

3.0

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The project analyzed in this Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR) is the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan (2035 General Plan), which consists of a comprehensive update of the County's current General Plan, including the continuation of many existing policies, the modification or deletion of others, and the addition of new policies. The 2035 General Plan is intended to provide guidance in the overall land use development for the County. To help describe the proposed project, this chapter provides background information regarding the location and setting of the County; explains what comprises a general plan in California; outlines the project objectives, the policy development, and community outreach process; identifies the key components of the general plan update; and lists the intended uses of the RDEIR. While it includes some of the policies from the 1992 General Plan, the 2035 General Plan is a stand-alone document.

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the County of San Benito Planning & Building Department is the lead agency for the proposed project, and is required to ensure compliance with all CEQA requirements. This RDEIR is the document that demonstrates compliance and provides an assessment of the environmental impacts related to the *Public Review Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan*. The San Benito County Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved of this public review draft at their May 6, 2014 meeting. The 2035 General Plan would supersede the current 1992 San Benito County General Plan (adopted in 1980, as amended periodically) with the exception of the 2007-2014 Housing Element, which would be incorporated into the 2035 General Plan. For consistency, this RDEIR refers to the current General Plan as the "1992 General Plan" since that was the year the Land Use Element was last fully updated.

Although the 2007-2014 Housing Element is part of the 2035 General Plan project, it was updated and adopted in May 2010 as a separate project in order to meet state requirements and deadlines. A separate initial study/negative declaration environmental document for the 2007-2014 Housing Element was circulated for public review from March 18, 2010 through April 15, 2010 and adopted on May 11, 2010 (Resolution No. 2010-53). It is therefore not part of the 2035 General Plan project being evaluated in this RDEIR. In compliance with the CEQA, this RDEIR describes the potential environmental impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan.

3.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

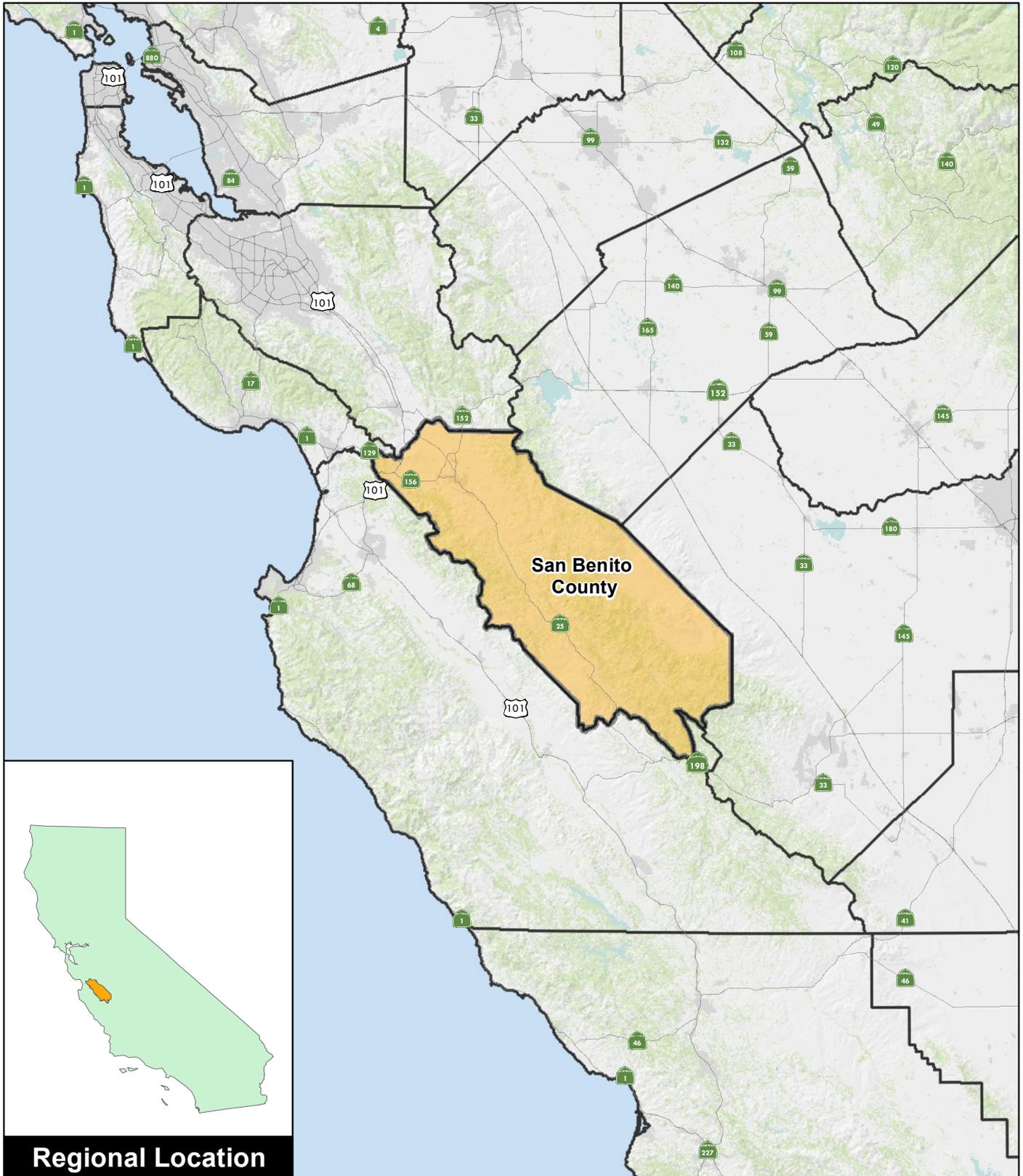
3.2.1 Project Location

San Benito County is located in central California (see [Figure 3-1](#)). It is surrounded by Santa Clara County to the north, Fresno County to the east, Merced County to the east and south, and Monterey County to the west and south. Vehicle travel within the County is served primarily by State Route 25, which runs north-south through the middle of the County; State Route 156, which runs east-west through the northern portion of the County; and U.S. Highway 101, which runs north/south through the northwest corner of the County. U.S. Highway 101 provides a major connection between northern and southern California.

3.2.2 Regional Environmental Setting

The majority of the County consists of steep mountains, rolling and rocky hillsides, and open grassland vegetation, with agricultural and grazing lands primarily located through the central and northern valley portions of the County. The San Andreas Fault runs through the center of the County. This geologic feature separates the County's two distinct mountain ranges: the Diablo Range to the east and the Gabilan Range to the west. The Diablo Range includes summits over 5,000 feet, and steep transitions from the San Benito River valley floor to 2,000 foot plateaus. San Benito Mountain, at 5,241 feet, is the highest peak in the Clear Creek Management Area, a United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wilderness area. The Gabilan Range is bordered by the Santa Lucia Range towards Big Sur to the west, and the San Andreas Fault, San Benito Valley, State Route 25, and the Diablo Range to the east. Fremont Peak, at 3,173 feet, is the highest peak within San Benito County in the Gabilan Range. It is protected within the 244-acre Fremont Peak State Park.

Additional environmental setting discussions are included in each topical environmental analysis section of this RDEIR (Chapters 5 through 20), presented from Countywide and regional perspectives appropriate for each environmental topic.



Source: San Benito County
 Geographic Information Systems Data,
 September 2011

Figure 3-1

Regional Setting



0 10 Miles



3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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3.3 EXISTING LAND USES AND POPULATION

San Benito County occupies over 890,000 acres or 1,391 square miles, of which approximately 882,675 acres or 99.5 percent is unincorporated. The incorporated cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista account for roughly 4,044 acres, or approximately 0.5 percent of the land within the County. There are also several historic unincorporated communities in the County, including Aromas, Paicines, Panoche, Ridgemark, Tres Pinos, and New Idria (see [Figure 3-2](#)). The boundaries of San Benito County's two incorporated municipalities and their Spheres of Influence (SOI) are described below:

Hollister. The City of Hollister, located in the northern portion of the County, is the largest city in San Benito County. In 2005, the City of Hollister adopted its *2005-2023 General Plan* that provided a land use plan for an approximate 9,625-acre planning area, which includes roughly 5,132 acres within the city limits and land under consideration for annexation within the City of Hollister's SOI boundary.

San Juan Bautista. The City of San Juan Bautista is also located in the northern portion of the County. In 1998, the City adopted its updated General Plan to guide development decisions through a 2015 planning horizon. The General Plan covered a an approximately 3,000-acre planning area that included approximately 469 acres within the city limits and 2,531 acres within the City of San Juan Bautista's SOI boundary (San Juan Bautista 1998).

The 2035 General Plan planning area contains all land within the County, but outside of the municipal boundaries of the two incorporated cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista. Land inside the city limits of incorporated municipalities is not under the County of San Benito's jurisdiction, nor is land managed by federal or state agencies. Therefore, this RDEIR focuses on the analysis of potential environmental impacts on non-public lands within unincorporated San Benito County, including land inside each municipality's SOI, but outside municipality's city limits.

San Benito County is largely rural, with a large percentage of the land used for farming, ranching, or forestry. Agriculture, which includes grazing land, is the predominant use in the County, totaling approximately 747,409 acres or 85 percent of the unincorporated County. After grazing, the largest other agricultural land uses include general agriculture and crops (approximately 86,391 acres combined), dry farming (approximately 13,906 acres), vineyards (approximately 9,512 acres), and orchards (approximately 6,420 acres). The County also has significant land, over 78,931 acres (8.9 percent of the unincorporated County) owned and maintained by city, state, and federal governments. Primary public lands management agencies include the BLM and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Publically managed lands include the Pinnacles National Park managed by the National Park Service

(NPS), and the Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area and Fremont Peak State Park managed by the DPR. Table 3-1 summarizes County land uses.

Table 3-1 San Benito County Land Uses

Land Use Categories ¹	Unincorporated Parcels		Unincorporated Acres	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture				
Crops	504	5.0%	27,693	3.1%
Dry Farming	162	1.6%	13,906	1.6%
Facility	9	0.1%	93	0.0%
General	371	3.5%	58,698	6.7%
Grazing	2,782	27.4%	612,670	69.4%
Nursery	11	0.1%	249	0.0%
Recreation	18	0.2%	2,181	0.2%
Resource	38	0.4%	957	0.1%
Livestock	43	0.4%	2,446	0.3%
Orchard	349	3.4%	6,420	0.7%
Vineyard	74	0.7%	9,512	1.1%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>4,361</i>	<i>43.0%</i>	<i>734,826</i>	<i>83.2%</i>
Commercial				
Commercial	68	0.7%	388	0.0%
Medical	1	0.0%	8	0.0%
Motel	-	-	-	-
Recreation	41	0.4%	1,237	0.1%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>1.1%</i>	<i>1,633</i>	<i>0.2%</i>
Industrial				
Heavy Industrial	6	0.1%	483	0.1%
Industrial	22	0.2%	810	0.1%
Industrial Farming	4	0.0%	104	0.0%
Industrial Food	3	0.0%	35	0.0%
Mines or Quarries	12	0.1%	1,305	0.1%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>0.5%</i>	<i>2,737</i>	<i>0.3%</i>

Land Use Categories ¹	Unincorporated Parcels		Unincorporated Acres	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Residential				
Residential	75	0.7%	398	0.0%
Rural	1,895	18.7%	8,000	0.9%
Single-family	1,913	18.9%	791	0.1%
Multi-family	329	3.2%	36	0.0%
Mobile Homes	125	1.2%	420	0.0%
Mobile Home Park	2	0.0%	23	0.0%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>4,339</i>	<i>42.8%</i>	<i>9,668</i>	<i>1.1%</i>
Vacant				
Vacant Agriculture	145	1.4%	3,743	0.4%
Vacant Commercial	9	0.1%	7	0.0%
Vacant Industrial	2	0.0%	20	0.0%
Vacant Residential	242	2.4%	1,968	0.2%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>3.9%</i>	<i>5,737</i>	<i>0.6%</i>
Other				
Infrastructure	31	0.3%	25	0.0%
Miscellaneous	3	0.0%	5	0.0%
Public/Quasi-Public	5	0.0%	100	0.0%
Parks/Resource Management Land ²	337	3.3%	78,931	8.9%
Unknown ³	505	5.0%	49,014	5.6%
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>881</i>	<i>8.7%</i>	<i>128,075</i>	<i>14.5%</i>
Total Unincorporated	10,136	100%	882,675	100%
Total County	20,079	50.5%	886,719	99.5%

Source: San Benito County 2009. (Spot checks conducted for acreages using County's 2011 GIS data reflecting negligible changes in land use.)

Notes: ¹See Table 3A-1 in Appendix 3A of the Background Report for a description of uses classified under each category.

²Parks/resource management includes park and recreation areas owned by city, state, and federal governments and is not based on assessor use codes.

³Existing use relies on County Assessor's parcel data, which excludes rights of way and underestimates the number of acres in the County by about 1,376 acres.

Currently, residential land accounts for 9,668 acres or 1.1 percent of the existing land use in the unincorporated County. Commercial uses include a range of general service uses, such as restaurants, banks, auto repair shops, offices, grocery or convenience stores, car washes, medical facilities, and some recreation uses. Outside the incorporated cities, there are only 1,633 acres of commercial land in the County. Recreational uses, including golf courses and campgrounds, account for 76 percent of the commercial uses in the unincorporated County. Other land uses in the County include industrial (such as heavy industrial operations), mines and quarries, vacant land, infrastructure, public/quasi- public uses (i.e., airports and schools), parks, and resource management areas.

From 1990 to 2014, the four-county region encompassing Santa Clara, Monterey, Santa Cruz, and Santa Benito counties grew steadily. Santa Clara County accounted for the largest proportion of the population (over 70 percent of the regional total and 1.8 million residents), while San Benito County accounted for the smallest proportion of the regional population (2.2 percent and less than 60,000 residents). Because San Benito County has the smallest population base, the County's population grew at a faster rate than the rest of the region. As shown in [Table 3-2](#), between 1980 and 2014 the population of San Benito County grew from approximately 25,005 to 57,517, or at an average annual growth rate of 2.48 percent.

Table 3-2 Regional Population Growth¹

AMBAG Region and Santa Clara County, 1980-2014									
Counties	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014	1980 – 2014	
								AAGR ²	Absolute Growth
San Benito	25,005	36,697	43,310	53,234	56,989	55,269	57,517	2.48%	32,512
Monterey	290,444	355,660	360,146	401,762	421,374	415,057	425,756	1.13%	135,312
Santa Cruz	188,141	229,734	239,889	255,602	259,933	262,382	271,595	1.09%	83,454
Santa Clara	1,295,071	1,497,577	1,568,225	1,682,585	1,755,453	1,781,642	1,868,558	1.08%	573,487
Four-County	1,798,661	2,119,668	2,211,570	2,393,183	2,493,749	2,514,350	2,623,426	1.12%	824,765
San Benito Share	1.4%	1.7%	2.0%	2.2%	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%		3.9%

Sources: San Benito County 2010b, U.S. Census 2010, DOF 2011, 2014, EMC Planning Group 2014.

