



SAN BENITO COUNTY
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT
3224 SOUTHSIDE ROAD
HOLLISTER, CALIFORNIA 95023-9174

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: Responsible, Trustee, and other Interested Public Agencies

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Environmental Impact Report for the Strada Verde Innovation Park Project
(County File No. PLN190029)

Lead Agency: San Benito County Resource Management Agency

Contact: San Benito County Resource Management Agency
Attn: Stan Ketchum, Principal Planner (Contract)
2301 Technology Parkway
Hollister, CA 95023

NOP Comment Period: April 11, 2022 to May 11, 2022

Public Scoping Meetings: April 27, 2022 and April 28, 2022

PURPOSE OF NOTICE

San Benito County Resource Management Agency (RMA) is the lead agency responsible for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Strada Verde Innovation Park Project (SVIP Project or proposed project) described below. Once a decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency must prepare a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform all responsible and trustee agencies that an EIR will be prepared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082). The purpose of this NOP is to provide responsible and trustee agencies, interested parties, federal agencies, and organizations with sufficient information describing the proposed project and identifying the potential environmental effects to enable meaningful input related to the scope and content of information to be included in the EIR.

PROJECT LOCATION

The 2,767-acre project site is located in the northwest corner of San Benito County along the southern boundary of Santa Clara County (**Figure 1**).¹ The proposed project site is approximately seven miles south of Gilroy and nine miles northwest of Hollister. The site is bounded by the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) “Hollister Spur Line” to the northeast, Highway 101 (US 101) to the west, the Pajaro River to the northwest, and agricultural land to the south. Surrounding land uses include open space and agricultural land. In addition, TriCal, Inc., an agricultural fumigant facility, is located on the southwest side of State Route 25 (SR 25), between SR 25 and the UPRR, approximately 70 feet from the project site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes an application for a General Plan Amendment, a Specific Plan,² a Zone Change, a Vesting Tentative Map, and a Development Agreement to allow the creation of a new automotive research and development campus and business center on an approximately 2,767-acre, triangular-shaped site; please refer to **Figure 2** for the Proposed Project Illustrative Site Plan and **Figure 3** for the Existing Land Uses. At maximum build-out, the proposed project would include approximately 7,221,159 square feet in testing grounds, research park, e-commerce, and commercial areas (**Figure 4**). As shown on **Figure 3**, current land uses on the site are primarily agricultural.

The SVIP Project includes the following proposed land uses: testing grounds, a research park, e-commerce, commercial, greenway, agricultural, biological preserve, and infrastructure. Each of the land uses are briefly described below. **Table 1. Proposed Land Use Summary** below provides the approximate acreage and building area (when relevant) for each of these proposed land uses.

Testing Grounds (SVIP-TG). The Testing Grounds district would serve as an area for testing new technology in the mobility sector, including electrified and automated vehicles.

Research Park (SVIP-RP). The Research Park district would provide space for research, office, and light manufacturing uses.

E-commerce (SVIP-EC). The E-commerce district proposes a range of commercial and light industrial facilities, including distribution and logistics, data centers, research and development, and large footprint laboratories.

¹ 013-070-006, 013-070-008, 013-070-009, 013-070-010, 013-070-011, 013-070-017, 013-070-021, 013-080-004, 013-080-005, 013-080-006, 013-080-007, 013-080-009, 013-090-007, 013-090-011, 013-090-018, 013-090-020, 013-090-021, 013-090-025, 013-090-026, 013-100-006, 013-100-007, 013-100-008, 013-100-014, 013-100-015, 013-110-006, 013-110-007, 013-110-009

² In general, a specific plan consists of a set of development standards that apply to a specific geographic area. Specific plans cover the land uses, distribution, location, and development standards, often in more detail than a general plan.

Commercial (SVIP-C). The Commercial district would consist of ancillary commercial land uses including hospitality and retail establishments, as well as public service facilities such as fire and police stations.

Agriculture (SVIP-A). The Agricultural district would be limited to agriculture uses including row crop production and the use of new agricultural technologies and practices.

Greenway (SVIP-G). The Greenway districts would be located in the center of the proposed project area and along the north and south perimeter; these areas would serve several functions including the provision of open space, buffer zones, and stormwater management.

Biological Preserves (SVIP-BPP and SVIP-BPC). Two areas within the SVIP Project area would be designated as biological preserves to protect and enhance natural resources. The preserves would provide mitigation areas for wetlands and special-status species disturbed in the development of the SVIP Project.

Infrastructure (SVIP-SM and SVIP-I). The infrastructure districts would include services for potable water storage, water and wastewater treatment and storage, and street rights-of way.

