
Chapter One: Introduction

GENERAL PLAN PURPOSE

This General Plan is a statement of fundamental values and shared vision for future development of the City of Hollister. Its purpose is to direct and coordinate future planning decisions. It also describes the desired character and quality of development, and the process for how development should proceed.

As the City faces continuing development pressure, it must strive to preserve its historical and rural character and traditions while rising to new opportunities and challenges. The General Plan is a tool for protecting Hollister's past while guiding its future development. The General Plan encapsulates the current state of the City and presents a vision for the next twenty years of development.

City of Hollister decision makers will refer to the General Plan when considering land use and planning decisions. City staff will use the General Plan on a day-to-day basis to administer and regulate land uses and development activity. Hollister residents can utilize the General Plan to understand the City's approach to regulating development and upholding community values.

The Hollister General Plan responds to and derives its authority from California state law. The General Plan addresses the seven mandated elements required by Government Code Section 65302.

Once adopted, the General Plan is the basis for land use and other municipal decisions, though the Plan itself is not a regulation. For implementation, the General Plan relies on tools such as the zoning

ordinance, design review and other programs. In accordance with California law, the City's zoning ordinance and other implementation mechanisms must be consistent with the General Plan.

Periodically, California cities update their General Plans to reflect changes in land development patterns, market conditions, and community preferences since the last General Plan was adopted. This General Plan is an update and reorganization of the City of Hollister's 1995 General Plan.