Notes: ¹Data for 1990 and 2000 are as of April of that year. All other data are as of January of that year.

²AAGR=Average Annual Growth Rate.

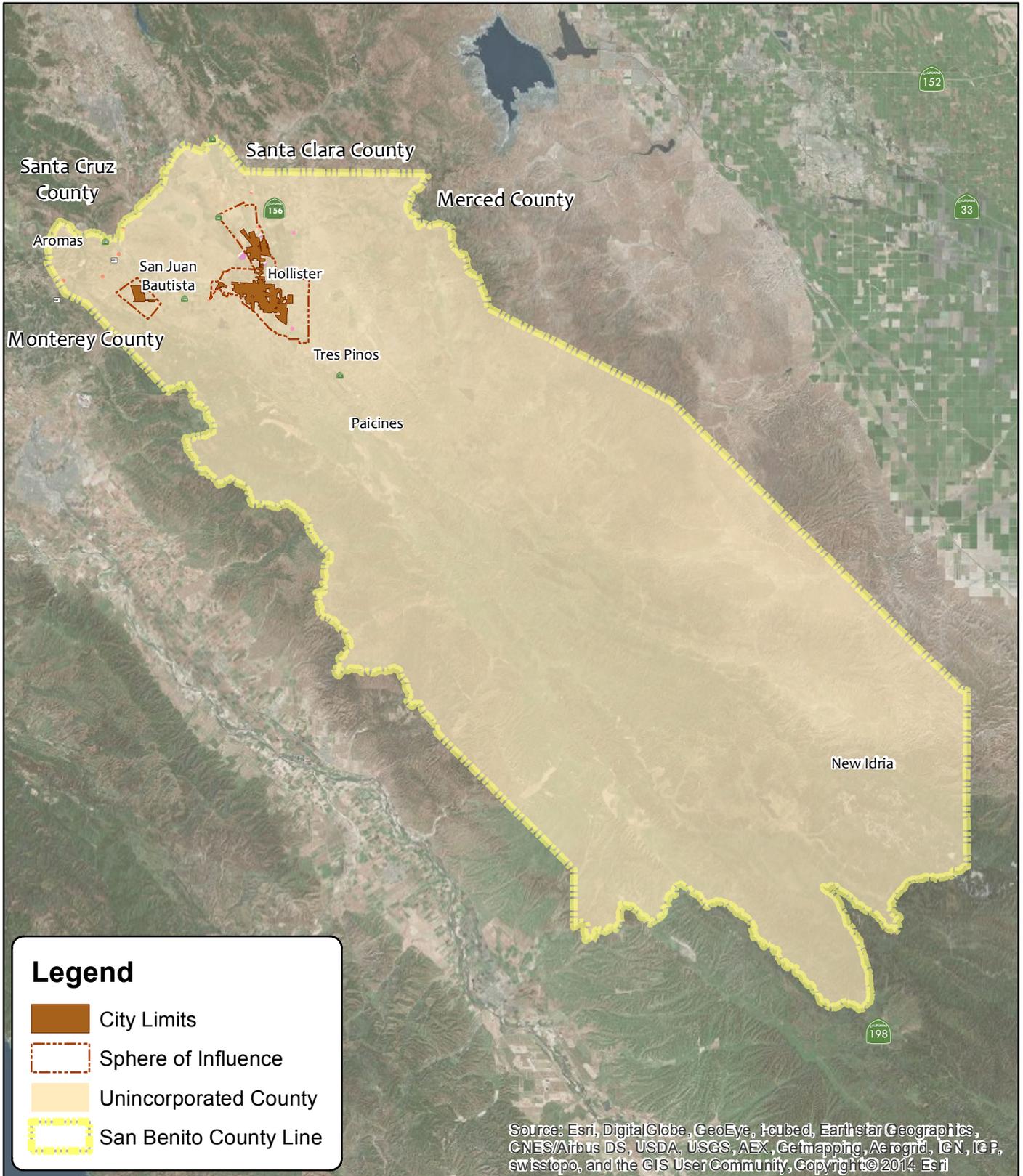


Figure 3-2

General Plan Boundaries

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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The population of San Benito County’s unincorporated area was approximately 19,000 in 2014. From 1990 to 2014 the population in the unincorporated area increased by over 3,100 people. [Table 3-3](#) summarizes the population growth in the unincorporated County and both incorporated cities.

Table 3-3 San Benito County Population Growth¹

San Benito County, 1980-2014									
	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014	1990-2014	
								AAGR ²	Absolute Growth
Hollister	--	19,318	25,602	34,424	36,786	34,928	36,676	1.5%	17,358
San Juan Bautista	--	1,570	1,567	1,549	1,714	1,862	1,905	0.4%	335
Unincorporated	--	15,809	16,141	17,261	18,489	18,479	18,936	0.4%	3,127
TOTAL	25,005	36,697	43,310	53,234	56,989	55,269	57,517	1.0%	32,512

Sources: San Benito County 2010b, U.S. Census 2010, DOF 2011, 2014, EMC Planning Group 2014.

Notes: ¹Data for 1990 and 2000 are as of April of that year. All other data are as of January of that year.

²AAGR=Average Annual Growth Rate.

3.4 PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The 2035 General Plan is a legal document that serves as San Benito County’s “blueprint” or “constitution” for all future land use, development, preservation, and resource conservation decisions. General Plans must be comprehensive and long-term.

- **Comprehensive.** General Plans are comprehensive both in their geographic coverage and in the range of subjects they cover. In the case of the 2035 General Plan, the geographic coverage is the County’s study area as defined above, and all general plan elements are addressed as required by State Law. The 2035 General Plan also encompasses four additional elements.
- **Long-Term.** General plans are long-term in perspective. General plan time horizons vary, but typically range from 15 to 25 years into the future. In the case of the 2035 General Plan, the County has established the year 2035 as the plan’s time horizon.

The purpose of the proposed 2035 General Plan is to revise and replace the existing 1992 General Plan, including all of the elements (except for the 2007-2014 Housing Element, which was adopted separately in May 2010 and will be incorporated into the 2035 General Plan), the Land Use and Circulation Diagrams, and all other existing goals, policies, and implementation plans. The 2035 General Plan will establish and implement new goals and policies for regulating development projects and for balancing population growth with infrastructure availability, agricultural preservation, natural resource protection, and other stated community goals. It will also integrate new planning concepts endorsed by the BOS, and translate the updated goals and policies into implementation programs (such as amendments to the County's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations) to assure that the County's vision is implemented.

3.4.1 Legal Authority and Requirements

State law requires each county and city to prepare and adopt a general plan for its physical development (Government Code §65300). A general plan must address seven required topics (referred to as "elements"): land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety, and noise. As identified in state law (Government Code §65302), these elements must be addressed to the extent that the topics are locally relevant. [Table 3-4](#) provides a summary of the primary objectives that must be addressed within each element.

A general plan may address other topics that the community deems relevant to its development, such as economic development, historic preservation, and urban design. The format and structure of a general plan is also left to local discretion, but regardless of the format or issues addressed, all substantive parts of the plan must be "internally consistent" with one another. For instance, the policies in the land use element must be consistent with those of the housing element, and vice versa.

In addition to the mandatory elements described above, the 2035 General Plan addresses four additional topics: economic development, public facilities and services, natural and cultural resources, and administration. Under state law, once included in the general plan, these elements carry the same weight of law as those that are legally mandated. Correlation between the 2035 General Plan elements and the general plan topics required by law are shown in [Table 3-5](#).

Table 3-4 Mandated Elements of the General Plan

Element	Primary Objective
Land Use	Outlines the general distribution, location, and intensity of land uses within the planning area.
Circulation	Describes the location and extent of existing and proposed transportation facilities and other public utilities and facilities.
Housing	Assesses the current and future housing needs for all County population segments, inventories resources and constraints, states the community's goals, objectives and policies related to housing needs, and provides a program to meet those needs.
Open Space	Provides preservation and protection measures for open space and natural resources, and presents management plans or resources to ensure public health and safety.
Conservation	Addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources.
Safety	Establishes policies to protect the community from risks associated with hazards, including man-made and natural hazards such as seismic, geologic, flooding, wildland fires, and air quality hazards and identifies and maps such hazards and evacuation routes.
Noise	Identifies and appraises major noise sources, shows noise contours, and contains policies intended to address existing and foreseeable noise problems and to protect the community from exposure to excessive noise levels.

Source: OPR 2003.

Table 3-5 San Benito County 2035 General Plan Elements and State Requirements

		Elements Required by State Law							
		Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Noise	Safety	Optional ¹
San Benito County Elements	Land Use	X							
	Economic Development								X
	Housing			X					
	Circulation		X						
	Public Facilities and Services	X							X
	Natural and Cultural Resources				X	X			
	Health and Safety						X	X	
	Administration				X				X

Notes: ¹State law allows jurisdictions to include optional elements in their general plans.

Source: San Benito County 2011.

3.5 BACKGROUND

1992 San Benito County General Plan

The San Benito County General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 1980, although some elements, such as the Land Use Element and the Open Space and Conservation Element, have been amended periodically. In addition, the Housing Element was updated in 2010 in accordance with applicable laws and required timeframes. The existing 1992 General Plan is comprised of several parts, and is referred to herein as the “1992 General Plan” (as the Land Use Element was last adopted in 1992). The first part, the general plan text, includes the following documents:

- Land Use Element (adopted in 1992, including the Land Use Diagram)
- Transportation Element (adopted in 1990, including the Circulation Diagram)
- Housing Element (adopted in 2010)
- Noise Element (adopted in 1984)
- Seismic Safety and Safety Element (adopted in 1980)

- Open Space and Conservation Element (adopted in 1995)
- Environmental Resources and Constraints Inventory (adopted in 1994)
- Scenic Roads and Highways Element (adopted in 1980)

The 2007-2014 Housing Element was updated and adopted as a separate project from the remainder of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan in order to meet state requirements and deadlines. A separate Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) environmental document for the Housing Element was circulated for public review from March 18, 2010 through April 15, 2010 and adopted on May 11, 2010 (Resolution No. 2010-53). The second part of the 1992 San Benito County General Plan Land Use Element Land Use Diagram contains land use designations (updated in 1992) for the following communities: Tres Pinos, North County, Hollister, and South Cienega/Paicines.

General Plan Update Process

Since the adoption of the 1992 San Benito County General Plan, the County has experienced significant growth due to, among other factors, increasing development pressure from the Silicon Valley and the Bay Area. Growth adjacent to San Benito County has affected planning considerations and decisions. Additionally, the State of California has adopted several laws and regulations that have significantly influenced the regulation of resources within the County and the scope of County activities. The 2035 General Plan is designed to update many of the elements in the existing General Plan to address increasing development pressures, changing environmental conditions, sustainability goals, recent legislation, and other important community objectives.

Community Outreach

The County initiated the comprehensive general plan update in 2007. Public participation has played an important role in the preparation of the 2035 General Plan. Citizen input has been essential to identify issues and formulate the goals of the community. Community outreach and involvement during the 2035 General Plan update process have been extensive, and have included numerous opportunities for the public to participate, including the following interviews, workshops, presentations, and meetings:

- Stakeholder interviews were held between January and March 2007, followed by a countywide mail-in-survey and newsletter in fall 2007.
- Three community workshops informed the County residents about the planning process and solicited their input on the general plan update. The workshops were held on October 6, 2007 in Hollister, on October 8, 2007 in San Juan Bautista, and on October 10, 2007 in Tres Pinos.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- In 2008, the County mailed out a survey to 13,699 households to solicit community input on a vision for the future of the County.
- The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), an advisory body established by the BOS, began meeting every six weeks in April 2009 to advise the PC and the BOS on the needs and concerns for the comprehensive revision of the General Plan. The GPAC held a total of 19 meetings during the 2035 General Plan update process. The most recent GPAC meeting was held on June 2, 2011 to review the BOS direction on the Preferred Policy Alternatives, to discuss and provide input on the proposed winery/hospitality priority areas, and to provide revisions to a policy related to mining.
- On July 27, 2010 County staff and consultants provided a presentation to the BOS to discuss the status of the general plan update, major milestone documents, the GPAC, and other concurrent planning processes.
- On November 9, 2010 County staff and consultants provided the BOS with a presentation and discussed the status of the general plan update, major milestone documents, the GPAC, and other planning processes.
- On January 26, 2011, the County hosted the 4th Community Workshop to gather input on alternatives for future change within the County over the next 25 years.
- A Special Joint General Plan Study Session with the BOS and the PC was held on April 5, 2011 to publicly discuss and provide direction on the Draft 2035 Vision and Guiding Principles, the merits of using various policy tools related to growth management, and the GPAC Preferred Policy Alternative.
- A series of newsletters were produced during the 2035 General Plan preparation process to provide an overview of the progress being made and the direction being pursued by the County.
- A Special PC Meeting was held on April 13, 2011 to discuss the status of the general plan update to provide direction to staff on the 2035 Vision and Guiding Principles, and to review and provide direction on the GPAC Preferred Policy Alternative.
- On April 26, 2011 the BOS held a meeting to discuss and provide input on the general plan update and adopted the “clustered residential” alternative, introduced the New Community Study Areas, and instructed staff to include Winery/Hospitality Priority Overlay Area on Land Use Map.
- October 27, 2011 the Notice of Preparation was released.
- At their September 11, 2012 meeting, the BOS approved changing the County’s level of service goal in the General Plan from “C” to “D.”

- The first circulation of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan Draft PEIR (DEIR) was circulated for public review from March 7, 2013 to April 22, 2013.
- At their February 18, 2014 meeting, the BOS discussed revisions needed to the draft 2035 General Plan, directing staff to make text revisions and to clarify the Land Use Diagram.
- The BOS held a joint workshop with the Planning Commission on March 19, 2014 to review revisions to the 2035 General Plan text and maps resulting from comments received on the first DEIR circulation and BOS direction.
- At their May 6, 2014 meeting, the BOS “accepted” a draft of the 2035 General Plan, solidifying the project description to use to analyze environmental impact in a planned recirculation of the DEIR.
- Since 2007, general plan update documents, including meeting agendas and summaries, background reports, draft goals and policies, draft alternatives reports and revised draft land use alternatives, have been posted for public access on the 2035 General Plan Update website at <http://www.sanbenitogpu.com>. All documentation after the release of the first DEIR can be found on the County’s website: cosb.us.

