

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO PREPARE A PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

FOR THE 2035 SAN BENITO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Date: October 27, 2011

To: State Clearinghouse
Responsible Agencies
Trustee Agencies
Interested Persons

From: San Benito County
Planning and Building Inspection Department
3224 Southside Road
Hollister, CA 95023

Contact: Gary Armstrong, Planning Director

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report for the 2035 San Benito County General Plan

Public Review Period: October 28, 2011, through November 28, 2011

INTRODUCTION

San Benito County will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a **Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)** for the adoption and implementation of the **2035 San Benito County General Plan (2035 General Plan)**, which is a comprehensive update of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan. This Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a Program EIR has been prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The comprehensive update to the San Benito County General Plan (adopted in 1980, with updates through 1995) is proposed in order to establish and implement new goals and policies for regulating development and balancing population growth with infrastructure availability, agricultural preservation, and natural resource protection.

Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines¹ requires that after a decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency must prepare an NOP to inform all responsible and trustee agencies that an EIR will be prepared. The purpose of the NOP is to provide sufficient information about the 2035 General Plan and its potential environmental impacts to allow agencies and the public to make a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the PEIR. An Initial Study has not been prepared for this project because the PEIR will address all environmental topics. Instead, a summarized description of the Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan and a description of potential environmental effects are attached to this NOP.

¹ Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act.

The project would include all actions necessary to update the San Benito County General Plan, including reorganizing and updating the existing Plan's seven elements, which together address the seven mandatory General Plan elements required by state planning and zoning laws. The 2035 San Benito County General Plan project would include a total of eight elements, including: Land Use; Economic Development; Housing; Circulation; Public Facilities and Services; Natural and Cultural Resources; Health and Safety; and Administration. The 2035 San Benito County General Plan also includes updated Land Use and Circulation Diagrams. The 2007 – 2014 General Plan Housing Element was updated in May 2010, in compliance with state deadlines. For this reason it will not be assessed in the PEIR.

Pursuant to state and local guidelines implementing CEQA, San Benito County, as the lead agency, has determined that a Program EIR is required to evaluate the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan. The Program EIR will evaluate the following impacts:

- Aesthetics/Visual Resources
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, & Minerals
- Global Climate Change
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology & Water Resources
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Circulation
- Utilities & Service Systems
- Cumulative Impacts
- Growth Inducement and other CEQA topics

The Program EIR will analyze the Land Use and Circulation Diagrams, goals, policies, and implementation programs for all General Plan elements, and a range of alternatives to the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan.

San Benito County is soliciting comments on specific issues to be included in the environmental analysis to ensure that the Program EIR is thorough and adequate, and meets the needs of the public and responsible/reviewing agencies. Comments from interested parties on the scope of issues (listed above) to be evaluated in the Program EIR are encouraged. The Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan is expected to be made available to the public by Spring 2012. At that time the Draft PEIR will be posted on the internet at <http://www.cosb.us> and at <http://www.sanbenitogpu.com>. Hard copies will be available for review at several repositories within the county, including all public libraries, as well as at the San Benito County Planning and Building Inspections Department office at 3224 Southside Road, Hollister, CA 95023.

The Notice of Preparation public review period is from October 28, 2011 to November 28, 2011. Comments may be submitted to: Gary Armstrong, Planning Director, at San Benito County Planning and Building Inspection Services, 3224 Southside Road, Hollister, CA 95023. Emailed comments should be submitted to: garmstrong@cosb.us. The phrase "2035 San Benito County General Plan NOP" should be included in the subject line.

Scoping Meetings: Two scoping meetings will be held at the chambers of the Board of Supervisors (BOS), located at the San Benito County Administrative offices at 481 Fourth Street, Hollister, CA 95023 on November 2, 2011, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. for public agencies and from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the evening for general public comments. The meetings will provide an opportunity for

the County to summarize the General Plan, the environmental review and adoption processes, and allow the agency staff and the public an opportunity to present issues/concerns on the proposed Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan PEIR. County staff will summarize the proposed policies of the 2035 General Plan, explain the Land Use and Circulation Diagrams, and outline the proposed scope of the PEIR.

Anyone wishing to make formal comments on the NOP must do so in writing by submitting comments to the addresses listed above. The scoping meetings are provided to satisfy the requirements of the Public Resources Code, §21083.9, that require a Lead Agency to call at least one scoping meeting for a project such as the Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan. Interested persons should contact Gary Armstrong, Planning Director, at (831) 637-5313 if they have questions, or if they need information regarding additional locations where the documents can be accessed.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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 San Benito County General Plan is defined to include all actions necessary to provide a comprehensive update of the existing 1980 San Benito County General Plan (adopted in 1980, with updates through 1995). The 2035 San Benito County General Plan would supersede the current 1980 San Benito County General Plan, with the exception of the 2007-2014 Housing Element.²

The purpose of the proposed 2035 General Plan is to revise and replace the existing General Plan, including all of the elements, the Land Use and Circulation Diagrams, and other existing goals, policies, and implementation plans as needed to reflect current law and the changing matters of public interest and concern. 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, and natural resource protection. Other goals and policies are directed to resource protection, ensuring the timely availability of public infrastructure and services, and encouraging a well-balanced economy. The plan will also integrate new planning concepts endorsed by the County Board of Supervisors, and translate the updated goals and policies into implementation programs (such as amendments to the County’s code, zoning ordinance, and subdivision regulations) to assure that the County’s vision is implemented.

Other project information and related General Plan documentation is available on the County General Plan Update website: <http://www.sanbenitogpu.com>

The following sections describe the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan to be analyzed in the Program EIR, including the project location, background, project goals and objectives, the probable environmental effects of the 2035 General Plan, and the relationship of the 2035 General Plan to related plans and regulations.

² Although the 2007-2014 Housing Element is part of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan project, it was updated and adopted as a separate project in order to meet State requirements and deadlines. It is therefore not part of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan project being evaluated in this PEIR. 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).

PROJECT LOCATION AND GENERAL PLAN PLANNING AREA

San Benito County is located in the Coast Range Mountains, south of San Jose and west of the Central Valley (see Figure 1). The county is surrounded by Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties to the west, Santa Clara County to the north, and Merced and Fresno Counties to the east and south.

The General Plan Planning Area (Planning Area) contains all land within the county, but outside of the two incorporated cities, Hollister and San Juan Bautista. The county encompasses approximately 1,389 square miles, of which 96 percent is unincorporated. Approximately six square miles, or four percent of the total land area, lies within the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista. All lands outside the jurisdictional boundaries of the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista comprise unincorporated San Benito County, and constitute the geography of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan. The county is served by State Route 25, which runs north/south through the middle of the county, State Highway 152 and 156, which run 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.

1980 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 and Open Space and Conservation Element, have been updated more recently. The 1980 General Plan is comprised of several parts. The first part, the General Plan text, includes the following documents:

1980 San Benito County General Plan (adopted in 1980)

- Land Use Element (adopted in 1992, including the Land Use Diagram)
- Transportation Element (adopted in 1990, including the Circulation Diagram)
- Housing Element (adopted in 1994³)
- Noise Element (adopted in 1984)
- Seismic and Safety Element (adopted in 1980)
- Open Space and Conservation Element (adopted in 1995)
- Scenic Roads and Highways Element (adopted in 1980)

The second part of the 1980 San Benito County General Plan contains land use designations (updated in 1992) for the following communities:

- Tres Pinos
- North County
- Hollister
- South Cienega/Paicines

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Since the adoption of the 1980 San Benito County General Plan, the County has experienced significant growth from increasing development pressures from the Silicon Valley and the Bay Area. This has affected planning considerations and decisions. Additionally, the State of California has

³ 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).

adopted several laws and regulations since preparation of the 1980 San Benito County General Plan that have significantly influenced the regulation of resources within the county, and the scope of County activities. Because of these influences, many of the elements in the existing General Plan need revision. Every city and county in California is required by state law to prepare and maintain a planning document called a General Plan to serve as the jurisdiction's "blueprint" for future land use decisions. All Community Plans, Specific Plans, subdivision plans, Public Works projects, and zoning decisions must be consistent with the jurisdiction's General Plan.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Since San Benito County initiated the comprehensive General Plan Update in 2007, public participation has played an important role in the preparation of the Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan. The plan reflects the goals of the community. Citizen input has been essential to identify issues and formulate goals, and community outreach and involvement during the General Plan update process has been extensive. There have been 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 served to inform the county residents about the planning process and to solicit their input on the General Plan Update on October 6, 2007 in Hollister, on October 8, 2007 in San Juan Bautista, and on October 10, 2007 in Tres Pinos.
- 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 Board of Supervisors (BOS), began meeting every six weeks to advise the Planning Commission (PC) and the BOS on the needs and concerns for the comprehensive revision of the San Benito County General Plan.
- On July 27, 2010, County staff and consultants made 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 a presentation to discuss 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 County 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 prepared during the 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, provide direction to staff on the 2035 Vision and Guiding Principles for the General Plan Update, 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.

