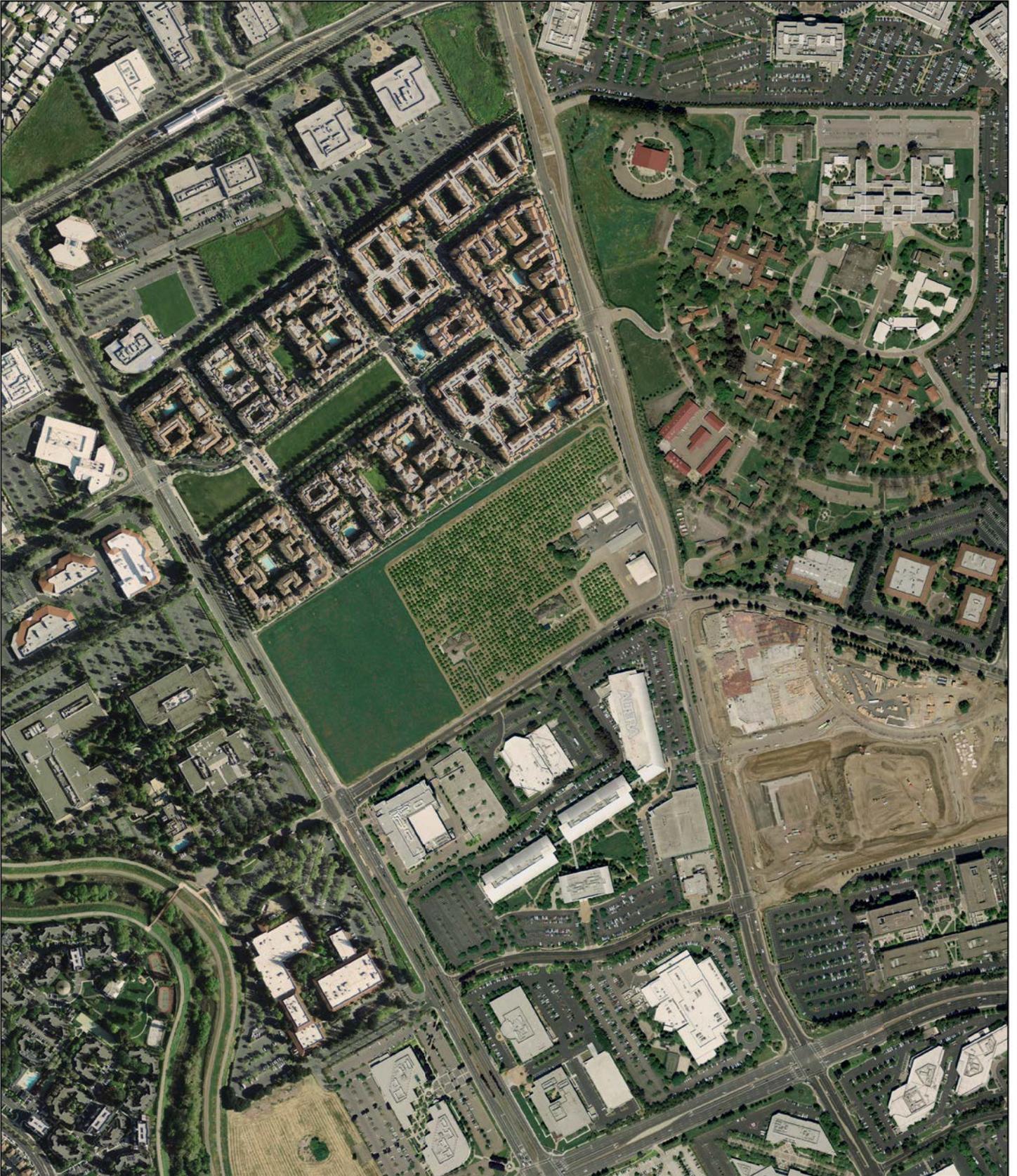


# City of San Jose Vacant Land Inventory



*Prepared by: City of San Jose, Planning Division, March 2012*

# City of San Jose Vacant Land Inventory

## **Background**

For several decades, the City of San Jose has periodically prepared a Vacant Land Inventory. At times, the report has been an invaluable tool in measurement of the rate, type, and location of development activity in the City. This was most certainly true in the mid-1980's and late-1990's, when activity levels were not only extremely high, but the majority of development was still occurring on vacant lands.

