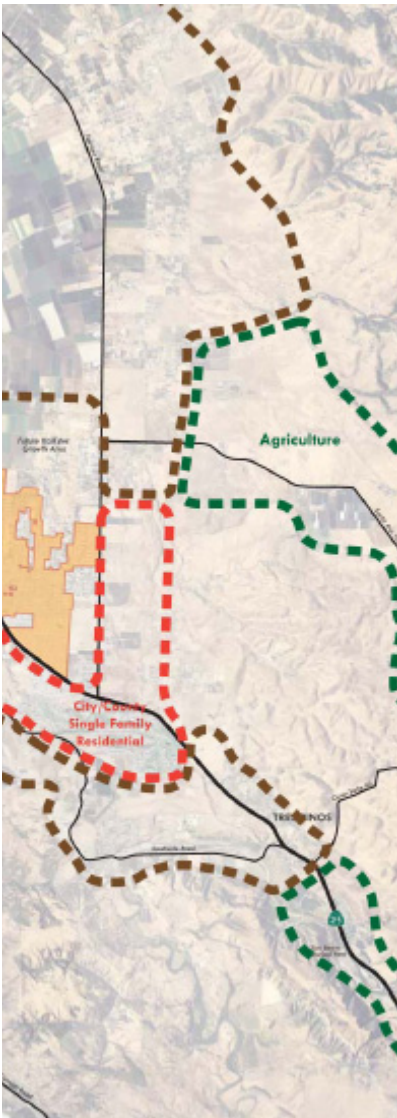


# Section 3

## Alternatives



### Introduction

This section describes three alternatives for the future change in San Benito County. These alternatives are intended to show different approaches to accommodating projected growth in the county through 2035.

The objective of this stage of the General Plan Update is to develop a base case scenario and two alternative futures for the county based on input received so far during the General Plan Update. The County is also interested in identifying potential Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) sending and receiving areas and showing how major policy decisions will affect agricultural preservation and future growth.

### How the Alternatives Were Developed

The alternatives presented in this report represent different policy options for San Benito County. While these alternatives do not necessarily establish allowed land uses, they do indicate where certain types of development would or would not be allowed in the future.

Alternative A represents the Base Case Scenario for the county. This alternative was developed by County staff and the Consultants based on existing County and City policies. This alternative also used the AMBAG Forecast (discussed earlier) to determine the amount and location of future population and employment growth.

Alternatives B and C represent different scenarios for how the county can change in 2035. While the AMBAG Forecast was used as a starting point for developing these alternatives, the location of growth (unincorporated vs. cities) was adjusted in Alternatives B and C to reflect different policy objectives. Major themes shown in these alternatives are based on input received from community workshops, the

Background Report, the 2035 Vision and Guiding Principles, and the Opportunities and Challenges Report. In addition, the boundaries where future change could occur were developed based on GPAC and Board of Supervisors input, and County staff and Consultants observations.

Each of the three alternatives take into account key factors and issues identified during the General Plan Update. These include:

1. Agricultural preservation
2. Land use mix and locations
3. Sustainability
4. Economic development
5. Walkability/livability
6. Rural character concepts
7. Constraints
8. Proximity to transportation corridors
9. Housing density
10. Jobs-housing balance

Once drafted, all three alternatives were further refined by the GPAC during their October 7, 2010, meeting.

## **Major Assumptions**

The following is a summary of major assumptions that were used to develop all of the alternatives.

### **North County Focus**

The alternatives presented in this report are all focused on the northern part of the county for two reasons. First, it is anticipated that the majority of the policy decisions related to future change (growth, preservation) will be focused in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys.

Second, it is anticipated that there will not be major changes to the central and southern parts of the county. While additional farms, homes, and other uses will be established in these parts of the county, it is not anticipated that any significant urban development will occur in these areas. This is because these areas contain significant constraints to development, such as lack of water and infrastructure, high fire hazards, steep slopes, and remoteness.

When drafted, the updated General Plan will include land uses, goals, policies, and programs for the entire unincorporated county. However, for this stage of the update process, the County is focusing primarily on the Hollister and San Juan Valleys.

### **San Juan Bautista and Aromas**

The alternatives show limited change for the city of San Juan Bautista and the unincorporated community of Aromas. This is largely due to the fact that both of these areas have existing constraints or are adjacent to prime farmland. San Juan Bautista has very limited infrastructure and is surrounded by some of the best farmland in the county. The Aromas area includes steep terrain, high fire hazards, and limited wastewater infrastructure. As a result, the alternatives assume little future change in these areas.

### **2035 Vision and Guiding Principles**

The 2035 Vision and Guiding Principles (shown on the following page) were used as a starting point for developing the alternatives. All three alternatives seek to achieve the 2035 Vision and Guiding Principles; however, they do it in different ways.

