

# Chapter Six: Open Space and Agriculture Element

## HOLLISTER TODAY

### **Topography**

The land within the Hollister Planning Area generally slopes upward from north to south, with elevations of approximately 210 feet near the Hollister Municipal Airport, 290 feet near City Hall and 500 feet near the intersection of Fairview Road and Airline Highway (Highway 25). Although the topography is relatively flat in most areas, the terrain is hilly near the San Benito River, west of the Southern Pacific railroad line northwest of Hollister and in the eastern portion of the Planning Area.

### **Open Space**

Open Space is vacant land in the City that is primarily maintained in its natural condition. In some cases this land includes landscaped areas which are maintained but which are not actively used for recreational purposes.

### **Soils**

The Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has classified the soils within the Hollister Planning Area using three soil associations. Soils of the Sorrento-Yolo Mocho association consist of nearly level to sloping soils that formed in very deep alluvium derived from sedimentary rocks, and underlie the central and western portions of the Planning Area. The dominant soils in this association are very deep and well drained, and include some of the most produc-

tive soils in the country. Soils of the Rincon-Antioch-Cropley association consist of nearly level to strongly sloping soils on fans and terraces, and underlie the southeastern quadrant of the Planning Area. These soils are very well drained, although erosion is a problem on the more sloping soils. Soils of the Clear Lake-Pacheco-Willows association consist of nearly level and gently sloping soils that formed in alluvium derived from sedimentary rocks, and underlie the northern portion of the Planning Area. In order for these soils to support agricultural activity, drainage is needed in most areas, and reclamation may be necessary in those areas affected by salts and alkali.

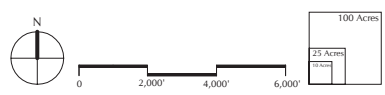
### **Agricultural Land**

When the State of California evaluates agricultural land, areas are designated as "Prime Farmland" when they are found to have the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for crop production, and have the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce sustained yields of crops when treated and managed. Lands identified as "Prime Farmland" must have been used for the production of irrigated crops within the last three years. Areas designated as "Farmland of Statewide Importance" represent land other than "Prime Farmland" which has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. As in the case of "Prime Farmland", these areas must have been used for the production of irrigated crops within the last three years.

Under the Land Conservation Act ("Williamson Act"), farmers are able to enter into land conservation contracts with San Benito County which enable them to enjoy reduced property taxes in exchange for maintaining their land in agricultural production. Once entered into by a farmer, a Williamson Act Contract is binding for a period of ten years. Contracts are automatically renewed each year unless the farmer files a Notice of Non-Renewal. After the filing of such a Notice, the land may not be converted to other uses for ten years, during which time the property taxes are gradually increased to reflect the full market



- Sphere of Influence
- Planning Area
- Creeks and Rivers
- Prime Agriculture Land



Map prepared by MIG, Inc. - October 2005

## Map 15 Prime Farmland Areas

City of Hollister 2005 General Plan

value of the land. Ten years after the filing of a Notice of Non-Renewal, the land is free of contractual land use restrictions and the farmer is denied further property tax benefits associated with the former Williamson Act contract.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Maintenance and Improvement of Open Space

A growing population is expected to place an increased demand on local open space resources, and as land that currently provides an open space function is converted to other uses, the amount of open space remaining within the Planning Area will be reduced. Preservation policies that protect open space features

### Continued Coordination with San Benito County

Surrounding Hollister are large tracts of agricultural land, some of which is classified by the California Department of Conservation (Division of Land Resource Protection) as "Prime Farmland" or "Farmland of Statewide Importance". A central concern of the General Plan, therefore, in considering the location, design, intensity and type of land uses in the City, is to continue to protect natural resource areas as development occurs and to concentrate development to minimize sprawl. It is also important to coordinate City land use policies with San Benito County General Plan policies that call for protection of the County's existing rural atmosphere, the encouragement of industry that is sensitive to and compatible with the environment and surrounding land uses, and the encouragement of building in areas where impacts are minimized and services and facilities can easily be provided.

### Protection of Agriculture and Soils

Agricultural soils and other natural features and assets are important to preserve through land use planning. As development pressures in the Hollister area increase, the demand for land suitable for residential development is expected to result in the conversion of some land which is currently in agricultural production, and some development may take place on soils which have been identified as among the most productive in the country. As construction takes place in developing areas, soil erosion would be expected to increase.

