



Notice of Preparation City of Cotati General Plan Update Draft Program Environmental Impact Report

Date: August 12, 2013

To: State Clearinghouse
State Responsible Agencies
State Trustee Agencies
Other Public Agencies
Organizations and Interested Persons

Lead Agency: City of Cotati Community Development Department
Vicki Parker, Community Development Director
201 West Sierra Avenue
Cotati, CA 94931
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Summary

The City of Cotati (City) will serve as Lead Agency in the preparation of a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR) addressing the comprehensive update to the City's General Plan. This programmatic EIR will address the environmental impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the 2013 Cotati General Plan. Information regarding the project description, project location, public outreach process and topics to be addressed in the Draft EIR is provided below. Additional information, including background documents and the preliminary Draft 2013 Cotati General Plan is available at: www.cotati.generalplan.org

Submitting Comments

Public agencies and interested parties are invited to submit comments in writing as to the scope and content of the EIR. Public agencies submitting comments are encouraged to identify a contact person and any key agency concerns regarding the proposed project. The City needs to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection to the proposed project. Public and agency comments will be received over a 30-day period, **ending on September 12, 2013**. All comments must be received prior to 5:00 p.m. on September 12, 2013. In the event that no response or request for additional time is received by any Responsible or

Trustee Agency by the end of the review period, the Lead Agency may presume that the Responsible Agency has no response to make [CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b)(2)].

Please send your responses to Vicki Parker, Community Development Director, at the address shown above.

Scoping Meeting

The City will conduct a scoping meeting to receive public input on the scope of the 2013 Cotati General Plan EIR. At this meeting, individuals, agencies, and organizations are encouraged to provide the City with their input on the topics and analysis for the EIR.

The scoping meeting will be held on Monday, August 19, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. at the Cotati City Council Chambers, located at 201 West Sierra Avenue, Cotati, CA 94931.

Project Characteristics and Background

Project Location and Setting

Cotati is a small historic town located 40 miles north of San Francisco, in the southern region of Sonoma's wine country (see Figure 1). Cotati has a population of approximately 7,265 and was established in 1892 by the Page brothers, acting as The Cotati Company on an 1877 Spanish land grant. The City incorporated in 1963. Sonoma County covers approximately 1,604 square miles, including Pacific Ocean beaches and wine country hillsides. There are nine incorporated towns and cities in Sonoma County, with a total countywide population just below 484,000. Cotati is the smallest incorporated city in the county.

Cotati is located adjacent to US 101 and the Gravenstein Highway (SR 116), which provide access to other parts of Sonoma County and the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

The city has long been considered the "Hub" of Sonoma County by virtue of its central location and its distinct and historic hexagonal plaza. Surrounded by beautiful vistas of hills, vineyards, majestic oaks and redwoods, Cotati mixes all the benefits of small town living, with the cultural advantages of a location near major urban centers and a highly acclaimed state university.

Cotati is a compact city set in a semi-rural atmosphere, and its agricultural roots are present and visible throughout downtown and the community's neighborhoods. The city radiates outward from its downtown and distinct central plaza, with two sets of surrounding streets that form concentric hexagons. The Hub is bisected by Old Redwood Highway and East Cotati /West Sierra Avenues, which provide north-south and east-west circulation respectively. Downtown is characterized by one- to two-story buildings set in a village scale environment. Since the 1998 General Plan Update, Cotati's downtown has been improved by several projects including streetscape and pedestrian improvements as well as private mixed-use developments.

Study Area

The study area for the 2013 Cotati General Plan EIR includes all land within the Cotati city limits, as well as all parcels within the sphere of influence (SOI). The Cotati city limits and SOI are shown on Figure 2.

Project Description

The City of Cotati is preparing a comprehensive update to their existing General Plan, which was adopted in 1998. The update is expected to be complete in late 2013.

The overall purpose of the 2013 Cotati General Plan is to create a policy framework that articulates a vision for the City's long-term physical form and development, while preserving and enhancing the quality of life for Cotati residents. The key components of the General Plan will include broad goals for the future of Cotati, objectives for meeting those goals, and specific policies and action items that will help implement the goals and objectives.