### **Employment Projections**

As discussed in the previous section, all three alternatives are based on the most recent population and employment projections prepared by AMBAG. However, one of the primary goals of the County is to promote economic development in order to create more jobs for local residents. As such, Alternatives B and C include more employment growth than Alternative A. This additional employment growth reflects an effort by the County to promote economic development.

### **City General Plans**

The Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista both have adopted General Plans. The County does not have jurisdiction over lands within city limits. All three alternatives assume no changes to the existing and adopted city general plans. Rather, the alternatives make different assumptions about how much future growth will go to the cities and to the unincorporated county.

## 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 2035 General Plan

### Land Use and Community Character

1. Direct new growth towards cities, compact 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 compact 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 condensed, pedestrian accessible, and transit-oriented development.
3. Promote higher residential densities in existing urban areas and new compact villages while encouraging mixed-use development and downtown revitalization.
4. Ensure new development complements and preserves the unique character and beauty of San Benito County.
5. Establish defined boundaries to separate cities and compact villages from prime agricultural land and important natural resources, 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 a major economic sector by protecting productive agriculture lands and industries, 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 businesses that are based on industries that are innovative, technology-based, and sustainable.

12. Support programs that educate the local workforce on conventional, productive, sustainable, and organic agriculture 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.

## Agricultural Land Protection

The alternatives present different ways of protecting productive and prime farmland in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys. The alternatives show how different major policy decisions will affect agricultural protection in the county.

## Constraints Analysis

During the previous stage of the General Plan Update, the County prepared an analysis of major constraints to future development. This analysis looked at the following three types of constraints:

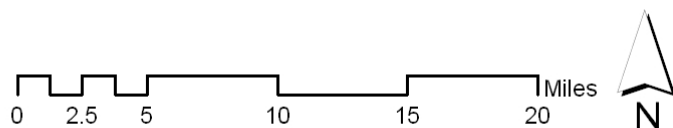
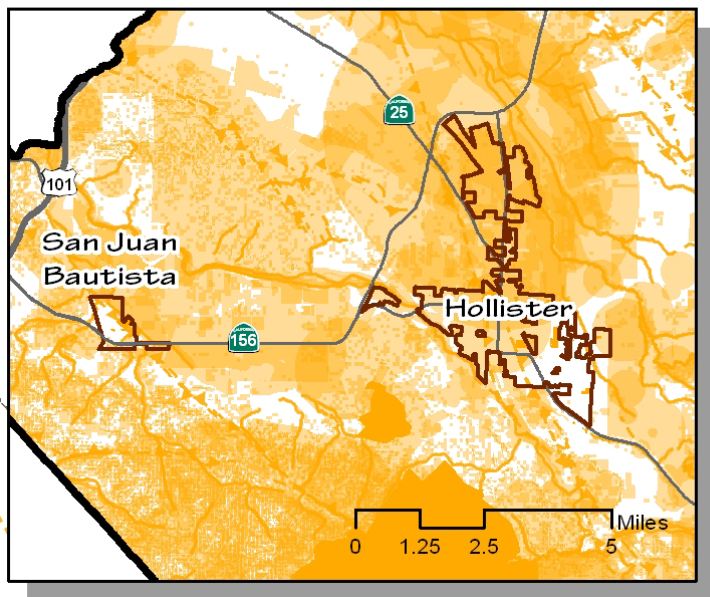
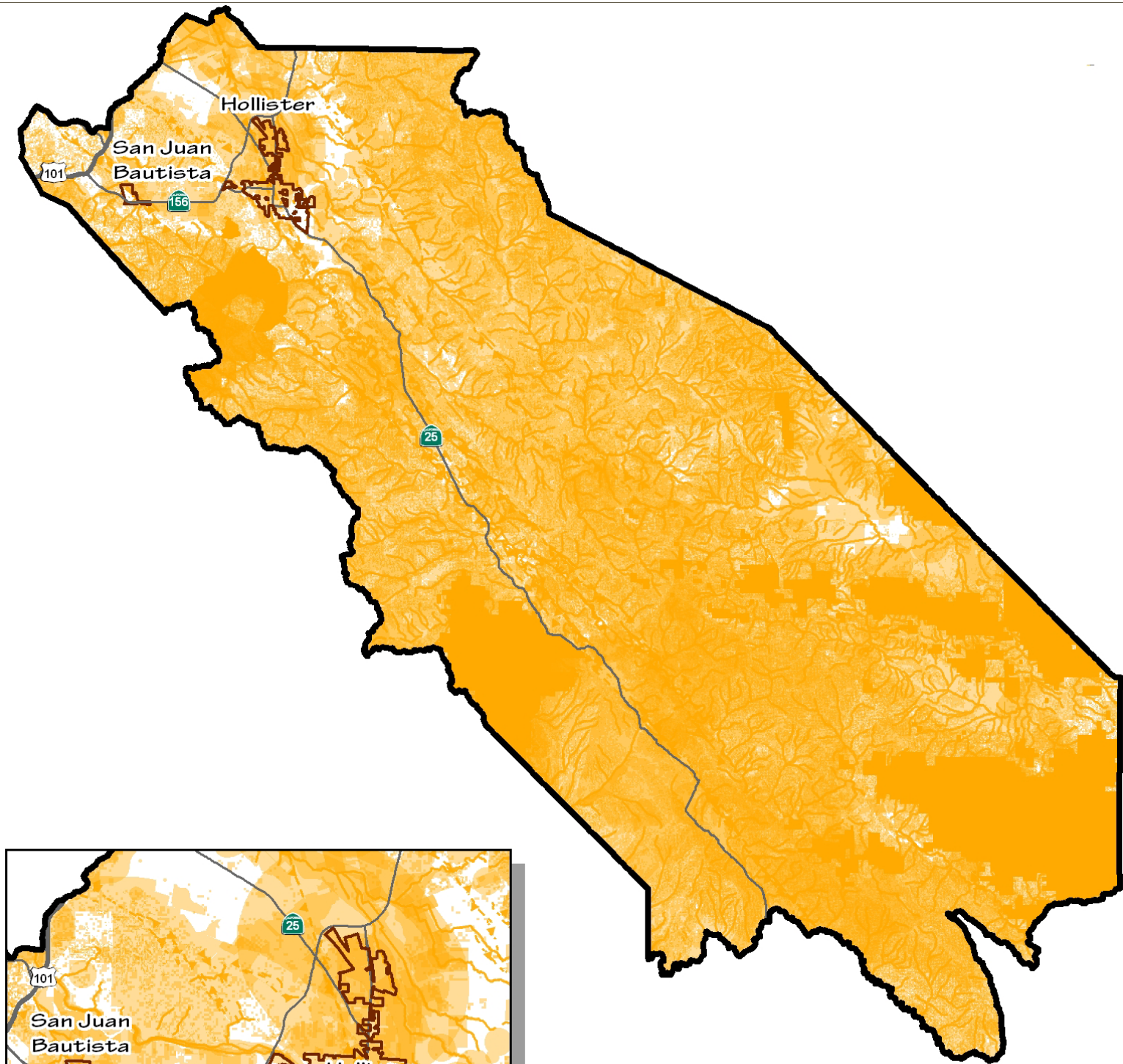
- **Physical Constraints.** These include areas that either pose major safety risks or have geographic features that significantly increase the cost to develop land (e.g., steep slopes, water bodies). Physical constraints are the most easily identifiable limitations on development. Physically constrained lands often have value in that they may provide habitat for endangered species, offer access to open spaces and views, or preserve historic resources.
- **Regulatory Constraints.** These include areas where Federal and State laws and regulations effectively limit development (or make it cost-prohibitive) by requiring significant mitigation to offset development impacts (e.g., wetlands, endangered species habitat). Local regulations also constrain development in areas that pose a threat to the safety and well-being of residents, such as airport over-flight zones.
- **Policy Considerations.** These include issues for consideration when planning for new development and are often addressed through local policy (e.g., prime farmland, scenic vistas, Sheriff and fire service areas). The degree to which these may limit development depends on the terms of those policies.