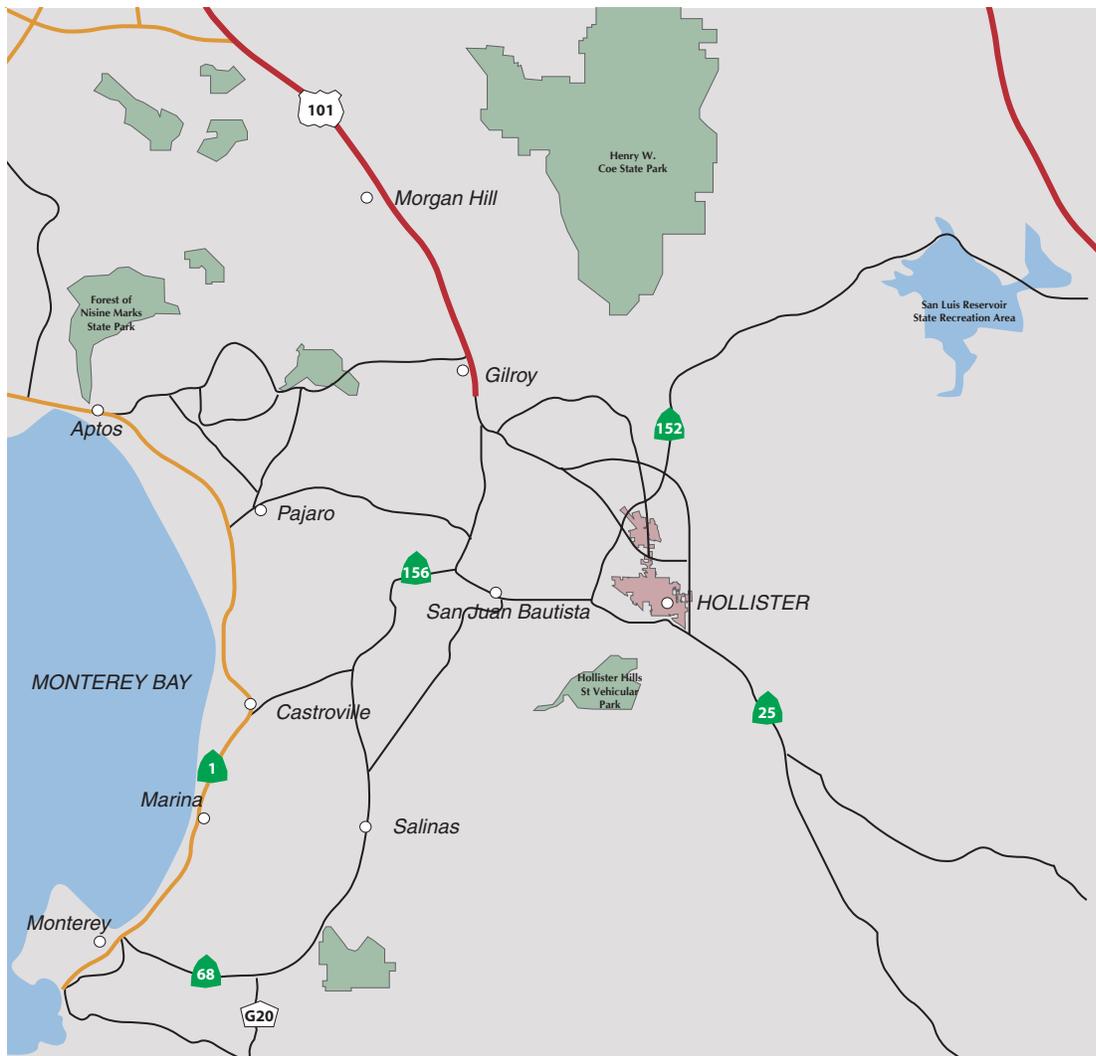
PLANNING CONTEXT

The City of Hollister is the County Seat and the largest city in San Benito County, with approximately 65% of the county population. San Benito County is situated in the Central Coast region of California, about 100 miles southeast of San Francisco, 40 miles east of Monterey and 300 miles north of Los Angeles. Map 1.1 on the opposite page illustrates Hollister's location in the region.

While agriculture continues to be the predominant economic activity in the county, development pressure is changing the rural character of the area. Due to Hollister's proximity to regional job markets, many of Hollister's employed residents commute to jobs outside the city.

San Benito County was the fastest-growing county in California during the 1990's, with the majority of that growth concentrated in Hollister. This new development has resulted in the loss of agricultural land and has created severe constraints upon the City's infrastructure. Primary commuter roadways, such as Highway 25, have become congested and more hazardous. Wastewater capacity issues have resulted in a moratorium for any development requiring new service connections. The moratorium will not be lifted until improvements for increasing capacity are completed.

To address these changes, Hollister voters enacted a growth cap initiative in November 2002 that limits new residential development to 244 homes per year. Similar growth cap ordinances have either been enacted or are being considered in other jurisdictions in San Benito County.



- City of Hollister
- Major Open Spaces
- Federal Highways
- Major Roads
- Minor Roads
- Water



Not to Scale

Map prepared by MIG, Inc. - August 2004

Map 1.1
Regional Context

City of Hollister 2005 General Plan

GENERAL PLAN SCOPE

Within this context, the 2005 Hollister General Plan addresses the following major policy areas:

Land Use and Community Design Element

The Land Use and Community Design Element establishes the type, location, density and intensity of development activity in Hollister. It also describes the goals and policies that will guide Hollister's future growth patterns and development standards. It also strengthens and protects the unique aspects that make Hollister a great place to live while enhancing the character of the City by improving the quality of design and amenities.

Housing Element

Hollister's ability to attract employment-generating uses will depend on its ability to provide a wide range of housing choices for families and non-family households so that all economic segments of the community have the ability to obtain safe, decent and affordable housing. The Housing Element quantifies the estimated housing needs of Hollister's future population and sets forth the actions to ensure that the future need is satisfied.

Circulation Element

The Circulation Element describes the services, facilities and capital improvements needed to facilitate vehicle, pedestrian, transit, bicycle and emergency circulation. The Element also identifies future distribution, location, level of service and extent of public and private transportation facilities to support the prescribed land uses in the General Plan.

Community Services and Facilities Element

Community facilities are necessary in the provision of Hollister's essential public services. These services include schools, fire and police

services, childcare, civic services, and park and recreation services.

Hollister's objective is to provide high quality public services throughout the city, now and in the future. Infrastructure serves as the foundation for all development in Hollister. This element establishes goals, policies and actions for the following systems: water supply, wastewater collection, storm drainage and flood control, and solid waste collection and disposal. Infrastructure improvements should preserve economic vitality, accommodate new housing, increase Hollister's revenue base, and correct existing deficiencies.

