

City of Santa Maria
2045 General Plan Update

Final Environmental Impact Report, Volume 1

SCH# 2025020584

prepared by

City of Santa Maria

City of Santa Maria Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, California 93458
Contact: Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager

prepared with the assistance of

Rincon Consultants, Inc.

1530 Monterey Street, Suite D
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

February 2026

RINCON CONSULTANTS

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Appendix A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

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1 Introduction

1.1 Final EIR Contents

This Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared by the City of Santa Maria (City) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed 2045 General Plan Update (hereafter also referred to as "project").

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15088 and 15132, the City of Santa Maria, as the lead agency, is required to evaluate comments on environmental issues received from persons who have reviewed the Draft EIR and to prepare written responses to those comments. This document together with the Draft EIR (incorporated by reference) comprise the Final EIR for the project. This Final EIR includes individual responses to each letter received during the public review period for the Draft EIR. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(c), the written responses describe the disposition of significant environmental issues raised.

The City has provided a good faith effort to respond to all significant environmental issues raised by the comments. The Final EIR also includes minor clarifications, corrections, or revisions to the Draft EIR suggested by certain comments. The Final EIR includes the following contents:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Responses to Comments on the Draft EIR
- Section 3: Recirculation Not Warranted
- Revised Final EIR Chapters
- Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program

1.2 Draft EIR Public Review Process

Pursuant to CEQA, lead agencies are required to consult with public agencies with jurisdiction over a proposed project and to provide the general public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR.

The City of Santa Maria filed a notice of completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to begin a minimum of a 45-day public review period (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21161), which began on August 14,2025, and ended on September 28, 2025. The Draft EIR was made available on the City's website.[1] In addition, the Draft EIR was made available for review at the City's offices at 110 South Pine Street, Suite 101, City of Santa Maria, CA 93458. A Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIR was published on August 14, 2025. As a result of these notification efforts, the City received nine written comments on the content of the Draft EIR. Section 2, "Responses to Comments on the Draft EIR," identifies these commenting parties, their respective comments, and responses to these comments. None of the comments received, or the responses provided, constitute "significant new information" by CEQA standards (CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5).

[1] Draft EIR for the project is available here: https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/resources

1.3 EIR Certification Process and Project Approval

Before adopting the project, the lead agency is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency.

Upon certification of an EIR, the lead agency makes a decision on the project analyzed in the EIR. A lead agency may: (a) disapprove a project because of its significant environmental effects; (b) require changes to a project to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects; or (c) approve a project despite its significant environmental effects, if the proper findings and statement of overriding considerations are adopted (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15042 and 15043).

In approving a project, for each significant impact of the project identified in the EIR, the lead or responsible agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that either: (a) the project has been changed to avoid or substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact; (b) changes to the project are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted; or (c) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091). Pursuant to PRC Section 21061.1, feasible means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account, economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors.

While the information in the EIR does not constrain the City's ultimate decision under its land use authority, the City must respond to each significant effect and mitigation measure identified in the EIR as required by CEQA by making findings supporting its decision. If an agency approves a project with unavoidable significant environmental effects, it must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that sets forth the specific social, economic, or other reasons supporting the agency's decision and explains why the project's benefits outweigh the significant environmental effects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15093).

When an agency makes findings on significant effects identified in the EIR, it must adopt a reporting or monitoring program for mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of project approval to mitigate significant effects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091[d]).

2 Responses to Comments on the Draft EIR

This section includes comments received during the circulation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) prepared for the 2045 General Plan Update.

The Draft EIR was circulated for a 30-day public review period that began on August 29, 2025 and ended on September 28, 2025. The City of Santa Maria received nine comment letters on the Draft EIR. The commenters and the page number on which each commenter's letter appear are listed below.

Letter No.	and Commenter	Page No.
1	John Roberts	2-1
2	John Roberts	2-5
3	John Roberts	2-8
4	Emily Waddington, Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District	2-14
5	Lisa Plowman, Santa Barbara Planning and Development Department	2-19
6	Laurie Tamura, Urban Planning Concepts, Inc	2-29
7	Ken Hough and Jeanne Sparks, Santa Barbara County Action Network	2-163
8	Kelley M. Taber, Somach Simmons & Dunn	2-168
9	Chris Bjornstad, Caltrans District 5	2-183

The comment letters and responses follow. The comment letters have been numbered sequentially and each separate issue raised by the commenter, if more than one, has been assigned a number. The responses to each comment identify first the number of the comment letter, and then the number assigned to each issue (Response 1.1, for example, indicates that the response is for the first issue raised in comment Letter 1).

(805) 925 -0951 Ext. 2444

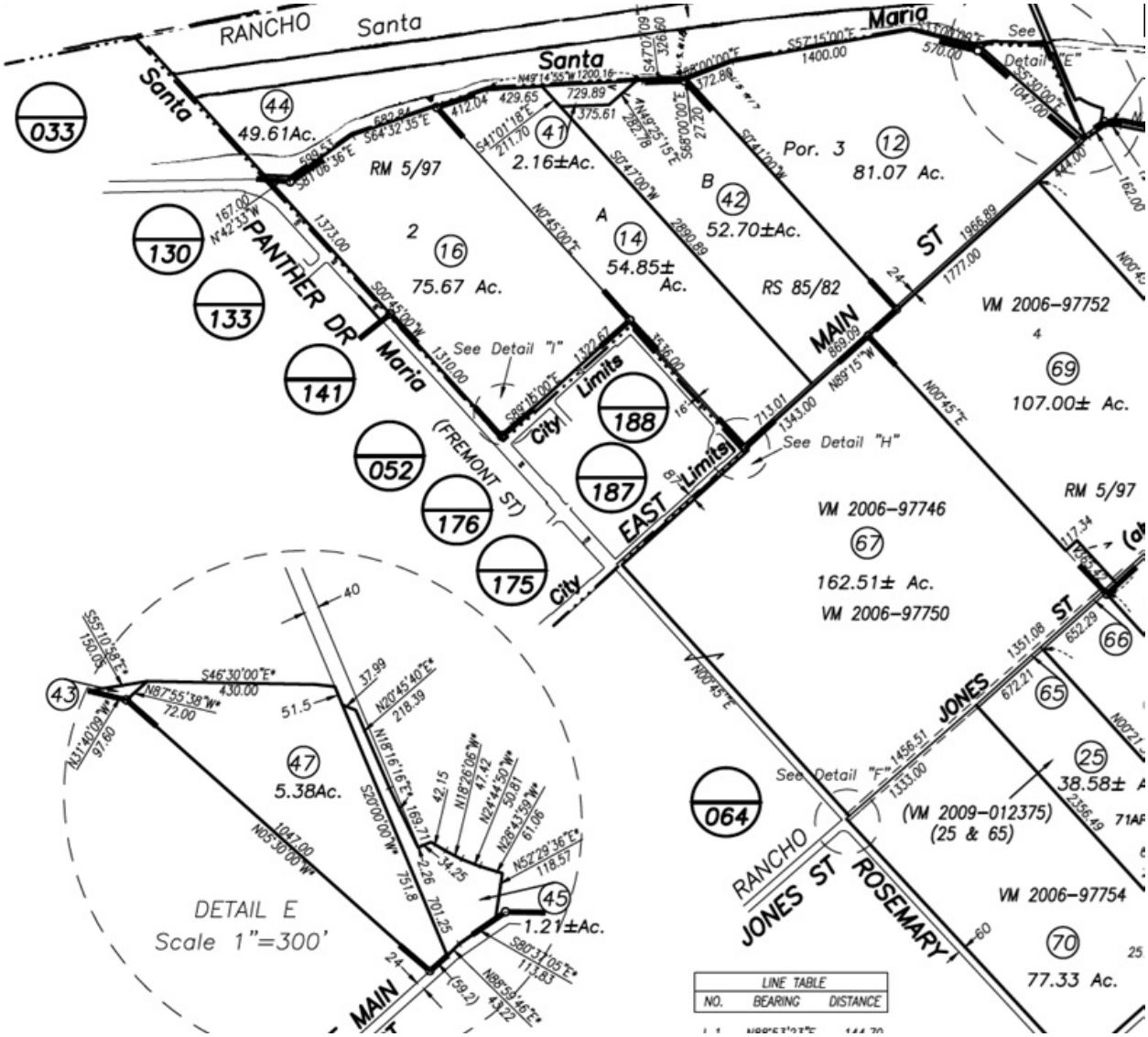
From: John Roberts <webmaster@rebelwithacause.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 19, 2025 2:04 PM
To: Dana Eady <deady@cityofsantamaria.org>
Subject: Draft EIR Feedback

*** EXTERNAL EMAIL: Please use caution when opening links or attachments.***

Hi Dana,
Thank you for the Zoom meeting today for the Draft General Plan & EIR.
I noticed a couple possible discrepancies in the DEIR that may need to be corrected:

1. To not create a “county island”, there are two missing APNs (128-094-047 & 128-094-043) from the list for annexation in DEIR Section 2.6.3 pg. 2-9 and not highlighted in the map figure 2-5 pg. 2-12, which are both west and south of the city landfill and contiguously east of the included proposed parcel APN 128-094-012. 1.1

   (See Detail E on county assessor map)
   https://sbcassessor.com/assessor/maps_pdfs/128094.pdf



2. On DEIR pg 4.1-2 under Chapter heading “LAFCO and Farmland”, the reference to “Section 1.5” should be changed to “Section 1.3”. 1.2

Thank you,
John Roberts

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Letter 1

COMMENTER: John Roberts, Community Member

DATE: August 19, 2025

Response 1.1

The commenter states that APNs 128-094-047 and 128-094-043 are missing from the annexation list in Section 2.6.3 and from Figure 2-5, which could create a county island.

The City is including APN 128-094-047 in the annexation area. Final EIR figures and language have been updated as necessary to reflect this change. The addition of APN 128-094-047 into the annexation area does not change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Draft EIR. APN 128-094-047 is a small area, 5.38 acres, compared to the overall annexation area, 985 acres, and has existing conditions similar to adjacent parcels, so its inclusion does not alter the scope or findings of the Draft EIR. APN 128-043 is already included in the city limits, and is therefore not a part of the annexation area but does not create a "county island" as it is not within county jurisdiction.

Response 1.2

The commenter states that on page 4.1-2 under the heading "LAFCO and Farmland" the reference to Section 1.5 should be corrected to Section 1.3.

The Final EIR has been revised to reflect the correct section reference. This correction does not affect the analysis or conclusions of the Draft EIR.

*** EXTERNAL EMAIL: Please use caution when opening links or attachments.***

Hi Dana,
I just discovered a third parcel (APN 128-094-045) that should be included for SOI/Annexation. It is also owned by the DeBernardi family, not the city according to https://www.acrevalue.com/.
Thank you,
John

From: Dana Eady <deady@cityofsantamaria.org>
Sent: Tuesday, August 19, 2025 2:09 PM
To: John Roberts <webmaster@rebelwithacause.com>
Subject: RE: Draft EIR Feedback

Hi John,

Thank you for this feedback. I will relay this information to the rest of the team here and we will look into it. Thank you for coming to the meeting today as well.

Have a good day,
Dana

Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager
Community Development Department
City of Santa Maria
110 South Pine Street Suite 101
Santa Maria, CA 93458
(805) 925 -0951 Ext. 2444