The result of this effort is a Composite Constraints Diagram (shown on the following page) that illustrates the combined magnitude of the constraints and considerations that should be weighed when addressing future development. The Diagram includes the following mapped constraints:

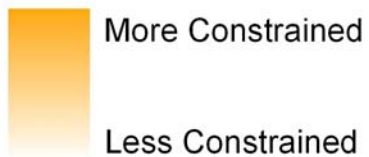
- 100-year Floodplain
- Agricultural Easements
- Airport Areas of Influence
- Airport Safety Zones
- Conservation Easements
- Critical Habitat
- Endangered and Threatened Species
- Fire Hazard Areas
- Noise
- Oak Woodlands
- Parks
- Prime Farmland
- Public Lands
- Rivers, Lakes, and Streams
- Scenic Vistas
- Seismic Faults
- Slopes
- Wetlands
- Williamson Act Contracts

As shown on the Diagram, the areas with the fewest development constraints tend to be located in or adjacent to the cities in the northern part of the county. Please note that this Diagram only includes constraints that can be mapped for which information is available. There are many additional constraints and considerations that were taken into account in developing the alternatives that are not shown on the Diagram (e.g., infrastructure capacity, farming operations, water supply).





Sources: San Benito County, Geographic Information Systems Data, September 10, 2009.



