

Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Hollister Research Campus and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting

DATE: September 23, 2021

TO: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Other Interested Parties

FROM: City of Hollister (Lead Agency)
Development Services Department
375 Fifth Street
Hollister, CA 95023

Re: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting for the Hollister Research Campus

The City of Hollister, as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Hollister Research Campus project. The project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described below.

The City of Hollister is soliciting input from responsible and trustee agencies, local agencies, members of the public, organizations, and any other interested parties as to the scope and content of the information to be included and analyzed in the project's EIR. Agencies should comment on the elements of the environmental information that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. The EIR will serve as the environmental document for responsible and trustee agencies when considering any discretionary approvals or permits related to the proposed project.

This NOP will be circulated for a 30-day period, from **September 24, 2021 to October 25, 2021**. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the 30-day NOP review period. The comment period closes at 5:00 pm on **October 25, 2021**. Please send your written/typed comments (including a name and contact information) to Eva Kelly, Associate Planner, at the physical address or email address shown below. Public agencies providing comments are requested to include a contact person for the agency.

Lead Agency Contact

Eva Kelly, Associate Planner
City of Hollister
Development Services Department
375 Fifth Street
Hollister, CA 95023
Email: eva.kelly@hollister.ca.gov

Project Location

The 230-acre project site is located at the intersection State Route (SR) 156 and San Felipe Road in unincorporated San Benito County, north of the City of Hollister. The 230 acres includes parcels on both sides and east of the State Highway. The site is bounded by Tequisquita Slough to the northeast, San Felipe Road to the west, and SR 156 to the east. Santa Ana Creek flows south to north through the property. Project parcel numbers are: 014-120-014; -055; -063, and -064.

Existing Conditions

The project site is currently undeveloped, except for an existing homesite (with mobile home) and agricultural operations. Due to poor soil chemistry on most of the site and salinity of existing agricultural wells, irrigated agricultural production is limited to about 25 acres in the northwest corner of the site and approximately six acres in the southeast corner, south of SR 156. The remainder of the site is fallow and regularly disced, or occasionally dry farmed.

The site is located in flood zones Zone X and Zone A (per FEMA FIRM maps). The slough and creek on and adjacent to the property provide approximately 10 acres of riparian habitat and regulated wetlands. The site is relatively level, and a PG&E gas main and easement traverses the site in a northwest/southeast direction.

The San Benito County General Plan currently identifies the subject parcels as Commercial Thoroughfare (CT) and Agriculture (A). The 2010 County zoning map identifies the property as Agricultural Productive (AP).

Project Description Summary

The project applicant, Hollister Research Campus LLC, is seeking an amendment to the City of Hollister's Planning Area and Sphere of Influence boundaries, a City General Plan Amendment to Industrial-North Gateway Overlay and Industrial designations, and rezoning of the property to Industrial Business Park (IBP) and Light Industrial (M1). The boundary amendments and rezoning are initial steps toward annexation of the properties into the City of Hollister, development of land consistent with the requested zoning, and provision of municipal services to the site.

The project is located at the northern gateway to the City of Hollister, close to Hollister Municipal Airport. Future development of the property is planned for uses that would be consistent with this visible location along the State Highway. Within "Area 1" (south of SR 156), the applicant

proposes traveler-oriented uses including restaurants, gas station/convenience market, truck stop, and hotels. Light industrial uses may also be located in this area. Within “Area 2” (the majority of the property north of SR 156), the applicant proposes a public events center and a Research Campus. The Research Campus is envisioned as a facility to attract private sector auto/truck/motorcycle manufacturers, autonomous and controlled transportation technologies and research, independent concept design companies, trade schools and other associated multidisciplinary businesses focused on the automotive sector and automotive technology. Other specific uses in Area 2 could include light manufacturing/warehousing, a 2.5-mile test track, open testing area and private garage areas.

Probable Environmental Effects

The City of Hollister will be preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) that evaluates potential environmental impacts consistent with CEQA Statutes and Guidelines. An initial study is not required to determine that an EIR will be prepared, and as such, an initial study was not prepared for the proposed project. The EIR will discuss potential environmental impacts of the proposal, including probable construction and operational effects. The City has identified several environmental areas where impacts are most likely to occur. These impact areas include:

- Aesthetics (including changes to visual character in a rural area)
- Agriculture (conversion of farmland to urban uses)
- Air Quality (construction and mobile source emissions)
- Biological Resources (including regulated wetlands and riparian habitat)
- Cultural Tribal Cultural Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (from historic uses on the site)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (changes in drainage, flood zone elevations and water quality)
- Land Use and Planning (including consistency with City/County/LAFCO plans)
- Noise and Vibration
- Public Services and Recreation (including the extension of services to the area)
- Transportation and Circulation (including VMT for the proposed uses and safety)
- Utilities and Service Systems (including the extension of water supply, wastewater, and demand for wet and dry systems)

The EIR will also evaluate a range of feasible alternatives to the project, as well as other required discussions including: (a) any significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; (b) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments to resources; (c) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project; (d) effects found not to be significant; and (e) cumulative impacts.