Open Space and Agriculture Element

The Open Space and Agriculture Element outlines city policy for the preservation of open space and agricultural areas. This element responds to Hollister's desire to maintain productive and viable agricultural land while providing for economic development, growth and expansion.

Natural Resources and Conservation Element

The Natural Resources and Conservation Element outlines city policy for the preservation of natural resources and provision of outdoor recreation opportunities, including the San Benito River.

Health and Safety Element

The Health and Safety Element identifies and assesses hazards in the community and establishes the goals, policies and actions necessary to assure community safety. This element addresses hazards associated with flooding, seismic activity, fires, ground failure (liquefaction and seismic compaction of soils), and noise. The purpose of the noise section is to provide a means for protecting the Hollister community from the harmful effects of excessive noise exposure. The Health and Safety Element also recognizes the need for remedial measures for existing noise problems and preventative actions to protect future development.

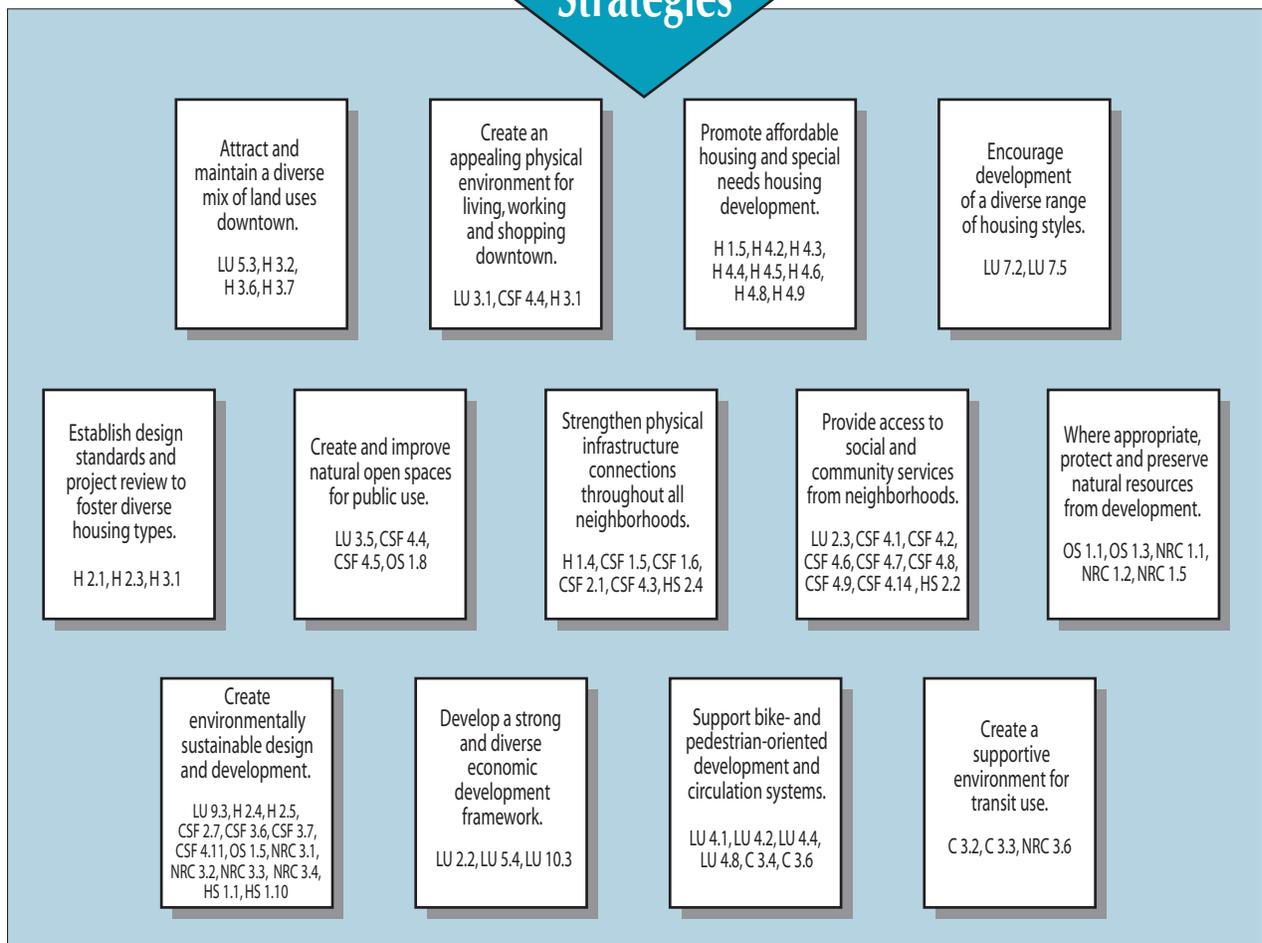
IMPACT OF PLAN ADOPTION

Though the General Plan addresses the wide-ranging elements described in the previous section separately, several common themes run through the entire document. Throughout the planning process, community members, elected officials and planning staff identified five goals for the General Plan to achieve. These goals, and the primary strategies to accomplish them, are identified on the chart on the following page. Underneath each strategy, a list of policies from each element (identified and elaborated on later in the Plan) demonstrate how this General Plan addresses the strategic framework.

Once adopted, the General Plan is the basis for land use and other municipal decisions. The plan itself is not a regulation - for implementation, it relies on tools such as the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, design review, capital improvement program, and a variety of special purpose ordinances and programs. The implementation measures associated with the primary strategies are illustrated on the following page. These implementation measures, as well as measures not related to primary strategies, are briefly described and related to General Plan policies in subsequent chapters.