2035 General Plan Reports Prepared During the Update Process

As part of the 2035 General Plan update program, and in coordination with the public outreach activities cited below, the County prepared several supporting milestone documents to help guide the update process. These documents served as the building blocks for the 2035 General Plan. These documents, however, are advisory in nature and will not be adopted by the BOS as part of the 2035 General Plan. The succeeding sections discuss the reports prepared during the plan preparation process.

2035 Vision and Guiding Principles: July 2010

This report summarized one of the first stages in the 2035 General Plan update, which was the development of a vision for the future and guiding principles to help achieve that vision.

General Plan Background Report: November 2010

This report took a “snapshot” of San Benito County’s current (2010) trends and conditions. It provided a detailed description of a wide range of topics within the County that provided decision-makers, the public, and local agencies with context for making land use and policy decisions, and was intended to be objective, data-driven and policy-neutral. The document served as important input to more detailed “Environmental Setting” section in each environmental topic area of the EIR.

Opportunities and Challenges Report: November 2010

This report was designed to focus the community's attention on the major constraints, opportunities, and challenges facing the County to be addressed during the 2035 General Plan update process. This report synthesized information gathered from community workshops held in October 2007, a community survey conducted in early 2008, the draft General Plan Background Report, GPAC input, and County staff and consultant observations. It was intended to stimulate discussion and provide context for the preparation of the land use alternatives, and ultimately, updated 2035 General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs.

Alternatives Report: December 2010

This report described and analyzed three alternatives for future change within San Benito County over the next 25 years. This analysis was used by the County staff, the GPAC, the PC, the BOS, and the public to help select a preferred alternative for the future of San Benito County. The preferred alternative became the basis for development of the Draft 2035 General Plan.

Public Review Draft 2035 General Plan: February 2013

This draft was the subject of a DEIR that was circulated for public comment in February, 2013. This draft of the 2035 General Plan was superseded by the 2014 Public Review Draft 2035 General Plan, as explained immediately below.

Public Review Draft 2035 General Plan: May 2014

A revised draft of the 2035 General Plan was accepted by the BOS at their May 6, 2014 hearing. This is the draft 2035 General Plan that is the subject of this RDEIR. It contains the goals, policies, and standards that will guide future land use and environmental decisions within the County. It also identifies implementation programs that will ensure the goals and policies in the General Plan are carried out.

How the General Plan Addresses State Mandates

The 2035 General Plan must comply with state requirements, most of which date to the 1970s or earlier. However, starting in 2006, the State of California has passed a series of laws that require regional and local governments to address sustainability, greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction, and complete streets in their planning documents. These include the California Global Warming Solutions Act (Assembly Bill 32), the Redesigning Communities to Reduce Greenhouse Gases Act (Senate Bill 375), and the Complete Streets Act (Assembly Bill 1358). The following summarizes how the 2035 General Plan addresses these recent state mandates.

Sustainability and GHG Reduction

Sustainability refers to the long-term social, economic, and environmental health of the community. A sustainable community grows and prospers while not compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. Sustainable communities are those that use resources efficiently and effectively, provide economic security, and distribute benefits evenly throughout the County.

Climate change refers to variation in the average weather of the earth that may be measured by changes in wind patterns, storms, precipitation, and temperature. Human activities associated primarily with the use of carbon-based fossil fuels have led to changes in the composition of the atmosphere. The combustion of carbon-based fossil fuels creates greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O), which have caused the earth's atmosphere to absorb more heat from the sun.

In 2006 the California State Legislature took a proactive role in addressing the challenges of climate change with the adoption of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32). AB 32 focuses on reducing GHG emissions in California. Among other things, requires the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the state agency charged with regulating statewide air quality, to adopt rules and regulations that would achieve GHG emissions equivalent to 1990 statewide levels by the year 2020.

The Redesigning Communities to Reduce Greenhouse Gases Act (Senate Bill 375), also known as the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, was designed to help California reach its AB 32 goals by promoting good planning to create more sustainable communities. SB 375 requires CARB to develop regional GHG reduction targets for passenger vehicles for 2020 and 2035 for each region covered by one of the state's 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). Each of California's MPOs is then required to prepare a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that demonstrates how the region will meet its GHG reduction target through integrated land use, housing, and transportation planning. Once adopted, the SCS becomes incorporated into the region's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) approved an SCS in 2014.

Finally, an emerging topic related to sustainability and climate change is adaptation to the expected impacts of a changed climate. In 2008 Governor Schwarzenegger issued Executive Order S-13-08 to prepare a statewide strategy to manage the anticipated impacts and challenges from climate change. The *2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy* summarizes the best-known science on climate change impacts in specific sectors, and provides recommendations on how to manage against those threats.

The 2035 General Plan includes policy standards for GHG reduction targets for both County operations and communitywide emissions consistent with AB 32. The cumulative effects of the 2035 General Plan policies addressing greenhouse gas emissions are designed to result in measurable reductions in emissions consistent with the adopted standards in comparison to a “business as usual” scenario. The 2035 General Plan also includes policies that are designed to be self-mitigating; in other words, incorporated into the project in order to avoid or reduce the impacts that are expected to occur due to climate change. Sustainability, GHG reduction, and climate change adaptation are addressed by policies and programs throughout the 2035 General Plan, rather than in a single section.

Complete Streets

The California Complete Streets Act of 2008 requires cities and counties to include complete streets policies as part of their general plans. Complete streets are roadways that are designed to safely accommodate all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, as well as motorists. The act also requires Caltrans to fully consider the needs of non-motorized travelers in all programming, planning, maintenance, construction, operations, and project development activities on state highways. Beginning in January 2011, any substantive revision of the circulation element in a general plan of a California local government is required to include complete streets provisions. The 2035 General Plan includes these provisions in Section 3, Land Use Element and Section 6, Circulation Element.

3.6 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the updated 2035 General Plan is to provide new policy guidelines for the future physical development, preservation of agricultural lands, and conservation of natural resources in the County, and to reflect new issues that have emerged since the preparation of the existing 1992 General Plan. Other important objectives of the 2035 General Plan, based upon regulatory requirements, the vision established within the community workshops, and the County’s guiding principles as set forth in the 2035 General Plan.

Land Use and Community Character

1. Encourage new growth in existing unincorporated communities, New Communities, or clustered developments in order to preserve prime farmland and rangeland, protect natural habitats, and reduce the financial, social, and environmental impacts of urban sprawl.

2. Ensure that there is a mix of residential, commercial, employment, park, open space, school, and public land uses in order to create a sense of place by supporting condensed, pedestrian accessible, and transit-oriented development.
3. Promote higher residential densities in existing unincorporated urban areas and New Communities while encouraging mixed-use development.
4. Ensure new development complements and preserves the unique character and beauty of San Benito County.
5. Establish defined boundaries to separate cities and unincorporated communities from prime agricultural land and important natural resources, using such features as agriculture buffers, greenbelts, open space, and parks.

Housing

6. Ensure a full range of housing options are available to accommodate residents of all income levels and life situations.
7. Balance housing growth with employment growth in order to provide local, affordable housing choices so people can live and work in the county.

Agriculture

8. Ensure that agriculture and agriculture-related industries remain a major economic sector by protecting productive agriculture lands and industries, promoting new and profitable agricultural sectors, and supporting new technologies that increase the efficiency and productivity of commodity farming.
9. Encourage agriculture that is locally-produced, profitable, and attracts related businesses.

Economic Growth and Prosperity

10. Expand and diversify the local economy by supporting businesses, supporting jobs for the diverse population, and capitalizing on the county's natural and human resources.
11. Support existing and establish new local businesses that are based on industries that are innovative, technology-based, and sustainable.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

12. Support programs that educate the local workforce on conventional, productive, sustainable, and organic agriculture concepts; water conservation strategies; high-tech industries; and alternative energy production.
13. Support the county's growing tourism industry.
14. Support the long-term financial viability of San Benito County government and public services through accommodating new population, fostering employment generating uses and encouraging new sources of tax revenue.

Transportation and Infrastructure

15. Encourage future growth near existing transportation networks such as the major roadways, State highways, airports, rail corridors, and other major transportation routes.
16. Encourage future growth near available water and sewer infrastructure to ensure improvements are economically feasible.
17. Encourage future growth that can be supported by adequate, long-term access to water, sewer, electric, gas, and other utilities.

Natural Resource Protection

18. Protect natural resources and open space areas from incompatible uses.
19. Preserve the county's environmental quality and diverse natural habitats.

Health and Sustainability

20. Encourage a healthy living environment that includes walkable neighborhoods, access to recreation and open space, healthy foods, medical services, and public transit.
21. Become a leader in the efficient use of resources, including renewable energy, water, and land.

Regional Coordination

22. Coordinate County planning efforts with those of the City of Hollister and the City of San Juan Bautista.

3.7 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Major Components of the 2035 General Plan

Section 15378 (a) of the State CEQA Guidelines defines a “project” to mean the whole of an action, which has a potential to result in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. This definition precludes an agency from evaluating only those aspects of a project under its jurisdiction or for which it has regulatory responsibility. The 2035 General Plan is defined to include all actions necessary to provide a comprehensive update of the existing 1992 General Plan (adopted in 1980, as amended periodically). The 2035 General Plan would supersede the current 1992 San Benito County General Plan, with the exception of the 2007-2014 Housing Element, which would be incorporated into the 2035 General Plan.

Although the 2007-2014 Housing Element would become part of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan once the plan is adopted, the 2007-2014 Housing Element was updated and adopted as a separate project in order to meet State requirements and deadlines. Therefore, for purposes of CEQA is not part of the 2035 General Plan project being evaluated in this RDEIR. A separate Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) environmental document for the 2007-2014 Housing Element was circulated for public review from March 18, 2010 through April 15, 2010 and adopted on May 11, 2010 (Resolution No. 2010-53).

Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan

The Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan consists of eight elements, or chapters, organized into topics that differ from the current General Plan, but that together meet state requirements for a general plan. These elements include: 1) Land Use Element; 2) Economic Development Element; 3) Housing Element; 4) Circulation Element; 5) Public Facilities and Services Element; 6) Natural and Cultural Resources Element; 7) Health and Safety Element; and the 8) Administration Element. The 2007-2014 Housing Element was updated as a separate project, and is therefore not part of the 2035 General Plan project being evaluated in this RDEIR.

The proposed 2035 General Plan project does not include updates to the general plans for the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista as set forth in Section 3.2, nor will the 2035 General Plan propose any changes in land uses for lands owned and/or managed by federal or state agencies.

2035 General Plan Overview

The updated 2035 General Plan has been revised and reorganized to provide policy guidelines for the future development and conservation within the unincorporated portions of San Benito County, and to ensure consistency with pertinent issues and new regulations that have emerged since the preparation of the existing 1992 General Plan. Each element includes sections presenting that topic's goals, policies, and implementation programs, which serve as the basis for future programming decisions related to the assignment of staff and the expenditure of County funds. A brief discussion of each part of the 2035 General Plan, including the policy content and direction, is provided in the following discussions.

Section 1: Introduction

The Introduction provides an overview of the 2035 General Plan. The section describes how the plan is organized; explains what the plan is and how it should be used; summarizes the process that was used to develop the plan; and explains the plan's relationship to other local, regional, state, and federal agency documents and regulations.

Section 2: Vision and Guiding Principles

This section presents the vision and guiding principles that were developed by the County during the 2035 General Plan update process conducted by the GPAC from 2009 through 2011. The vision is a statement of the general desires or outcomes to be achieved through implementation of the 2035 General Plan. It provides the foundation for the more specific guiding principles, goals, policies, and programs included in the 2035 General Plan. The vision statement for the 2035 General Plan is as follows:

At pace with the changing world, but still rural in nature, our vision of San Benito County in 2035 is of a positive and prosperous future, in which balance has been attained between business and residential growth without surrendering our rich natural resources, valuable agricultural assets, active country character, or our historic heritage. To this end, the General Plan policies are flexible to enable San Benito County to maintain this important balance to foster a positive and prosperous future.

Neighborhoods, parks and public lands, business districts, and job centers are linked to one another by a sensibly-sized, well-maintained transportation network, suitable for foot, bicycle, auto, bus, or sometimes horse. Connection to distant destinations is readily available by auto, bus, train, or plane, or by way of enhanced virtual telecommunications.

Established local businesses, not just the buildings they inhabit, are understood to be important foundations to thriving prosperous downtowns. To ensure continued relevance of the downtowns, infill development containing compatible enterprises is supported. Visitors find ample retail and dining prospects, welcoming accommodations, and unmatched outdoor recreational opportunities.

The County continues to widen the spectrum of business and industry, enhanced educational opportunities, and broadened leisure time activities available for a population that is diverse in age, culture, education, and lifestyle. People are afforded the facilities needed for healthy lives. Environmentally-sustainable technologies are embraced, and businesses of any size are encouraged to put down roots here, hire local talent, and grow in the rich soil, clean water, beautiful climate, and rural atmosphere of San Benito County.

Guiding principles are fundamental ideas that represent the County's philosophy about future change, including new development, economic growth, and sustainability. The objectives listed above form the guiding principles that expand on the main ideas contained in the vision so that important concepts are given more weight.

2035 General Plan Elements

Each element is summarily described below, and the draft goals are listed. In addition to goals, each element includes policies and implementation programs. The detailed policies and implementation programs of each element are set forth in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan (policy document), which can be viewed and downloaded from the County's website at: www.cosb.us. Copies of the Background Report may be viewed during standard business hours, Monday through Friday, at the San Benito County Planning and Building Department, 3224 Southside Road, Hollister, California 95023. Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines §15150, the Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan is hereby incorporated into this RDEIR by reference as though fully set forth herein.

The 2035 General Plan goals listed below have been reviewed and commented on by the public during the 30-day review period, and evaluated by the County planning staff, the GPAC, and by the San Benito County PC and BOS during preparation and circulation of the NOP. Therefore, the goals cited in this RDEIR should be considered to be the proposed 2035 General Plan, as should the detailed policies and implementation programs available at the website listed above. The RDEIR will evaluate the potential effects of the 2035 General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs as they appear in the Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan policy document.

Section 3: Land Use Element

This section provides policy guidance for future County decisions regarding the overall pattern, composition, and timing of growth and development in San Benito County. The purpose of the Land Use Element is twofold. First, this element includes a series of land use designations that identify the type and intensity of land uses permissible on unincorporated property in the County on lands not subject to federal or state jurisdiction. The element includes the Countywide Land Use Diagram, shown in [Figure 3-3](#), which graphically illustrates where land uses designations are applied. The Land Use Diagram depicts the boundaries of the various land use designations for San Benito County through the year 2035 and beyond.