**Table 1.
Proposed Land Use Summary**

Designation	Land Use District	Gross Acres¹	Net Acres²	Max Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Building Area (square feet)³
SVIP – TG	Testing Grounds	1,077	915	0.025	996,435
SVIP – RP	Research Park	127	108	0.3	1,411,344
SVIP – EC	E-Commerce	253	215	0.5	4,682,700
SVIP – C	Commercial	24	20	0.150	130,680
SVIP – A	Agricultural	227			
SVIP – CG	Greenway	252			
	Biological Preserves				
SVIP – BPP	Pajaro River Wetlands & Riparian Preserve	394			
SVIP – BPC	CTS Upland Habitat Preserve	153			
	Infrastructure				
SVIP – SM	Stormwater Management	157			
SVIP – I	Potable Water Storage	2			
SVIP – I	Water and Wastewater Treatment and Storage	16			
SVIP – I	Street Right-of-way	85			
	TOTAL	2,767			7,221,159 ⁴
	Built Areas as a % of Specific Plan Area				<6%

Notes:

1. All areas are rounding to the nearest whole number.
2. Net buildable acres are 85% of gross due to loss for internal streets, parking, utilities, and landscaping.
3. Building square footage is rounding to the nearest tenth.
4. Up to 10% of building area in each district may be transferred to other buildable districts so long as the total building area in the Specific Plan is not exceeded.

For more information about the proposed project, please visit the San Benito County RMA website at: <https://www.cosb.us/departments/resource-management-agency/planning-and-land-use-division/strata-verde-innovation-park-file-no-pln-190029>.

Development of the site would use a phased approach, as shown in **Figure 5**. The configuration, number and timing of each phase would be based on the demands of the market and individual users and would be determined by the project applicant or their designee(s).

The proposed primary ingress and egress to the project site would be a new road connecting the southwestern corner of the SVIP Project area to the Betabel interchange located on US 101. An existing farm road, which connects to SR 25 may be used for a future emergency vehicle access (**Figure 6**).

The proposed project site is located within the Bolsa Study Area, one of four identified “New Community Study Areas” that are potentially suitable for new development in the San Benito County 2035 General Plan. A rezoning of the property will be required as part of the proposed project to allow development under a Specific Plan. The proposed project will also require an amendment to the San Benito County 2035 General Plan to redesignate the SVIP Project area to the land uses included in **Table 1**.

RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

For the purposes of CEQA, the term “responsible agency” includes all public agencies other than the lead agency which have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). Discretionary approval power may include such actions as issuance of a permit, authorization, or easement needed to complete some aspect of the project.

It is anticipated that the SVIP Project would require the following initial discretionary approvals from San Benito County:

1. EIR Certification and adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) and findings;
2. General Plan Amendment;
3. Specific Plan Approval;
4. Zone Change;
5. Initial Vesting Tentative Map; and
6. Development Agreement.

The proposed project could also require discretionary approvals from other federal, state, and regional agencies including, but not limited, to the following:

1. Federal Agencies
 - a. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
 - b. Army Corps of Engineers;
 - c. National Marine Fisheries Service;
 - d. Federal Emergency Management Act;
2. State and Regional Agencies
 - a. California Department of Fish and Wildlife;
 - b. California Department of Toxic and Substance Control;
 - c. California Department of Transportation;

- d. Monterey Bay Air Resources Control Board;
- e. Regional Water Quality Control Board;
- f. San Benito County Water District; and
- g. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

The EIR will evaluate the potential physical and environmental impacts of the SVIP project for each of the environmental topics outlined in the CEQA Guidelines (Guidelines §15002(f)). Amendments or revisions to existing policy documents, including the County’s General Plan and Zoning Code, will be addressed at a programmatic level, in conformance with §15146(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. Because the SVIP Project identifies the specific amount of development that would be permitted by the proposed project, the impacts of that development will be addressed at a project-specific level in the EIR, in as much detail as presently available. Where the analysis indicates that expanded or new infrastructure would be needed to serve the new development, the impacts of constructing the infrastructure, so far as can be determined at this time, will also be addressed.

The EIR will evaluate and identify the significant environmental effects anticipated to result from the development of the proposed project. In addition, it is anticipated that the County will rely on the EIR for subsequent project phases and development, including but not limited to, entitlements for future development within the SVIP Project area, as deemed appropriate and consistent with the requirements of CEQA by the County as the Lead Agency.

Given the size and scope of the SVIP project, it is anticipated that there could be environmental effects within any of CEQA’s environmental topic areas. Therefore, the EIR will include and evaluate at least the following specific environmental categories related to the proposed project:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture/Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems,
- Wildfire

The EIR will also examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the SVIP Project, including the CEQA-mandated No Project Alternative and other potential alternatives that may be capable of reducing or avoiding potential environmental effects while generally meeting the SVIP Specific Plan objectives. The Draft EIR will also analyze the cumulative impacts that could result with adoption and development under the SVIP Specific Plan.

