



Vision Summit: *"Now is the Time!"*  
October 26-28, 2011  
Hollister, Calif.

Preliminary Report

A 10-Year Vision for  
San Benito County: 2012-2022

This report is available online at:  
<http://www.cffsbc.org/communityvision>



November 17, 2011

Dear San Benito County Visionaries,

Community Vision San Benito County (CVSBC) is excited to release the following Preliminary Report from our vision summit, "*Now is the Time!*" held October 26-28 at St. Benedict's Hall in Hollister, California.

As you will see, the first part is the vision our community has clearly articulated. *It's in the future tense.* Pages 7-11 list the Strategies residents suggested and agreed upon. This is our game plan/ marching orders/ Next Steps – whatever we call them: they are the actions that will move us toward San Benito County's Best Possible Outcomes.

The strength of this report cannot be underestimated. It is the work of *hundreds* of people, voices from all different communities in San Benito County that were listened to. It has been the result of 12 months of community meetings, beginning with a community leaders' retreat in October, 2010, followed by 38 Listening Sessions with hundreds of residents during the summer, and culminating with the three-day summit where more than 130 residents participated.

**Key Takeaways from the Preliminary Report:**

- **Our vision unifies.** Create a united vision & sense of direction and the community will make it happen. We have the people interested and willing to move it forward.
- **We come to a consensus on a vision that is within reach, even if people say it is not, and this group stays with it to conclusion, no matter how long it takes.**
- **We learned that the ideas and vision from the three days are already reflected in the Draft General Plan.** The County has done a thorough job with the Draft General Plan; it reflects residents' desires and is very similar to priorities of the majority of residents. CVSBC can assist with the adoption and implementation of a Final General Plan that is in the best interest of all residents by encouraging more public input and reaching out to community members not normally involved in the process.
- **We will continue to learn how to communicate and collaborate.** CVSBC can encourage residents to meet new people and make new connections. We build relationships that act as foundations for collaboration.
- **When working from a consensus, the purpose is what is important.** As the purpose is being focused upon and encouraged, the resources will show up.
- **The right resources are discovered and received at the right time.** The necessary resources (financial and human) are produced and maximized so a new plan, project, program, etc. ... gets implemented and is successful for our community. Collaboration will be key to attracting funding and working towards successful outcomes.

Our mission at CVSBC is "*to encourage & facilitate participation of all residents in decisions that improve our community's quality of life.*" Through these community meetings, we are moving forward to engage our community in this important discussion about our future. Stay tuned as we enter into 2012 when we will finalize this report, and begin to achieve a unique and relevant vision for San Benito County.

Sincerely,

  
Julie F. Morris, Director  
Community Vision San Benito County

*COMMUNITY VISION San Benito County is a project of the Community Foundation for San Benito County*  
Advisory Committee

Gary Byrne, Dan Dungy, Damon Felice, Marilyn Ferreira, Scott Fuller, Paula Grace, Colleen Johnson,  
Renee Kunz, Paul Levy, Joe Morris, Mike Sanchez, Charlie Scott, Bonita Villalobos-Rivera & Gene Zanger

San Benito County 10-Year Vision: 2012-2022 – Preliminary Report



## COMMUNITY VISION SAN BENITO COUNTY: *"Now is the Time!"*

### Ten - Year Vision: 2012-2022

#### ***SAN BENITO COUNTY IN 2022: Where a True Sense of Community Exists.***

**Welcome to San Benito County where a true sense of community exists.** Great schools, strong sense of place and satisfaction, high quality of life obtainable by all, and a vibrant thriving economy. San Benito County will have a strong sense of place and be the most desirable County to live in California.

**We are a community that came together with a common vision.** We have a highly educated workforce, sustainable industry has been developed, unemployment is less than 3%, young people are returning to work and educate their children, 95% of students going to college. We have fresh water, clean air, lots of open space for recreation and agriculture.

#### **We are United, Determined, Engaged and Involved.**

**San Benito County is a place where residents are engaged and involved.** Our community continues to work together to resolve issues for the betterment of all residents. If we want something done we all unite for what is best for all not just a few. Volunteerism is at an all-time high.

**San Benito County is known as a community of likeminded citizens and leadership who are united and determined to produce and live in a healthy, sustainable society, economy, culture and ecosystem.** It is wonderful place to live and has a process to address the needs of all of its citizens: medical, employment, recreation and other quality of life issues. We found a positive and fun way to make things happen and work together towards continually improving our County. Our practice is to step out of our comfort zone to make a difference.

