

# I. THE VISION

## A. Sprawl: The Failed Model



The landscape of sprawl is so familiar, so deeply embedded in the normal practices of planning, development, and real estate finance that it has acquired the character of inevitability. It represents a set of conventions, however, that has long outlived the

problems it was intended to address. Whatever the rationale may once have been for the segregation of land uses, for total dependence on automobiles for every human transaction, for the dispersal of the elements of community, and for the rampant consumption of open space and farmland, it no longer makes sense. No one believes that these are good things, yet many people continue to act as if they are somehow ordained by history, as if any other future is unimaginable.

This document is intended to challenge the entrenched planning practices that produce sprawl. While it does not purport to be a fully developed plan in the conventional sense, it is instead a proposal for the spirit and intention that should inform any future plan for Coyote Valley. This Vision presents an argument for those elements and topics that should be addressed in such a plan, and a model for where the plan should be prescriptive and specific and where it should be general and permissive. Its objective is to respond to the ever-changing conditions of the real estate market while redressing the acknowledged problems of sprawl.

Sprawl has been so widely criticized over the last decade that it hardly seems necessary to enumerate its shortcomings. Nonetheless, for the sake of clarity, it is worthwhile to describe the specific characteristics of the recently built and still

proposed suburban landscape that the Vision seeks to supplant. It is not hard to imagine exactly how Coyote Valley will look a generation from now if it is consumed by sprawl of the conventional sort.

It will contain one, two, or perhaps three very large concentrations of employment, which will be referred to euphemistically as “parks” or “campuses.” In fact, these areas will be low- to medium-density clusters of very large sprawling office buildings, surrounded by vast seas of surface parking. While it may be physically possible to reach these “campuses” by public transit, the experience of walking from a transit stop through the undifferentiated sea of parking will be so grim that only those who cannot afford to drive to work will undertake it. Inside the workplace, the buildings’ daylight edges will be reserved for an upper echelon of workers with the rest of the workforce consigned to a windowless, air-conditioned, fluorescent-lit netherworld in which the weather and the time of day are unfathomable mysteries. If one wants to leave this environment at midday, say for lunch or to run errands, one must drive, and each car that makes this journey must be provided with at least two parking spaces, one at work and another at the midday destination.

The sprawl that could consume Coyote Valley would also contain housing. However, it will be segregated from employment areas in walled enclaves. The residential areas generally will not be very densely built, will not support public transit, and will be an auto trip away from every service that exists outside the home: schools, shops, churches, parks, and offices. Even when a house happens to be just a few hundred feet from a regular destination, such as a store, the likelihood is that the trip to the store will involve driving, more often than not on a large, multi-lane arterial. Nobody walks to the store in sprawl because the store and the land it sits on are



*Typical Silicon Valley corporate campus swims in a sea of parking while being segregated from residential, commercial, and open space areas. Robert Cameron, 1998. Above San Francisco, Cameron and Company*

designed for the automobile, and pedestrians are an afterthought.

There will be green open space in sprawl, but most of it will be fragmented and formless and generally remote from the people who use it. There will not be even a trace of the beautiful and bounteous farmland that once composed Coyote Valley.



*Sprawl development is designed to facilitate the use of the automobile with little concern for pedestrians or the quality of the environment.*

## B. Smart Growth: A Model for Livable Communities



Sprawl in Coyote Valley is easy to imagine because there is so much of it in the 65 miles between San Francisco and Morgan Hill. In this same stretch,

however, there are other models of community building, older models that in recent years have been re-energized with new vitality and investment. Palo Alto, Mountain View, Burlingame, parts of San José itself demonstrate that there is nothing unrealistic about mixed-use, walkable communities. While these communities have much yet to accomplish in the realms of affordable housing and transit choices, their physical structure demonstrates that it is still perfectly possible for buildings to define the public spaces of a town. Stores and offices do not need to float in an undifferentiated sea of parking, but can contribute to the fabric of a town and help to make great places to live, work, and play.

Housing in and around these revitalized centers is dense and the streets that the houses define are pleasant for walking. Parks, stores, and schools are located nearby, and some people live close enough to their workplace to walk or bike. Under these circumstances, families can live comfortably with one car, not one for everyone over the age of 16.

Walkable town and neighborhood centers, dignified settings for public buildings, and residential squares framed by housing cannot be shaped by land use maps alone. The Vision demands that future planning define the obligations that all buildings have to the public spaces of a community, the specific ways in which buildings face the space of streets, squares, and parks, and the ways that parking can be accommodated without

becoming the dominant feature of the town. The methods and instruments of planning that produce the landscape of sprawl cannot produce its opposite. The pages that follow suggest different tools and approaches capable of shaping a vibrant new community.

