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## VISUAL CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

### BACKGROUND

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Insert Fig. 5-1: Community Character and Design – Priority Areas for Design Improvements and Landscaping, Gateways, Key Cultural Resources

### 5.1 NATURAL SETTING AND VISUAL CHARACTER

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#### BACKGROUND

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#### GOAL 5-1:

Protect and enhance the natural setting of hillsides, canyons, and creeks which establish Castro Valley's visual character. Protect views to these natural resources from public streets, parks, trails, and community facilities.

## POLICIES

- Policy 5.1-1 **Cluster Development in Natural Areas.** Cluster development in hillside and canyon areas of Castro Valley to ensure protection the natural character of steep hillsides, canyons, and creeks.
- Policy 5.1-2 **Lot coverage and Landscaping Requirements for Hillsides.** Establish maximum lot coverage limits and minimum landscaping requirements in the Zoning Ordinance for the hillside areas of Castro Valley.

## ACTIONS

- Action 5.1-1 **Visual Impact Review.** During the review of public and private development projects, require visual impact analysis to ensure protection of views to natural areas from public streets, parks, trails, and community facilities.
- Action 5.1-2 **Clustering and Open Space Preservation in Natural Areas.** Encourage planned unit developments that cluster lots and preserve large areas of open space for new subdivisions in hillside, creek, and canyon areas and in areas with significant biological resources.

## 5.2 STREET DESIGN AND COMMUNITY LANDCAPE

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### BACKGROUND

#### GOAL 5-2:

Improve the appearance of Castro Valley by adding trees, landscaping, and other streetscape design features along major arterials, in commercial areas, and at major gateways to the community. Retain the “small-town” and “rural character” of Castro Valley’s hillside streets.

### POLICIES

- Policy 5.2-1 **Landscaping as part of Street Improvement Projects.** When street improvement projects are undertaken by County, State, Federal and other agencies, include landscaping and other design improvements that mitigate the visual impacts

of paved roadways and improve the appearance of the community.

- Policy 5.2-2 **Capital Improvements for Community Appearance.** Undertake capital improvement projects such as street redesign, community landscaping, and other similar projects in order to improve the appearance of Castro Valley and foster a community identity unique to Castro Valley.
- Policy 5.2-3 **Avoid Improvements in Hillside Areas.** Do not add curbs, gutters and sidewalks to residential streets in the Residential Hillside land use classification that do not already have such improvements, except on collector streets where such improvements are necessary for pedestrian safety, or on pedestrian routes to schools.
- Policy 5.2-4 **Retain Existing Landscaping that Defines Castro Valley.** Retain existing landscaping in street right of ways such as trees along Seven Hills Avenue or Proctor Road that retain the “small-town” and “natural hillside character” of Castro Valley.
- Policy 5.2-5 **Entry Signage.** Create simple entry sign structures combined with planting and add street landscaping at key entries into the community identifying Castro Valley.

## ACTIONS

- Action 5.2-1 **Improvements to Targeted Streets.** Add street landscaping and other visual improvements along the following streets during the 20 year planning period of the General Plan.
- Lake Chabot Road between Seven Hills Road and Quail
  - Norbridge/Strobridge Intersection between I-580 and Castro Valley Boulevard
  - Lake Chabot Road between Somerset Avenue and Castro Valley Boulevard
  - Redwood Road between Grove Way and I-580 – landscaping and trees in the median
  - Frwove Way between Redwood Road and Center Street

- A Street from the Planning Area boundary to Grove Way
- Center Street from the Planning Area boundary to Grove Way
- Grove Way from Center Street to I-580
- Crow Canyon Road in the segment just within and outside the Castro Valley Planning Area

Action 5.2-2 **Entry Signs at Targeted Gateways.** Add simple entry sign structures and street landscaping in the following gateway locations which are entrances in to the Castro Valley Planning Area. Solicit public input about the design of the sign structures prior to final design and construction.

- Seven Hills Road and Lake Chabot Road
- Norbridge/Strobridge Gateway at Interstate 580
- A Street near the Planning Area boundary
- Center Street near the Planning Area boundary
- Crow Canyon Road near the Planning Area boundary
- East Castro Valley Boulevard near the 580 exit ramp

Action 5.2-3 **Visual Improvements on Lake Chabot Road.** Add streetscape improvements on Lake Chabot Road as part of the hospital renovation and rebuilding on order to improve the appearance of this area from Somerset Avenue to Castro Valley Boulevard.

Action 5.2-4 **Castro Valley Boulevard Improvements.** Complete the Castro Valley Boulevard Streetscape Plan improvements in order to create an attractive and pedestrian-friendly character in central Castro Valley.

Action 5.2-5 **Review of Large Developments.** Identify all large scale development projects and public roadway projects planned within and around the Castro Valley planning area. Review Environmental Review documents for such projects. Request and lobby for landscaping improvements that mitigate visual impacts and improve the appearance of Castro Valley to be part of those projects.