## Constraints Composite Diagram

## Alternatives Summary

The following pages describe each of the three alternatives. Each alternative diagram shows boundaries (dashed-lines) for where certain types of develop could or could not go in the future. In the center of each boundary is a label that identifies what use would be allowed or encouraged in that area (i.e., protected agriculture, clustered residential, single-family residential). The alternatives also show future commercial and employment “nodes.” These nodes are not intended to show exact locations for these uses, rather they show generally where that particular use could/should go in order to achieve a certain policy objective (e.g., regional commercial, local employment). In addition, the alternatives also show the current (2010) city limits for Hollister and San Juan Bautista in yellow.

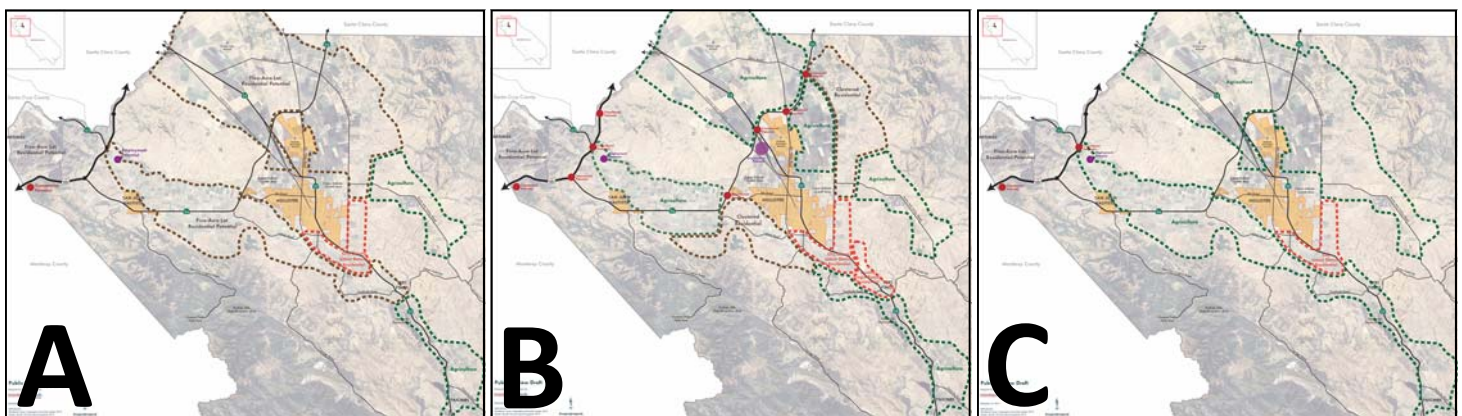
The following is a brief summary of the major theme of each alternative:

- **Alternative A.** This alternative is a continuation of the existing County and City policies. It represents what could happen on the valley floor under the status quo. A major component of this alternative is the potential for a significant number of five-acre lot splits across the valley floor.
- **Alternative B.** This alternative directs future growth away from prime farmland by encouraging clustered residential development in the unincorporated county. Alternative B also promotes increased commercial and employment growth at key highway intersections in the unincorporated county.

- **Alternative C.** This alternative focuses on the protection of agricultural and open space resources by directing the majority of future population and employment growth to Hollister.

## Population, Dwelling Units, and Employment Comparisons

The table to the right summarizes the population, dwelling unit, and job projections assumed under each alternative. This includes assumptions about where future growth will occur in the cities versus the unincorporated county. As shown in the table, Alternative B focuses more employment growth in the unincorporated county than the other alternatives. In turn, Alternative C focuses almost all future population and job growth to the city of Hollister.



ALTERNATIVE POPULATION, DWELLING UNIT, AND JOB ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS 2010-2035												
	Alternative A				Alternative B				Alternative C			
	2010 Total	2035 Total	Net New	% New	2010 Total	2035 Total	Net New	% New	2010 Total	2035 Total	Net New	% New
<b>Population</b>												
Unincorporated County	20,080	29,070	8,990	28%	20,080	29,070	8,990	28%	20,080	20,730	650	2%
City of Hollister	40,420	62,760	22,340	69%	40,420	62,760	22,340	69%	40,420	71,100	30,680	95%
City of San Juan Bautista	1,940	2,910	970	3%	1,940	2,910	970	3%	1,940	2,910	970	3%
<b>Total Countywide</b>	<b>62,440</b>	<b>94,740</b>	<b>32,300</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>62,440</b>	<b>94,740</b>	<b>32,300</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>62,440</b>	<b>94,740</b>	<b>32,300</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Dwelling Units</b>												
Unincorporated County	6,880	10,040	3,160	31%	6,880	9,690	2,810	28%	6,880	7,080	200	2%
City of Hollister	11,540	18,220	6,680	65%	11,540	18,530	6,990	69%	11,540	21,130	9,590	95%
City of San Juan Bautista	760	1,150	390	4%	760	1,070	310	3%	760	1,070	310	3%
<b>Total Countywide</b>	<b>19,180</b>	<b>29,410</b>	<b>10,230</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19,180</b>	<b>29,290</b>	<b>10,110</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19,180</b>	<b>29,280</b>	<b>10,100</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Jobs</b>												
Unincorporated County	6,260	7,510	1,250	35%	6,260	9,350	3,090	40%	6,260	6,420	160	2%
City of Hollister	10,900	13,890	2,990	64%	10,900	15,420	4,520	59%	10,900	18,390	7,490	97%
City of San Juan Bautista	220	300	80	1%	220	330	110	1%	220	330	110	1%
<b>Total Countywide</b>	<b>17,380</b>	<b>21,700</b>	<b>4,320</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>17,380</b>	<b>25,100</b>	<b>7,720</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>17,380</b>	<b>25,100</b>	<b>7,720</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: AMBAG, 2008; Mintier Harnish, 2010

