

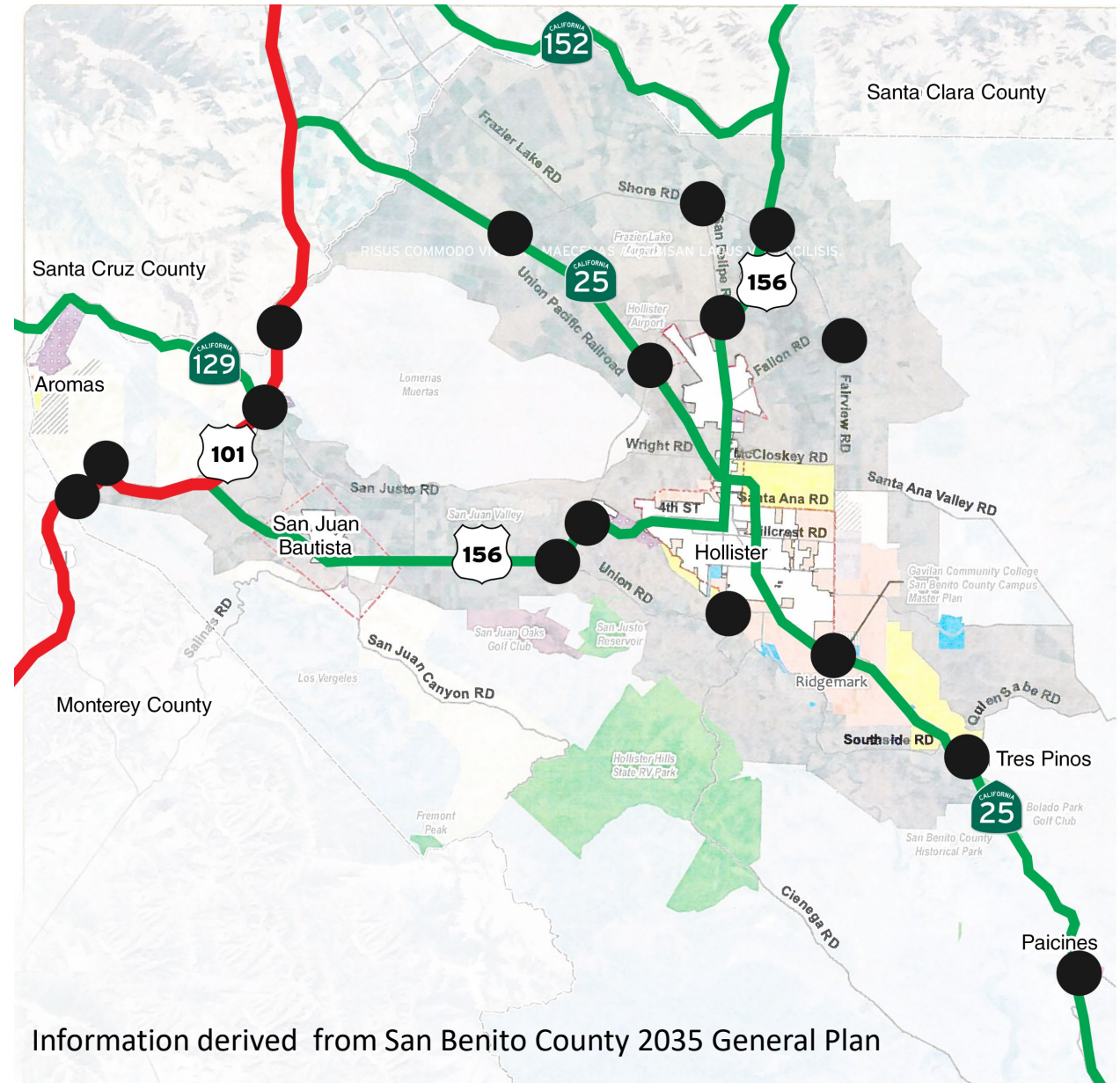
# Citizens Initiatives for San Benito County & Hollister





# Urban Sprawl in San Benito County

- County Supervisors plan to rezone 16 rural & agricultural sites (“nodes”) shown as dots on General Plan map.
- The rezone can allow both commercial & residential development.
- First 4 nodes to be rezoned are 300 acres along Hwy 101.
- Other 12 nodes to be developed are on Hwy 156 & Hwy 25.
- County’s 2035 General Plan promotes Urban Sprawl.





