

USPS Mailing Addresses and Community Identity in Unincorporated Alameda County

ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
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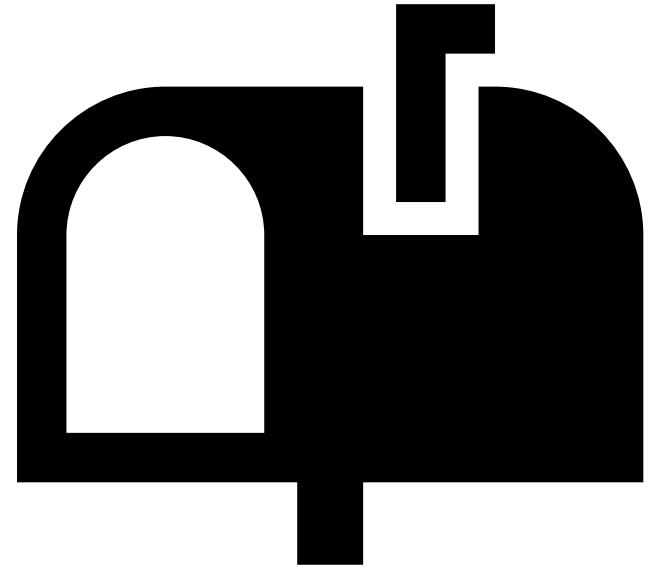


Issue:

USPS-assigned mailing addresses may not accurately reflect unincorporated community names or boundaries.*

This has unintended consequences:

- Causes confusion
- Impacts community identity
- Hinders data collection
- Influences resource allocation



History of the “ZIP Code Project”

- Supervisor Nate Miley launched the Eden Area Livability Initiative (EALI) in 2004 with the goals of improving the quality of life and health of the residents of the urban unincorporated communities. It had 2 phases.
- During EALI Phase II (2012-2019), a “ZIP Code Realignment” project arose from the Governance Working Group to address the unintentional impacts of ZIP codes and USPS place names on unincorporated community identity, data collection, and service delivery.
- Beginning in 2019, the Governance Working Group began researching ZIP Code realignment options and processes. In 2022, Supervisor Miley requested Planning provide further research and support for this project.
- This project focuses on the urban unincorporated area of Alameda County because residents of these communities have expressed concern about community identity related to ZIP codes and USPS mailing addresses.

1. Example of Issue: USPS Place Names not consistent with urban unincorporated area places

The official USPS Place Name in the example, below, is “San Leandro” (a city) when, in fact, this address is in **Ashland**, an **unincorporated community**:

The USPS calls this Place Name their “Preferred Last Line” (PLL).

A PLL is an official USPS Place Name associated with the Post Office branch that delivers your mail.

REACH Ashland Youth Center
16335 E 14th St
San Leandro, CA 94578

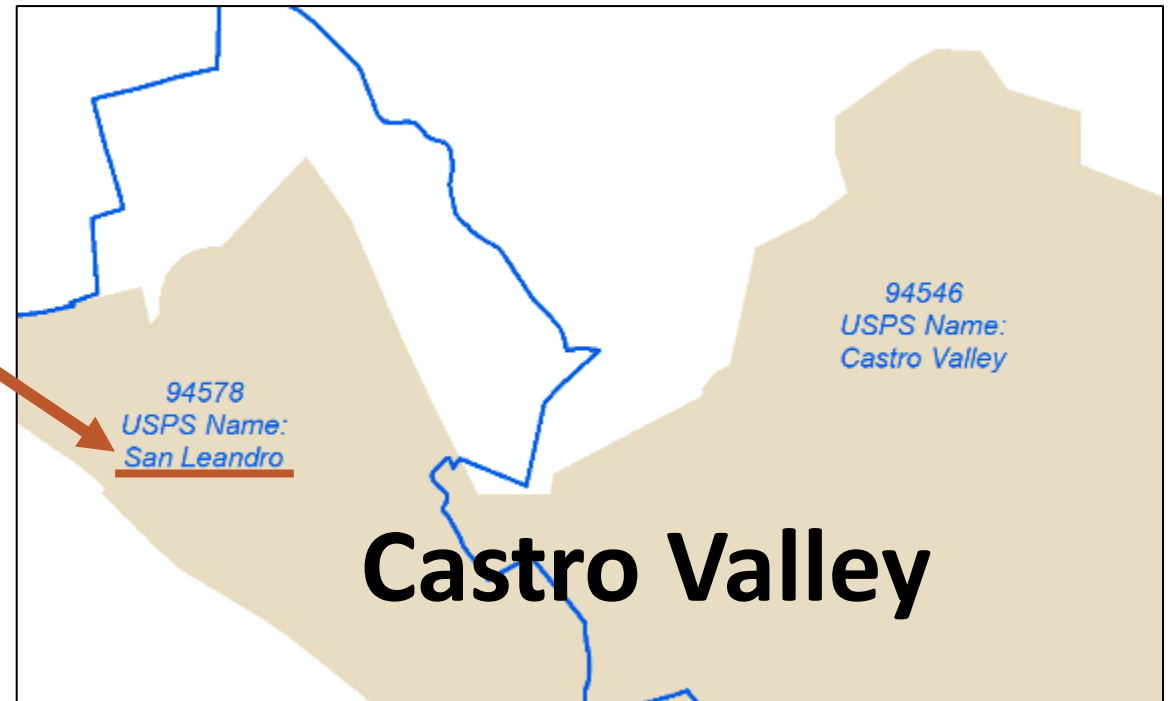
Current PLLs in urban unincorporated: “Hayward, CA”, “San Leandro, CA”, “Castro Valley, CA”, and “San Lorenzo, CA”