## **Alternative A: Base Case Scenario**

This alternative assumes no major policy changes to the existing County and cities general plans. It represents what could happen on the valley floor under the policy “status quo.”

### **Population and Employment Trends**

This alternative assumes a 2035 countywide total of 94,731 residents and 21,700 jobs, based on the AMBAG Forecast. It also allocates future growth to the unincorporated county and the cities the same as the Forecast.

### **Growth Assumptions**

#### ***Residential Growth***

Currently (2010) residential ranchette subdivisions (e.g., five-acre lots) can be created on land zoned either AP or R in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys. While these larger lot homes are attractive to many home buyers, they limit the ability of farmers to continue viable agricultural operations in these valleys.

In addition to the five-acre lots, this alternative provides for urban density single-family residential uses (i.e., more than six units per acre) located south and east of Hollister along the State Route (SR) 25 corridor. This is consistent with the draft 2010 Hollister/San Benito County Housing Memorandum of Understanding which recognizes this area for future residential growth.

#### ***Commercial and Employment Growth***

This alternative includes unincorporated commercial and employment growth focused along the US Highway (US) 101 corridor. The purpose of this is to capture regional commercial opportunities along the largest transportation corridor in the county.

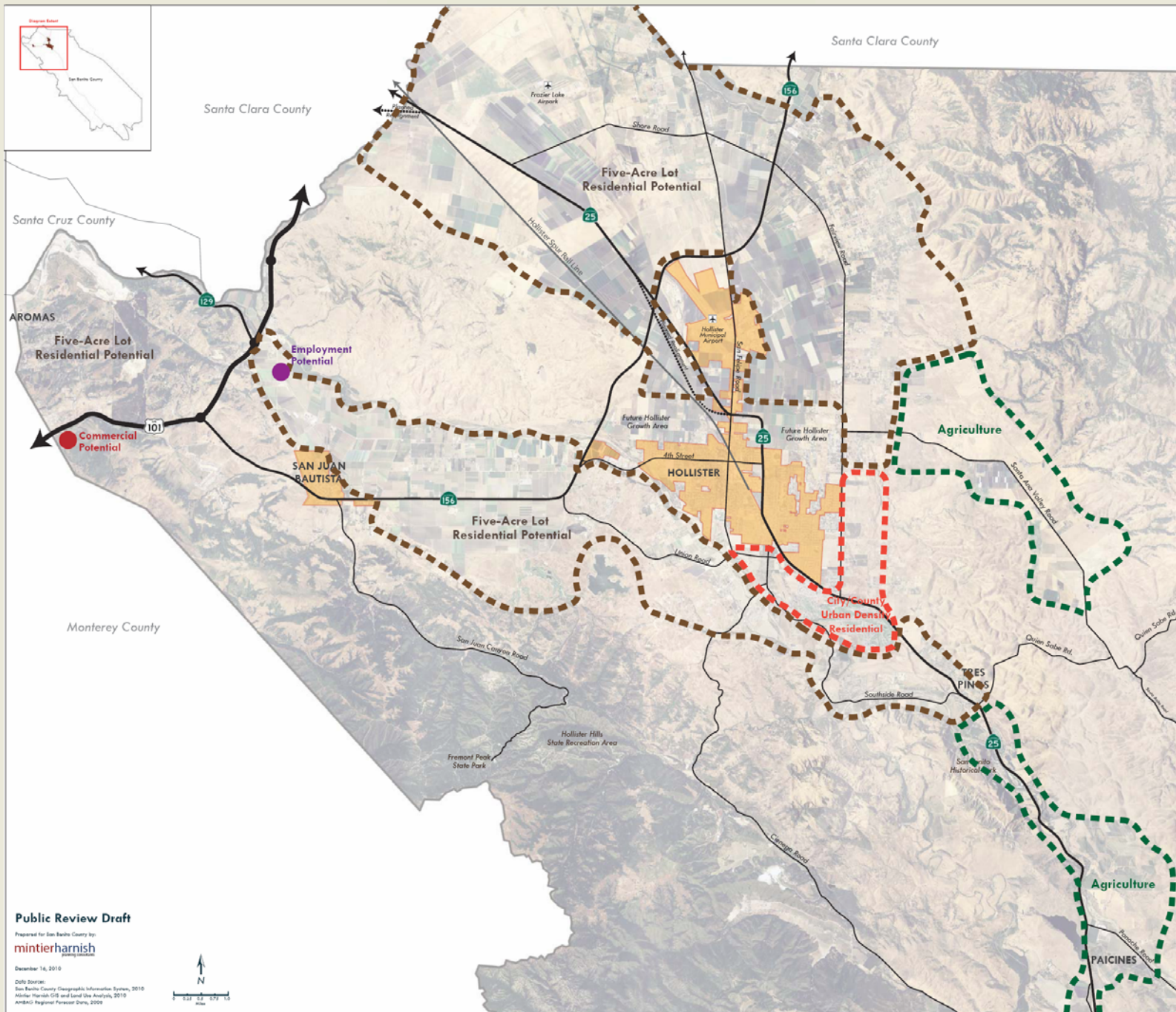
#### ***Agricultural Preservation and Expansion***

