

LAFCO of Monterey County

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
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KATE McKENNA, AICP
Executive Officer

DATE: January 25, 2010

TO: Chair and Members of the Formation Commission

FROM: Kate McKenna, AICP, LAFCO Executive Officer

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE COMMENTS ON THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE GONZALES
2010 GENERAL PLAN (CITY OF GONZALES)**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Commission authorize Chair Salinas to execute and send a comment letter (Attachment 1) to the City of Gonzales.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:

Overview

The City of Gonzales, as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is preparing a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a draft comprehensive update of its General Plan, known as the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan*. A Notice of Preparation was issued in December (Attachment 3), and the City is requesting comments on what should be included in the EIR. In response to a request by LAFCO Chair Salinas, City Manager René Mendez has graciously extended the time for LAFCO to provide comments (Attachment 2).

The draft *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* does not include a proposed Sphere of Influence boundary. Therefore, the Environmental Impact Report being prepared now will analyze the impacts of the General Plan, but will not directly analyze the impacts of a proposed Sphere of Influence amendment. After the City certifies the EIR and approves the new General Plan, the City will develop a proposal to LAFCO for a Sphere of Influence amendment. At that time, the City will also prepare a separate environmental review for the Sphere proposal, using the current EIR as the basis for that review.

LAFCO is a Responsible Agency under CEQA. In order to implement the General Plan, the City will request LAFCO to review and approve an update of the City's Sphere of Influence and to approve annexations. LAFCO will rely upon the future environmental review to be conducted by the City for this purpose. As a Responsible Agency, LAFCO should review the Notice of Preparation of the Program EIR (Attachment 3) with a view to the future Sphere and annexation proposals, and comment now on the scope and content of the EIR. Our comments must be germane to our statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

Project Description

The EIR will address the impacts of the draft General Plan update. The last comprehensive update was in 1996. The update would add approximately 2,150 acres of land to the City for a variety of urban and open space uses, and approximately 2,130 acres of land for an Urban Reserve. The existing City is approximately 1,340 acres and would increase to approximately 3,490 acres if all land identified for urban uses are incorporated and developed (not including Urban Reserve). The *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* estimates a total buildout population of approximately 37,000 persons and a total employment base of 7,300 jobs.

The *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Diverse, Self Sustaining Local Economy,
2. Long-Term Vision,
3. Small-Town Characteristics,
4. Discouragement of Suburban Sprawl,
5. Protection of Best Agricultural Lands,
6. Sustainability, and
7. Competitive Development Environment.

Attachment 3 is a cover memo from the City's Notice of Preparation and draft Land Use Diagrams from the proposed *Gonzales 2010 General Plan*. An electronic copy of the entire Notice of Preparation, including the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report Scope and Initial Study, is available from the City (831/675-5000) or at the LAFCO Office.

The City hosted two scoping meetings at City Hall for the benefit of interested agencies and individuals. LAFCO staff attended both of these meetings.

Analysis

As this EIR will be the basis of a future environmental review for a Sphere of Influence amendment, it is important that LAFCO comment now on items to be addressed in the EIR. Attachment 1 is a draft comment letter. LAFCO will have an opportunity to comment on the EIR when it is circulated for review, and then again on the subsequent environmental review that will be prepared by the City for a future Sphere of Influence proposal.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

The Commission may modify, delete or add to the draft comment letter.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kate McKenna, AICP
Executive Officer

Attachments:

1. Draft Comment Letter
2. Letter from City Manager René Mendez, December 17, 2009
3. Notice of Preparation and Draft Land Use Diagrams

cc: René Mendez, City Manager, City of Gonzales
Bill Farrel, AICP, Community Development Director, City of Gonzales
Martin Carver, AICP, CEQA Project Manager, Coastplans

Attachment 1

Draft Comment Letter

KATE McKENNA, AICP
Executive Officer

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January 25, 2010

Mr. Bill Farrel, AICP, Community Development Director
City of Gonzales
P.O. Box 647
Gonzales, CA 93926

RE: Comments on Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the
Gonzales 2010 General Plan

Dear Mr. Farrel:

Thank you for your courtesy in accommodating our request for an extension of time to submit comments for the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* Notice of Preparation. It is our understanding that the Notice of Preparation is being revised to add LAFCO as a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act. LAFCO will be responsible for reviewing and approving future proposals to update the City's Sphere of Influence and to annex territory to the City. Those actions are necessary to implement the General Plan.