General Plan Elements

The 2013 Cotati General Plan will include a comprehensive set of goals, objectives, policies and implementation measures, as well as a revised Land Use Map (Figure 2). The State requires that the General Plan contain seven mandatory elements: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open Space, Noise, Safety and Conservation. The Housing Element was completed ahead of the rest of the General Plan Elements, and was adopted by the City Council on December 12, 2012. The 2013 Cotati General Plan will include all of the State-mandated elements, as well as optional elements, including: Economic Vitality, Community Services and Facilities, and Community Health and Wellness.

- The **Land Use Element** designates the general distribution and intensity of residential, commercial, industrial, open space, public/quasi-public, and other categories of public and private land uses. The Land Use Element includes the Land Use Map, which identifies land use designations for each parcel in the city limits and SOI (Figure 2).
- The **Circulation Element** correlates closely with the Land Use Element, and identifies the general locations and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, and alternative transportation facilities necessary to support a multi-modal transportation system. This element is intended to facilitate mobility of people and goods throughout Cotati by a variety of transportation modes, including bicycle, pedestrian, and rail.
- The **Open Space Element** addresses the preservation of open space for the conservation of natural resources, and public health and safety related to open space and recreational opportunities. This element also includes provisions for parks and recreational facilities throughout the City.
- The **Noise Element** establishes standards and policies to protect the community from the harmful and annoying effects of exposure to excessive noise levels. This element includes strategies to reduce land use conflicts that may result in exposure to unacceptable noise levels.
- The **Safety Element** establishes policies and programs to protect the community from risk associated with geologic, flood, and fire hazards, as well as setting standards for emergency preparedness.

- The **Conservation Element** addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources, riparian environments, native plant and animal species, soils, mineral deposits, cultural/historical resources, air quality, and alternative energy. It also details plans and measures for preserving open space for natural resources and the managed production of resources.
- The **Economic Vitality Element** (optional element) is designed to support and enhance the City's economy, through programs to create jobs and business opportunities, to help maintain the existing workforce, and to improve the business climate.
- The **Community Services and Facilities Element** (optional element) sets forth standards for public service and utility systems including water, wastewater, solid waste, schools, medical facilities, libraries, parks, recreation, and historic preservation.
- The **Community Health and Wellness Element** (optional element) addresses a wide range of community health topics, including access to healthy foods, substance abuse, access to medical care, and maintaining healthy lifestyles.

Goals, Objectives, Policies and Actions

Each element of the 2013 Cotati General Plan contains a series of goals, objectives, policies and action items. The goals, objectives, policies and action items provide guidance to the City on how to direct change, manage growth, and manage resources over the 20-year life of the General Plan. The following provides a description of each and explains the relationship of each:

- A **goal** is a description of the general desired result that the City seeks to create through the implementation of the General Plan.
- An **objective** further refines a goal and provides additional specificity on how a goal may be achieved by the General Plan. Each goal may have one or more objectives.
- A **policy** is a specific statement that guides decision-making as the City works to achieve its goals and objectives. Once adopted, policies represent statements of City regulations. The General Plan's policies set out the standards that will be used by City staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council in its review of land development projects, resource protection activities, infrastructure improvements, and other City actions. Policies are on-going and require no specific action on behalf of the City.
- An **action** is an implementation measure, procedure, technique or specific program to be undertaken by the City to help achieve a specified goal or implement an adopted policy. The City must take additional steps to implement each action item in the General Plan. An action item is something that can and will be completed.

General Plan Land Use Map

The General Plan Land Use Map identifies land use designations for each parcel within the City of Cotati and the City's SOI. The 2013 Cotati General Plan Land Use Map is attached as Figure 2.

General Plan Land Use Designations

The Land Use Element of the 2013 General Plan defines various land use designations by their allowable uses, minimum parcel sizes, and maximum development densities. The following describes the proposed land use designations for the General Plan. Table 1 shows the total number of parcels and total acreages for each land use designation shown on the proposed Land Use Map.