2. Example of Issue: Inconsistent Boundaries

Castro Valley and San Lorenzo have their own Post Offices and Place Names (PLLs), but the USPS PLL boundaries do not match the boundaries of those communities:

For example:

A resident of Castro Valley, 94578 has an official PLL of “San Leandro” in their mailing address because the San Leandro Post Office delivers their mail.



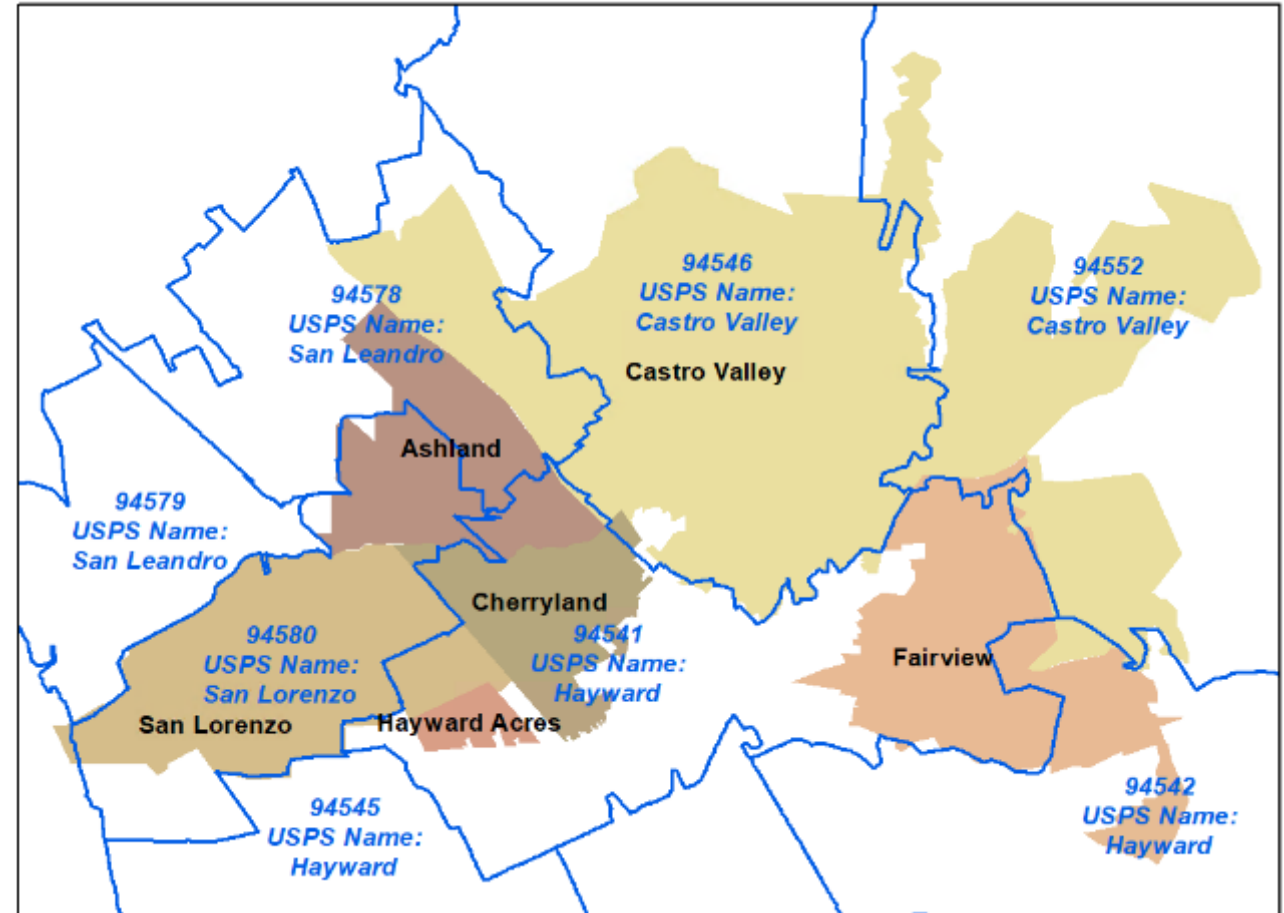
Four USPS Place Names (PLLs) are currently used in the urban unincorporated communities:

“Hayward, CA”

“Castro Valley, CA”

“San Leandro, CA”

“San Lorenzo, CA”