Concurrently with its preparation of the SVIP Project EIR, the County will conduct analyses that will allow the decision-makers to consider the applicability under General Plan Policy HS-6.9 (Sensitive Uses near Industrial Facilities) of any appropriate buffer between new land uses within the project and operations at the existing TriCal, Inc. facility. This topic will be studied in a parallel process and

considered as part of the decision on whether or not to approve the project. CEQA does not apply to any effects of existing environmental conditions on future employees, users, or visitors of the proposed project. Thus, this topic will not be included as a CEQA topic area in the EIR document.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

San Benito County RMA will hold two public EIR scoping meetings for the proposed project. These meetings will be held on April 27, 2022 and April 28, 2022. The scoping meetings will include a description of the proposed project and the environmental review process. The primary goal of the scoping meeting is to obtain the public's input on the EIR analysis for the proposed project. Responsible agencies and members of the public are invited to attend and provide input on the scope of the EIR.

Dates and Times: April 27, 2022 at 10:00 AM and April 28, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Location: Administration - Board of Supervisors Chambers
481 Fourth Street, 1st Floor
Hollister, California 95023

Zoom Info: The public may also join this meeting using Zoom by visiting the web address <https://zoom.us/join> or dialing one of the following telephone numbers: +1 408 638 0968 US (San Jose) or +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose). To access the meeting, please enter the Webinar ID and Passcode below.

Meeting #1:

April 27, 2022 at 10:00 AM
Webinar ID: 818 8356 6493
Passcode: 919237

Meeting #2:

April 28, 2022 at 6:00 PM
Webinar ID: 889 7494 1304 Passcode:
487210

COMMENTS ON THE SCOPE OF THE EIR

We are requesting your input on the scope and content of the environmental information appropriate to your agency's statutory responsibilities or of interest to you or your organization. Specifically, we are requesting the following:

1. Identify significant environmental effects and mitigation measures that you believe need to be explored in the EIR with supporting discussion of why you believe these effects may be significant;
2. Describe special studies and other information that you believe are necessary for the County to analyze the significant environmental effects, alternatives, and mitigation measures you have identified;
3. For public agencies that provide infrastructure and public services, identify any facilities or improvements that will be required to provide services to the proposed project;
4. Indicate whether staff from your agency would like to meet with County staff to discuss the scope and content of the EIR's environmental documentation;

5. Provide the name, title, and contact information for the designated person from your agency or organization that we can contact regarding your comments; and
6. Identify alternatives that you believe need to be explored in further detail in the EIR.

Once the EIR process is complete, the County will determine whether the EIR has been completed in accordance with CEQA. The County will consider certification of the EIR at a public hearing and, only after certification of the EIR, the County may take action on the proposed project. Certification of an EIR does not constitute project approval.

The NOP is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 30 days beginning **April 11, 2022**. San Benito County RMA welcomes all comments regarding the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. All comments will be considered in the preparation of the EIR. **Written comments will be accepted by San Benito County RMA through 5:00 P.M. on May 11, 2022.** You may submit comments in a variety of ways: (1) by U.S. mail; (2) by electronic mail (e-mail); or (3) by attending the public scoping meeting and submitting verbal comments at that time. Comments provided by email should include “**SVIP Project NOP Scoping Comments**” in the subject line, and the name and physical address of the commenter should be contained in the body of the email.

