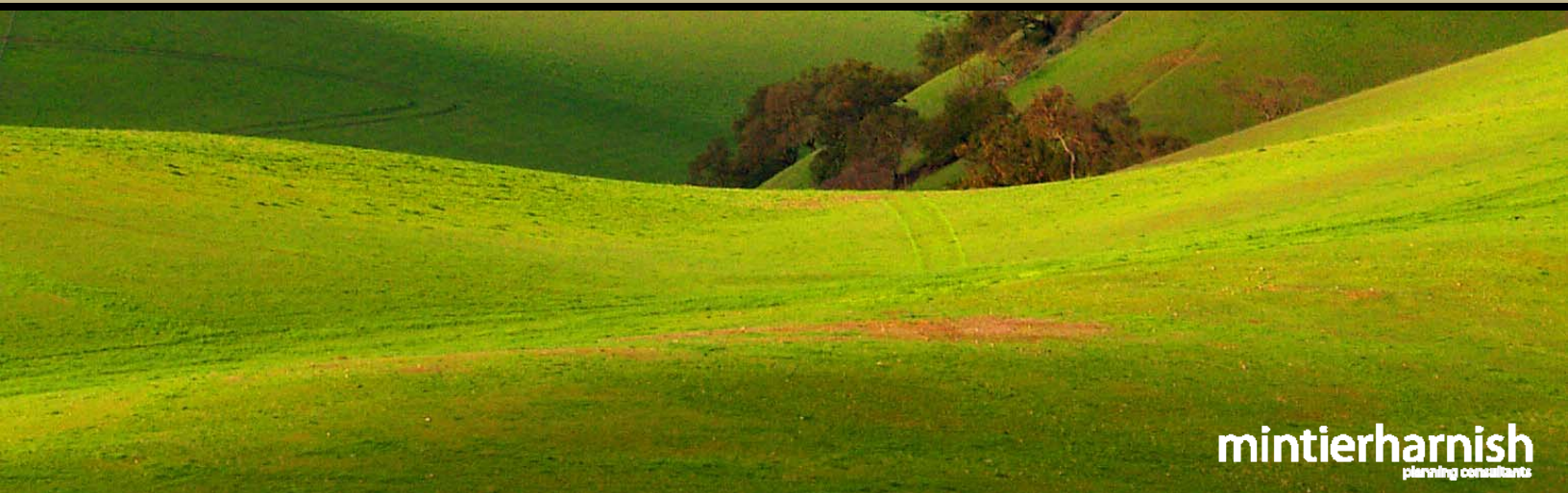




San Benito County General Plan Update
2035 Vision and Guiding Principles

GPAC Review Draft | March 26, 2010



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GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

In March 2009 the County began a 30-month process to update its 1992 General Plan. The General Plan guides land use, economic, transportation, infrastructure, agricultural, resource, environmental, and other County decisions. The General Plan is intended to provide for orderly growth and convey the community's values and expectations for the future. This report summarizes one of the first stages in the General Plan Update, which is the development of a vision for the future and guiding principles to help achieve that vision.

DRAFT 2035 VISION

A vision statement is a summary of general goals to be achieved by the updated General Plan. The vision provides the foundation for more specific guiding principles, goals, policies, and programs to be developed later during the update process. The visioning process is valuable in identifying issues important to the community and in providing early direction for alternatives development and analysis.

The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) held a series of meetings between July and September 2009 to discuss and draft a vision for San Benito County. This included reviewing public input received from a community mail survey and community workshops held in 2008. The following page summarizes the GPAC's draft 2035 Vision for San Benito County. This draft vision will be presented to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for their consideration and ultimate inclusion in the new General Plan.

Draft 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.

Walkable 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 “virtually” by way of enhanced telecommunications.

Downtowns are not taken for granted. 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.

*San Benito County General Plan Advisory Committee
September 22, 2009*



Guiding Principles for the General Plan Update

Guiding principles are fundamental ideas that represent the County's philosophy about land use, change, economic development, and sustainability. Guiding principles are written early in the General Plan Update process so that they can be used to guide the development of land use and policy alternatives. Similar to the vision, the guiding principles will be used to help evaluate existing and proposed goals, policies, and programs developed during the General Plan Update.

Guiding principles are purposefully broadly stated in order to guide the County throughout development of the updated General Plan. All future general plan goals, policies, and implementation programs will need to be consistent with the vision and guiding principles. These principles expand on the main ideas contained in the vision statement so that important concepts are given more weight. They are also organized based on specific topics of importance to the community.

The draft guiding principles, located on the following pages, were developed based on input from the following sources (*note: all documents are available on the General Plan Update website, available at: www.sanbenitogpu.com*).

- General Plan Advisory Committee input
- County Staff and Consultants observations
- Draft Housing Element (2010)
- Community Mail Survey results (2008)
- Phase I Workshop results (2008)
- Draft Principles for the County Transferable Development Credit Program (2006)
- Vision San Benito (2005)

This draft guiding principles will be presented to the GPAC, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors for their consideration and refinement.

Guiding Principles for the 2035 General Plan (DRAFT)

Land Use and Community Character

1. Direct new growth towards cities, rural villages, or clustered developments in order to preserve prime farmland, rangeland, protect natural habitats, and reduce the financial, social, and environmental impacts of urban sprawl.
2. Ensure that rural villages include a mix of residential, commercial, employment, park, open space, school, and public land uses in order to create a sense of place by supporting compact, pedestrian accessible, and transit-oriented development.
3. Promote higher residential densities, mixed-use development, and downtown revitalization in existing urban areas.
4. Ensure new development complements and preserves the unique character and beauty of San Benito County.
5. Establish defined boundaries to separate cities and rural villages, 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 the county's largest economic sector by protecting productive agriculture, 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-owned, profitable, and attracts related businesses.

Economic Growth and Prosperity

10. Expand and diversify the local economy by supporting quality businesses, supporting quality jobs for the diverse population, and capitalizing on the county's natural and human resources.
11. Support existing and establish new local business that are based on industries that are innovative, technology-based, and sustainable.

12. Support programs that educate the local workforce on agribusiness concepts, water conservation strategies, high-tech industries, and alternative energy production.

13. Support the county's growing tourism industry.

Transportation and Infrastructure

14. Locate future growth near existing transportation networks such as the major roadways, State highways, airports, rail corridors, and other major transportation routes.

15. Locate future growth near available water and sewer infrastructure to ensure improvements are economically feasible.

16. Ensure that future growth 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.