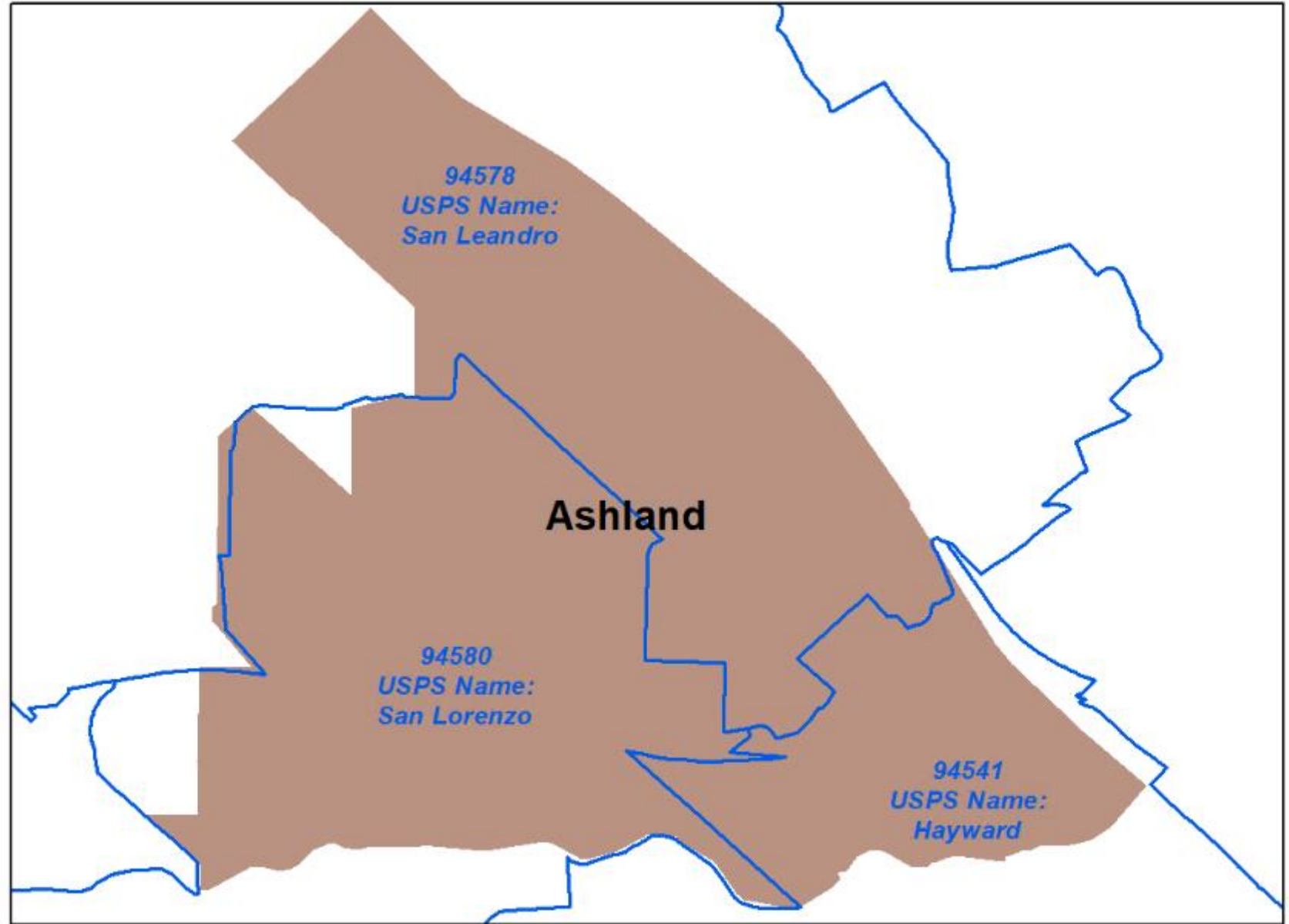


Existing ZIPs and PLLs in Ashland

94578 – “San Leandro”

94580 – “San Lorenzo”

94541 – “Hayward”