Under this alternative prime agricultural lands in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys is only modestly protected from future residential lot splits. This is because currently (2010) the only protections for this

land are either Williamson Act contracts, which are only short term (i.e., 10 years), or existing General Plan policies that discourage residential development on prime farmland.



# ALTERNATIVE A BASE CASE SCENARIO



Public Review Draft

Prepared for San Benito County by

**mintierharnish**

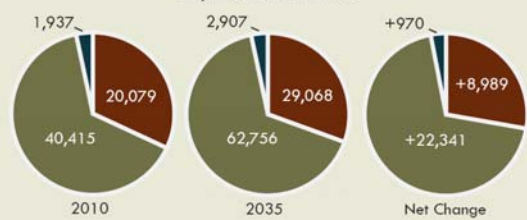
December 14, 2010

Data Sources:  
San Benito County Geographic Information System, 2010  
Minter-Harnish GIS and Land Use Analysis, 2010  
AMBA Regional Professional Study, 2008

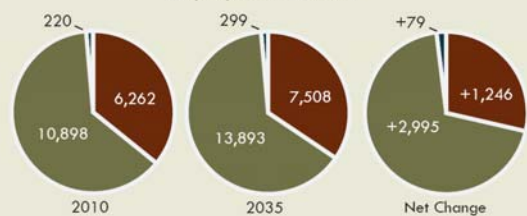


■ Unincorporated County  
■ City of Hollister  
■ City of San Juan Bautista

Population Growth



Employment Growth



## **Alternative B: Regional Economic Growth and Clustered Residential**

This alternative provides for clustered residential development that is away from prime farmland in the unincorporated county in an effort to protect productive farmland. It also emphasizes more unincorporated regional commercial and employment growth than either Alternative A or C.

### **Population and Employment Trends**

This alternative assumes the same countywide population growth as Alternative A (94,731), but includes more employment growth than is projected in the AMBAG Forecast (25,100 vs. 21,700). This is done in order to maintain a 0.9 jobs-to-housing ratio countywide. This alternative also allocates more future employment growth to the unincorporated county than Alternative A.

### **Growth Assumptions**

#### ***Residential Growth***

Under this alternative residential ranchettes are discouraged in the unincorporated county in favor of clustered residential development in areas with few or no constraints. This would primarily be achieved through a Transfer of Development Credit program and/or Clustered Residential incentive programs. The County would also develop more stringent agriculture protection policies for the Hollister and San Juan Valleys. Similar to Alternative A, this alternative includes urban density single-family residential along the SR 25 corridor south of Hollister.