AGRICULTURAL (A) – The Agricultural land use designation identifies rural, agricultural areas intended to serve as a buffer and community separator. The A designation provides for very low densities of residential development, small acreage intensive farming, commercial uses that directly support agricultural operations, and part-time farming. Densities up to one dwelling unit per five acres are allowed in the A designation, with site coverage of up to 10 percent.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL (RR) - The Rural Residential land use designation identifies areas with limited variety of agricultural and rural uses, primarily along the southern and western city borders. The RR designation allows agricultural uses such as orchards, vineyards, and grazing as well as low-density residential and associated neighborhood retail uses, where development and agricultural uses maintain existing natural vegetation and topography to the maximum extent feasible. Densities up to one dwelling unit per acre are allowed in the RR designation, with site coverage of up to 15 percent.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (LDR) – The Low Density Residential designation allows single family residential attached or detached homes and associated neighborhood retail uses. Densities of two dwelling units per acre are allowed in the LDR designation, with site coverage of up to 40 percent.

LOW-MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (LMDR) - The Low-Medium Density Residential designation allows single family attached and detached units, duplexes, and associated neighborhood retail. Densities of six dwelling units per acre are allowed in the LMDR designation, with site coverage of up to 45 percent.

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (MDR) – The Medium density residential designation permits up to ten units per acre of single family attached and detached units, duplexes, multiple-family units, and associated neighborhood retail. Densities of 10 dwelling units per acre are allowed in the MDR designation, with site coverage of up to 55 percent.

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (HDR) – The High density residential land use designation permits up to 15 units per acre of single family attached and detached units, duplexes, multiple-family units, and associated neighborhood retail. Densities of 15 dwelling units per acre are allowed in the HDR designation, with site coverage of up to 75 percent.

GENERAL COMMERCIAL (GC) – The General Commercial land use designation provides for the basic business and service needs of the local community, including shopping centers, neighborhood-oriented retail, and highway-oriented commercial uses. Office and multi-family residential land uses which are easily integrated into the adjacent districts are also appropriate in the General Commercial designation. Densities of 15

dwelling units per acre are allowed in the GC designation, with site coverage of up to 100 percent.

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL (CI) - The Commercial/Industrial land use designation applies to areas appropriate for industrial parks, research/development, food processing/preparation, manufacturing, laboratories, and compatible commercial uses, including business parks, retail sales for on-site manufacturing, and professional offices, in the same district. Site coverage of up to 80 percent is allowed in the CI designation; residential uses are not allowed.

OPEN SPACE/PARKS (OSP) - The Open Space/Parks land use designation identifies land utilized or intended for open space and both active and passive community recreational purposes. Appropriate uses include recreational facilities, and conservation of areas of important aesthetic, historical, or natural resource significance. Development within the Open Space/Parks designation is limited to parks, recreational and cultural facilities, and visitor facilities, where appropriate, for passive recreation and conservation uses. One caretaker's quarter per parcel is allowed in the OSP designation, with site coverage of up to 5 percent.

PUBLIC FACILITIES (PF) - The Public Facilities designation applies to land areas reserved for government offices and facilities, public agency offices and facilities, schools, and public utility facilities. Site coverage comparable to adjacent residential uses are allowed in the PF designation; residential uses are not allowed.

SPECIFIC PLAN (SP) - The Specific Plan designation applies to lands within the Downtown Specific Plan and Santero Way Specific Plan. These areas are intended to provide a range of community- and visitor-serving uses, with an emphasis on a vibrant mix of land uses. Land uses are allowed as described by each of the applicable Specific Plans.

Table 1: Proposed General Plan Land Use Designations		
Land Use	Parcels	Acreage
City Limits		
Agriculture (A)	0	0
Rural Residential (RR)	82	105.8
Low Density Residential (LDR)	143	145.67
Low/Medium Residential (LMDR)	1145	234.78
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	792	103.57
High Density Residential (HDR)	177	29.98
General Commercial (GC)	77	110.8
Commercial Industrial (CI)	83	108.61
Open Space/Parks (OSP)	11	21.75
Public Facilities (PF)	8	21.73
Specific Plan (SP)	243	83.39
No Designation and/or Right of Way	155	254.58
TOTAL- City Limits	2916	1220.66
Sphere of Influence		
Agriculture (A)	127	592.9
Rural Residential (RR)	183	490.67
Low Density Residential (LDR)	29	93.63
Low/Medium Residential (LMDR)	36	30.87
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	0	0
High Density Residential (HDR)	0	0
General Commercial (GC)	2	8.03
Commercial Industrial (CI)	14	43.23
Open Space/Parks (OSP)	2	4.93
Public Facilities (PF)	0	0
Specific Plan (SP)	0	0
No Designation and/or Right of Way	38	48.79
TOTAL- SOI	431	1313.05

