

# Section 1 Introduction



## Purpose of this Report

San Benito County is in the process of comprehensively updating its General Plan. Once adopted, the updated Plan will guide the County’s decisions on land use, conservation, economic development, transportation, and infrastructure. This report describes and analyzes three alternatives for future change within San Benito County over the next 25 years. This analysis will be used by the County staff, General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and the public to help select a preferred alternative for the future of San Benito County. Once selected, the preferred alternative will become the basis for developing the draft 2035 General Plan.

## Organization and Content

This report is organized into four sections:

- **Section 1—Introduction.** This section provides an overview of the General Plan Update process, the various documents that have been or will be produced during the update, public input opportunities, and next steps.
- **Section 2—Projections.** This section provides background information on population and employment projections that were used as a starting point for developing alternatives.
- **Section 3—Alternatives.** This section describes the major assumptions and features of the three alternatives and how the county could change under each alternative.
- **Section 4—Comparative Evaluation.** This section provides a qualitative evaluation of how each alternative relates to major issues raised during the General Plan Update.

## General Plan Update Overview

The San Benito County General Plan guides land use, economic, transportation, infrastructure, agricultural, resource, environmental, and other County decisions. The General Plan provides for orderly growth and conveys the community values and expectations for the future. The updated General Plan will look forward to the year 2035. The General Plan is being updated in two phases:

### Phase I: Public Outreach

From January 2007 to February 2008, the County conducted a community outreach and analysis process, which included stakeholder interviews, community workshops, and a community survey. The purpose of Phase I was to identify the themes that would be the focus of the General Plan Update. The overarching themes identified in Phase I include:



*Phase 1 workshop participants*

- Balancing growth and agricultural preservation
- Protecting natural resources
- Maintaining a place-based identity
- Increasing economic opportunities
- Repairing and expanding infrastructure

### Phase 2: General Plan Update

In March 2009 the County initiated Phase 2 of the General Plan Update. This phase includes a comprehensive update of the existing plan. The following paragraphs summarize the two documents that will make up the updated General Plan, as well as the various support documents.

#### **General Plan Background Report**

The General Plan Background Report is a “snapshot” of current conditions and trends in San Benito County. It provides a detailed description of a wide range of topics, such as demographic and economic conditions, land use and development trends, public facilities, and natural

resources. The report provides decision-makers, the public, and local agencies with context for making policy decisions. The report will also serve as the description of the existing setting in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the General Plan.

#### **General Plan Policy Document**

The General Plan Policy Document is the essence of the General Plan. It will contain the updated goals, policies, and standards that will guide future decisions within the county. The plan will also include implementation programs and quantified objectives that ensure the goals and policies in the General Plan are carried out. The Policy Document will also contain land use and circulation diagrams, both of which will serve as general guides to the distribution of land uses and transportation facilities throughout the county.

#### **General Plan Support Documents**

As part of the General Plan Update, the County has prepared or will prepare several support documents that will serve as building blocks for the Policy Document and analyze the environmental impacts associated with implementing the General Plan. These reports include the following:

- **2035 Vision and Guiding Principles.** This report summarizes the 2035 Vision Statement for San Benito County and the Guiding Principles for the updated General Plan. A vision statement is a summary of general goals to be achieved by the updated General Plan. Guiding principles are more specific and focus on fundamental ideas that represent the County’s philosophy about land use, change, economic development, and sustainability.
- **Opportunities and Challenges Report.** This report identifies and provides objective analysis of the key constraints, opportunities, and challenges to be addressed in the General Plan.
- **Alternatives Report.** This report identifies alternative approaches to addressing the various opportunities and challenges throughout the county. The report also evaluates the alternatives for their long-term social, economic, and environmental effects on the county. Ultimately, the Board of Supervisors will select one or a combination of alternatives as the preferred alternative. Once the preferred alternative

is selected, the goals, policies, programs, and land use and circulation diagrams will be developed based on that alternative.

- **Environmental Impact Report.** The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the County to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the draft General Plan. The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will use the EIR during the General Plan Update process to understand the potential environmental implications associated with implementing the General Plan.

**Please visit the County's General Plan Update website to view and download all available reports:**  
[www.sanbenitogpu.com](http://www.sanbenitogpu.com).

## Project Schedule

Phase 2 of the General Plan Update is scheduled to take approximately three years, beginning in February 2009 and concluding with adoption of an updated General Plan in January 2012. The figure to the right shows the ten major stages in Phase 2. Stages shown in green are complete, red are in process, and gray will be completed in the future.