[Figure 3-4](#) is a more detailed insert of the land use designations in the northern part of the County, primarily Hollister and its surrounding areas. [Figure 3-5](#) is a more detailed insert of the land use designations for the census-designated communities in the County; Aromas, Ridgemark, and Tres Pinos. [Figures 3-3, 3-4, and 3-5](#) represent the Land Use Diagram. [Figure 3-6](#) represents new commercial and industrial nodes identified by the County for development.

Land Use Designations

There are 16 different land uses listed within the proposed Land Use Diagram, including Rangeland, Rangeland Management Area, Agriculture, Rural, Rural Transitional, Residential Rural, Residential Mixed, Commercial Neighborhood, Commercial Thoroughfare, Commercial Regional, Industrial Heavy, Industrial Light, Parks, Public/Quasi-Public, Planned Development, and the Santana Ranch and Fairview Corners Specific Plans. Unlike zoning designations, which entail detailed regulations outlining permissible uses and building heights, land use designations are broad descriptions designed to help guide decisions about the type and intensity of development envisioned on each unincorporated parcel within the County.

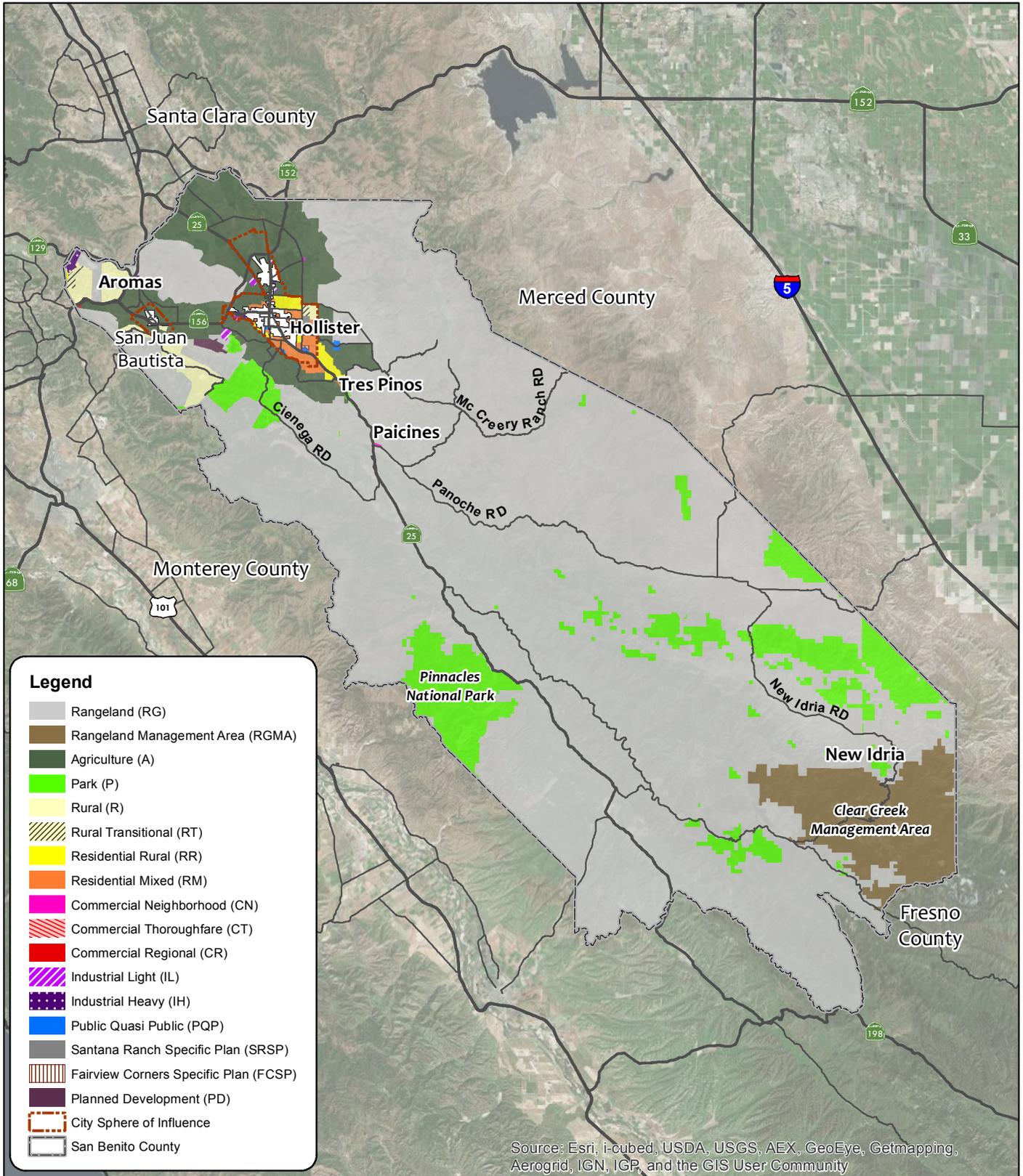


Figure 3-3

Land Use Diagram (Countywide) [GP 3-1]



3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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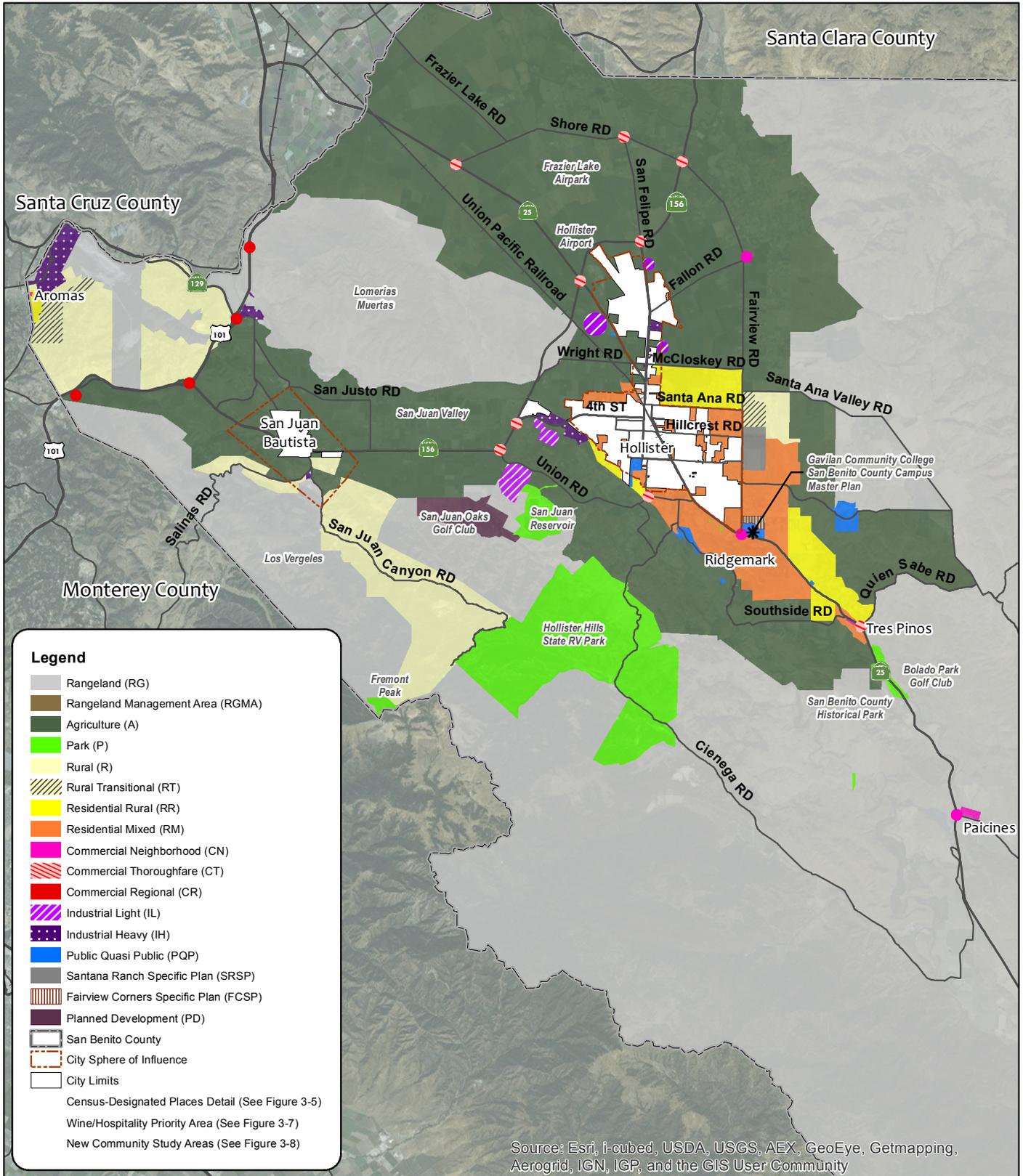


Figure 3-4

North County Land Use Diagram [GP Figure 3-2]



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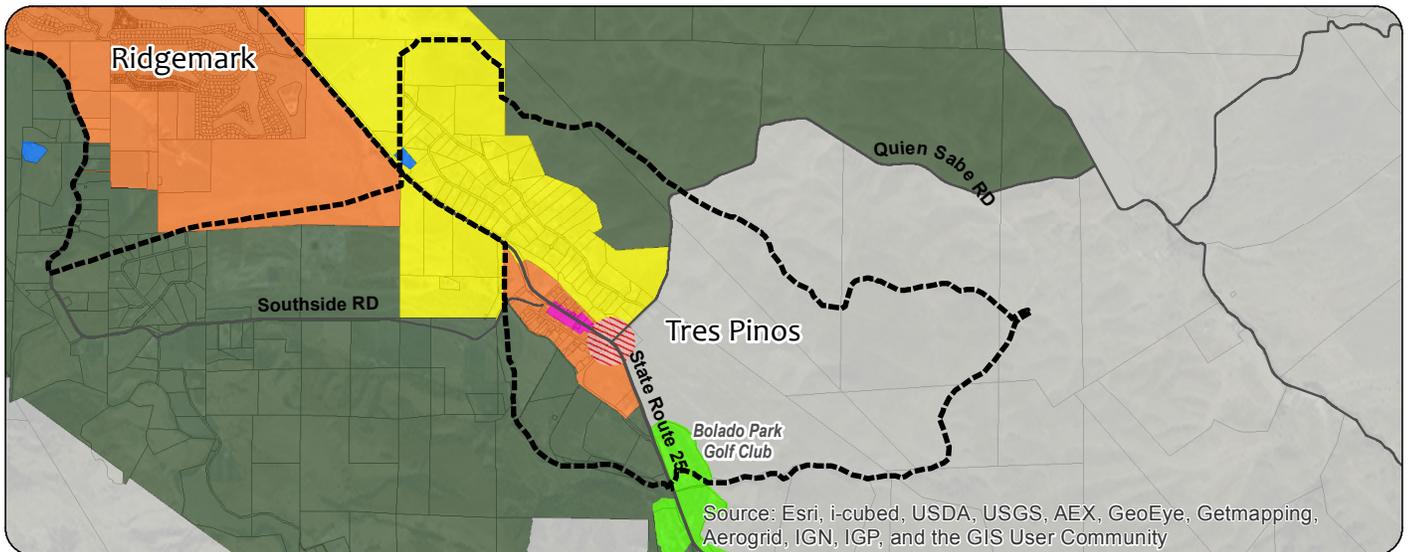
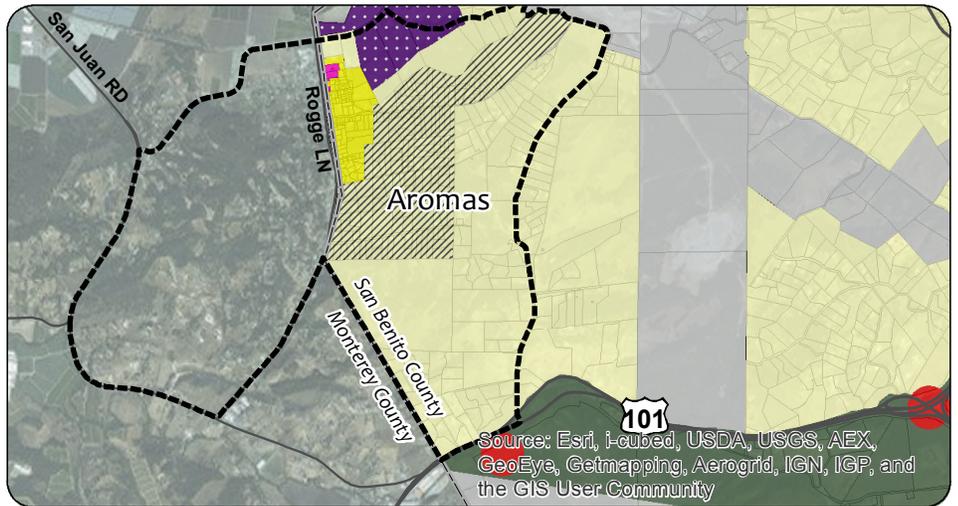
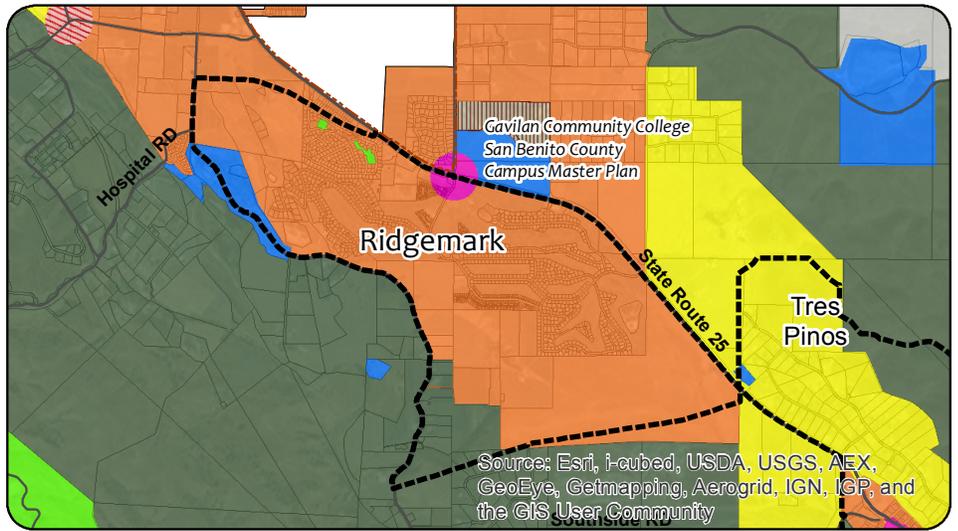