- General Plan 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 County's General Plan Update website at <http://www.sanbenitogpu.com> since 2007.

COUNTY OBJECTIVES IN PREPARING THE 2035 GENERAL PLAN

The primary objective of the updated 2035 San Benito County General Plan is to provide new policy guidelines for the future physical development, preservation of agricultural lands, and conservation of natural resources in San Benito County, and to reflect new issues that have emerged since the preparation of the previous document. The objectives of the 2035 General Plan are based upon regulatory requirements, the vision established within the community workshops, and the County's guiding principles as set forth in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan. The vision statement is a summary of the general desires or outcome to be achieved through implementation of the 2035 General Plan. The guiding principles are ideas that represent the County's philosophy about future change, including new development, economic growth, and sustainability. The County's objectives, based on the vision and guiding principles, are as follows:

1. Adopt a General Plan that complies with state law;
2. Promote a positive and prosperous future, in which balance has been attained between business and residential growth without surrendering rich natural resources, valuable agricultural assets, active county character, or the historic heritage.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Promote higher residential densities in existing unincorporated urban areas and new communities while encouraging mixed-use development.
6. Ensure new development complements and preserves the unique character and beauty of San Benito County.
7. 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.
8. Ensure that a full range of housing options is available to accommodate residents of all income levels and life situations.
9. Balance housing growth with employment growth in order to provide local, affordable housing choices so people can live and work in the county.
10. 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.
11. Encourage agriculture that is produced locally, is profitable, and that attracts related businesses.
12. 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.
13. Support existing businesses, and establish new local businesses that are based on industries that are innovative, technology-based, and sustainable.

14. 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.
15. Support the county's growing tourism industry.
16. Encourage future growth near existing transportation networks, such as the major roadways, state highways, airports, rail corridors, and other major transportation routes.
17. Encourage future growth near available water and sewer infrastructure to ensure improvements are economically feasible.
18. Encourage future growth that can be supported by adequate, long-term access to water, sewer, electric, gas, and other utilities.
19. Protect natural resources and open space areas from incompatible uses.
20. Preserve the county's environmental quality and diverse natural habitats.
21. Encourage a healthy living environment that includes walkable neighborhoods, access to recreation and open space, healthy foods, medical services, and public transit.
22. Become a leader in the efficient use of resources, including renewable energy, water, and land.
23. Coordinate County planning efforts with those of the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista.

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, 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 8) Administrative Element. The 2007-2014 Housing Element was updated as a separate project, and is therefore not part of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan project being evaluated in this PEIR. 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 proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan project does not include updates to the General Plans for the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista as set forth above, nor will the 2035 General Plan propose any changes in land uses for lands owned and/or managed by federal or state agencies.

The updated 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 previous 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 General Plan, including the policy content and direction, is provided in the following discussions.

GENERAL PLAN OVERVIEW

Section 1: Introduction

Section 1 provides an overview of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan, including its vision and guiding principles. 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 General Plan Update process conducted by the County GPAC in 2009 through 2011. The Vision is a statement of the general desires or outcome 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 General Plan. The Guiding Principles are fundamental ideas that represent the County's philosophy about future change, including new development, economic growth, and sustainability.

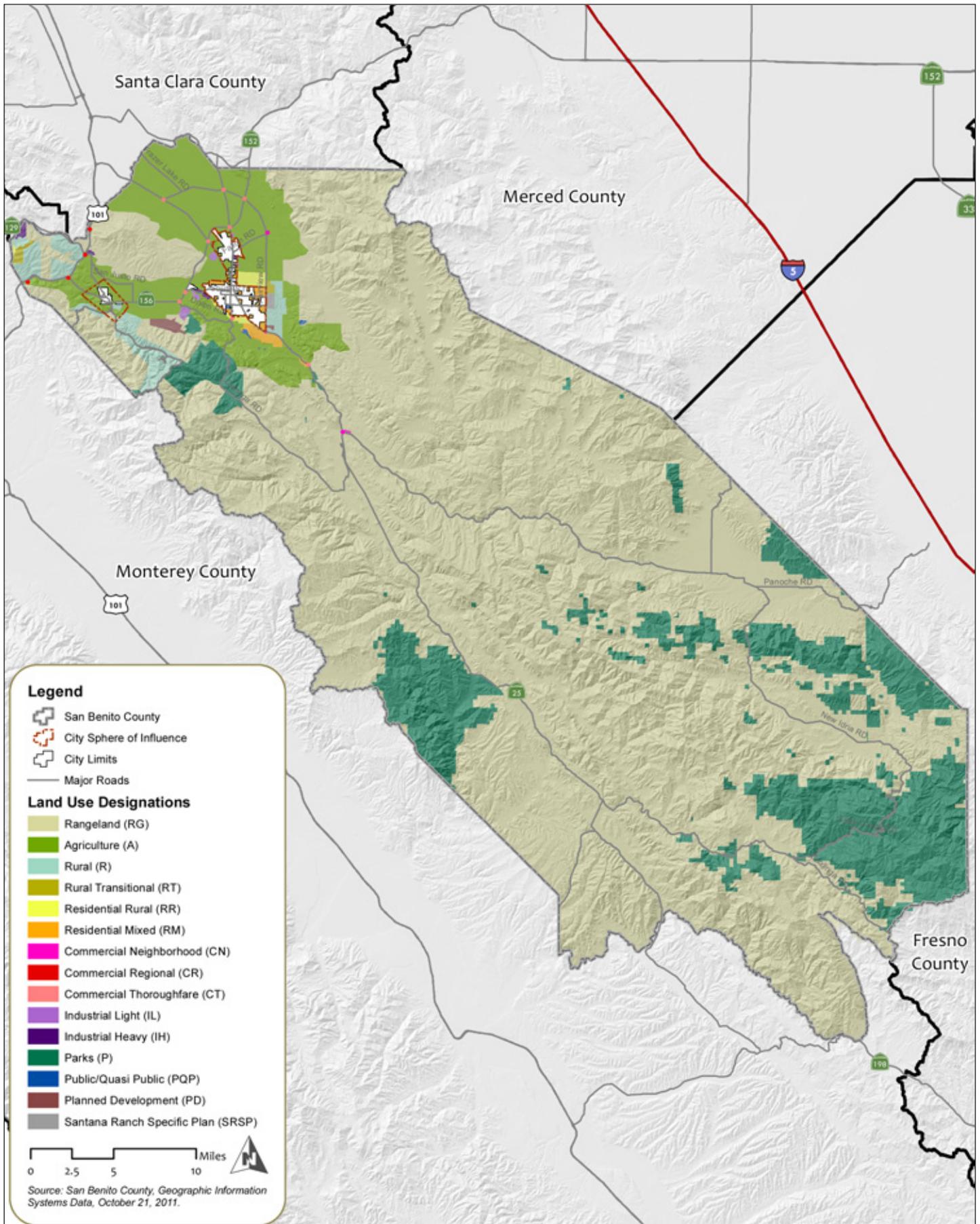
GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