A digital copy of this NOP and additional detail about the project can be viewed at:
<http://hollister.ca.gov/government/city-departments/development-services/planning/>

Public Scoping Meeting

Due to local and statewide shelter in place directives resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Hollister will hold an online EIR public scoping session/workshop consistent with Public Resources Code §§ 21080.4(b) and 21083.9 in lieu of a public gathering. Members of the public and public agencies are invited to view and participate in this virtual gathering to provide comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held **Thursday October 21, 2021 at 6:00pm via Zoom**. You may register for the meeting at the following link: and accessed via the following meeting link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_icLrzZpgRIS17sQTtxW05g

ALL INTERESTED PARTIES ARE INVITED TO SUMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS ON THE SCOPE OF THE EIR TO ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED.

For additional information, please contact Eva Kelly, Associate Planner, at eva.kelly@hollister.ca.gov.

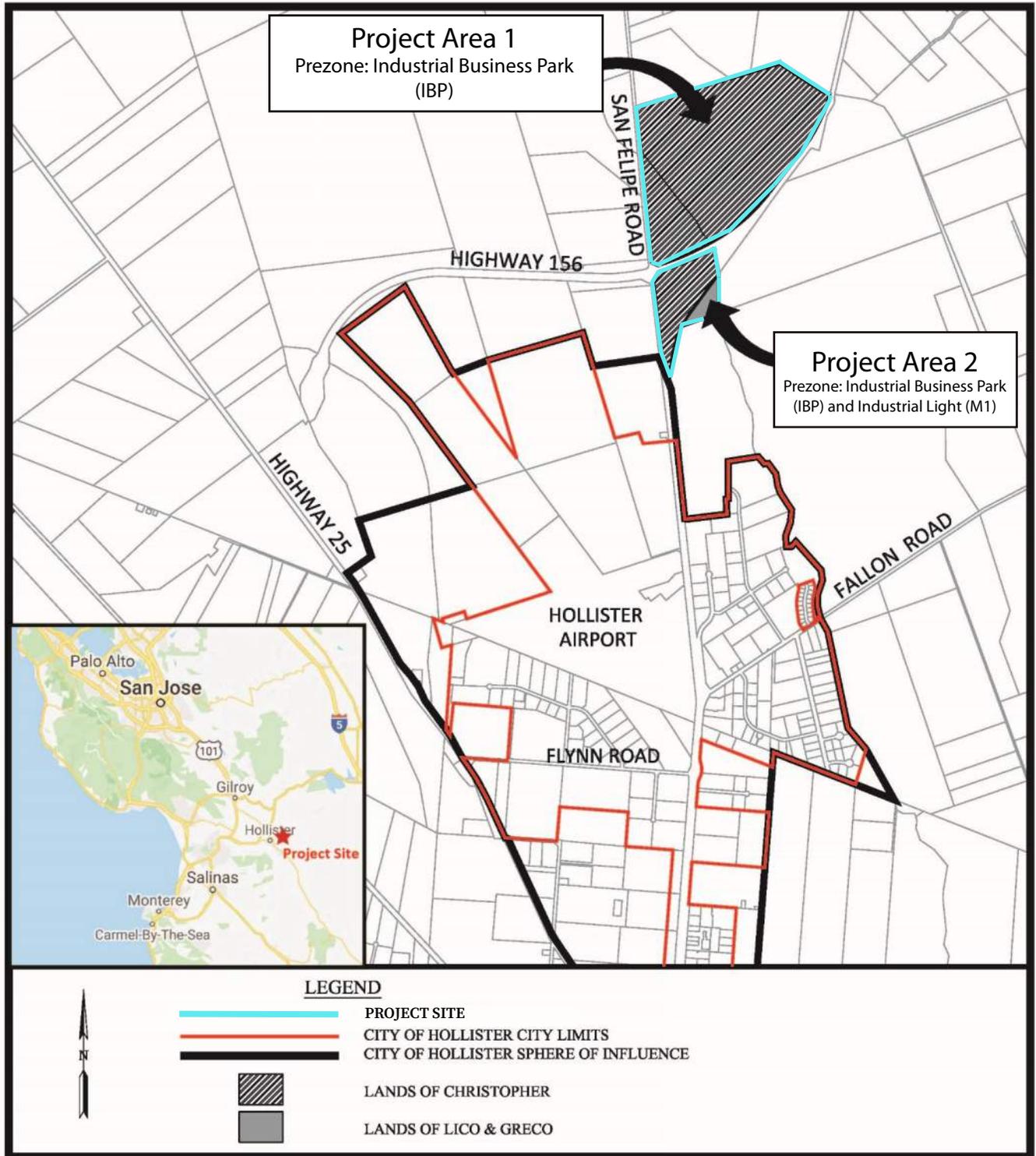
Lead Agency Authorization

Date: September 23, 2021

Name: M. Abraham Prado

Title: Planning Manager

Figure 1: Project Location



Source: RJA, 2020