General Plan Outreach and Public Input

Visioning Workshops

The City initiated the General Plan Update process in early 2011. Between March and May 2011, the General Plan Update team held 4 public visioning workshops to help kick-off the General Plan Update process. A diverse group of city residents and stakeholders attended workshops at City Hall. The workshops provided an opportunity for the public to offer their thoughts on what they value about their community and the city and what important issues should be addressed in preparing the general plan.

Each workshop included a presentation by the consultant team that explained the role of the General Plan, an overview of the General Plan Update process, and an opportunity for the workshop participants to ask questions and seek clarification on the process and the role of the community. Workshop participants were asked to complete activities and exercises in order to provide information to the General Plan Update team. Each workshop focused on different themes and topics to be addressed in the General Plan.

Stakeholder Interviews

Between March and July 2011, the General Plan consultants and City Planning staff conducted interviews and outreach efforts with several key stakeholders in the city and surrounding areas of Sonoma County. These interviews and outreach efforts helped the General Plan Consultants gain perspectives and insights into the issues to be addressed by the General Plan Update. Key stakeholders contacted during these efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Cotati Public Works Department
- Cotati Police Department
- Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition
- Redwood Community Health Coalition
- American Lung Association (Redwood Empire)
- Legal Aid of Sonoma County
- California Rural Legal Assistance
- Cotati-Rohnert Park School District
- Sonoma County
- Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Cotati Planning Commission

The Cotati Planning Commission worked with staff and the consultant team to develop the goals, objectives, policies and action items to be included in the 2013 General Plan, and also worked to develop and refine the Draft General Plan Land Use Map. The Planning Commission met a total of 12 times between August 2011 and October 2012 to work on the General Plan Update.

Program EIR Analysis

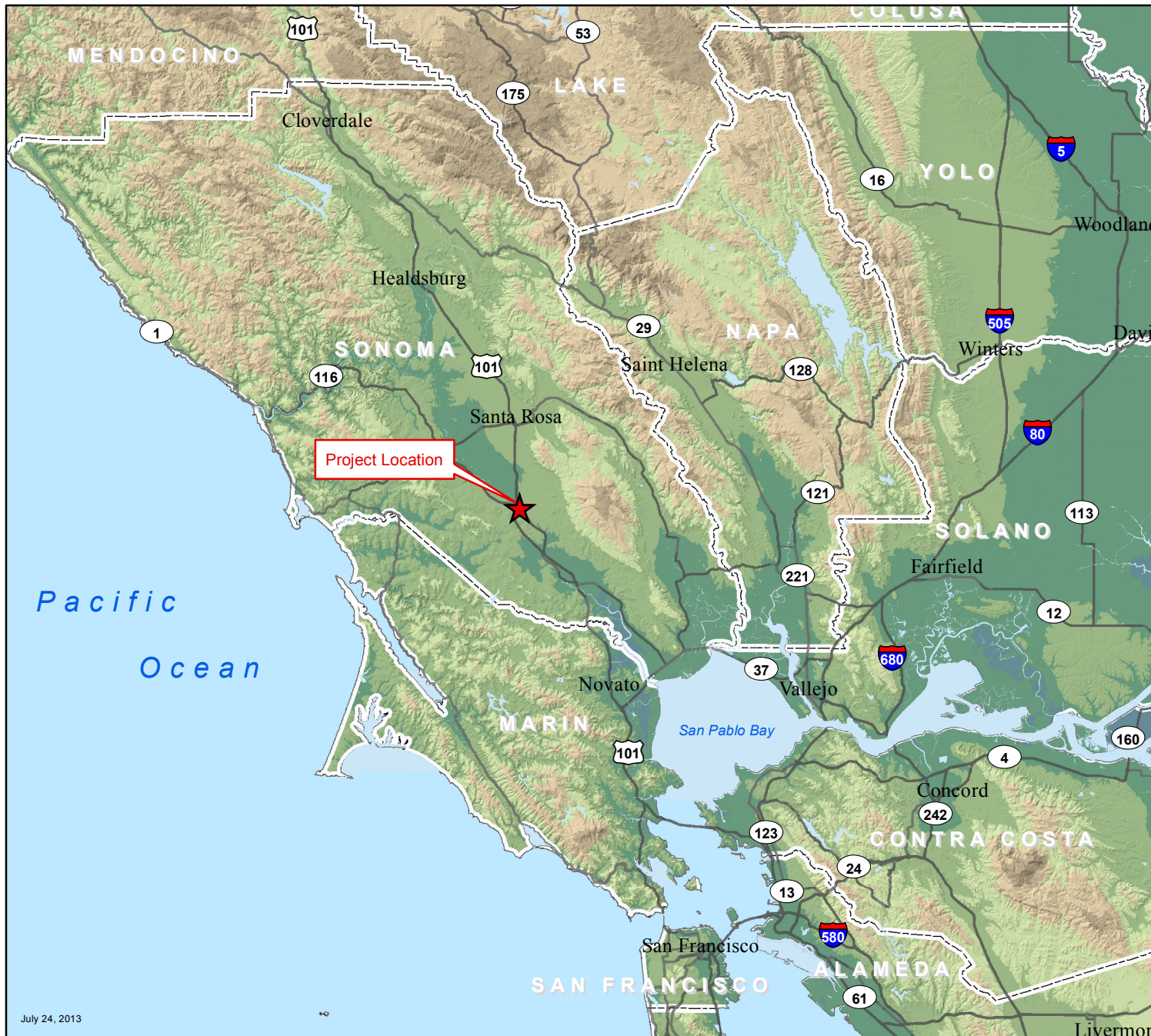
The City, as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will prepare a Program Environmental Report for the 2013 General Plan. The City's 2013 General Plan will be comprehensive in scope. The EIR will be prepared in accordance with CEQA, implementing the CEQA Guidelines (Guidelines), relevant case law, and City procedures. The Cotati 2013 General Plan is considered a "project" under CEQA, and is therefore subject to CEQA review. As a policy document, the General Plan provides guidance and sets standards for several areas of mandatory environmental review for later "projects" that would be undertaken by local government and the private sector.