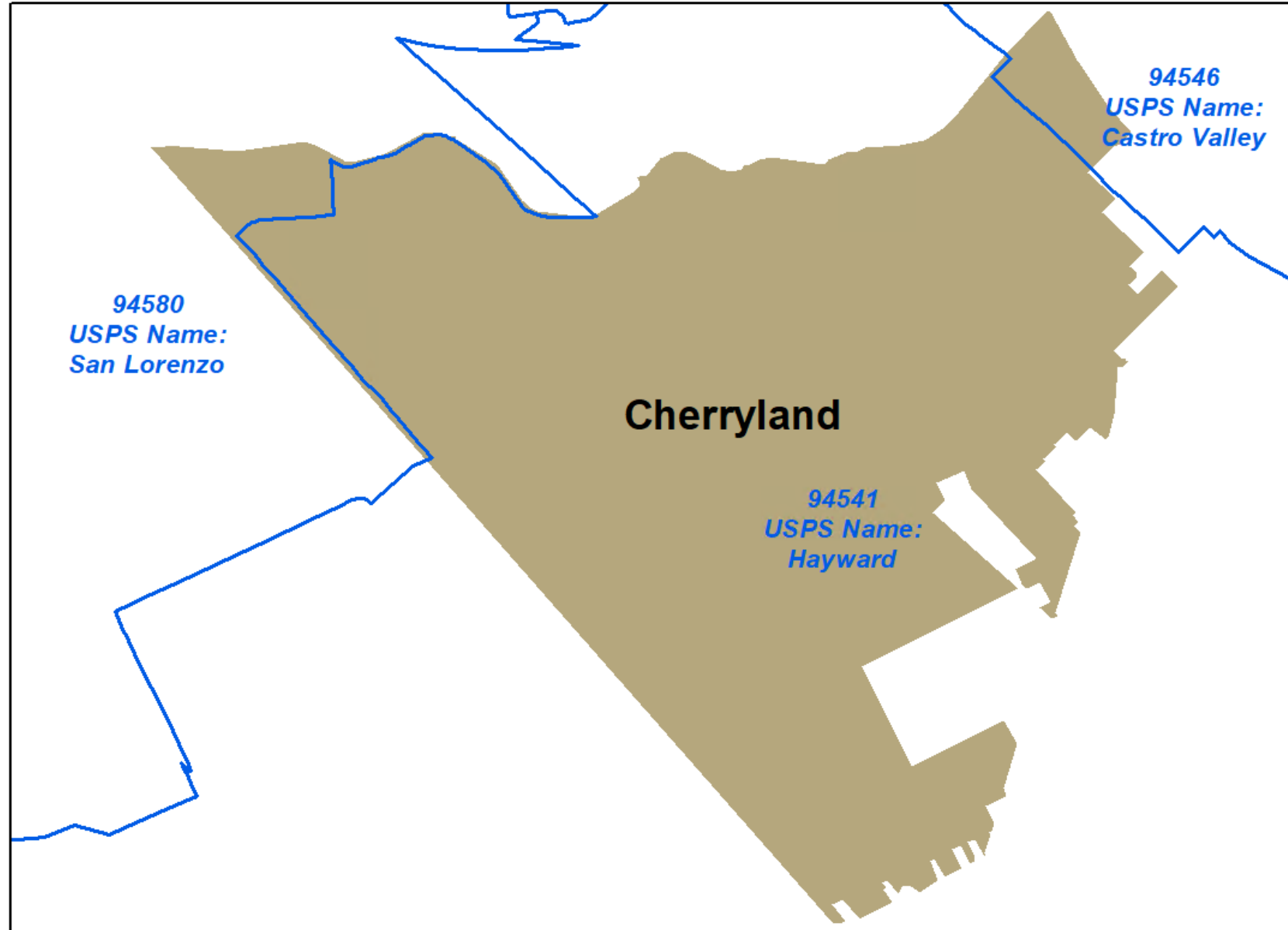


Existing ZIPs and PLLs in Cherryland

94546 – “Castro Valley”

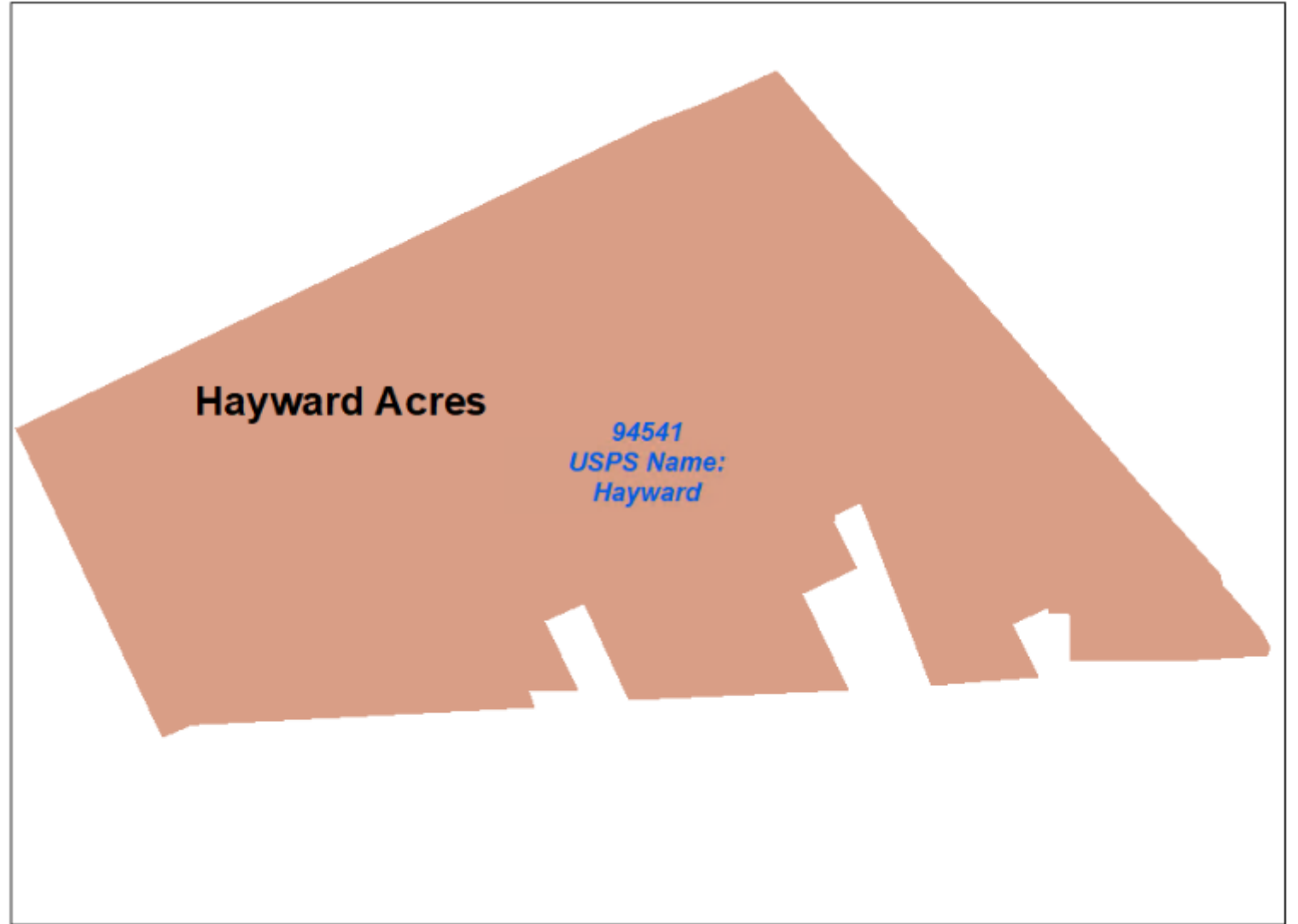
94580 – “San Lorenzo”

