

1. INTRODUCTION

This Hollister General Plan Update Environmental Baseline document, comprised of this introduction and 19 additional chapters, provides an overview of existing physical, environmental, economic, and other conditions in the Hollister General Plan Planning Area. This Environmental Baseline document is intended to serve as a comprehensive reference and resource for community members, policymakers, staff, and the consultant team throughout the development of the Hollister General Plan Update.

This document is being released as a Public Draft. Hollister Planning Division staff and the General Plan consultant, PlaceWorks, their subconsultants, and many other City departments and agencies have worked together to ensure that an accurate and reliable source of information is provided to serve the General Plan Update process. The release of this Public Draft provides an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the Environmental Baseline Report. The Environmental Baseline Report will act as a working document to serve the General Plan Update process until formal adoption of the General Plan by the Hollister City Council, which is expected in Winter 2022.

The General Plan Update process will include a targeted update of Hollister's General Plan, which sets a vision for the future of Hollister; preparation of several related documents such as a Climate Action Plan and a Hazard Mitigation Plan, and preparation of an Environmental Impact Report that investigates the possible impacts of these policy documents on the surrounding physical environment. This Environmental Baseline document provides information about these components and provides the existing setting for the Environmental Impact Report.

This introductory chapter introduces Hollister and its Planning Area, including their regional setting and boundaries. It also provides an overview of this Environmental Baseline document including its structure and contents, as well as the process by which it was developed. This chapter also provides an introduction to the General Plan itself, including the General Plan's basis in State planning law and its required contents and structure.

1.1 HOLLISTER LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

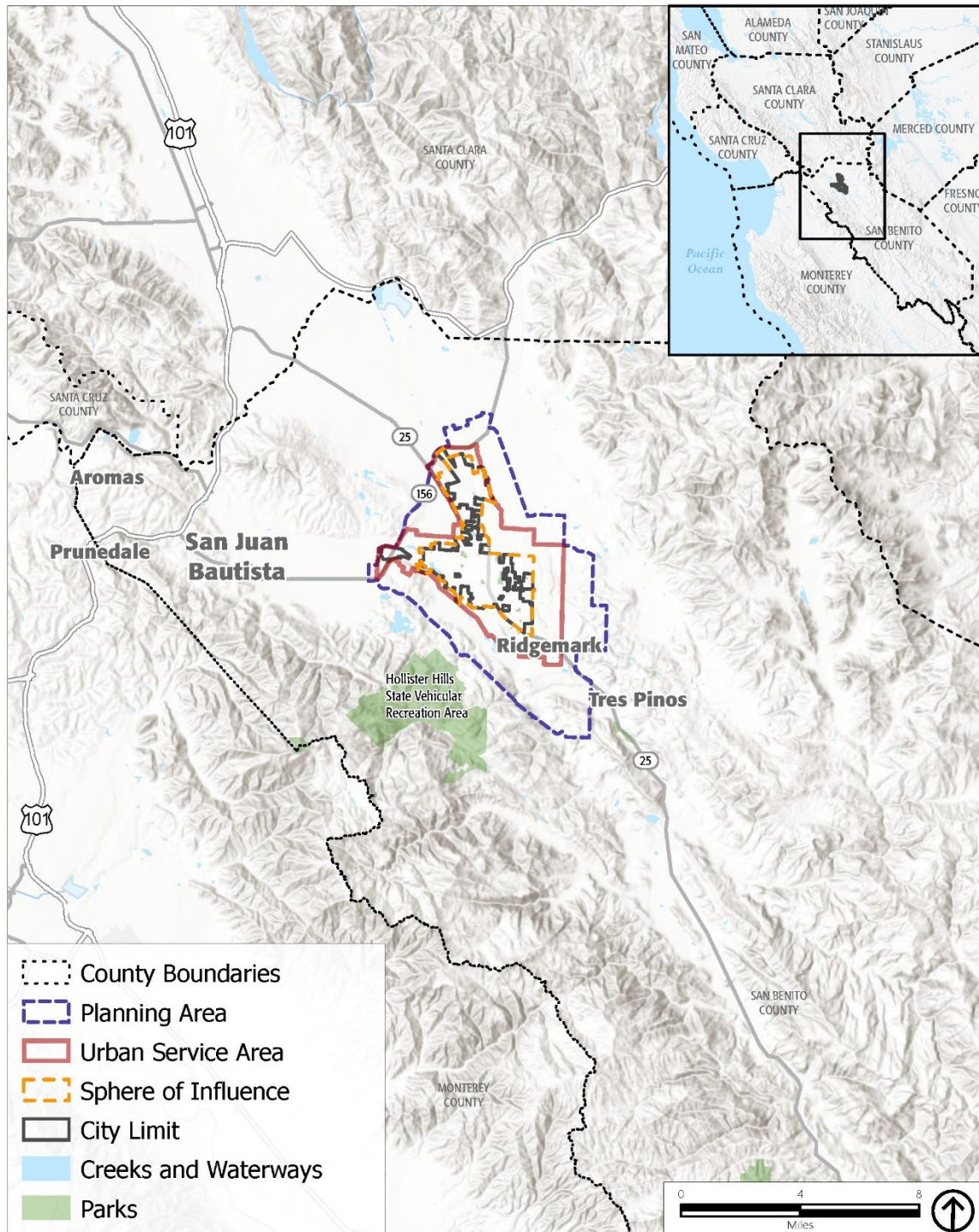
This section provides a brief overview of Hollister's regional location, political boundaries, and principal characteristics in terms of topography and land use. More detailed information on these various aspects is provided in the chapters that follow.