The EIR will analyze potentially significant impacts associated with adoption and implementation of the 2013 General Plan. In particular, the EIR will focus on areas of planned land use changes in the City. Figure 2 shows the Draft Land Use Map for the 2013 General Plan.

Pursuant to Section 15063(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, no Initial Study will be prepared for the proposed project. The EIR will evaluate the full range of environmental issues contemplated under CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. At this time, the City anticipates that EIR sections will be organized in the following manner:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gasses and Climate Change
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use, Agricultural Resources, and Population
- Noise
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities
- Mandatory Findings of Significance/Cumulative Impacts

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COTATI GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

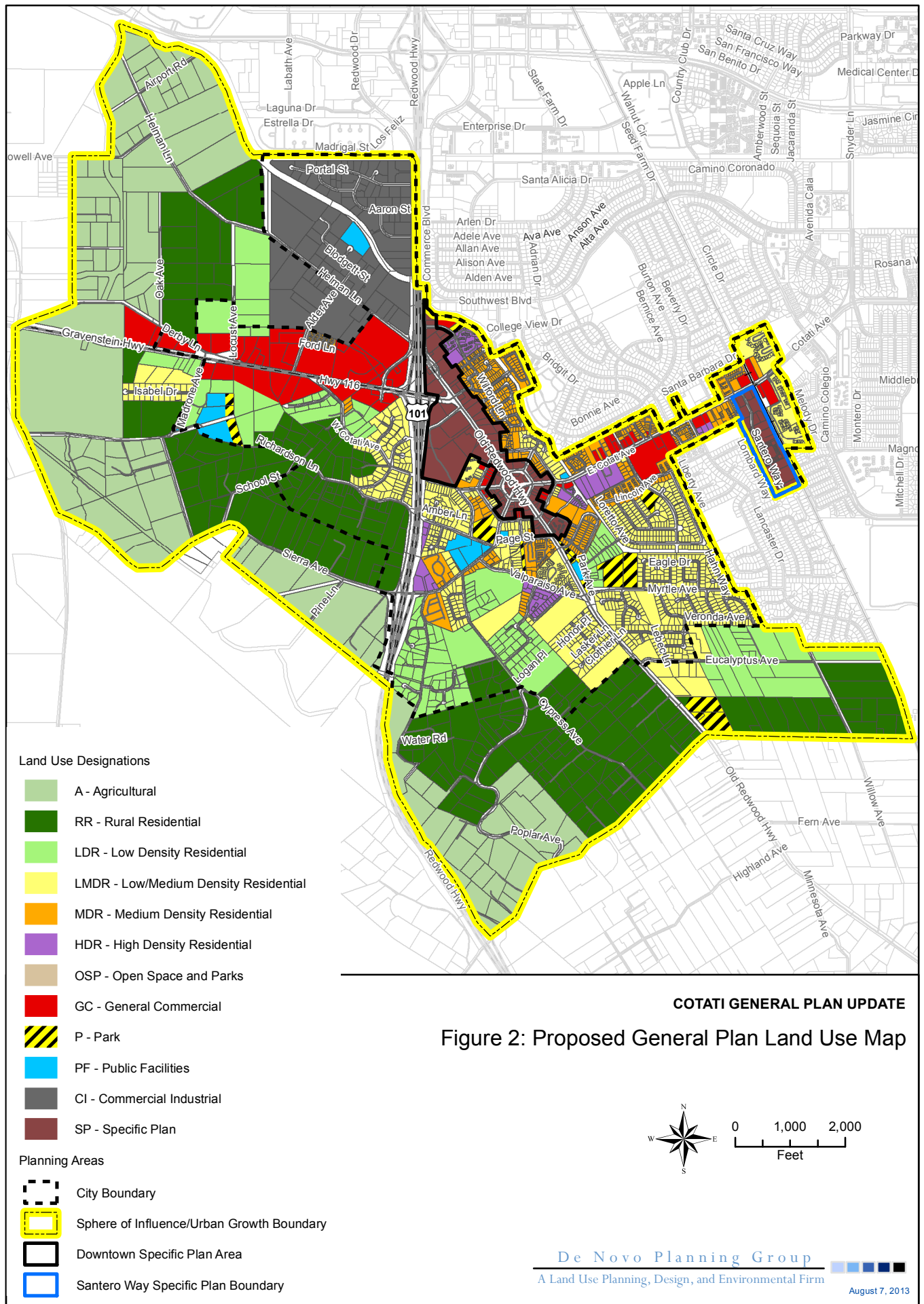
Figure 1:
Regional Location Map



0 2.5 5 10 15 Miles

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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

320 WEST 4TH STREET, SUITE 500
LOS ANGELES, CA 90013
(213) 576-7083



August 28, 2013

Vicki Parker
City of Cotati
201 W. Sierra Avenue
Cotati, CA 94931

Dear Ms. Parker:

Re: SCH 2013082037 Cotati General Plan Update NOP