In accordance with California law, the City's zoning ordinance and other implementation tools must be consistent with the General Plan. This means that the zoning ordinance will need to be reviewed after adoption of this Plan to ensure consistency. During the preparation and public review of zoning ordinance amendments, topics such as building height, densities, and allowed uses will be discussed for specific parcels. The general rule is that the zoning ordinance can be more restrictive than the General Plan, but cannot allow a greater level or completely different type of development than that described by the policies and standards in the General Plan.

Hollister General Plan Goals



Implementation Measure Timeline

1-Year	2-Year	3-Year	5-Year
<p>Inclusionary Housing Regulations </p> <p>Zoning Code</p> <p>Public Service Plans </p> <p>Expand Sewer and Water System Capacity</p> <p>Infill Housing Land Use Plan </p> <p> Joint Use Agreements with Schools</p> <p> Information Technology Plan</p>	<p>Streetscape Improvement Guidelines</p> <p>Design Review Guidelines </p> <p>Anti-Discrimination Ordinance</p> <p> Mixed-Use Design Standards</p> <p>Fair Housing Information Packet</p> <p>Zoning Amendments for Mobile/Manufactured Homes</p> <p>Water System Expansion</p> <p>Fire Protection Plan </p> <p>Consider an Area-Wide Fire District</p> <p>Library Expansion</p> <p> Water Conservation Requirements</p> <p>Water Quality Tests</p> <p>Pesticide and Fertilizer Management</p> <p>Recycling </p> <p>Open Space Plan</p>	<p>Economic Development Plan </p> <p>Participate in Creation of Nonprofit Affordable Housing Organization</p> <p>Encourage "Green" Building</p> <p>Drainage System Improvements</p> <p>Water Recycling </p> <p>Updated Geologic, Flooding and Hazard Maps</p>	<p>Evaluate Capital Improvements Program</p> <p> Develop Ranking Criteria For Growth Management Program</p> <p>Resale Controls; Rent and Income Limits</p> <p>Protect "At Risk" Units</p> <p>Water Quality Source Control Program</p>
<p>Note: All implementation measures must be consistent with the General Plan.</p> <p>The General Plan is not a regulation for implementation, but the measures listed here and throughout the document are tools the City can use to implement the Plan. In accordance with California State law these measures and subsequent decisions, programs and ordinances must be consistent with the City General Plan.</p>			

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THIS GENERAL PLAN

Public Participation

The Hollister General Plan was developed through a three-phase public sharing process, consisting of issue exploration, alternatives analysis, and policy development. The General Plan Steering Committee provided overall direction, with the assistance of citizen representatives who worked closely with the consultant team and City staff to guide the public process for updating the Plan.