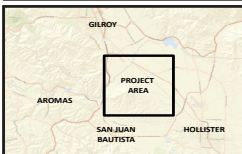
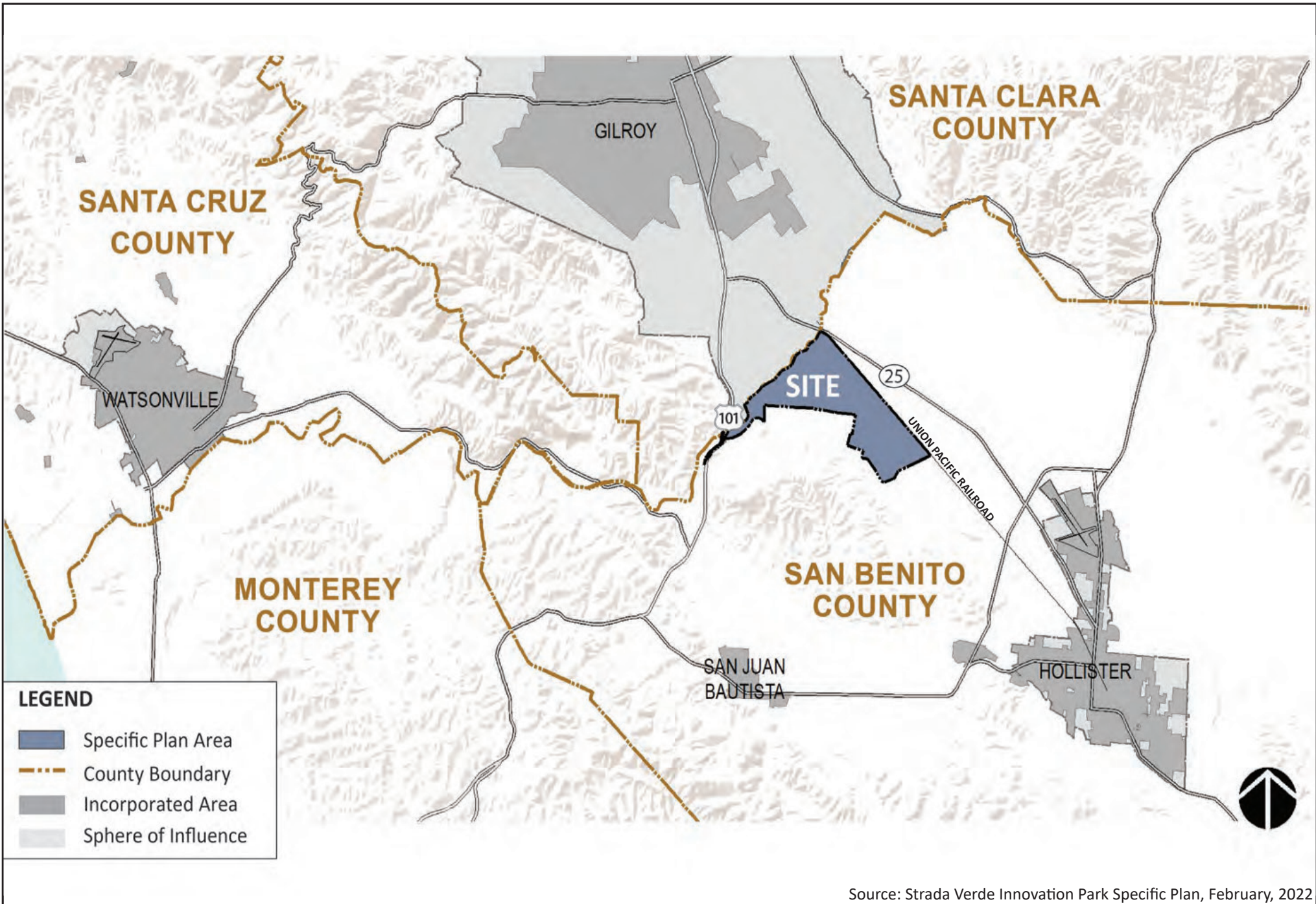
Please send all comments via mail to:

County of San Benito
Resource Management Agency
Attn: Stan Ketchum, Principal Planner (Contract)
2301 Technology Parkway
Hollister, CA 95023

OR via email to: SKetchum@cosb.us

Subject line: “**SVIP Project NOP Scoping Comments**”

Your views and comments on how the proposed project may affect the environment are welcomed and will be used to identify the range of action, alternatives, mitigation measures, and significant effects to be analyzed in depth in the EIR. Please contact Stan Ketchum, Principal Planner (Contract), at SKetchum@cosb.us if you have any questions about the environmental review process for the proposed project.