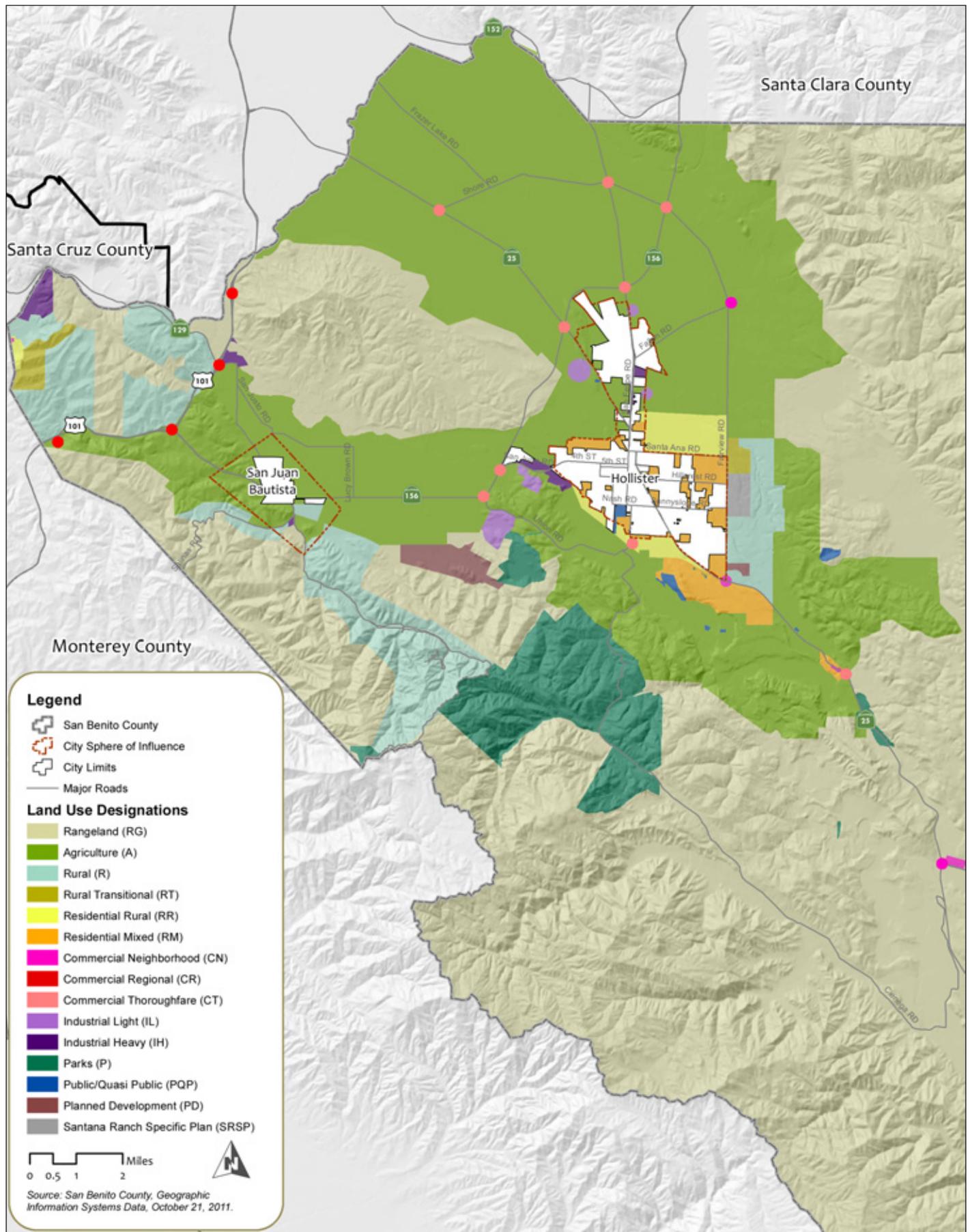
Each General Plan element is summarily described below, and the draft goals are listed. In addition to goals, each element includes policies and implementation programs. The detailed policies and implementation programs of each element are set forth in the Draft 2035 San Benito County General Plan (policy document), which can be viewed and downloaded from the County's website at: <http://www.sanbenitogpu.com>.

Goals, policies, and implementation programs are undergoing review and evaluation by the public, County planning staff, the General Plan Advisory Panel (GPAC), and by the San Benito County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors during preparation and circulation of this Notice of Preparation. Therefore, the goals cited in this NOP should be considered preliminary, as should the detailed policies and implementation programs available at the website listed above. The PEIR will evaluate the potential effects of the 2035 General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs.

Section 3: Land Use and Community Character 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. This includes the Countywide Land Use Diagram, shown in Figure 2, which graphically illustrates where land uses designations are applied. The Land Use Diagram depicts the boundaries of land uses for San Benito County through the year 2035 and beyond. 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 and San Juan valleys, 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). Figure 3 is a more detailed insert of the land use designations in the northern part of the county, primarily the Hollister and San Juan valleys and surrounding areas. Both land use diagrams identify the various urban boundaries (i.e. city limits) of the two incorporated cities within the county, the areas designated for agricultural and rangeland uses, commercial nodes (i.e. neighborhood, regional, thoroughfare), together with the boundary and area color identifications, as explained in Table 1.





SOURCE: San Benito County Geographic Information Systems Data, 2011

2035 San Benito County General Plan Update

Figure 3

North County Land Use Diagram

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. Each land use description includes a text summary, which describes the designation’s purpose, where it is applied, and its intended use. Each land use designation also includes a series of development standards. These are statements that list the allowed density and intensity of development. 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.”

There are 15 different land uses listed under the proposed Land Use Diagram, including Rangeland, Agriculture, Rural, Rural Transitional, Rural Residential, Mixed Residential, Neighborhood Commercial, Thoroughfare Commercial, Regional Commercial, Heavy Industrial, Light Industrial, Parks, Public/Quasi-Public, Planned Development, and the designation for the Santana Ranch Specific Plan. Table 1 describes each land use designation that appears on the Land Use Diagram.

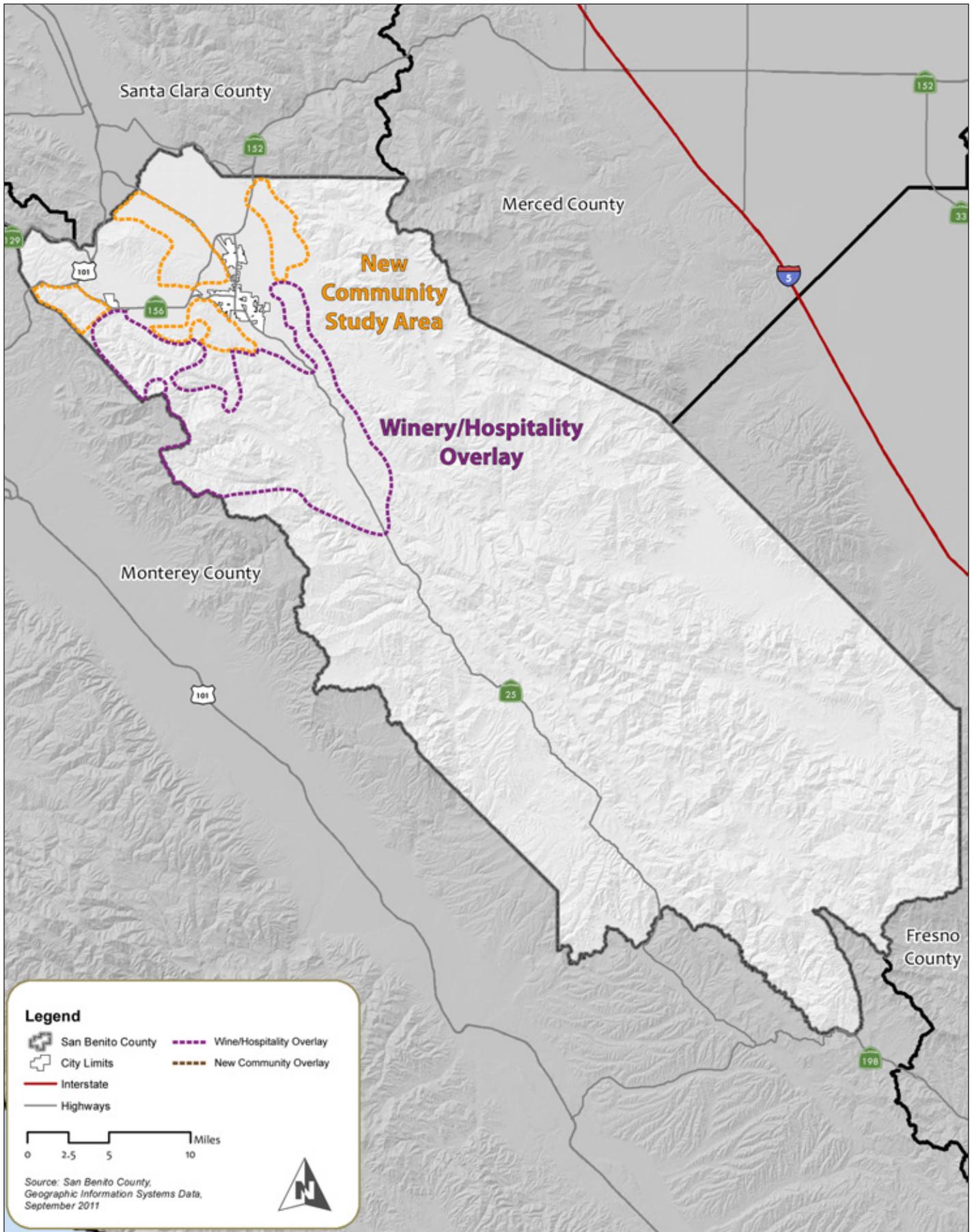
In addition to the land use designations, the 2035 San Benito General Plan also includes two overlay designations that identify the areas of the county where certain policy concepts are applied. The two overlay designations include the Wine/Hospitality Overlay and the New Community Study Area Overlay. The purpose of the Wine/Hospitality Overlay 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 Area Overlay is to provide the opportunity for San Benito County to accommodate some future growth in new unincorporated communities, while protecting productive agricultural lands, preserving open space, and creating a more sustainable land use pattern in the county. Future entitlements, including a General Plan amendment, would be necessary to approve any future developed land uses for areas within the New Community Study Area Overlay designation. Figure 4 shows the overlay designations.

