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Alameda County Announces Official USPS Place Name Changes for Urban Unincorporated Communities

Alameda County, CA—Following years of community advocacy, the United States Postal Service (USPS) recently changed a 60-year-old naming convention impacting nearly 29,000 mailing addresses in Alameda County's urban unincorporated communities. Residents of Ashland, Cherryland, Hayward Acres, Fairview, San Lorenzo, and Castro Valley will now see their unincorporated community name accurately reflected as the default "Place Name" on USPS.com. A "Place Name" (also called a "Preferred Last Line") is the "City, State" line in a USPS mailing address.

This significant change, driven by the Eden Area Livability Initiative (<https://www.acgov.org/edenareavision/>) and championed by Supervisor Nate Miley of District 4 and Supervisor Lena Tam of District 3, is an important step toward addressing longstanding community identity issues in unincorporated Alameda County. When ZIP Codes were first established in the 1960s, many unincorporated communities were assigned USPS address Place Names and ZIP Codes associated with larger neighboring cities for convenience (i.e. Hayward and San Leandro). In September 2023, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a formal request to USPS to officially recognize Alameda County's urban unincorporated communities as USPS Place Names. USPS implemented these changes in March 2025, and Ashland, Cherryland, Fairview, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo, and Hayward Acres are now the official mailing address Place Names for their respective urban unincorporated Alameda County communities.

"This is a major milestone for our unincorporated communities," said Supervisor Nate Miley. For decades, residents have faced confusion about where to get services – do I call the police, or do I call the Sheriff? Do I get a book from the city library or the county library? It clears up issues of identity – what community do I live in, is it in a city or unincorporated area - and what does that mean? Not to mention the impact of data collection by ZIP Code due to incorrect Place Names in their USPS addresses.

This change is easy because residents and businesses don't have to change their ZIP Code, it stays the same, no change-of-address is needed. You can use your old Place Name if you want to. And over time, Google Maps and others business that use USPS data to populate their databases will pick up the correct community names too. Its a win-win!"

What This Means for Residents

- **Correct Place Names on Mail:** Residents in the affected communities will now see their unincorporated community name in official mailing addresses on USPS.com. Mail using the old Place Name will still get delivered, see Flexibility in Usage, below.
- **No Change to ZIP Codes:** ZIP Codes in the County's unincorporated communities remain the same, ensuring uninterrupted mail service.
- **Flexibility in Usage:** While the new Place Names are the official default on USPS.com, USPS will continue to deliver mail addressed with the previous Place Name as long as the correct ZIP Code and street address are used.
- **No Impact on Essential Services:** School districts, tax rates, and public safety services in the unincorporated communities remain unchanged.

Integration into Other Address Systems

While USPS is the official source for mailing address data, agencies and private companies acquire address data updates through a variety of sources, including through third-party address vendors and services. Due to the decentralized nature of address data in a digital world, it will take some time before these USPS Place Name address changes are universally reflected in mapping applications, address verification systems, and elsewhere outside the USPS databases. Residents may notice inconsistencies across various platforms until these decentralized systems are fully updated, but this will not impact mail delivery as long as residents continue to use the correct street address and ZIP Code.

Community Engagement & Feedback

The County conducted extensive community outreach prior to requesting this change. The outreach process, conducted by the Alameda County Community Development Agency, included a public survey and eight public meetings, ensuring that residents had the opportunity to weigh in before any decisions were made. The Board of Supervisors carefully considered the community's input before approving the request to USPS.

To inform residents of the changes to USPS Place Names, Alameda County is launching a multimedia outreach campaign in early April that will include mailers to impacted addresses, social media posts, billboards, grassroots outreach via community-based organizations, and more.

Next Steps for Residents

Residents may begin using their unincorporated community name on their mail immediately. While there is no requirement to update address labels or notify service providers, residents who wish to align their records with the new Place Name can do so at their convenience. Residents may notice that their new Place Names are not yet reflected in all address verification systems; the County urges patience as decentralized address systems are updated to reflect this correction to unincorporated-area addresses.

For additional information and answers to frequently asked questions, visit Alameda County's address change project website at <https://www.acgov.org/cda/addresschange.htm>.