

Area Plans – Greater Salinas

Vision Statement

The Greater Salinas Planning Area is world renown for its remarkable agriculture. In the year 2000, the business center and the shipping center for Monterey County's agricultural industry generated \$3 billion. The rare combination of climate, soils, and water resources has made the Greater Salinas area suitable for agricultural production year round. This Planning Area encompasses approximately 161 square miles and includes the most valuable farmland in Monterey County. In fact, farmland in Monterey County represents only 1 percent of the farmland acres in California, but produces 10 percent of California's farm income, making the farmland in this Planning Area an irreplaceable valuable resource for the long-term success of the agricultural industry

The City of Salinas, with a population of 152,200 as of January 1, 2004, is located within the Greater Salinas Planning Area and is the largest city in the county. Unincorporated residential use is located primarily in the areas of Boronda and Bolsa Knolls, both immediately adjacent to the City of Salinas, and in Spreckels, a small historic community located along the western boundary of the Planning Area. In addition, there are a small number of residential subdivisions scattered along Old Stage Road and San Juan Grade Road. A small portion of this Planning Area is in public land use, including over 500 acres of Bureau of Land Management land and the Fremont Peak State Park.

The Gabilan and Sierra de Salinas Ranges offer scenic ridgelines and form natural boundaries to the Planning Area. The valley floor has rich, productive topsoil. Numerous canyons and creeks that empty into the Salinas River characterize the surrounding foothills. The Salinas River generally forms the western boundary of this Planning Area and plays a large role in the watershed. The riparian environments, wetlands and groundwater replenishment associated with the River are valuable resources for the long-term success of this Planning Area.

Due to its close proximity to metropolitan areas and the attractive qualities of the area, Greater Salinas has experienced rapid growth and development in recent years. The City of Salinas has grown from 108,777 people in 1990 to 152,200 in 2004, an increase of 40 percent. During the past twenty years, 2,381 acres were added to the City through annexation.

Unincorporated growth has also occurred immediately outside the Salinas city limits. The small, unincorporated community of Boronda, which includes the historic Boronda Adobe, is contiguous with the City's western limits. Boronda residents value their rural lifestyle and have chosen not to become a part of the City. Improvements in streets, parks and other amenities have been initiated through the

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County Redevelopment Program to provide needed infrastructure for this working community. Boronda contains a number of heavy industrial uses in its southern portion, including a waste disposal transfer station, United Parcel Service, and a large agricultural seed supplier. Since the area has limited access, heavy truck traffic is a common occurrence. The area is also adjacent to the Westridge Shopping Center of the City of Salinas, which further adds to traffic congestion in the area.

Bolsa Knolls, an unincorporated area that is immediately adjacent to the City's northern boundaries, has a mixture of residential subdivisions along San Juan Grade Road. Drainage of this area has been a problem in the lower areas, and flooding occurs frequently.

Rancho San Juan, an area just north of the city limits of Salinas, was identified as an Area of Development Concentration in the 1982 General Plan. The proposed development of Rancho San Juan has been extremely controversial, and the Board's action in December of 2004 to adopt a Rancho San Juan Specific Plan, and to approve a major residential development in the Rancho San Juan area, face both legal and political challenges.

The unincorporated community of Spreckels is located approximately four miles south of the City of Salinas, and near the Salinas River. Spreckels is an historic company town that was planned, built, and controlled by the Spreckels Sugar Company. The town has approximately 185 single-family residences, a small commercial district with a few businesses, a school, and other public buildings. The historic integrity of the town has been maintained, with the original street grid and many of the structures dating from the town's earliest era. Spreckels is significant historically, as it was one of the few company towns established in California. The town has had renewed interest, and careful renovation of existing homes has been underway. Several new homes reflecting the architectural style and quality have also been added to the town. According to the County Assessor's records, Spreckels now has only one vacant residentially-zoned parcel. Owners of land contiguous to the developed town, however, hope to gain approval to build on 93 parcels designated on the 1907 map originally describing the town, but which have never been developed.

In the future, a number of issues will need to be addressed in this Planning Area. One of the most important issues will be working with the City of Salinas to provide needed housing opportunities for workers in the area. Despite construction of a substantial number of housing units within the city, overcrowding problems remain severe in many areas. The County will need to work cooperatively with the City and property owners to define new areas for future housing and to direct new development away from the most important farmlands. Additionally, it will be critical that the County and City work jointly in considering appropriate locations for additional industrial and commercial uses so as not to erode the City boundaries and

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agricultural buffer areas. This will be particularly necessary to assure that sufficient land supply is available for the continued viability of the agricultural industries in the Valley. There is a finite supply of agricultural land within the Greater Salinas Planning Area.