## Public Input Opportunities

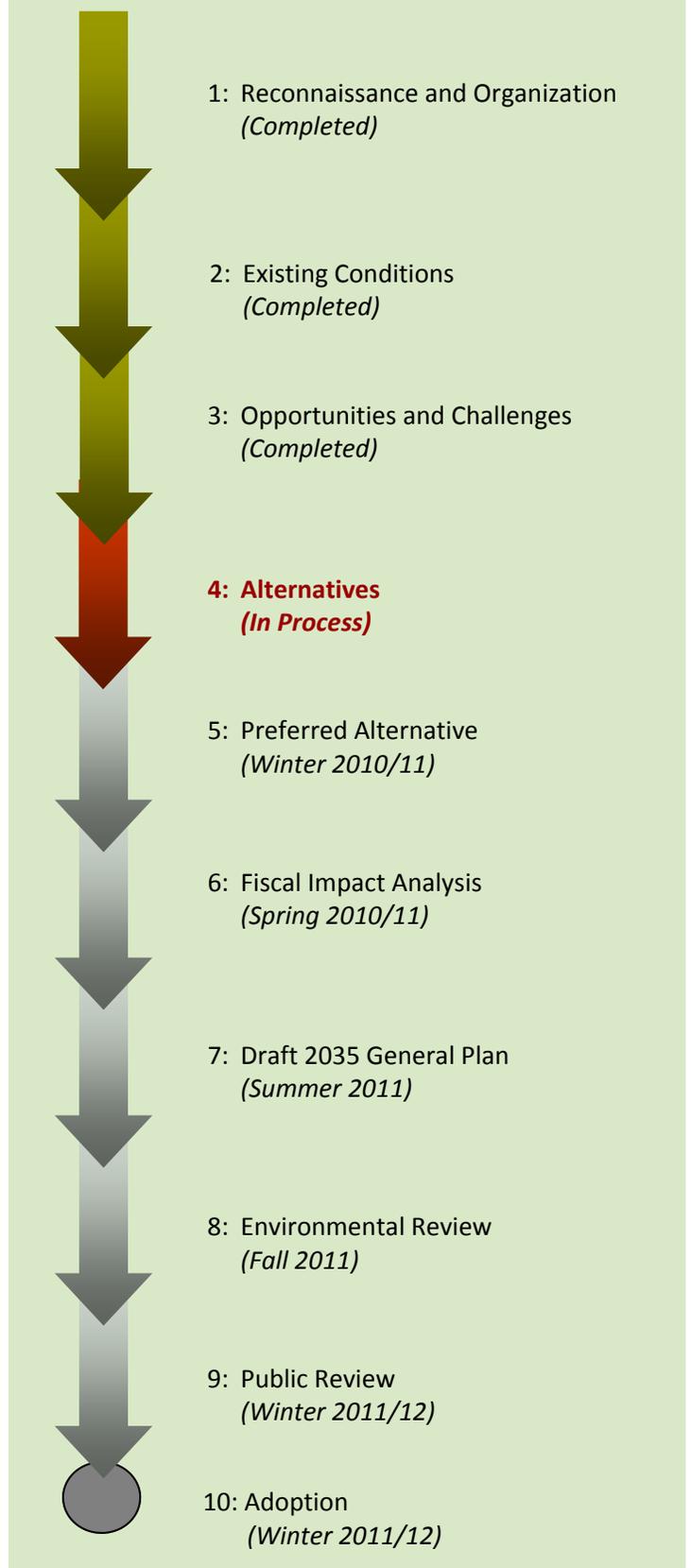
There are numerous opportunities for the public to follow and participate in the General Plan Update:

**Project Website.** The General Plan Update website is frequently updated with information on the status of the project, announcements of upcoming workshops and meetings, and publication of reports.

**Newsletters.** The County will periodically publish newsletters throughout the General Plan Update process to inform the community on the progress of the project and announce upcoming meetings and publication of reports. The newsletters will be published in hard copy form and made available online.

**GPAC Meetings, Community Workshops, and Open Houses.** The GPAC meets regularly—about every six weeks—to discuss planning and policy issues, and to provide feedback on draft milestone documents. The public is encouraged to attend GPAC meetings. In

## Phase 2 Project Schedule



addition, the County will also hold a series of community workshops and open houses at several points in the process to gain input on plan alternatives and the General Plan documents. Dates and locations will be posted on the project website once they are scheduled.

**Email Updates.** The County maintains a database of email addresses collected from various sources (e.g., General Plan Update website, stakeholder interviews, community workshops, and other sources) and periodically sends emails to the entire contact list to keep the community current on the project, maintain their interest, and create greater turn-out for community workshops and other outreach efforts.

**Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission Joint Study Sessions.** The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will meet several times during the General Plan Update process to review milestone products and provide feedback to County staff and the General Plan Consultants. Dates and locations will be posted on the project website and published in future newsletters once they are scheduled.

## Next Steps

### Alternatives Review and Feedback Process

The purpose of the alternatives process is to stimulate a discussion concerning future growth options and help the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors determine the philosophy and course of action for guiding future development and preservation within the county. The Alternatives are based on input received during preceding General Plan Update phases and Update documents prepared to date (see diagram on the next page).

The ultimate goal of the alternatives process is for the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission to select a preferred alternative that will provide the framework for drafting the updated General Plan.

First, following publication of the Alternatives Report and companion newsletter, the County will hold a series of Community Workshops to solicit public opinions on the Alternatives and how the county should grow in the future.

Second, based on GPAC and Community Workshop feedback, the Planning Commission will review and provide feedback on the Alternatives. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors on a preferred growth alternative. The Board of Supervisors will then receive all input and select a Preferred Growth Alternative, which will be used as the basis for developing the new General Plan's goals and policies. The diagram to the right summarizes this process.

### Selecting a Preferred Alternative

After the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission thoroughly review the alternatives and receive feedback from the GPAC and community, they will select a preferred course of action. The Preferred Alternative will not necessarily be one of the Alternatives described in this report. Rather, the Preferred Alternative will likely be made up of parts of some or all Alternatives that the GPAC, community, and decision-makers feel best represents how San Benito County should change in the future.

Public discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of the Alternatives will assist decision-makers in ultimately choosing a Preferred Alternative, which will be the basis of the new General Plan.

***As you review the alternatives in this Report, think about which parts of each alternative you would like to see included in the Preferred Alternative.***

# Alternatives Process

