



SECTION 2

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This section summarizes two important components of the 2035 General Plan. The first is the community's vision for what San Benito County should be like in 25 years. The second is a series of guiding principles that represent the community's core values and provide direction to achieve the vision. The vision and guiding principles provide the framework for the 2035 General Plan. In turn, all goals, policies, and implementation programs build upon, and are consistent with, both the vision and the guiding principles.

2035 VISION FOR SAN BENITO COUNTY

A vision statement is a summary of the general desires or outcome to be achieved through implementation of the 2035 General Plan. The vision provides the foundation for the more specific guiding principles, goals, policies, and programs included in the General Plan. The visioning process is valuable in identifying issues important to the community and setting the overall framework for what the County wants to achieve in the 2035 General Plan.

The County began the visioning process in mid-2009 as part of the General Plan Update. This process was led by the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), which held a series of meetings between July and September 2009 to discuss and draft a vision and guiding principles for San Benito County. Their work included reviewing public input received from a community mail survey and community workshops held in 2008. The GPAC's draft vision and guiding principles were then reviewed and refined by both the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The following page shows the 2035 Vision for San Benito County.

The vision, guiding principles, goals, policies, and implementation programs are intended to be interconnected and equal. They should be considered together when making consistency determinations.



2035 VISION FOR SAN BENITO COUNTY

At pace with the changing world, but still rural in nature, our vision of San Benito County in 2035 is of a positive and prosperous future, in which balance has been attained between business and residential growth without surrendering our rich natural resources, valuable agricultural assets, active country character, or our historic heritage.

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

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

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



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles are fundamental ideas that represent the County’s philosophy about future change, including new development, economic growth, and sustainability. The following guiding principles expand on the main ideas contained in the vision so that important concepts are given more weight. They are also organized based on specific topics of importance to the community.

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

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

HOUSING

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

AGRICULTURE

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



ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

10. Expand and diversify the local economy by supporting businesses, supporting jobs for the diverse population, and capitalizing on the county's natural and human resources.
11. Support existing and establish new local businesses that are based on industries that are innovative, technology-based, and sustainable.
12. Support programs that educate the local workforce on conventional, productive, sustainable, and organic agriculture concepts; water conservation strategies; high-tech industries; and alternative energy production.
13. Support the county's growing tourism industry.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

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

HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

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

REGIONAL COORDINATION

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