Water is another topic that will require continued attention in this Planning Area. The water supply for this area is derived mainly through wells and the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP). The most serious groundwater problems in Greater Salinas result from the effects of saltwater intrusion extending inland from the coast. Although overdrafting problems in the pressure area have been alleviated by the construction and operation of the Nacimiento and San Antonio dams, saltwater intrusion is still prevalent and groundwater levels on the east side have continually declined. Also, some groundwater within the uppermost soil layers is contaminated due to both natural mineralization and nitrate pollution. Surface runoff and sewage discharge into the Salinas River are the primary causes of surface water pollution in the Greater Salinas area. Some chemical levels in the Salinas Valley water have exceeded recommended public health limits. The two most important contaminant chemicals are chloride and nitrate. Chlorides are found mainly in areas intruded by saltwater, while principal sources of nitrogen contamination are agricultural applications, animal husbandry operations, municipal and industrial wastes and septic systems.

Recreational opportunities will be an important consideration for residents in this area. The more compact urban development forms that are critical to the preservation of farmland are only successful if sufficient open space areas are identified. Potential new development areas need to be planned to enhance, link and increase the potential for parks, wildlife corridors and recreation areas to serve the community.

One primary principle that should be followed is to reinforce urban/agricultural boundaries to maintain a strong overall sense of community, and to maintain the efficiency of urban form. It is also important to protect and preserve the long-term productivity of adjacent agricultural lands. The vision for this Planning Area includes the promotion of economically viable agriculture through the support of value added products, demonstration farms, agricultural support facilities, streamlined permit procedures, and agricultural land use protection procedures such as zoning, Williamson Act contracts, right to farm ordinances, buffer zones on developed property, and agricultural conservation easements. One important objective of the vision is to accommodate projected population growth and to provide for needed workforce housing while protecting important agricultural and natural resources.

Boronda

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The unincorporated community of Boronda has some potential for growth. Currently, there are 24 vacant residentially zoned parcels in this area. These parcels could be further subdivided to provide for additional housing. This area has much of the infrastructure necessary to accommodate needed housing units to accommodate the area's workforce. Planning coordination with the City of Salinas is a must. Traffic circulation, stormwater concerns, and improvements to enhance livability are critical for the success of this area.

Boronda's community vision includes preservation and enhancement of the established Boronda neighborhood, and compatible design and development of potential sites in the South Boronda area. Residents of the Boronda community envision a future that accommodates improvements and new development in a manner, which maintains the rural character of the established neighborhood, and respects existing design and character elements. Public and private improvements are well-planned and well-designed, such that infill and new development serve to strengthen and unify the small town, village character of Boronda.

Boronda contains a mix of land uses. Currently, various types of housing co-exist with various types of commercial, light industrial, agricultural and other uses. This diversity of land use is a characteristic that makes Boronda unique. It is desirable to retain this diversity and also to make improvements so that the activities and impacts of residents and businesses are better accommodated and managed.

Residential Uses in Boronda

Boronda should continue to be a place where housing is available at a price that is attainable for area residents. There should be enough housing provided to allow area workers to live within proximity to their jobs. Boronda recognizes that, for housing to be more affordable and attainable, new development needs to utilize land more efficiently, providing more housing units per acre, particularly on larger sites that are presently vacant. Citizens of Boronda support more compact development in the South Boronda area that is well designed, reflects varied architecture, and integrates valued character elements from existing developments in the neighborhood. Design guidelines should be adopted and used to guide future residential development to ensure consistency with these principles. Public improvements serving residential development must meet city standards, and ensure achievement of a livable, walkable neighborhood with a village character. Neighborhood-serving retail uses must be located within walking distance of housing units. Attractive circulation improvements are needed, including not only curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lights and street trees; but also bicycle routes, trails, pathways, and a pedestrian bridge over the open space area, in order to encourage walking and bicycling both within the community, and to link to destinations outside of Boronda. Housing rehabilitation and neighborhood services programs should reflect this philosophy.

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Non-Residential Uses in Boronda

Boronda residents respect and value the contributions of existing commercial and industrial activities within the Boronda community, as well as adjacent agricultural lands, which define the edge of the community. These uses will continue to exist in the future, but in order to strengthen Boronda as a residential village certain vacant lands presently designated for industrial use should be re-designated to provide for future residential development.

The Boronda community supports policies and actions, which ensure that non-residential land uses are located and operated in ways that address and/or prevent significant and inappropriate impacts (e.g. traffic, noise and pollutants) on or within residential areas. The highest priority improvement for the Boronda community is the Rossi Street Extension, which will provide appropriate access and circulation for industrial and other neighborhood traffic. Public and private improvements are also needed to ensure adequate non-residential parking and appropriate locations for trash, outdoor storage and other business activities.

Design guidelines should be adopted to address new non-residential development, to ensure that it is well-designed, reflects varied architecture, and integrates valued neighborhood elements from existing developments. Public improvements serving non-residential development must meet city standards.

Transportation and Public Facilities in Boronda

The existing circulation and transportation system in Boronda is not adequate to meet the needs of residents and businesses, and results in conflicts between residential and non-residential uses. The need to make improvements offers a significant opportunity for the community, because it will be possible to design improvements and focus public and private investment on implementing the principles of “livable communities” and “new urbanism.” The Boronda community desires attractive, neighborhood streets that promote walking and neighborhood interaction, and that link nearby shops, schools and other destinations. The Rossi Street Extension is a key future public improvement that should be designed to segregate non-residential traffic from residential areas, in a manner, which also strengthens community identity and accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists. Future circulation plans for Boronda should also consider the area’s relationship to bus routes and its relationship to other transportation facilities.

