East Bay EDA

Leading the Next Generation of Industrial Buildings & Districts: Design Guidelines

October 2026

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION















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Foreword

Funded by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Priority Production Area (PPA) Technical Assistance and Planning Grant, these industrial design guidelines were developed in collaboration with the East Bay Economic Development Alliance to support a strong and resilient economy.

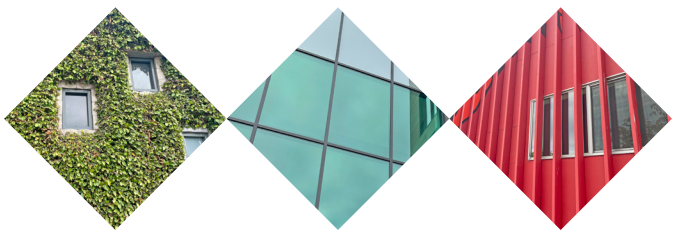
To sustain a vibrant and evolving industrial economy, local jurisdictions need a supply of industrially designated land that meets the needs of businesses and investors while also conforming to land use regulations and contributing to community goals for complete communities.

High-quality building and site design can attract top-tier businesses and high-paying jobs, but overly prescriptive and ambitious design guidelines can impact project cost and feasibility, putting investments and jobs at risk. Industrial uses near established commercial and residential areas can benefit jobs-housing balance and reduce vehicle traffic but may impact established neighborhoods and nearby community uses such as schools and open spaces.

Recognizing these tensions, professionals with varied, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives were engaged in developing and reviewing the guidelines. This included urban designers, economists, industrial architects, staff from participating cities' planning and economic development departments, and members of the development community. The Next Generation Industrial Design Guidelines seek to reflect these competing priorities and balance high-quality design with economic development and community livability.

Each local jurisdiction can apply or modify these design guidelines to best match their needs. Regardless of specific guidelines, each city should understand the following best practices for attracting and securing investments in local industrial properties.

- Adopt clear land use policies that support economic development goals
- Encourage planning and economic development staff to partner and work with prospective project representatives
- Establish and clearly communicate objective, "bright-line" approval processes
- Clearly delineate ministerial and discretionary pathways and processes
- Consider completing a Specific Plan and EIR to support and accelerate industrial development



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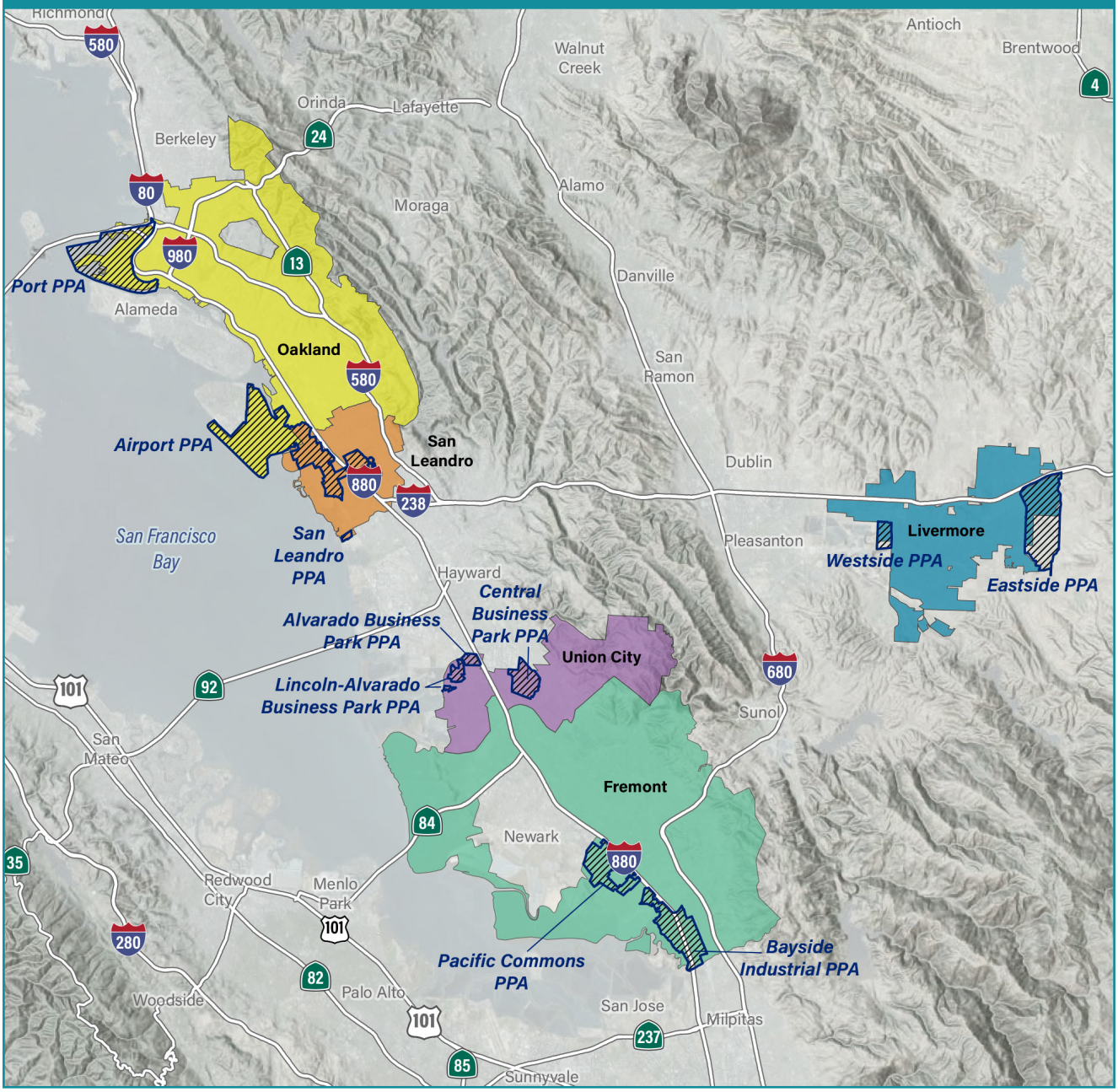
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Participating East Bay Jurisdictions and Priority Production Areas



Source: PlaceWorks, 2025.