We also understand that the General Plan does not include a proposed Sphere of Influence boundary, and that the proposed Environmental Impact Report will therefore not examine the impacts of a future Sphere of Influence amendment. Further, we understand that the City intends to use this Program Environmental Impact Report as the basis for its separate environmental review of a future Sphere of Influence proposal.

In anticipation of future proposals for amendments to the City's Sphere of Influence, LAFCO requests that analysis of the following issues be addressed in the environmental review process:

Agricultural Resources –

- Please include a detailed review of the project's direct impact on open space and farmland mapped as prime and of statewide importance, including an assessment of recommendations for avoidance of impacts and mitigation of impacts. Examples of potential mitigations are permanent on-site or off-site conservation easements, mitigation

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fees to a regional agricultural lands conservation bank program, permanent agricultural buffers, and temporary agricultural buffers that can be put in place prior to full General Plan buildout.

- Please review the impacts of the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* on parcels that currently participate in the Williamson Act or Farmland Security Zone programs.
- In the analysis of farmland that would be converted to urban uses, please state which land would be considered as “prime agricultural land” as defined in Government Code section 56064. This code section is a part of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act which LAFCO utilizes for determining impacts.
- Please review the impacts upon agricultural resources consistent with the attached draft *LAFCO Policy on Preservation of Open Space and Agricultural Lands*. The policy has been recommended for approval by LAFCO’s Sphere of Influence and Annexation Policy Committee and will be considered for adoption on January 25.

Land Use and Planning –

- Please review the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan’s* compatibility and compliance with the “determinations” listed for consideration of a Sphere of Influence by a local agency formation commission (see Section 56425[e] of the Government Code).
- Please review the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan’s* compatibility and compliance with LAFCO of Monterey County’s adopted “Sphere Of Influence Policies and Criteria” (attached).
- Please review the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan’s* compatibility and compliance with the draft *Policy on Preservation of Open Space and Agricultural Lands* (see above, and attached).

Population and Housing –

- Please compare the population growth that would be allowed by the proposed plan with population projections published by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) within its most recent Regional Forecast. Discuss potential timelines for the buildout of the proposed *Gonzales 2010 General Plan*.

Public Services –

- Please analyze the adequacy of the public service delivery systems and infrastructure to serve the proposed expansion area, and any changes recommended.

Transportation/Traffic –

- Please analyze the adequacy of the existing regional and local transportation network to serve the proposed expansion area, and any changes recommended.

Utilities and Service Systems –

- Please analyze the adequacy of the existing service delivery systems and infrastructure to serve the proposed expansion area, and any changes recommended.

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Cumulative Impact –

- Please analyze the cumulative impact to the Salinas Valley of the conversion of farmland mapped as prime and of statewide importance and any required mitigations.
- Please analyze the cumulative impacts to regional roadways and regional jobs/housing balance.
- Please analyze the cumulative impacts to the regional water supply.

Alternatives –

- Please discuss a *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* alternative that would be consistent with AMBAG population projections.

We look forward to providing comments on the Draft Program EIR, and to commenting on the subsequent environmental review for a future Sphere of Influence proposal.

We extend an invitation to the City of Gonzales to participate in LAFCO's preliminary review process as a way to promote early and informal dialogue, understanding and cooperation. The preliminary review process would consist of an informal presentation and discussion about the City's comprehensive growth plans. We encourage the City to take part in the preliminary review process prior to formal submittal of Gonzales' comprehensive Sphere of Influence amendment proposal and annexation proposals to LAFCO.

In addition, please note the statutory requirement for early consultation between the City and County (Government Code Section 56425b) before the formal Sphere of Influence amendment is submitted to LAFCO.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments. LAFCO's Executive Officer, Kate McKenna, would be pleased to meet with your City staff and consultants for more detailed discussions.

