialized welcome sign will let the visitor know that they have entered the community of Alviso.

Comments

The Gateway to Alviso...

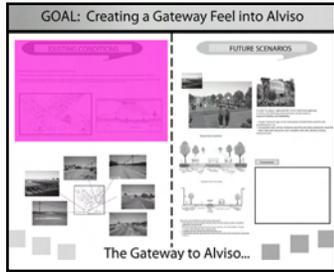
Note: Enlargements of this display board's sections are provided on the following four pages

Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 39 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Gateway Feel

Existing Conditions



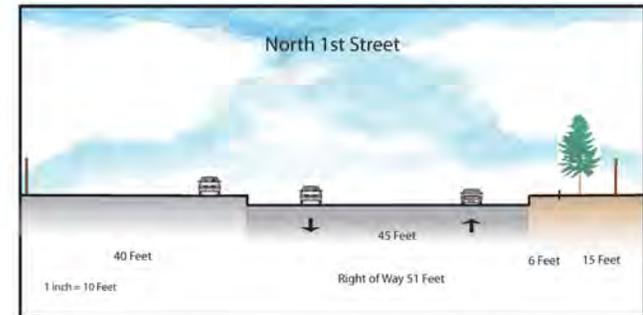
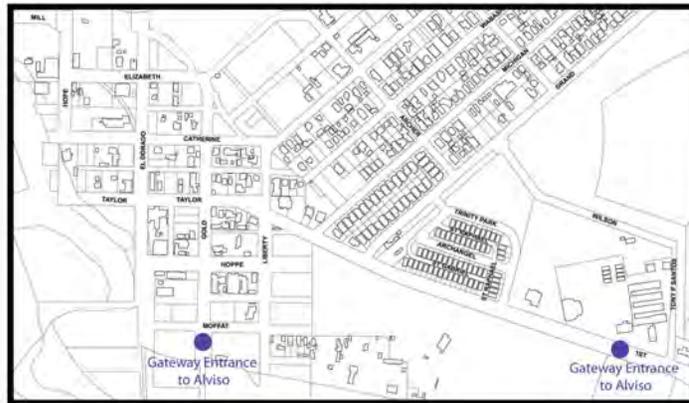
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EXISTING CONDITIONS

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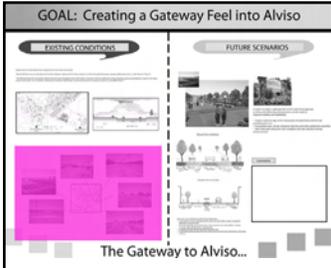


Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 39 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Gateway Feel

Existing Conditions



Enlarged portion shown at right



Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



Figure 39 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Gateway Feel

Future Scenarios



Enlarged portion shown at right

FUTURE SCENARIOS

In order to create a "gateway feel" at the Gold Street gateway to Alviso, the following enhancements can be made to improve livability and walkability:

- Install a welcome sign at the intersection of Gold Street and the trail paralleling the river
- Incorporate trees, shrubs, lampposts, benches and other pedestrian amenities
- Add a bike path along the river, complete with safe railroad crossing enhancements

"Gateway" Feel on Gold Street

Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.

