



# San Benito County

## Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center

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October 22, 2020

Dear members of the City of Hollister 2040 General Plan Update Planning Committee,

On behalf of the San Benito County Chamber of Commerce Green Committee, we are writing today to provide critical feedback and recommendations in response to the City of Hollister's General Plan Update.

We believe that the General Plan update should encompass a series of sustainability initiatives that protect human health and the environment, foster a green economy, and better conserve our precious resources in San Benito County.

The Chamber's Green Committee has identified several elements we would like to see included in the General Plan Update listed here:

1. Include plans to meet all environmental state mandates in areas such as, but not limited to: water conservation and efficiency, green building codes, energy conservation and efficiency, electrification, pollution prevention, and source reduction and recycling.
2. Recognizing that local agriculture is central to the City's history, heritage, economy, and quality of life. Include recommendation to prioritize infill development and multi-family housing in order to preserve the irreplaceable croplands and rangelands at the City's boundaries. When development of agricultural lands cannot be avoided, require a minimum of 1:1 mitigation.
3. Participation in the creation of a Climate Action Plan, at the county or tri-county regional level, that defines current GHG inventory and targets GHG reductions (so the General Plan is designed to meet GHG reduction targets)
4. Protection of our water, continued promotion of the sustainable use of this precious resource and good wastewater management practices.
  - a. Since the San Benito County Water District (SBCWD) is the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the county and imports water from the federal water system (Central Valley Project) they should be intimately involved with the process of the General Plan. The timing is good since the SBCWD is working on a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). This document is being assembled now with input from the public. The plan should be ready for adoption by June 2022. This plan should be a chapter or appendix within the GP. One of the primary challenges is the continued likelihood of some degree of growth, climate change and the historic inadequacy of water supply during periods of drought.
  - b. Programs that incorporate recycled water, increased stormwater capture, expanded water conservation programs, and use groundwater basins as local storage are what needs to be supported. The SBCWD recognizes these activities and are trying to implement them so we have a diversified portfolio of water supply. Fully succeeding in these efforts will require improved cooperation between private industry and government agencies to address institutional and regulatory challenges, manage contamination, and rethink water rights and adjudication processes.
5. Continued efforts to conserve resources and reduce waste.
6. There should be robust efforts in outreach to bring community together, of diverse background and varied perspectives through multiple workshops, forums, social outreach, etc.
7. In collaboration with key stakeholders, form an open space network (e.g., bordered by rivers, habitats, parks, etc.) that identifies habitat areas (conserved/obligated land, etc.) to define autonomous, compact, balanced, walkable mixed-use neighborhoods (villages) of varied scales to create walkable communities that are both linked and surrounded by natural beauty.
8. Ensure a clean and sustainable environment, and high aesthetic standard without negatively impacting our most vulnerable.
9. Powering the city using renewable energy/microgrids (above/beyond Central Coast Community Energy), municipal efficiency work (e.g., LED for all streetlights, as one example), having electric municipal vehicles/EV chargers, green building codes, and moving new construction to all electric.

We are excited to participate in the planning of this document, as it will guide development and conservation in Hollister for the next 20 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback,

The San Benito County Chamber of Commerce Green Committee