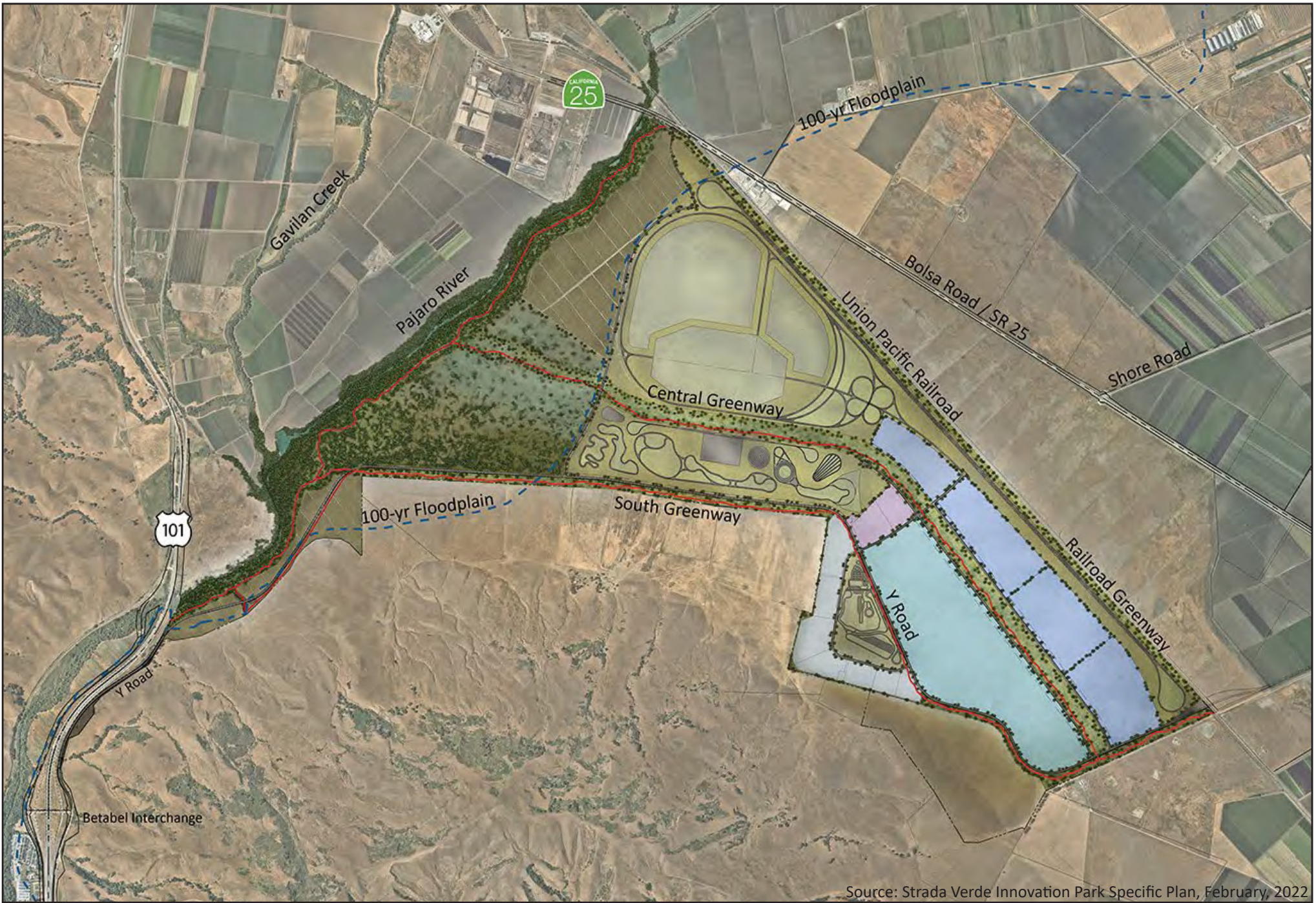


Title: **Regional Map**

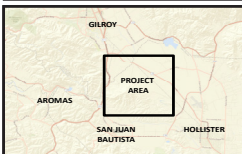
Date: April 11, 2022

Project: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan NOP

Figure **1**



Source: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan, February, 2022

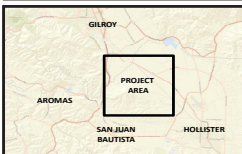
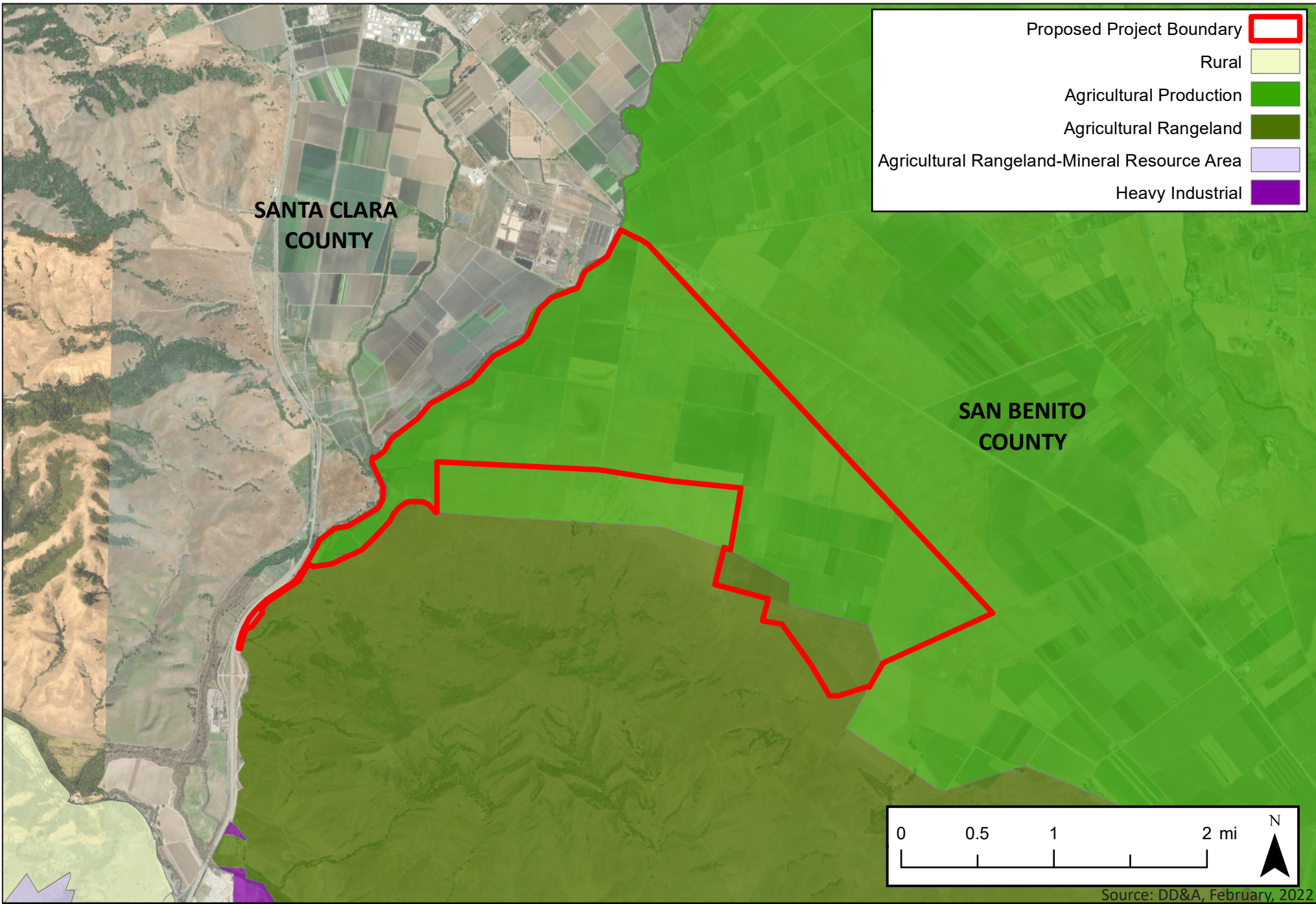