The California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) has jurisdiction over the safety of highway-rail crossings (crossings) in California. The California Public Utilities Code requires Commission approval for the construction or alteration of crossings and grants the Commission exclusive power on the design, alteration, and closure of crossings in California. The Commission Rail Crossings Engineering Section (RCES) is in receipt of the *Notice of Preparation (NOP)* for the proposed City of Cotati (City) General Plan Update project.

The project area includes active railroad tracks. RCES recommends that the City add language to the General Plan Update so that any future development adjacent to or near the railroad/light rail right-of-way (ROW) is planned with the safety of the rail corridor in mind. New developments may increase traffic volumes not only on streets and at intersections, but also at at-grade crossings. This includes considering pedestrian circulation patterns or destinations with respect to railroad ROW and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Mitigation measures to consider include, but are not limited to, the planning for grade separations for major thoroughfares, improvements to existing at-grade crossings due to increase in traffic volumes and continuous vandal resistant fencing or other appropriate barriers to limit the access of trespassers onto the railroad ROW.

If you have any questions in this matter, please contact me at (213) 576-7076, ykc@cpuc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Ken Chiang", is positioned above the typed name.

Ken Chiang, P.E.
Utilities Engineer
Rail Crossings Engineering Section
Safety and Enforcement Division

C: State Clearinghouse