Table 3-1 Land Use Designations

	<p>Rangeland (RG) 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.</p>
	<p>Agriculture (A) 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 any type, including crop land, vineyards, and grazing lands. These areas have transportation access, but have little to no public infrastructure.</p>
	<p>Rural (R) 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. Within areas where the average cross slope equals or exceeds 30 percent, the number of allowable units will be determined by use of the County's slope density formula. For land located within environmentally hazardous areas, some density credit may be given. However, this density shall be transferred to a non-environmentally hazardous portion of the property. Alternatively, for land with a combination of environmental hazards (slope, flood, high fire hazard, fault) and/or which is environmentally sensitive, (habitat, wetlands) the base density will not be allowed.</p>
	<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.</p>
	<p>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 of public infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, drainage).</p>
	<p>Residential Mixed (RM) The purpose of this designation is to allow areas of unincorporated urban uses where circulation and utility services presently exist. This will provide individuals with the opportunity to live in an unincorporated village atmosphere. This designation applies to areas that are already 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 eight units per acre. The exception shall be the Residential Multiple zoning category where densities of eight to 20 units per acre are allowed. This designation also allows mixed-use developments that include residential, retail, and office uses.</p>
	<p>Commercial Neighborhood (CN) The purpose of this designation is to provide convenience goods within or near existing communities or concentrations of population. The intent of the category is to reduce unnecessary vehicular trips to commercial centers in the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista and outlying cities in other counties. This designation also allows mixed-use developments that include residential, retail, and office uses.</p>

Table 3-1 Land Use Designations

	<p>Commercial Thoroughfare (CT) 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 community.</p>
	<p>Commercial Regional (CR) The purpose of this designation is to provide areas for regionally-serving commercial uses at key intersections along Interstate 101 and other major State Routes. This could include shopping centers, truck and automobile stations, tourist-serving commercial uses, and hotels/motels.</p>
	<p>Industrial Heavy (IH) 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>Industrial Light (IL) The purpose of this designation is to allow light industrial development near existing transportation systems (e.g., highways, rail, air). This includes: warehouses, contractor's yards, nurseries, lumber yards, auto repair shops, light manufacturing and/or assembly, and research and development operations that do not cause environmental hazards or create major pollution.</p>
	<p>Parks (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 park 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>Public/Quasi-Public (PQP) 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, government lands (non-parkland), sewage treatment plants, fire stations, sheriff stations/substations, jails, religious meeting areas, libraries, energy distribution, water distribution, and public meeting halls.</p>
	<p>Santana Ranch Specific Plan (SRSP) 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>Planned Development (PD) This designation identifies areas where future development is anticipated to occur through preparation of a Specific Plan. General Plan land use designations will be applied to the area through a General Plan Amendment once more detailed planning is conducted and environmental review is completed.</p>



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. A major change in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan land use element is that some of the existing goals and objectives outlining standards for new development proposals, general plan amendments, and review and use of the growth management program have been removed or deleted because they are either repetitive of other policies, or no longer appropriate for the county. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: countywide growth and development, agricultural and rangeland, residential development, commercial and mixed-use development, employment and industrial development, community character, new communities, city fringe areas, and sustainable and energy efficient development. The draft goals of the Land Use Element are:

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

Goal LU-2 To ensure the long-term protection 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.

Goal LU-3 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.

Goal LU-4 To promote the development of regional, thoroughfare, and locally-serving commercial uses at key opportunities sites in the unincorporated county.

Goal LU-5 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.

Goal LU-6 To preserve San Benito County's historic identity and rural community character.

Goal LU-7 To provide the option for New Communities to be considered as a way of accommodating planning growth in the unincorporated parts of San Benito County.

Goal LU-8 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.

Goal LU-9. To promote energy efficiency through innovative and sustainable building and site design.

Section 4: Economic Development Element

This is a new General Plan element that provides policy direction on how the County will partner with the business community to retain existing businesses and attract new industries. The goals of the Economic Development Element emphasize expanding the wine, hospitality, and tourism segments of San Benito County's economy in 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, and partnerships. The draft goals of the Economic Development Element are:

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

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

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

Goal 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.

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

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

Goal 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.

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 San Benito County General Plan project being evaluated in this PEIR. 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).

Section 6: Circulation Element

This section includes the policy framework for County decisions concerning the countywide transportation system, including providing 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 greenhouse gas 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. A major change in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan Transportation Element is that some of the existing goals and objectives outlining standards for studies needed to support development proposals and provisions for walkways, bicycle pathways, and other roadway improvements have been removed or deleted because they are either vague, repetitive of other policies, or no longer appropriate for the county. 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 includes a comprehensive update to the Circulation Diagram, which identifies future circulation system improvements, including bicycle facilities necessary to support the Land Use Diagram. Figures 5 through 9 show the County's existing roadways and proposed Regional Circulation Diagram, the Hollister area's existing roadways and proposed Circulation Diagram, and existing and the proposed bicycle facilities within the Hollister area.

The draft goals of the Circulation Element are:

Goal C-1 To provide an adequate road system that is safe, efficient, reliable, and within the County's ability to finance and maintain.

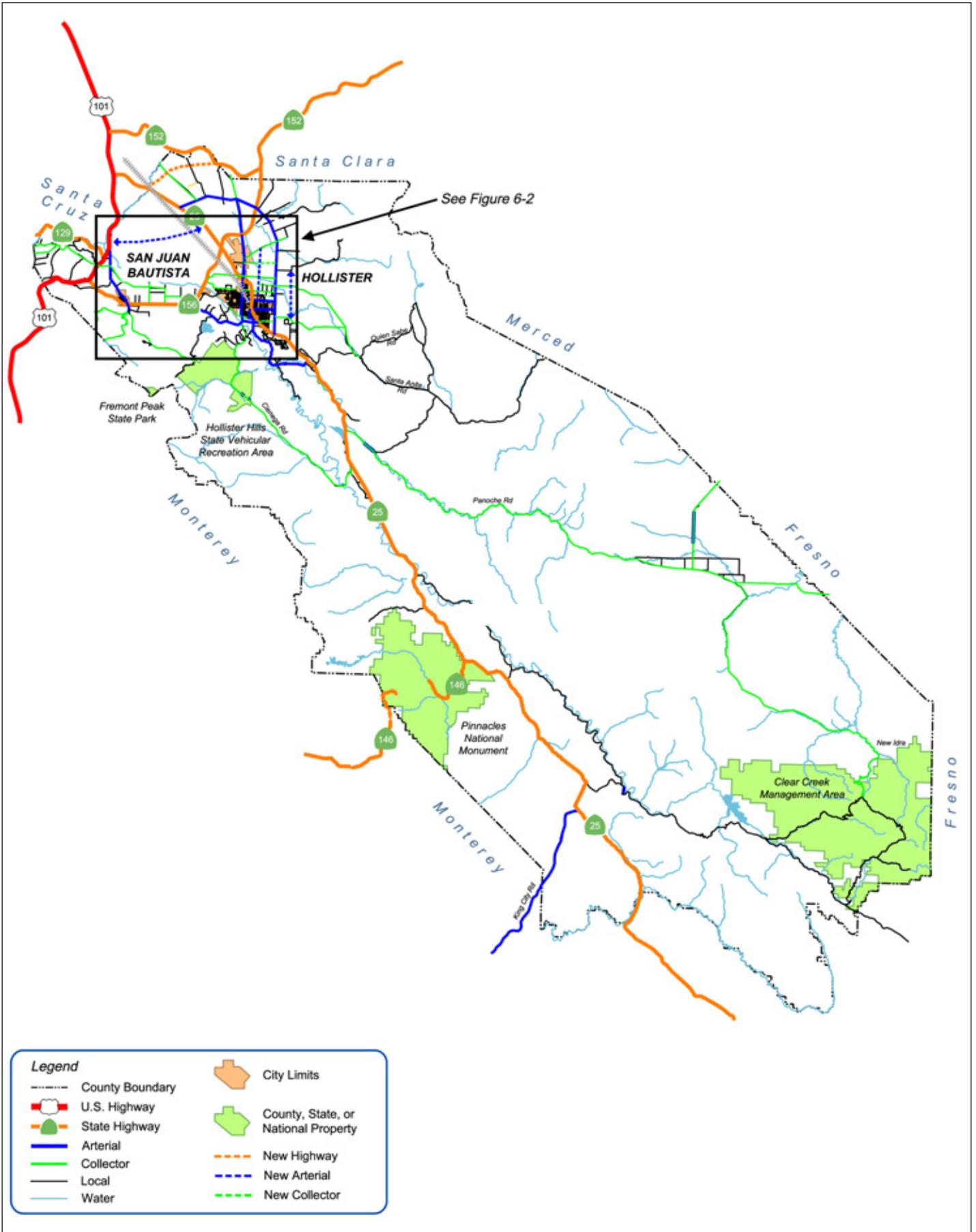
Goal C-2 To provide a safe, continuous, and accessible system of facilities for bicycle and pedestrian travel in appropriate areas of the county.

