Santa Maria General Plan

imagine

Conservation and Open Space Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

This page has intentionally been left blank

Introduction

The Conservation and Open Space Element combines two elements that are required to be included in the General Plan. This element describes the city's natural, cultural, historic, tribal, and open space resources and outlines strategies for their continued preservation. In the previous General Plan, these topics were addressed in the Resource Management Element.

This Element consists of three main sections: Background, Issues and Opportunities, and Conservation and Open Space Policies. The *Background* section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in this Element. The *Issues and Opportunities* section describes the key issues and opportunities that shaped the Element. Finally, the *Conservation and Open Space Policies* section outlines the City's Conservation and Open Space goals, policies, and implementation actions.

The Conservation and Open Space Element guides the protection, management, and enhancement of wildlife, habitat, agricultural uses, the city's urban forest, surface water and groundwater, and historic, cultural, and tribal resources. It also supports improving local air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with State law. The Element leverages the city's open space areas as a foundation for long-term conservation of these resources, while also providing opportunities for community recreation and mitigation for natural hazards such as flooding and extreme heat. Through strategic land use planning, the City can minimize the impact of development on local natural resources, improving the quality of life for all residents.

Santa Maria River vegetation, US-101 and Preisker Lane

Santa Maria River and US-101

Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Conservation and Open Space Policies.

Natural and Working Lands

Wildlife Habitat

The varied topography and soil types of the Santa Maria Valley have enabled a mix of native plant communities to exist in the region, including chapparal, coastal scrub, riparian scrub, oak woodland, annual grassland (including grazing lands), sandyhill chaparral, and agricultural (see Figure COS-1). The plant communities in the region provide suitable habitat for various species of animals, including some wide-ranging and mobile species of raptors, waterfowl, and deer. In general, as cities urbanize and expand into undeveloped areas, there is potential for reduced biodiversity and increased human-wildlife conflicts as a result of habitat loss and fragmentation.

Wetlands

Santa Maria contains a number of United States Fish and Wildlife Service-recognized wetlands, which are registered in the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) (see Figure COS-2). These wetlands include freshwater ponds and freshwater emergent wetlands, concentrated in agricultural and open space areas, as well as freshwater forested/shrub wetland and riverine habitat along the Santa Maria River. The wetlands provide habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants and have ecological and recreational value in the form of groundwater recharge, flooding prevention, and providing clean drinking water. However, urban development has the potential to result in the loss of wetland areas, disrupting natural ecosystems, increasing flooding, and reducing natural filtration.

Figure COS-1: Existing Vegetation Types

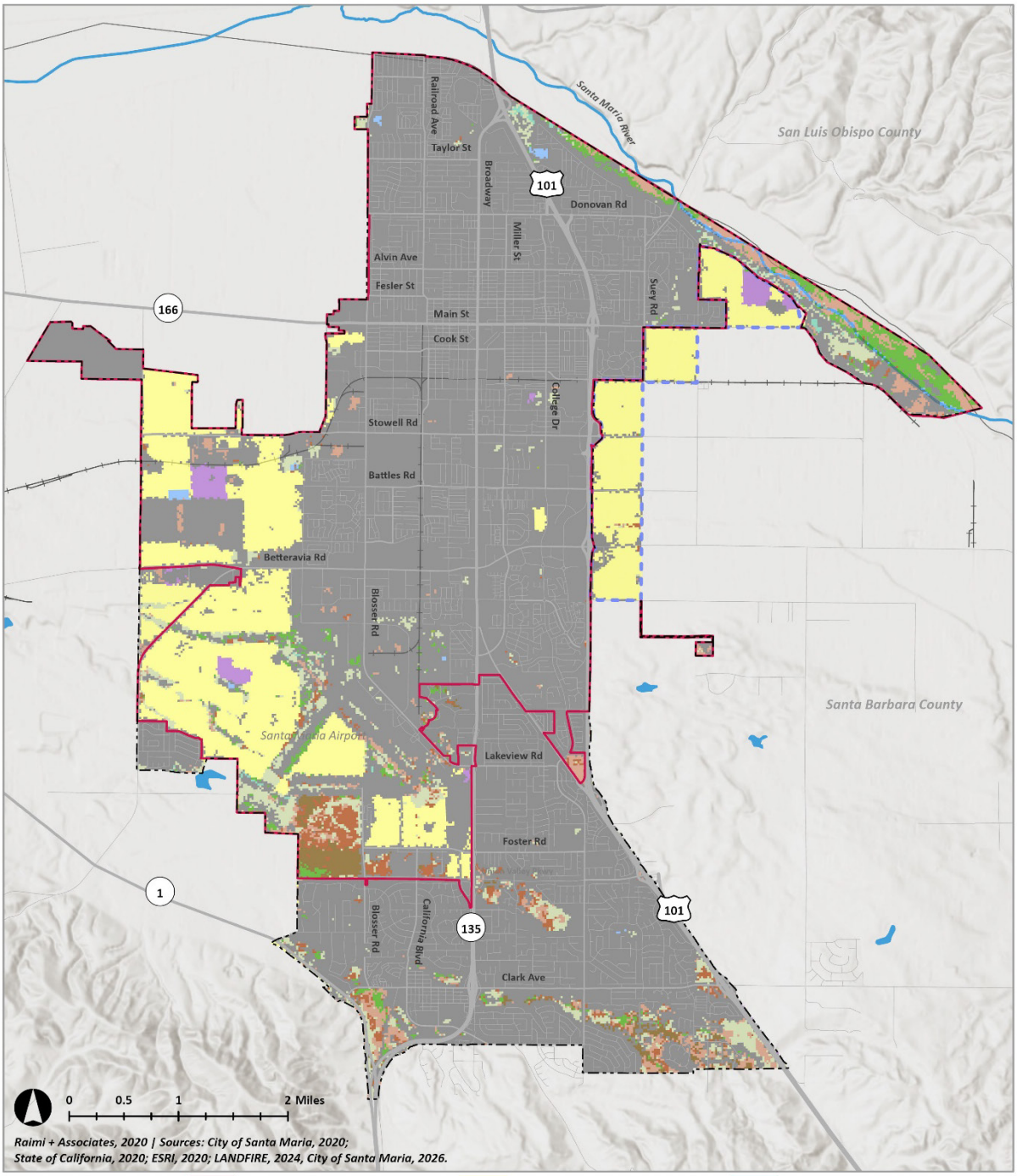
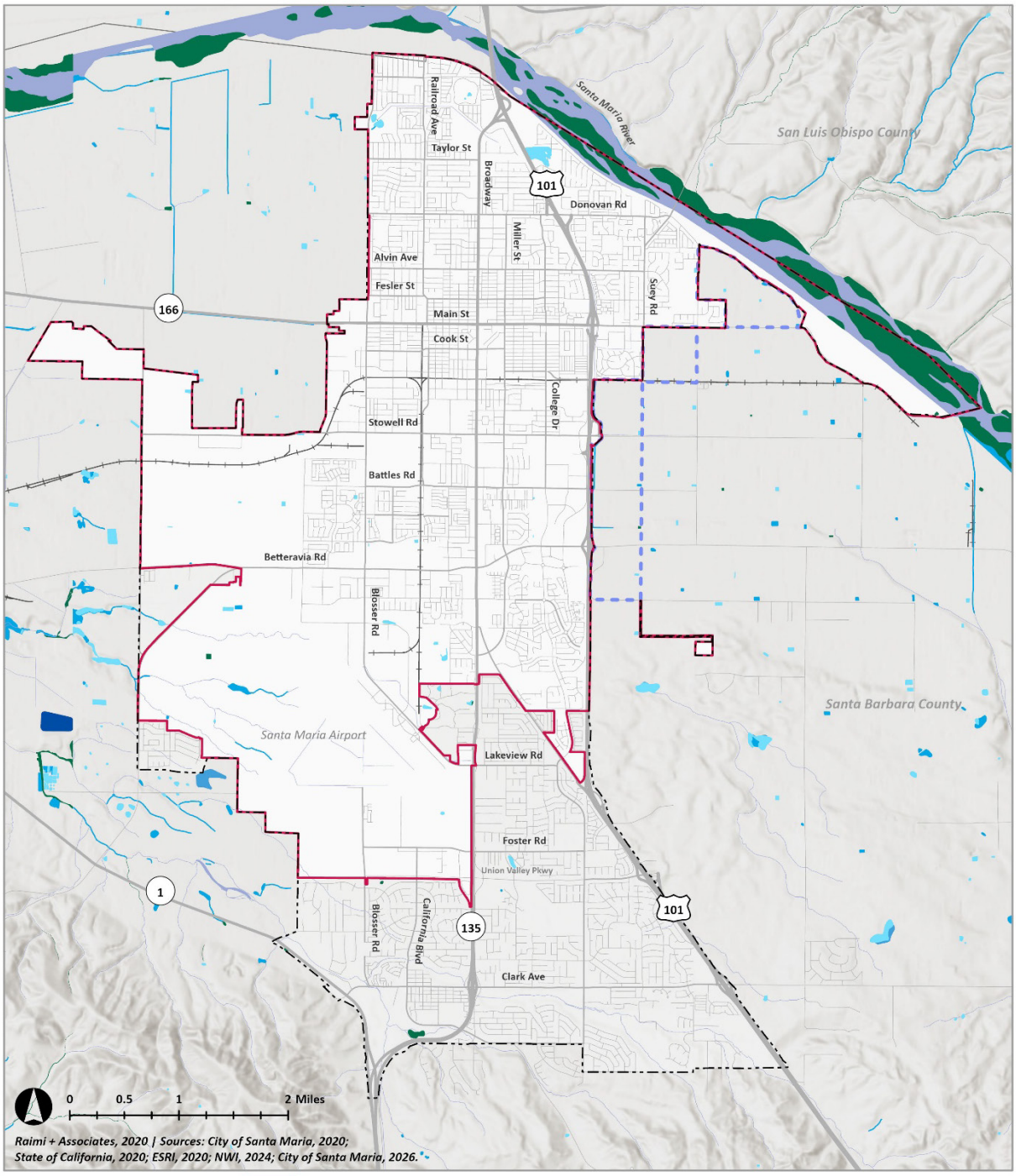