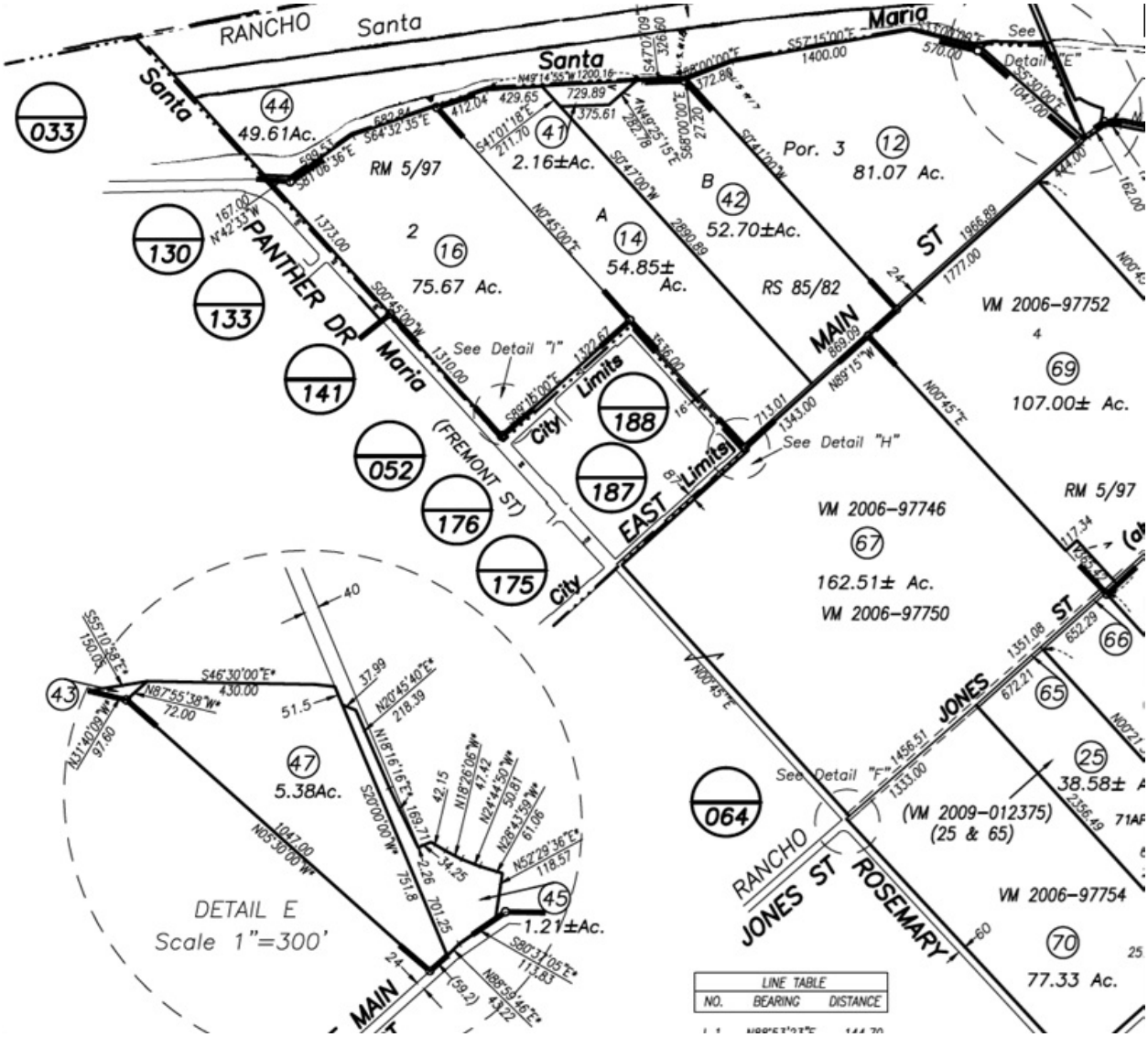
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   (See Detail E on county assessor map)
   https://sbcassessor.com/assessor/maps_pdfs/128094.pdf



2. On DEIR pg 4.1-2 under Chapter heading “LAFCO and Farmland”, the reference to “Section 1.5” should be changed to “Section 1.3”.

Thank you,
John Roberts

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Letter 2

COMMENTER: John Roberts, Community Member

DATE: August 19, 2025

Response

This comment is in addition to the commenter's previous email (identified herein as Letter 1). The commentor identifies an additional parcel, APN 128-094-045, that the commenter states should be included in the proposed SOI/annexation area and states it is owned by the DeBernardi family, not the City.

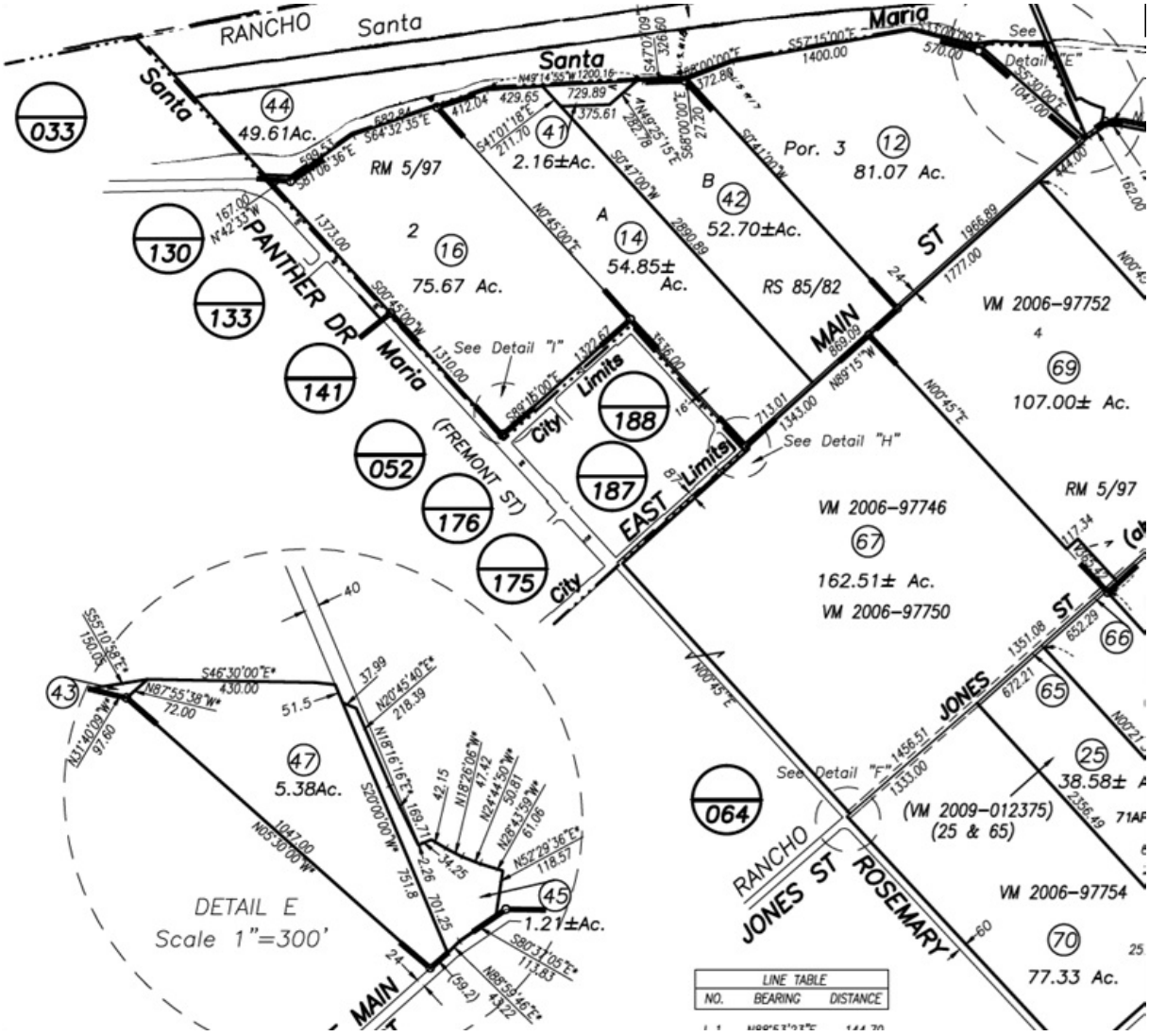
APN 128-094-045 is already included in the city limits, and is therefore not a part of the annexation area. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

I am updating my previous email with more specifics that may explain the Some of the "missing" APNs and other possible updates to the DEIR regarding a City parcel.
Thank you!

3.1

There seems to be three missing DeBernardi APNs 128-094-047, 128-094-043, 128-094-045, **AND** a possible City APN 128-094-041 from the list for annexation in DEIR Section 2.6.3 pg. 2-9 and not highlighted in the map figure 2-5 pg. 2-12, which are all west and south of the city landfill and east of the included proposed parcel APN 128-094-012, except the City parcel, which is north of 128-094-042.

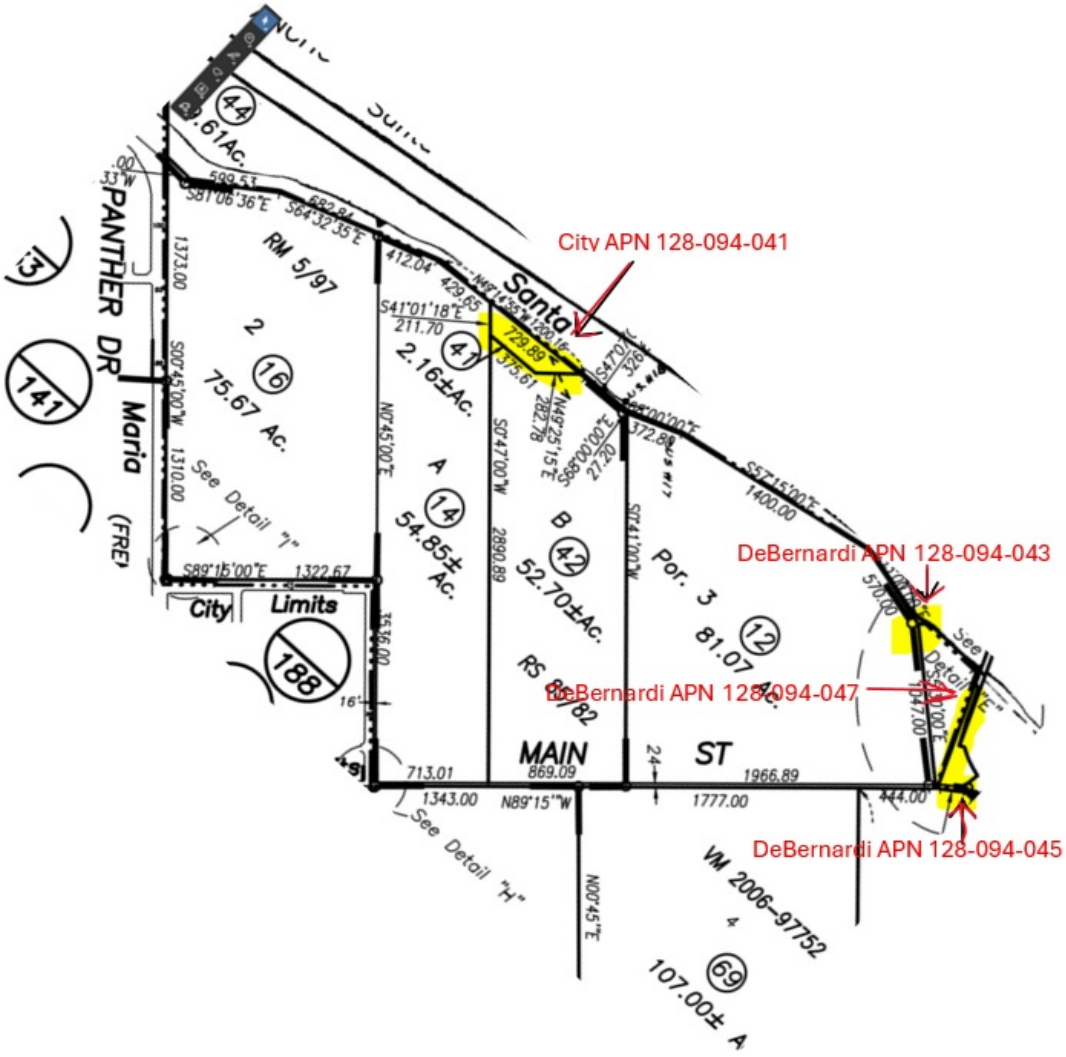
(See Detail E on County Assessor Map)
https://sbcassessor.com/assessor/maps_pdfs/128094.pdf



The City APN 128-094-041 was created from DeBernardi APN 128-094-042 and "swapped" with the City's APN 128-094-045, now owned by the DeBernardi family.

3.2

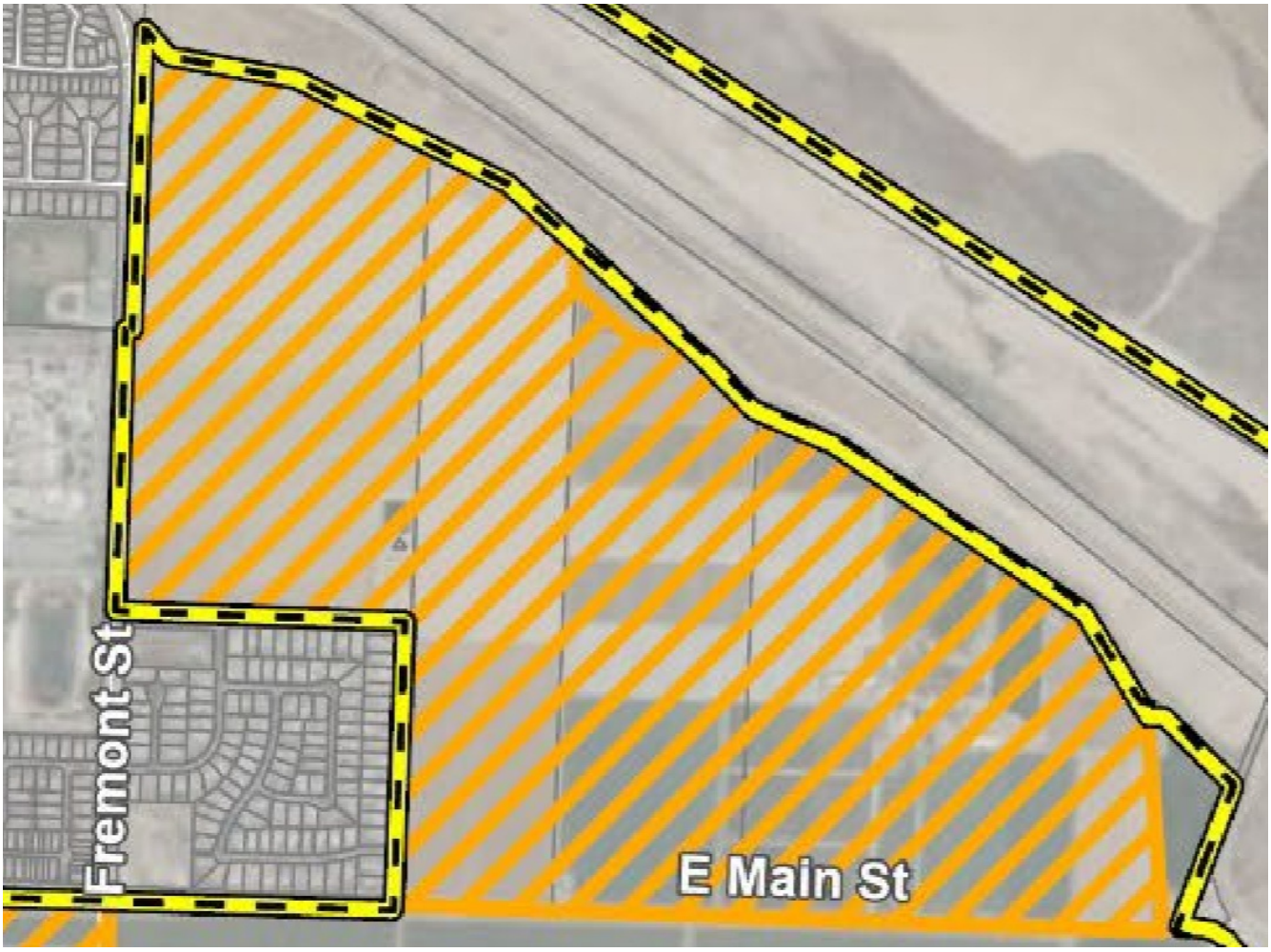
The DeBernardi's are in the process of doing a title search and possible chain of ownership for APN 128-094-043. This parcel may be resolved after the title search and may discover that the parcel number has been abandoned and the land has been absorbed by one or more the nearby parcels. The last tax year the DeBernardi's were required to pay taxes for this parcel was 2008-2009.