The situation today is obviously quite different. Development activity has moderated quite significantly since the end of the "dot com" era. But equally important, infill development patterns and land use intensification trends, along with a rapidly diminishing supply of vacant lands, have produced a situation where, today, most new construction occurs via land redevelopment.

In any event, a reassessment of San Jose's remaining vacant lands is still a useful endeavor, especially at this particular juncture. Just a few months ago, the City completed an extensive, four year process to update its General Plan, called *Envision San Jose 2040*, which is a comprehensive, long-term plan to guide future development and land use decisions. Thus, land use designations identified in this Vacant Land Inventory correspond with the new designations established by the Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan.

However, an additional linkage between the Vacant Land Inventory and General Plan can be found in California State Law. Specifically, Government Code Section 65583(a)(3), which governs preparation of a "housing element" (one of seven mandatory topics to be addressed by a general plan and required to be updated every five years), states that a housing element shall "identify adequate sites for housing, including an inventory of vacant sites suitable for residential development." As such, this inventory sets the stage for preparation of San Jose's next housing element, due in 2014, in compliance with legal requirements.

## **Methodology and Limitations**

The Vacant Land Inventory was prepared through interpretation of aerial photographs of the City of San Jose obtained from the United States Geological Survey (USGS). These aerials were taken in April 2011. Vacant land areas were identified from these photos and entered into a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database.

While the information contained herein is believed accurate, errors may occur due to source limitations (e.g., tree cover and other obstructions) and the GIS data translation process. Where aerial photos indicated the presence of new improvements on vacant lands, these areas were considered developed if building foundations or structures were observed. The inventory does not monitor the redevelopment of lands with prior improvements or measure the intensity of improvements or their occupancy (i.e., vacancy rate of buildings).

The inventory generally includes only those lands identified on the Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan that are within the Urban Service Area (USA) and which are designated for urban development. These criteria act to exclude, for example, the Open Hillside and Open Space, Parklands and Habitat land use designations.

Additional development potential ultimately exists on vacant lands within the City's Urban Reserves (i.e., South Almaden Valley and Coyote Valley), located within the Almaden and Coyote Planning Areas, respectively, and within the City's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), but outside the USA. However, due to the environmental and fiscal impacts associated with development in these areas, the Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan does not allow urban/suburban development in Urban Reserves through 2040.

No representation is made or implied as to the suitability or availability of lands for development. Some vacant lands may have approved development entitlements.

The Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan update process resulted in changes to land designations (esp. to promote commercial uses), and some designations allow a mix of uses (e.g., Urban Village). Further, by State law, a General Plan can be amended as many as four times a year. Thus, over time, land area may be added or subtracted from identified vacant land categories as a result of General Plan updates, amendments, or development proposals.

Some vacant lands designated as Public/Quasi-Public may not be suitable for urban development or may be intended for permanent open space uses (e.g., buffer lands surrounding the Water Pollution Control Plant in Alviso).

Parcel lines represented on the accompanying map are for illustrative purposes only. Vacant land areas identified commonly extend beyond the boundaries of a parcel or parcels. For tracking purposes, only one Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) is used to identify each vacant land area.

## **Summary of Findings**

### *Residential*

The supply of vacant residential lands in San Jose was over 700 acres as of April 2011. Three-quarters of these lands were designated for single-family development, the majority of which were in peripheral locations within a half-mile from the City's Urban Service Area boundary. In contrast, multi-family lands were more centrally located; for example, over 80% occurred within one-mile of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's light rail transit system.