94541 – “Hayward”



Existing ZIP and PLL in Hayward Acres

94541 – “Hayward”



Existing ZIPs and PLLs in Castro Valley

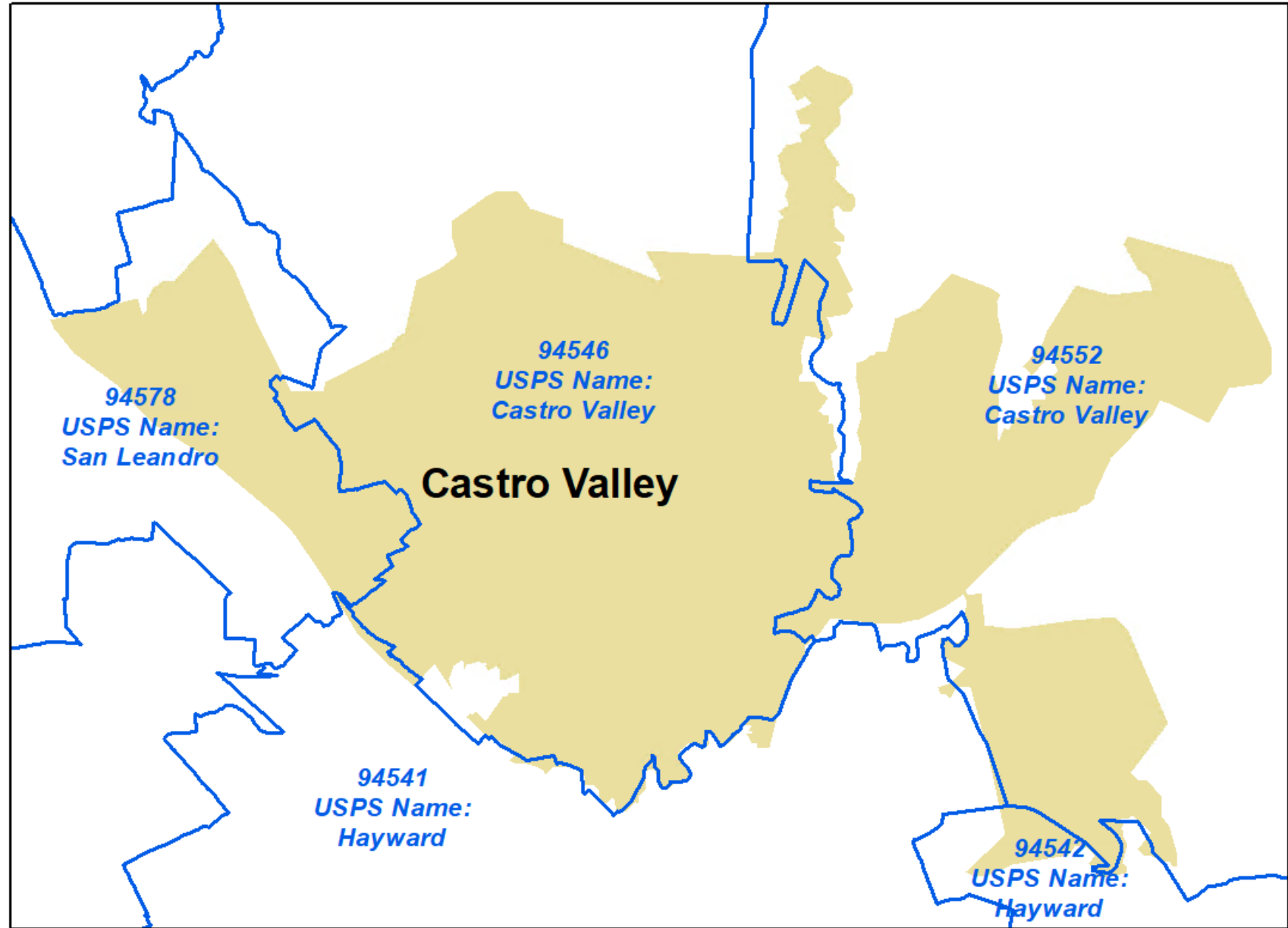
94546 – “Castro Valley”