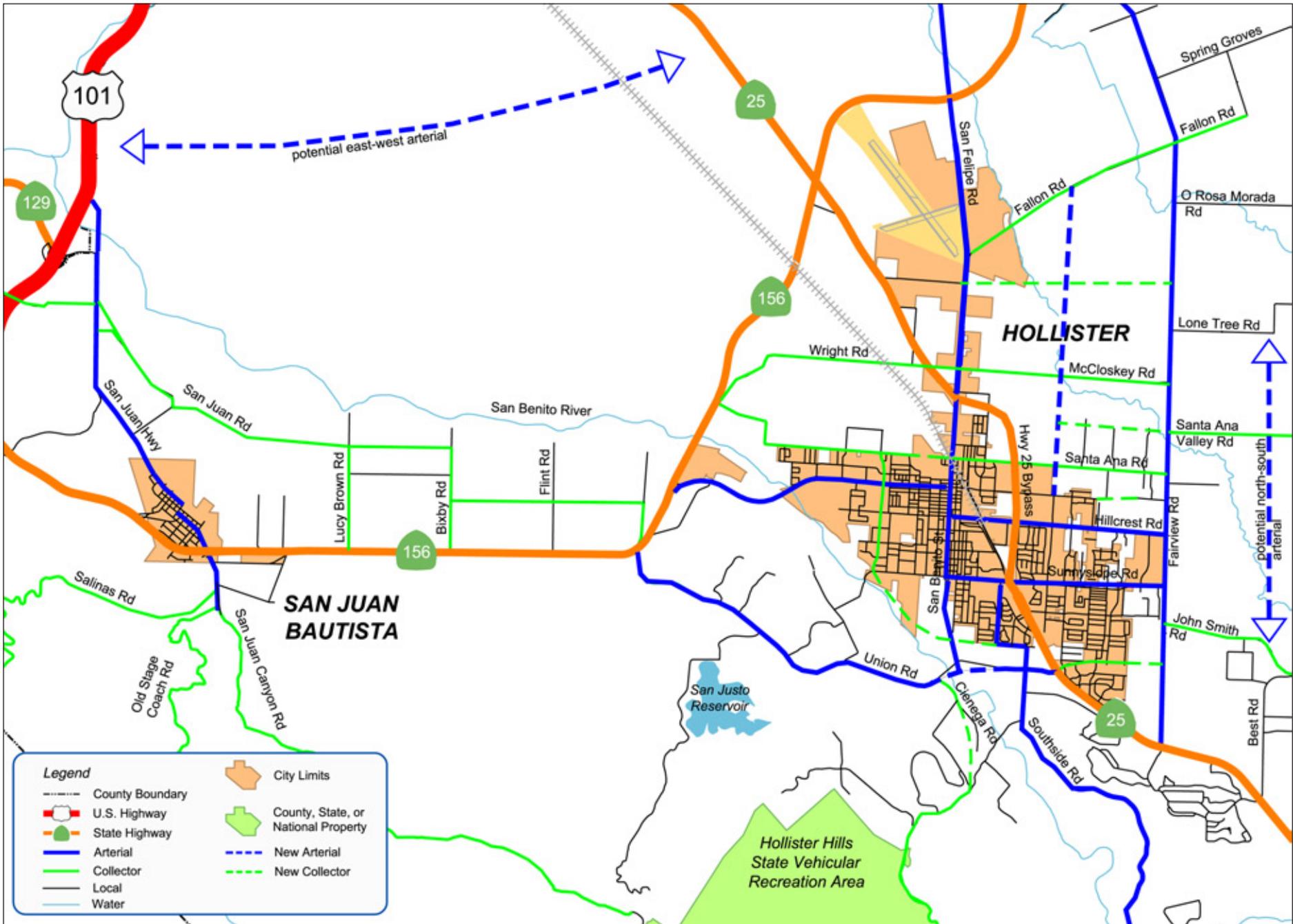
Goal C-3 To promote a safe and efficient public transit system that provides a viable travel alternative to automobiles, maximizes mobility, and reduces roadway congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Goal C-4 To encourage alternative transportation modes to reduce the demand for vehicular trips, especially during congested commute times.

Goal 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.

Goal C-6 To promote the safe and efficient use of aviation facilities.