Given this limited vacant land supply, the future rate of land absorption will be much slower than in prior decades.<sup>1</sup> However, this circumstance does not imply a reduced rate of housing production, as projects are now primarily occurring through land redevelopment and project densities are rising.<sup>2</sup> In fact, since 2000, single-family detached units have accounted for just one-fifth of new housing, as the large majority were higher density apartments, condos, and townhomes.

<sup>1</sup>Residential land absorption, annual average rate, 1980-2011= 300 acres/year (approx.).

<sup>2</sup>New residential project densities, average, 2006-2011= 35-40 dwelling units/acre (approx.).

## *Commercial*

The supply of vacant commercial lands in San Jose was over 300 acres as of April 2011. These lands were geographically dispersed and generally small in size.<sup>3</sup>

This limited vacant land supply represents less than 10% of all commercial lands in the City, such that the future rate of land absorption will be much slower than in prior decades.<sup>4</sup> The majority of the City's commercial lands were developed prior to 1975, and present day construction activity has been concentrated on previously developed lands. Prominent examples of commercial redevelopment include new high-rise office buildings in Downtown, and construction/renovation of regional shopping centers (e.g., Santana Row, Valley Fair, Oakridge Mall, The Plant).

<sup>3</sup>Vacant commercial lands, average size= 3 acres (approx.).

<sup>4</sup>Commercial land absorption, annual average rate, 1980-2011= 35 acres/year (approx.).

## *Industrial*

The supply of vacant industrial lands in San Jose was over 3,000 acres as of April 2011. Approximately half of these lands were located in the North Coyote Campus Industrial area, with the remainder concentrated in, and roughly evenly distributed among, the Alviso, Edenvale, Evergreen, and North Planning Areas.

The rate of industrial land absorption has closely mirrored fluctuations in the local high tech economy over the last twenty years, ranging from single-digit acreage lows to highs of 200 acres or more in the early-1980's and late-1990's<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup>Industrial land absorption, annual average rate, 1980-2011= 140 acres/year (approx.).

**Figure 1:  
San Jose Planning Areas and Urban Service Area**



**Table 1**  
**City of San Jose**  
**Vacant Land Supply (in acres)**  
**by Land Use and Planning Area, as of April 2011**