94552 – “Castro Valley”

94578 – “San Leandro”

94541 – “Hayward”

94542 – “Hayward”



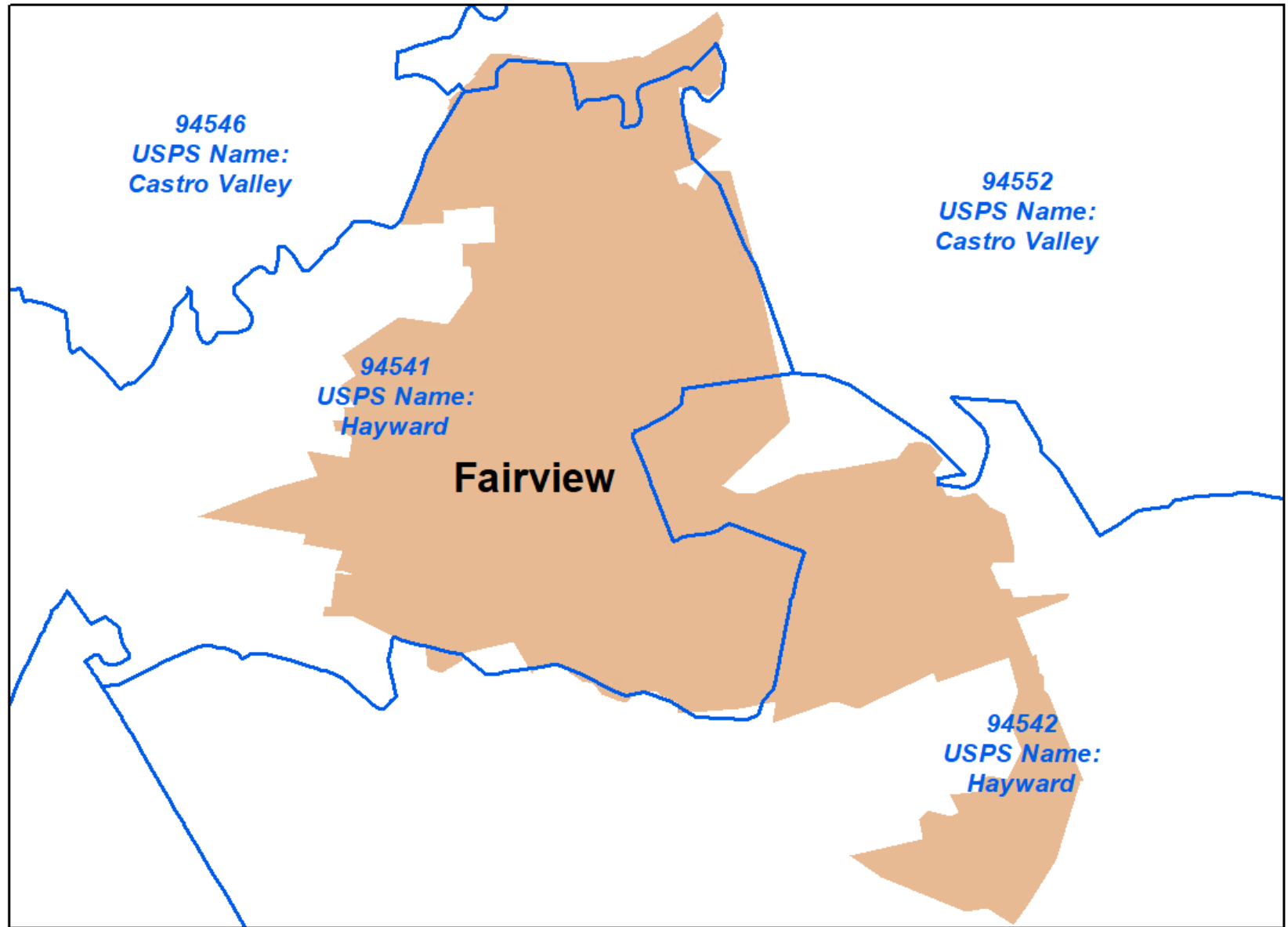
Existing ZIPs and PLLs in Fairview

94546 – “Castro Valley”

94552 – “Castro Valley”

94541 – “Hayward”

94542 – “Hayward”