1.1.1 REGIONAL SETTING

Figure 1-1 shows Hollister's regional setting. Hollister lies in north central California at the northern end of the San Benito Valley, approximately 40 miles east of Monterey, 100 miles southeast of San Francisco, and 300 miles north of Los Angeles. Highways 25 and 156, which diagonally transect the city in the northwest to southeast and southwest to northeast directions, define the principal transportation corridors connecting the city to the subregion. Highway 101 to the west serves as a major transportation corridor for the state, providing connections to San Francisco Bay to the north, and the Salinas Valley and Central Coast to the south. Highway 156 connects to the Monterey Peninsula to the west and the Central Valley to the east, while Highway 25 connects south to Pinnacles National Park.

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Figure 1-1 Regional Setting



Source: ESRI, 2020; PlaceWorks, 2020; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019

1.1.2 CITY BOUNDARIES AND SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS

Hollister is located in the north central part of San Benito County and extends into rural land on all sides. San Benito County location was first established in 1868 when the San Justo Homestead Association purchased 21,000 acres of land to subdivide into homesteads, setting aside 100 acres for a town site. Two years later, a Southern Pacific Railroad line was built through the community, shaping development patterns of the city and region. Today, Hollister is the largest of only two cities in the county, and it serves as the County seat.

In recent times, Hollister and San Benito County have seen significant growth resulting from their location near San Jose and Monterey. The city has expanded from its historic center and adjacent residential neighborhoods toward outlying suburban development constructed on previously rural land. The County was the fastest-growing county in California in the 1990s (measured by rate of growth), with growth primarily concentrated in Hollister.

Figure 1-2 shows the General Plan Planning Area which includes the City Limits, Sphere of Influence, Urban Service Area, and the Planning Area. The city is bounded on all sides by unincorporated county land. Parts of the City Limits follow along the San Benito River and Santa Ana Creek, while the remaining City boundaries are more arbitrary. The total land area of the Hollister City Limits is currently approximately 5,220 acres. San Benito County has jurisdiction over all areas outside the City Limits.