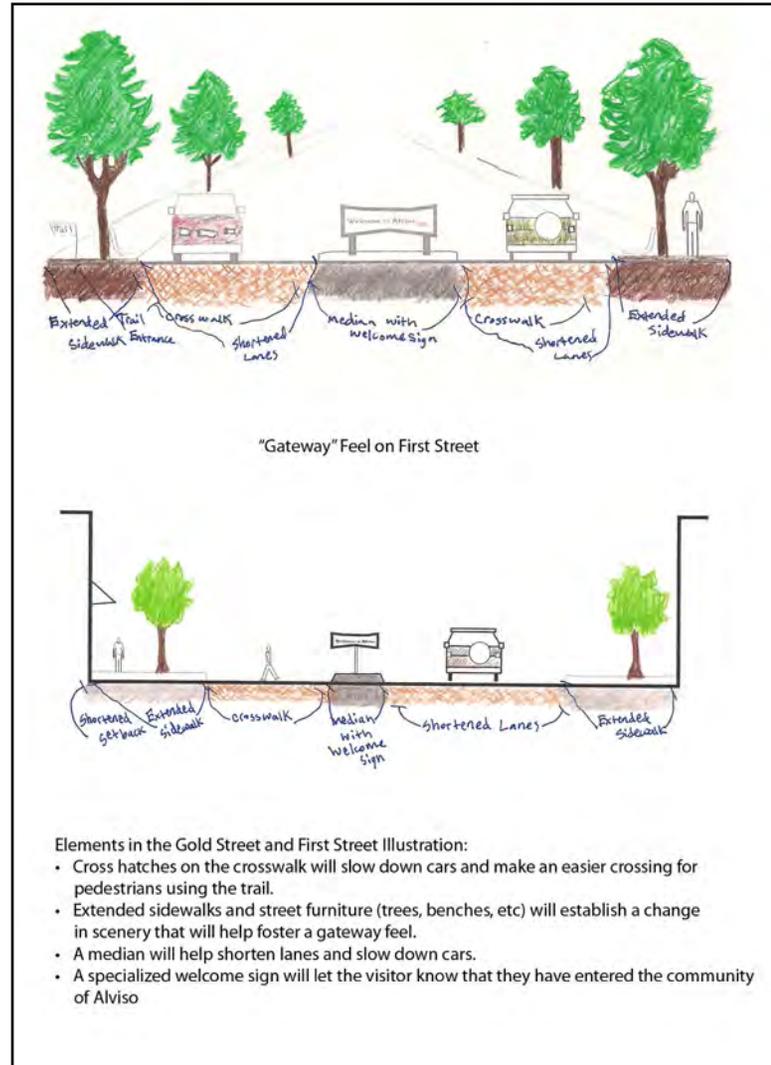


Figure 39 (continued): Charrette Display Board: Gateway Feel

Future Scenarios



Enlarged portion shown at right



Group C: Andrew Ross, Christine Badal, Lauren Staubli, Otha Cole, Tejasvi Ursal.



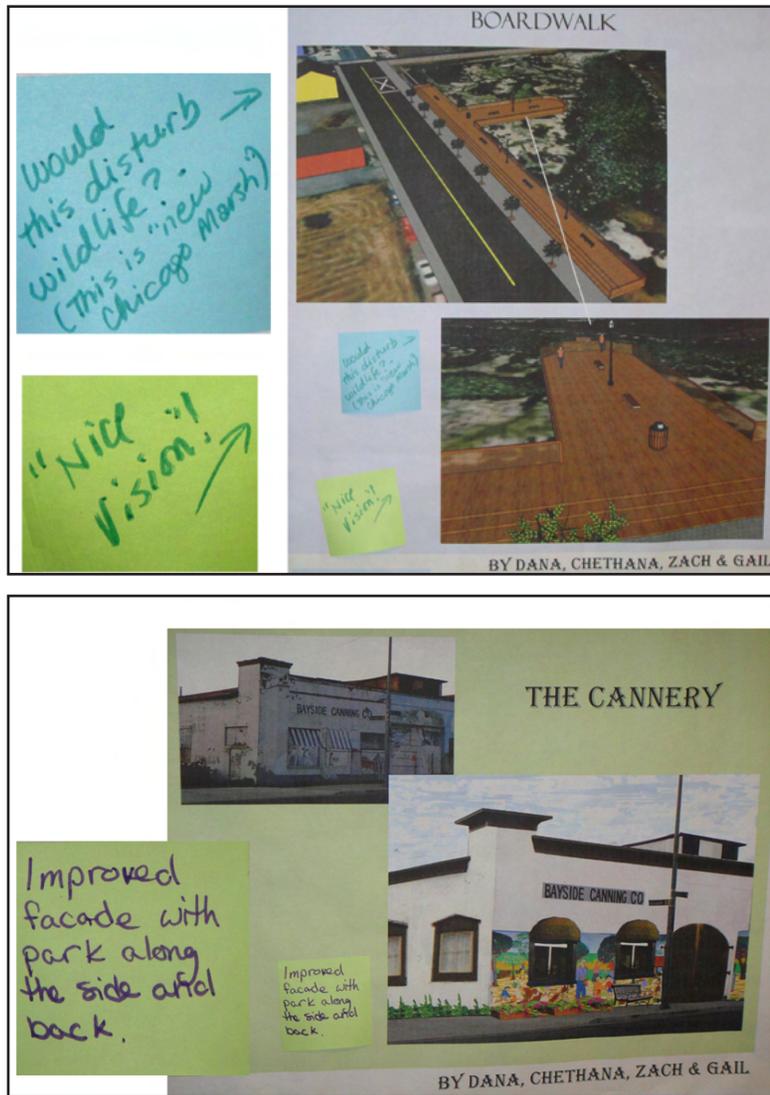


Figure 40: Close-ups of post-it note comments from charrette participants

Reactions to the Charrette

Overall, the participants reacted very positively to our illustrations that reflected our interpretation of the *1998 Alviso Master Plan* objectives. In particular, the images related to widening and deepening the Alviso Slough and Marina were very popular. Also, the illustrations that depicted improvements to Alviso's street infrastructure and landscaping drew praise.