Title: **Proposed Project Illustrative Site Plan**

Date: April 11, 2022

Project: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan NOP

Figure
2

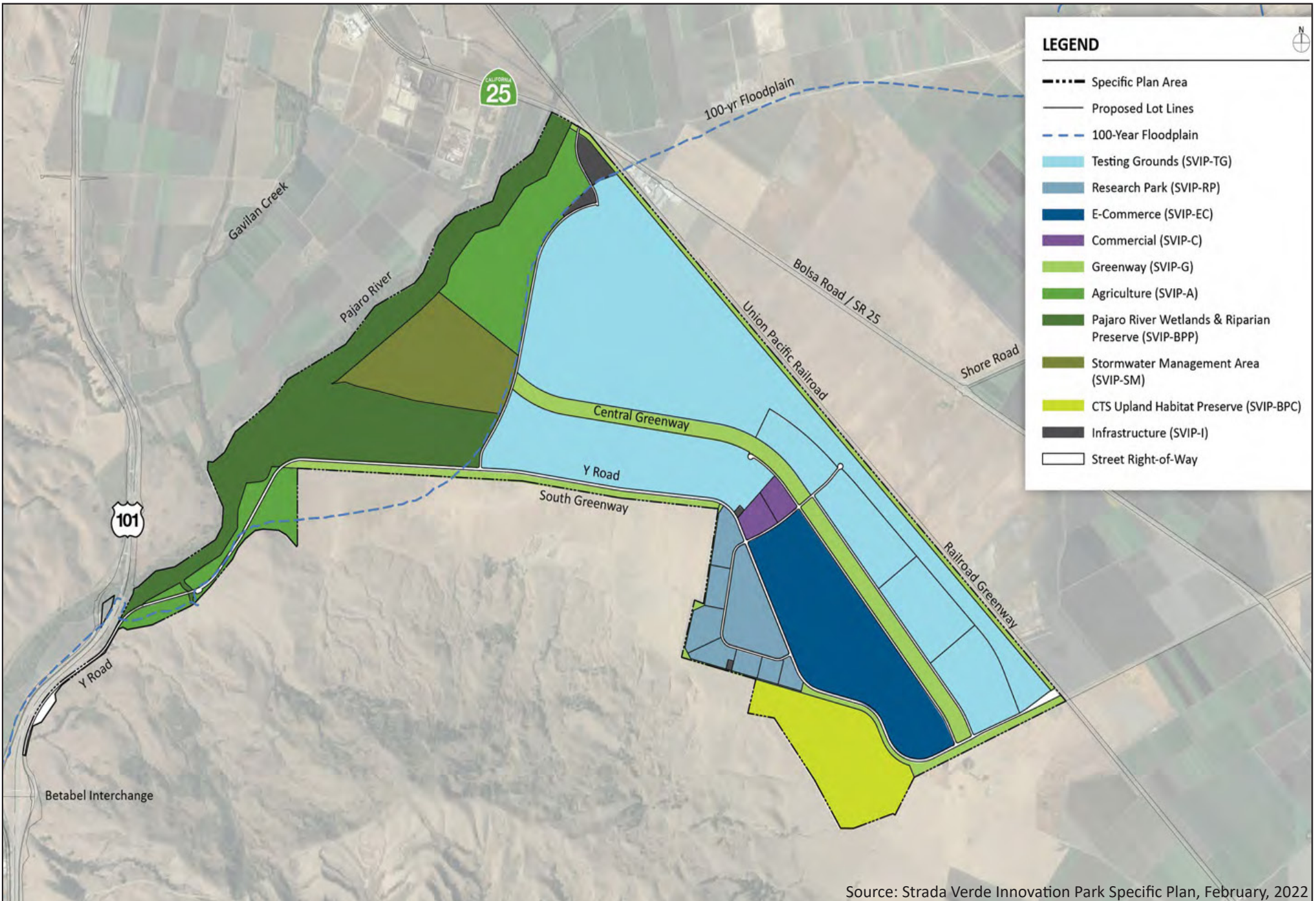


Title:
Existing Land Uses

Date: April 11, 2022

Project: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan NOP

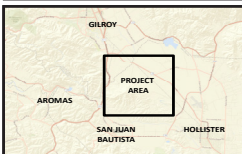
Figure
3



LEGEND

- Specific Plan Area
- Proposed Lot Lines
- - - - 100-Year Floodplain
- Light Blue Testing Grounds (SVIP-TG)
- Medium Blue Research Park (SVIP-RP)
- Dark Blue E-Commerce (SVIP-EC)
- Purple Commercial (SVIP-C)
- Light Green Greenway (SVIP-G)
- Medium Green Agriculture (SVIP-A)
- Dark Green Pajaro River Wetlands & Riparian Preserve (SVIP-BPP)
- Olive Green Stormwater Management Area (SVIP-SM)
- Yellow-Green CTS Upland Habitat Preserve (SVIP-BPC)
- Black Infrastructure (SVIP-I)
- White Street Right-of-Way