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Priority Production Areas (PPAs)

East Bay EDA Project Jurisdictions

- Fremont
- Livermore
- Oakland
- San Leandro
- Union City

I. Introduction

Background

These industrial design guidelines were developed as part of the MTC / East Bay Economic Development Alliance (EDA) Priority Production Areas (PPAs) Technical Assistance and Planning Project.

Part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)'s Plan Bay Area regional growth framework, PPAs are locally designated economic-development zones strategically located along the region's goods-movement network, making them ideal locations for employment-generating uses.

In 2019, the Alameda County cities of Fremont, Livermore, Oakland, San Leandro, and Union City nominated PPAs to be prioritized for economic development uses and protection from competing land uses. In 2024, MTC awarded technical-assistance funding to Alameda County's PPA jurisdictions to support land use planning best practices.

Purpose and Use

Industrial guidelines are an adaptable resource for local jurisdictions that can use them to best meet local needs. They provide direction for property owners, developers, designers, contractors, and architects to meet the intent of jurisdiction goals and policies. Guidelines can be integrated into existing or new design guidelines; be used as a template to develop more tailored local guidance; help navigate conversations with industrial clients, developers, designers; and support staff project review.

They are prescriptive but flexible, allowing for context-sensitive solutions while ensuring a baseline of thoughtful design. They are written to encourage, but not require, specific design elements. Each site has distinct conditions and constraints that will inform project design and the recommendations in these guidelines may not be appropriate for every property.

Contents

The design guidelines describe elements of functional, well-designed sites and buildings that improve the economic viability and visual character of properties, organized into the following chapters:

- Site Design
- Loading and Services
- Building Design
- Landscaping, Lighting, and Signage
- Sustainability

There are two sections that were developed to respond to specific local needs and ideas: **Building Renovations, Additions, and Adaptive Reuse; and Site Security and Crime Prevention.**

This document also includes a **summary of industrial trends shaping site and building design**, and a high-level overview of industrial development construction and place types.

The Guidelines are intended to complement (and not supersede) siting, design, operations, safety and energy-efficiency requirements from California Code of Regulations Title 24,Part 6 (Energy Code) and Part 11 (CALGreen), jurisdiction zoning requirements, and other relevant regulations including SB415 (2025).



Related Resources

The **Industrial Case Studies** and **Energy Efficiency Reports** developed as part of the technical assistance program are additional related resources, and are included as appendices to this document.

Industrial Development and Market Trends

The Next Generation Industrial Design Guidelines were developed in 2025 and 2026. While they were written to be adaptable and flexible and have a long lifespan, the following market and design trends shaped many of the recommendations.

- Tenants are seeking maximum flexibility in building design to accommodate growth, changes in uses, and evolving technology and equipment. High clear heights, wide column spacing, and flexible floor plans are desirable features.
- In built-out communities, there is a need for renovation and reuse of existing structures, such as converting heavy industrial facilities or offices into advanced manufacturing, R&D spaces, and warehouses.
- There is an increasing emphasis on a mix of uses at the building, site, and campus or neighborhood level.
- The presence of nearby support systems, including R&D, supply chains, and logistics and warehousing, are driving location decisions.
- Providing amenities and placemaking is increasingly emphasized alongside site utility.
- Access to power and grid reliability is paramount to providing stability to avoid disrupting operations.
- Minimizing and mitigating air pollution, noise, and traffic-related disturbances to neighboring uses and the public realm is a top community priority and state legislative focus.

Building and Place Type Guidance

New construction and renovation/alteration projects face different challenges, and certain guidelines are tailored to these different construction types. Below is a summary of the opportunities, key constraints, design requirements, and implementation considerations for each type, along with an index of relevant sections.

Table 1 Building and Place Type Guidance

Type	Opportunities	Key Constraints	Design Requirements	Implementation Considerations
New / Ground-up	Optimize site plan and building layout (1.1, 1.2); modern clear heights (3.2); efficient and sustainable design (5.1, 5.2)	Higher capital cost; longer permitting and California Environmental Quality Act process; potential community concerns about traffic, noise (1.4)	Efficient loading layouts (2.1); stormwater management and landscape buffers (4.1-4.3); sufficient power supply facilities (5.1)	Phasing of infrastructure; construction mitigation strategies
Renovation, Alteration and Addition, Including Adaptive Reuse (6.1)	Lower cost than ground-up; quicker delivery; extends life of existing structures (6.1.3); activate underused sites; reduces embodied carbon (6.1.5)	Structural limitations; low clear heights (3.2); older systems; may require hazardous materials remediation (6.1.4); constrained circulation (6.1.2); more complex design for loading and fire access; limited parking	Accessibility and safety upgrades (6.1.2), sustainability and seismic upgrades (6.1.4, 6.1.5); add screened loading, trash and mechanical areas (2.1-2.3)	Managing work with existing tenants; structural assessments
Historic Properties (6.2)	Unique identity and sense of place (6.2); eligibility for historic tax credits and grants	Strict preservation/ design review; limited exterior changes (3.1, 6.2)	Maintaining character-defining features (6.1.1, 6.2); thoughtful integration of new systems	Close coordination with historic agencies; potential for visitor-oriented uses