(Below is the relevant zoomed-in Proposed 2045 General Plan Annexation Area)
City APN 128-094-041 seems to be in the County, while DeBernardi APNs 128-094-043, & 128-094-045 seem to be within the SOI/City limits.

The DeBernardi family are in the process of doing a title search and possible chain of ownership for APN 128-094-043. This may be resolved as an abandoned parcel number that has been absorbed by one of the DeBernardi parcels as they have not needed to pay property taxes on that parcel number since the 2008-2009 tax timeline.

3.2



Thanks again Dana!

John Roberts

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From: John Roberts <webmaster@rebelwithacause.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 19, 2025 7:32 PM
To: 'Dana Eady' <deady@cityofsantamaria.org>
Subject: RE: Draft EIR Feedback

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Have a good day,
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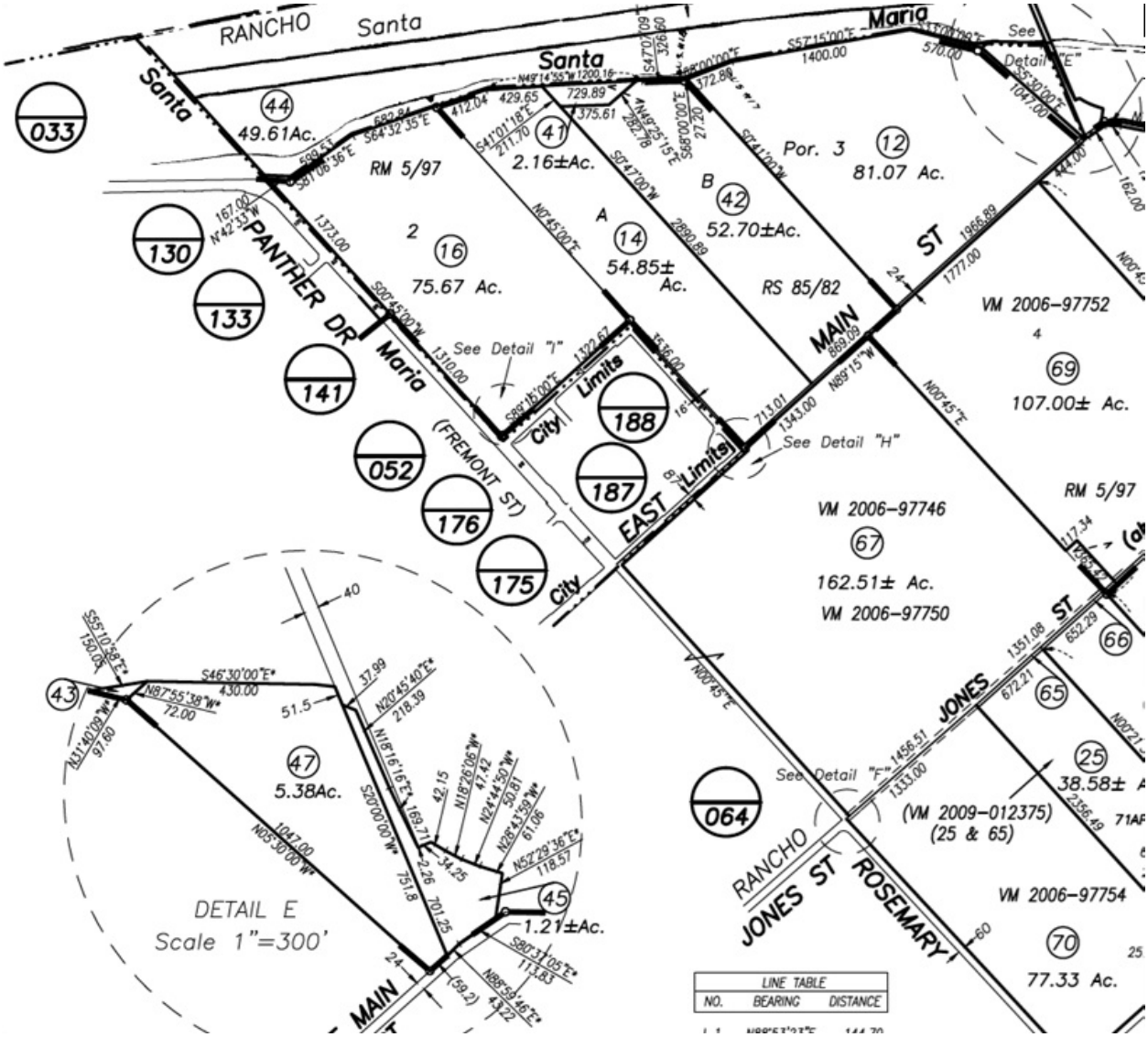
From: John Roberts <webmaster@rebelwithacause.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 19, 2025 2:04 PM
To: Dana Eady <deady@cityofsantamaria.org>
Subject: Draft EIR Feedback

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2. On DEIR pg 4.1-2 under Chapter heading “LAFCO and Farmland”, the reference to “Section 1.5” should be changed to “Section 1.3”.

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Letter 3

COMMENTER: John Roberts, Community Member

DATE: December 5, 2016

Response 3.1

The commentor states this email is an update to their previous email, this one includes more details and specifics to explain their concerns, including the previously mentioned "missing" APNs. The commenter states that four parcels (APNs 128-094-047, 128-094-043, 128-094-045, and 128-094-041) are missing from the annexation list in Section 2.6.3 and from Figure 2-5. These parcels are located west and south of the city landfill and east of APN 128-094-012, except APN 128-094-041, which is north of APN 128-094-042.

Refer to Response 1.1 and the Response 2.1 for a discussion of APNs 128-094-047, 128-094-043, and 128-094-045.

The City is including APN 128-094-041 in the annexation area. Final EIR figures and language have been updated as necessary to reflect this change. This parcel is a small area, 2.16 acres, compared to the overall annexation area, 985 acres, and has existing conditions similar to adjacent parcels, so its inclusion does not alter the scope or findings of the EIR.

Response 3.2

The commenter provides clarification regarding parcel ownership and history, noting that APN 128-094-041 was created from APN 128-094-042 and swapped with APN 128-094-045, which is now owned by the DeBernardi family. The commenter also states that a title search is underway for APN 128-094-043, which may reveal the parcel number has been abandoned and absorbed into adjacent parcels, with the last tax payment recorded in 2008–2009.

This comment provides the City with additional information about the parcel ownership and history, but does not recommend revisions to the Draft EIR. Therefore, the additional information provided by the commenter does not change the environmental analysis or conclusions of the Draft EIR.

apcd air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

September 25, 2025

Dana Eady
Community Development Department
City of Santa Maria
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, CA 93458

Sent Via Email: deady@cityofsantamaria.org

Re: Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the City of Santa Maria 2045 General Plan Update, SCH #2025020584

Dear Dana Eady:

The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (District) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the City of Santa Maria 2045 General Plan Update, which will guide growth and development of the City through 2045. The update will help the City plan for important community issues such as community growth, housing, mobile and infrastructure needs, climate change, and environmental protection. The Plan would change some land use designations and amend two existing specific plans, the Entrada Specific Plan and the Area 9 Specific Plan. Additionally, three areas totaling 985 acres east of the city limits would be annexed and a new land use designation, Planned Annexation, would be established that allows for a mix of commercial, residential, industrial, and public land uses. The Plan provides the framework for development of up to 16,140 net new dwelling units and 1,504 net new acres of non-residential uses including 452 acres of mixed uses, seven acres of industrial/airport uses, 33 acres of public and open space, and 1,012 acres of specific plan and planned annexation areas, with a reduction in 462 acres of commercial uses. 4.1

1. **Impact AQGHG-2 Classification After Mitigation**: *Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2 Project-Level Air Quality Analysis and Mitigation* requires that a project with emissions that exceed air quality thresholds must *"implement all feasible mitigation measures to reduce emissions to below thresholds*," yet the EIR classifies the impact as "*significant and unavoidable*." Since this mitigation measure would reduce any significant impact to a less than significant level, the City should consider if an impact classification of "*less than significant after mitigation*" is more appropriate for this impact. 4.2

2. **AQGHG-3 Construction Equipment Exhaust Control Measures**: This measure requires off-road heavy-duty diesel engines used during construction to meet CARB-certified Tier 3 or higher emission standards or employ CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters. The District's strongly encourages the City to revise and strengthen this measure to align with the District's current recommendations for control of diesel exhaust and minimization of construction-related TAC exposure impacts. Namely we request the measure be revised to require the following: 4.3

    a. Off-road diesel equipment 25 horsepower (hp) or greater shall be equipped with engines compliant with, or certified to meet or exceed, CARB's Tier 4 Final engine emissions standards. Where available, off-road construction equipment should be zero-

Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer
(805) 979-8050 | 260 N. San Antonio Rd., Ste. A Santa Barbara, CA 93110 | ourair.org | @OurAirSBC

emission. Alternative/renewable fuels such as compressed natural gas (CNG), liquefied natural gas (LNG), or propane should be utilized to the maximum extent feasible when zero-emission is not available. Commitments to Tier 4 and/or zero-emission equipment shall be included in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts; successful contractors shall demonstrate the ability to supply the compliant construction equipment for use prior to ground-disturbing and construction activities. 4.3

b. All portable generators shall be powered by a source other than diesel fuel or gasoline (i.e. battery, natural gas, propane etc.).

3. **Action COS-5.2.3**: This action on page 4.2-24 specifies "*collaborate with SBCAPCD to monitor pesticide residues in the air and enforce pesticide use and storage regulations*." The District does not have regulatory authority over the use or storage of pesticides. We recommend that the General Plan and EIR discussion is updated to cite the appropriate regulatory authority. 4.4

4. **CalEEMod Trip Rates**: *Appendix B CalEEMod Outputs* shows that there are no trip rates entered for the modeled land uses, and only vehicle miles traveled (VMT) were modeled in CalEEmod to quantify the mobile emissions from the proposed land uses. This omission underestimates the project's mobile emissions as the trip rates are used for the calculation of vehicle starting exhaust and evaporative emissions. To properly assess mobile emissions from the proposed land uses, the CalEEMod analysis should be updated to include trip rates of the proposed land uses. Using default trip rates is acceptable, as project-specific trip rates are not known at this time. 4.5

We hope you find our comments useful. Please contact me at (805) 979-8334 or via email at WaddingtonE@sbcapcd.org if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Emily Waddington,
Air Quality Specialist
Planning Division

cc: Planning Chron File

Letter 4

COMMENTER: Emily Waddington, Air Quality Specialist with Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District

DATE: September 25, 2025

Response 4.1

The commenter summarizes the scope and purpose of the General Plan Update.

This commenter's summary does not provide new information about the Draft EIR analysis or recommend changes to the Draft EIR. Therefore, no further response is required.

Response 4.2

The commenter suggests the City consider reclassifying Impact AQGHG-2 as less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2.

Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2 requires project-level air quality analysis and mitigation that would reduce criteria pollutant emissions but cannot ensure all future projects will be capable of feasibly reducing emissions below Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District's (SBCAPCD) adopted thresholds of significance due to project-specific variability. Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4, the impact analysis concludes this impact would be significant and unavoidable for the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 4.3

The commenter recommends edits to Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 (Construction Equipment Exhaust Control Measures) to align with the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District's current best practices.

Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 and the subsequent discussion of this impact's significance after mitigation have been revised in the Final EIR to incorporate SBCAPCD's requested language, as follows:

Mitigation Measures

AQGHG-3 Construction Equipment Exhaust Control Measures

For individual discretionary and ministerial residential projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update that would develop three or more units; would involve demolition, mass grading, or excavation and trenching phases longer than two months; and would be located within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors, the City shall enforce a project specific Condition of Approval requiring the following: ~~off-road heavy-duty diesel engines to meet CARB-certified Tier 3 or higher emission standards or employ CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters to the extent that this equipment is commercially available. "Commercially available" shall be defined as the availability of required equipment in geographic proximity to the project site and within a reasonable timeframe relative to critical path construction timing. If Tier 3 or higher emission standard equipment or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available, documentation shall be provided by the project applicant to the City stating that Tier 3~~

~~equipment or higher emission standard or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available with supporting evidence from the contractor. If CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters are utilized, they shall be kept in working order and maintained in operable condition according to manufacturer's specifications, as applicable.~~

a. Off-road diesel equipment 25 horsepower (hp) or greater shall be equipped with engines compliance with, or certified to meet or exceed, the California Air Resources Board's Tier 4 Final engine emissions standards. Where available, off-road construction equipment should be zero-emission. Alternative/renewable fuels such as compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, or propane should be utilized to the maximum extent feasible when zero-emission is not available. Commitments to Tier 4 and/or zero-emission equipment shall be included in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts; successful contractors shall demonstrate the ability to supply the compliant construction equipment for use prior to ground-disturbing and construction activities.
b. All portable generators shall be powered by a source other than diesel fuel or gasoline (i.e. battery, natural gas, propane etc.).

Significance After Mitigation

Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 would reduce potential residual health risk impacts associated with exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations of DPM and TACs. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 would require construction projects that may be a substantial source of health risk exposure to sensitive receptors to ~~utilize Tier 3 equipment or higher emission standard or Level 3 diesel particulate filters to the maximum extent feasible~~ align with the District's current recommendations for control of diesel exhaust and minimization of construction-related TAC exposure impacts, which reduce potential construction-related TACs exposure impacts to a less than significant level.

This revision does not alter the significance conclusion for construction-related air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts.

Response 4.4

The commenter points out that Action COS-5.2.3, under the General Plan Update's proposed Policy COS-5.2, Agricultural air pollutant emissions, incorrectly assigns pesticide use and storage enforcement authority to SBCAPCD, which does not have that authority, and recommends listing the correct regulatory agency instead.

The City has revised Action COS-5.2.3 in the 2045 General Plan Update to clarify that pesticide use and storage are regulated by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation and the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office. The discussion of Action COS-5.2.3 has been revised in the Final EIR for consistency with this revision in the 2045 General Plan Update. This revision does not change the environmental analysis or conclusions of the Draft EIR.

Response 4.5

The commenter recommends including trip rates in the CalEEMod analysis.

The VMT-based approach used in the Draft EIR is consistent with SB 743 and CEQA Section 15064.3 for program-level analysis. Regional mobile emissions are estimated using VMT. Consistent with the

State CEQA Guidelines and SBCAPCD's Scope and Content of Air Quality Sections in Environmental Documents (2022a), project-specific trip data would be used for transportation analysis during future project-level environmental review. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE
Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Tanja Heitman, Assistant County Executive Officer
Wade Horton, Assistant County Executive Officer

September 26, 2025

Attn: Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager
City of Santa Maria Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street, Room 101
Santa Maria, CA 93458

Email: deady@cityofsantamaria.org

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the City of Santa Maria General Plan Update

Dear Ms. Eady:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the City of Santa Maria General Plan Update Draft Environmental Impact Report. At this time, the County submits comments from the Santa Barbara County Planning & Development Department. 5.1

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office directly or Lisa Plowman, Planning and Development Director at (805) 568-2086.

Sincerely,

Clare Tobin
Legislative Analyst

cc: Lisa Plowman, Director, Planning and Development Department
Zoë Carlson, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Department

Enclosures: Santa Barbara County Planning & Development Department Letter, dated September 26, 2025

105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 406, Santa Barbara, CA 93101 · (805) 568-3400 · Fax (805) 568-3414
caoemail@countyofsb.org · www.countyofsb.org/ceo
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Planning and Development
Lisa Plowman, Director
Jeff Wilson, Assistant Director
Elise Dale, Assistant Director

September 26, 2025

Attn: Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager
City of Santa Maria Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, CA 93458

Email: deady@cityofsantamaria.org

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the City of Santa Maria General Plan Update

Dear Ms. Eady:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced project. The Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department (P&D) has reviewed the Draft EIR and requests that the City of Santa Maria (City) proceed with the environmentally superior alternative that achieves the City's stated goals for the Project and maintains consistency with City and LAFCO policies and standards mentioned in P&D's comment letter on the NOP, dated March 13, 2025 (attached), while avoiding unnecessary significant and avoidable environmental impacts and obviating the need to prematurely annex rural lands outside of the City limits. 5.1

The description for Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative in the Draft EIR is as follows:

> *6.3.1 Description*
>
> *Under the Infill Only Alternative, the City of Santa Maria would adopt the 2045 General Plan Update, including all goals and policies. However, the Infill Only Alternative would exclude the annexation of areas located east of the current City limits and direct development to areas within existing urban or suburban areas as infill, redevelopment, or increased densities. For the purpose of this analysis, the Infill Only Alternative is assumed to result in a similar overall level of buildout and population growth compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, despite the exclusion of future development in the eastern annexation area.* 5.2

> *While this alternative would reduce the geographic footprint of development, it would result in increased development pressure on existing neighborhoods and infrastructure. As a result, the Infill Only Alternative may not fulfill the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update because it would not fully address evolving community health needs, state housing requirements, or opportunities for connected growth anticipated through 2045. However, as discussed in detail in Section 6.3.2, this alternative would avoid environmental impacts in the annexation area, such as conversion of agricultural land, fragmentation of open space, or potential effects on biological resources, while potentially exacerbating environmental impacts associated with the increased development density in existing neighborhoods.*

5.2

The description states the Infill Only Alternative may not fully address evolving health needs, state housing requirements, or opportunities for connected growth; however, there does not appear to be an analysis that substantiates this conclusion. As currently described, it is unclear whether this alternative would provide for development of existing agricultural and other open lands within the City's existing boundaries to meet state housing requirements, though the text seems to suggest that this alternative would preclude the conversion of any agricultural land. If necessary, this alternative could be strengthened to meet all stated objectives for the Project and maintain its status as the environmentally superior alternative if it included agricultural lands within City boundaries and its sphere of influence, in addition to the urban and suburban lands it currently identifies for development.

Section 6.5 *Environmentally Superior Alternative*, further demonstrates how the Infill Only Alternative meets the City's objectives while reducing potential environmental impacts:

> *Unlike the Greater Annexation Alternative, the Infill Only Alternative would concentrate development in already developed areas of the city by increasing densities and redevelopment. As a result, the Infill Only Alternative would have reduced impacts on agricultural lands, as this alternative would not include the annexation area, thus removing the potential for development to convert agricultural lands outside of the City limits. The Infill Only Alternative would also result in reduced impacts to air quality and GHG emissions, as infill development would encourage the use of active transportation and transit uses due to the proximity of services to residential development. Additionally, compared to the Greater Annexation Alternative, the Infill Only Alternative would have reduced impacts on biological and cultural resources due to the concentration of development within previously disturbed areas that have low potential for biological resources and low potential to uncover archaeological resources. The Infill Only Alternative would have reduced per capita VMT, as development within the infill areas would reduce buildout potential to a wider area, which would reduce mobile emissions in comparison to the Greater Annexation Alternative. Due to the reduced buildout potential*

5.3

and reduced buildout area, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would also be reduced compared to the Greater Annexation Alternative.

5.3

Section 6.5 *Environmentally Superior Alternative*, also includes justification for not selecting the Infill Only Alternative; however, this justification does not appear to be substantiated and is discussed below:

Although the Infill Only Alternative would be the Environmentally Superior Alternative, this alternative would not fulfill the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update, including the provision of housing quality and various housing choices or improving opportunities for connected growth.

The above statement is inaccurate as this alternative could fulfill the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update including Housing Quality and Choice and Connected Growth. Both objectives are described below in italics:

5.4

Housing Quality and Choice. *Develop a high-quality and diverse housing supply at all levels of affordability that preserves Santa Maria as a place where families can establish roots and today's youth can afford to stay. Balance the growth of housing and the economy so that people can live and work in Santa Maria. As new housing types are introduced, (e.g., accessory dwelling units (ADUs), adapt parking, transportation, and other community features. Develop workforce housing solutions that provide safe, healthy, and comfortable homes for workers and their families.*

According to the Draft EIR, the Infill Only Alternative would result in a similar overall level of buildout and population growth through infill development. Therefore, the strategies discussed above for achieving housing quality and choice, including ADUs, can be achieved through infill development without annexation of rural agricultural lands.

Connected Growth. *To accommodate projected population, housing, and jobs growth, focus on improvements to existing neighborhoods along with infill and vacant site development. Expand beyond current City limits when needed, weighing the short and long term environmental, economic, infrastructure, public service, and fiscal trade-offs. Establish strong cultural, design, and physical connections between newly developed areas and the rest of Santa Maria.*

It is unclear how the Infill Only Alternative does not meet this objective as it emphasizes improvements to existing neighborhoods and infill development. It also emphasizes expanding beyond City limits ***when needed***. 5.4

The Draft EIR contains additional justification for not selecting the Infill Only Alternative in Section 6.5 as follows:

> *Further, the Infill Only Alternative would not enhance new and existing neighborhoods such that each neighborhood would be a Complete Neighborhood or provide innovative housing and may result in the City failing to meeting its RHNA obligations in accordance with State law as it would significantly reduce the affordable housing options and limit new housing to infill only and redevelopment.*
>
> As mentioned above, the Infill Only Alternative could be strengthened if it considered development of agricultural lands within the City boundary and sphere of influence in addition to the proposed urban and suburban lands to meet its RHNA obligations, along with the incorporation of higher density residential development (e.g., up to 40 units/acre in residential zones) in order to increase affordable housing options. This would allow it to meet the goal of providing Complete Neighborhoods and maintain its designation as the environmentally superior alternative.
>
> A modified Infill Only Alternative that includes agricultural lands within the City boundaries and within Santa Maria's sphere of influence would reduce substantial impacts to agricultural lands designated as important farmland. Table 4.1-1 *Summary of Important Farmland in the Plan Area and Annexation Areas* shows that of the 944 acres of land in the annexation areas, 803 are prime farmland, 7 acres are farmland of statewide importance, 134 acres are unique farmland and only 41 acres are not considered to be prime or unique farmland or farmland of local or statewide importance. This table also identifies 1,537 acres of grazing land within the City limits and sphere of influence, along with over 2,500 acres of prime farmland, unique farmland, and farmland of statewide importance. Therefore, there is greater opportunity for Complete Neighborhood development on farmland within the City boundary or sphere than the area proposed for annexation. Further, the Infill Only Alternative would reduce impacts to agricultural resources to a less than significant level whereas impacts under the proposed project would remain significant and unavoidable. The City should focus any proposed development of agricultural lands on areas within the City limits prior to consideration of additional areas for annexation. 5.5

In summary, and as stated in the attached P&D comment letter, the County encourages the City to fully utilize existing areas within the City before considering annexing agricultural land in the

rural area, with an approach that includes increasing the density of residential land use designations and seeking redevelopment opportunities within the existing city limits or development of urban agricultural lands within the City at appropriate densities to meet its needs. We also continue to encourage the City to coordinate with the County regarding sound regional growth strategies. 5.5

Please contact Zoë Carlson, Planner, in the Long Range Planning Division, at (805) 568-3532, or at carlsonz@countyofsb.org, if you have any questions.

Regards,



Lisa Plowman
Director, Planning and Development Department

Attachment:

1. Re: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the City of Santa Maria General Plan Update

G:\GROUP\COMP\Resp. Agency Review\RAR Projects by Agency\Cities & Counties\City of Santa Maria\Santa Maria GP Update\2025 Update\GP EIR NOP\PD Letter SM GP EIR NOP 3.12.25.docx

Letter 5

COMMENTER: Lisa Plowman, Director of the County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development Department

DATE: September 26, 2025

Response 5.1

The commenter thanks the City for the opportunity to provide public comment and requests that the City proceed with the environmentally superior alternative (the Infill Only Alternative) which achieves the City's stated goals for the project, and maintains consistency with City and LAFCO policies and standards mentioned in the commenter's submitted comment letter on the NOP.