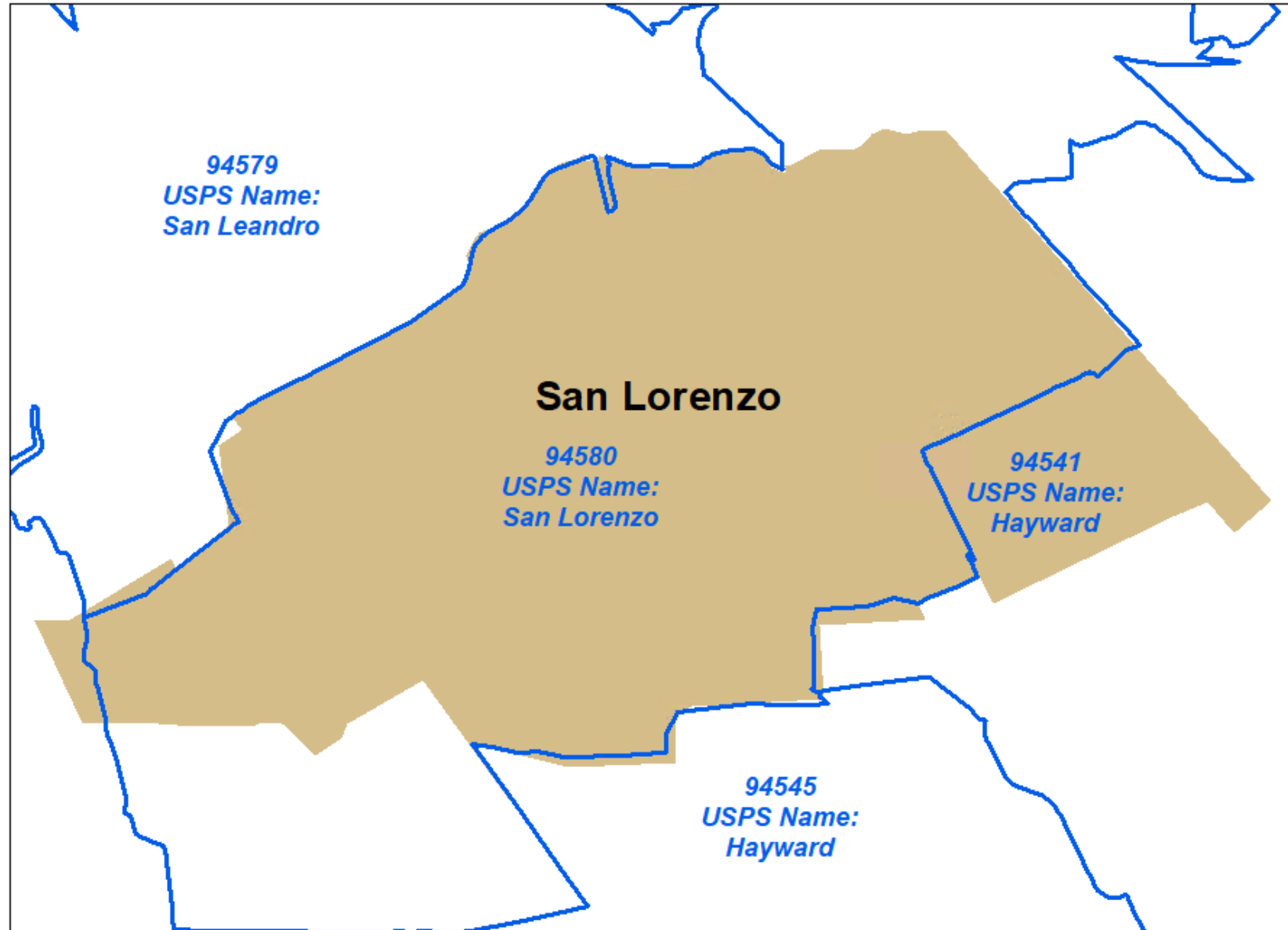
Existing ZIPs and PLLs in San Lorenzo

94580 – “San Lorenzo”

94541 – “Hayward”

94545 – “Hayward”

94579 – “San Leandro”



What changes can the County request from USPS?



Option 1: Preferred Last Line (PLL)
Place Name Change

Option 2: Alternate Preferred Last
Line Change

Option 3: Full ZIP Code Boundary
Realignment

Option 1: Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change

Residents would use their community name as the official Place Name on their mail.

“Official” means that USPS recognizes your unincorporated community name (Ashland, Cherryland, Hayward Acres, Fairview, San Lorenzo, or Castro Valley) as the default Place Name (PLL), reflected in USPS.com searches.

EXAMPLE:

**16335 E 14th St
San Leandro, CA
94578**



would officially become

**16335 E 14th St
Ashland, CA
94578**

Hayward and San Leandro would no longer be official PLLs in unincorporated or on USPS.com, but residents could still use the old USPS Place Name (PLL) as long as they use the correct ZIP and street address. ZIP codes would not change.

Option 2: Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL) Change

Residents could use their community name on their mail, but it would not be official.

EXAMPLE:

**16335 E 14th St
San Leandro, CA
94578**

would remain

**16335 E 14th St
San Leandro, CA
94578**

but USPS would also accept

**16335 E 14th St
Ashland, CA
94578**

The official PLL and ZIP would not change. Hayward and San Leandro would remain official PLLs in unincorporated. This change would not be the default on USPS.com.

What's the difference between Option 1 and Option 2?

Option 1: Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change

Unincorporated community names become the official, default USPS Place Names. “San Leandro” and “Hayward” can still be used but are no longer official.

Option 2: Alternate Preferred Last Line Change

Official/default Place Names do not change, but residents have the *option* to write unincorporated community names on mail.

Option 3: Full ZIP Code Boundary Realignment

County could request change to ZIP Code boundaries and PLLs to align with communities.