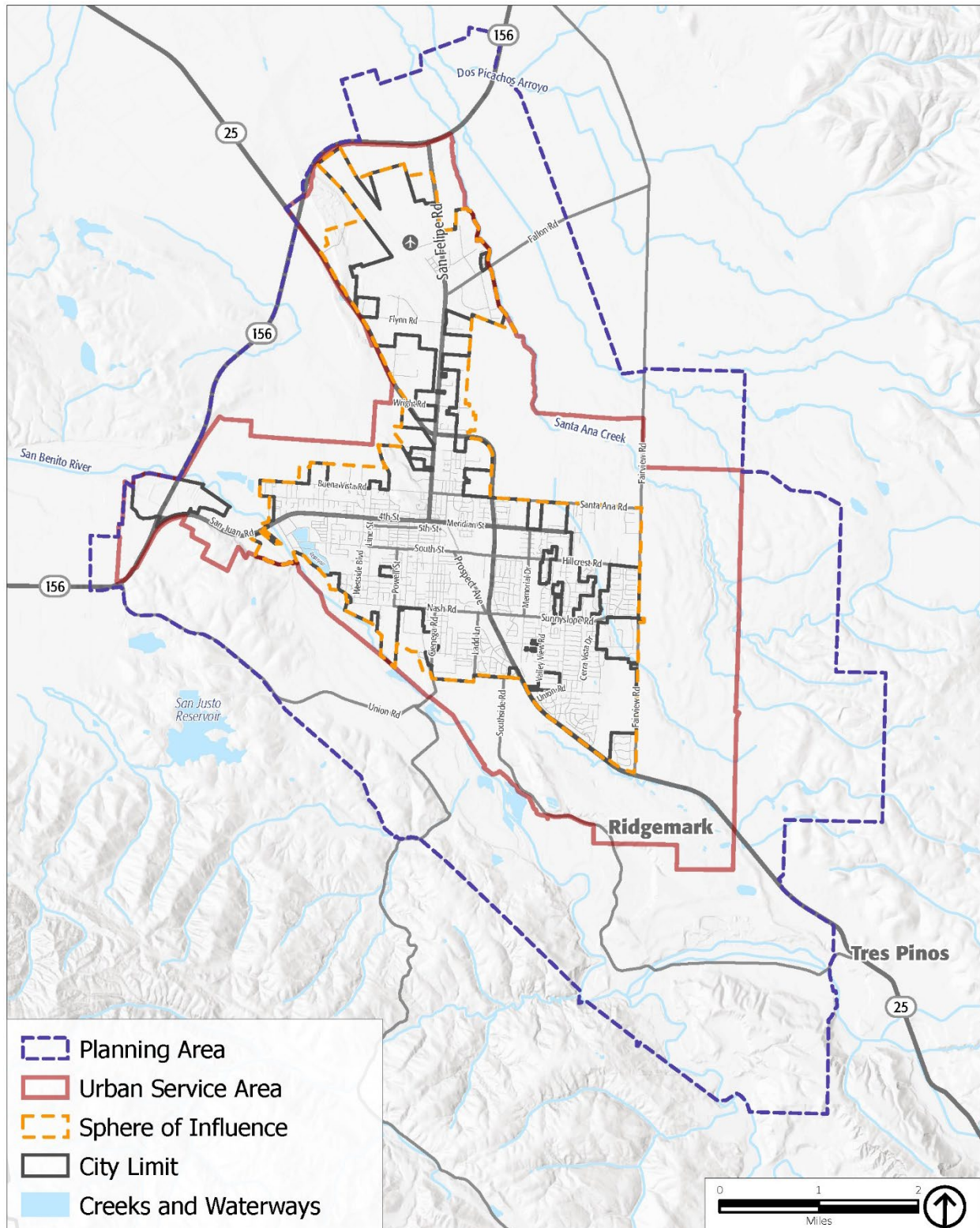
The Hollister Sphere of Influence (SOI), totaling approximately 6,554 acres which includes the City Limits, is the area designated by the San Benito Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to indicate land that is likely to be annexed into the City in the near future. Outside the City Limits, the SOI currently includes small pockets of primarily agricultural or low-density residential land west, south, and east of the limits.