#### ***Commercial and Employment Growth***

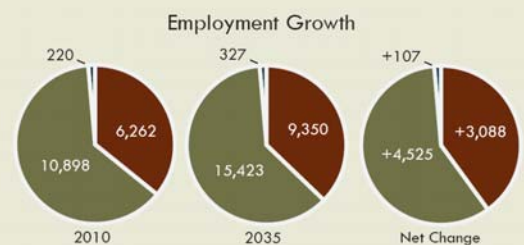
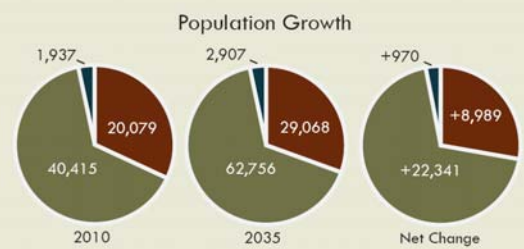
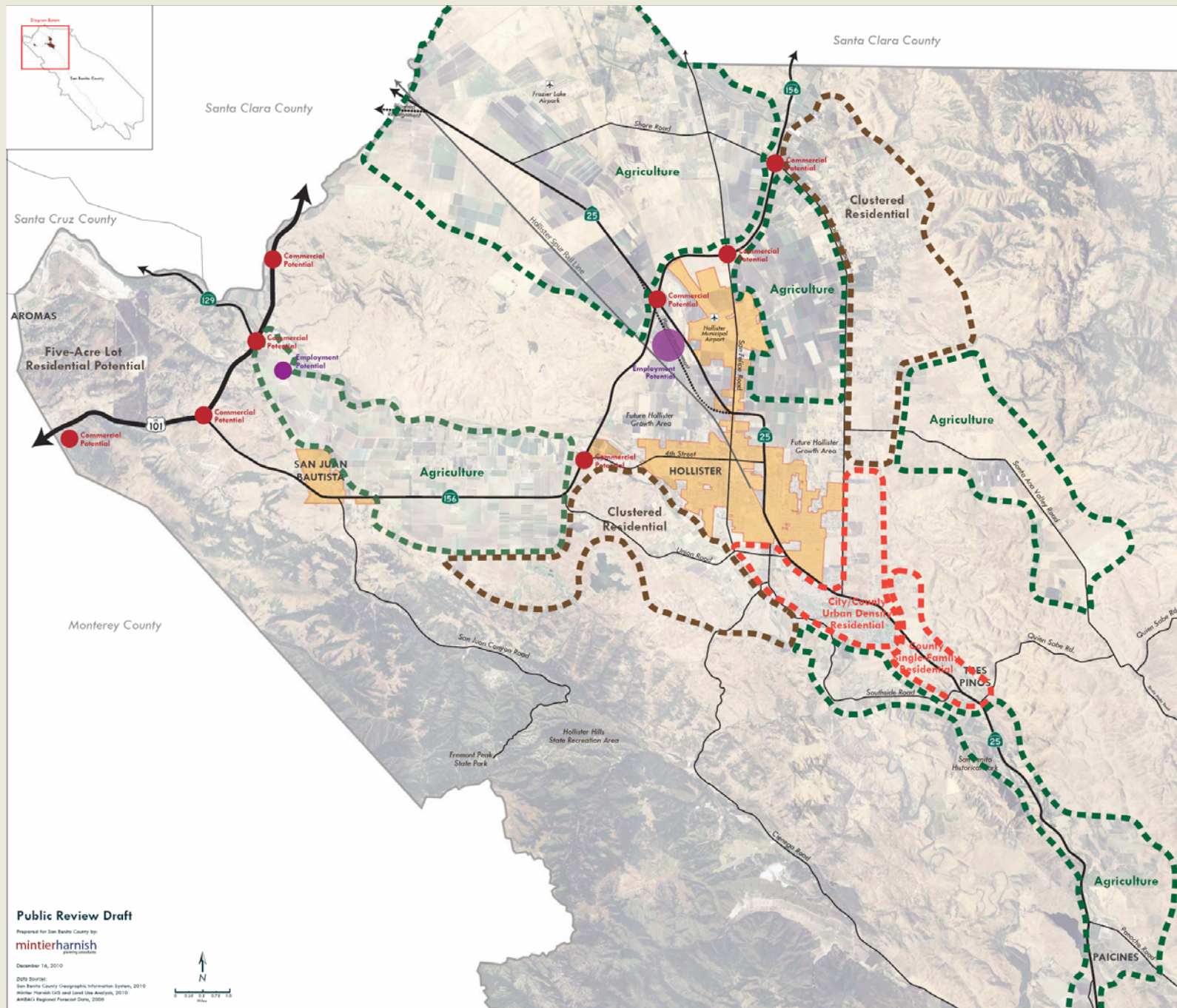
This alternative includes more unincorporated commercial and employment growth than either Alternative A or C. This additional growth is focused at key intersections and interchanges along US 101 and SR 156 in the unincorporated county in order to attract regionally-serving uses. This alternative also includes a large employment center at the intersection of SR 156 and SR 25, near the existing rail line.

#### ***Agricultural Preservation and Expansion***

Agricultural land in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys are more protected under this alternative than Alternative A. This would be achieved primarily through either re-designating property, adopting a Transfer of Development Credits program, and/or adopting a mandatory Clustered Residential program.



# ALTERNATIVE B REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CLUSTERED RESIDENTIAL



## **Alternative C: City-Centered Growth**

Under this alternative most future growth would be directed to the city of Hollister, while providing for a modest amount of unincorporated residential, commercial, and employment growth.

### **Population and Employment Trends**

This alternative assumes the same countywide population growth as Alternatives A and B (94,731), but like Alternative B includes more employment growth than is projected in the AMBAG Forecast (25,100 vs. 21,700). This was done in order to maintain a 0.9 jobs to housing ratio countywide. This alternative also allocates more future employment growth to the city of Hollister than either Alternative A or B.