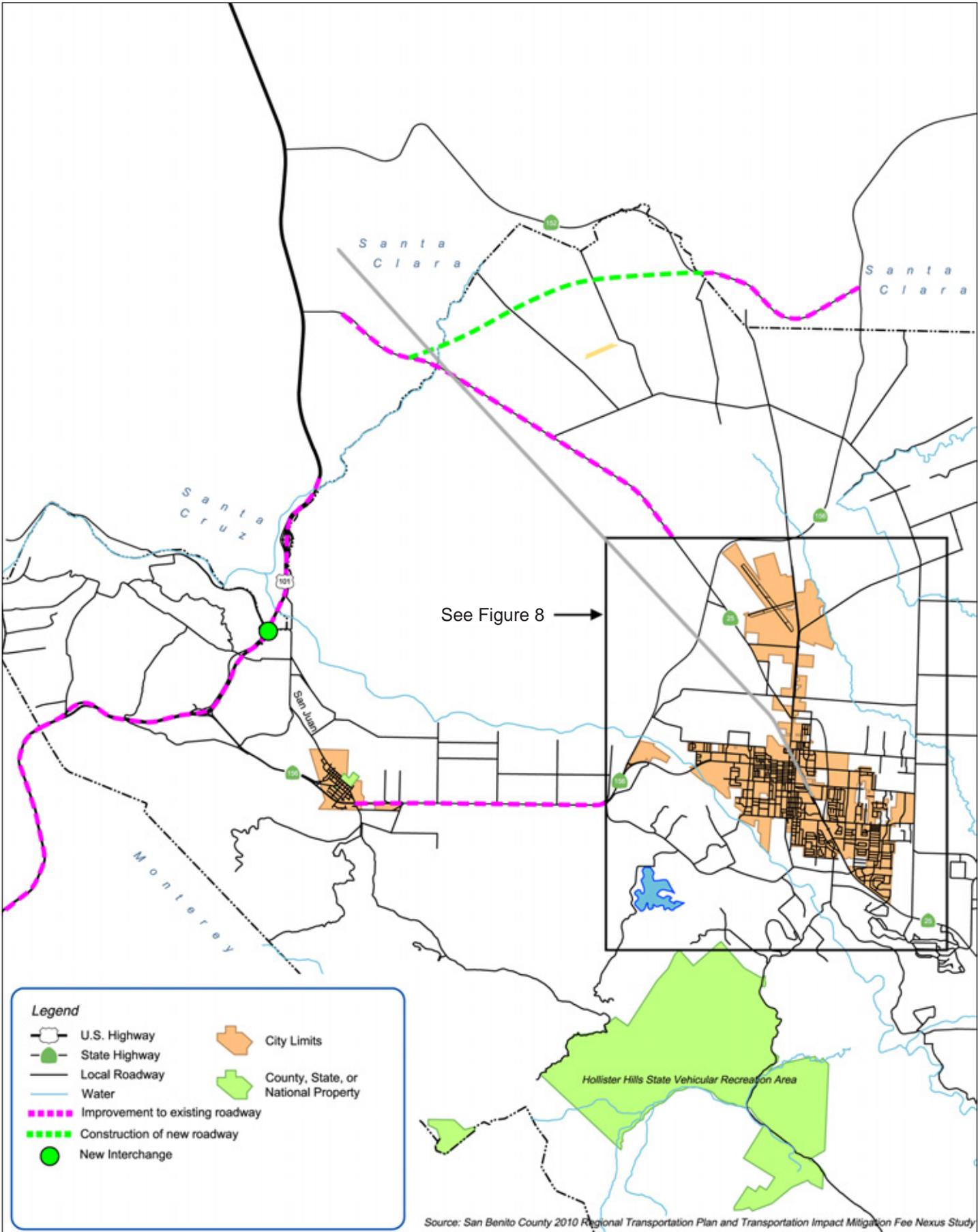


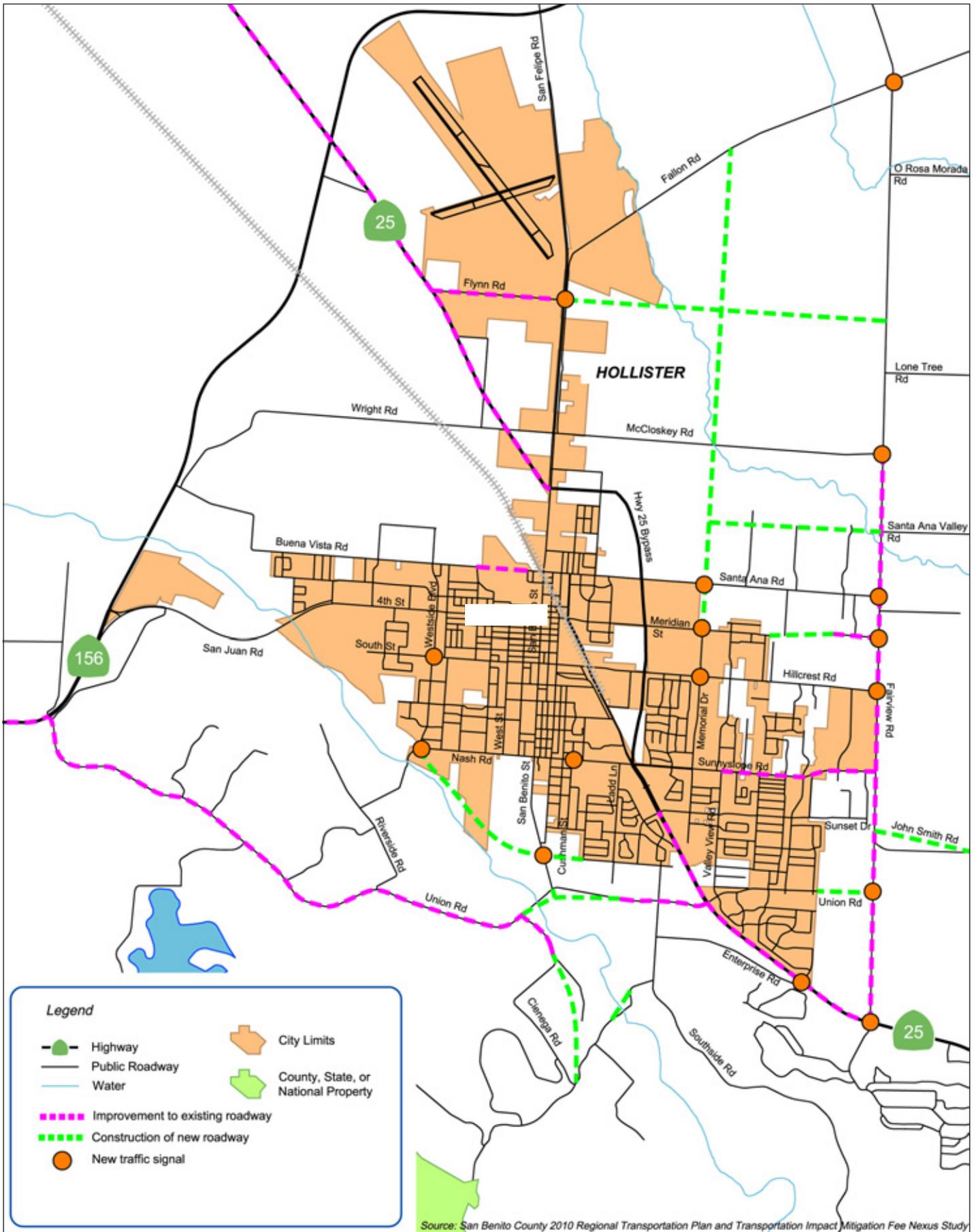
2035 San Benito County General Plan Update

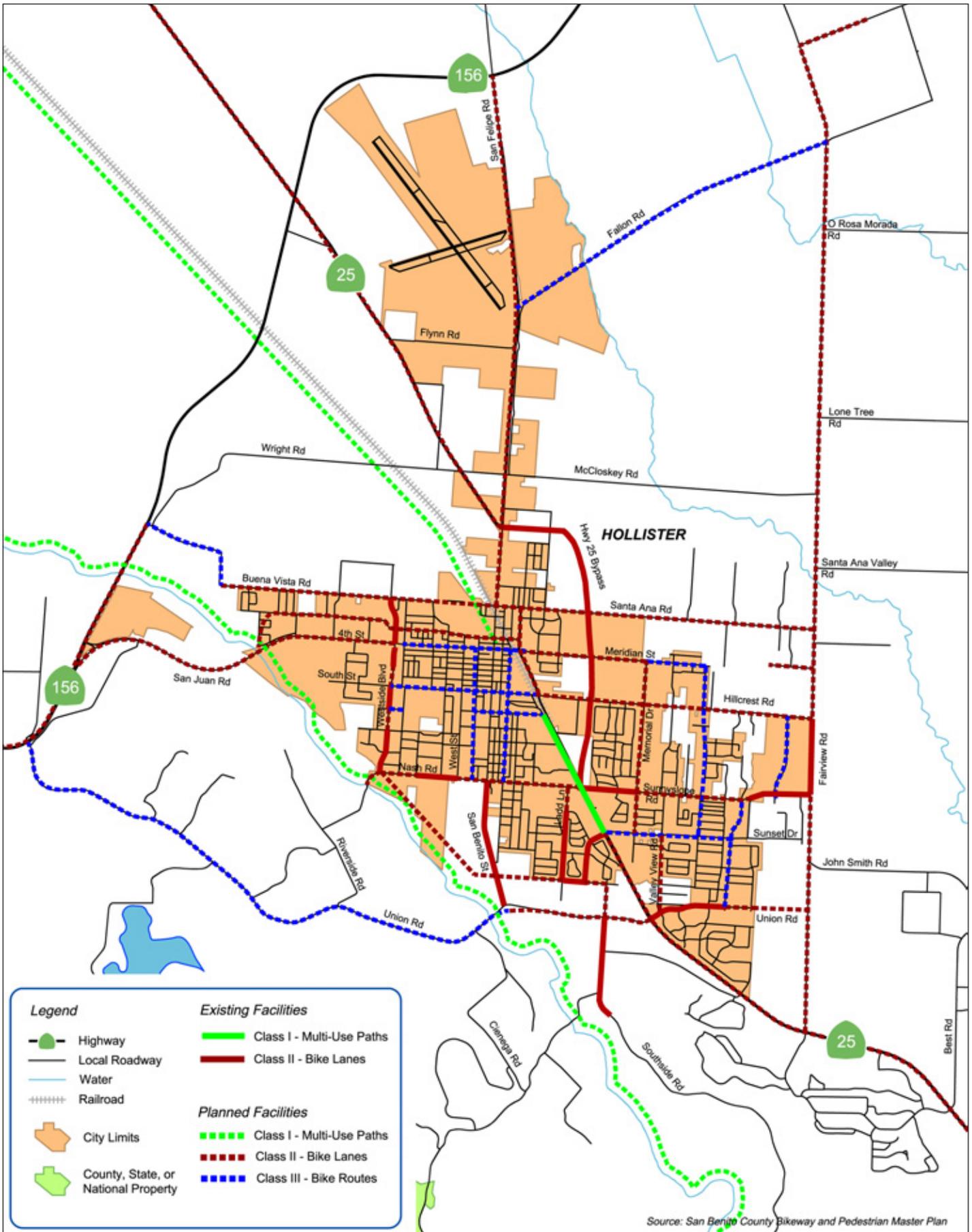
SOURCE: San Benito County General Plan Update Existing Conditions Report, 2010

Figure 6

Hollister/San Juan Bautista Area Roadway Classifications







Section 7: Public Facilities and Services Element

This section provides the framework for County decisions concerning public and private infrastructure, utilities, and services. This includes 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. A major change in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan Public Facilities and Services Element is that some of the existing goals and objectives outlining standards for new individual septic systems previously outlined in the county's Land Use Element have been removed or deleted because they are repetitive of other County policies. 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. As such, 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, flood protection infrastructure, 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 draft goals of the Public Facilities and Services Element are:

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

Goal 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.

Goal 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.

Goal 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.

Goal PFS-5 To ensure wastewater treatment facilities and septic systems are available and adequate to collect, treat, store, and safely dispose of wastewater. (Source: New Goal, MH)

Goal 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.

Goal PFS-7 To provide flood protection facilities using methods that protect residents and property, maintain natural water ways, and enhance natural habitat.

Goal PFS-8 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.

Goal PFS-9 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.

Goal PFS-10 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.

Goal PFS-11 To collaborate with school districts and other education providers to develop high quality education facilities and programs that serve existing and future residents.