Sincerely,

Simón Salinas
Chair

Attachment 2

**Letter from City Manager René Mendez,
December 17, 2009**



City of Gonzales

P.O. BOX 647
PHONE: (831) 675-5000

147 FOURTH ST.
FAX: (831) 675-2644

GONZALES, CALIFORNIA 93926
www.ci.gonzales.ca.us

Maria Orozco
Mayor
December 17, 2009

Scott Funk
Mayor Pro Tem
Simon Salinas, Chair
Local Agency Formation Commission of Monterey County
P.O. Box 1369
Salinas, CA 93902

Matt Gourley
Councilmember
RE: Extension of Comment Period for Gonzales General Plan EIR Notice of Preparation

Liz Silva
Councilmember
Dear Mr. Salinas:

Jose G. Lopez
Councilmember
Thank you for your letter of December 11, 2009 requesting an extension of time for your agency to complete review and comments on the Notice of Preparation for the 2010 Gonzales General Plan. The City will accept LAFCO's comments which will be submitted by January 29th.

Sincerely,

René L. Mendez
City Manager

René L. Mendez
City Manager

Attachment 3

Notice of Preparation and Draft Land Use Diagrams



CITY OF GONZALES

147 Fourth Street, Gonzales California 93926, (831) 675-5000

DATE: December 7, 2009

TO: Responsible Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

FROM: Bill Farrel, AICP, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
For the Gonzales 2010 General Plan

INTRODUCTION

The City of Gonzales, as the Lead Agency for analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act, hereby notifies all concerned that it is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a project known as *Gonzales 2010 General Plan*. This Notice of Preparation includes information on the location and description of the project being studied, on the plan's purpose and objectives, and on the preliminary scope of analysis for the EIR. This Notice of Preparation also has attached to it, an Initial Study to be used as the basis for focusing the EIR on potential significant effects and avoiding unnecessary analysis on those effects that are not potentially significant. This Notice of Preparation has been sent to responsible and trustee agencies, involved federal agencies, tribal authorities, and interested parties pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. Agencies should comment on the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines, the comment period for this Notice of Preparation is 30 days (starting on December 7, 2009 and ending on January 8, 2010). The City of Gonzales welcomes agency and public input during this review. If one or more of the contacted responsible agencies, organizations, or interested parties fail to provide comment on this Notice of Preparation by the end of the review period, the Lead Agency will presume that those who failed to respond have no comment. The City is scheduled to hold two public scoping meetings on December 16, 2009, at 3:00 pm and

6:00 pm, respectively. Both of these meetings will be held at the City of Gonzales City Council Chambers at 117 Fourth Street, Gonzales, California. Agencies and the public are invited to attend these scoping meetings to provide oral comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis. Copies of the Notice of Preparation and Initial Study can be viewed at City offices located at 147 Fourth Street, Gonzales, California. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of this NOP which includes color maps, call Paula Bonincontri at 831-675-5000 or leave a message with your email address.

Comments may be submitted in writing by January 8, 2010 and addressed to:

Bill Farrel, AICP, Community Development Director
City of Gonzales
P.O. Box 647
Gonzales, California 93926

Comments will also be accepted by email: bfarrel@ci.gonzales.ca.us.

If you are from an agency, your response should include the name of a contact person. Agencies or persons with specific questions about the project should contact Martin Carver, CEQA Project Manager, at (831) 426-4557 (mcarver@coastplans.com) for further information.

PROJECT TITLE:

Gonzales 2010 General Plan

PROJECT LOCATION:

The project is located in and around the City of Gonzales, County of Monterey. A map has been prepared showing the regional location of the Gonzales General Plan Planning Area (attached as Exhibit A).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The City proposes to adopt the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan*, which had its last comprehensive update in 1996. The updated General Plan adds approximately 2,150 acres of land for a variety of urban and open space uses, and approximately 2,130 acres of land for urban reserve. The existing City is approximately 1,340 acres in size and would increase to a total of approximately 3,490 acres if all land identified for urbanization was incorporated and developed (not including Urban Reserve). The General Plan estimates a total buildout population of approximately 37,000 persons and a total employment base of 7,300 jobs. A table has been prepared that shows capacity estimates for housing, commercial and industrial use, population, and employment associated with the plan (attached as Exhibit B).

- ❖ The proposed *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* addresses the seven mandatory topics of Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, and Safety, plus three optional elements: Community Character, Public Facilities and Services, and Sustainability. The Housing Element, which was prepared separately and ahead of the rest of the 2010 Gonzales General Plan was adopted by the City Council on June 15, 2009 following public hearings and was certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development on August 13, 2009. Accordingly, the Housing Element, while included within the General Plan document, is not the subject of this EIR.