Figure COS-2: Wetlands



Santa Maria General Plan imagine

- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- County Boundaries
- Railroads
- Freeways and Highways
- Santa Maria River

Surface Water

- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond
- Lake
- Riverine

Protected Species

Santa Maria and its surrounding region have species of plants and animals that are protected at the federal and State level. Critical habitat, areas essential for the conservation of a listed endangered or threatened species, are scattered throughout the city (see Figure COS-3). New development in or near habitats of protected or special status species, or in areas where these species are known to live, can lead to habitat loss, fragmentation, or harm to the species.

Wildlife Movement Corridors

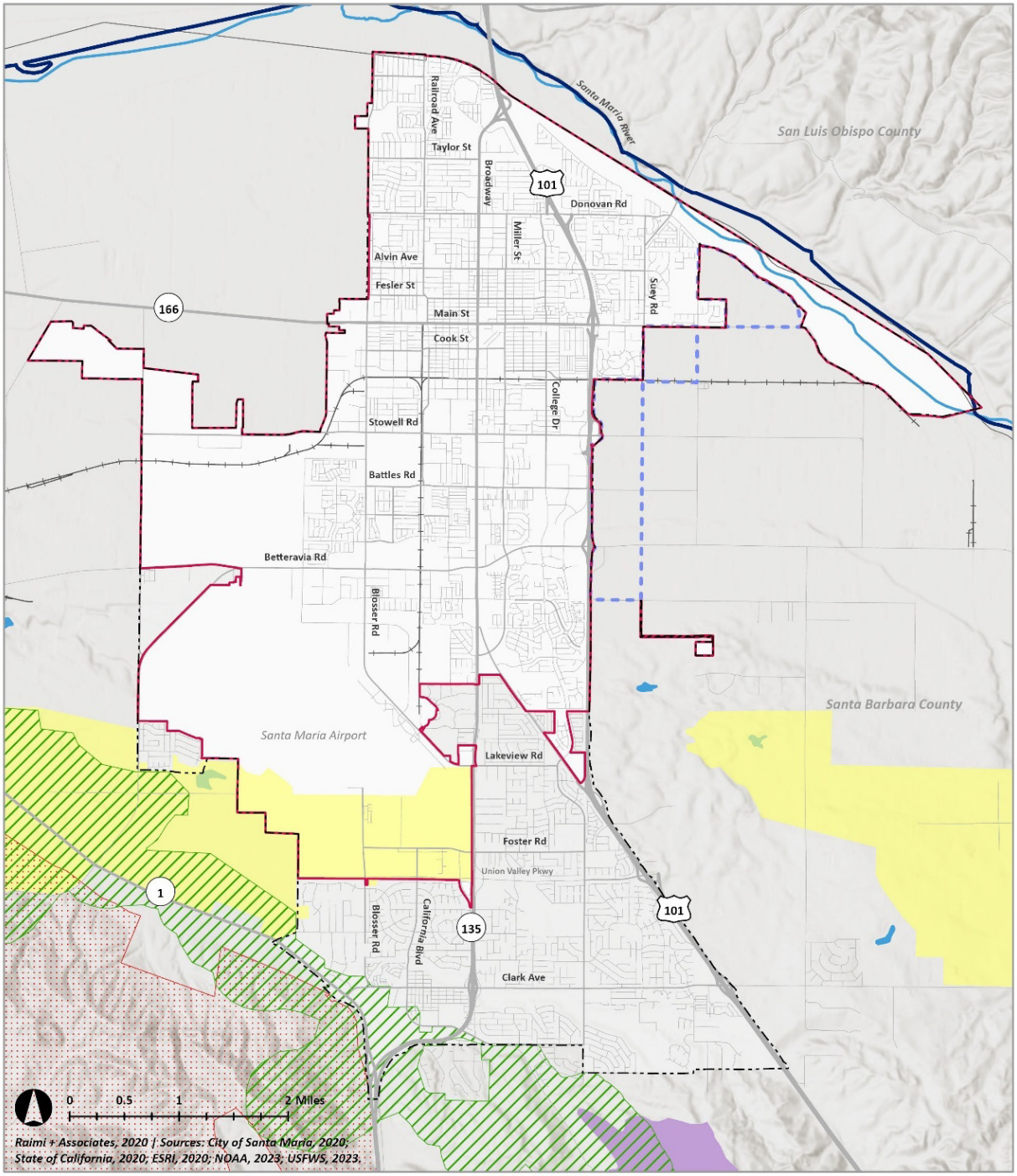
Wildlife corridors are generally defined as connections between habitat patches that allow for physical or genetic exchange between isolated animal populations. These connections may serve a local purpose, such as foraging, nesting, or denning, or they may be regional in nature. Wildlife corridors form a network that is essential to the regional ecology of an area.