Figure 3-5
 Land Use Diagram (Census Designated Places Detail)
 [GP Figure 3-3]



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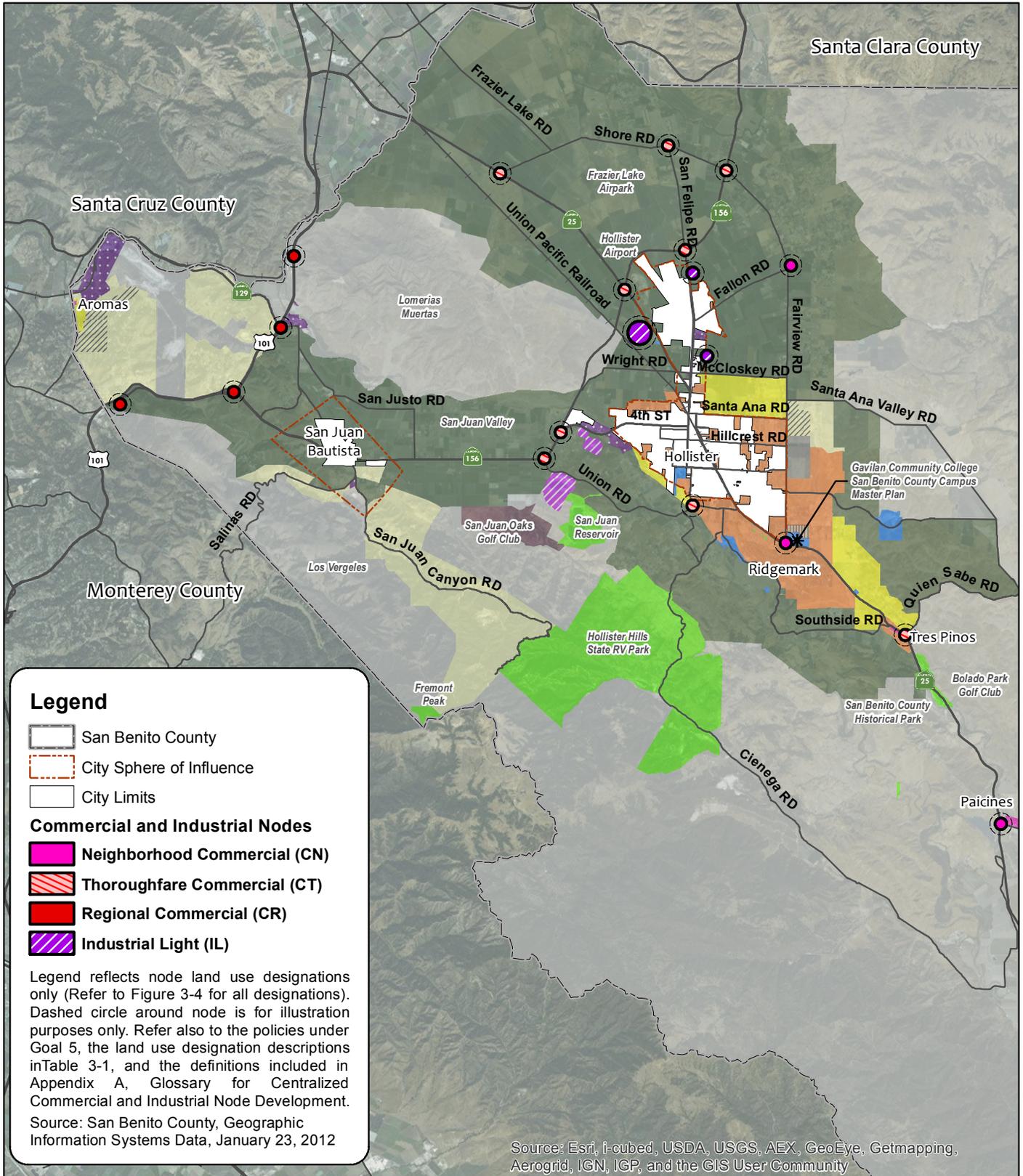


Figure 3-6

Commercial and Industrial Nodes [GP Figure 3-5]



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As set forth in [Table 3-6](#), each land use designation is followed by a text summary that describes the designation purpose, where it is applied, and its intended use.

Table 3-6 2035 General Plan Land Use Designations

	<p>Rangeland (RG)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to maintain open space and grazing land on hills, mountains, and remote areas of the county. This designation is applied to areas that have minimal transportation access, high to very high fire hazard, and no public infrastructure (e.g., sewer, water, drainage). Most of these areas are located within remote parts of the county. This designation allows support uses that directly support agricultural operations and one principal residential dwelling unit per lot. Secondary dwellings are allowed for relative, caretaker/employee, and farm worker housing.</p>
	<p>Rangeland Management Area (RGMA)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to maintain open space and grazing land on hills, mountains, and remote areas of the county that are managed by a local, regional, state and/or federal agency. This designation is applied to areas that have minimal transportation access, high to very high fire hazard, and no public infrastructure (e.g., sewer, water, drainage). Most of these areas are located within remote parts of the county. This designation allows support uses that directly support agricultural operations.</p>
	<p>Agriculture (A)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to maintain the productivity of agricultural land, especially prime farmland, in the county. This designation is applied to agriculturally productive lands of various types, including crop land, vineyards, and grazing lands. This designation allows agricultural support uses, such as processing, wineries, and other necessary public utility and safety facilities and one principal residential dwelling unit per lot. Secondary dwellings are allowed for relative, caretaker/employee, and farm worker housing. These areas typically have transportation access, but little to no public infrastructure.</p>
	<p>Parks (P)</p> <p>This designation applies to the land within San Benito County that is presently owned by Federal, State, or County agencies and used as active or passive parkland. The uses allowed within the Federal and State parks are dictated by those agencies. Permissible uses within the Parks, Public category are public recreation facilities such as public golf courses, community park, neighborhood park, local park, community center, campgrounds, recreation corridors, and trails.</p>
	<p>Rural (R)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to allow very low-density residential development in areas that are not primarily suited for agricultural uses, but due to the lack of public infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, drainage) or for geographical reasons are unsuited for higher density residential designations.</p>

Rural Transition (RT)

The purpose of this designation is to allow traditional rural development as a transition between rural and urban areas. Development within this designation should be associated with rural standards and will typically lack public infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, drainage). These transitional areas are intended to fulfill the need for buffering higher density residential development from exclusively agricultural areas, in order to minimize the conversion of agricultural lands to urban uses.

Residential Rural (RR)

The purpose of this designation is to allow for large-lot rural residential homes within areas of the county that are generally unsuitable for productive agriculture because of existing small property sizes, multiple property owners, and proximity to other more intensive residential development. These properties will typically lack public infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, drainage).

Residential Mixed (RM)

The purpose of this designation is to allow areas of unincorporated urban uses where circulation and utility services exist. This will provide individuals with the opportunity to live in an unincorporated village or neighborhood atmosphere composed primarily of residential land uses with some commercial uses serving the residences. This designation applies to areas that are largely developed and have public infrastructure and services necessary to support the increased density. The intensity of development will be directly proportional to the level and availability of public infrastructure and services. A maximum of 20 dwelling units per acre can be achieved in those areas so designated. Thirty percent of new residential dwelling units with available public sewer and water shall include mixed residential types with an average development density of 8 units per acre. The exception shall be the Residential Multiple zoning category where densities of 8 to 20 units per acre are allowed. This designation also allows mixed-use developments that include residential, retail, and office uses.

Commercial Neighborhood (CN)

The purpose of this designation is to provide convenience goods within or near communities or other concentrations of population. This designation intends to reduce unnecessary vehicular trips to commercial centers in the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista and outlying cities in other counties, encouraging a focus on local businesses, with a destination retailer or restaurant. This designation also allows mixed-use developments that could include residential, retail, and office uses.

	<p>Commercial Thoroughfare (CT)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to provide commercial services for motorists near highway interchanges, along thoroughfares, and near Federal, State, and regional parks, and other tourist attractions to capture pass-through traffic, and to allow for commercial uses that serve the agricultural and rural unincorporated community. These uses could include small shopping centers, truck and automobile stations, and tourist-serving commercial uses.</p>
	<p>Commercial Regional (CR)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to provide areas that function as destinations for commercial activity serving the regional population. This designation intends to accommodate the location of such commercial uses at key intersections along Interstate 101 and other major State Routes. These uses could include shopping centers, truck and automobile stations, tourist-serving commercial uses, and hotels/motels.</p>
	<p>Industrial Light (IL)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to allow light industrial development near existing transportation systems (e.g., highways, rail, air). This includes: warehouses, contractor yards, nurseries, lumber yards, auto repair shops, light manufacturing and/or assembly, and research and development operations that do not cause significant environmental hazards or create major pollution.</p>
	<p>Industrial Heavy (IH)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to provide areas for heavy industrial activities that are not suitable for urban areas because of their size, noise, dust, traffic, or safety concerns. This could include large-scale manufacturing operations, mining and aggregate production facilities, recycling transfer centers, chemical and explosives manufacturing, or other similar uses.</p>
	<p>Public/Quasi-Public (PQP)</p> <p>The purpose of this designation is to provide for public and quasi-public uses, including public utility facilities and services. This designation applies to the following uses: schools, landfills, recycling, resource recovery, government lands (non-parkland), sewage treatment plants, fire stations, sheriff stations/substations, jails, religious meeting areas, libraries, energy generation and distribution, water distribution, and public meeting halls, and other similar uses related to the operation of County government services.</p>

	<p>Santana Ranch Specific Plan (SRSP)</p> <p>This designation applies to the Santana Ranch Specific Plan area. The plan area encompasses approximately 292 acres located east of intersections of Fairview Road with Hillcrest Road and Sunnyslope Road. Specific land uses in this area must be consistent with the Santana Ranch Specific Plan, which sets forth a comprehensive planning vision and regulatory framework for the project.</p>
	<p>Fairview Corners Specific Plan (FCSP)</p> <p>This designation applies to the Fairview Corners Specific Plan area. The plan encompasses approximately 60 acres located adjacent to the proposed Gavilan College San Benito Campus, directly north of Airline Highway (State Route 25) and east of Fairview Road. Specific land uses in this area must be consistent with the Fairview Corners Specific Plan, which sets forth a comprehensive planning vision and regulatory framework for the project.</p>
	<p>Planned Development (PD)</p> <p>This designation identifies areas where future development is anticipated to occur through preparation of a Specific Plan, which may also incorporate form-based zoning. General Plan land use designations will be applied to the area through a General Plan Amendment to incorporate the Specific Plan as a part of this General Plan, once more detailed planning is conducted and applicable CEQA environmental review is completed.</p>

Sources: San Benito County 2011, 2014; EMC Planning Group 2014; Mintier Harnish 2011.

The boundary lines between land use designations are delineated as specifically as possible, in most cases following parcel lines. For larger parcels, particularly outside of the Hollister area, the boundary lines between land use designations are indicated more generally. These boundaries will be more clearly delineated by subsequent general plan amendments as more detailed planning is undertaken for these areas in the future (e.g., community plans, specific plans).

Priority and Study Areas

The 2035 General Plan includes a Wine/Hospitality Priority Area and four New Community Study Areas. The purpose of the Wine/Hospitality Priority Area is to identify areas of the County where the wine industry and wine tourism are encouraged, while protecting the agricultural character of the area. The purpose of the New Community Study Areas is to designate areas that the County wishes to study, but not yet approve, for future growth. Future entitlements, including a specific plan, would be necessary to approve any developed land uses for areas within the New Community Study Areas. [Figure 3-7](#) shows the Wine/Hospitality Priority Area and [Figure 3-8](#) shows the New Community Study Areas.