Action 5.2-6 **Building Appearance in Commercial Centers.** Work with property owners and the Redevelopment Agency to improve building façade appearance and signage and promote new quality infill development in the major commer-

cial centers of the community and at key gateway locations, specifically including the following priority areas:

- Castro Valley Boulevard from Redwood Road to Lake Chabot Road
- Castro Valley Boulevard from Lake Chabot Road to Norbridge
- Lake Chabot Road from Seven Hills Road to Quail Avenue
- Commercial Properties near the Grove Way and Center Street intersection
- Commercial Properties near the Grove Way and Redwood Road intersection

Action 5.2-7 **Care of Surplus Public Property.** Work with County departments and other public agencies to ensure maintenance and landscaping of surplus properties.

Action 5.2-8 **Underground Utilities on Commercial Corridors.** Work with PG&E and other public agencies to underground overhead utility lines along major commercial corridors using Rule 20A monies and other funding sources.

Action 5.2-9 **Billboard Reduction.** Work with private property owners, the Redevelopment Agency, County departments, State government officials, and other public agencies to reduce the number of billboards on Castro Valley Boulevard.

Action 5.2-10 **Local Funding for Capital Improvements.** Put forward a bond measure to Castro Valley voters or establish a Community Services District to provide local match funds for community appearance improvements, street improvements, community gathering places, and historic or local cultural resource preservation.

## 5.3 COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACES

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### BACKGROUND

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### GOAL 5-3:

Create and enhance community gathering places in order to foster community identity and civic participation.

### POLICIES

*Policy 5.3-1*      **Establish Community Gathering Places.** Work to establish a variety of community gathering places in Castro Valley by expanding or improving existing facilities and by establishing new outdoor and indoor public spaces

### ACTIONS

Action 5.3-1      **Capital Improvement Plan.** Establish a capital improvement plan for Castro Valley community gathering places.

Action 5.3-2      **Castro Valley Library.** Construct the Castro Valley library, and include a community meeting space in the building. Include a small café and outdoor plaza if feasible. Coordinate the building project with creation of a creek trail improvement project adjacent to the site. Plan the library site so that there is the potential for the addition of other public and civic spaces, so that this area of the downtown can function as a civic center for the Castro Valley community.

Action 5.3-3      **Central Plaza.** Create a central community plaza in the core pedestrian area of the Central Business District, for example within Castro Valley Shopping Center, as a small gathering place for civic events such as a holiday lighting celebration.

Action 5.3-4      **Indoor Community Spaces.** Establish joint ventures with other agencies for the addition of community meeting rooms or community performance spaces at existing facilities, such as public schools and Eden Hospital.

Action 5.3-5      **Farmers Market.** Locate and operate a farmers market in Castro Valley, for example at the BART station, at the future library site, or at a future community plaza. Use this space for other community events to hold festivals, holiday

celebrations, civic events, etc.

- Action 5.3-6 **Post Office.** Work with the federal government to improve or relocate the Castro Valley post office site and consider including a small public plaza as part of the project.

## 5.4 HISTORIC AND LOCAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

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### BACKGROUND

The Castro Valley area has a rich cultural history that predates the late 18<sup>th</sup> century exploration of the area by Spanish expeditions. Archeological research shows that the planning area was probably occupied by Chochenyo-speaking members of the Costanoan groups who lived in villages surrounded by temporary camps used as a base for hunting and fishing. Native American resources have been found on ridges, midslope terraces, and near water courses such as San Lorenzo, Cull, and Crow Creeks. Until the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, much of the land in the planning area, which was once part of Guillermo Castro's Rancho San Lorenzo, was devoted to grazing.

By the end of the 1920's, Castro Valley was one of northern California's primary poultry industry centers. Most of the communities 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century structures were demolished during the building boom following World War II but a few of the community's older structures remain. In 2005, the County initiated an inventory of historic sites in the Castro Valley area to provide a basis for identifying appropriate approaches to preserving the area's historic and cultural resources.

### GOAL 5-4:

Protect historic sites and structures and other cultural resources that help to maintain the special character and identity of Castro Valley and represent important physical connections to the community's past.

### POLICIES

- Policy 5.4-1 ***Preservation and Enhanced Maintenance of Historic Resources.*** Protect and preserve Federal and State-designated historic sites and structures and properties that are deemed eligible for designation to the maximum extent feasible. Enhance the maintenance of key historic structures such as the Stanton House, Strobridge House, and the Adobe Arts Center, and ensure that they remain or are relocated to attractive and prominent

settings consistent with their character and history.