Los Padres National Forest

While there is limited information on the actual use of wildlife corridors in the region, there is a potential that the Santa Maria River, Cuyama River, and Sisquoc River are used by wildlife to access habitats in the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains (see Figure COS-4). Isolated populations can experience overcrowding and competition for resources, as well as decreased genetic diversity and a greater risk of extinction.

Santa Maria River

Figure COS-3: Critical Habitat



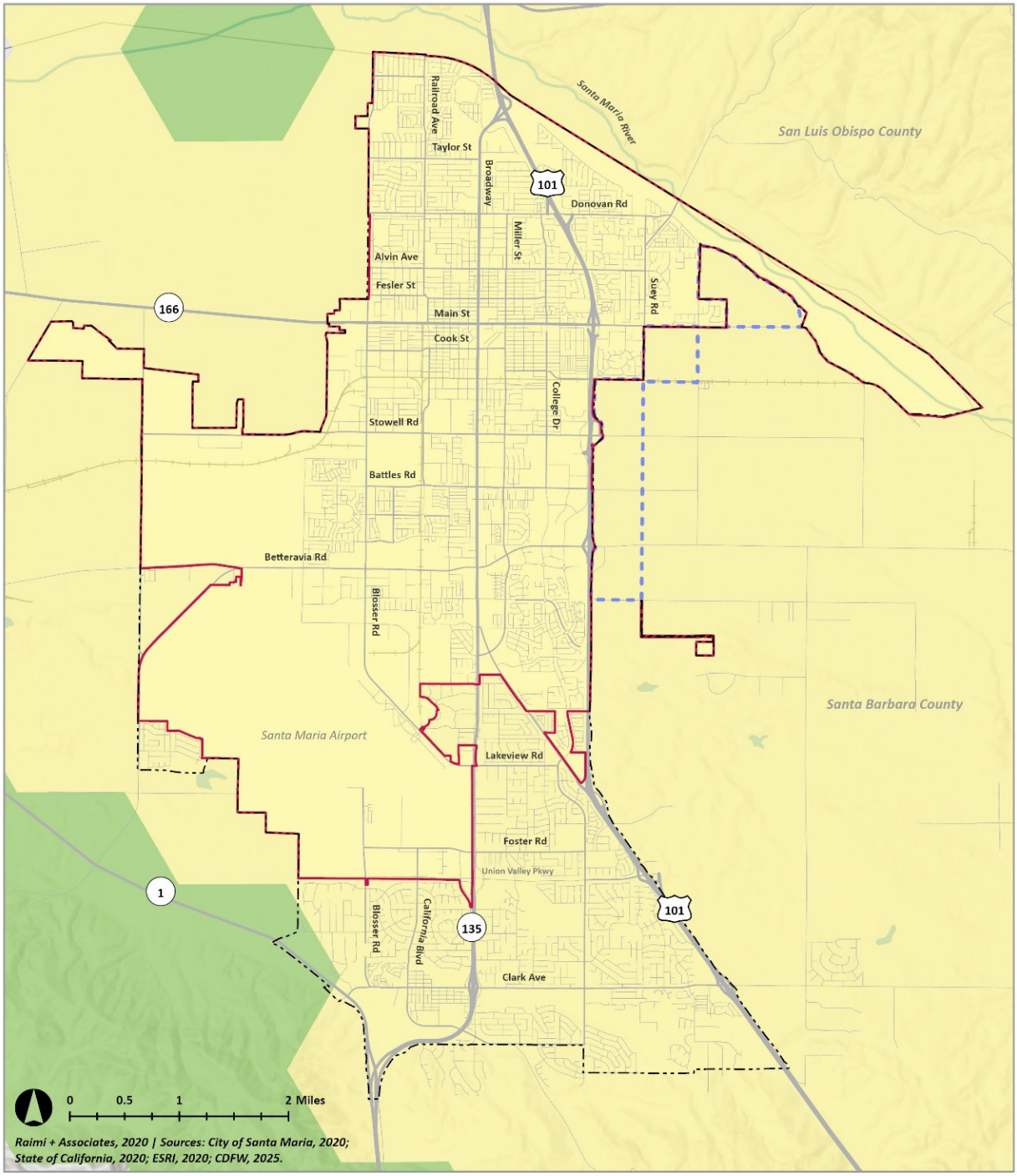
Santa Maria General Plan imagine

- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- County Boundaries
- Railroads
- Freeways and Highways
- Santa Maria River

Critical Habitat

- Steelhead
- California red-legged frog
- California tiger Salamander
- La Graciosa thistle
- Lompoc yerba santa