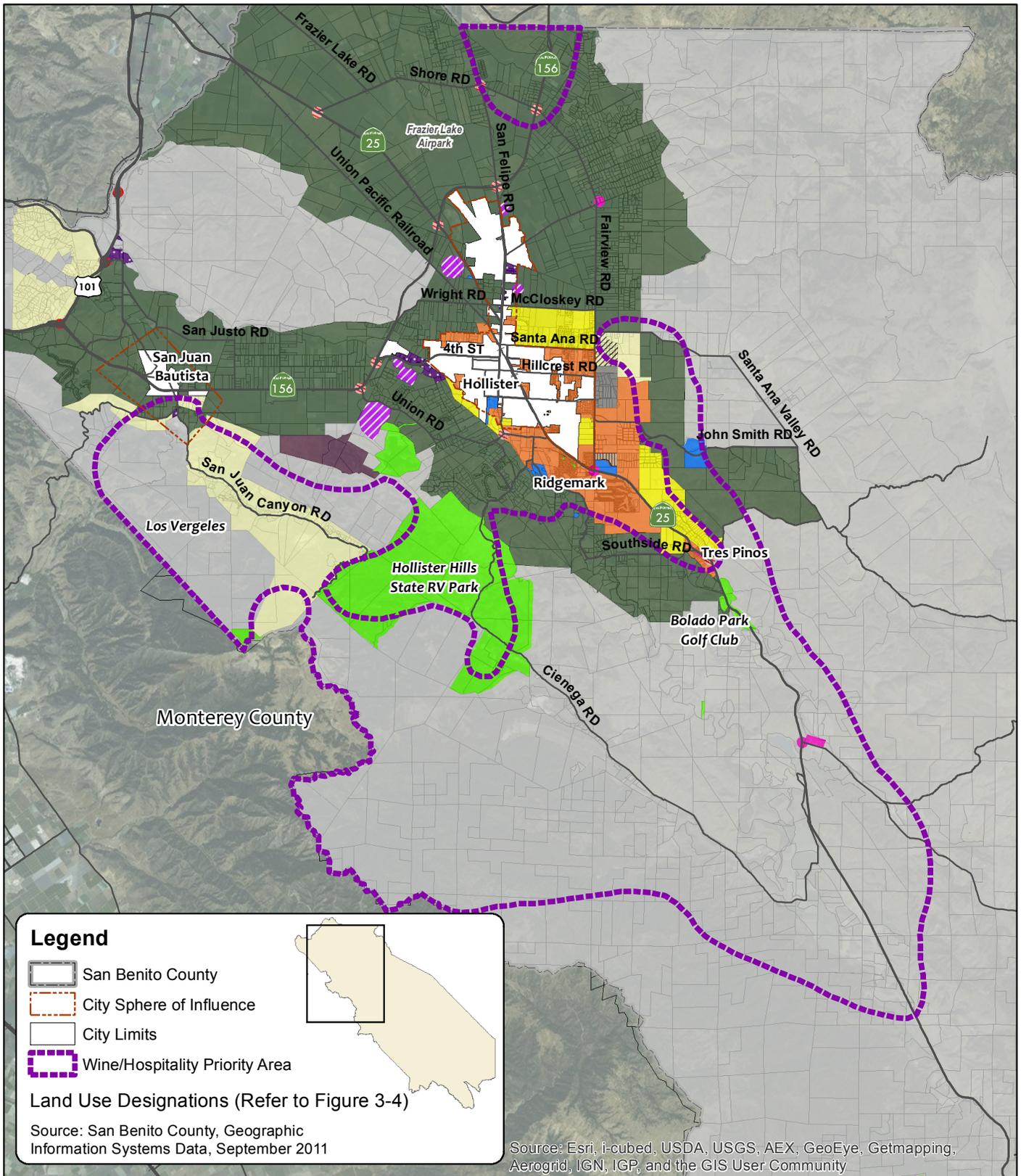


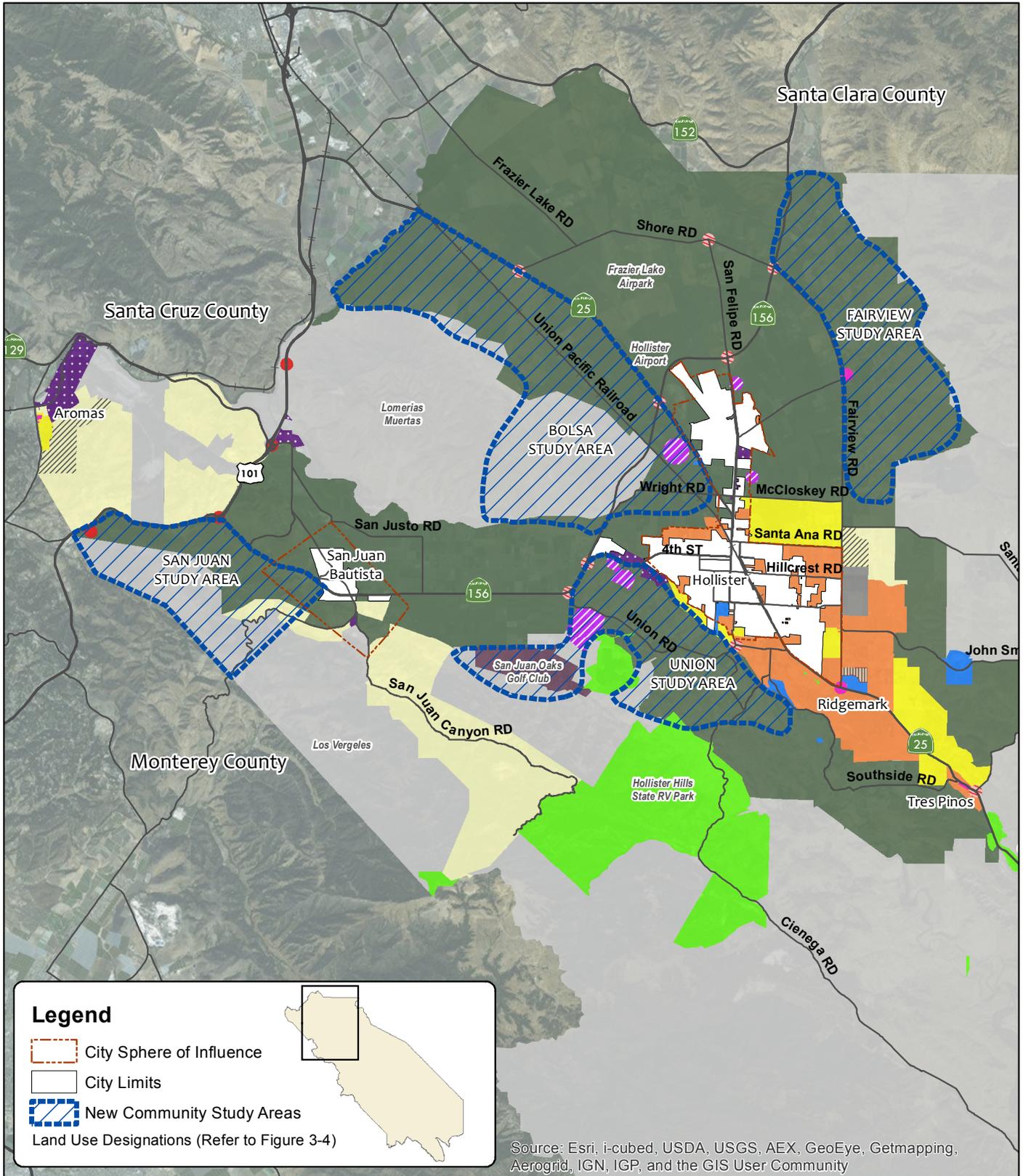
Figure 3-7

Wine/Hospitality Priority Area [GP Figure 3-4]



3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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Source: San Benito County, Geographic Information Systems Data, September 2011

Figure 3-8

New Community Study Areas [GP Figure 3-6]



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Land Use Standards

Consistent with state law, the 2035 General Plan includes standards of population density and building intensity for each of the land use designations appearing on the Land Use Diagram. [Table 3-7](#) identifies these standards, and lists the acreage of the County allocated to each land use type. For residential standards, the statements are described in terms of “density.” For non-residential standards, the statements are described in terms of “floor-area ratio.”

Table 3-7 Area of County by Land Use Designation and Land Use Standards

Land Use Designation	Acreage	Percent	Max. du/ac ⁴	Max. Non-Residential FAR ⁴	Avg. PPH ⁴	Avg. ED ⁴
Rangeland (RG)	634,703	71.66%	1/40	0.1	3.4	
Rangeland Management Area (RGMA)	48,560	5.48%	1/40	0.1	3.4	
Agriculture (A)	62,638	7.03%	1/5	0.5	3.4	
Rural (R)	10,911	1.23%	1/5	-----	3.4	-----
Rural Transitional (RT)	691	0.08%	1/2.5	-----	3.4	-----
Residential Rural (RR)	1,694	0.19%	2/1	-----	3.4	-----
Residential Mixed (RM)	2,202	0.25%	Multiple ⁵	0.8	3.4	
Commercial Neighborhood (CN)	159	0.02%	1-20/1	0.8	3.4	500
Commercial Thoroughfare (CT)	283	0.03%	-----	0.8	-----	500
Commercial Regional (CR)	126	0.01%	-----	0.8	-----	500
Industrial Heavy (IH)	589	0.07%	-----	0.8	-----	800
Industrial Light (IL)	552	0.06%	-----	0.8	-----	800
Parks (P)	121,157	13.60%	-----	0.1	-----	
Public/Quasi-Public (PQP)	358	0.04%	-----	1.0	-----	
Santana Ranch Specific Plan (SRSP)	301	0.03%	Multiple ¹			
Fairview Corners Specific Plan (FCSP)	64	0.007%	Multiple ¹			
Planned Development (PD)	752	0.08%	N/A ³			

Sources: San Benito County 2010, 2012, 2014.

Notes: ¹The Santana Ranch Specific Plan includes a total of 1,092 dwelling units of various housing types and densities, including 774 single-family residential units at densities of 1.0 to 5.0 units per acre, and 318 multiple residential units at 5.1 to 12 units per acre. It also includes 9.7 acres of commercial retail and 2.0 acres of office development.

² The Fairview Corners Specific Plan includes a total of an approximately 60-acre single-family residential units located to the east of the City of Hollister, including 220 housing units and open space.

³ The San Juan Oaks Planned Development Area is adjacent to the existing San Juan Oaks Golf Course. Until some time as the BOS may approve a Specific Plan and other necessary entitlements are approved by the County, this area will remain designated "Rural Transitional" and "Commercial Thoroughfare."

⁴ du/ac = dwelling unit per acre, FAR = floor area ratio, PPH = persons per household, ED = employee density in sq.ft/employee.

⁵ 1-20 dwelling units/1 acre or mobile home parks with an average of 8 dwelling units/1 acre.

Residential Density

Standards of population density for residential uses are stated as the allowable range of dwelling units per gross acre. The term "gross acre" includes all land (including streets and rights-of-way) designated for a particular residential use, while net acreage excludes streets and rights-of-way. In urban areas, net acreage is normally 20 to 25 percent less for a given area than gross acreage. In rural areas, the difference between net and gross can be as low as 5 percent.

Net acreage is the standard typically used in zoning, while gross acreage is more commonly used for general plans. Standards of population density for residential uses can be derived by multiplying the maximum allowable number of dwelling units per gross acre by the average number of persons per dwelling unit assumed for the applicable residential designation. Standards of building intensity for residential uses are stated as the allowable range of dwelling units per gross acre.

Non-Residential Floor-Area Ratio

Standards of building intensity for non-residential uses such as commercial, industrial, public, or mixed-use development are stated as a range (i.e., minimum and maximum) of floor-area ratio (FAR). The FAR is a ratio of the gross building area on a site, excluding structured parking, to the net developable area of the site. The net developable area is the total area of a site excluding portions that cannot be developed (e.g., right-of-way, public parks). A site includes all contiguous parcels that will share parking or access. For example, on a lot with 25,000 square feet of land area, a FAR of 0.50 will allow 12,500 square feet of useable building floor area to be built, regardless of the number of stories in the building (e.g., 6,250 square feet per floor on two floors, or 12,500 square feet on one floor). On the same 25,000-square-foot lot, a FAR of 1.00 would allow 25,000 square feet of useable floor area, and a FAR of 2.00 would allow 50,000 square feet of useable floor area. In the case of mixed-use developments that include residential uses, the FAR includes residential building square footage, and the density range is not applicable.

While FAR provides for the overall development size and intensity, it does not specify the form or character of the building. Different interpretations of the same FAR can result in buildings of very different character. Other County regulations such as the Zoning Ordinance guide the form of buildings within a given FAR range.

Land Use Policies

The Land Use Element includes a series of goals and policies identifying the County's philosophy for future change, development, and resource protection in the County over the next 25 years. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: Countywide growth and development, sustainable and energy efficient development agricultural and rangeland, residential development, commercial and mixed-use development, employment and industrial development, community character, new communities, and city fringe areas. The goals of the Land Use Element are:

LU-1 To maintain San Benito County's rural character and natural beauty while providing areas for needed future growth.

LU-2 To promote energy efficiency through innovative and sustainable building and site design.

LU-3 To ensure the long-term preservation of the agricultural industry, agricultural support services, and rangeland resources by protecting these areas from incompatible urban uses and allowing farmers to manage their land and operations in an efficient, economically viable manner.

LU-4 To encourage variety in new unincorporated residential development while also providing incentives for clustered residential as a means to protect valuable agricultural and natural resources.

LU-5 To promote the development of regional, thoroughfare, and locally-serving commercial uses at key opportunities sites in the unincorporated County.

LU-6 To promote the development of new industrial and employment uses in the unincorporated parts of the county that are compatible with surrounding land uses and meet the present and future needs of county residents.

LU-7 To preserve San Benito County's historic identity and rural community character.

LU-8 To provide the option for New Communities to be considered as a way of accommodating planned growth in the unincorporated parts of San Benito County.

LU-9. To ensure that planning and development approvals within city fringe areas are coordinated between the County and the Cities in order to ensure future growth in these areas is orderly, efficient, and has sufficient and necessary public facilities and infrastructure.

Section 4: Economic Development Element

This is an entirely new General Plan Element that provides policy direction on how the County will partner with the business community to expand existing businesses and retain new industries. The goals of this element emphasize expanding the wine, hospitality, and tourism segments of San Benito County's economy over the next 25 years. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: general economic development and diversification, existing business retention and expansion, new business attraction, wine and hospitality industry promotion and expansion, tourism, workforce training and education, partnerships, and quality of life attributes. [Figure 3-7](#) above shows the Wine/Hospitality Priority Area. The goals of the Economic Development Element are:

ED-1 To sustain the long-term economic wellbeing of the county by promoting economic sustainability and diversification.

ED-2 To support and promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses within the county.

ED-3 To attract new high quality businesses and investment that complement the county's rural character and provide high wage jobs for local residents.

ED-4 To expand the county's wine and hospitality industries in order to ensure San Benito County becomes a regional leader in the wine industry and a premier tourist destination.

ED-5 To expand tourism opportunities in order to make the county a premier destination.

ED-6 To improve the skills of the existing, local workforce in order to attract new investment and ensure future economic growth.

ED-7 To establish meaningful partnerships between the County, other public agencies, and private organizations in order to ensure mutually-beneficial and long-term economic development and sustainability in the county.

ED-8 To improve access for all residents to a variety of high-quality, well-activated parks, green space, and recreational opportunities that enhance quality of life and connect to surrounding neighborhoods and businesses.

ED-9 To improve the health of all County residents and reduce health inequities to ensure people can make productive contributions to the economy, their family, and their community.

ED-10 To ensure County residents have accessible and convenient opportunities to purchase and grow healthy, affordable, and culturally diverse foods with low concentrations of unhealthy food providers.

