

Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Notice of Availability for Public Review

TO: Interested Individuals
 San Benito County Clerk

FROM: San Benito County Resource Management Agency
2301 Technology Parkway
Hollister, CA 95023-2513

Contact Person: Stephanie Reck, Senior Planner, 831 902-2289, sreck@sanbenitocountyca.gov
Project File No.: County Planning file REF250003 (Program 3-2 Residential High Rezone and General Plan Amendment)
Project Applicant: County of San Benito
Project Location: Countywide unincorporated San Benito County

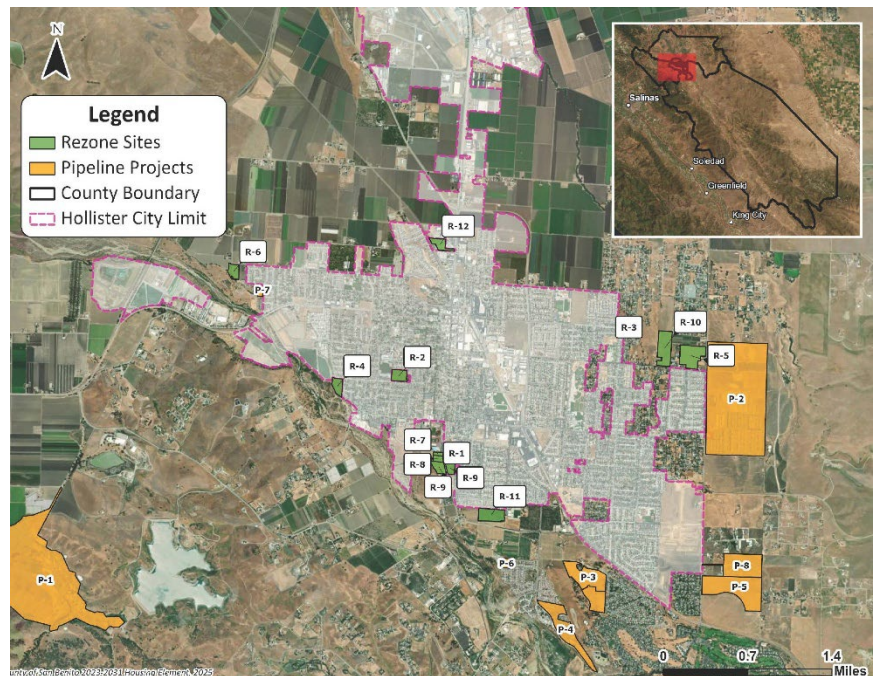
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Initial Study for Planning file REF250003 is available for public review and that the County as LEAD AGENCY intends to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for this project, which finds that the project, with implementation of identified mitigation measures, will not have a significant effect on the environment. The public review period in which comments will be accepted for the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration begins **September 12th, 2025**, and ends at 5 p.m. on **October 13th, 2025**. The project's Initial Study, its proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, and the documents referenced in the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration are available for review at the County Resource Management Agency at the above address or Accela Citizens' Access (see instructions at lower right). Comments may be addressed to the contact person noted above, and written comments are preferred. Please reference the project file number in all communications.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that a public hearing for this project before the San Benito County Planning Commission is currently scheduled for 6 p.m., **November 19th, 2025** (or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard), in the Board of Supervisors Chambers of San Benito County, located at 481 Fourth Street, Hollister, California, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon.

The Housing Element is a mandatory component of every city and county General Plan under California Government Code §65580 et seq. It must be updated every eight years to demonstrate how the jurisdiction will accommodate its share of the State's projected housing need. On May 8, 2025, San Benito County ("County") adopted its 6th Cycle Housing Element for the 2023–2031 planning period ("HEU"). The Housing Element identifies programs and zoning strategies to accommodate the County's assigned Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 754 dwelling units (DUs).

To implement the Housing Element and ensure continued compliance with State Housing Element Law, the County proposes amendments to the General Plan and Zoning Code to rezone 12 candidate housing sites. These sites were selected based on infrastructure capacity, development feasibility, and consistency with fair housing obligations under Government Code §65583.2. The proposed amendments would redesignate land use and adjust zoning standards to allow residential uses at appropriate densities, particularly for lower-income households.

The County's 6th Cycle Housing Element, adopted on May 8, 2025, covers the 2023–2031 planning period. While HCD found that the Housing Element meets statutory requirements upon adoption, HCD's final determination of substantial compliance is contingent upon completion of Housing Element Program 3-2: Residential High Rezone and General Plan



To view project documents using Accela:
1) go to the website aca.accela.com/SANBENITO,
2) find the search bar with the magnifying glass to enter the Record Number **REF250003** and click the magnifying glass, then
3) open the drop-down menu "Record Info" and click "Attachments."
Project-related documents can be found here, with the initial study using the file name **2025-08-28_IS_REF250003_HE Program 3-2 Rezones and GP Amendment.pdf**

Amendment, which requires rezoning and associated General Plan amendments to provide adequate sites for the County's RHNA. For the 6th Cycle, HCD assigned the unincorporated County a RHNA of 754 DUs, distributed across income categories as required by law.

To meet this obligation, the 6th Cycle Housing Element identifies 12 candidate housing sites with sufficient capacity and feasibility to accommodate the County's RHNA. Where existing zoning does not allow residential uses or sufficient density, the Housing Element includes rezoning programs to ensure compliance with Government Code §65583.2(c), which governs site inventory adequacy, minimum density standards, and housing opportunity requirements, particularly for lower-income households.

The candidate sites were selected based on development feasibility, proximity to infrastructure and services, and consistency with Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) requirements. Implementation of the Housing Element, therefore, requires targeted General Plan amendments and rezones to permit residential uses and increase allowable densities on selected sites.

This Initial Study evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the Housing Element's rezoning program. While no specific development projects are proposed at this time, this document provides a program-level CEQA analysis based on the maximum potential buildout of 4,497 DUs across the 12 candidate housing sites. This buildout scenario represents a conservative worst-case assumption for environmental review purposes.

San Benito County is located in the Coast Range foothills of west-central California. It is bordered by Santa Clara County to the north, Monterey County to the south, Fresno and Merced counties to the east, and Santa Cruz County to the west. Major regional transportation corridors that serve the County include U.S. Highway 101 (US 101), State Route 25 (SR-25), and State Route 156 (SR-156), which connect the County to the greater San Francisco Bay Area and Central Coast.

The candidate housing sites encompass parcels generally located within unincorporated County lands along the boundary of the City of Hollister within the City's Sphere of Influence but under the County's jurisdiction. These parcels are generally rural in character but are located in areas identified in the Housing Element as appropriate for future residential growth due to proximity to existing infrastructure and services. Of the 12 candidate sites totaling approximately 100 acres, six are vacant (approximately 41 acres), six are currently used for rural residential or agricultural purposes (approximately 59 acres).



Signature

Senior Planner
Title

9/05/2025
Date