Figure COS-4: Wildlife Connectivity



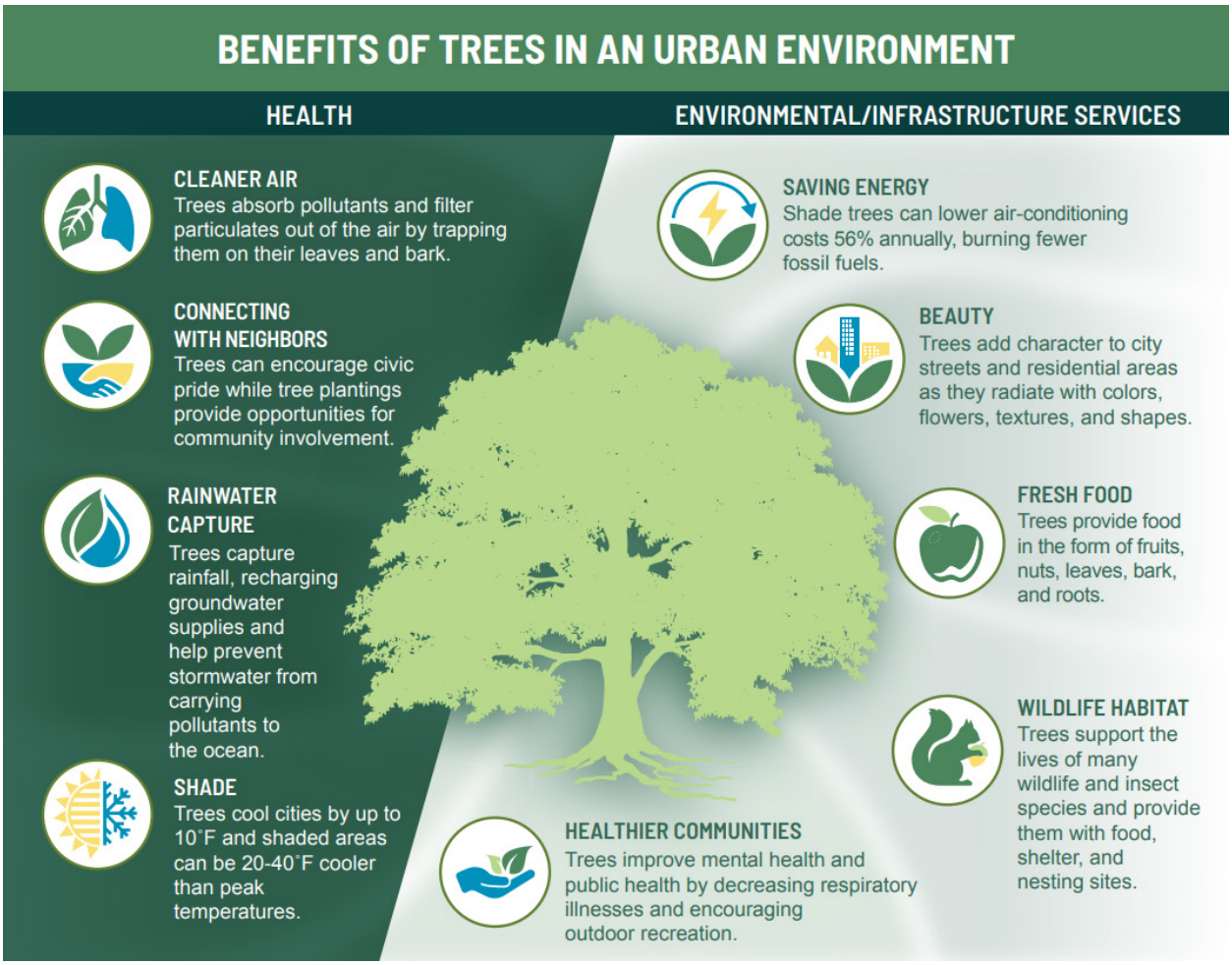
Urban Forest

Santa Maria hosts a rich urban forest of over 27,800 trees that is managed by its Urban Forestry Program. The City has a tree planting easement in commercial and residential areas and requires tree planting along street frontages with new development. City-managed trees are protected, and tree removals must be approved by the Recreation and Parks Department. If healthy trees are removed, they must be replaced at a ratio according to the City's Landscape and Irrigation Standards (2007). In addition, Municipal Code Chapter 12-44 governs the removal and replacement of trees on development sites. The city's urban forest provides a number of benefits to the community, including reducing the urban heat island effect, improving air quality, sequestering carbon dioxide, reducing stormwater runoff, and filtering stormwater. Urban trees require proper maintenance and care to ensure these benefits can be materialized. Tree cover comprises only a small percentage of the total urbanized area of the city. In addition, urban trees are not evenly spread throughout the city, as some areas have fewer trees than others and, consequently, fewer benefits.

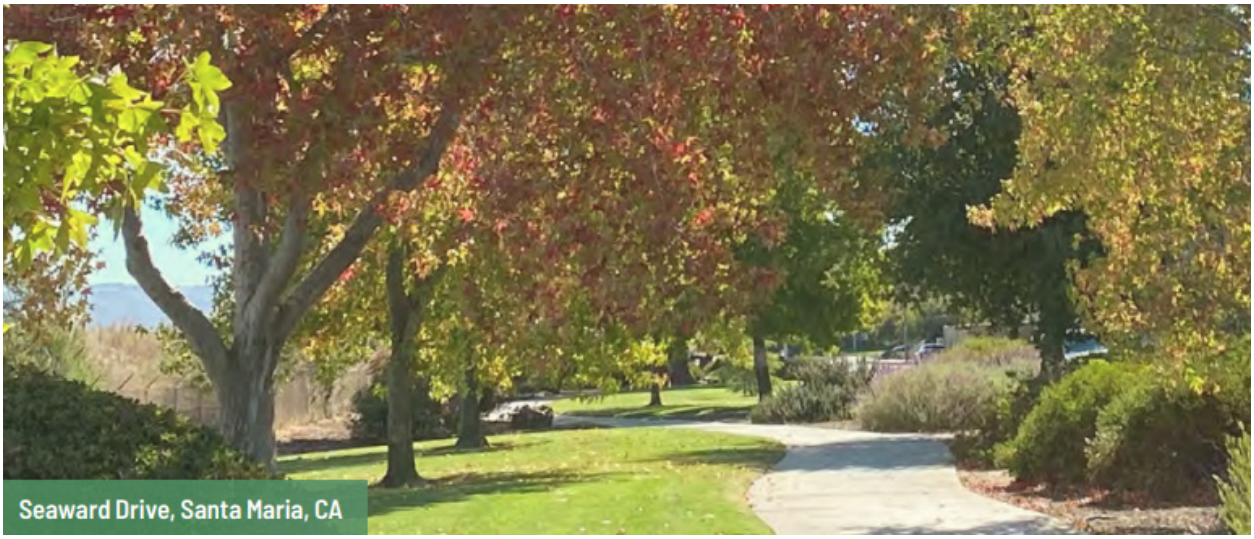
Residential neighborhood with mature Street Trees.

Credit: Rebecca Carey

Credit: Rebecca Carey



Source: Santa Maria Urban Forest Management Plan.



Credit: Rebecca Carey

Water Resources

Surface Water

The principal hydrologic feature in the Santa Maria River Valley is the Santa Maria River Watershed, which drains approximately 1,880 square miles and includes all tributaries of the Cuyama River, Sisquoc River, and the Santa Maria River. The Santa Maria River begins where the Sisquoc and Cuyama Rivers converge. The watershed generally drains to the west, where it meets the Pacific Ocean at Guadalupe. In the lower stretches, the Santa Maria River consists of a sandy, braided channel that is leveed along much of its length. Major land uses in the Santa Maria Watershed that may affect water quality and supply include irrigated and dry-land agriculture, oil production, and urban development. At this time, the Santa Maria River is not utilized for water recreation; however, there are trails adjacent to the river that are used by pedestrians and bicyclists.

Surface Water Quality

Surface water quality in Santa Maria may be impacted by oil, gas, agricultural, and urban land uses. The Santa Maria River is included on the Section 303(d) list for nitrate and other pollutants from agriculture, domestic animals/livestock, natural sources, and urban runoff/storm sewers. Runoff from agricultural areas may carry contaminants such as pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, which are then carried to the Santa Maria River through the drainage system. In more urbanized areas, where vehicle use and urban land use activities are common, water runoff picks up pollutants on the ground surface, including heavy metals, hydrocarbons, detergents, fertilizers, and pesticides. Generally, these pollutants are associated with sediments that collect on roadways and are flushed or wind-blown into drainage systems either in dry weather flows, during construction, or by rainfall. Construction activities can also create erosion and cause sediment to be transported off-site, as surface water runs through a construction site. The concentrated presence of contaminants has the potential to degrade potential beneficial uses such as aquatic habitat, drinking water supply, groundwater recharge, and agricultural supply. Decreased surface water quality can degrade natural ecosystems, leading to the loss of protected and special status species, and pose a public health risk, as contaminated water can spread waterborne diseases.