Section 5: Housing Element

This section provides policy direction on how the County will achieve local and state goals for the maintenance, improvement, and development of affordable housing in San Benito County. The 2007-2014 Housing Element was updated as a separate project, and is therefore not part of the 2035 General Plan project being evaluated in this RDEIR. A separate Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) environmental document for the Housing Element was circulated for public review from March 18, 2010 through April 15, 2010, and adopted on May 11, 2010 (Resolution No. 2010-53). Because the Housing Element proceeded on a separate track, its goals were developed in a different format than the other General Plan elements. Each goal is expressed succinctly and is to be implemented through various programs described in the Housing Element. The goals of the Housing Element are:

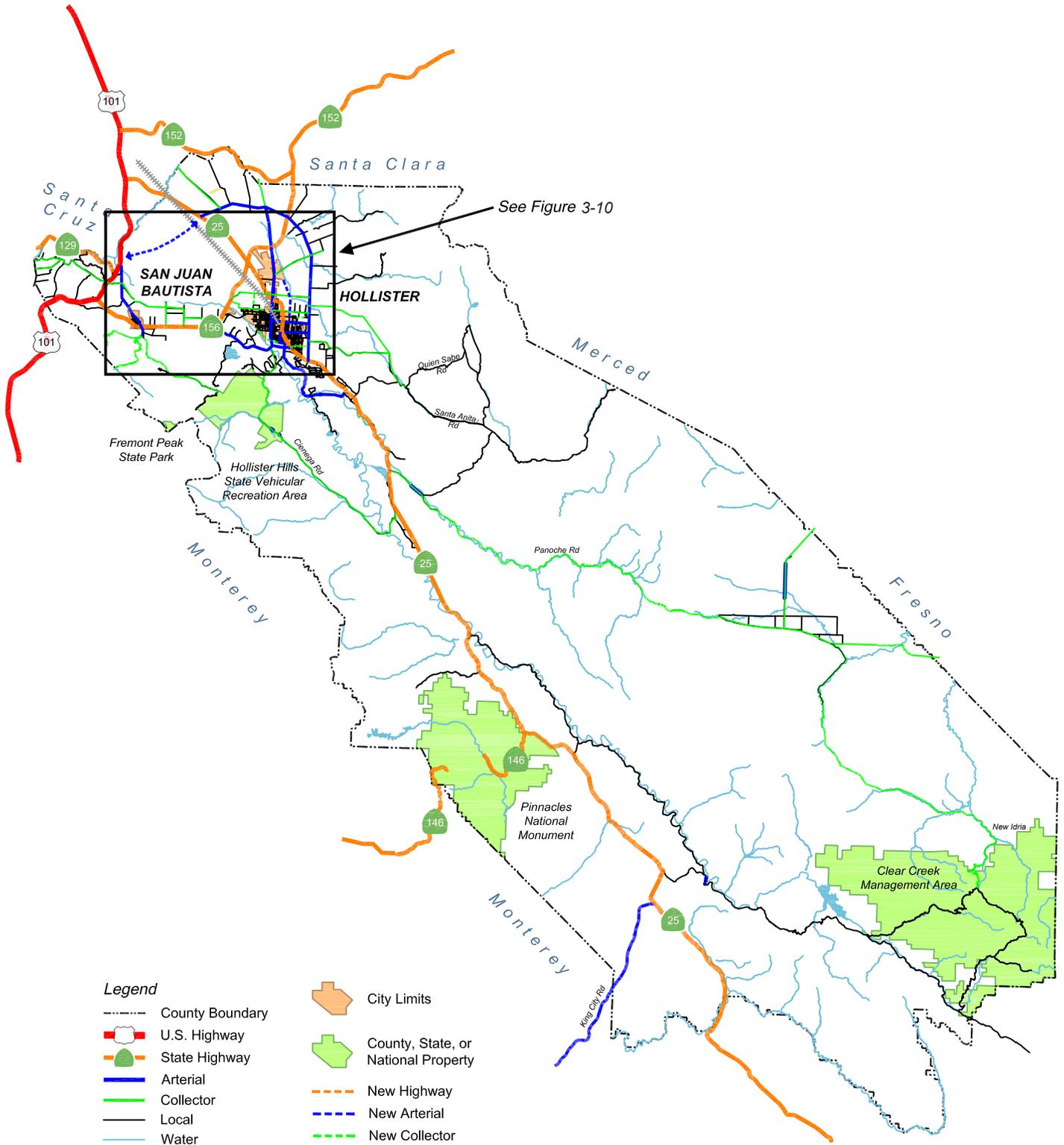
1. Availability
2. Increase the diversity of housing types and the quantity of housing that will be affordable to very low, low, and moderate income households during the program period.
3. Stable long-term funding for maintaining housing programs and the construction of a mixture of housing types and densities with emphasis making housing available to extremely low, very Low, low and moderate income households.
4. Rehabilitation/Conservation of affordability
5. Intergovernmental Coordination
6. Equal Opportunity
7. Special Needs
8. Energy Conservation

Section 6: Circulation Element

This section includes the policy framework for County decisions concerning the countywide transportation system, including the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in and around the County through a variety of transportation modes. The element addresses ways in which the County can reduce GHG emissions and promote alternative forms of transportation (i.e., transit, bicycle, pedestrian). The element also includes specific policy direction for the creation of complete streets that allow for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit circulation on roadways.

Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: roadways, pedestrian, equestrian and bicycle trails, public transit, transportation demand management, goods movement, and air transportation. This section also includes a comprehensive update to the Circulation Diagram, which identifies future circulation system improvements, including bicycle facilities necessary to support the Land Use Diagram. [Figure 3-9](#) shows the County's existing roadway classifications. [Figure 3-10](#) shows the roadway classifications for Hollister and San Juan Bautista. [Figure 3-11](#) shows the regional planned roadway improvements. [Figure 3-12](#) illustrates the locations of the Hollister area planned roadway improvements. [Figure 3-13](#) shows the Hollister area existing and planned bicycle facilities. The goals of the Circulation Element are:

- C-1** To provide an adequate road system that is safe, efficient, reliable, and within the County's ability to finance and maintain.
- C-2** To provide a safe, continuous, and accessible system of facilities for bicycle and pedestrian travel in appropriate areas of the county.
- C-3** To promote a safe and efficient public transit system that provides a viable travel alternative to automobiles, maximizes mobility, and reduces roadway congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.
- C-4** To encourage alternative transportation modes to reduce the demand for vehicular trips, especially during congested commute times.
- C-5** To provide for the safe and efficient movement of goods to support commerce while maintaining safety and quality of life in the county.
- C-6** To promote the safe and efficient use of aviation facilities.



Legend

- County Boundary
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Arterial
- Collector
- Local
- Water
- City Limits
- County, State, or National Property
- New Highway
- New Arterial
- New Collector



Not to scale

Figure 3-9

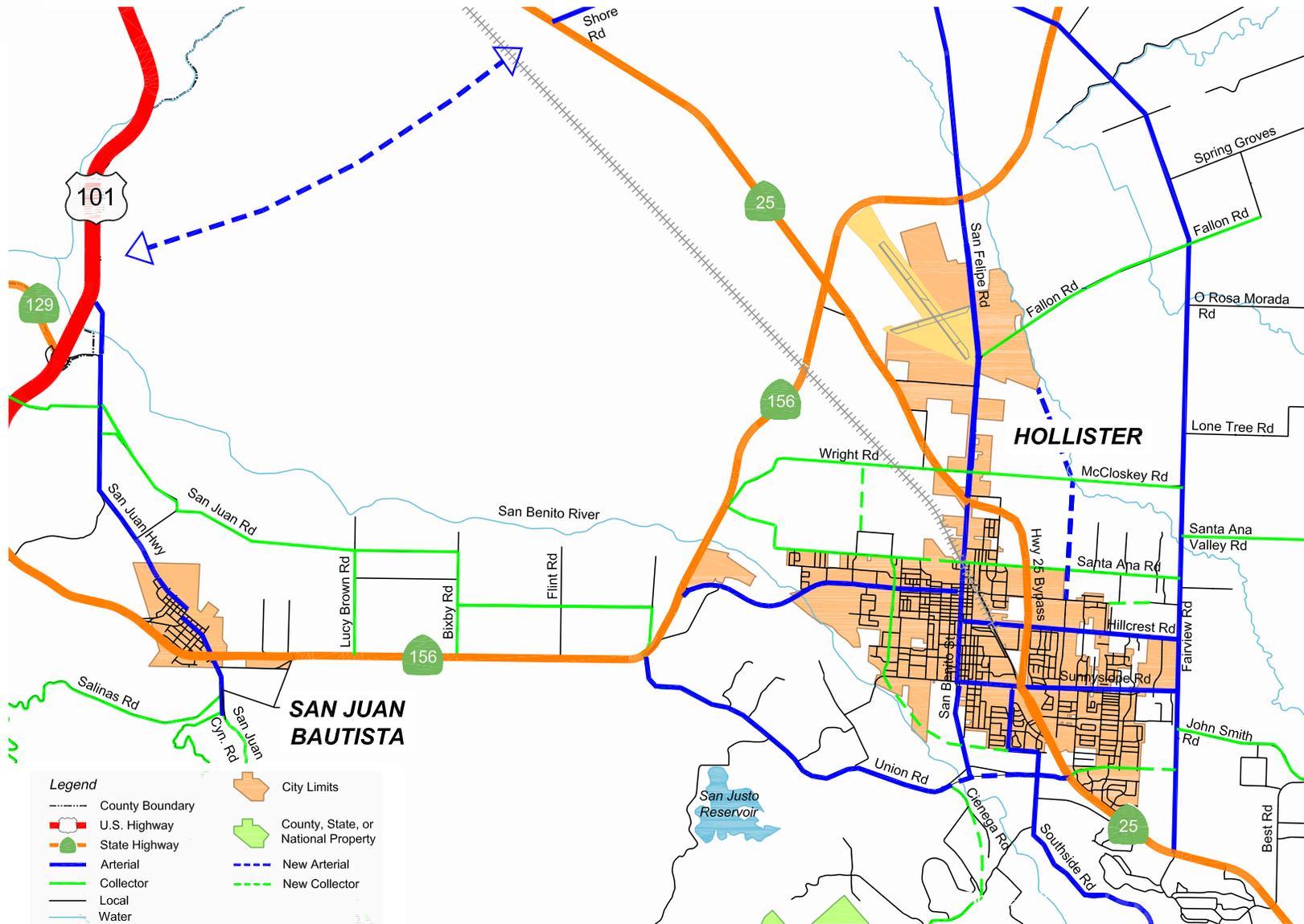
Circulation Diagram

(San Benito County Roadway Classifications)



3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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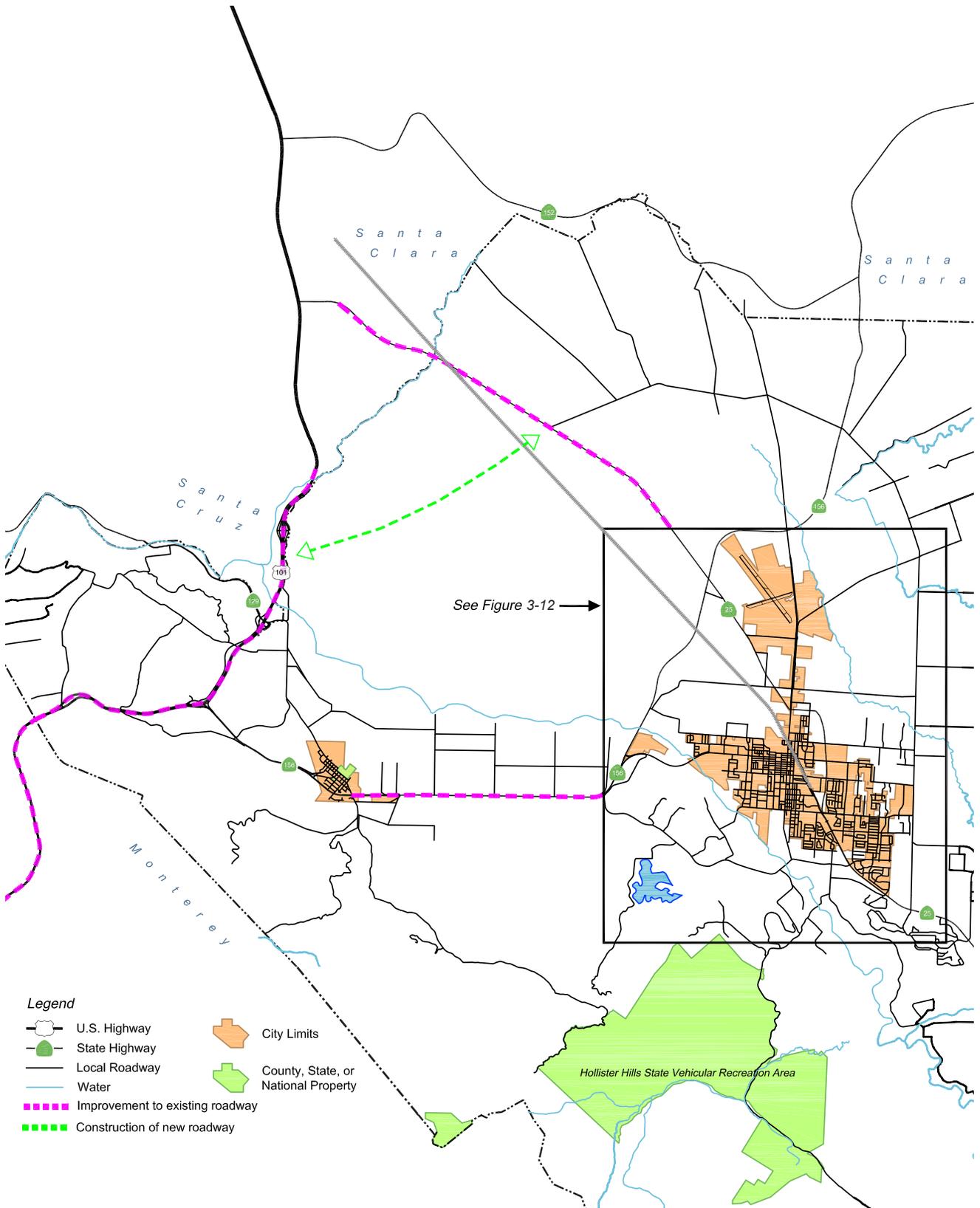


Not to scale



Figure 3-10
Circulation Diagram
 (Hollister and San Juan Bautista Roadway Classifications)

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Legend

- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Local Roadway
- Water
- Improvement to existing roadway
- Construction of new roadway
- City Limits
- County, State, or National Property