The planning movements known as Smart Growth and New Urbanism are a rediscovery and adaptation of enduring and successful patterns of American town building to our current circumstances. On many levels these patterns redress the negative environmental, social, and economic consequences of sprawl. The environmental advantages of the Smart Growth vision described herein include reduced automobile use, decreased energy consumption, less pollution of air and water, increased conservation of land, and enhanced habitat protection. The social advantages include the integration of affordable housing and meaningful employment into the community, and a town structure and density that makes schools, services, retail, and employment accessible by transit, bicycle, or walking. The economic advantages include a more diverse economic base that is less susceptible to cycles of boom and bust, enhanced real estate values, reduced long-term transportation and energy costs, and new employment that is part of an attractive mixed-use community, rather than in isolated, single-use “campuses.” Thriving town centers such as Mountain View, Walnut Creek, and San Rafael provide a model for the evolution of Coyote Valley into a prosperous, attractive, livable, and environmentally responsible community in its own right—one that retains the imprint of its environmental setting and its agricultural heritage.

With the revitalization of its downtown and its recent emphasis on neighborhood centers, San José has led the nation in recovery from the outdated conventions of sprawl. Coyote Valley can be San José’s next great opportunity.



*A vibrant Town Center includes a mix of retail, office, service, and residential uses within a framework that preserves key sites for public buildings and view corridors to the surrounding landscape.*



*Smart Growth involves the creation of an attractive, compact and walkable community.*



*Smart Growth involves finding a sustainable balance between urban growth, agriculture, and open space.*

## C. Elements of Town Building: The Making of a Place

The diagrams on this and the following page compare and contrast the familiar pattern of sprawl, as it might consume Coyote Valley if development is allowed to occur under a “business as usual” scenario, with the more orderly pattern that would result from a Smart Growth approach emphasizing the creation of a compact, transit- and pedestrian-friendly community integrated with the natural setting.

The Coyote Valley Vision has evolved from the overlay of several interdependent patterns, each related to a specific physical element—land use, circulation, open space, hydrology—that contributes to the form of this new community. It is characteristic of sprawl that these patterns typically are considered independently of one another with little or no recognizable relationship among them. In more compact, walkable, and transit-oriented urban places, by contrast, these patterns are responsive to one another and there is a high degree of integration of these different aspects of a town.

Among the important components of the Coyote Valley Vision are the following:

### Open Space

Coyote Valley is a narrow rural valley with rolling foothills enclosing it on three sides. The undeveloped foothills provide a scenic backdrop for the Coyote Creek Parkway and the agricultural operations that occupy the flat valley floor. Together the natural hills and agricultural valley form a distinctive open space framework for the new town. The foothills provide the larger topographic structure and the agricultural lands provide the more immediate land use context in which to place the new community. This natural open space component is then complemented by the creation of urban parkland that is integrated with both the urban and natural systems.

### Hydrology

Coyote Valley is part of an important watershed, and the two natural drainages that flow through the Valley are key structural elements for the new town. Coyote Creek and Fisher Creek regularly flood the Valley floor and combine with a high water table to constrain the use of the land. A principal element of the Vision is to shape the hydrologic system to provide adequate flood management and groundwater recharge while also creating public open space that provides habitat and wildlife corridors.

### Transportation Infrastructure

The town is also shaped by the Valley’s transportation infrastructure. The regional automobile infrastructure includes Highway 101, Monterey Highway, and Santa Teresa Boulevard, which run north/south through the Valley. Bailey Avenue and Scheller Avenue will form key east/west connections across the Valley when they are extended east to connect to future interchanges with Highway 101. Public transportation in the Valley includes the Caltrain line parallel to Monterey Highway and bus service along Santa Teresa Boulevard. In the near term, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will be introduced with fixed transit stations along Santa Teresa Boulevard, and a Caltrain station will be developed just south of Bailey Avenue. As the community matures, local bus loops will be added to serve the surrounding neighborhoods from these regional transit facilities. Ultimately, as demand warrants and funding is available, the BRT system will transition to a Light Rail system.

### Interconnected Street Grid

An important difference between the patterns of sprawl and a coherent town is the interconnectivity of its streets. The Vision provides a grid pattern of streets and block layouts that establishes more coherent and direct connections between the various parts of the community. This encourages biking and walking, disperses auto traffic, facilitates public transit, and makes shops, offices, and public amenities easily accessible to housing.