Groundwater Basin

The city overlies the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin, which has a surface area of approximately 184,000 acres, or 287.5 square miles. Two reservoirs, Lopez Reservoir on Arroyo Grande Creek in the north, and Twitchell Reservoir on the Cuyama River (a tributary to the Santa Maria River in the south), provide storage of stormwater for recharge of the Basin. Groundwater discharges from the Basin include use of groundwater by agricultural, municipal, and industrial users, and groundwater discharges to the ocean. Subsurface groundwater flows to the ocean are required to prevent seawater intrusion into the Basin. Overdraft of the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin could lead to the reduction of available quality groundwater. It could also reduce the natural subsurface flow towards the ocean, leading to an increased potential of saltwater intrusion on the western edge of the Basin.

Groundwater Quality

Groundwater quality conditions vary within the Santa Maria Valley. Current and historic data indicate better groundwater quality in the eastern, central, and southern portions and poorer quality in the western portion. Groundwater quality concerns in the Santa Maria Valley are focused on increased mineralization and nutrient (e.g., nitrogen) concentrations. Salt and nutrient accumulation can be amplified by fertilizer application on agricultural lands. Higher concentrations of salts can make groundwater unsuitable for drinking or irrigation, corrode pipes and water infrastructure, and harm native vegetation. In Santa Maria, groundwater threats also include cleanup sites (e.g., leaking underground storage tanks, former Santa Maria Army Airport site), oil and gas sites, irrigated lands regulatory program sites, land disposal sites, and permitted underground storage tanks.

Air Quality and GHG Emissions

Air Quality

Santa Maria is located in the Santa Barbara portion of the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB), which is under the jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBCAPCD). While the SBCAPCD monitors criteria air pollutant levels in Santa Barbara County, the air quality monitoring station in Santa Maria is owned and operated by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Santa Maria has the highest exceedances of small particulate matter (less than 10 microns in diameter, or PM_{10}) in the county, and the second highest annual mean PM_{10} concentrations. The main source of airborne particulate is local agricultural uses but may also include fugitive dust generated by the Oceano-Nipomo Dunes. The primary sources of toxic air contaminants (TACs) in Santa Maria include gas stations and industrial uses in the eastern portion of the city. While regional air quality has dramatically improved since the 1990s, long-term conditions may shift due to climate change, which could increase pollutants (e.g., smoke from a wildfire event).

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Santa Maria currently has not adopted a Climate Action Plan. Santa Maria's Community-Wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory compares the city's GHG emissions in 2020 to 2005 levels. The GHG Inventory reports that GHG emissions in 2020 totaled 441,390 metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO2e), a 20 percent reduction from the 2005 baseline, consistent with the State's GHG reduction target set by Assembly Bill 32. During this time, the commercial/industrial sector has experienced the greatest reduction in GHG emissions (44 percent), followed by the residential sector (25 percent), and the transportation sector (12 percent). The transportation sector is the primary source of GHG emissions in Santa Maria, representing approximately 62 percent of the city's total GHG emissions, not including emissions emitted by airplanes at the Santa Maria Airport. Santa Maria continues to work towards the statewide goal of carbon neutrality by 2045 to reduce climate change impacts.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Historic District and Landmarks

The City of Santa Maria adopted the Historic Overlay District to encourage the preservation of local landmarks and objects of historical merit through flexible development standards. The City's Municipal Code defines objects of historical merit as places, sites, buildings, structures, or works of art that have special historical, aesthetic, or cultural value, according to the Recreation and Parks Commission. Historical landmarks are places, sites, buildings, structures, or works of art with historical, cultural, aesthetic, or special character or interest for the general public, and are at least 50 years old, and are approved by the City Council. As of January 2019, four parcels on Broadway (SR-135) are within the Historic Overlay District , and 36 landmarks and objects of historic merit are located between Liberty Street and El Camino Colegio. Buildings in these areas generally consist of California mission architecture. Santa Maria's historic resources[1] illustrate the community's history and culture; redevelopment on sites with historic resources and the aging of these structures pose a risk of damage or loss of these resources.

Archaeological, Paleontological, and Tribal Cultural Resources

Archaeological resources refer to the material remains (artifacts, structures, refuse) produced purposely or accidentally by human beings. Archaeological remains identify the type of activities, methods of adaptation to the environment, and changes in activities and organization that were experienced by people in the past. Furthermore, these remains often have special significance to ethnic groups, special interest groups, and the general public. Archaeological, paleontological, and tribal cultural resources provide a vital link to the shared history of human societies, and tribal resources continue to hold significant spiritual and cultural meaning for Native American tribal communities. Without appropriate mitigation, development can lead to the damage or destruction of these resources. Other cultural resources designated by the City of Santa Maria include the Santa Maria Museum of Flight and the Santa Maria Cemetery District

[1] A list of the historical landmarks and objects of historical merit in the city of Santa Maria is located on the City of Santa Maria website at https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/about-us/maps.

Santa Maria City Hall, City Historical Landmark Number 7

Buena Vista Park, City Historical Landmark Number 1

Santa Maria Inn, City Historical Landmark Number 6

Ruben Hart Residence, City Historical Landmark Number 4

Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the policy direction of the Conservation and Open Space Policies.

Natural resource protection. The Santa Maria Valley hosts a diverse range of habitats and vegetation types that support a range of plant and animal species, including several State and federally protected species. Natural lands consist of areas that are primarily undeveloped and retain their ecological characteristics, such as providing critical habitat, ecosystem services, and supporting biodiversity. Through comprehensive conservation planning efforts, the City can improve the ecological health of local resources by preserving and expanding open space and natural areas, protecting habitat for special status species and wildlife connectivity, increasing biodiversity through native landscaping, and growing the city's urban forest. Natural and open space areas can also be multifunctioning, supporting healthy ecosystems, providing recreational opportunities, and enhancing climate resilience by mitigating climate-induced hazards such as flooding and extreme heat.

Water quality. Santa Maria's surface and groundwater resources are essential for supporting local municipal, agricultural, and ecological functions. These systems have faced challenges from water pollutants derived from agriculture, urban runoff, oil and gas operations, and industrial uses, impairing local waterways and the groundwater basin. The use of best management practices (BMPs) in agricultural operations, strengthening development standards to reduce runoff and enhance stormwater filtration, and monitoring the operation and closure of oil and gas production sites will minimize contamination of surface water and groundwater resources.