While the Infill Only Alternative is identified as the Environmentally Superior Alternative in the Draft EIR, due to its reduced environmental impacts, the City selected the 2045 General Plan Update as the preferred alternative as it would best meet the full range of project objectives, including housing quality and choice, connected growth, and infrastructure planning. The 2045 General Plan Update would provide for both infill development and annexation areas, which would allow for a greater range of housing types and locations, support planned infrastructure improvements, and accommodate projected population and employment growth identified in the plan. In contrast, the Infill Only Alternative limits development to existing urban areas, which would reduce overall growth potential and associated infrastructure planning opportunities. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 5.2

The commenter summarizes the description of the Infill Only Alternative in the Draft EIR and opines that the reasoning for not adopting this alternative needs to be substantiated further.

Chapter 6, Alternatives, Section 6.3, Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative, pages 6-6 through 6-9, of the Draft EIR explains that the Infill Only Alternative would not fully meet several of the 2045 General Plan Update's primary objectives, particularly those related to housing quality and choice, connected growth, and the provision of complete neighborhoods. This alternative would limit development to existing urban areas, which would reduce overall growth potential and opportunities for new housing types compared to the proposed plan. It also constrains the ability to plan for future infrastructure improvements beyond current city limits and may increase development pressure on existing neighborhoods. While the Infill Only Alternative offers some environmental advantages, the Draft EIR concludes that these limitations prevent it from achieving the full range of objectives identified for the 2045 General Plan Update. The Infill Only Alternative may also limit the City's ability to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation obligations and reduce opportunities for innovative housing solutions. Additionally, increased development pressure on existing neighborhoods and infrastructure could exacerbate localized environmental impacts and constrain the City's long-term growth strategy.

The commenter is correct that the description could be strengthened by clarifying whether agricultural lands within existing city limits could be developed under this alternative and how that might affect housing capacity. To address this, additional explanation has been added to Chapter 6, *Alternatives*, Section 6.3, *Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative*, page 6-7, to clarify that the Infill Only Alternative would rely on redevelopment and increased densities within existing urban areas and

locations already designated for urban development. The Infill Only Alternative would not convert agricultural lands within city limits because the land use designations and zonings of lands within city limits currently used for agricultural purposes have been planned for urban redevelopment in specific plans or earlier iterations of the General Plan, and the potential impacts associated with the loss of agricultural resources were previously evaluated in the environmental review documentation for these long-range plans. For some properties within city limits that remain in crop production, this represents a transitional non-conforming use that is anticipated to be replaced with urban redevelopment during implementation of current specific plans and the General Plan.

As discussed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources,* environmental documents such as the Sphere of Influence Expansion Environmental Impact Report (SCH #90010930), the Area 9 Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2008071018), the Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan Amendment Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SCH #1994107909), and the Betteravia Plaza General Plan Amendment, Land Use and Zone Change and Development Agreement Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2015011029) have evaluated impacts to agricultural resources from the conversion of agricultural lands within the city. As a result, these lands have land use and zoning designations intended for urban redevelopment and would not be considered a conversion of existing agricultural uses.

The language within the analysis on pages 6.7 has been revised in the Final EIR to incorporate the following underlined language:

> By accommodating a similar amount of development entirely within existing City limits, the Infill Only Alternative would avoid the annexation area's agricultural lands and result in reduced impacts to farmland. While the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program still designates areas within the city as Important Farmland, the conversion of these areas and associated land use changes have been previously evaluated in earlier environmental documents which are listed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*. Under this alternative, future growth would rely on redevelopment and increased densities within existing urbanized areas and locations already designated for urban development rather than expansion into agricultural lands. The Infill Only Alternative would not convert agricultural lands within city limits because lands within city limits currently used for agricultural purposes have been previously designated for planned urban redevelopment in specific plans or earlier iterations of the General Plan. As discussed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources,* environmental documents such as the Sphere of Influence Expansion Environmental Impact Report (SCH #90010930), the Area 9 Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2008071018), the Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan Amendment Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SCH #1994107909),and the Betteravia Plaza General Plan Amendment, Land Use and Zone Change and Development Agreement Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2015011029) have evaluated impacts to agricultural resources from the conversion of agricultural lands within the city. As a result, these lands have land use and zoning designations intended for urban redevelopment and would not be considered a conversion of existing agricultural uses. The exclusion of future development in the eastern annexation area would reduce impacts to agricultural resources in comparison to the 2045 General Plan Update. However, because this alternative limits development to infill sites, it would constrain opportunities for housing diversity and connected growth compared to the proposed plan. As the Infill Only Alternative would not result in the conversion of agricultural lands within City limits nor would it include the annexation area, this impact would be reduced to less than significant.

Response 5.3

The commenter summarizes text from the Draft EIR Alternatives Section and states the Infill Only Alternative would meet the City's objectives and reduce environmental impacts.

As discussed in Chapter 6, *Alternatives*, Section 6.3, *Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative,* pages 6-6 through 6-9, of the Draft EIR, the Infill Only Alternative would concentrate development within existing city limits, thereby avoiding the conversion of agricultural lands in the eastern annexation area and reducing impacts on biological resources, air quality, and greenhouse gas emissions. These benefits led to its identification as the Environmentally Superior Alternative under CEQA. Please also refer to Response 5.2 above for a discussion on why the Infill Only Alternative was not chosen as the preferred alternative. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 5.4

The commenter opines that the justification for not selecting the Infill Only Alternative was not substantiated in Section 6.5 of the Draft EIR. The commenter further opines that the Infill Only Alternative could fulfill the objectives for Housing Quality and Choice and Connected Growth of the 2045 General Plan.

Please refer to Reponses 5.1-5.3 above for an explanation of the City's decision to move forward with the proposed project as opposed to the Infill Only Alternative. While the Draft EIR acknowledges that the Infill Only Alternative would implement the General Plan's goals and policies, the determination that it would not fully meet the plan's objectives reflects a broader planning consideration: that infill alone may not provide sufficient geographic flexibility or capacity to meet long-term housing and infrastructure needs. The commenter's preference for the Infill Only Alternative will be passed on to decision makers for their consideration.

Response 5.5

The commenter provides suggestions which they believe would strengthen the Infill Only Alternative and fulfill the goals of the Draft General Plan. The commenter also recommends allowing development of agricultural lands within the city limits and sphere of influence, combined with higher-density residential zoning (up to 40 units per acre). The commenter further encourages prioritizing redevelopment and increased density within existing city boundaries before annexing rural agricultural land and recommends continued coordination with the County on regional growth strategies.

As discussed in Chapter 6, *Alternatives*, Section 6.3, *Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative,* pages 6-6 through 6-9, and in Responses 5.1-5.4 above, the Draft EIR concludes that the Infill Only Alternative may constrain the City's ability to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation obligations and provide innovative housing types due to its reliance solely on infill and redevelopment. However, as described in the Alternatives Technical Memoranda (see the City General Plan website: https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/_files/ugd/e3bef4_378ddb76d4224730a46da6a98aac8165.pdf), the Infill Only Alternative already assumes several land use changes to support new housing opportunities within city limits and its sphere of influence, including revisions to the Area 9 Specific Plan and increased densities (up to 35 du/ac) in High Density Residential zones, as well as new mixed-use designations along Main Street and Broadway corridors that would facilitate additional infill development.

The preferred land use alternative (as discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*) would facilitate infill development particularly along the Main Street and Broadway corridors similar to the Infill Only Alternative. The preferred land use alternative would also increase densities for residential development, and the new Corridor Mixed Use designation would allow for increased allowable densities within the city that would account for approximately 60 percent of new residential units. The annexation area within the preferred land use alternative would account for the remaining 40 percent of new residential units.

Changes within the Infill Only Alternative are intended to support a diverse housing supply and promote Complete Neighborhoods within existing City limits. However, the analysis found that even with these enhancements, the City would not fully address evolving community health needs, meet state housing requirements, or provide opportunities for connected growth anticipated through 2045. Therefore, annexation of adjacent rural agricultural land was determined to be the only feasible solution to meet long-term housing needs and ensure compliance with state housing requirements.

The commenter's suggestion to include agricultural lands within the city boundary and sphere of influence is acknowledged; however, this suggestion does not account for the City's existing land use plans and constraints. Many agricultural parcels within the city limits are designated as Primary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-1) or Secondary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-2), which are intended to preserve land for current and future agricultural production. These designations reflect long-term planning goals and community values, and conversion of these lands would be in direct conflict with the City's agricultural identity objective.

While increasing density and utilizing urban agricultural lands aligns with infill principles, the Draft EIR and supporting technical documents demonstrate that these options have already been explored and found to be insufficient. Ultimately, annexation of adjacent rural agricultural land was determined to be the preferred alternative by the City as it includes a feasible way to meet the City's housing needs through 2045 while balancing land use priorities.

September 27, 2025

Dana Eddy, Planner Manager
Community Development Department
110 S. Pine Street
Santa Maria, Ca 93454

RE: Comments on Draft EIR for General Plan Update

Dear Dana

Please find my comments on the Draft EIR for the General Plan Update attached. I hope that these comments and the information provided will help provide more detail and context to the future development of the City of Santa Maria. 6.1

Both the Draft General Plan Elements and the Draft EIR were released at the same time for a 45-day public review. This was a very heavy lift for the community to provide detailed comments in such a short period of time.

After review of both documents there are some core issues that need to be addressed before the General Plan is approved by the City Council and forwarded to LAFCO for the Sphere of Influence adjustment and future annexations.

1. **Annexation Area:** There is no information on how the annexation area will be developed with over 8,000 units and all the related development items such as commercial uses, schools, parks, roads, infrastructure. Without this information now it will be many years before these areas will be available for annexation and development. 6.2

2. **Future School Sites:** There is no information about how and where the 8 elementary schools, 3 new junior highs, and 2 new high schools are going to be located for the 16,140 new units. The current schools are already impacted and cannot absorb more students. Half of these schools will be in the infill area of the city and there is no land available for these schools!!! The city needs to set aside over 200 acres for future schools for the infill and the annexation areas or each of the existing school sites will need to have two and three story campus buildings. **This is a flaw in the plan.** 6.3

3. **Future Parks**: The current city policy is to have 5 acres per 1,000 residents. If the city is built out to 165,000 people by 2045 the city would need to have 825 acres of parkland to be consistent with this policy. That means all the annexation area will need to be park land with no development or the city needs to annex a whole lot more land in this process. Currently the city indicates that they have about 240 acres of parkland, but it is not clear if this includes the 20-acre sports field project. Ther is no new parkland identified for the infill of the city so where are the new parks to be located. 6.4
   No where in these two documents does the city include discussion on the parks and trails at Los Flores which is more than 300 acres.??? There is also no information on how much

100's of acres of new parks will cost the city both in the acquisition, development or long-term maintenance of many new parks over the next 25 years. T**he park policy needs to be substantially reduced to be realistic for the future.** 6.4

4. **Water and Wastewater Plans** There is no information about the many upgrades needed for water and sewer trucklines throughout the city. There is no information as to how the annexation area is going to be served for wastewater treatment. Is there going to be a new plant on that side of the city or how will the effluent be carried through what major trucklines across the city to the existing plant and how much expansion to the plant will need to be made to increase the plant by 50% and how much it will cost. **This information needs to be in the General Plan and the Draft EIR to validate that there is a feasible plan for the growth of the city.** 6.5

5. **Traffic Impact:** The traffic section of the EIR has no information on the 50% increase of traffic in the city of Santa Maria and the impacts to roadways and intersections. Some road sections will have 3 to 5 times as much traffic as currently experienced. Ironically the Noise section of the draft EIR has more information about traffic impacts than the traffic section. Table 4.6-8 reveals major impacts throughout the city. The bottom line is that the city either needs to **change the Policy to accept LOS F for most roadways or the city needs to identify** all the roadways and intersections that will need to be expanded and improved to maintain a LOS D. How much will these road improvements cost the city and the developers. Also, there is a map on the existing Circulation system within the city but there is no map on the new Circulation System. 6.6

6. **Los Flores Park and Landfill** There is no map or discussion in any of these documents on the 1,500 acres the city owns and what the plans are for this property. The plans were to have a 300-acre landfill for the future of the city of Santa Maria but that is not discussed in the Public facilities element or the EIR. On page 4.8-5 of the EIR the reference is that the city will be hauling trash to the Cold Canyon Landfill by 2034. WHY? 6.7

   Also, there is no discussion in either document on the parks and trails and other amenities at Los Flores that the city has spent park and general fund money on. What are the plans for the future of this park and the rest of the land at Los Flores?

7. **Future environmental review** Throughout the EIR there are references to future projects needing additional environmental review. This is incorrect. Most of the housing projects that are part of this infill area will not need future environmental review, and it needs to be clear in each chapter that most housing projects are exempt. They will not need VMT studies, bio studies, noise studies, cultural resource studies. They may need infrastructure studies if the city does not do it. 6.8
   Unfortunately, the annexation areas will need to have second level EIR's because the development plans for these areas were not included in this General plan update. So more time and money will be spent in the next five years to plan for these areas.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions on the attached comments.