**We are an example of teamwork to others.** We are a model community and have facilitators to help other neighboring communities. We finally got it right. Our City and County Officials have excellent judgment and reason.

**It is common to utilize cross-jurisdictional boundaries by governmental agencies to more effectively and efficiently serve the public.** We are seen as a close knit community with one governmental agency, low unemployment, evenly-taxed commercial base, well-trained and bright youth, and activities for all ages, and a wonderful place to live. There is one planning commission in the County. San Benito County is well-funded and our public funds are spent wisely. Our libraries, schools and parks are of equal priority to us as our police and fire services.

**We have established partnerships that meet economic, education and recreational needs as a community.** Communication flows consistently and respectfully between to the public and private sector. We remain rural, but we are congenial, respectful, prosperous, and forward thinking for the greater good, locally and globally. We are truly a service-minded community.

San Benito County 10-Year Vision: 2012-2022 – Preliminary Report

**San Benito County is a community of educated, healthy, caring, fully employed, and happy people who thrive upon helping one another making it the *best place in America* to live.** Our political culture is characterized by democratic, participatory, creative solutions and respectful listening. Everyone is listening with respect to each other. Our citizens vote in elections and expect candidates who are ethical, highly able, and experienced.

#### **San Benito County Is a Vibrant Community.**

**San Benito County is a beautiful, vibrant place.** We are a real community that people love to live in and visit. We have ample jobs, quality schools, affordable housing. We utilize all of a multi-use Arts and Cultural Center, natural parks and biking trails.

**San Benito County is a vibrant community with quality education, housing, industry and employment opportunities.** Our county is a great place to be; it feels vibrant, alive and growing. It is "the place to live." We have an economy with low unemployment; we are joyful; our individuals are thriving. Our county is a highly desirable place to live; an ideal place to live, learn, play and invest.

**San Benito County is listed as one of the top spots to live in the state, based on satisfaction of residents, education, employment, health and recreation.** We are one of the top 10 places to live in the United States. In Money magazine's annual survey, we are one of the top 10 places in the US to live and work instead of ranking one of the top 10 stressed communities. Our county is the benchmark by which other communities strive for.

#### **A Great Place to Live and Raise Families**

**San Benito County is a great place to live and raise your family.** It has rural beauty, a thriving local economy and excellent educational, cultural and recreational opportunities for people of all ages. We are a community where people would like to live, work, play and raise a family and where we have chosen to raise our families for generations.

**San Benito County is known as one of the greatest places to raise children because of access to culture, education and recreation.** We are also a great place to retire: the best place in America to raise children, grow your family and retire.

#### **Our Children Are Well Educated.**

**Our children are healthy, happy, safe and well educated.** Our children are universally above average and enjoy a sense of place. All of our students are educated, not just put through the educational process.

**Our children are educated and passionate about the place they call home and have the ability to continue to live and work here, if they choose.**

**San Benito County has excellent schools, new parks and open space preserved for the people of the community to play in and enjoy.** Our school system is unified with a Gavilan campus around a vision that promotes career training that sustains this booming economy, all while maintaining the pastoral quality and historic heritage of this rich valley.

**Innovative schools draw people into the area.** We have schools that draw people in where kids want to be. We have an active San Benito County School District that oversees the consolidation of schools, where it makes sense, so that we may be more efficient in our use of resources.

**We Are Supporting Old and Young.**

**We have a united, active, multigenerational cultural community that is growing, innovative, youth oriented and senior supported.** Seniors and youth have their expectations met. Senior citizens are happy and healthy and employed and engaged in community events. Children thrive, seniors thrive, businesses thrive—we all thrive and can be content, happy and healthy if we so choose.

**We Have Preserved Our Heritage; Newcomers and New Ideas are welcomed.**

**We have preserved our heritage and we welcome newcomers with open arms. We embrace our neighbors.** Our heritage is preserved, we do all we can to encourage agriculture as part of our identity. We have pastoral beauty in our towns and countryside. Our community is full of historic richness and cutting-edge tools to meet the needs of its residents. We share our prosperity and are educated in our county history and multicultural population.

**We are a vibrant community that is a model for balancing sustainable economic growth with the preservation of heritage, culture and natural beauty.** Our community in every respect is a model for others and our agricultural heritage has been preserved properly. San Benito County has a vibrant economy, world-class educational opportunities, and a great variety of recreational opportunities that highlight and protect our natural resources. Natural resources produce wine, cattle and *other* crops make our county a destination.

