



COUNTY OF SAN BENITO  
**PLANNING & BUILDING INSPECTION SERVICES**

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TO: Members of the General Plan Advisory Committee  
FROM: Michael Kelly, Associate Planner, and Art Henriques, Director of Planning  
DATE: March 18, 2010  
RE: **Policy Review Subcommittee Recommendations**

At subcommittee meetings following the February 24 special GPAC meeting, Committee members Foley, West, Moore, Noble, Roemer, and Schneider reviewed the goals, objectives, policies, and actions of the General Plan Land Use Element.

Suggested new policies included a policy to preserve dark nighttime skies and a policy encouraging health-promoting physical design, such as walkable streets.

The following recommendations regarding existing policies were made:

Goal 1	To maintain the County's rural atmosphere.	Combine with Goal 7.
Goal 2	A balance of housing types, locations and a relatively wide range of prices within the County which will accommodate a variety of families from all socio-economic backgrounds.	
	b) To encourage an overall rural approach to development such as large lots or the clustering of home sites to preserve the maximum open space possible.	Remove "large lots or."
	c) To identify areas within existing communities and/or where public services are available that could provide low-income housing.	Change "low-income" to "the range of affordable income."
	d) To amend existing subdivision and Planned Unit Development Ordinances to provide requirements for low-income housing where services can be provided.	Change "low-income" to "the range of affordable income."
Goal 5	To provide for a diversified economic base for the County.	Expand objectives to include achieve and maintain appropriate housing and job ratio.
	a) To direct the development of industrial uses to areas which are compatible with surrounding land uses and which will be sensitive to the environment except when the industry is site dependent or site related.	Change to "To direct the development of industrial, agricultural industrial and agricultural serving uses..."
Goal 6	To establish a working relationship with the Cities of San Juan Bautista and Hollister in order to encourage the cooperative planning efforts for all jurisdictions involved.	Change to "To continue to encourage a working relationship..." Add: Objective b) City and County to work together to clean up boundary lines and county pockets.
Goal 7	To maintain the character and the natural amenities of San Benito County while providing for its growth.	Merge into Goal 1.
	a) Preserve the County's historic identity and integrity.	Objective a should be more clearly worded.
Goal 8	Develop a growth management program that will stabilize the rate of population growth, provide opportunities for housing for a full spectrum of the population in San Benito County, and provide for public health, safety, and general welfare.	Change to "Continue to monitor and review growth management..."

Goal 9	Develop a growth management program that will stabilize the rate of population growth in San Benito County while avoiding adverse environmental consequences to natural resources and enhancing existing quality of life.	"Develop" should be changed to "continue," since programs have already been developed.
<b>AGRICULTURAL</b>		
Policy 3	Grade 1 soils as defined in the Soils Survey of San Benito County shall be the highest priority for protection of soil resources.	
	a) Development proposals in the following locations will be exempt from Policy 3.	
	iv. Grade 1 soils in the Soils Survey of San Benito County that do not have a historical agricultural use.	Clarify the meaning of "historical agricultural use."
Policy 7	It is the policy of the County to consider transfer of development credits (TDC) programs, land trusts, and purchase of development credits (PDC) programs to provide financial incentives to protect and preserve agricultural soil resources and to protect the integrity of important agricultural areas for future use.	
	d) Consider the exclusion of hazardous areas (100-year flood, fault zones) from a TDC or PDC program.	Consider some loosening of this action for properties with only small amounts of land in a flood plain.
<b>URBAN</b>		
Policy 15	The majority of development with a density greater than two units per acre shall occur within the City of San Juan Bautista, Hollister and the Paicines Ranch Resort project site. All commercial development providing comparative shopping and serving a regional need, major cultural and institutional uses and all industrial uses (excluding agricultural-related uses and low profile compatible industry) shall occur within the Cities, except for those uses which by their nature should or could be located in undeveloped areas.	This policy needs rewriting. Delete the reference to Paicines Ranch Resort. Consider allowing commercial uses within Planned-Unit Development "rural villages."
Policy 18	The County shall cooperate with cities to protect land within adopted-of-influence for future urban density, however, the County will allow development of unmet special needs housing, identified in the 2001-2008 Housing Element Update program 7-1, within these areas. These developments would be restricted to housing for the following special need groups - seniors, farm workers, disabled, local work force, emergency shelter, and group homes for mentally disabled/substance abuse.	Update the policy to refer to the current Housing Element planning period (2007–2014) and to the appropriate Housing Element program. Add "sphere" in front of "of-influence."
	a) Development requests within the sphere-of-influence of a City shall be denied if sewer and water services will not be available through agreement from other governmental agencies.	Add "and appropriate special districts" after "of a City."
Policy 20	Allow the development of Neighborhood Plans where public interest is demonstrated to maintain and establish community identity, to coordinate traffic and circulation, to promote infill development where public services are already in demand, to identify recreational needs and ensure coordinated development.	Clarify the meaning of "Neighborhood Plans."
<b>COMMERCIAL</b>		
Policy 24	Small scale neighborhood stores in unincorporated areas shall be allowed if a marketing study provides evidence that a local need and market exists, evidence is provided that vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled will be reduced, and there is not an opportunity for infill commercial development nearby.	Remove.
Policy 25	New neighborhood commercial areas shall be permitted if located within reasonable distance of a community, is centrally located to serve a rural community that is lacking neighborhood commercial services or where the need for expanded neighborhood commercial services can be demonstrated.	Remove.
Policy 26	It is the policy of the County to direct neighborhood commercial services to consolidated, centrally located areas and to discourage spot commercial uses.	Remove.
Policy 27	Standards for siting, location, and approval of general plan amendments for	