Future public and private investment in the Boronda community must result in the provision of high quality public infrastructure and services, including adequate sewer, water, storm drainage, circulation, parks, open space and recreation facilities and services. Future residential development in a more compact development pattern in the South Boronda area will allow for more efficient provision of infrastructure

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and services, and Boronda supports this approach, as such efficiency will make it more feasible to provide public amenities and to preserve open space lands.

Parks, Open Space and Recreational Lands in Boronda

The Boronda community is fortunate to contain natural open space areas, parks, and historic resources, and to be located near agricultural lands. These resources are assets which provide a strong identity and sense of place. Residents of Boronda envision enhancement and management of these resources to the benefit both the human and natural environments. Natural open spaces, including the floodplain and Markley Swamp wetland area, should be preserved and managed consistent with sound biotic and resource principles, while also allowing for appropriate trails, pathways, and a pedestrian/bicycle bridge. The Boronda School Park facilities need to be completed, and a gateway identity sign should be implemented. The community supports enhancement of the adjacent historic adobe site as a community asset for the Boronda neighborhood as well as the greater area population.

The Boronda community recognizes that the South Boronda area in particular offers an opportunity to implement the principles of “smart growth” and “new urbanism” rather than “urban sprawl,” which will better enable preservation and enhancement of the parks, open space, and recreational areas that provide a unique identity for Boronda. The citizens of Boronda envision that these natural community assets will be retained and improved upon in the future, and will act as keys to the “sense of community” that connects residents and businesspersons to Boronda and to each other

Special Policies For Greater Salinas Area

Greater Salinas Policy #1 – Historic Spreckels

The Town of Spreckels is designated as a County historic district. New construction within the Town of Spreckels shall be consistent with its historic character. No construction shall be permitted on any of the undeveloped “lots” shown on the 1907 Map of Spreckels unless and until a court of competent jurisdiction has ruled that such lots are “legal lots of record,” and that the owner of such lots is entitled to develop them.

Development in Spreckels shall primarily consist of single family residential units on existing legal lots of record. No new subdivisions shall be allowed. Existing non-residential uses as of the date of adoption of this General Plan may continue in their present use, or, if discontinued, another commercial use of the same nature shall be allowed upon being granted a use permit. If no other similar commercial use is proposed, then the property shall revert to single-family residential use. In addition, new development must comply with the following requirements:

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- a. **New development must be harmonious with existing development in exterior treatment, building lines, and bulk and height specifications; and**
- b. **Prior to development, the developer must submit project plans or drawings showing the proposed building design, color scheme, landscape plans, and parking layout for review and possible modification, to comply with the Spreckels Historic Design Guidelines.**

Greater Salinas Policy #2 – Spreckels Boulevard

The walnut trees along both sides of Spreckels Boulevard are held to be both scenic and historic resources and should be preserved and maintained. Efforts by Spreckels and countywide residents to raise funds for tree maintenance through private efforts and/or through non-profit agencies such as Parks Foundation shall be encouraged.

Greater Salinas Policy #3 – Boronda Historic Resources

The County should support the efforts of the Monterey County Historical Society (MCHS) and others to preserve the County's historic resources. MCHS efforts which should receive support include:

- a. **Attempts to attract more tourists to the Boronda Adobe site.**
- b. **Attempts to make the Boronda Adobe a site for festival events and other ceremonial functions.**
- c. **Any other MCHS actions which are deemed appropriate to establish the Boronda Adobe site as a revenue source for the Historical Society.**

Greater Salinas Policy #4 – Visitor Farm

A “Visitor Farm” may include displays, including outside exhibits that depict historical and/or contemporary farming and agricultural machinery, techniques, processes, and farm labor. Recreational uses such as tractor rides, hay wagon rides, and nature tours may be provided. Other activities may include Pick-Your-Own Produce operations for visitors, tours of the working farm and its operations, overnight farm stays within the primary farm residence on-site, and a produce stand for the sale of agricultural products grown within the tri-county area of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties.

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A visitor farm shall be allowed on the agricultural property located at the northwest corner of Highway 68 and Foster Road (APN 207-051-013), under the following conditions:

- a. **The visitor farm is an accessory use to the primarily agricultural use of the property;**
- b. **Any produce stand shall be for the sale of agricultural products grown within the tri-county area of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties;**
- c. **Gift and souvenir sales that promote Monterey County agriculture shall be allowed, not to exceed 10% of the building area of the produce stand, but in no case covering more than 300 square feet;**
- d. **Food sales shall be allowed, not to exceed 25% of the building area of the produce stand, but in no case covering more than 600 square feet;**
- e. **Overnight farm stay accommodations shall be allowed if the accommodations are within the primary farm residence on-site, and such stays are limited to no more than 72 hours;**
- f. **A general development plan shall be approved for the entire site prior to any development; and**
- g. **The visitor farm shall not interfere with agricultural activities on adjoining properties.**

Greater Salinas Policy #5 – Public Trails

No public trails shall be constructed on private lands within the Greater Salinas Planning Area without the permission of the property owner.