**We celebrate our rich and various heritages.** The heritage of cultures, agriculture, and self-reliance is celebrated with parades, fairs, festivals, etc. year-round. We honor all cultures and ways of life. *Our community* celebrates diversity and all walks of life. It meets all age, economic, cultural and family needs.

**San Juan Bautista is one of the most charming towns to visit.** San Juan Bautista is still a small, historic village, Mission City— without chickens defecating all over our sidewalks driveways and decks. San Juan Bautista is a Paradise in California.

**We have a vibrant and rich agricultural heritage.**

**The rich agricultural heritage is preserved but smart growth is evident.** San Benito County remains a lovely, diverse, agricultural paradise, with small economically viable towns that are healthy, rich in education, culture, art and that residents are happy to call it their home. The City of Hollister is centralized and contained without destroying the agricultural and pastoral setting.

**We have vibrant agricultural communities.** We are a first-class - small and large - agricultural community. Farms are thriving. San Benito's farms, ranches and towns are thriving, interesting and fun places to be. We are an agricultural showplace of Best Practices. Residents understand the agricultural community and support a

"European-style," year-round farmers market with meats, wine, produce, oils, etc., available and purchased by residents, bringing in shoppers from out of the community.

**A Safe, Happy, Healthy, Community that Provides for Various Lifestyles.**

**A safe, happy, healthy, fun loving community that provides sustainable opportunities for various lifestyles.** We enjoy lifestyles that include agriculture; individuals/families of many cultures who live in harmony; and joy in a pristine and healthy environment. San Benito County is the pinnacle of a healthy lifestyle for now and forever.

**San Benito County is a thriving sustainable community with an active population with a high education level and a crime free environment.** Ours is a safer community where residents work, play, shop, walk, seek medical attention and know and care about others. Safety is a priority for our residents and all residents enjoy the natural beauty.

**San Benito County is a wonderful, healthy beautiful place to live.** We are known as safe, healthy, inclusive and economically secure. *We are* healthy, safe and have walkable community centers.

**Scenic, beautiful, rural and all the comforts of larger cities.** We have a thriving rural community with a vibrant downtown that includes retail, entertainment and restaurants, low – level high rise residential, connectivity with bike lanes in transit, to a larger regional Park and River Parkway for hiking, biking, equestrian, theater and music venues.

**Neighborhoods are connected by green corridors with bike and pedestrian paths.** We are a community where proper planning has created walking/biking trails between housing, commercial and school lands.

**There is a thriving arts scene, new, state-of-the-art library, schools, agriculture and walkable/livable downtown.** We have a walkable, sustainable downtown; various recreational opportunities; a strong agricultural heritage; a diverse population. There is a cultural center in San Benito County which includes large free library and park.

**We are a hub of sustainable business development, green economy and agri-tourism.**

**Businesses are actively trying to locate here because we have a good/great government process that welcomes and encourages them.** We have well-planned towns that families and businesses want to move to. We have a low percentage of folks commuting out of town for work, and people support local farms and businesses. *We have* a growing workforce, providing the opportunity for young families to work and live in the county.

**San Benito County has pulled itself from staggering unemployment rates and struggling schools to become a hub of sustainable business development, green economy, and agri-tourism with a thriving downtown that revolves around a vibrant arts and cultural center.** Significant steps have been made on economic growth, jobs to housing balance, the development of a wide range of well-planned mixed-use communities, and people are proud and pleased to live here.

**We have a happening downtown area that attracts young and older residents. The downtown is revitalized and thriving.** Downtown Hollister is family-friendly and offers great shopping and things to do.

We have a well-balanced community with a thriving wine and tourism industry; a place where people want to visit frequently. Visitors come for entertainment, history, recreation and to participate in events with the community. We are one of the communities with a high number of recreational opportunities.

**We have improved transportation that meets the community's needs.**

We have a highway that moves cars, bikes, golf carts, and walking lanes so you can travel to shop work or home; *"Lots of roundabouts!"* We have hundreds of miles of bike paths like mountain bike trails, zip line park and etc.

We have improved transportation *by meeting the community's interest* and we do not settle for less. San Benito Street now belongs to the people of San Benito County, not Caltrans. We are still emerging and now harvesting the fruits from the 2011 Vision Summit. Hwy 152 takes a western direction off Shore Rd to Hwy 101. A fast train service provides commuters viable service to their jobs up north.

**CREATING OUR PURPOSE  
STRATEGIES WE HEARD THAT WE AGREE WITH**

This document includes all the strategies and actions created at the Vision Summit on the last day. The statements in **CAPITALS AND BOLD** are the purpose statements created during the summit: The strategies or actions must foster these purposes to be effective.