*Sprawl development in Coyote Valley would result in an unorganized pattern of development that features segregated land uses, large multi-lane arterial roadways, and discontinuous loops and cul-de-sacs.*



*The Smart Growth Vision for Coyote Valley integrates land use, circulation, and drainage functions to create a coherent pattern of development that supports transit, walkable neighborhoods, and convenient access to employment, shopping and services.*

## Two Growth Scenarios For Coyote Valley

This illustration shows how the principal physical elements of the Valley would relate to each other under the sprawl and Smart Growth scenarios.

### Coyote Valley As Sprawl

#### Land Use

##### Segregated Uses

Single-use districts (housing, shopping, employment, etc.) that are isolated and unrelated to each other, and provide little or no flexibility for future changes. An automobile is necessary for everyday activities.

#### Circulation

##### Automobile Oriented

A network of expressways and distributor streets creates a series of isolated enclaves. Discontinuous local streets and cul-de-sacs funnel traffic onto a few key distributor roads, resulting in larger and busier streets with more congestion and pollution.

#### Open Space

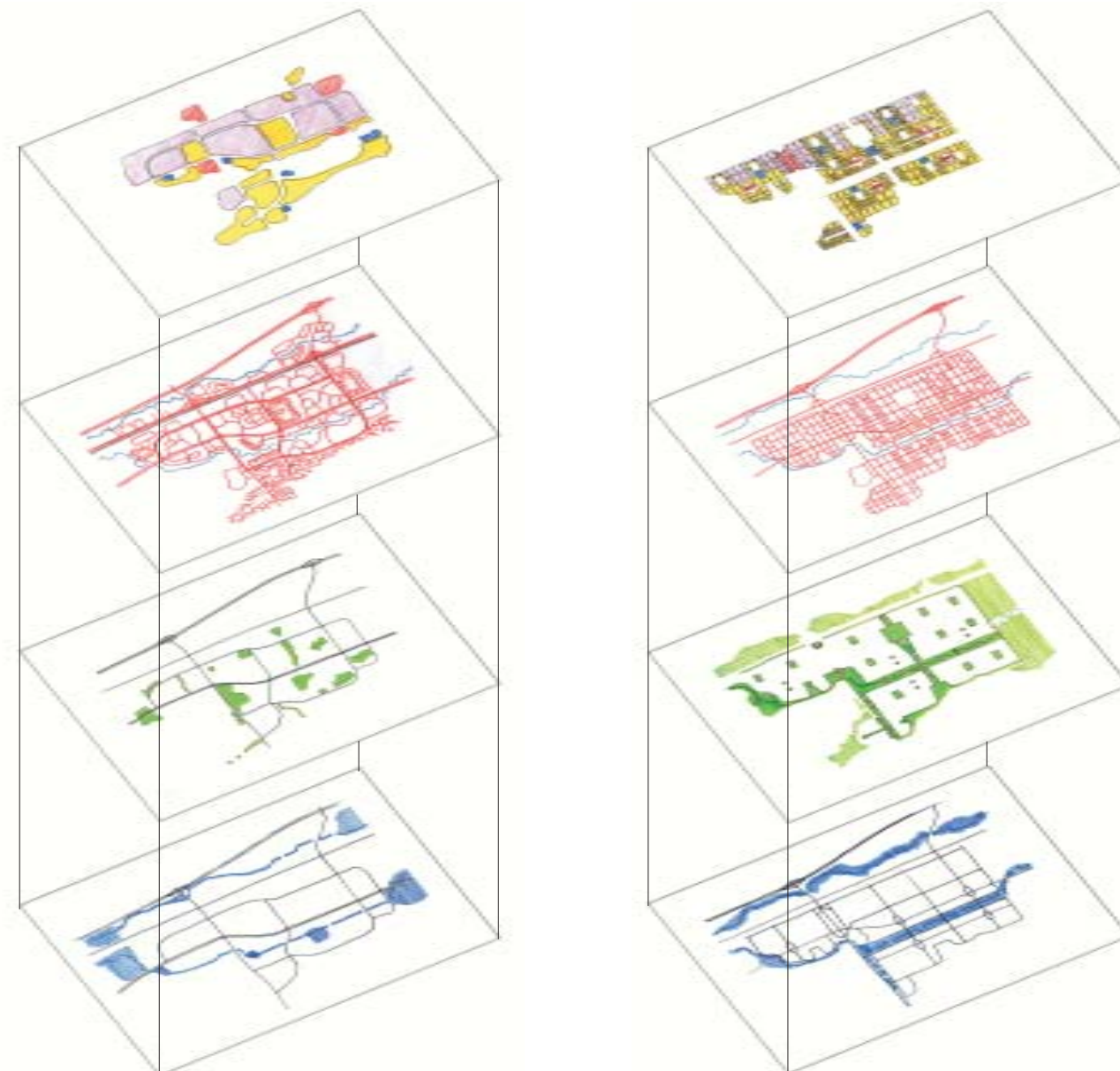
##### Isolated Parks with Open Space Fragments

Parks and open space are fragmented and isolated as residual elements between the different land uses.