- County must send survey to all impacted addresses
- 50% of surveys must be returned and 50% of responses must approve of the requested change
- Survey response does not guarantee approval—USPS will offer Options 1 and 2 as “accommodations” during a ZIP Boundary Review process
- Long and costly process, rarely approved by USPS
- Additional coordination with Cities likely necessary

How long will it take?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
Approximately 6 months from time of request	Approximately 1 month from time of request	1 year or more from time of request

Will USPS approve it?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
Very likely	Extremely likely	Not likely

Will it be the default on USPS.com?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
Yes, unincorporated community names would become the official/default Place Names	No, the official/default Place Names would not change	Yes, this change would be official/default if approved

Is this change optional for residents?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
Yes. This change is official , but residents can choose to use either the new or old Place Name (PLL).	Yes. This change is not official , so residents can use either the official or Alternate Place Name.	Not optional. Residents within new ZIP/PLL boundaries would need to use new ZIP code/PLL.

Does this help with community identity?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
Yes. This strengthens unincorporated community identity because USPS default Place Names would accurately reflect unincorporated community names and boundaries.	Not much. This does little to improve unincorporated community identity because it does not remove City names from unincorporated mailing addresses.	Yes. If approved, this strengthens community identity by aligning official mailing addresses and ZIP codes with unincorporated communities.

Would it impact mail delivery?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
No, as long as you use the correct ZIP	No, as long as you use the correct ZIP	Yes, because this changes the way mail is delivered

Would I need to buy new address labels?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
No. You can continue to use labels with the old Place Name (PLL) as long as the ZIP and street address are correct.	No. Your official Place Name (PLL) will not change, so there is no need to change address labels.	Yes. Mailing labels with an old ZIP would need to be discarded. Businesses may also need to change advertising or signage.

* For all, the County would need to wait 10 years before pursuing another ZIP Code Boundary Review.

Are there other potential impacts?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
Possible improvements to data collection that uses PLL (e.g., Census, others?) Unknown impacts outside of County and USPS uses.	No impacts anticipated.	Improved public health data collection. Possible impacts where ZIP is used (e.g. insurance rates, district boundaries, annexations)

What is the cost to the County?

<u>Option 1:</u> Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change	<u>Option 2:</u> Alternate Preferred Last Line (APLL)	<u>Option 3:</u> ZIP Code Boundary Review
Some cost: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address list purchase• Mailing to inform residents (optional and good practice)	Low to no cost: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mailing to inform residents (optional)	Highest cost: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address list purchase• Survey mailing to all addresses and• Door-to-door outreach to reach 50% required survey response

Summary of options:

Option 1: Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change

Unincorporated community names become the official, default USPS Place Names. “San Leandro” and “Hayward” can still be used but are no longer official in unincorporated.

Option 2: Alternate Preferred Last Line Change

Official/default Place Names stay the same, but residents have the option to write unincorporated community names on mail.

Option 3: ZIP Code Boundary Review

County could request to change ZIP Code boundaries and PLLs to align with communities. ZIP changes are costly and rarely approved.

What is the community process?

- Staff gathers community input and makes recommendations to BOS:
 - Unincorporated Services Committee – December 2022
 - CV/Eden Area Chamber, Eden MAC, CV MAC, Fairview MAC, Transportation & Planning Committee – Early 2023
- Board of Supervisors directs staff about which option to pursue
- Staff gathers address data and makes request to USPS

Feedback from Unincorporated Services Committee meeting, December 2022

- Community Question: How many addresses will be impacted?
 - Staff response: Preliminary analysis indicates that **27,365 parcels** will be impacted, but the actual number of USPS addresses will be larger. County Assessor property data are parcel-based, not address based, and a single parcel may contain have multiple addresses. The County will need to purchase a third-party address list to know the complete number of USPS addresses impacted.
- Community Question: Will this project also fix City Name discrepancies in the County Assessor’s data?
 - Staff response: These are separate initiatives because the USPS and County databases are unrelated. If the County pursues Option 1 or Option 3, it will need to purchase a complete list of addresses in impacted areas. District 4 staff are separately exploring options for leveraging this list to benefit County address data systems more broadly.
- Community Comment: Option 1 (Preferred Last Line Change) may have unanticipated impacts because of the ways that Place Names are used. For example, you can get into the San Leandro city golf course for free if your mail says “San Leandro” —if your address changes to “Ashland”, you might not still have access.
 - Staff response: Option 1 would not change community boundaries, but it would make unincorporated community names the official USPS place names within their respective boundaries. In this example, the resident would still have the option to write “San Leandro” on their mail.
- Community Question: How can we request more USPS drop boxes in neighborhoods that need them?
 - USPS response: The community member should address this request with their local Post Office. If no response, they can contact the Complaints and Inquire Department at 916-373-8630.
- Community comment at USC was generally supportive of Option 1– Preferred Last Line Change; Supervisors Brown and Miley signaled support of pursuing Option 1 and directed staff to bring these options to community (MACs, Chamber, etc) for feedback before bringing a recommendation to the BOS

Staff recommendation

Option 1: Preferred Last Line (PLL) Place Name Change

- Helps establish unincorporated community identity
- Potential for data collection to better reflect unincorporated
- Achievable, likely to be approved by USPS
- Lower cost than ZIP Boundary Review
- Change is official, but residents don't have to buy new labels and can still use "San Leandro" or "Hayward"

Questions?