Goal PFS-12 To continue to place high priority on programs and facilities that serve youth, families, seniors, and other special needs groups.

Goal PFS-13 To provide adequate law enforcement facilities and services to prevent crime, ensure the safety of residents and visitors, and protect private and public property.

Goal PFS-14 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 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. A major change in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan Natural and Cultural Resources Element is that some of the existing goals and objectives previously outlined in the Open Space and Conservation, and Scenic Roads and Highways Elements of the 1980 General Plan were revised and re-written to be more specific. Further, additional policies were incorporated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet State-mandated reduction targets and to achieve energy independence. 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 draft goals of the Natural and Cultural Resources Element are:

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

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

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

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

Goal 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.

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

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

Goal 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. This includes fires, hazardous materials, floods, earthquakes, airport hazards, noise, air quality, and adaptation to climate change. A major change in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan Health and Safety Element involves revisions to the 1980 adopted Seismic and Safety, and Noise Elements. Specific changes may involve the increase in noise level standards to accommodate special events and the incorporation of adaptation measures to plan for the potential impacts related 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 draft goals of the Health and Safety Element are:

Goal 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.

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

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

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

Goal HS-5 To anticipate and plan for the potential impacts of climate change through adaptive management strategies and responses.

Goal HS-6 To improve local and regional air quality to protect residents from the adverse effects of poor air quality.

Goal HS-7 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.

Goal HS-8 To promote the safe operation of public and private airports and protect the safety of county residents.

Goal HS-9 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 San Benito 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. As a new section, there are no major changes outlined. Goals and policies are organized into the following headings: development review and decision-making process, inter-agency coordination, and general plan maintenance. The draft goals of the Administrative Element are:

Goal 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.

Goal 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.

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

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The PEIR will analyze a broad range of potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the draft General Plan. Due to the programmatic nature of the General Plan, the level of analysis in the PEIR will be commensurate with the level of detail in the plan itself, which includes a program-level or “first tier” analysis of the Draft General Plan consistent with California Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 21083.3, 21093, and 21094, and California Code of Regulations (CCR) Sections 15146, 15152 and 15168. In other words, the degree of specificity in the Program EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity involved in the comprehensive General Plan update. The PEIR will focus on the secondary and regional effects that can be expected to follow from adoption of the General Plan update, and will not be as detailed as an EIR on specific development or construction projects that may follow.

The analysis in the Program EIR will compare the existing conditions or baseline setting to potential regional-level impacts within the General Plan planning area expected for each environmental topic area based on implementation of the 2035 General Plan, including build-out of the Plan area by the year 2035. The Program EIR will provide all necessary environmental review, impacts analysis, and mitigation to evaluate the adoption and implementation of the General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs. The PEIR will also assess the potential impacts of a range of project alternatives. Following the preparation of the Draft PEIR, a Final PEIR will be completed that responds to public and agency comments received on the Draft PEIR. The County Board of Supervisors is expected to consider the certification of the Final PEIR and approval of the 2035 General Plan by Spring 2012. Once the Program EIR is certified, the County will review subsequent projects for consistency with the Program EIR, and prepare appropriate environmental documentation pursuant to CEQA provisions for subsequent projects.

Based on the County's preliminary analysis of the project, the PEIR will evaluate the following topics:

Aesthetics. The PEIR will identify regionally significant aesthetic and scenic resources, and describe the potential effects of implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan on existing viewsheds, scenic vistas, and scenic highways. It will describe the changes in visual character associated with land use designations contemplated in the 2035 San Benito County General Plan. It will also provide an assessment of lighting/glare impacts, and impacts to the dark sky character of rural communities within the planning area.

Agriculture/Forestry. The PEIR will identify all prime agricultural lands and productive farmlands in the unincorporated county based on the California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), and existing County data. The PEIR will also evaluate the potential of implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan to convert agricultural land to other uses, and identify any direct or indirect impacts on agricultural lands and/or conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contract lands within the planning area. Proposed policies to reduce the size of the Williamson Act lands or to modify the land uses and parcel sizes consistent with the Agricultural designation will also be evaluated. Other than some oak woodlands, there are no commercial forest resources in San Benito County. Oak woodland conservation will be evaluated under the topic of Biological Resources in the PEIR.

Air Quality. The PEIR will describe regional and local ambient air quality standards and trends in the project vicinity based on monitoring data provided by the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD). Programmatically, the PEIR will evaluate the potentially significant air quality effects of implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan, including long-term operations of proposed land uses. The PEIR will also evaluate the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan with respect to air emissions, potential to contribute to air quality violations, potential to expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, potential sources of odor, and effects on climate change. Additional information on impacts to climate change will be discussed in a separate PEIR section.

Biological Resources. The PEIR will identify important biological resources, including critical and important habitat areas and species of concern based on existing County and State regional mapping data. The PEIR will evaluate the impacts in terms of the potential of implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan to result in adverse effects to sensitive habitats or species listed as endangered, threatened, sensitive, candidate, or special status species in a local or regional plan, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The PEIR will also consider potential effects to federally-protected wetlands, oak woodlands, the movement of resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, or wildlife corridors, and potential conflict with the provisions of adopted Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Communities Conservation Plans, or other approved local or regional plans, policies, or ordinances.

Cultural Resources. The PEIR will review areas that contain known, regionally significant cultural resources, including archaeological and paleontological resources. The PEIR will evaluate, on a regional level, whether implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan would cause a change in the significance of historical or archeological resources, disturb human remains, or destroy unique paleontological resources or unique geologic features.

Geology, Soils and Mineral Resources. The PEIR will summarize the geologic and mineral resources setting, including the regional soil types and conditions, major faults, seismicity, and geologic formations in the unincorporated portions of the county based on existing County, regional, and State data, including information from the California Division of Mines and Geology. The PEIR will evaluate implementation of the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan in terms of its potential to expose people or future populations and/or structures to the risk of loss, injury, or death involving the rupture of a known earthquake fault, seismic-related ground failure, substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil, and unstable geologic conditions that could result in landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence liquefaction, or collapse. The PEIR will also evaluate potential effects to the availability and use of mineral resources within the Plan area.

Global Climate Change. The PEIR will contain an inventory of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions for the unincorporated lands, primarily based on the Draft San Benito County Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 2005 Baseline Report produced by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments Energy Watch Program. A comparison between the baseline 2005 and 2010 emission rates and future emissions will be provided to demonstrate consistency with AB 32 legislation. As such, the PEIR will address implementation of the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan in terms of its potential to contribute to GHG emissions and global climate change effects.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials. The PEIR will identify hazards and hazardous materials associated with implementation of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan. Hazardous materials and waste are often used, stored, and disposed of within the county, and historic agricultural, mining, and industrial land uses may have left residues of such materials in the soil and groundwater that may pose a threat to sensitive receptors and public health. Impacts associated with fire hazards and airport safety hazards will also be evaluated. Specifically, the PEIR will analyze impacts related to the sources of hazardous materials within the unincorporated portions of the county.

Hydrology and Water Resources. The PEIR will identify County-mapped hydrologic features and water resources including hydrologic basins, floodplain boundaries, surface waters, groundwater resources, dam inundation zones, and areas prone to inundation by seiche or mudflows. The PEIR will analyze whether implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan would alter existing drainage patterns, contribute to runoff which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems, or place housing or other structures within flood hazard areas. The PEIR will determine if implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan would expose people or future populations to a significant risk involving flooding. The PEIR will also determine the impacts on a regional level to surface and groundwater quality based on waste discharge requirements, Clean Water Act regulations (e.g. Section 303(d)), and other applicable water quality objectives. Finally, the PEIR will analyze whether implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan would substantially deplete groundwater supplies and interfere with groundwater recharge resulting in a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater level.

Land Use and Planning. The PEIR will discuss any substantive differences between the proposed and existing County General Plan and other applicable land use plans, ordinances, policies, and regulations including, but not limited to, County Specific Plans and Community Plans, and various other regional plans, including airport land use plans and Comprehensive Land Use Plans. The PEIR will determine whether implementing the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan

would result in any physical division of established communities, and identify the potential for land use conflicts resulting from the proposed land use patterns.

Noise. Long-term noise impacts may result from the increased number of vehicles associated with the designation of certain lands to higher land use intensities. Short-term noise impacts could result from the construction impacts, and impacts could be exacerbated by higher-density development projects. The addition of commercial and industrial designated land uses could also impact noise levels in the county. The noise analysis in the PEIR will review the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan for consistency with the most recent State guidelines for General Plans. Noise modeling for transportation-generated noise will be performed for various roadway segments, based on updated traffic data. Noise impacts from stationary sources will be evaluated. The PEIR will also evaluate the proximity of sensitive land uses to excessive noise levels and what impacts may result from the adoption of slightly higher noise levels in specific zones compared to what is allowed under the existing General Plan standards.