#### Hydrology

##### Engineered Solutions

Flood management is seen as an engineering problem to be solved with large, single-use structures. Creeks are turned into drainage channels. Stormwater runoff is sent off-site as quickly as possible.



### Coyote Valley as a Town

#### Land Use

##### Mixed-Use Neighborhoods

A structured and coherent block pattern can accommodate a mixture of land uses in proximity to one another, and provide the flexibility over time to create a compact, pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented community.

#### Circulation

##### Walkable, Bikeable Streets

A hierarchy of inter-connected streets and boulevards disperses traffic and creates a network of alternative routes for travel throughout the town. Different modes of travel are safely accommodated, including pedestrians, bicycles, public transit, and the automobile.

#### Open Space

##### Network of Parks

Parks and open spaces form an integrated framework that defines neighborhoods and provides for a network of paths linking residential areas to key community destinations. Agricultural lands surround the town, providing an open space buffer and amenity within the context of a working landscape.

#### Hydrology

##### Integrated Open Space Solution

Flood management is embraced as natural landscape function and is incorporated into the open space network, maintaining as much of the natural function as possible and integrating improvements as part of a continuous riparian corridor through the town.



Diablo Range

Riverside Golf Course

US 101

to San Jose

PG&E Substation

Coyote Valley Parkway

Coyote Town Center

Metcalf Energy Center

Tulare Hill

Santa Teresa Blvd.

to San Jose

Tulare Hill Neighborhood Center

Town Center Green

East Laguna Neighborhood Center

Fisher Creek Greenway

IBM

Foothill Park

Hidden Valley Neighborhood Center

West Laguna Neighborhood Center

West Scheller Neighborhood Center

Laguna Avenue

Richmond Avenue

Scheller Avenue

Palm Avenue

Central Park

Palm Avenue Greenway

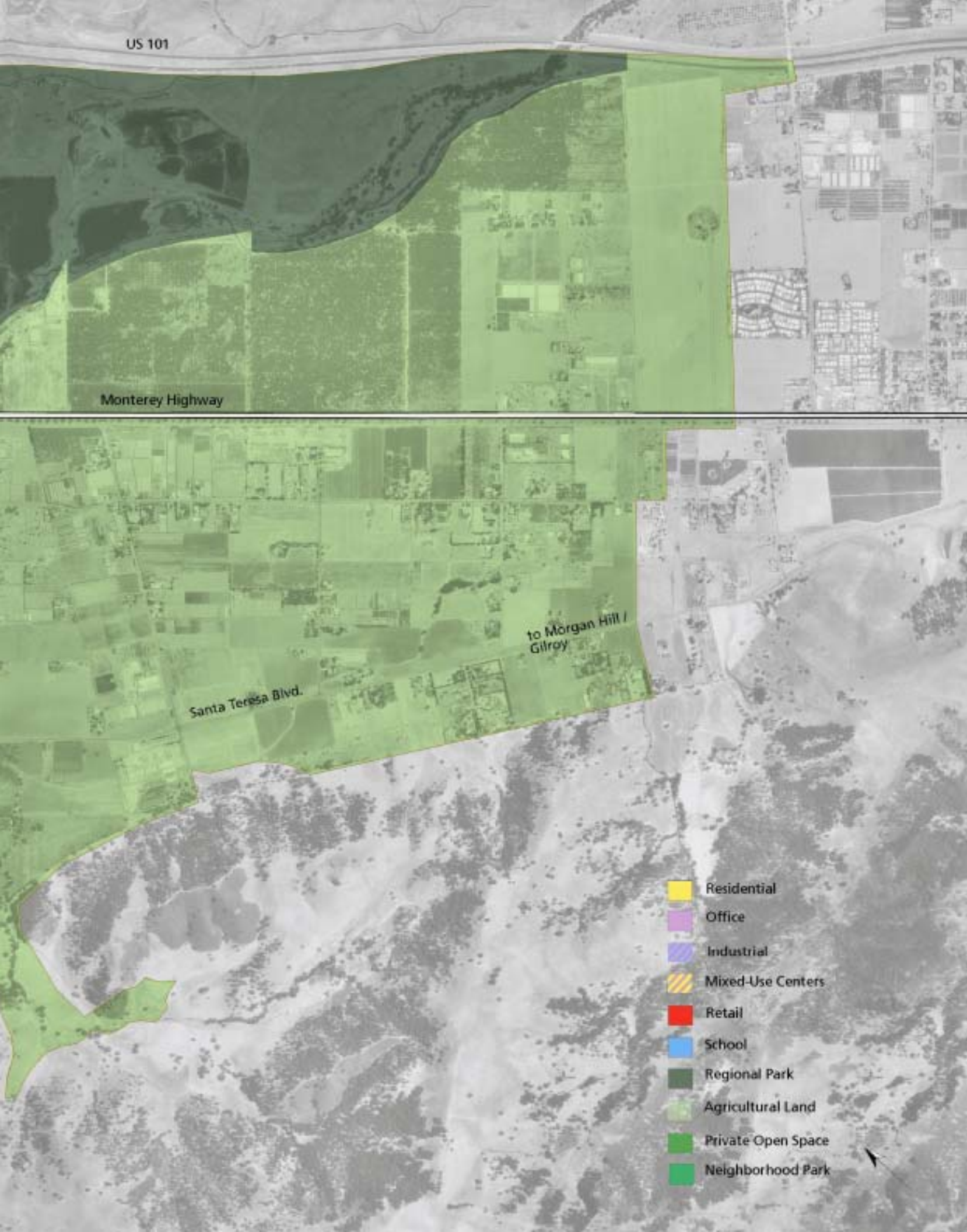
Coyote Blvd.