Source: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan, February, 2022

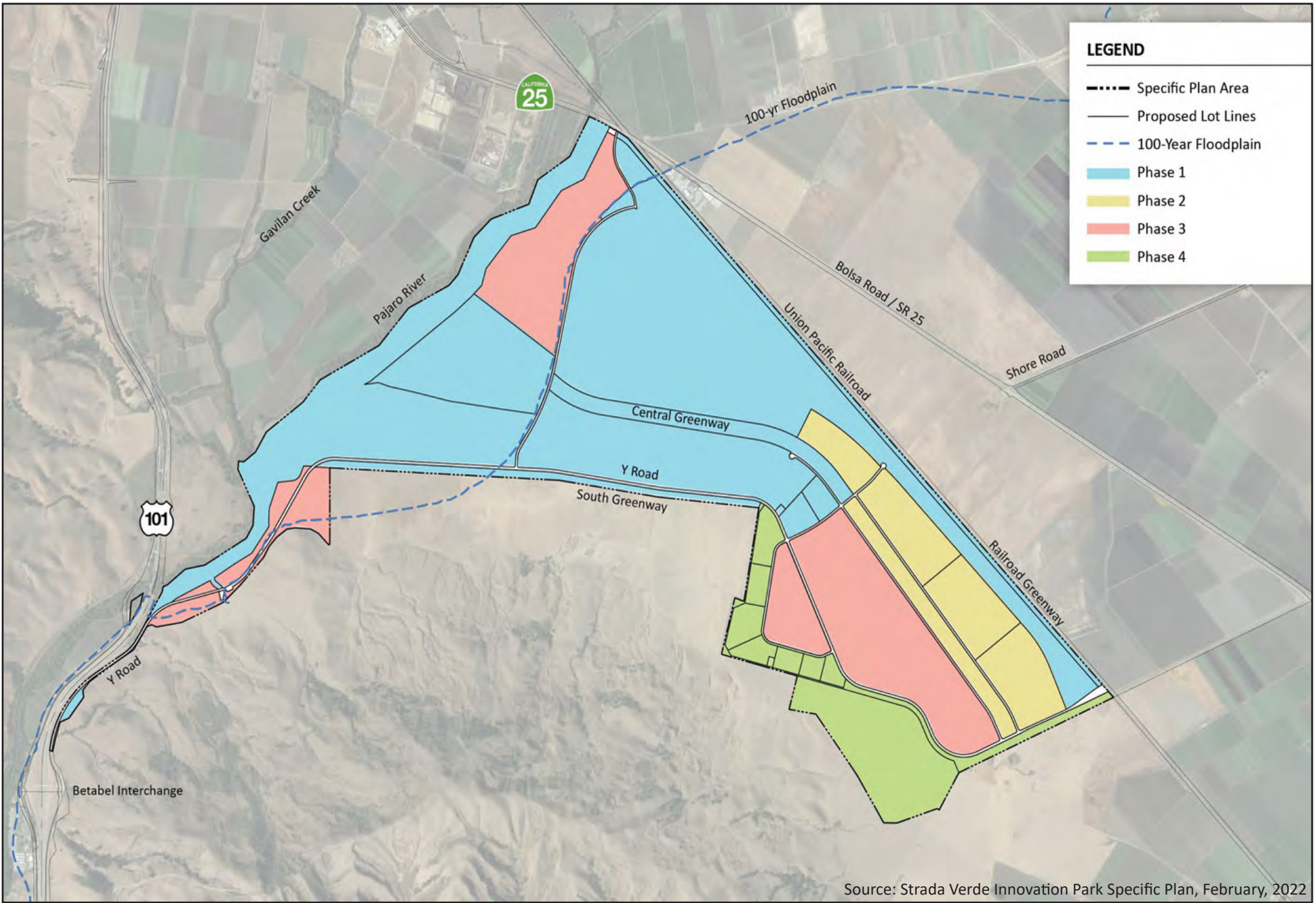


Title: **Proposed Land Use Plan**

Date: April 11, 2022

Project: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan NOP

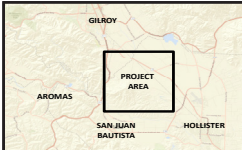
Figure **4**



LEGEND

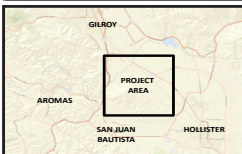
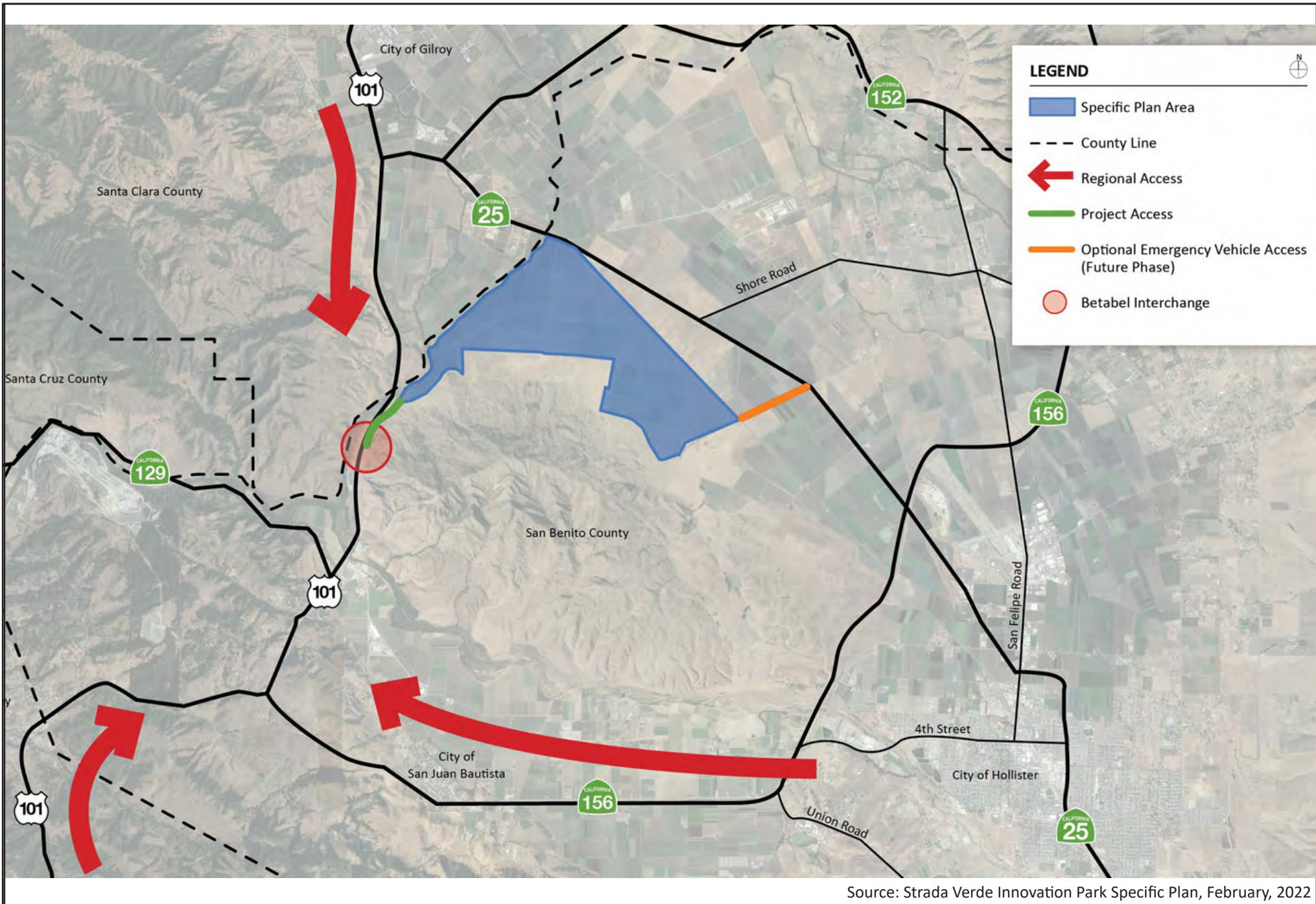
- Specific Plan Area
- Proposed Lot Lines
- - - - 100-Year Floodplain
- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Phase 4

Source: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan, February, 2022



Title: **Conceptual Backbone Infrastructure Phasing Plan**

Date: April 11, 2022
 Project: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan NOP



Title: **Regional Access to Proposed Project**

Date: April 11, 2022

Project: Strada Verde Innovation Park Specific Plan NOP

Figure **6**