Not to scale

Figure 3-11

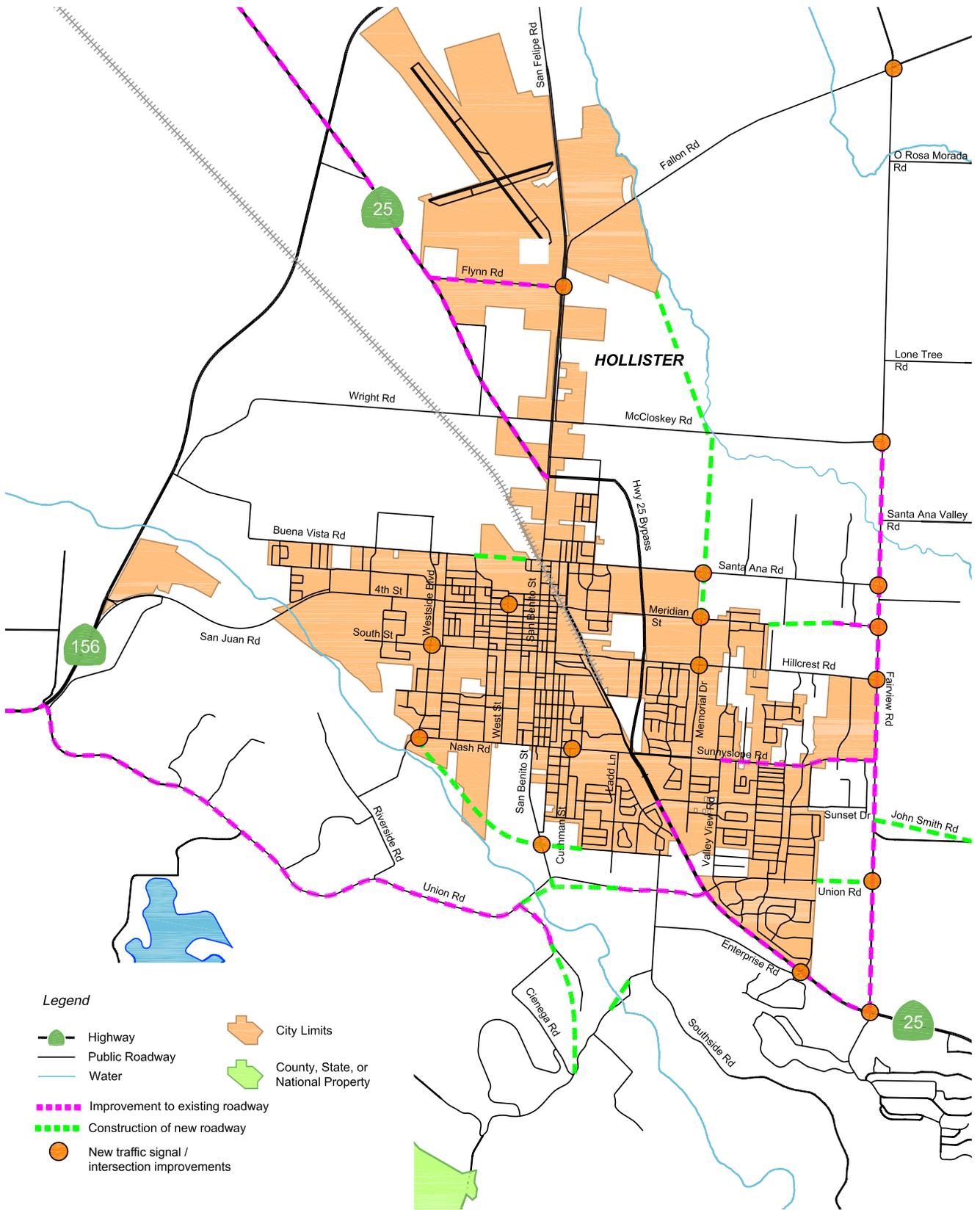
Circulation Diagram

(Regional Planned Roadway Improvements)



3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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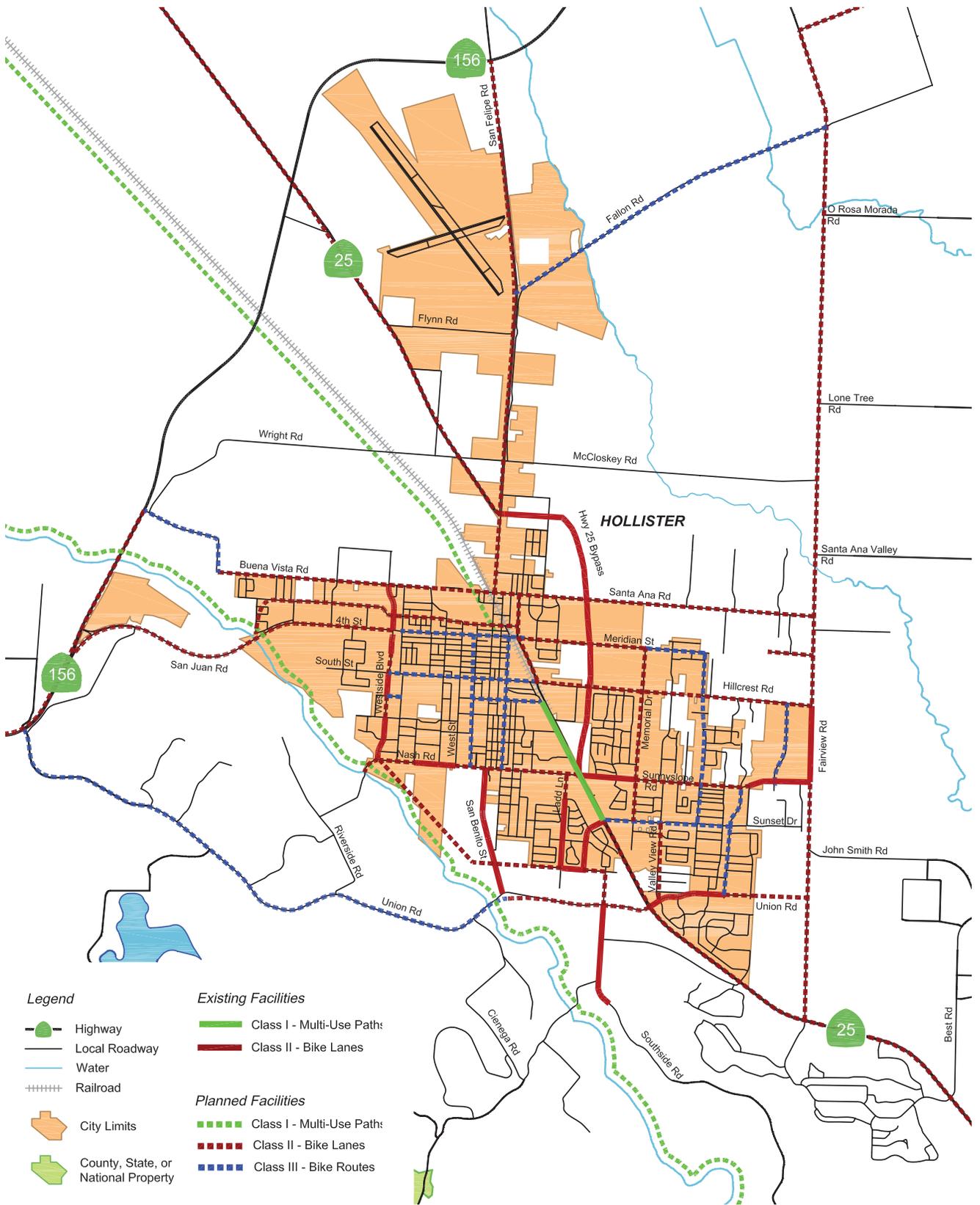


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Figure 3-12
Circulation Diagram
 (Hollister Area Planned Roadway Improvements)
 2035 San Benito County General Plan Revised DEIR

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Source: San Benito County Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan 2010



Not to scale

Figure 3-13

Circulation Diagram (Hollister Area Existing and Planned Bicycle Facilities)



3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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Section 7: Public Facilities and Services Element

This new section provides the framework for County decisions concerning public and private infrastructure, utilities, and services. These include County operations, water supply and delivery, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, flood protection, solid waste disposal, utilities and telecommunications, parks and recreation, law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services. However, this element contains several new overarching strategies that would guide the provision of public facilities and services in a more energy-efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective manner.

New policies focus on increasing energy efficiency, reducing waste, promoting water conservation, providing renewable energy sources, and improving stormwater management and flood protection. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: general public facilities and services; County operations; water supply and conservation; water treatment and delivery; wastewater treatment and disposal; stormwater drainage; solid waste and recycling; utilities; telecommunications; school and library facilities; youth, families, seniors, and special needs groups; law enforcement and crime prevention; and fire protection and emergency medical services. The goals of the Public Facilities and Services Element are:

PFS-1 To provide residents and businesses quality, cost-effective, and sustainable public facilities and services.

PFS-2 To increase efficiency of County facilities, services, and operations and conserve resources to serve as a leader in sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

PFS-3 To ensure reliable supplies of water for unincorporated areas to meet the needs of existing and future agriculture and development, while promoting water conservation and the use of sustainable water supply sources.

PFS-4 To maintain an adequate level of service in the water systems serving unincorporated areas to meet the needs of existing and future agriculture and development, while improving water system efficiency.

PFS-5 To ensure wastewater treatment facilities and septic systems are available and adequate to collect, treat, store, and safely dispose of wastewater.

PFS-6 To manage stormwater from existing and future development using methods that reduce potential flooding, maintain natural water quality, enhance percolation for groundwater recharge, and provide opportunities for reuse.

PFS-7 To provide solid waste facilities that meet or exceed State law requirements, and use innovative strategies for economical and efficient collection, transfer, recycling, storage, and disposal of solid waste.

PFS-8 To ensure that all areas of the County are provided with gas and electric service and residents and businesses can connect renewable energy facilities to the electric-grid.

PFS-9 To facilitate the orderly and appropriate development and expansion of telecommunications facilities to meet the needs of residents and businesses for comprehensive, reliable, and cost effective telephone, wireless telephone, broadband, and cable television service.

PFS-10 To collaborate with school districts and other educational providers to develop high quality educational facilities and programs that serve existing and future residents.

PFS-11 To continue to place high priority on programs and facilities that serve youth, families, seniors, and other special needs groups.

PFS-12 To provide adequate law enforcement facilities and services to prevent crime, ensure the safety of residents and visitors, and protect private and public property.

PFS-13 To coordinate with fire protection and emergency service providers to ensure adequate fire facilities, equipment, and services are available to protect county residents and property from fire.

Section 8: Natural and Cultural Resources Element

This new section includes the County's goals, policies, and programs related to the balanced management and conservation of open space, wildlife habitat, mineral, water, energy, scenic, recreation, cultural, and historic resources in San Benito County. The element replaces the existing 1995 Open Space and Conservation Element. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: open space, wildlife habitat, recreational resources, water resources, mineral resources, energy resources, cultural and historic resources, and scenic resources. The goals of the Natural and Cultural Resources Element are:

NCR-1 To preserve and enhance valuable open space lands that provide wildlife habitat and conserve natural and visual resources of San Benito County.

NCR-2 To protect and enhance wildlife communities through a comprehensive approach that conserves, maintains, and restores important habitat areas.

NCR-3 To develop and maintain a comprehensive system of parklands and protected public recreational areas that meet both the active and passive recreational needs of all age groups.

NCR-4 To protect water quantity and quality in natural water bodies and groundwater basins and avoid overdraft of groundwater resources.

NCR-5 To protect and support economically viable mineral resource extraction while avoiding land use conflicts and environmental impacts from current and historical mining activities.

NCR-6 To increase energy independence and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the use of renewable energy sources and improved energy conservation and efficiency.

NCR-7 To protect, preserve, and enhance the unique cultural and historic resources in the county.

NCR-8 To enhance and preserve the attractive visual qualities of scenic vistas and corridors in the county.

Section 9: Health and Safety Element

This section provides policy guidance for how the County will protect residents, workers, visitors, and properties from unreasonable risks associated with natural and manmade hazards. These include fires, hazardous materials, floods, earthquakes, airport hazards, noise, air quality, and adaptation to climate change. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: emergency preparedness, flood hazards, seismic and geologic hazards, fire hazards, climate change impacts, air quality, hazardous materials and waste, airport hazards, and noise. The goals of the Health and Safety Element are:

HS-1 To maintain the necessary level of disaster preparedness for the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of people living, working, and residing in San Benito County.

HS-2 To minimize the loss of life, injury, or damage to property as a result of floods in the county.

HS-3 To protect lives and property from seismic and geologic hazards.

HS-4 To minimize the risk of wildland and urban fire hazards.

HS-5 To improve local and regional air quality to protect residents from the adverse effects of poor air quality.

HS-6 To safeguard and protect the health and safety of people, the environment, and personal property from the potential dangers associated with a hazardous materials release.

HS-7 To promote the safe operation of public and private airports and protect the safety of county residents.

HS-8 To protect the health, safety, and welfare of county residents through the elimination of annoying or harmful noise levels.

Section 10: Administration Element

This new section provides guidance for how the County administers the 2035 General Plan. This includes goals, policies, and programs related to the development review and permitting process, environmental justice, interagency coordination, and General Plan maintenance. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: development review and decision-making process, inter-agency coordination, and General Plan maintenance. The goals of the Administration Element are:

AD-1 To ensure that the development review process and the decisions made by the Board of Supervisors are efficient, fair, and to the greatest extent feasible, predictable.

AD-2 To cooperate and coordinate with applicable local, regional, State, and Federal jurisdictions and agencies in order to achieve mutually-beneficial development, environmental, and economic goals.

AD-3 To provide a clear framework for the ongoing administration, maintenance, and implementation of the San Benito County 2035 General Plan.

3.8 TYPE AND INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This RDEIR is intended to review potential environmental impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the draft 2035 General Plan, and to determine any necessary mitigation measures. It is designed to fully inform the County decision-makers, in addition to other responsible agencies, persons, and the general public, of the potential environmental effects of the proposed project and its alternatives. San Benito County will submit the RDEIR for review to all appropriate public agencies, the public, and to the State Clearinghouse, as defined under applicable laws and regulations.

This RDEIR is being prepared as a “Program” EIR pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines §15168. Section 15168(a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines states:

A Program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related ... in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program.

Therefore, a Program EIR is an EIR prepared on a large-scale planning project, such as the 2035 General Plan, that provides the framework for specific projects to be developed in accordance with identified land use patterns. Program EIRs do not evaluate the potential impacts of specific development projects that may be allowed in the 2035 General Plan. Such development projects will be subject to their own project-level environmental review process under CEQA as appropriate.

The RDEIR will function as a first-tier environmental document that assesses the broad environmental impacts of future projects, with the understanding that subsequent environmental reviews will occur on a project-specific basis. As a first-tier document, this RDEIR is intended to streamline the review of projects consistent with the approved 2035 General Plan, and to allow the scope of future projects to be narrowed pursuant to the rules for tiering set forth in State CEQA Guidelines §15152 and §15168.

“Tiering” refers to the relationship between a community-level EIR (where long-range programmatic cumulative impacts are the focus of the environmental analysis) and subsequent environmental analyses that focus primarily on issues unique to a smaller project within the larger program or plan. Through tiering, a subsequent environmental analysis for an individual project can incorporate, by reference, discussion that summarizes general environmental data found in a program EIR that establishes cumulative impacts and mitigation measures, the planning context, and/or the regulatory background. These broad-based issues need not be reevaluated subsequently, having been previously identified and evaluated at the program stage.

Tiering focuses the environmental review on the project-specific significant effects that were not examined in the prior environmental review, or those that are susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance by specific revisions in the project, by the imposition of conditions, or by other means.

It is anticipated that such subsequent environmental documents will incorporate the RDEIR by reference, pursuant to §15150 and §15152 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As a first-tier environmental document, this RDEIR is also intended to provide the cumulative analysis for any future project consistent with the 2035 General Plan. Subsequent projects will be reviewed by the County for consistency with the 2035 General Plan, and additional environmental review, if necessary, will be conducted as required by CEQA. Future projects could include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Approval and funding of capital improvements;
- Future specific plan, planned unit development, and community plan approvals;
- Property rezoning consistent with the 2035 General Plan;
- Development plan approvals, such as tentative maps, variances, conditional use permits, and other land use permits; or
- Development agreement process and approvals.