The first phase, the "Exploration" phase, consisted of a number of exercises to gauge the opinions of residents and business people about future development in Hollister. That phase ended with a Community Workshop to provide direction for the "Alternatives" phase of the process. This phase consisted of a second workshop that provided the basis for development and assessment of alternative development strategies, leading to development and selection of a "preferred strategy." The preferred strategy then provided the basis for the third phase of the process: preparation of the draft General Plan.

The working draft General Plan was reviewed in public discussion and hearings by the Planning Commission and City Council, and subsequently refined before adoption.

Environmental Review

In addition to the public participation noted above, the General Plan process has included the preparation of an EIR pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Descriptions of the environmental setting and the specific public actions resulting from the General Plan are included in the body of individual sections of the Plan. These sections provide the description of the General Plan and its environmental setting for the EIR.

The EIR provides the project summary, impact analysis, and associated mitigation measures. It also addresses other mandated components of an EIR for a General Plan. Following circulation of the draft Hollister General Plan and Draft EIR, responses were prepared for the comments received, and the Final EIR will be certified prior to adoption of this updated General Plan.

UPDATING THE GENERAL PLAN

Once adopted, the General Plan does not remain a static document. According to Government Code Section 65358 [b], state law permits up to four General Plan amendments per mandatory element per year. Most amendments usually propose either a change in the land use designation of a particular property or a text amendment. It is important to note that amending the plan often can result in internal inconsistency of the plan. In this context, the decision-making bodies are advised to take care in making decisions regarding General Plan Amendments and to adopt the findings as stated below.

General plans are based on analyses and assumptions concerning social, economic and physical conditions that may be subject to change over time. Having now been adopted in its final form, the Hollister General Plan should be reviewed annually and, if necessary, updated to reflect new conditions and information.

Now that the City of Hollister has adopted a general plan, it may also adopt "area plans" and "specific plans" to address local concerns in additional detail.

An area plan is a specialized plan that addresses a particular region or community within the Hollister Planning Area. Such plans refine the policies of the Hollister General Plan as they apply to a smaller area. They are implemented by local ordinances such as those regulating land use. Area plans are focused planning policy documents that become part of (and must be internally consistent with) the Hollister General Plan. Unlike a specific plan, state law does not stipulate the minimum contents of an area plan. However, in order to be considered for adoption in the City of Hollister, area plans must include sufficient information to enable a comprehensive evaluation of a given area in relationship to the General Plan.

Unlike an area plan, a specific plan would not be an amendment to the Hollister General Plan, but would be designed to implement the goals and policies of the General Plan for a specific geographical area. When a specific plan is adopted, it represents a separate document that must be fully consistent with the goals and policies stated in the Hollister General Plan. A specific plan is a hybrid policy statement and/or regulatory tool that places the emphasis on development standards and criteria that would supplement those stated in the Hollister General Plan. The text and diagrams of a specific plan must address land use (including open space), infrastructure, standards for development and natural resource conservation, and implementation measures.

General Plan Amendments that are approved by the City Council must be supported by findings of fact. Findings provide a rationale for making a decision to approve or deny an amendment. While specific findings may be applied on an amendment-by-amendment basis, the following minimum standard findings should be made for each General Plan Amendment:

1. The proposed amendment is deemed to be in the public interest.
2. The amendment is consistent and compatible with the rest of the general plan and any implementation programs that may be affected.
3. The potential impacts of the amendment have been assessed and have been determined not to be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare of the community.
4. The amendment has been processed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the California Government Code and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

City-initiated amendments, as well as amendments requested by other public agencies, are subject to the same basic process and requirements described above to assure consistency and compatibility with the general plan. This includes appropriate environmental review, public notice, and public hearings leading to an official action by resolution of the City Council.