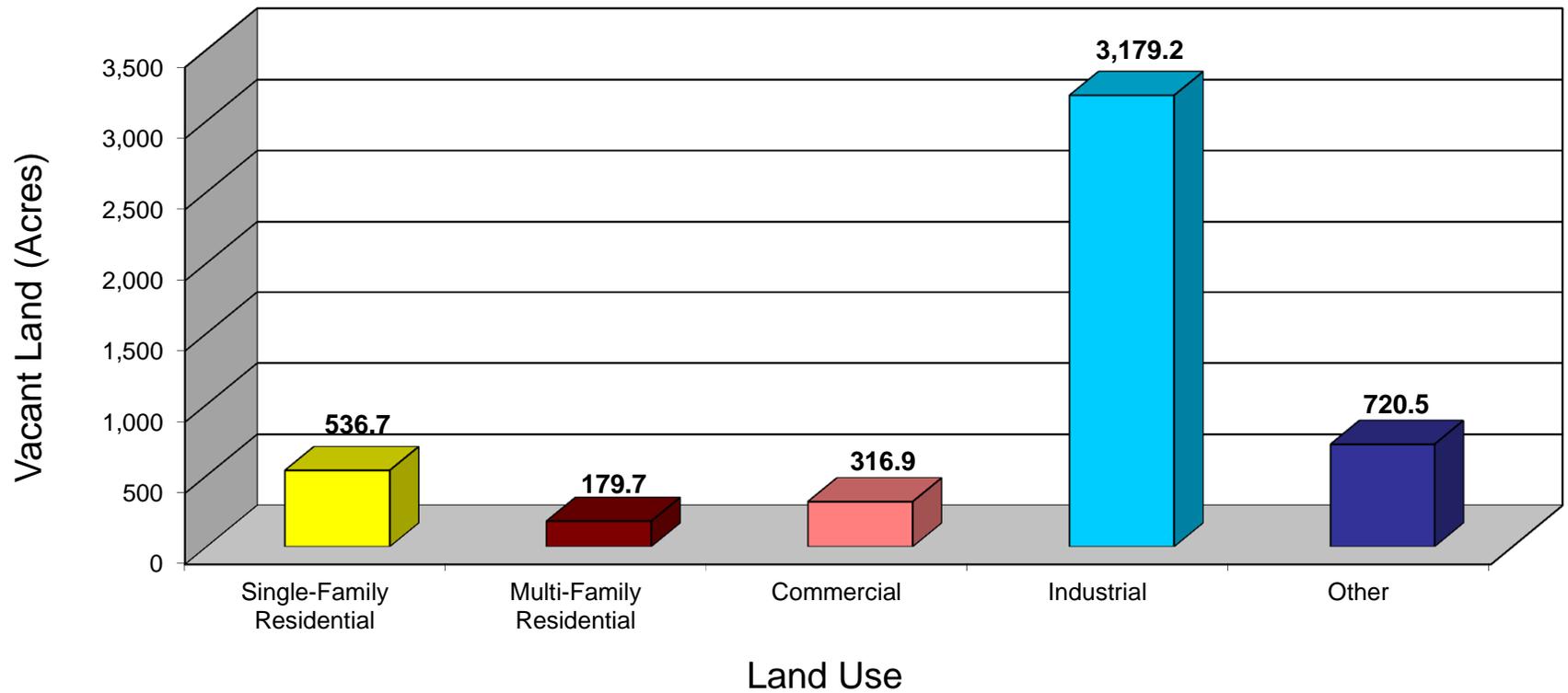
Planning Area	Residential <sup>1</sup>			Non-Residential				Total
	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Subtotal	Commercial	Industrial	Other <sup>2</sup>	Subtotal	
Almaden	56.9	-	56.9	-	-	-	-	<b>56.9</b>
Alum Rock	103.3	15.5	118.8	24.3	6.9	23.5	54.7	<b>173.5</b>
Alviso	7.0	6.9	13.9	0.3	305.3	636.8	942.4	<b>956.3</b>
Berryessa	134.0	2.7	136.7	15.0	41.2	32.4	88.6	<b>225.3</b>
Cambrian/Pioneer	3.0	-	3.0	48.2	-	0.6	48.8	<b>51.8</b>
Central	11.9	19.9	31.8	24.3	66.1	5.6	96.0	<b>127.8</b>
Coyote	-	-	-	-	1,615.7	-	1,615.7	<b>1,615.7</b>
Edenvale	42.7	16.0	58.7	104.8	406.7	1.4	512.9	<b>571.6</b>
Evergreen	127.5	22.0	149.5	68.2	341.6	3.9	413.7	<b>563.2</b>
North	-	22.7	22.7	8.0	268.4	9.5	285.9	<b>308.6</b>
South	42.7	72.9	115.6	13.4	124.5	2.6	140.5	<b>256.1</b>
West Valley	1.5	-	1.5	3.0	-	1.4	4.4	<b>5.9</b>
Willow Glen	6.2	1.1	7.3	7.4	2.8	2.8	13.0	<b>20.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>536.7</b>	<b>179.7</b>	<b>716.4</b>	<b>316.9</b>	<b>3,179.2</b>	<b>720.5</b>	<b>4,216.6</b>	<b>4,933.0</b>

<sup>1</sup>For definition purposes, "single-family" includes the Lower Hillside, Rural Residential, and Residential Neighborhood Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan land use designations, while "multi-family" includes the Mixed Use Neighborhood, Urban Residential, and Transit Residential land use designations.

<sup>2</sup>The "other" land use category is comprised of the Public/Quasi-Public General Plan land use designation.

Note: numbers may not sum due to rounding.