East Scheller Neighborhood Center

Santa Teresa Blvd.

Foothill Blvd.

Santa Cruz Mountains



### D. Illustrative Vision and Overview

The map of the Valley at the left illustrates a Smart Growth Vision for how the 6,800-acre Coyote Valley can responsibly accommodate future growth projected by the City of San José. The result is a compact, transit- and pedestrian-oriented urban community that is integrated with the natural and agricultural setting to create a sustainable balance among the needs for environmental quality, economic vitality, and social equity.

The Vision is designed to accommodate the employment and housing goals established by the City of San José for Coyote Valley. These goals translate into a new community that will provide approximately 53,000 jobs in 18.2 million square feet of commercial development, and house 80,000 residents in 25,000 residential units. While the new community will occupy approximately 2,200 acres, the Vision also preserves two-thirds of the area in open space: approximately 2,400 acres of agricultural land (including rural residences in the Coyote Greenbelt) and 2,200 acres of parks and natural open space.

The adjacent map illustrates how the elements of the town diagrammed on the previous pages are integrated to form the framework for the new Coyote Valley community. The urban community is nestled within a framework of natural and agricultural open space, with the Fisher Creek Greenway bisecting the urban area from north to south. This greenway will serve as the main flood channel for the central part of the Valley while also providing an enhanced natural riparian corridor and regional parkland with bicycle trails that link the various neighborhoods and provide access to schools. Complementing and contrasting with the Fisher Creek Greenway, an east/west urban parkway corridor, consisting of neighborhood and community parks, bisects the community from Monterey Highway to the western foothills.

The Fisher Creek Greenway and the Coyote Creek Parkway on the eastern edge of the Valley are part of a network of regional, community, and neighborhood parks that serve all parts of the community, contributing form and character to the neighborhoods as well as providing visual relief and recreational open space.

The community has been structured as a series of neighborhoods that give a more human scale and identity to the urban setting, and facilitate convenient transit service. The heart of the community is the Town Center, which is located along Bailey Avenue between Monterey Highway and Santa Teresa Boulevard. Modeled on the successful example of downtown Palo Alto, a trio of parallel streets is used to accommodate local and regional traffic while still supporting active pedestrian life in the Town Center. The Town Center will be served by transit from the Caltrain station located just south of Bailey Avenue and by a Bus Rapid Transit/Light Rail station at Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard.

The Town Center is complemented by six Neighborhood Centers that are located at the intersection of major arterial streets coincident with transit stops. Three Neighborhood Centers are located at BRT/LRT stations along Santa Teresa Boulevard, two are located along the boulevard west of the Fisher Creek Greenway, and one along Bailey Avenue. Those not on Santa Teresa will be served by local bus routes. The Neighborhood Centers consist of higher density, mixed-use development, including housing, employment, neighborhood-serving retail, and community facilities. Outside the Neighborhood Centers, neighborhood parks and elementary schools are strategically located within sub-neighborhoods to provide a central feature and public amenity at the core of each residential area.