Sincerely

Laurie Tamura, AICP
Principle Planner
Urban Planning Concepts, Inc

ES-1	4	The first sentence should have the elements listed in the order of state law. Throughout this document the reference should be in the order of state law. Should include Housing element in this list. Also the optional elements needed to be listed last	6.9
ES-1	6	Agricultural Identity needs to be revised to state: **"Balance the needs of the existing city and the annexation areas while respecting the agricultural operations outside of the city sphere of Influence."**	
ES-2	7	Connected Growth needs to be revised to state: **To accommodate projected population, housing and job growth focus on improvements Including new schools, parks, and infrastructure to existing neighborhoods along with infill on vacant sites. At the same time balance the growth needed by annexing planned areas that will also include schools, parks, businesses and jobs.**	6.10
ES-3	4	Alternatives: There is no Project Description listed here first. What is this EIR analyzing ?? Need to provide details on the growth hybrid plan of 8,000 units in the city and 8,000 units in the annexation area. also need to include details on how many schools are needed, how many parks, water, sewer, roads. Jobs etc.	6.11

		Each of the three alternatives need the same details listed here. How many units etc.... The determination of alternative 2 as the superior alternative is in error as there is no plan for anything but housing what about schools, parks, jobs, etc. and it does not meet the objectives for the future of the city.	6.11
ES-3	5	The one controversy has been expansion of Santa Maria to included prime agricultural land in the annexations. Please revise this statement.	6.12
ES-5-26		There will be many comments on MM's in this document that will need to be revised in this table	6.13
Introduction			
1.1	1	Throughout this EIR and the General Plan update the date should be changed from 2045 to 2050. This will give the city a 25-year timeline before the GP needs to be updated again and it will have the d city go through three housing cycles.	6.14
1-1	2	This paragraph needs a much longer review of the history of the city over the last 30 years since the Sphere of Influence and annexation project was approved by the City of Santa Maria. The 1993 plan studies the potential of 3,000 acres and resulted in the annexation of 2,000 acres with 10,000 units, schools, parks, jobs/housing balance. This history needs to be very detailed as this new GP update is following in the footsteps of the original annexation plan. Should include a map. This paragraph should be split in two after the word WRITTEN.	6.15
1-1	4	This should be a 2025 plan. The second sentence said that this is a blueprint for the city but there are no plans this is only a policy document and the blueprints will have to be done later project by project. Please rewrite this sentence and make it clear that the bullets listed here are not in this General Plan or EIR.	6.16
1-1	Whole page	There is no mention in the Introduction on the purpose of this EIR. This EIR is to study the Hybrid plan of 8,000 new infill units with schools, parks, jobs upgraded infrastructure and 8,000 new units in the annexation area with new schools, parks, jobs and infrastructure	6.17

		to serve this new area. must include these numbers in every session of this EIR as this is what the GP with result in fo the city.	6.17
1-2	2	This should have been a full EIR on the infill and annexation for the future of the city. Doing a Programmatic EIR just means that almost all future projects will need to do their own ND or Full EIR. Many more documents will need to be done project by project in the future.	6.18
2-1	2	Revise paragraph per correct listing of elements and optional elements and also note that this GP should be 2050.	6.19
2-1	footnote	This footnote should be revised to indicate that any development within SOI can and will be processed by the city of Santa Maria for annexation to the city. The county would be a responsible agency regarding the annexation application. For example Richards Ranch was processed by the city.	6.20
2-2	Fig 2-1	This map needs to include the 1,500 acre Los flores property that the city owns and operates to the southwest of the Orcutt area. this site will eventually have a new 300 acre landfill.	6.21
2-4	1	The linear portion of Santa maria is located on the **east side** not ~~west side~~ of U.S.101. Please correct. ~~The internal farm~~ The city owned service road go east to the City owned property where the water storage tanks are located along with communication towers and other city equipment. The city also owns and operates 1,500 acres of land known as Los Flores. This land includes parks and trails and, in the future, will be the new city landfill on about 300 acres. Add this information to this paragraph. The last sentence should be moved to the next paragraph	6.22
2-4	2	Regional transit is provided also by SMOOTH and other medical and senior carriers. This should be noted throughout this EIR. Regional rail should also include the Santa Maria Valley Railroad into the city of Santa Maria. Make these corrections.	6.23
2-4	3	Revised this paragraph The City of Sant Maria is characterized as ~~a suburban residential community~~ **the largest city in Santa Barbara County.** The next sentence is wrong as table LU-1 states the city is only 12,752 acres within the city limits. This sentence says that it is 15,058 acres…need to resolve the numbers.	6.24

		Please note that most of the 4,500 acres of land are in the Oru cut area south of Santa Maria and is already almost fully developed. The next three sentences are incorrect and should be deleted.	6.24
2-4	4	Again this paragraph repeats incorrect acreage.	6.25
2-4	7	Identify the optional elements Public Facilities, Rec and Park and Econ Devel. These Elements are not required and could be deleted.	6.26
2-5	1	It is too bad that this update to the Zoning maps and Zoning Ordinance could not have been done at the same time as this 5 + year effort but understand since the GP Update did not include land use maps.	6.27
2-5	2	This paragraph should be revised as this GP Update is only a goals and policy document but there are no land use or zoning plans provided for the future. It does not show how the 8,000 units of infill are going to be built out and it does not show any plans for the Annexation Area. All of this planning work has been pushed off into the future. Please correct this,	6.28
2-5	6	Vision statement should include support of the expansion of VSFB	6.29
2-5	Bullet	Revise the Agricultural objective as noted in other sections. ES-1	6.30
2-7	All bullets	Revise order of the Elements per state law and list the optional elements at the end. List the housing element in the bullets with the information about when it was adopted.	6.31
2-7		Land Use designations …the city needs to work on reducing the number of land use designations. There are too many and this is the time to reduce them. See comments provided for the Land Use Elements. Many cities are simplifying their land use and zoning ordinances	6.32
2-9	Bullet 2	Does this mean that the city is going to retire the Entrada Specific Plan since it is no longer being used?	6.33
2-9	Annexation	This whole section does not include the land uses and zoning to be planned for in this area. This area will include between 8,000 and 9,000 units, commercial at the interchanges, medical expansion, 6 new schools, 50 acres of parks and job creating uses. Need to provide these details in the EIR? Better, include a concept plan on how this area will be developed. Use the 1993 land use plan as an example. Delete the last phrase …and public land uses in annexed lands. ~~outside of the current city limits.~~	6.34
2-9	Noise	The maps in the Noise section are not correct as they do not include most of the sound walls that have been installed along 101 to reduce noise impacts on the community. These is a very big error that needs	6.35

		to be resolved in this section, Figure 2-6, the Noise Element and in this EIR	6.35
2-10	Fig 2-3	There are many errors in this map The land fill is not open Space???it should be CF Community Facility. The santa maria Cemetery is colored HDR-22 but it should be CF Airport land use designations are wrong. Area 7 is wrong. Betteravia plaza has new land use designations. There are no SP lands. This figure needs to be corrected.	6.36
2-11	Fig 2-4	Again, many errors. Most of them are listed above.	6.37
2-12	Fig 2-5	Need to include the eastern island that is not noted for annexation. This exhibit should have had a concept layout for 8,000-9,000 units and all of the other related uses need for this annexation area. at least the city could provide a list of needs for this buildout on this Figure	6.38
2-13	Fig 2-6	Rive and correct this map based on the existing sound walls along 101, there is no way that these contours impact half of the city. Also, there are many other projects with sounds walls that have reduced noise impacts along Blosser Road and this map should show this.	6.39
2-14	1	This plan should be taken out to 2050 because it has taken so long to get to this point and knowing that there is still so much work to do.	6.40
2-14	Fig 2-1	This table needs to be revised base on other tables that use other numbers. Double check the acreages.	6.41
2-14	4	Where is these 1,504 acres located? Is this in the city and not developed yet or is there other areas that the city is looking at for development. the bullets do not make sense ...why is there 463 acres of Commercial use in parens...if this is a loss or change in zoning this will be a huge lose of potential sale tax dollars to the city. Wht is 7 acres of airport use ? ll of these bullets are confusing and need a map to clearly note what this is trying to say.	6.42
2-14	5	These percentages need to be revised based on the correct acreage. Also, there are no lands in the city classified as vacant or agriculture. All lands have city land use and zoning for future development. Delete the second sentence.	6.43
2-15	1	Through 2050 ...	6.44
2-15	2	This paragraph should be revised to clearly state that most future housing projects will be exempt from CEQA based on newly adopted state laws. In the future the city will use this document as the main EIR for future projects and apply it to most projects in the future to save time and money in the permit process. There will only be few	6.45

		projects that additional environmental review will be needed and this included futured annexations. Add this statement to this Intended Use of this EIR.	6.45
2-15	Bullet 1	Update the city Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance.	
	Bullet 2	Rezoning Properties ~~as dictated by future development proposal~~. **to be consistent with the General Plan**	
	Bullet 5	Add water, wastewater, parks, schools, etc. Delete reference to ~~natural /capital resource preservation and or restoration.~~ This is not what the city is required to do as it is doing infill development and annexations.	6.46
	Bullet 6	This bullet needs to be very specific as to what future studies are needed.	
2-16	Bullet 3	Forward plan to LAFCO for approval of the SOI and annexations.	
Environmental Setting			
3-1	2	The second sentence needs to be clear that the SOI will also be expanded so that the annexations can be approved …it would be more efficient to have both the SOI amendment and the Annexations to happen at the same time like was done in 1993..	6.47
3-1	3	Delete internal farm road and state east along a service road to the city of Santa Maria water tank complex.	6.48
3-1	4	Regional transit includes SMOOTH, medical and senior transit throughout the city and should be add to this list medical transit take residence to doctors in Santa Barbara. Also change the last sentence. Regional rail is provided by Amtrak with a bus stop at the IHOP on Main Street offramp. There is also a train station in Guadalupe to catch the train .. Freight transit is provided a by Amtrak and the SM Railroad spur from Guadalupe to the city of Santa Maria. Details are important for this process.	6.49
3-1	5	This is a redundant paragraph and needs to be changed as noted Page 2-3 para 3 Delete the sentence reference agricultural and vacant use as that is not appropriate for City of santa Maria.	6.50
3-2	1	Typo in last line ..Existing instead of exiting	6.51
Environmental Impact Analysis			
4.1 Agricultural Resource			
4.1.1	2	This paragraph needs to be revised to provide details on the county of Santa barbara and the Santa Maria Valley	6.52

4.1.1		Urban and Built -up Land ...this definition is not right. It doesn't not include the definition of urban density of up to 30 units per acre or more. Please expand this definition to include city boundaries and allowed uses	6.52
4.1-2	1	This acreage number of 5,116 does not seem right. Table 4.1-1 does not seem right. How much of this acreage is in the Orcutt SOI area? why is these analyses including Area 5B7 Area 7and Area 9 and the Airport Specific plan. All of these planning areas a have already been analyzed and have Statement of Overriding Consideration for the future development of these planning Areas. This EIR should only be reviewing the impact on agricultural impacts on the annexation area. Revise this table and the whole section to make clear what has already been approved in prior actions and what is being considered for the future annexation.	6.53
4.1-2	4	This paragraph needs to be clear that LAFCO 's consideration is only for the annexation areas	6.54
4.1-3	Fig 4.1-1	This figure is very wrong as it does not clearly identify what has been developed and been approved in Area 5B, area 7 , Area 9 including the development of Windset farms and the development of the Airport Specific plan. Also, this map and acreage should not include any of the land in Orcutt as this open space area is not agricultural uses..no row crops and no grazing. This map needs to be revised and clearly note what has already been approved by previous action by LAFCO, and city.	6.55
4.1-4	Fig 4.1-2	Add to this map the AQ Pres numbers and dates of expiration. Delete the note in the legend that says Williamson Act Enrollment 2023. This is not needed.	6.56
4.1-5	5 and 6	Delete paragraphs 5 and 6 as they do not apply to this project and the Santa Maria Valley. These issues are not impacting the Santa Maria Valley	6.57
4.1-5	Table4.1-2	This table needs to be laid out on one page, and it should only focus on the Santa Maria Valley. There has not been a loss of ag land since the annexations of the City of Santa Maria in1993 and the 200 acres in the city of Guadalupe in 1995. This section needs to refer to the history of planning in the santa Maria valley over the last 30 years. Revised this whole section.	6.58
4.1-8	3	Note in this a paragraph that there are no agricultural preserves in the city of Santa Maria.	6.59