**Figure 1**  
**Vacant Land Supply by Land Use,**  
**as of April 2011**



**Table 2**  
**City of San Jose**  
**Vacant Residential Land Supply (in acres)**  
**by General Plan Designation and Planning Area, as of April 2011**

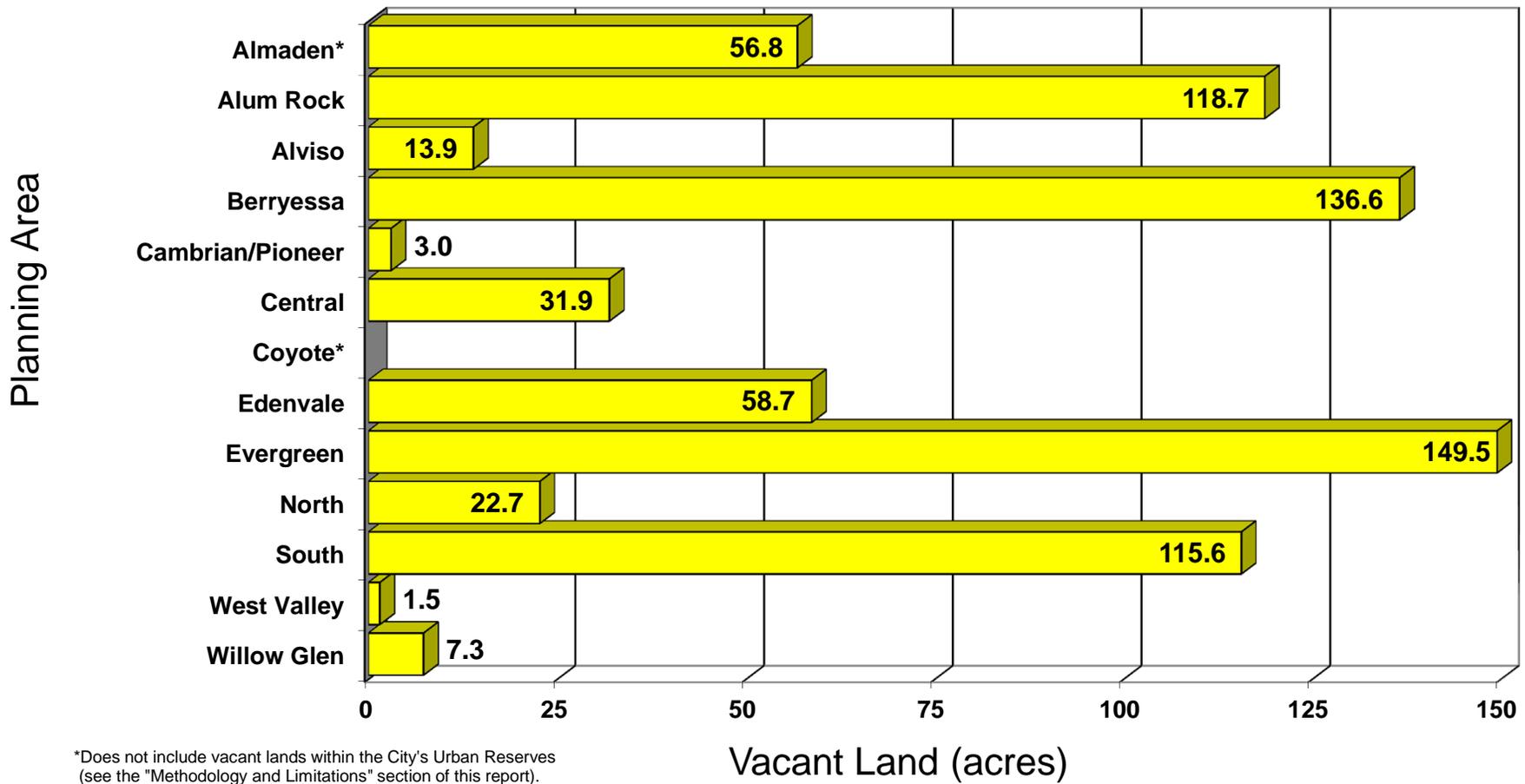
Planning Area	Residential General Plan Designation						Total
	LH*	RR*	RN*	MUN*	UR*	TR*	
Almaden**	15.3	32.8	8.7	-	-	-	56.8
Alum Rock	60.6	11.4	31.3	12.6	0.4	2.4	118.7
Alviso	-	-	7.0	6.9	-	-	13.9
Berryessa	37.0	79.3	17.6	-	-	2.7	136.6
Cambrian/Pioneer	-	-	3.0	-	-	-	3.0
Central	-	-	11.9	6.7	4.3	9.0	31.9
Coyote**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Edenvale	-	3.2	39.5	1.2	14.8	-	58.7
Evergreen	27.7	76.7	23.1	22.0	-	-	149.5
North	-	-	-	-	-	22.7	22.7
South	-	25.3	17.4	1.0	71.9	-	115.6
West Valley	-	-	1.5	-	-	-	1.5
Willow Glen	-	-	6.2	1.1	-	-	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>140.6</b>	<b>228.7</b>	<b>167.2</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>91.4</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>716.2</b>