Population and Housing. The PEIR will evaluate population and housing impacts. Although the San Benito County Housing Element was updated and adopted in May 2010 as part of a separate project, the PEIR will describe the anticipated population, employment, and housing effects of the project. It will also assess on a regional level the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan's environmental effects due to changes in population and housing conditions, the potential to displace housing that may cause housing or people to be moved elsewhere, and whether the plan satisfies the County's fair share of allocated housing types. Additional information on the County's Housing Element can be accessed at: <http://www.cosb.us/government/building-planning/general-plan-update/>

Public Services. The PEIR will identify types of governmental facilities and services that serve the unincorporated portion of the county (e.g., police, fire, schools, parks). The PEIR will discuss the regional location and types of governmental facilities and service improvements that may be required to meet future demand due to the implementation of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan.

Recreation. The proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan would provide services for a greater residential population than under the existing General Plan, placing increased demands on public parks and open space lands. The PEIR will analyze the conversion of existing open space lands in the county to urban uses based on the proposed land use plan. The PEIR will also evaluate the potential loss of recreational resources.

Transportation/Circulation. Implementation of the 2035 San Benito County General Plan would result in increased vehicular use of freeways, State highways, urban roadways, and rural roadways throughout the county. This increased use may adversely impact the level of service on these routes. The PEIR will analyze the effects of the proposed land uses on the County's regional transportation network. The analysis will compare the potential impacts associated with the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan and alternatives to the existing baseline conditions, and the "no project" condition scenario for roadway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, aviation, and rail systems.

Utilities and Service Systems. Increases in land use intensity or the designation of land uses pursuant to the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan may create demand for additional utilities and services beyond the capacity of current systems. The analysis of utilities and service systems will examine utility-related plans to determine if sufficient and adequate capacity is available,

and if not, if future utility infrastructure is planned. The PEIR will review water supply systems, wastewater treatment capacity, solid waste disposal, electrical supply, and other related wet and dry utilities.

Cumulative Impacts. The PEIR will include a separate section that will identify whether the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan's impacts for each of the subject areas identified above are cumulatively considerable. "Cumulatively considerable" means that the "incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects." The analysis will be based on plans for surrounding jurisdictions and the geographic scope of each environmental topical issue.

Growth-Inducing Impacts. The extension of residential, commercial, industrial, and other mixed-use land use designations and infrastructure improvements could create additional development pressures within the General Plan planning area and adjacent areas. The PEIR will discuss growth-inducing impacts associated with 2035 San Benito County General Plan buildout.

Significant Irreversible Changes. The PEIR will address significant and irreversible environmental changes that would result from the implementation of the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan. The analysis will be presented as a summary of major impacts described in the PEIR.

Alternatives. The State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6) provide criteria for the development of alternatives to the proposed 2035 General Plan. These criteria include 1) ability of the alternative to attain most of the basic objectives of the project, 2) potential feasibility of the alternative, and 3) ability of the alternative to avoid or substantially reduce one or more of the significant environmental effects of the project. Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines states in part:

"The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. Of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The range of feasible alternatives shall be selected and discussed in a manner to foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making."

The PEIR will examine a range of feasible alternatives to the 2035 San Benito County General Plan, including the No-Project Alternative. The alternatives that will be identified in the PEIR will be developed in accordance with these CEQA provisions considering input received at scoping meetings, through public comments on this NOP, and as a result of the outcome of the environmental impact analysis.

The County considered a range of land use alternatives during preparation of the Draft General Plan. This process touched on many environmental issues, as well as social and economic issues. The previous public discussion of the Draft General Plan alternatives is distinct from the alternatives analysis that will be prepared in the PEIR, although there may be overlap with certain concepts presented earlier.

RELATIONSHIP TO AREA AND REGIONAL PLANS

A range of federal, state, regional, and local plans have been adopted that have a bearing on County land use policy. These plans may parallel the County plan or they may supersede County policy. The 2035 San Benito County General Plan Update's relationship to applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans is described below.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

No federal plans directly control local land use policies. However, several federal laws and regulations have significant impacts on land use decisions at the municipal level. Regulations that may affect land use decisions include the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act, among other federal laws and regulations. There are various land uses within the southern portion of San Benito County managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service (NPS). Both agencies administer management plans for land uses on federal lands. For example, the BLM oversees several management areas, including the Clear Creek Management Area, San Benito Mountain Natural Area, Panoche Hills, San Justo Reservoir, Griswold Hills, and Tumey Hills. The BLM also manages several smaller tracts of land that are not contiguous with the larger management areas. These areas include Curry Mountain, Coalinga Mineral Springs, Laguna Mountain, and Williams Hill. Similarly, the NPS uses the General Management Plan for the Pinnacles National Monument to help guide decisions regarding facilities and resource management, and visitor use within the park. All management plans for federal land address land use goals, policies, and programs that guide land use decisions within their management area. Land use regulation within these management areas is outside of the jurisdiction of the County.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The State of California yields significant influence on local land use and related policy decisions. For example, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research provides guidelines for the content of General Plans, and the Department of Housing and Community Development must certify the County's Housing Element. The State also has significant influence through the funding of public infrastructure. Further, there are various land uses located within and south of the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, including the Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA), San Juan Bautista State Historic Park, and Fremont Peak State Park. Similar to a General Plan, management plans or strategic plans exist for each of these recreation areas. For example, all land use activities within the Hollister Hills SVRA is outlined under the California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division Strategic Plan (2009). Land use regulation within these areas is outside the jurisdiction of the County.

Other State agencies, including, but not limited to the California Department of Conservation and Department of Fish and Game, Department of Mines and Geology, Department of Conservation, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, State Lands Commission, Native American Heritage Commission, Reclamation Board, Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (Cal-FIRE), Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Water Resources, and Department of Transportation (Caltrans), also have jurisdiction and directly regulate certain land use decisions in the County.

REGIONAL AGENCIES

Various state regulations are implemented through regional planning and regulatory agencies. These planning regulations include the implementation of regional air quality plans, which are overseen by the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD), and regional transportation plans managed and overseen by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), which serves as the County's federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization and Council of Governments (COG). In addition to metropolitan-level transportation planning, AMBAG also addresses other regional issues, including managing housing, population, and employment forecasts. AMBAG is required by state law to determine existing and projected regional housing needs for the County.

Other quasi-regional agencies that have influence over County land use decisions include the San Benito County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) and the San Benito County Local Agency Formation Commission (San Benito County LAFCo). The San Benito County ALUC administers and implements the San Benito County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, which guides land use and development decisions adjacent to airport planning areas. The San Benito County LAFCo reviews and evaluates all special district formation, city incorporation, city and special district spheres of influence, and city and special district annexation proposals to ensure well-planned and fully-serviced development in the county.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

San Benito County is also within the planning area of a regional forum and collaborative planning effort among three County Councils of Government and 18 cities to complete the Monterey Area Blueprint known as "Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area." The blueprint project involves a regional effort to shape the way the region grows and develops through 2035. In June 2011, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments developed a vision for land use and transportation decisions in the Monterey Bay area and released the "Draft Envisioning The Monterey Bay Area: A Blueprint for Sustainable Growth and Smart Infrastructure." The three counties involved include: Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz. The regional effort also included the following cities: Capitola, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Del Rey Oaks, Gonzalez, Greenfield, Hollister, King City, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Salinas, San Juan Bautista, San City, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Seaside, Soledad, and Watsonville.

LOCAL AGENCIES

There are two incorporated cities within San Benito County, Hollister and San Juan Bautista, that house the majority of the county's population. Each city has an adopted General Plan that addresses land use and development goals, policies, and programs that guide land use decisions within its jurisdiction. Land use regulation within city boundaries is outside of the jurisdiction of the County. Unincorporated areas outside of a city's boundary may be included within a city's General Plan, although until such areas are annexed to a city, the ultimate authority for land use regulation rests with San Benito County. In many cases a city and San Benito County have worked with one another to coordinate land use regulation in such areas.

SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS

San Benito County is surrounded by five counties: Santa Clara, Monterey, Santa Cruz, Merced, and Fresno. In addition, three cities within these surrounding counties also have an effect on San Benito County. These cities include: Gilroy, Watsonville, and Salinas. Each city and county has an adopted General Plan that addresses land use and development goals, policies, and programs that guide land use decisions within its jurisdiction. Land use regulation within these cities and counties is outside of the jurisdiction of San Benito County. Unincorporated areas outside of a nearby city's boundary, including areas within San Benito County, may be included within a city's General Plan, although the ultimate authority for land use regulation would continue to rest with San Benito County.