## OPEN SPACE AND AGRICULTURE ELEMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

Preservation of open space and the natural environment have been a priority for Hollister residents for many years. Whenever possible, the natural terrain and vegetation of the community should be preserved and maintained. Recognizing the importance of agriculture to the community, the City will protect agricultural lands by maintaining parcels large enough to sustain agricultural production, preventing conversion to non-agricultural uses, and prohibiting uses that are incompatible with long-term agricultural production.

*GOAL*      Preserve and protect open space and the natural  
*OS1*            environment for all to enjoy.

*GOAL*      Preserve viable agricultural activities and lands.  
*OS2*

**GOAL** Preserve and protect open space and the natural environment for all to enjoy.  
**OS1**

Policies	Lead Responsibility	Time Frame	Implementation Measures
<p><b>OS1.1 Open Space Preservation</b>            Retain and protect open space areas whenever practical through the protection of prime farmlands, the prevention of new development in areas subject to natural hazards, that serve as wildlife habitat or as visual assets for the community, and where the development of additional parks and trails is possible. Open space areas can also function as connections between neighborhoods, for example with the creation of pathways in environmentally appropriate areas.</p>	Planning	On-going	Create open space preservation opportunities [OS.H]
<p><b>OS1.2 Cluster Development</b>            Wherever feasible, encourage those proposing development to cluster planned residential development, leaving open space buffers in proposed site plans, particularly on the borders of development facing agricultural uses and State Routes 25 and 156. This will diminish the potential for land use conflicts and improve opportunities for visual harmonization between agricultural and urban activities.</p>	City Council  Planning	2 years  On-going	Develop open space management plan(s) [OS.B]  Manage private open space [OS.F]

**GOAL OS1** Preserve and protect open space and the natural environment for all to enjoy.

Policies	Lead Responsibility	Time Frame	Implementation Measures
<p><b>OS1.3 Site Planning to Preserve Open Space</b>                      Hollister shall consider the use of creative site planning in a way that is responsive to open space values. Require those proposing new development to design open spaces to minimize paved areas and to maximize landscaping to reduce outdoor air temperatures around buildings in warm weather.</p>	<p>Planning</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Manage private open space [OS.F]</p>
<p><b>OS1.4 Open Space Management</b>                      Designate appropriate uses to specific sites. Determine maintenance needs to address uses and the preservation of natural amenities. Address illegal camping and campfires, disease control, erosion control, urban/wildlife interface, recreation and other activities harmful to open space environment, vegetation management and protection issues.</p>	<p>City Council</p>	<p>2 years</p>	<p>Develop open space management plan(s) [OS.B]</p>
<p><b>OS1.5 Open Space Use</b>                      Protect and preserve the natural value of open space and wildlife habitat areas while permitting educational and recreational uses compatible with these resources. Uses of open space areas shall be secondary to open space preservation.</p>	<p>Planning                      City Council</p>	<p>On-going                      2 years</p>	<p>Restrict utilities in open space [OS.I]                      Develop open space management plan(s) [OS.B]</p>



**GOAL** Preserve and protect open space and the natural environment for all to enjoy.  
**OS1**

Policies	Lead Responsibility	Time Frame	Implementation Measures
<p><b>OS1.6 Utilities in Open Space</b>  Discourage utilities in open space areas. Necessary utilities in open space should be located and designed to minimize harm to the area's environmental and visual quality.</p>	Planning	On-going	Restrict utilities in open space [OS.I]
<p><b>OS1.7 Coordination with Other Jurisdictions</b>  Coordinate San Hollister's open space system with San Benito County, the State, and regional and private open space systems.</p>	Planning	On-going	Coordinate with other jurisdictions in open space planning [OS.E]
<p><b>OS1.8 Access to Open Space</b>  Encourage provision of access to open space areas in the design of adjacent development. Secure access paths as part of subdivision approvals and design access paths to avoid or minimize neighborhood and user conflicts with sensitive wildlife habitat areas.</p>	Planning	On-going	Provide open space access points [OS.G]