# Supervisors Rezone Hwy 101 Nodes (Measure K)

- **Sept 24, 2019:** Supervisors unanimously approve C-3 rezone of 4 Hwy 101 nodes.
  - This decision is **Measure K**.
- Supervisors claim the Hwy 101 development will generate tax revenue for County roads and services.
- Supervisors refused to do an economic analysis before rezoning.





# Volunteers Organized Against Hwy 101 Nodes

4,428 Petition Signatures Collected for a Referendum to Reverse Supervisors' Decision





The Citizens' Referendum won with 60% of the vote on March 3, 2020



# Future of San Benito County

- San Benito County is experiencing huge growth pressures from Silicon Valley.
- Supervisors are pursuing an outdated, economic development model.
  - Building more hotels and strip malls is risky during the age of Airbnb and Amazon.
- There are smarter models for sustainable economic development.
  - Ecotourism, Agritourism, Cultural Tourism (theater, music, etc.)
- Counties like Napa, Sonoma and Ventura offer examples of more enlightened economic development.





# Lessons from Napa, Sonoma & Ventura Counties



- Napa County was the first, in 1990, to pioneer a citizens' initiative that used direct democracy to control growth.
  - Older growth control initiatives used growth caps or limits. They were more complicated & not as successful.
- Following Napa's example, Sonoma & Ventura counties passed initiatives that put decisions about development in the hands of voters.
- In the past 25 – 30 years, these 3 counties have successfully:
  - Reduced sprawl development.
  - Protected agricultural & open space lands.
  - Built strong economies by expanding tourism.
- Greenbelt Alliance of Sonoma and Ventura's SOAR have been advising *Preserve Our Rural Communities* regarding initiatives.





## How Ventura County Saved Its Agriculture & Open Space

- Most Southern California Counties have lost much of their agricultural & open space lands to urbanization.
- Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino & Riverside Counties lost 327,000 acres of agricultural land since 1984.
- Ventura County was able to protect much of its land through initiatives:
  - In the 1990s, Ventura County and 8 cities passed citizens initiatives to give voters control over land use decisions.
  - These initiatives require a majority vote of the people before agricultural & open space lands can be rezoned for development.
  - The initiatives have also cleaned up politics in Ventura County. Elected officials don't get as many donations from developers & landowners.





Submitting County Initiative to Elections Office



Submitting Hollister Initiative to City Clerk

# San Benito County & Hollister Initiatives

- The County initiative removes the 16 nodes (located on agricultural and rural lands) from the County's General Plan & lets voters determine future development.
- The Hollister initiative creates an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) around the city and lets voters decide if growth should go beyond this boundary.
  - The UGB is the current Hollister Sphere of Influence
  - The Hollister Initiative is similar to the UGB initiatives approved by voters in:
    - Cities within Ventura, Sonoma & Napa Counties.
    - Gilroy.
- Both county and city initiatives are needed to prevent sprawl development.

# A Brighter Future

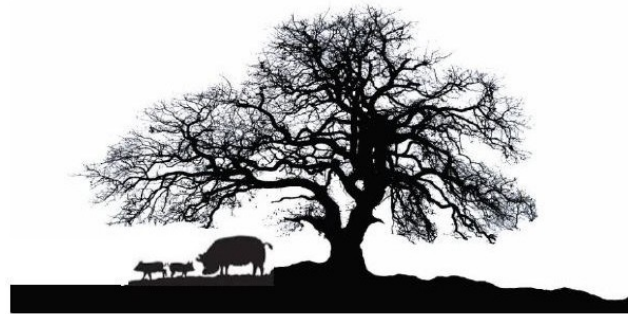
- San Benito County has an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Napa, Sonoma & Ventura Counties.
- The County & Hollister initiatives provide a strong foundation for smarter economic development.
- The initiatives protect our natural and cultural resources upon which a stronger economy can be built.
- San Benito County has a bright future if we don't "kill the goose that laid the golden egg".





“A society is defined **not** just by what it creates,  
but by what it refuses to destroy.”

*– John Sawhill, former president of The Nature Conservancy*



Preserve Our Rural Communities

[PreserveOurRuralCommunities.org](http://PreserveOurRuralCommunities.org)