When the event was concluded, we held a short “de-briefing” amongst ourselves and shared observations about our successes and areas where we could have improved. Many agreed that the charrette should have been held in a location that was more visible to participants wanting to find it. While we grateful for using the DCP multipurpose room, it can only be accessed via a circuitous path that might have been difficult for some people to find. Although we posted directional signs in various places, we suspected that some people simply gave up and did not attend. We also agreed that it was wise to hold the charrette in a very public place like the DCP School. To hold it somewhere less public (the private South Bay Yacht Club was offered and we had considered using it as a venue) might have deterred some Alviso residents from attending. Overall, we felt that the level of participation was decent, considering that Alviso resi-



dents have historically shied away from community events in the past, with the exception of the most vocal community advocates.

Recommendations to City Planners

We hope that this report will be of value to both the Alviso community and to the City of San José planning staff that will engage with Alviso residents in the future. By assessing the community from multiple angles (demographics, environment, community organizations, etc.) and with the input of many community members, we hoped to capture the essence of the community and to provide a common platform of facts and figures for all to work from. Building upon this factual foundation, the last two chapters in this report were designed to critique the *1998 Alviso Master Plan* and to offer our interpretations – in visual form – of the main design-related objectives of that document. In so doing, we endeavored to provide material for all stakeholders to use in the future, as important decisions are rendered regarding the physical appearance of Alviso.

At the end of our semester together, we collaborated on a list of recommendations for city staff

to consider, based on our eight-month involvement in the community. These recommendations are presented next.

1. Public Right-of-way Considerations

A number of streets in Alviso are not built to complete city standards; in fact, many lack sidewalks, street trees, curbs and gutters. A number of residents noted this fact to us and the general sentiment appeared to be that there would be great appreciation in the community if the city finished **improving all of the streets** in a timely manner.

Additionally, many of the streets in Alviso are extremely wide, which encourages speeding and presents dangers for pedestrians wishing to cross these streets. Any and all attempts to **calm traffic** via design enhancements should be considered, including the installation of landscaped median strips, the addition of parking lanes and bicycle lanes, the construction of curb bulb-outs at pedestrian crossings, and the installation of speed tables. Speeding is a particular problem along North First Street and Gold Street since drivers often use these streets to bypass traffic backups on Highway 237 during peak commute periods.



Street lighting on some streets is missing or far too dim, creating safety and security concerns. A notable exception is found along Elizabeth Street between the cannery and the railroad tracks, where new lighting standards provide illumination that is attractive, appropriate to the setting, and evenly-spaced.

2. Public Improvements

Alviso has an abundance of public spaces, but they are primarily in the form of right-of-ways. The area offers very few parks, with the exceptions being the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge, George Mayne Elementary playgrounds, the Guadalupe River Trail and Alviso Marina Park. All of these areas offer recreational opportunities for athletes, bicyclists, pedestrians and wildlife viewers; however, they are all located on the geographic fringes of the community. Therefore, we see an opportunity to **provide plazas, neighborhood parks, and public gathering places in locations that are better integrated into the community**. Such amenities can foster pedestrian connections, safety, and places for residents to enjoy and interact with each other.

The provision of **new pedestrian trails** - and access to them – is also recommended. For ex-

ample, the wonderful trail that exists along the Alviso Slough levee could be better integrated into the community by providing a direct linkage (with signage) from the Gold Street Bridge to the existing trail. Currently, pedestrians must traverse an unimproved, rocky area to reach the levee trail from this location. In the displays presented at the charrette, we envisioned improvements to this area as shown on the display titled “Creating a Gateway Feel into Alviso”.

We encourage the community and city planners to work together to consider locations for the type and location of **future public buildings**, including a community meeting facility – a need that was mentioned by a number of residents during our research.

3. Private Development Standards

While the *1998 Alviso Master Plan* identifies a number of objectives concerning the design of structures on private lots, we feel that the document requires further clarity in the following areas. These are topics that we recommend be directly integrated into the entitlement process for new projects in Alviso.