4.1-9	1	This paragraph needs to be corrected as there is not 5,116 acres of ag land in this planning Area and the analysis should only be on the annexation area. What and where are the nine acres of grazing land. Is it the annexation area?	6.60
4.1-9	2-3	This paragraph needs to clearly state that ag land in the city of Santa Maria have already been approved in other EIRs for urban development with Statement of Overriding Consideration. The next paragraph needs to be blended into this one.	6.61
4.1-9	4	The reference to the Greenbelt and Urban buffer is very important as it has been the guiding planning tool for the city over the last 30 years. This buffer will be adjusted in the new SOI and annexation area.	6.62
4.1-11		Goal COS-2 Working lands: Sustainable and productive agricultural lands support healthy and diverse economic resources Revise this policy.	6.63
4.1-11		Delete Action COS -2.1.2 this is not a feasible option for the infill of the City of Santa Maria	
		Revise Policy LU-1.2 Infill development: Continue to encourage infill of existing residential, commercial, and industrial uses to revitalize downtown and existing neighborhoods to the extent feasible Delete the next sentence	
4.1-12	Fig 4.1-3	Delete this figure as it does not have a relationship with the annexation. Also the map has the wrong land use designations in each of the areas. The map should have included each of the Area numbers. What about area 7 and the SMAP. Either you show all of the planning areas in the city, or you delete this map Again, this figure should be removed as it is incorrect.	6.64
4.1-13		Revise Policy LU-9.1 Agricultural Resource. Accommodate future City growth in the SOI and annexation area while respecting agricultural resources outside of the SOI .	6.65
		Delete Policy LU 9.2	
		Policy LU9.3 Add the phrase and active agricultural uses "outside of the SOI and annexation area"	
		Policy LU9.4 Add the phrase and active agricultural uses "outside of the SOI and annexation area"	
		The last paragraph needs to be revised to clearly state that the SOI and annexation will convert ag land to urban uses. Delete the first sentence as there will not be conservation easements for ag land in	6.66

		the city. The city will plan land uses to address the "Greenbelt and Urban Buffer" to respect surrounding ag lands outside the city.	6.66
4.1-14	3	the first sentence needs to be revised to state: The Santa Maria valley has over 180,000 (?) acres of prime land and an additional 100,000 (?) acres of non-prime and grazing lands. 30 years ago, the city of Santa Maria and Guadalupe annexed lands and there has been no annexations since. The city of Santa Maria annexed 2,000 acres and Guadalupe annexed 200 acres to provide land for the growth of these two cities. This is less than 1 % of the ag land in the valley. It is important to stress the effort the city , county and LAFCO have made to plan growth and protect agricultural over the last 30 years and now is the time to allow another small annexation for future growth. Most of this paragraph is not correct and needs to be revised.	6.67
4.2 Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emission			
4-.2-1 to 4.2-17		The first 14 pages are routine information in every EIR. Suggest that Table 4.2-4 be moved to the next page so that the whole table is on one page.	6.68
4.2-8	1	Double check this first sentence as it does not seem right that the earth's surface would be 33 degrees Celsius cooler. ??? Also, there is no mention that the world population has increased by 7 billion people over the last 200 years. This should be included in this paragraph.	6.69
4.2-9	1	This paragraph needs a table that CARB provides that start with the GHG level starting in 1990 which was over 500 MMT. The goal is to be 40% less GHG by 2030, This table will show how much the GHG levels in California have dropped. This has been done by requiring car modifications, reducing oil activities in the state and many building code requirements. Add this information to this paragraph.	6.70
4.2-14		All three paragraphs under Global Warning need to include every time there is a reference to 1990 GHG levels at over 500 MMT at that time ..you need to include this number so the reader can see how much the GHG level has already been reduced. Provide these details.	6.71
4.2-15		Under Senate Bill 1383	6.72

		Need to provide what the 2013 levels were for each of these targets and what the current levels are for comparison. Also note that Santa Maria has adopted the organic waste collection per this law.	6.72
4.2-16		Need to add a reference to the 2026 building code that will require more energy efficiency requirements.	6.73
4.2-17	4	This paragraph implies that every project in the future in the city of Santa Maria will have to do a GHG and Air Quality Analysis. This will be very costly in the future ...why did not the City include GHG thresholds as part of this GP update. Also all infill projects should be considered GHG reduction project and not need any more studies and in most projects with housing will be exempt from CEQA by state law. You need to make this clear in this paragraph.	6.74
4.2-18	Table 4.2-5	This table makes no sense. Only 7 acres of industrial when there are over 100 acres of vacant industrial land currently??? only 33 acres of parks when the Park Elements says they want 500 acres of parks. Where are the 452 acres of mixed use minus 463 acres of commercial so this is saying that all commercial will be torn down and rebuilt in the next 25 years???? If it is mixed use development what is the density of residential portion of these 452 acres ...how many units. If 30 units per acre there could be 12,000 units just in the mixed use infill It looks like that you double counted between res and mixed use. Clearly this model does not know that no one is planning on building 1021 acres or millions of sf of office professional or industrial uses over the next 25 years. It also does not include the fact the state is requiring that all existing and future development and vehicles be net zero by 2025. So basically, this model is not correct. This table should have been reviewed by developers and commercial real estate brokers and economic forecasters at UCSB to truth test these assumptions before running the CalEEMod	6.75
4.2-18	4	The assumption used in the CalEEMod are dated as the building code has been updated several times since 2019 and there is going to be a new update for 2026. These updates continue to add more energy efficiency to building and housing construction.	6.76
4.2.19	Table 4.2-6	This VMT table is clearly wrong. If the job/housing balance in the city is 1.5 most workers will only have to drive 5 miles to work. With all of	6.77

		the emphasis on mass transit and hybrid working there will be much less vehicle miles traveled. Also another factor is the deduct that the model needs to provide for the substantial increase in EV being purchased. The county of Santa Barbara VMT threshold is 19 miles. Also reference the ZEV report that SBCAG produced in January 2025. This report needs to be referenced in this section. Who came up with 47.6 VMT per household? Clearly wrong. Need to provide future assumption not what has happened in the past.	6.77
4.2-20	7	This paragraph and others should also reference the ZEV plan and the projected reductions in the future.	
4.2-21	Thresholds	Why has the city not completed a GHG threshold review fo the city? Does this mean that every project in the future is going to have to do GHG analysis but need to note that most housing project will be exempt from CEQA now and in the future. That needs to be stated here.	6.78
4.2-24	ACTION COS-5.1.3	This action needs to be revised to state that most housing and mixed-use projects will be exempt from CEQA and will only have to follow existing conditions.	6.79
4.2-24	Policies Actions	Many comments were provided on these provisions in the Element so make sure the recommended changes are made here to be consistent	
4.2-25	Table 4.2-7	This table needs to be run again as many of the build out assumptions in table 4.2-5 and 4.2-6 are incorrect. By 2045 -2050 many of these air quality impacts will be substantially reduced also this table needs to average this impact over the next 20-25 year as development occurs …there is no mention that it is assuming full build out impact in 2045. Correct this table based on a corrected CalEEMod run.	6.80
4.2-25	1	Delete the first sentence. You have already concluded in the table and discussion on page 24 that there is going to be a significant impact so why would you subject hundreds of future projects with wasteful studies on air quality and GHG analysis that you have already determined will happen and there has been a statement of overriding considerations adopted. Also, many of the housing projects will be exempt from environmental review. Make this clear in this section.	6.81

		Also since there is no adopted threshold this again is a waste of time and money to do studies on all these future projects. Delete this whole mitigation measure as inappropriate for future projects. There are standard air quality and ghg measures that are routinely required for projects based on the building code.	6.81
4.2-26	2-3	Delete or rewrite these two paragraphs. There is no need to do more studies based on this Programmatic EIR that has already run a CalEEMod on full build out. There will be an impact as projects are built out but these impacts will be progressively less, and state standards change. This is a plan fo the next 20-25 years and there will be many changes to improve air quality and GHG.	6.82
4.2-26	6	Revise this paragraph as state law requires that most construction related equipment be electric or hybrid in the next couple of years. most diesel construction equipment will be retired per state law.	6.83
4.2-28	5	MM AQGHG-3 This MM sounds like a very old standard that has already been implemented by many contractors. This needs to be reviewed by local contractors to get their opinion if this is even needed any longer. This document needs to stay up with the times and state law. Delete if no longer needed.	6.84
4.2-30	1	Over the last five years during this GP update process the city should have also generated GHG thresholds,	6.85
	2	What was the 1990 levels that we are trying to reduce by 40%?	6.86
	5	Goal COS -6 needs to be revised per other comments Encourage the city to be carbon neutral by 2045-2050 per state law. Action COS 6.1.1 too bad the city did not already get the GHG threshold done as part of this process but since the GHG level will be exceeded by the full buildout of the 2045-2050 plan there is no need to b do any further GHG studies.	6.87
4.2-31	1	The city of Santa Maria is served by PG&E not Southern California Edison...correct this paragrpagh	6.88
4.2-31		Delete Goal COS 6 and the following as they are listed on the previous page. Redundant.	6.89
4.2-31 4.2-32	11-12 1-2	These four paragraphs need to be revised. How can something be inconsistent and consistent at the same time?	6.90

		Also reference to VMT inconsistency is inappropriate since there are many measures that will meet the VMT reductions ..first being the job housing balance that is part of this plan as well as hybrid work and mass transit and EV's. The future will have many options to reduce AG and GHG.	6.90
		Revise the first consistency statement to make it clear that the 16,140 units will be split between the infill and the 980 acres of annexation area along with schools, parks, jobs, commercial etc. The plan is intend to take SM through 3 RNHA cycles since the last cycle Sant Maria was assigned 5,400 units to 2031. Refer to the adopted Housing Element.	6.91
		Revise the second consistency finding to make it consistent. Based on state law and other policies the build out to fhe City of Santa Maria will meet all of the future goals and stateslaws to reduce Air Quality and GHG. Also again correct that PG&E works with 3CE.	6.92
4.2-33	1	Delete the last two sentences of this paragraph as they are in conflict with most of the analysis. The city will continue in the future to meet state law and be consistent with requirements as the city grows and future plans are amended. You cannot hold the city to a 2022 Ozone plan in 2045.	6.93
	Table 4.2-9	First make this whole table on one page so it is easier to read and second this whole table needs to be revised to note that development will happen over the 20-25 years and will implement many air quality Measures. Energy is incorrect because the city is part of 3CE and they are working to be 100% energy renewable ..this should be substantially less or net zero based on state law and 3CE goals. Mobile should also be substantially less if all cars are to be electric by 2035??? The whole net reduction section of this table is wrong as it should be substantially higher so that in the end the new development will be net zero by 2045.	6.94
4.2-34	1-2	Both paragraphs are wrong in that every statewide and local effort will result in reductions to air quality impacts and GHG impacts so that new development will be Net zero by 2045-2050	6.95
4.2-34-36		The whole cumulative section needs to be revised to address the future state requirements to be net zero by 2035. To hold the city to the 2022 Ozone plan out to 2045 is not appropriate. This Ozone plan is scheduled to be updated in the next couple fo years. Also, the 2050	6.96

		RTP/SCS plan will be updated to reflect the future General Plan for the City of Santa Maria. The infill plan and the planned annexation will address the requirement to reduce air quality and GHG over the next 20-25 year.	6.96
4.3- Biological Resources			
4.3-1	2	Rincon has done many EIR's and biological surveys in the santa Maria and should refer to the physical surveys that they and other consultants have done. These surveys have reports indicating very little biological resources in the SM Valley because of historic agricultural production.	6.97
4.3-1	3	Using the word "open space" is not the correct word as there is no dedicated open space it is all agricultural land uses for row crops, vineyards and grazing. The second to last sentence is wrong. The EIR needs to be clear that the land in Area 5B, Area 9, Area 7 and the SM Public Airport are having land use designation for residential commercial and industrial uses. The percent needs to be changed to indicate that over 85% of this land is designated for Urban uses. 29% land currently in ag/open space is an interim use before the full development in the land use designated areas occurs.	6.98
4.3-1	4	There is very little area with undistributed native habitat. According to the map most of this land is located south of Orcutt	6.99
4.3-2	Fig 4.3-1	This map is wrong. The colors in the legend do not make sense to the map. 1. Why is the SM Cemetery shown is green and there is no green color in the legend, it is not a habitat area. 2. The landfill both old and new have no biological habitat and yet this map shows all kinds of plants in the landfill area. Need to be corrected. 3. Rivergate Specific Plan has been graded multiple times and has no biological resources. 4. The Guggia and DeBarnardi property is all agricultural production so remove the brown color on their property. If it is to shown where the house and barn s are located brown area is it is much smaller than what is shown. 5. This map needs to clearly indicate that planning areas in the city. Delete reference to agricultural in Area 5B which is currently being developed with the sports fields and will be developed with 1,440 units in the next couple of years	6.100

