

County of Santa Clara
Department of Planning and Development
 County Government Center, East Wing 70
 West Hedding Street, 7th Floor
 San Jose, California 95110



**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A
 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
 FOR THE RURAL ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS
 PROJECT**

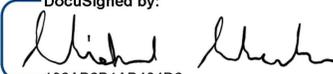
File Number: PLN20-15-CWP

The County of Santa Clara (“County”) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Rural Zoning Ordinance Amendments Project (“project”). This project may also include related amendments to the General Plan. The County requests your input on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the DEIR for the project. A brief description of the project, its location, and a summary of the potential environmental effects are provided below. Approval of the project will require actions by the County of Santa Clara, including the preparation and certification of a Final EIR and the adoption, by ordinance, of the zoning amendments by the Board of Supervisors.

A Public Scoping/Community Meeting to solicit comments for the Notice of Preparation will be held virtually via Zoom (<https://sccgov-org.zoom.us/j/99899797781>) on **April 14, 2022, beginning at 6:00pm**. The deadline for your response is April 27, 2022, at 6:00pm; however, an earlier response, if possible, would be appreciated. Please send your comments to:

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 Attention: **Michael Meehan, Principal Planner**
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Prepared by:
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Signature

Date

Approved by:
 Leza Mikhail
 Planning Services Manager

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Signature

Date

Introduction

As the lead agency, the County of Santa Clara (“County”) will analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with amendments to the Zoning Ordinance of the County of Santa Clara (“Zoning Ordinance”) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.) and its implementing regulations, the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. Section 15000 et seq.). The proposed amendments would streamline permitting for certain rural compatible development, introduce objective development standards, and further implement existing County General Plan policies to prevent sprawl and preserve agricultural land.

Project Location

The proposed amendments would affect the following zoning districts in the unincorporated county: *Exclusive Agriculture, Agricultural Ranchlands, Hillsides, and Rural Residential*. The location of these rural zoning districts is shown in Figure 1.

Project Description

The proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance would apply to rural zoning districts (*Exclusive Agriculture, Agricultural Ranchlands, Hillsides, and Rural Residential*) within the unincorporated county. The objectives of these amendments are to:

- a) Replace existing provisions of the Zoning Ordinance addressing local-serving uses with objective development standards, to provide a more streamlined approach for development of rural compatible uses;
- b) Preserve rural areas by limiting the development of non-compatible uses; and
- c) Further the County’s General Plan policy goals for continued agricultural viability.

The proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance would update how development is regulated in rural zoning districts with three primary changes:

- a) Simplify and streamline the permit process for agriculture supportive uses.
 - Broaden the uses that are permitted ancillary to an agricultural operation.
 - Combine use classifications for *Agricultural Processing, Agricultural Sales, Agricultural Accessory Structures & Uses, Agriculturally Related Entertainment & Commercial Uses* and *Wineries* into a new use classification called *Agriculture Supportive Uses*.
 - Streamline the regulation of *Agriculture Supportive Uses* according to size, either *Limited* or *General*.
- b) Align development in agricultural areas with existing County land use policies.
 - Remove non-compatible uses in the *Exclusive Agriculture* zone that are inconsistent with the intent of General Plan policies.
 - Require that certain types of development be accessory to onsite agriculture.
 - Introduce an *Agricultural Buffer* requirement for new development on properties adjacent to farmland.
 - Allow *Agrivoltaics* in agricultural areas, which consists of active agricultural uses alongside commercial solar energy production.

- c) Replace “local-serving” provisions with objective development standards.
- Remove regulations related to “local-serving” uses in rural areas.
 - Introduce development standards, *Lot Coverage* and *Development Area*, which will regulate the size and scale of new development in rural zoning districts.
 - Streamline the regulation of *Religious Institutions* according to size, either *Limited* or *General*.

Required Project Approvals

In addition to certification of a Final EIR, the County Board of Supervisors must approve the proposed zoning amendments by ordinance.

Potential Environmental Effects of the Project

The proposed project would implement existing County General Plan policies to preserve agricultural land while streamlining the approval of smaller (“Limited”) agricultural supportive uses in the rural zoning districts.

Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance may have an effect on the environment by impacting the type and density/intensity of future development projects allowed under the Zoning Ordinance. The EIR will therefore consider the effects of this project on the following environmental resources:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural resources (farmland)
- Air quality
- Biological resources
- Cultural resources
- Energy conservation
- Geology and soils
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Hazards and hazardous materials
- Hydrology and water quality
- Land use
- Mineral resources
- Noise
- Population and housing
- Public services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal cultural resources
- Utilities
- Wildfire

The County welcomes all input on the scope and content of the EIR in response to this Notice of Preparation, and especially welcomes responses that will assist the County in:

- 1) Identifying potentially significant environmental impacts raised by the proposed modifications to the Zoning Ordinance;
- 2) Identifying and evaluating potential alternatives to the proposed project and mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce potentially significant impacts associated with the project.

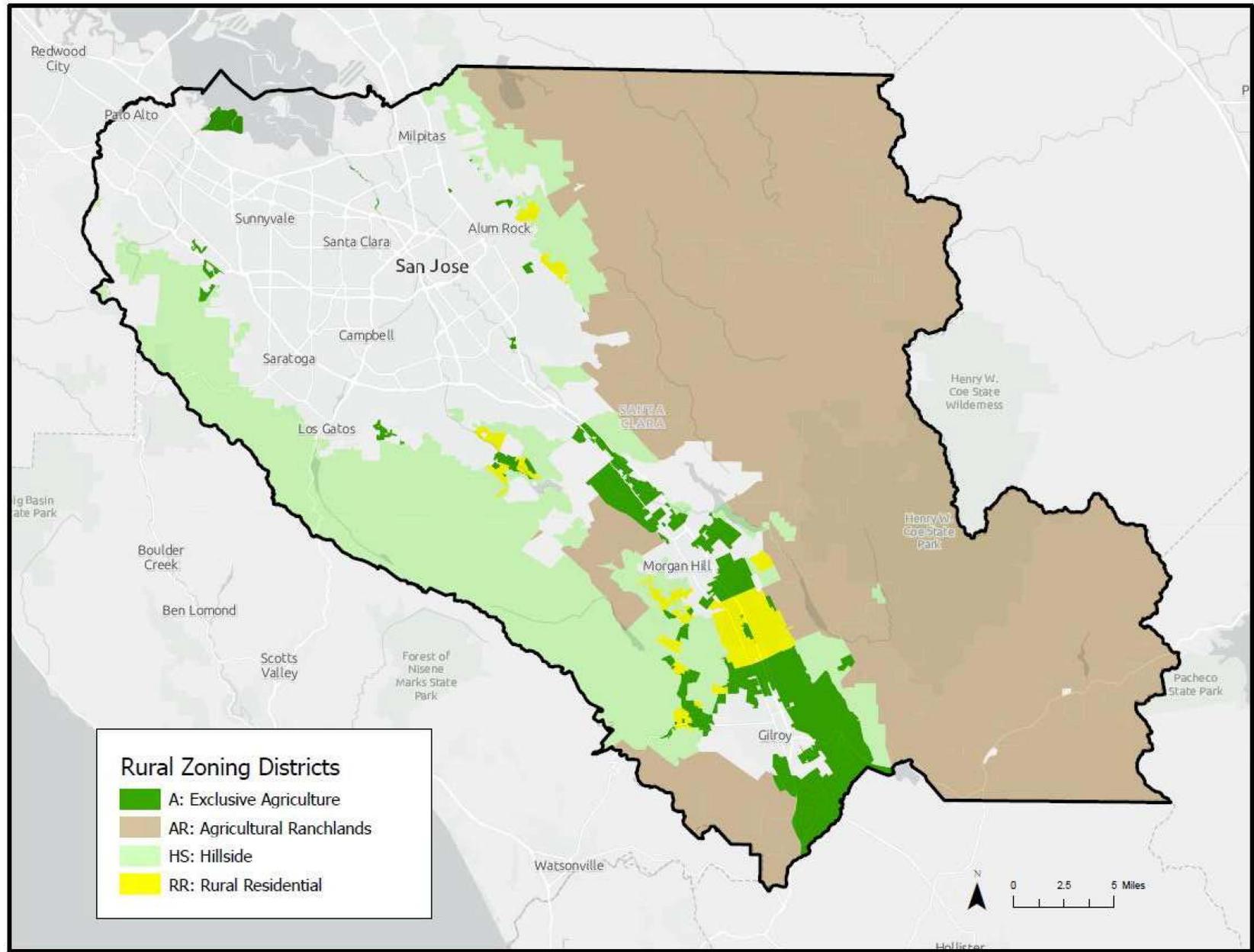


Figure 1
Project Location – Rural Zoning Districts