### **Growth Assumptions**

#### ***Residential Growth***

Under this alternative residential ranchette subdivisions and clustered residential developments would be prohibited on prime farmland in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys. Similar to Alternatives A and B, this alternative includes urban density single-family residential south of Hollister along the SR 25 corridor consistent with the 2010 Hollister/ County Housing Memorandum of Understanding.

#### ***Commercial and Employment Growth***

This alternative includes very limited future unincorporated commercial or employment growth, since the majority of this growth will be focused in Hollister. This growth would be focused along the US 101 corridor.

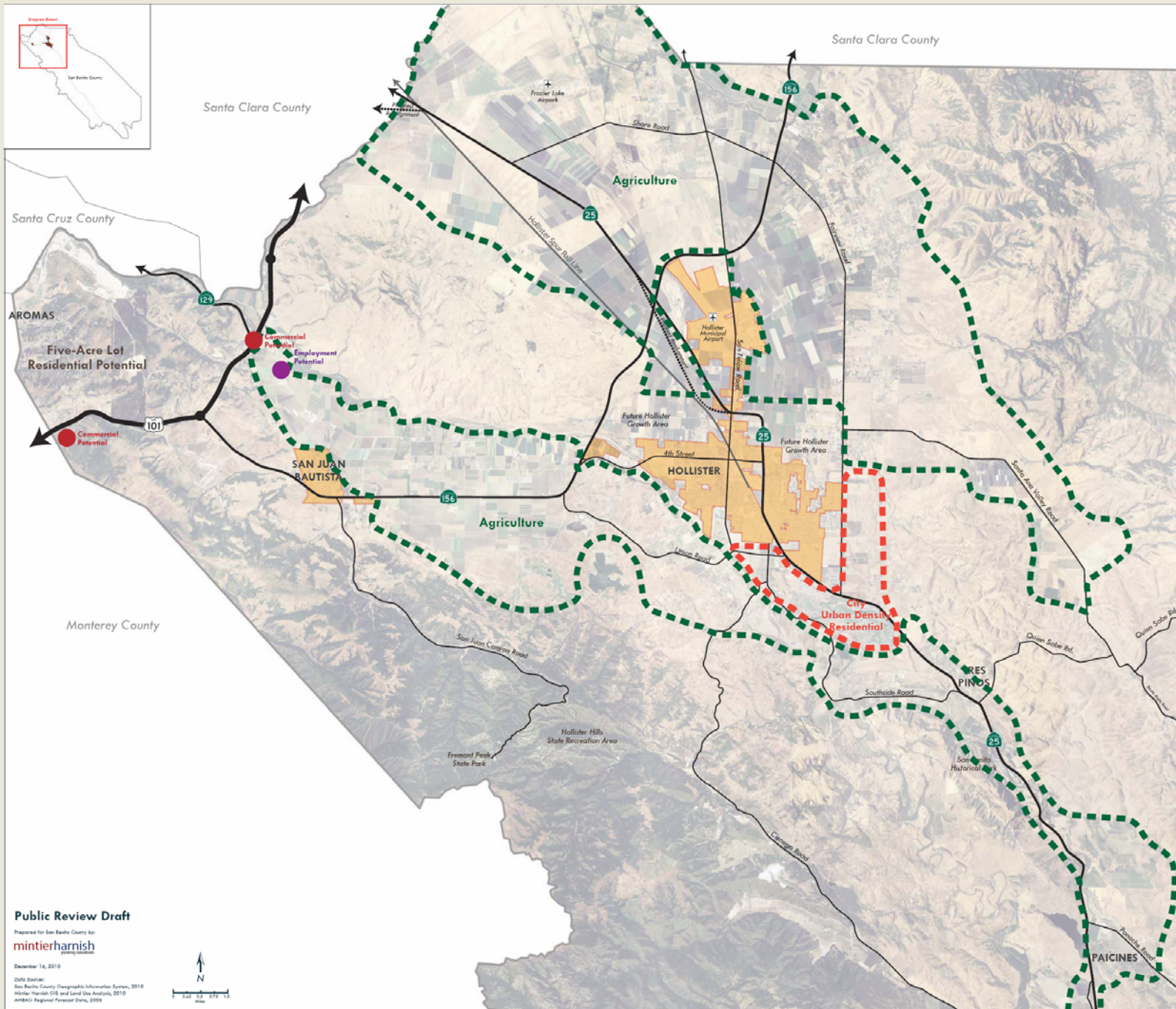
#### ***Agricultural Preservation and Expansion***

Under this alternative all agricultural lands in the Hollister and San Juan Valleys would be protected from subdivision and/or future development through a mandatory countywide Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) program and more stringent land use regulations (e.g., large minimum parcel sizes, farmland protection overlay zones).



# ALTERNATIVE C

## CITY-CENTERED GROWTH



Unincorporated County  
 City of Hollister  
 City of San Juan Bautista