Each element includes goals, policies and implementing actions to address issues related to the element. The elements contained in the proposed *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* are as follows:

- ❖ Land Use – Issues include, but are not limited to: agricultural preservation and land use, the structure and design of new neighborhoods, population and employment, and the use of Specific Plans as implementing tools. A Land Use Diagram, which includes the base diagram and three inset maps, has been prepared that describes and designates potential land uses within the *Planning Area* (attached as Exhibits C1 through C4).
- ❖ Circulation – Issues include, but are not limited to: existing and future travel demand and traffic patterns, level of service and other performance measures, truck traffic to industrial areas and the Johnson Canyon Landfill, transit services, and pedestrian and bicycle use. A Circulation Diagram, which includes the base diagram and one inset depicting public transit facilities, has been prepared that identifies the planned circulation system for the city (attached as Exhibits D1 and D2).
- ❖ Conservation and Open Space – Issues include, but are not limited to: biological resources such as special-status species and habitats, water use and conservation, energy conservation, and managed production of resources. This element also includes a discussion of public parks, recreational open spaces, natural areas, hiking and bicycle trails, and open space and parks as part of an overall strategy of sustainability and quality of life.
- ❖ Community Facilities and Services – Issues include, but are not limited to: sewer, water, and drainage facilities and services, governmental services, schools, and social services.
- ❖ Community Character – Issues include, but are not limited to: the design of new neighborhoods, architecture, street design, and the protection of historical and archaeological resources.

- ❖ Sustainability – Issues include, but are not limited to: energy conservation, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change.

The proposed *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* also includes an introduction (Chapter I), which sets forth the plan purpose and objectives, describes the planning process, discusses major themes and issues, and summarizes the relationship of the plan to other plans and programs in the region. Finally, the proposed *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* includes an implementation chapter (Chapter X), which summarizes the implementing actions identified in the elements of the General Plan.

PLAN PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The *Gonzales 2010 General Plan* seeks, through the adoption of diagrams, goals, policies, and implementing actions in its various elements, to achieve the following objectives:

- Obj 1. **Diverse, Self Sustaining Local Economy.** The development of a city that has the size, diversity, excellence in urban design, and public services and facilities necessary to create a vibrant, diverse, and self-sustaining local economy that attracts creative and productive citizenry and retains a full range of age groups from the youth to the elderly (all elements);
- Obj 2. **Long-Term Vision.** The development of a city that has sufficient planning scope to provide a coherent long-term vision of development and discourage incremental development decisions that could result, over the long-term, in an incoherent collection of residential subdivisions (Land Use, Circulation, and Conservation and Open Space elements);
- Obj 3. **Small-Town Characteristics.** The development of a city that has retained essential small-town characteristics by: 1) ensuring that major new residential development programs are based upon a traditional neighborhood design format with a high degree of walkability, ample parks, and that include elementary schools, small scale commercial uses and that reflect variety providing a variety of housing types, and 2) establishing highest residential densities within a range consistent with other small cities in the region (Land Use and Community Character elements);
- Obj 4. **Discouragement of Suburban Sprawl.** The development of a city that discourages low-density suburban development characterized by large, single-use housing subdivisions with separate car-dependent commercial services (e.g., strip malls, shopping malls, and fast food chains).

- Obj 5. Protection of Best Agricultural Lands. The development of a city that has a plan for growth that reduces development pressure on the highest quality agricultural lands in the Salinas Valley by promoting growth eastward toward the foothills and away from the Salinas Valley floor, by bounding urbanization with permanently protected agricultural land and effective agricultural buffers, and by encouraging compact urban form and the efficient use of land resources (Land Use, Circulation, Conservation and Open Space, Community Facilities and Services, and Community Character elements);
- Obj 6. Sustainability. The development of a city that has sustainable, energy efficient development that manages greenhouse gas emissions consistent with state and regional goals by emphasizing compact urban form, high connectivity and mobility within and between neighborhoods, ample opportunity for walking and bicycle use, neighborhood retail and other neighborhood commercial uses within neighborhood centers to reduce vehicle use within the neighborhood, and otherwise designing for the efficient use of energy resources (all elements); and
- Obj 7. Enhancement of Natural Environment. An urban experience shaped by the restoration, enhancement, and where possible, the re-creation of the area's natural environment (Land Use, Conservation and Open Space, and Community Character elements); and
- Obj 8. Competitive Development Environment. The development of a city with a primary growth area containing several land owners/developers, so as to maintain a competitive environment for urban development (Land Use element).