\*LH= Lower Hillside; RR= Rural Residential; RN= Residential Neighborhood; MUN= Mixed Use Neighborhood;  
UR= Urban Residential; TR= Transit Residential.

\*\*Does not include vacant lands within the City's Urban Reserves (see the "Methodology and Limitations" section of this report).

Note: numbers may not sum due to rounding.

**Figure 2  
Vacant Residential Land Supply by Planning Area,  
as of April 2011**



**Table 3**  
**City of San Jose**  
**Vacant Commercial Land Supply (in acres)**  
**by General Plan Designation and Planning Area, as of April 2011**

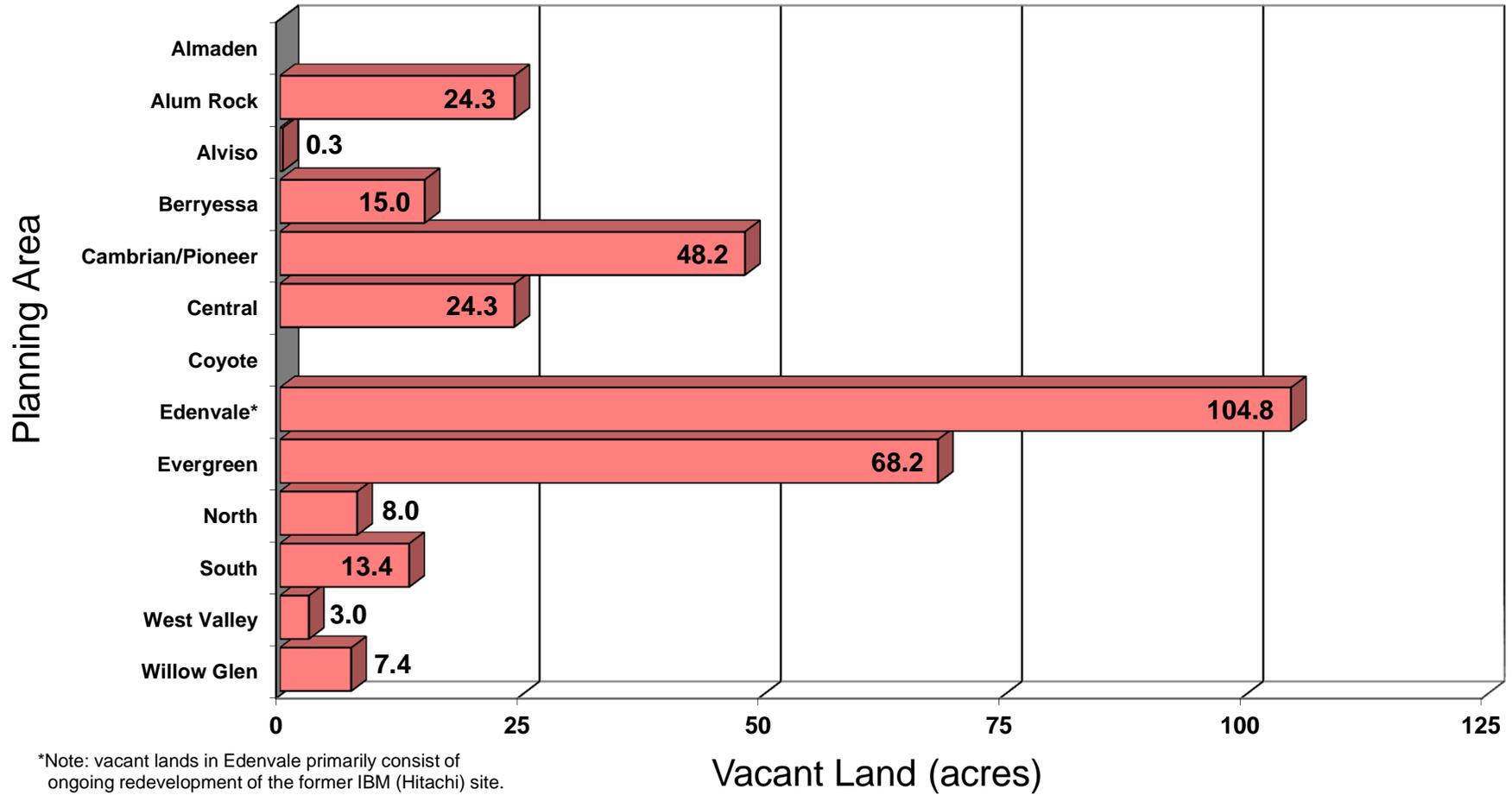
Planning Area	Commercial General Plan Designation					Total
	NCC*	MUC*	RC*	DT*	UV*	
Almaden	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alum Rock	22.3	-	-	-	2.0	24.3
Alviso	0.3	-	-	-	-	0.3
Berryessa	15.0	-	-	-	-	15.0
Cambrian/Pioneer	3.2	1.6	43.4	-	-	48.2
Central	7.9	6.3	-	7.5	2.6	24.3
Coyote	-	-	-	-	-	-
Edenvale**	10.5	-	-	-	94.3	104.8
Evergreen	68.2	-	-	-	-	68.2
North	7.0	-	-	-	1.0	8.0
South	13.4	-	-	-	-	13.4
West Valley	3.0	-	-	-	-	3.0
Willow Glen	7.2	0.2	-	-	-	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>158.0</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>316.9</b>