Environmental impacts of working lands. Working lands, which includes agricultural and mining operations, play a significant role in Santa Maria's economy and character. However, these activities can result in habitat loss and disruption, impact local air and water quality, and generate land use conflicts as urban areas expand, particularly between sensitive uses such as residential uses and agricultural operations. Implementing best management practices that encourage sustainability and utilizing strategic land use planning to minimize conflicts can help to mitigate these issues.

Air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. Since the 1990s, the City has made substantial progress in improving local air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Despite these improvements, there is still a high level of particulate matter and toxic air contaminants due to agricultural and industrial operations. Climate events, including the spread of wildfire smoke, may cause air quality conditions to change over the long-term. In addition, the City has limited existing policies or plans to further reduce greenhouse emissions to meet statewide targets. Adopting and implementing robust climate policies, including strategies for cleaner transportation and energy systems, will enable the City to decrease air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions to meet State goals and support public health.

Historic, cultural, and tribal resource protection. Santa Maria is committed to preserving its architectural, cultural, and archaeological heritage. These resources illustrate the diverse history and community identity of the city and region. However, over time, development and physical deterioration of aging structures have challenged the continued preservation of these resources. By establishing flexible development standards, fostering collaboration with tribal communities, and promoting awareness of the local cultural heritage, the City can continue to preserve these resources while also accommodating future growth.

Community support and stewardship. Community participation is vital to the success of conservation efforts, as it fosters local stewardship, builds public awareness, and ensures that strategies are aligned with community values. Without community support in carrying out local conservation initiatives, these programs may struggle to gain traction, potentially face resistance, and overall are likely to be less effective. By creating opportunities for community members to participate in creating and implementing conservation plans, the City can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility that can lead to the long-term success of local conservation initiatives.

Volunteers with the Urban Forest Advisory Committee planting Coast live oak trees *(Quercus agrifolia)* in Santa Maria.

Credit: Rebecca Carey

Conservation and Open Space Policies

The Conservation and Open Space Policies address the key issues and opportunities identified above and establish a comprehensive roadmap for conserving Santa Maria's natural environment and open space areas. The *Policy Framework* outlines Conservation and Open Space goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Conservation and Open Element emphasize the continued preservation and enhancement of the city's natural resources, working lands, open spaces, and historic and cultural resources.

The Policy Framework promotes the long-term, sustainable stewardship of natural assets and open space, such as wildlife habitat and corridors (Goal COS-1), and addresses the potential adverse impacts of agricultural and mining operations on natural resources (Goal COS-2). The Framework also outlines actions for mitigating the impact of development on historic and cultural resources (Goal COS-7).

The Framework also includes initiatives for growing the city's urban forest (Goal COS-3), along with efforts to improve local water quality (Goal COS-4) and air quality (Goal COS-5) and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Goal COS-6) to support a healthier and more resilient environment. To maximize public support and ensure effective implementation, the Framework highlights opportunities for incorporating community involvement in sustainability programs (Goal COS-8).

Policy Framework

Goal COS-1: Natural lands and biodiversity. A healthy and connected natural environment sustains the local natural resource biodiversity.

Policy COS-1.1: Natural habitat and wildlife corridors. Protect and, to the extent feasible, expand natural habitat and wildlife corridor areas, natural wetlands, and other natural lands throughout the city and Sphere of Influence.

Action COS-1.1.1: Prevent the loss of natural land area and/or the reduction of the quality of natural lands through the establishment of a *no net loss* land use management policy.

- Site new development outside of sensitive habitat and wildlife corridor areas.
- Prohibit redevelopment that would encroach upon sensitive habitat and wildlife corridor areas.

Action COS-1.1.2: If impacts to natural resources are identified during environmental review, require the applicant to adjust site design and/or incorporate additional mitigation measures to minimize the identified impacts.

Action COS-1.1.3: Coordinate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to identify critical wildlife corridors in Santa Maria.

Action COS-1.1.4: Encourage the establishment of conservation open space areas and conservation easements or acquisitions in sensitive habitat areas and areas identified as critical wildlife corridors through education, technical assistance, and pursuing grant funding (such as funding from the Habitat Conservation Fund).

Policy COS-1.2: City greenbelt. Coordinate with Santa Barbara County to develop a continuous system of greenbelts and natural corridors.

Action COS-1.2.1: Define the purpose and desired outcomes for a system of greenbelts and collaborate with Santa Barbara County to develop designation criteria and standards for the design, implementation, and use of greenbelt areas.

Action COS-1.2.2: Assess existing land use patterns to designate areas that will comprise the City's greenbelt. Design the greenbelt to ensure connectivity to existing and planned parks, trails, and open spaces to facilitate wildlife movement.

Action COS-1.2.3: Designate publicly owned portions of the Santa Maria River as greenbelt areas whereby riparian habitats may be preserved, and coordinate with private landowners on potential future options to voluntarily preserve such land.

Action COS-1.2.4: Explore the feasibility of allowing the transfer of development rights and permitting higher intensity uses in existing urban areas to conserve natural lands.

Policy COS-1.3: Natural biodiversity. Increase natural biodiversity through the reintroduction of native species, removal of non-native, invasive species, and proper sustainable maintenance of vegetated areas.

Action COS-1.3.1: Identify areas feasible for implementing sustainable maintenance practices on City-owned open spaces and landscaped areas and incorporate these practices into regular maintenance activities for the identified areas.

- Reduce mowing in targeted areas (i.e., within agricultural and habitat buffers and in City open spaces) to promote natural plant growth and habitat for pollinators.
- Reduce the use of pesticides on City-owned lands through the adoption of minimum risk pesticide use and spot treatment.
- Incorporate the use of integrated pest management strategies on City-owned landscaped areas and parks.
- Use organic compost in landscaped and turfed areas to enhance soil quality and improve water retention.

Action COS-1.3.2: Eliminate non-native and invasive species in natural habitat areas, open spaces, and City-managed landscaped areas through regular maintenance and vegetation management activities.

Policy COS-1.4: Urban rewilding. Implement urban rewilding projects to reintroduce natural processes, restore natural ecosystems, and promote biodiversity.

Action COS-1.4.1: Identify areas where urban rewilding projects could be implemented, including vacant land, alleyways, underutilized parking lots, basins, channels, and underutilized areas within existing parks (landscaped areas, areas along trails and walkways).

Action COS-1.4.2: Develop and implement small-scale pilot projects on City-owned land, such as pocket forests or incorporating native plants in community gardens, to demonstrate how urban rewilding can be successfully achieved and the benefits of these efforts.

Action COS-1.4.3: Connect with private landowners where urban rewilding projects could be implemented. Provide educational information on potential rewilding projects and seek partnerships for implementation, including strategies that minimize potential fire hazards through proper maintenance, use of defensible space, and the use of appropriate vegetation.

Policy COS-1.5: Endangered, threatened, and special status species. Minimize potential impacts of development on federal or State endangered and threatened species and non-listed special status species through the development and permit review process. Condition development projects to avoid impacts to these species, to the greatest extent feasible.

Policy COS-1.6: Multifunctional open spaces. Design multifunctional open spaces that provide public recreational opportunities and protect the community from hazards.[2]

Action COS-1.6.1: Consult with utility companies and public agencies to establish walking trails and native landscaping in easement areas.