	Regional Commercial services shall be developed.	
	a) Regional centers shall be located near existing or future highway interchanges or major intersections.	Replace "near" with "at or near."
Policy 28	Approval of general plan amendments for Thoroughfare Commercial services shall be based on evidence that the property will service nearby tourists attractions (e.g. parks) or heavily traveled roadways, that adequate public services may be provided, the land use is compatible with nearby properties, and that the scenic character of the area will be maintained.	
	a) A traffic study will be required for proposals near highway interchanges or major intersections to identify any necessary project or cumulative improvements to maintain adequate capacity and safety on the road network.	Replace "near" with "at or near."

## INDUSTRIAL

Policy 31	A general plan amendment shall be required for the establishment of new heavy industrial areas or quarries outside the areas identified for Mineral Resources in the Open Space/Conservation Element. An environmental impact analysis shall be required for consideration of the general plan amendment to minimum near- and long-term effects on the environment. In some limited situations, new small scale isolated industrial operations will be allowed as overlay zoning in other land use categories.	
	a) Encourage industrial land uses in areas that would not pose significant land use conflicts.	Potential new wording: "a) Encourage industrial land uses in areas that would not pose significant land use conflicts, such as industry in direct support of agricultural operations in agricultural land use categories."

## OVERALL COUNTY

Policy 32	Specific development sites shall be free from the hazards identified within the Open Space and Conservation Element Maps (e.g. faults, landslides, hillsides over 30% slope, flood plains). The site shall also be on soil suitable for building and maintaining well and septic systems (i.e. avoid impervious soils, high percolation or high groundwater areas, set back from creeks). Absent adequate mitigation, development shall not be located on environmentally sensitive lands (wetlands, erodible soil, archaeological resources, important plant and animal communities).	For all actions, Planning staff will review what has been completed.
	a) All hazardous and environmentally sensitive lands as identified in the Open Space and Conservation Elements shall be zoned as restricted development area in the applicable combing district (Seismic Safety Area, Flood Plain Area, Open Space Area). Severe erosion hazard and fire hazard shall also be added to Section 17.1 of the zoning ordinance.	
	b) The County should develop a hillside ordinance which will prohibit the development of hillsides where slopes are 30% or greater.	Reword the language to recognize the action has been taken.
	c) Proposed site plans, tentative or parcel maps shall depict all environmentally sensitive and hazardous areas (e.g. 100 year flood plain, fault zones, 30% slopes, severe erosion hazard, fire hazard, wetlands, riparian habitat, etc.).	
	d) The base density of a proposed development site should be reduced if a combination of environmental hazards (fire, access, fault, flood, 30% slope) and/or natural resources (habitat, wetlands) are on a particular development site.	
	e) Incorporate the above concepts into the County's development regulations.	