The City also designates its own “Urban Service Area” (USA), which is an area larger than the SOI in which the City will provide water and sewer service if requested by landowners or developers. The San Benito River and Santa Ana Creek form portions of the southern and eastern boundaries of the Hollister Urban Service Area, while the remainder of the USA loosely follows major transportation corridors. The Urban Service Area totals approximately 13,264 acres both inside and outside the City Limits and SOI.

Under State law, a general plan must address all areas within the jurisdiction’s Planning Area. The Planning Area for the General Plan Update, as shown in Figure 1-2, defines where the City has an interest in land use and includes all the land within the City Limits, SOI, and USA. The Hollister Sphere of Influence (totaling approximately 6,554 acres) was designated by the Local Agency Formation Commission to indicate land that is likely to become part of the physical boundaries of the city. The Planning Area is larger than both the Urban Service Area and the Sphere of Influence at approximately 28,054 acres. The

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Figure 1-2 General Plan Planning Area



Source: ESRI, 2020; PlaceWorks, 2020; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019

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Planning Area consists of all lands both inside and outside the City Limits, SOI, and USA that bears relation to the City's planning.

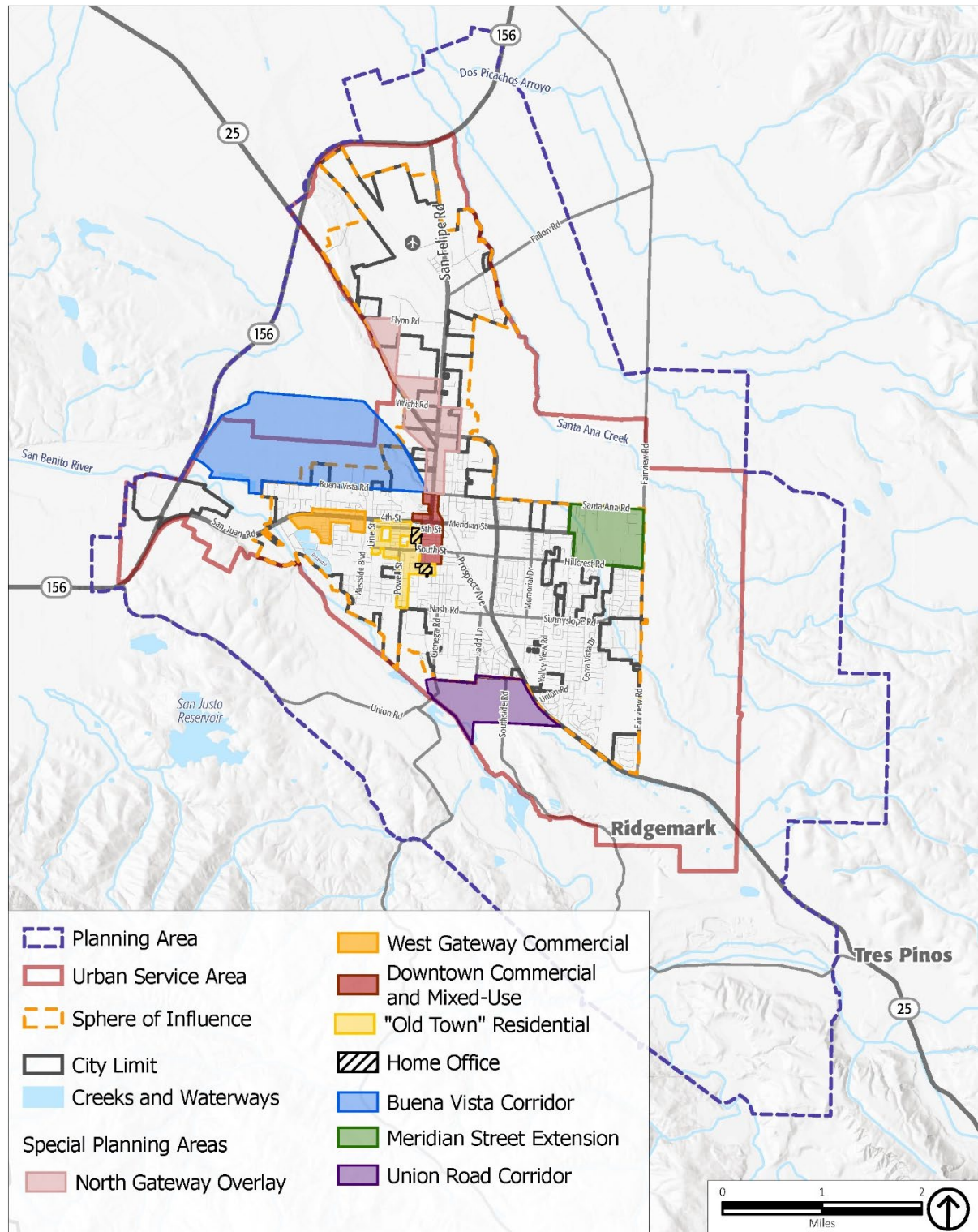
For this General Plan Update, the City as designated eight "Special Planning Areas" for special consideration during the Hollister General Plan Update process. The Special Planning Areas, shown in Figure 1-3, are either anticipated to experience growth and development through 2040 and/or will receive focused policy direction. These include the following areas:

1. North Gateway which includes land to the southwest of the Hollister Municipal Airport, east of State Route 25, extending partially down the San Felipe Road corridor until reaching the downtown.
2. West Gateway located west of the downtown, on Fourth Street from Westside Boulevard to the west to Graf Road, and on either side of State Route 156B.
3. Downtown which includes the entire downtown area and is roughly bounded by Fourth Street, East Street, South Street, and Powell Street.
4. "Old Town" Residential located to the west and south of the downtown area and includes the portion of the San Felipe Road corridor south of the downtown, extending further south to San Benito High School.
5. Home Office includes the areas south and west of Downtown Hollister on either side of Monterey Street from 5th Street south to Haydon Street.
6. Buena Vista Corridor bounded to the north by Wright Road, to the east by San Felipe Road, to the south by Santa Ana Road, and to the west by State Route 156.
7. Meridian Road Extension along the eastern edge of the City Limits, generally bounded by Santa Ana Road to the north, Fairview Road to the east, Hillcrest Road to the south, and El Toro Drive and Clearview Drive to the west.
8. Union Road Corridor includes the portion of land to the south of the City Limits, bounded to the north by Union Road, the east by State Route 25, to the south by the Ridgemark Golf Club and Resort, and to the west by Cienega Road.

The first five of the SPAs listed above are already designated in the current General Plan, while the last three will be considered for designation through the current General Plan Update process.

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Figure 1-3 Special Planning Areas



1.2 HOLLISTER'S CURRENT GENERAL PLAN

Hollister's current General Plan is the legal document that serves as the city's "blueprint" or "constitution" for land use and development. State law requires every city and county in California to adopt and maintain a General Plan that is comprehensive and long-term. A General Plan must outline proposals for the physical development of the county or city and any land outside the jurisdiction's boundaries which, in the jurisdiction's judgment, bears relation to its planning.¹

General Plans must be comprehensive both in their geographic coverage and in the range of subjects they cover. General Plans must also be long-term in perspective. General Plan time horizons vary, but typically range anywhere from 15 to 25 years into the future. The updated Hollister General Plan will have a horizon of 2040, which is expected to be 18 years from adoption in 2022.

Every General Plan in California must address at least eight topics or "elements". The importance of each of the required topics will, of course, vary from community to county. The following are brief descriptions of what State law requires be addressed in each of the eight elements:

1. The *Land Use Element* designates the general distribution and intensity of all uses of the land in the city. This includes residential uses, commercial uses, industrial uses, public facilities, and open space, among others.
2. The *Circulation Element* identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed major transportation facilities, including major roadways, rail and transit, and airports.
3. The *Housing Element* assesses current and projected housing needs and sets out policies and proposals for the improvement of housing and the provision of adequate sites for housing to meet the needs of all economic segments of the community.
4. The *Conservation Element* addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources including water, forests, soils, rivers, and mineral deposits.
5. Overlapping the Conservation and Safety Elements, the *Open Space Element* details plans and measures for preserving open space for the enhancement, promotion, and protection of natural resources, such as wildlife habitat; the managed production of resources, such as agricultural and timber land; outdoor recreation, such as parks, trails, and scenic vistas; and public health and safety, such as areas subject to geologic hazards, flooding, and fires.
6. The *Noise Element* identifies and appraises noise problems and includes policies to protect the community from excessive noise.
7. The *Safety Element* establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risks associated with seismic, geologic, flood, and wildfire hazards.