- a. The **maximum height** of structures should be clearly indicated, along with visual simulations that show how taller structures might be integrated into the community in a manner that is respectful of existing, shorter structures. A few of the illustrations we presented at the community charrette explored this theme.
- b. The **front setbacks** of new structures should explicitly take into account the setbacks of existing structures. Although parts of Alviso were developed organically with wide variations of setbacks along the older streets, new structures in these areas should nonetheless endeavor to respect the average front setback distance.
- c. Residential design guidelines for Alviso should specify the **maximum building width** and/or the **minimum spacing between buildings** in order to maintain views between buildings, and to maintain the sense of “openness” in Alviso – an oft-cited quality about which many residents take great pride.
- d. Special attention should be paid to the treatment of **ground floor details** (e.g. ensuring

that front doors face public streets, minimization of garage doors facing public streets, reduction in the amount of blank walls facing streets) in order to improve the pedestrian experience.

4. Alviso-Specific Design Guidelines

We recommend three additions to any city guidelines that directly affect Alviso.

First, we recommend that **long facades be broken up** to enhance visual interest and reduce a “mass-produced” appearance. This can be accomplished by introducing a more liberal mix of façade setbacks and protrusions. Architectural features such as trim, friezes, cornices and siding should be used to distinguish the core components of a building (top, middle, bottom). Projections such as bay windows, recessed entrances, and porches all provide visual interest and important transitional spaces between the public environment of the street and sidewalk, and the private space of the structure.

We also recommend that **pitched, compound roofs be strongly favored** and encouraged over flat roofs, in keeping with the general appear-



ance of historic Alviso. Pitched roofs, gabled awnings, and balconies would be representative of the bayside character and the existing homes in the historic district, while flat roofs or low pitched slopes lack the characteristics that would be compatible with the historic district and home-town feel of the neighborhood.

Finally, we recommend that future structures in Alviso **emphasize vertical forms**. While this will partly be achieved, automatically, via requirements to build living spaces a minimum of nine feet above ground (due to flooding considerations), the emphasis on verticality can also be achieved by adding windows with a vertical:horizontal ratio of 2:1 or 3:1. Transom windows might also be utilized whenever possible to create an open feeling to the façade.

5. Tout the Historic District

We recommend that the City – in partnership with non-profit groups specializing in historic resources - develop a plan for publicizing Alviso’s historic core. As a starting point, we recommend that these groups develop a walking tour that includes historic signage, detailed interpretations of historic structures, and publicity via print and the Internet. Creative partnerships

might be established; for example, we learned that the Wade Warehouse once housed the original horse-drawn carriages used by Wells Fargo Bank. Perhaps the bank would like to invest in the rehabilitation of this notable landmark for the benefit of their company’s image, visitors to Alviso, and beautification for Alviso residents. Efforts such as these would attract visitors – and their spending dollars – to Alviso and its restaurants.





Contact List

Name of Organization	Contact Person	Contact Person's E-mail Address	Contact Person's/Office Phone
Alviso Branch Public Library	Priscila Leni, Librarian	priscila.leni@sjlibrary.org	(408) 586-7618
Alviso Community and Youth Center	Kendra Yarn, Supervisor	kendra.yarn@sanJoseca.gov	(408) 251-6392
Alviso Community Policing Center	-	-	(408) 934-1520
Alviso Water Task Force	Betty Brown, Chair	alvisowatertaskforce@betty.maileater.net	(650) 208-3034
Alviso Youth Advisory Committee	Maria Elena Montellano, President	mmonte7102@aol.com	-
Downtown College Prep - Alviso	José Arreola, Principal	jarreola@dcp.org	-
Gardner Community Health Center	-	-	(408) 998-2264
George Mayne Elementary School	Corinne Ghaffari, Principal	cghaffari@scusd.net	(408) 423-1701
People Acting in Community Together	Jennifer-Wood Taylor, Community Organizer	Jenniferwood-taylor@pact.org	(408) 835-6708
Rotary Club of Alviso	Michele Dodge, President	chel@lava-jewelry.com	(408) 564-9714
San José District 4, Office of Kansen Chu	-	-	(408) 535-4904
Star of the Sea Church	Reverend Luis Vargas	-	(408) 263-2121



Reference List

Environment Chapter

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Alviso, California Community Assessment & Urban Design Analysis

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