\*NCC= Neighborhood/Community Commercial; MUC= Mixed Use Commercial; RC= Regional Commercial;  
DT= Downtown; UV= Urban Village.

\*\*Note: vacant lands in Edenvale primarily consist of ongoing redevelopment of the former IBM (Hitachi) site.

Note: numbers may not sum due to rounding.

**Figure 3  
Vacant Commercial Land Supply by Planning Area,  
as of April 2011**



**Table 4**  
**City of San Jose**  
**Vacant Industrial Land Supply (in acres)**  
**by General Plan Designation and Planning Area, as of April 2011**

Planning Area	Industrial General Plan Designation					Total
	CIC*	LI*	HI*	IP*	TEC*	
Almaden	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alum Rock	-	6.9	-	-	-	6.9
Alviso	167.8	137.5	-	-	-	305.3
Berryessa	5.6	-	12.9	22.7	-	41.2
Cambrian/Pioneer	-	-	-	-	-	-
Central	24.7	21.1	18.4	-	1.9	66.1
Coyote	-	-	-	1,615.7	-	1,615.7
Edenvale	113.7	1.9	-	253.6	37.6	406.8
Evergreen	-	8.4	-	333.2	-	341.6
North	19.5	22.5	3.1	139.7	83.7	268.5
South	28.3	19.7	14.9	61.8	-	124.7
West Valley	-	-	-	-	-	-
Willow Glen	2.8	-	-	-	-	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>362.4</b>	<b>218.0</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>2,426.7</b>	<b>123.2</b>	<b>3,179.6</b>

\*CIC= Combined Industrial/Commercial; LI= Light Industrial; HI= Heavy Industrial;  
IP= Industrial Park; TEC= Transit Employment Center.  
Note: numbers may not sum due to rounding.

**Figure 4  
Vacant Industrial Land Supply by Planning Area,  
as of April 2011**