**GOAL OS2** Preserve viable agricultural activities and lands.

Policies	Lead Responsibility	Time Frame	Implementation Measures
<p><b>OS2.1 Premature Conversion of Prime Farmland</b></p> <p>Whenever possible, minimize the premature conversion of prime farmland to non-agricultural uses by directing urban growth toward portions of the Hollister Planning Area which have not been identified as prime farmland.</p>	City Council	5 years	Enact a farmland trust [OS.D]
	City Council	2 years	Investigate voluntary "Subscription Farming" or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs [OS.C]
<p><b>OS2.2 Coordination with San Benito County to Preserve Prime Farmlands</b></p> <p>Encourage the County of San Benito to maintain existing County land use policies that discourage urban development in rural areas within the County as a way to ensure continuing agricultural operations within portions of the Hollister Planning Area. Coordinate with the County of San Benito in efforts to maintain prime farmlands in active agricultural use whenever possible and in all efforts to maintain the continued economic viability of agriculture within the Hollister Planning Area.</p>	Planning	On-going	Coordinate with other jurisdictions in open space planning [OS.E]
	City Council	5 years	Enact a farmland trust [OS.D]

**GOAL**      **Preserve viable agricultural activities and lands.**  
**OS2**

	<b>Policies</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Implementation Measures</b>
<b>OS2.3</b>	<p><b>Williamson Act Contracts</b>  Encourage the sponsors of subdivisions on agriculturally viable land to enter and maintain prime soils of the proposed subdivision in Williamson Act contracts as a means of off-setting the loss of agricultural land.</p>	City Council	5 years	Enact a farmland trust [OS.D]
<b>OS2.4</b>	<p><b>Residential Development Near Agricultural Areas</b>  Require developers to inform potential buyers of homes near agricultural areas of the possible hazards associated with the application of pesticides/herbicides and nuisances from other cultivation practices. In those cases where the County of San Benito's "Right-to-Farm" Ordinance applies to the City review of projects, homeowners shall also be informed of this ordinance by developers.</p>	City Council	1 year	Create an agricultural community disclosure ordinance [OS.A]

## IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

### 1-Year Time Frame

#### **OS.A Create an agricultural community disclosure ordinance**

Hollister shall consider the adoption and enforcement of an Agricultural Community Disclosure Ordinance (similar to the County of San Benito's "Right to Farm" Ordinance No. 577) for all future residents of subdivisions adjacent to or incorporating agricultural operations.

### 2-Year Time Frame

#### **OS.B Develop open space management plan(s)**

Establish a committee with representatives from neighborhood associations, environmental organizations, user groups and other stakeholders to prepare an Open Space Management Plan(s). The plan should address use and ongoing maintenance of open space areas. The management plan should address appropriate access points, parking areas, public information signage, trail extensions, restoration of erosion and other degraded areas, and guidelines for the location of amenities such as picnic tables and benches. Amend zoning provisions as needed.

#### **OS.C Investigate voluntary "Subscription Farming" or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs**

Consider promoting the development of a voluntary "Subscription Farming" or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program as part of proposed development on sites where conditions may be suitable.

## **5-Year Time Frame**

### **OS.D Enact a farmland trust**

The establishment of a farmland trust, which could accept donations of land or conservation easements, may provide a mechanism to permanently preserve prime farmland within the Hollister Planning Area.

## **On-going Time Frame**

### **OS.E Coordinate with other jurisdictions in open space planning**

Continue to work with public agencies managing open space within the Hollister Planning Area to ensure a coordinated system.

### **OS.F Manage private open space**

In designating open space as part of a development project or with the dedication of land for open space, identify limitations to uses in those areas, such as restrictions on ornamental landscaping, structures and fences.

### **OS.G Provide open space access points**

Through the development review process, identify access points and parking areas to be retained and required improvements.

**OS.H Create open space preservation opportunities**

Through the development review process, preserve open space areas. Encourage the dedication of open space areas that are adjacent to public open space. When potential open space is not contiguous to existing public open space, the preference is to retain the open space in private ownership. When portions of a site are retained as private open space, ensure the preservation and management of that open space through appropriate means, including required maintenance, as determined through development review. Work with other public and non-profit agencies to identify sources for acquisition and maintenance of open space.

**OS.I Restrict utilities in open space**

Use zoning ordinance provisions and the design and environmental review processes to evaluate the location and design of public utilities.