PRELIMINARY EIR SCOPE

Exhibit E contains a preliminary description of the intended scope of EIR analysis for the *Gonzales 2010 General Plan*. It is being circulated to agencies and members of the public with the Notice of Preparation (NOP) to allow these parties an opportunity to make specific and timely comments on the proposed content of the EIR. The scope of the EIR will be refined taking these comments into consideration. The analyses in the EIR will describe existing conditions, the legal and regulatory framework relevant to the proposed project, standards of significance to be used in the analysis, analysis methodologies, potential environmental impacts, and recommended mitigation measures. The EIR will focus on potential new development compared to existing conditions. In some instances, the Initial Study concluded that there was no potential significant effect in a particular category of environmental concern, and in these instances, the EIR will provide no further analysis. The Initial Study is attached as Exhibit F and can also be viewed at City offices located at 147 Fourth Street, Gonzales, California.

Exhibit C1 - Draft Land Use Diagram

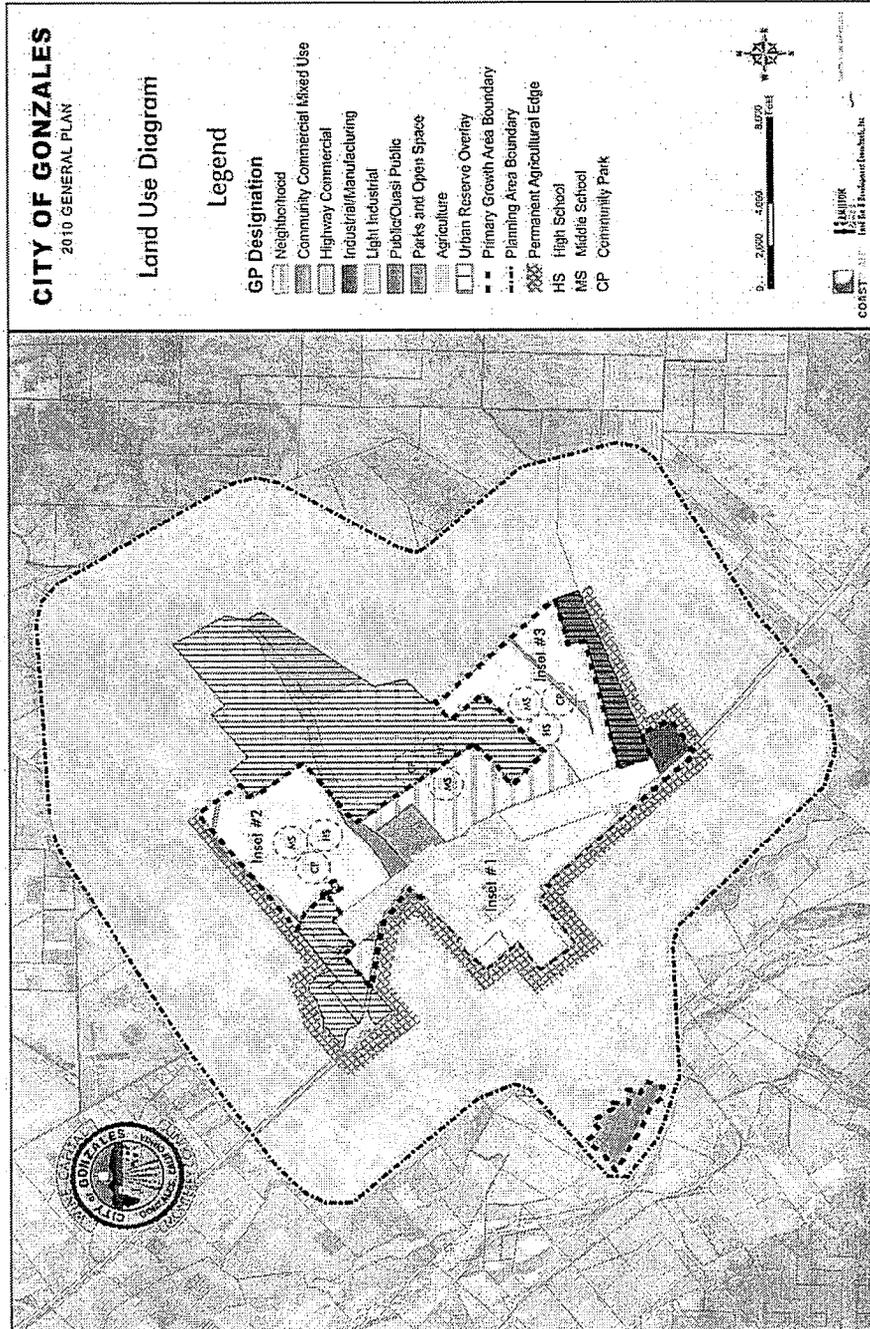


Exhibit C2 - Draft Land Use Diagram Inset 1

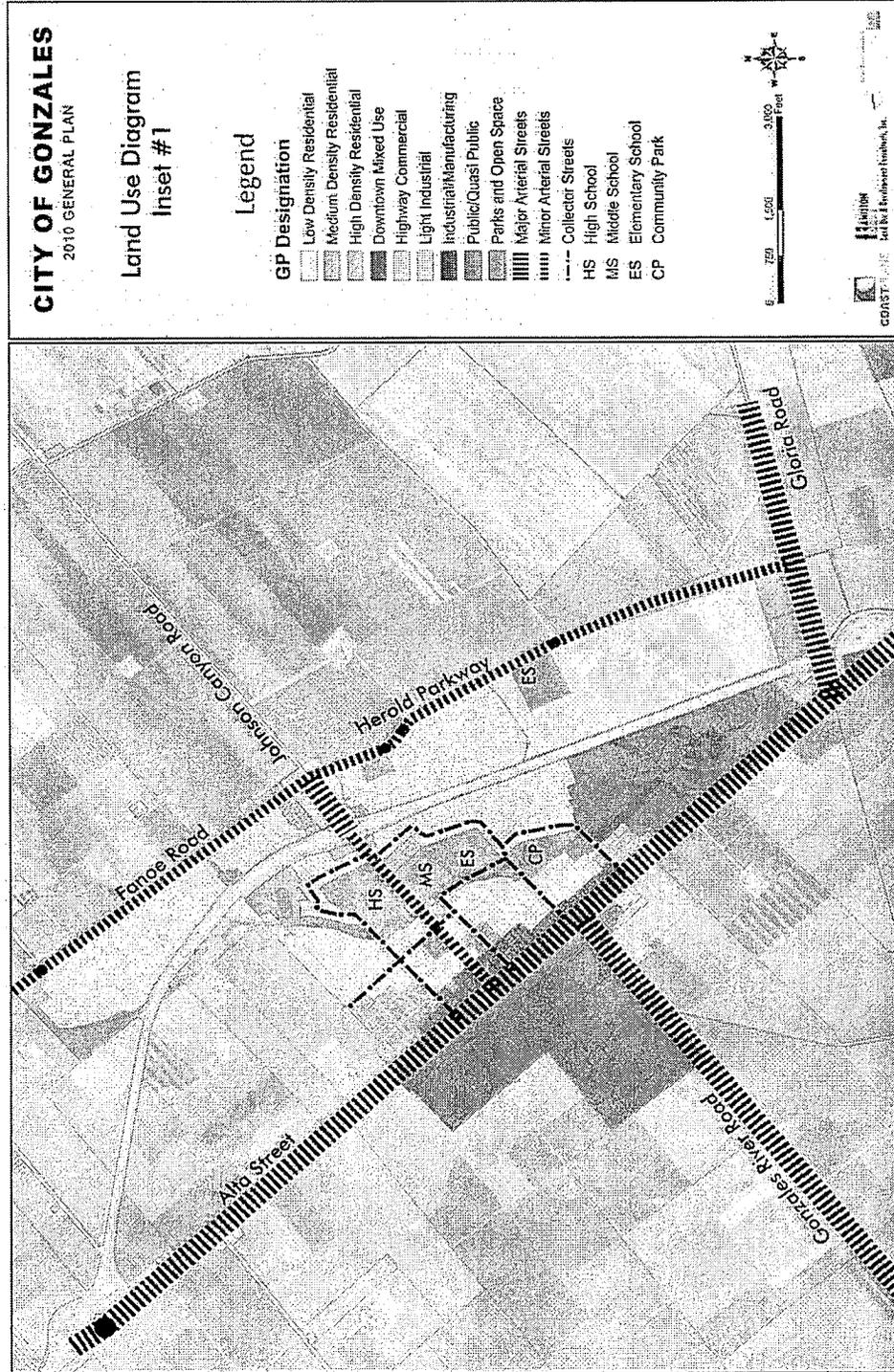


Exhibit C3 – Draft Land Use Diagram Inset #2

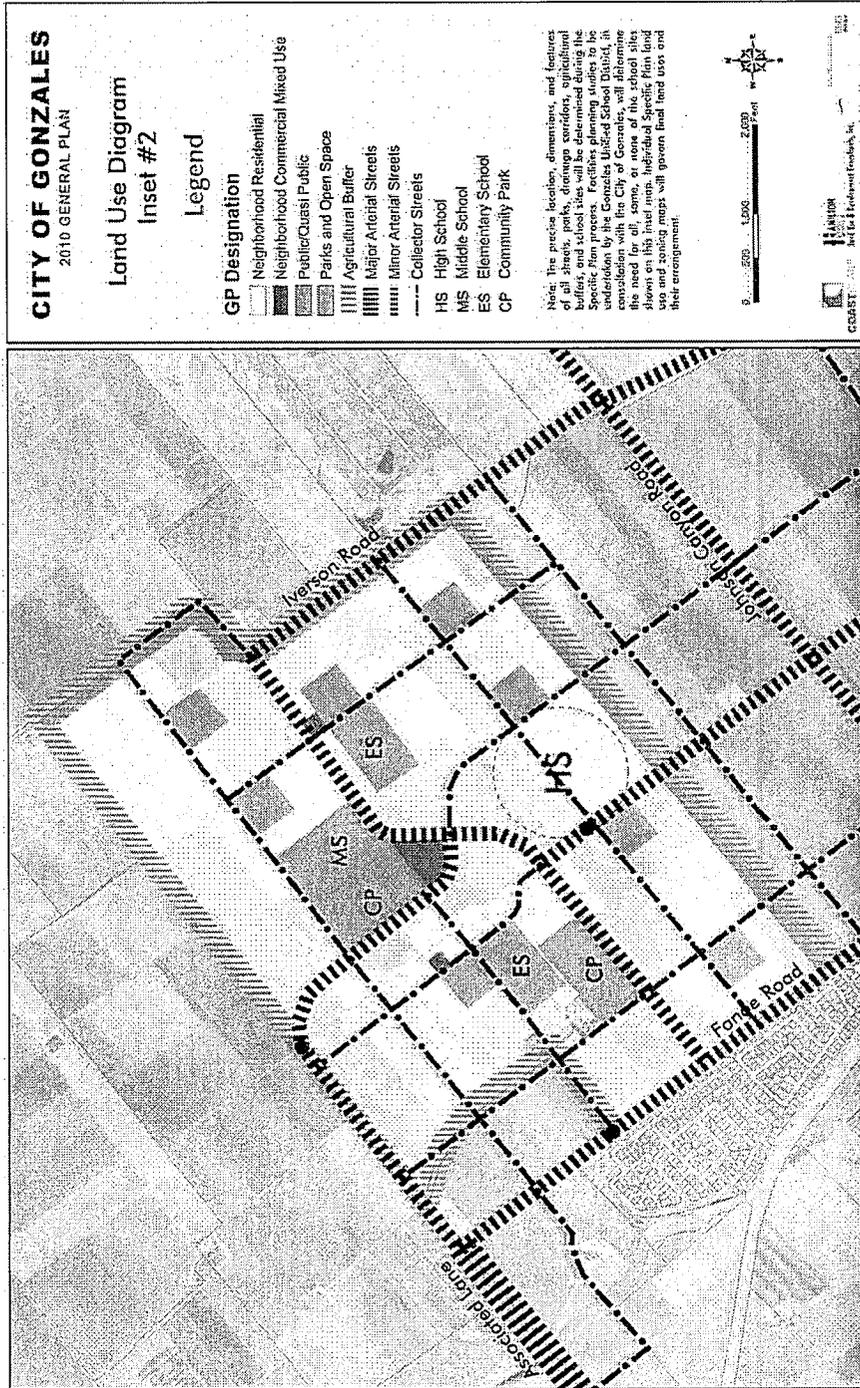


Exhibit C4 – Draft Land Use Diagram Inset #3