**1. Community San Benito County**

**COMMUNICATION AND TRUST ARE BUILT BETWEEN THE MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES OF SAN BENITO COUNTY.**

*We consider* the foregoing of a county identity.

**Have one, consolidated governmental agency to eliminate the need to present to multiple agencies.**

- Highlight the importance of participating in programs like Leadership San Benito to develop a working relationship with all segments of the community.

**2. Economics and Jobs**

**THE ECONOMY IS IMPROVED TO THE POINT THAT GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL IS WITHIN REACH.** *There is a consensus; economic development. The issue is how to create a thriving and economically sound community. We create jobs. The economy thrives. We have growth.*

**Increase efforts in bringing new companies to the Hollister Industrial Park.**

- We need to find a way to streamline business and development in our County.
- Create a Citizens' Committee to review local regulations, laws, and policies that may have the unintended consequences of blocking economic development. The board would review laws/regulations/policies to ensure that the intent is met (spirit of law/reg/policy) in a way that doesn't stymie economic opportunity.
- Work with local government to determine what rules and regulations are deterring businesses from coming to San Benito County.

**Create incentives for new business.**

- Establish a formal vehicle to promote regulatory change to incentivize local developments and also lobby for more state and federal "grants" to support local projects with incentives to use local labor and local contractors.
- Increased jobs by offering incentives to businesses that open in San Benito County and require that a % of employment is local residents. Hire local contractors for local jobs.
- EDC/City/County to work together to establish a job creations goal in create incentives to target industry that would meet this goal.
- Lobby for business. Hire a lobbyist to represent our cities/counties at the state level to get more local funding. This is in addition to using our Assemblymen and Senators.
- Tech industry airport. Motels/hotels for tourism. SR housing.
- Use Transfer of Development Credits to direct development where it best fits.

**Find and promote a downtown hub.**

- Creation of "next space" telecommuting center to help eliminate unnecessary commuting (preferably in the downtown) and shared office opportunities by working with property owners and local government along with business development organizations.
- Use of local vacant buildings to promote these services and etc.
- There is a community Media Center with meeting areas for facilitators to meet with groups on an ongoing basis to discuss ongoing projects plans issues and concerns.
  - Media Center-communication facilitators.
  - The Media Center will provide information through the Internet, radio, TV, schools, government offices. Information for all residents.
  - Advocate for increased access to the Internet or create media centers to increase access to information.
- Support County Information Centers. Support County information Centers. Including youth advocacy options/groups. Youth
- Collaborative business/art studio spaces.
- Wire local + \_\_\_\_\_.

**3. Decision-making**

**BECAUSE CONFLICTS CONTINUALLY ARISE, BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOMES WILL INCLUDE CREATING A CONTINUING CAPACITY TO ADDRESS AND RESOLVE CONFLICTS; SUSTAINABLE.** We will work together to create solutions and gain a greater understanding of other peoples perspective.

**Facilitators Bureau. Create a community facilitator group to work with organizations and community meetings.**

- Create a decision-making model that includes County response and methods for our reach.
- Create an organized group of trained facilitators to be available to meet groups in conflict (possibly organized by the community foundation).
- Use facilitators in immediate problems that occur in the community. Facilitators will go out to the community to help with current problematic issues.

- Out of this group of 100 – a subcommittee agrees to serve as facilitators for public meetings in San Benito County (example with aging forum – police can sit in listening sessions instead of worrying about crowd control).
- After coming to a consensus they can help the groups present a solution to the government agency if it is required.
- Report the facilitating process in the media, newspapers, TV and radio.

#### **4. Continue the vision process:**

**THE COMMUNITY CAN MOVE FORWARD IN A UNIFIED VISION OF WHAT IS BEST THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.**

**Continue the vision process to train facilitators to provide a process to address issues of importance in and out of the community.**

- Form a facilitator group to go out into the community with these people. Each person in a group is responsible for bringing in 8 to 10 people to facilitate the vision.

#### **5. Communication**

**THERE IS COMMUNICATION ON VISION TO ALL CONSTITUENTS.** We look at all sectors *that are* instrumental: business, government, nonprofit, education and bring all stakeholders together and communicate.

**Find a means of communication so that the community learns about Community Vision SBC and issues at hand.**

- Develop a greater communication to share information.
- Create the infrastructure for free broadband access for every household in the community to have an avenue for communicating our visions and our solutions via surveys, Skype, blogs and etc.
- Bilingual media.
- Media training > radio, print, TV, and Internet. Papers, TV and radio.
- Information kiosk.