Action COS-1.6.2: Increase natural green spaces and green infrastructure throughout the city to reduce the risk of extreme heat impacts and incorporate climate-resilient, native vegetation.[3]

Goal COS-2: Working lands. Sustainable and productive working lands support healthy local ecosystems.

Policy COS-2.1: Agricultural preservation. Collaborate with Santa Barbara County and local landowners to preserve existing agricultural uses on lands not proposed for future development, including croplands and rangelands.

Action COS-2.1.1: During review of projects that would alter or convert existing agricultural uses, balance State and regional efforts to preserve existing agricultural uses, including the Santa Barbara County Right to Farm Ordinance, clustering of urban land uses/development, and transfer of development rights —with other factors. These include providing adequate housing, achieving a jobs-housing balance, supporting economic sustainability, and advancing other City interests.

[2] Please see the Circulation Element for additional active transportation policies and actions.
[3] Please see the Safety Element for additional natural cooling policies and actions.

Action COS-2.1.2: To the extent feasible, support the establishment of agricultural conservation easements on land within the City's Sphere of Influence that is zoned for agriculture and designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland by initiating discussions with property owners on eligible sites and providing education and technical assistance to interested owners.

Policy COS-2.2: Sustainable agriculture. Encourage the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices to preserve productivity while protecting natural environments.

Action COS-2.2.1: Support local agricultural operators to encourage the continued use and adoption of best management practices that enhance soil quality, conserve water, and reduce soil erosion, including:

- Integrated pest management and reduction of chemical pesticide use
- Rotational grazing and crop rotation to enhance soil health and biodiversity
- Agroforestry
- Composting

Policy COS-2.3: Sustainable resource extraction. Ensure sustainable extraction and processing of mineral resources that preserve the health of local natural ecosystems.

Action COS-2.3.1: Review applications for the extraction and processing of mineral resources for consistency with the Santa Maria General Plan, and compliance with the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 and the City of Santa Maria Surface Mining Ordinance (Municipal Code Chapter 47).

Action COS-2.3.2: Update the City's Surface Mining Ordinance to require operators and new mineral extraction uses to develop plans for post-extraction land rehabilitation to restore the natural environment after mineral operations cease. Such post-extraction rehabilitation plans must, at a minimum, meet the requirements set forth by State law.

Action COS-2.3.3: Update the City's Surface Mining Ordinance to require operators to conduct annual training to educate employees on safe practices and how to effectively monitor and report potential environmental concerns.

Goal COS-3: Urban forestry. A healthy and expansive urban forest is cohesive with the city's natural environment.

Policy COS-3.1: Urban forestry regulations. Adopt and implement the Urban Forest Management Plan with the goal of expanding the urban canopy to 20 percent of the city by improving tree maintenance and planting standards in the City's Municipal Code.

Action COS-3.1.1: Ensure implementation of urban forestry projects to comply with the adopted Urban Forest Management Plan.

Action COS-3.1.2: Pursue grant funding to support expansion, maintenance, and education related to the city's urban forest, such as funds provided through the California Urban and Community Forestry

Inflation Reduction Act. Dedicate a share of received funds to support programs for disadvantaged communities.

Action COS-3.1.3: Evaluate and dedicate local revenue mechanisms for urban forestry management, such as funding from the following sources:

- Recycled urban lumber sales
- Fines for illegal removal of trees
- In lieu fees for tree replacement
- Municipal fuel taxes
- Grants

Action COS-3.1.4: Partner with local agencies and non-profit organizations to implement a tree planting program on City-owned lands and streets.

Action COS-3.1.5: Develop street tree master plans to outline how the City will expand the urban forest in areas with an overlap of disadvantaged communities and inadequate canopy cover.

Goal COS-4: Water resources. Sustainable watershed management protects the city's water quality and natural ecosystems.[4]

Policy COS-4.1: Santa Maria River protection. Protect and enhance the beneficial uses of the Santa Maria River to support essential community and environmental needs, including municipal and domestic water supply, agricultural supply, and groundwater recharge.

Action COS-4.1.1: Implement best management practices to reduce pollutants from city runoff.

Action COS-4.1.2: Support regional recharge programs and projects that use the Santa Maria River for replenishing local groundwater sources.

Policy COS-4.2: Stormwater management. Improve local surface water and groundwater quality through strategic land use and zoning practices.

Policy COS-4.3: Groundwater contamination. Minimize groundwater contamination from current and previous oil and gas operations.[5]

Action COS-4.3.1: Consult CalGem and Santa Barbara County Environmental Health, as required, to update the City's Petroleum Ordinance to adopt standards for post-production restoration, including requirements for timing, equipment removal, borehole and well plugging, and site restoration. Require the use of native vegetation in all site restoration efforts.

[4] Please see the Safety and Public Facilities and Services Elements for additional water resources and stormwater policies and actions.

[5] Please see the Safety Element for additional policies and actions related to oil extraction sites.

Policy COS-4.4: Sustainable water management. Ensure the long-term sustainability of groundwater resources through conservation management practices and supporting opportunities for expanding groundwater recharge.

Action COS-4.4.1: Assess and enhance stormwater retention systems that integrate groundwater recharge and contribute to natural resource conservation.

Action COS-4.4.2: Continue and expand local water conservation programs. Increase awareness of the City's water-wise landscaping program, including the use of native and drought-tolerant plants.

Action COS-4.4.3: Continue to support the reduction of local per capita water consumption through community education programs.

- Update the City's Water Conservation webpage to provide additional and up-to-date information on the City's water conservation initiatives and the role the community serves in reducing water consumption.
- Publicize home projects residents can implement to reduce water consumption, such as installing low-flow water fixtures, smart irrigation systems, rainwater harvesting systems, and permeable paving. Host community workshops to demonstrate how to implement these projects. Publish this information on the City's website with links to affordable fixtures, irrigation systems, and rain barrels.

Goal COS-5: Air quality. The community breathes clean and healthy air.

Policy COS-5.1: Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District policies. Ensure consistency between the City and the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBCAPCD) air quality plans and regulations. Continue to enforce the standards and regulations set by the SBCAPCD.

Action COS-5.1.1: Continue to refer projects requiring an Air Pollution Control District (APCD) permit to the SBCAPCD and require ACPD permit approval.

Action COS-5.1.2: Evaluate potential impacts of proposed development on air quality during the development and environmental review process, using APCD threshold standards as guidelines.

Action COS-5.1.3: Ensure new development complies with the Air Quality Attainment Plan (AQAP), Ozone Plan, and other relevant regulations during the development and environmental review process.

Policy COS-5.2: Agricultural air pollutant emissions. Reduce air pollutant emissions associated with agricultural uses.

Action COS-5.2.1: Work with agricultural operators located within City limits and in adjacent unincorporated areas to encourage the adoption of farming practices that minimize dust, consistent with the Santa Barbara County's dust control measures. These practices include limiting plowing, disking, mowing, and tilling when soil is dry and winds are high, and using surface coverings or cover crops to reduce wind erosion and stabilize soil.