Policy 5.4-2 ***Protect Local Cultural Resources.*** Establish appropriate strategies to protect local cultural resources that do not qualify for designation as historic resources but still reflect Castro Valley's history and traditions. Possible strategies include:

- Conservation districts for older neighborhoods with a unified distinctive character such as the neighborhood of Eichler homes;
- Lower densities or conservation easements in environmentally sensitive areas that reflect Castro Valley's agricultural history such as: Palomares Canyon, and properties with barns and stables located along creek beds and Crow Canyon Road.

Policy 5.4-3 ***Historic Factor in Development Review Process.*** Integrate consideration of historical and cultural resources into the development review process to promote early resolution of conflicts between cultural resources preservation and other community goals and objectives.

Policy 5.4-4 ***Balance Preservation with Community Goals and Property Rights.*** Balance preservation goals with goals for infill development and goals for renovation and improved appearance of commercial areas within Castro Valley. In the review of applications, the level of requirements should be established with a clear understanding of public and private responsibilities. Property owners may be required to preserve historic resources that qualify for federal or state designation, even where there is a significant diminution in property value relative to the maximum intensity allowed under zoning. However private owners should not be required to preserve a local cultural resource if it severely restricts the ability of the owner to develop in accordance with underlying zoning. Applicants should strive to develop proposals that incorporate new development and still preserve the character of local cultural resources that contribute to the community.

Policy 5.4-5 ***Financial and Legal Incentives for Historic Resources.*** Promote the maintenance, restoration, and rehabilitation of historic and cultural resources through a variety of financial and regulatory incentives.

## ACTIONS

- Action 5.4-1 **Historical Resources Survey.** Complete the Historical Resources Survey of the Castro Valley Planning area, an inventory of historic and local cultural resources.
- Action 5.4-2 **Adopt Regulations Based on Survey Results.** Adopt regulations to protect and preserve historic and local cultural resources in the Castro Valley Planning Area based on the results of the Historical Resources Survey of the Castro Valley Planning area. Establish the following three different categories of historic and local cultural resources, and regulations for alterations, additions, and demolition commensurate with the value of the resources:
- Historic Resources that qualify for Federal or State designation;
  - Local Historic Resources that may not qualify for federal or state designation but are of local interest and are worthy of preservation; and
  - Local cultural resources that are not historic resources as defined by CEQA but enhance the character of the community through their architectural character or their connection to local history.
- Action 5.4-3 **Guidance on Demolition.** In regulations adopted for the protection of historic and local cultural resources, provide clear guidance as to the criteria for when demolition of a historic or local cultural resource is permitted. Specify appropriate mitigations in cases where demolition is permitted, commensurate with the size and scale of the project and the value of the resource, for example, donations to programs that restore historic or cultural resources.
- Action 5.4-4 **Consideration of Historic Resources in Project Review.** Revise the project review process in the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that regulations and policies related to preservation of historic and local cultural resources are enforced.
- Establish or designate the review process through which additions, alterations, and demolition of historic or local cultural resources will be reviewed, for example through design review, site plan review, etc.

- Refer all projects subject to environmental review, and all projects on creekside properties (as defined in Chapter 7) that involve more than one new residential unit or more than 10,000 square feet, to the Northwest Information Center to conduct project review to determine whether known historic or archeological resources are present and whether a study has been conducted on all or a portion of the project site.
- Require a staff evaluation of demolition of structures more than 50 years old to determine if the structure is a historic or local cultural resource.

Action 5.4-5 **Special Districts for Unique Areas.** Consider adopting design review districts, specific plans, or other similar mechanisms to preserve the character of neighborhoods that have a unique design character. These may be considered for designation as historic districts, or may be designated as local cultural or design districts if they do not qualify for designation as a historic district.

*Design review criteria, standards, and guidelines can be established through an overlay district in the Zoning Ordinance or through a specific plan. Modified setback, height, and other standards can be prescribed to ensure the consistency of new buildings and additions with the existing neighborhood development patterns. Design guidelines can be written and illustrated in order to preserve the design character of neighborhoods.*

Action 5.4-6 **Coordinated Establishment of Preservation Programs.** Work with County departments, the Alameda County Parks, Recreation and Historical Commission; the East Bay Regional Parks District; the Hayward Area Historical Society; other public agencies; businesses; and nonprofit organizations to establish programs for preservation of historic and local cultural resources. Consider establishing the following types of programs:

- A historic preservation fund that provides a monetary source for local preservation incentives such as an architectural assistance program and archaeological site protection plan. The fund may be supported through grants, private or public donations, or other sources.
- Permanent displays for the new Castro Valley Library describing the culture of Native American communities who lived in the area and the history

and development of the community since European settlement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- A “receiver site” program that provides relocation sites for historical resources (buildings, structures or objects) that cannot be preserved onsite. Receiver sites should be located within the community in which the resource was originally located and should maintain a context and setting comparable to the original location.
- An “adopt a resource” program. These programs encourage and assist the public and local businesses to become involved in the protection and preservation of historical and cultural resources, sponsor preservation of individual properties, and conduct the necessary fundraising.