#### **6. Community Connections:**

**PEOPLE WILL FEEL CONNECTED AND EMPOWERED.** We give a voice to many more residents, to show them they have a say and can make a difference in our collective community.

**Stay in touch with the community. Multiple media modes. Think outside the box.**

- Social Media. Take advantage of social media (County govt.)
- Initiating a social media site providing a central location for public to access San Benito County information – government, schools, businesses and activities.
- Using and developing social media/skills.
- New/Facebook/twitter.
- Old door to door.
- Through computer, advertisement and door-to-door communicating.
- Library resources.
- Basic communications-electronic and work with newspapers. Personal asks of local media.

San Benito County 10-Year Vision: 2012-2022 – Preliminary Report

**Make more effort to reach out others. Slowdown – listen.**

- Hold more small group meetings.
- Change our own attitude towards communication – i.e. become a better listener. Take more time to listen to others before I speak.
- Give more value and credence to opinions with which you don't agree.
- Participation in leadership *opportunities*-Join leadership SBC: learn leadership, learn about all aspects of the community, learn the community issues and meet community leaders.

**7. Education**

**CHILDREN ARE HEALTHY AND EDUCATED.** Our children are in an educational environment that allows for learning and achievement and there is a unified vision that is acted on.

**Conduct consensus sessions with the educational community.**

- Contract with the school and parents so that both are aware of each others' responsibilities. (i.e: parents are not just dropping off their kids.)
- Create a contract between the school and parents specifying expectations of each other.
- Role of parents – everything begins at home.
- Unify expectations from preschool through college by bringing teachers from each grade level, administrators and etc. together. When teachers are committed students are committed.
  - Develop articulation between grade levels in schools. Share ideas and goals.
  - Have educators from all schools meet and have open communication.
  - Treat each colleague as a valued equal being.
  - Have educators between all grade levels sit together.

**Make all children feel important by valuing them as humans first.**

- Make all students feel valued as human beings first. Value students as people first.
- Acknowledge children's individual gifts and have them excel in those areas (foster).
- Allow children to be who they are not fit into a box.

**Develop ways to value education.**

- Understand the future of the educational system: What does it do well and what doesn't it do well? Value education – prioritize it.
- Valuing and appreciating the job of teachers so that talented people will continue to be attracted to the profession; Support teachers/education with community respect and well-paid positions.

**Democratic education.**

- Teach a more democratic environment. Give students a true democratic experience.

**Teach critical thinking.**

- Teach critical thinking not rote "learning".
- Teach critical thinking over test taking.
- Test for multiple skills not just test results.

San Benito County 10-Year Vision: 2012-2022 – Preliminary Report

- Education (trade school) for technology.

**Communication - between educators, community, schools, teachers, parents and students.**

- Better communication in our community.
- Get all parties communicating regularly.

**Make use of our resources i.e. seniors.**

- Volunteers (grandparents etc.) In the classroom (100% literacy).
- Use community volunteers.
- Utilize our resources (seniors, parents and etc.) To help provide individual attention to kids.

**Go to e-books.**

**Develop an affordable preschool.**

**8. Agriculture**

**We need to get together as a community if we want to control our future.**

- Gather the farmers and ranchers for a united front to influence agricultural land use, regulation and growth development. This will influence our state and local governments decision-making including Caltrans.
- *Help* people who don't understand the benefits to the community that ranching provides: wildlife, food, and self-financed open space.

**Agriculture community needs to develop of vision and specific strategies to move towards that vision.**

- Help farmers and ranchers develop their vision. A vision process specifically for farmers and cattle ranchers.
- Develop a "vision" for our strategic plan for farmers and ranchers to gain public support in maintaining these uses/lifestyle/cultures and stewardship of the land.
- Ranchers and farmers meet and develop a set of issues (one hour meeting). Water, taxes, market/local\_\_\_\_, zoning and disposing (how/why/alternatives).

**A streamlined, inexpensive permit process for ranchers and farmers to comply with regulations – without fear of losing management of their lands.**

- Governmental regulations encourage good stewards of the land.
- Laws and restrictions must take into account the groups that are most affected by it.
- With every new law, one must be discarded.

**Develop a more expanded/year-round farmers market featuring local produce, meats, wines, oils and etc.**

*The above is a Preliminary Report, summarizing highlights of the Community Vision San Benito County Summit held Oct. 26-28 at St. Benedict's Hall in Hollister, Calif. The comments recorded are those of individual residents and reflect the general consensus of the more than 130 participants, representing various communities in San Benito County.*