Action COS-5.2.2: Coordinate with SBCAPCD to report illegal burnings and enforce SBCAPCD regulations pertaining to agricultural burnings.

Action COS-5.2.3: Collaborate with the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office to monitor pesticide residues in the air and enforce pesticide use and storage regulations.

Action COS-5.2.4: Update the Municipal Code to establish a minimum buffer requirement between agricultural uses, including agricultural supply businesses, and development based on the type of use. Sensitive land uses, including residential uses, schools, day cares, senior homes, and hospitals, require the largest buffer distance from agricultural and related uses.

Action COS-5.2.5: Update the Municipal Code to require the use of green walls or vegetation barriers in combination with minimum buffers to provide a physical barrier between agricultural and sensitive uses.

Policy COS-5.3: Fugitive dust emissions. Mitigate air pollutants and fugitive dust emissions resulting from construction and demolition activities by requiring the use of best management practices consistent with SBCAPCD Guidelines regarding fugitive dust control.

Action COS-5.3.1: Utilize SBCAPCD's short-term construction emissions guidelines to determine levels of significance for construction-related emissions.

Goal COS-6: Greenhouse gas emissions. The city strives to be carbon-neutral.

Policy COS-6.1: GHG reduction strategy. Develop and implement a citywide GHG reduction and monitoring strategy.

Action COS-6.1.1: Establish City GHG emissions reduction targets that are consistent with State-mandated targets of reducing emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2045.

Action COS-6.1.2: Develop a sustainability plan or similar document that outlines how the City will achieve its GHG reduction targets. Integrate City-led GHG reduction strategies with regional efforts.

Policy COS-6.2: Vehicle emissions reduction. Reduce vehicle-generated air pollution and GHG emissions by expanding active transportation opportunities.[6]

Policy COS-6.3: City vehicle fleet electrification. Transition the City's vehicle fleet to electric/zero-emission vehicles.

Action COS-6.3.1: Amend the City's Capital Improvement Plan to incorporate the replacement of high-mileage fleet vehicles with clean fuel vehicles.

Action COS-6.3.2: Pursue State and federal grants for transitioning City vehicles to clean fuel sources and installing electric vehicle charging stations at City facilities.

[6] Please see the Circulation Element for policies and actions focused on complete streets, active transportation, and transit.

Policy COS-6.4: Energy conservation programs. Promote energy conservation through public awareness programs.

Action COS-6.4.1: Coordinate with the Tri-County Regional Energy Network (3C-REN) to increase awareness of local incentives for improving energy efficiency for homeowners.

Action COS-6.4.2: Identify and pursue funding to create a program offering home energy audits to help property owners identify updates to increase energy efficiency and funding assistance for home retrofits.

Goal COS-7: Historic and cultural resources. The city's cultural heritage is preserved and celebrated.

Policy COS-7.1: Historic, cultural, and tribal resources. Protect the city's historic, cultural, and tribal resources through the City's Historic Overlay Ordinance, Historic Landmark Ordinance, and proper tribal consultation practices.

Action COS-7.1.1: Review and explore opportunities for strengthening the Historic Overlay Ordinance to protect and document culturally significant sites, including tribal and historic resources.

Action COS-7.1.2: Enforce federal, State, and local regulations related to the preservation of historic and cultural resources.

Action COS-7.1.3: Avoid the relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of historic resources to the greatest extent feasible, consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Action COS-7.1.4: Support the adaptive reuse of designated and non-designated historical resources by enforcing the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoration, and providing technical assistance and sharing of best practices.

Policy COS-7.2: Historic, cultural, and tribal resource impact mitigation. Identify impacts of new development on historic, cultural, and tribal resources during the development and environmental review process and incorporate site-specific mitigation measures accordingly to minimize the identified impacts.

Policy COS-7.3: Tribal resource protection. Protect tribal resources by partnering with representatives of Native American tribes during planning and development activities.

Action COS-7.3.1: Consult with local tribes and cultural organizations to identify and conserve cultural resources and points of interest.

Action COS-7.3.2: Continue to comply with State, regional, and local regulations pertaining to notification and engagement of Native American tribes, including AB 52 and SB 18.

Policy COS-7.4: Cultural resource access. Explore opportunities to incorporate cultural resources into parks and open spaces, enriching community access to Santa Maria's history.

Action COS-7.4.1: Develop wayfinding and educational signage for significant historical and cultural resources.

Action COS-7.4.2: Pursue grant funding to facilitate the preservation and restoration of historic sites significant to the city's cultural identity.

Policy COS-7.5: Archaeological resource protection. Protect archaeological resources by requiring development to incorporate adequate mitigation to ensure the integrity of these resources.

Action COS-7.5.1: Continue to analyze project-specific impacts to archaeological resources through the development review and CEQA processes with the goal of avoiding and reducing impacts on archaeological resources.

Action COS-7.5.2: Consult with representatives of Native American tribes to ensure the appropriate treatment of archaeological resources, including cultural artifacts and human remains, if found.

Goal COS-8: Community engagement. A knowledgeable and engaged community actively supports local conservation initiatives.[7]

Policy COS-8.1: Community conservation planning. Increase public involvement in conservation planning and decision-making processes to foster local stewardship of local natural resources.

Action COS-8.1.1: Integrate opportunities for public involvement, such as community forums, during the initial planning stages of the City's conservation initiatives to enable the community to help shape the vision for conservation projects.

Action COS-8.1.2: Establish community advisory committees to provide counsel during conservation planning for natural, historic, urban forestry, and parks and recreation resources. These committees should also ensure there are ample opportunities for public engagement throughout the planning process and provide opportunities for the community to co-design and participate in City-led conservation programs and collaborate in the creation of a shared community vision.

Policy COS-8.2: Community environmental stewardship. Offer a variety of community education opportunities to increase public understanding of the relationship between people and the natural environment.

Action COS-8.2.1: Offer self-guided nature walks in local open spaces, such as the Santa Maria River Levee trail, to educate the community on local natural resources and increase access to open space areas.

Action COS-8.2.2: Host community workshops on a variety of sustainability topics, such as composting, water conservation, and/or sustainable gardening.

Action COS-8.2.3: Facilitate the creation of local gardens specifically for native plants that support native birds, bees, and insects.

[7] Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for additional community engagement policies and actions.

Action COS-8.2.4: Update the Utilities webpage on the City's website to include information about recycling centers.

Action COS-8.2.5: Develop a public dashboard for sharing data on the City's tree inventory, canopy cover, and environmental and economic benefits of the urban forest.

Action COS-8.2.6: Facilitate the creation of a community-led team of volunteers to assist with implementing, maintaining, and monitoring conservation projects, such as the planting and maintenance of native plants and trash clean-up events, like the "Adopt-A-Road" program.

Action COS-8.2.7: Continue outreach and educational programs to raise awareness among community members about drinking water quality, including publicizing annual drinking water quality reports and how to read them, and the direct impact of individual actions on water quality and actionable guidance for its protection.