¹ California Government Code Section 65300 et seq.

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8. The *Environmental Justice Element*, only required in jurisdictions with disadvantaged communities, identifies goals and policies to reduce the unique and/or compounding health risks suffered by those communities.

State legislation also requires consideration of General Plan policies on issues such as climate change and air quality. The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research updated the General Plan Guidelines in 2017 and released additional guidance for Environmental Justice Elements in 2020.

While the General Plan is required to include these elements, State law allows communities to determine the most appropriate structure and format for their General Plan. For example, many communities choose to combine the Open Space and Conservation Elements into a single element, due to the many commonalities between the topics addressed in them. The General Plan may also address additional topics that the city feels are relevant to its development, such as agriculture, economic development, historic preservation, and urban design. Hollister’s current General Plan contains seven elements that were comprehensively adopted in 2005, except the Housing Element which was updated in 2014. The precise contents and organization of General Plan Update are to be determined through the update process.

For each locally-relevant mandated or optional issue addressed, the General Plan must do the following:

- Describe the nature and significance of the issue in the city (Background Information).
- Set out policy in text and maps for how the jurisdiction will respond to the issue (Policy).
- Outline specific programs for implementing policies (Implementation Programs or Actions).

No General Plan element is deemed to be more important than another, all carry equal weight. While, as noted above, the format and structure of the General Plan is left to local discretion, all substantive parts of the plan must be consistent with one another (i.e. internally, or “horizontally consistent”). For instance, the policies in the land use element must be consistent with those of the housing element and vice versa.

State law also requires subsequent documents drafted to implement the General’s Plan’s objectives to be consistent with the plan. This “vertical consistency” extends to community and specific planning efforts and General Plan implementation through City ordinances.

The current General Plan was adopted by the city council on December 5, 2005 with a planning horizon of 2023. The current Housing Element was adopted on April 4, 2016 and addresses housing needs from 2015 to 2023. The current General Plan includes the following seven Elements:

1. Land Use and Community Design
2. Housing
3. Circulation
4. Community Services and Facilities
5. Open Space and Agriculture
6. Natural Resources and Conservation

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7. Health and Safety

1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE DOCUMENT STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

This Environmental Baseline document consists of this Introduction (Chapter 1), followed by 18 chapters that describe the regulatory setting and existing conditions within the city for the following subject areas:

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|---|---|
| 2. Aesthetics | 11. Hydrology and Water Quality |
| 3. Agriculture Resources | 12. Land Use and Planning |
| 4. Air Quality | 13. Noise and Vibration |
| 5. Biological Resources | 14. Population, Housing, and Economic Development |
| 6. Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources (6A), and Arts (6B) | 15. Public Services and Recreation |
| 7. Energy | 16. Transportation and Circulation |
| 8. Geology and Soils | 17. Utilities and Service Systems |
| 9. Greenhouse Gas Emissions | 18. Wildfire |
| 10. Hazards and Hazardous Materials | 19. Climate Change |

This Environmental Baseline document is based on a number of sources, and reflects, to the extent possible, current information as of 2020. It incorporates and builds upon previous reports including the current Hollister General Plan, Hollister General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR), *2018 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy* for the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), the *Hollister Park Facility Master Plan*, written in 2017, and various San Benito County plans.

This Environmental Baseline document is being published in two segments to allow or easier review by decision-makers and the public. At the time that this introduction is published, Chapters 3, 4, 6A, 6B, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 18 and 19 are also being published. The remaining chapters are expected to be published in November 2020.

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