		6. The Santa Maria Airport needs to be corrected. 7. Area 9 is over half way developed with Windset Farms and many new industrial uses along Stowell Road . 8. Area 7 is planned for 1,000 and other uses.	6.100
4.3-3	1	Delete the last two sentences as they do not describe the biological resources of the last 100 years of agricultural production in the Santa maria Valley. Also as described in the Cultural resources most of the valley floor had very little surface water. Using the general CDFW description does not reflect SM Valley.	6.101
	3	Again, delete this generic description as it does not reflect the history fo the SM valley. Agriculture is very intense and only provides very limited opportunities for biological resources.	
	4	Barren land does not exist in the valley. the agricultural land is too valuable and productive to go barren. Delete this paragraph.	6.102
	5	Delete this whole paragraph as it does not apply to the Santa Maria valley. Also this is a generic description from CDFW and does not apply to SM.	6.103
4.3-4	2	Where in SM Valley is this Pine/Cypress habitat? This needs to be specific or deleted as it does not apply.	6.104
	4-5	Chaparral is mostly located in the south Orcutt area never hear of Chamise-redshank chaparral in the Santa Maria valley. Again, this looks like a generic description but does not apply to the Santa Maria valley. This should be deleted.	6.105
4.3-5	2	Delete the word Ruderal as it does not apply.	6.106
	3	Again delete the paragraph on Barren lands as it does not apply and is a generic description form CDFW. This definition should be part of the paragraph above as this is land that is being used in streets, parking structural improvements and is not barren. It is developed.	6.107
	4	This paragraph uses uncommon words that are generic to the state of California CDFW. Riverine should be called blue line river or stream and identify the Santa Maria River as such. Also what about Orcutt Creek and Solomon Creek in Orcutt. What about vernal pools? Why are they not identified in this document as CTS are very important habitat for planning in the SM Valley. These need to be described in this paragraph	6.108
4.3-6	Fig 4.3-2	Again, another figure that is wrong. 1. This aerial photograph has to be over 15 or 20 years old and does not include Windset farms or Enos Ranch and many infill	6.109

		projects. Rice Ranch just started grading in 2005, This EIR document should be using a very recent base aerial photograph to show how much of the city has been developed. 2. Both Santa Maria Wastewater plant and LCSD plant discharge ponds are not Freshwater ponds!!!! This needs to be corrected. 3. There are many basins with the city for flood control and recharge. Rivergate SP Area, Waller Park, SMCC,	6.110
4.3-7	2	Delete this paragraph. Again, there are no barren areas that meet this definition unless this is supposed to be the Santa Maria Levee. In which case this section should clearly state this, but the levee serves a very important purpose and should not be a called Barren.	6.111
4.3-7	Bullets	B Special Status Species whole section is in the wrong place move this to Page 4.3-9 before Special Status Plant Species	6.112
4.3-8	1	Correct refence to Appendix C not B.	6.113
4.3-8	2	Again this description does seem to apply to Central Coast Grasslands. The fourth sentence refers for fall rains which is not true, this region has winter and spring rains. Write this description to reflect the Santa Maria Valley. The grassland and perennial grassland also need to note that in this region they are predominately used for cattle grazing and also serve as CTS habitat. Make these descriptions specific to SM Valley. We do not the Roosevelt Elk in the Santa Maria valley	6.114
4.3-9	1	Oak woodlands in this area in located in the southern Orcutt Area. not in the city of Santa Maria or the Planning Area. Please make that clear in this paragraph.	6.115
	2	Delete this paragraph as it does not apply to the area being studied in this EIR	6.116
	3	Delete this paragraph as it does not apply to the area being studies in this EIR.	
4.3-10		Refer to Appendix C not B on this page What does the vicinity of this plan mean? One mile? Five miles? Show a map that was studied for this report?	6.117
	2	This paragraph should be very clear that the potential for these 13 plant species is very unlikely as infill development has already reduced potential for these plants and the Planning Area for annexation has been in full ag production for over 100 years.	6.118
	3	Again, what is the plan area that was studied to determine that species in the area. Also, make it clear that the development infill has very low potential and the Planning Area for annexation also has very low potential because of the 100 years of Ag. Production.	

4.3-11	Last two para	These paragraphs should be listed in bullets as it is very confusing what is the difference between Sensitive Community and Critical Habitat 1. Southern Vernal pools at Airport and on the east and west side out of the Sphere of Influence of the city. 2. Steelhead trout potential in the Santa Maria River . 3. La Graciosa thistle and the red legged frog in the southern portions of the Orcutt area. 4. No mention of Lompoc Yerba Santa in this section but it on the map. Also not mentioned on page 4.3-10???	6.119
4.3-12	3	This paragraph and Figure 4.3-4 do not make any sense. Most of the santa Maria is not known for wildlife corridors. There are known regions of CTS on the east and west side of the Santa Maria Valley but connectivity between these vernal pools is not documented. The paragraph refers to the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains that are over 30 miles away from Santa Maria. This whole paragraph should be deleted. The Santa Maria may serve as connectivity, but the map only shows a small polygon in the riverbed.	6.120
4.3-15	2-4	This section does not discuss the Supreme Court Decision on Water of the US, that needs to be included here.	6.121
4.3-17	2-5	Does the Supreme Court Decision have influence on waters of the state???	6.122
4.3-20	2	Again, this is disappointing that this EIR was not more thorough and clearer that future infill projects and the Planning Area will NOT have biological impacts and will NOT need additional biological surveys. The only areas that may trigger additional biological surveys are south airport area and those areas in the southernmost sections of Orcutt SOI but most of that area has already been developed. Revise this paragraph to make this clear.	6.123
4.3-21	1	Revise BIO-1 to make it clear that biological impacts will only happen to the southernmost areas of the Orcutt area.	6.124
4.3-21	2	Revise this paragraph to make it clear the there are no special status species within the infill areas of the city and in the Planning Annexation area. Only special status species occur in the south Orcutt area. There is no incremental loss of habits or fragmentation of open areas or loss of wildlife corridors. Delete this sentence. Make these corrections.	6.125

4.3-21		Delete Policy COS-1.1 This is an infeasible policy and is inconsistent with infill development and the annexation areas.	6.126
		Revise Policy COS 1.3 by stating the only place for planting biodiversity species is in city parks.	6.127
4.3-21	1	Again, there is no indication what the "Plan Area " is. Make it clear that most of these 13 plants are located over five to ten miles from the city along the sand dunes and none of these plants are in the city or the SOI or the annexation area.	6.128
	2	Delete this paragraph since none of these plants exist in the city or SOI or annexation area. so, there is no significant impact.	6.129
	3	This paragraph needs to be clear that within the city there are no wildlife species found and the annexation area is production agriculture and no species found. Make it clear that no additional studies are needed within these areas.	6.130
	4	What is the "Plan Area" for these species? They have not been found in the city and the annexation area. Revise this paragraph to make sure that there is no significant impact within the city.	6.131
4.3-23	1-2	The Mannal discussion is again not relevant to this General plan update as there are no known bat colonies in the city and the annexation area that do not have any trees. Also there have been no known badger dens in the city of Santa Maria or the annexation areas so there is no significant impact.	6.132
	3-5	These paragraphs need to be clear in that none of these have been identified in the city of Santa Maria or the annexation area.	6.133
4.3-24	2	Delete whole paragraph referencing burrowing owls as there have not been any identified in the city of Santa Maria or the annexation area.	6.134
4.3-25	3-5	This whole section needs to be clear that these amphibians are not located in the city of Santa Maria for the infill sites nor are they in the Planning Area for annexation so no additional studies are needed for future developments.	6.135
4.3-26	2	Bio -1(a) This whole MM needs to be rewritten as it does not apply to the infill of the City of Santa Maria or the annexation area. Also most infill projects, particularly housing projects, will be exempt by environmental review. The city should make it clear that there will not need to be any more bio studies except for maybe birds and bats. This MM is poorly written and way too long. It needs to be reduced and only focused on the city.	6.136

		BOI-1(b) Delete this MM as it has been proven that there are no special status plants in the City of Santa Maria or the annexation area. No additional studies are needed as it will be a waste of time and money. If you want to cover this issue, make it clear that it only applies to the southern area of Orcutt.	6.137
		BIO 1.(c) Delete as not appliable to the City of Santa Maria or the annexation area.	
		BIO 1(d) Again delete this MM to make it clear that this only applies to the southernmost area of Orcutt, There is no need for any Habitat Plans for the city since no habitat exist in the city or the annexation area.	6.138
		BIO-1(e) and BIO -1 f should be deleted as they are not needed in the city of Santa maria infill and the annexation areas. These MM are too long an should be deleted as too costly and waste of time for city projects. Also most housing projects are except for environmental review nd these MM will not apply.	6.139
		BIO-1(g) the WEAP training is appropriate because it includes a lot of other training beyond BIO stuff.	6.140
		BIO-1 (h) there have been hundreds of city projects and none of them had legless lizards so this MM needed to be deleted as it is not needed and it is a waste of time and money for infill projects and the annexation area.	6.141
		BIO-1(i) This MM needs to be substantially reduced. Having a page and half to require bat studies that are very rarely occurring in santa Maria. All you need o say is if a bio screening and assessment has been done and bats are found then standard study will apply.	6.142
4.3-32	1	BIO-1(j) this mitigation measure needs to be clear that it only applies to site with eucalyptus trees in the south city of Santa Maria and Orcutt area.	6.143
		BIO-1(k) Again this MM is over kill if bird survey is to be done follow standard procedures. It should be noted that there have been very few projects in the city of Santa Maria and the annexation area that will require bird surveys.	6.144
4.3-33	3	This whole paragraph needs to start with the first statement which is that the city of Santa Maria and the annexation area have no known special status species and do not have to conduct biological surveys. If nesting birds and or bats are determined to be in the infill areas of Santa Maria then surveys and MM will be done for them.	6.145

		Delete reference to many of the MM that are to be deleted as not needed in the city of Santa Maria or annexation area.	6.146
4.3-34	1	Impact BIO-2 This impact's first two sentences do not apply to the city of Santa Maria since there is no wetlands in the infill of the city or the annexation the only impact is working with NPDES permits for construction impacts.	6.147
	2	This whole paragraph needs to be revised to state that there are no marine habitats, or freshwater nature ponds in the city or the annexation area. The figure referenced is incorrect and needs major corrections. There are manmade flood control basins and channels that are designed to dry up most of the year	6.148
		Delete Policy COS-1.1 and COS 1.3 as both policies are infeasible. Revise COS 1.5 should be revised to only focus on birds and bats that may have potential in the city of Santa Maria and annexation area.	6.149
4.3-35	1-2	These two paragraphs need to delete refence to MM Bio's since most of them are deleted.	6.150
4.3-36		Delete COS-1.1and COS 1.3. Revising COS 1.5 make this police clear that the infill of the city and the annexation has no impact on species except for maybe birds and bats.	
4.3-37		Delete COS -1.1 Because there is no wildlife corridor in the city or wetlands, and this policy is infeasible. Delete the Policy COS 1.3 as it is infeasible unless it is only focused on city parks, Revise Policy COS 3.1 as the Urban Forest Management Plan has not been adopted. Also, it is infeasible to have a 20% tree cover if the city includes all of the land in the airport district and in areas 7 and 9. This percentage should only apply to the built-out city and the infill and it should include trees on private properties, school sites, AHC and other areas.	6.151
4.3-38 4.3-39		The whole cumulative section needs to be revised to clearly state that there are no known special status species in the city or the annexation area. The second and third paragraphs need to be revised to be clear as there are no wetlands in the city or in the annexation area. There are some CTS vernal pools in the south on the airport and Area 7 so these paragraphs should focus on this.	6.152
4.4 Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources.			

4.4-2	6-7	Where is the Historic Overlay District? You should include a map showing this and where the following buildings are located. Also include the map from the existing element to show the potential of cultural resources in the city	6.153
4.4-4 4.4-8		All the laws listed on these pages should include the date they were adopted.	6.154
4.4-8		SMMC This code needs to be changed to either change the requirement to 70 years ago or only apply to buildings build before 1950. Anything after that is not a historical building and most of the residential buildings are tract houses. Another option would be to consider buildings in the 4 sq mile area built before 1950. Since the city goal in the Air Quilty section is to tear down almost all of the commercial buildings in the city and build mixed-use buildings this standard for existing building review needs to be clear.	6.155
4.4-9		Resource Management Element First you need to be clear that this old element is being retired and a separate resolution will be needed to retire this element. Second, all the maps should be in the EIR and the new elements. In this case the map in the Resource Management Element needs to be added to this EIR and the COS Element. The map will identify those areas with negative or low sensitivity versus those areas with higher levels of sensitivity This paragraph notes that there is a low level of cultural resource in the Santa Maria Valley, but it does not explain why. Most of the valley was in the flood plain of the Santa Maria River and cultural resources were lost in periodic flooding for over 10,000 years. Also, after the rainy season there was very little surface water available throughout the rest of the year, so the Chumash moved from the Solomon hills to the Nipomo Mesa where water was available. The historic riverbed was the bluff running east west just north of Betteravia Road.	6.156

		South of Betteravia into the Orcutt area there are a few sites identified. Most of them are in the area around Orcutt and Solomon creek because of the periodic water source in those creeks. Add this history to this EIR and the COS document.	6.156
4.4.11	Last Para	This paragraph needs to be clear that before 1960 the population of the city was about 35,000 with maybe about 9,000 units, mostly in the 4sq mile area. Now the city has almost 30,000 units with many of them built over the last 70 years. They are mostly tract homes and apartments. The city ordinance needs to be revised to state that tract homes and units built after 1960 are not historic units.	6.157
4.4-12	Act COS 7.1.1	Where is the Historic Overlay District??? Where should it be expanded??	6.158
4.4-13	1	This paragraph needs to be revised to clearly note that the city ordinance is for 50 years older not 45 years old. Also, all developments since 1960 is not considered historic and are not required to be surveyed or studied. It is important to set a date and not years as the building will continue to be older but are not historic.	6.159
4.4-14	2	The last sentence should end with the phrase" ...south of Betteravia Road."	6.160
	3	The last sentence should end with the phrase "...south of Betteravia road".	6.161
4.4-15		CUL 2a, 2b, 2c Add the phrase ....For projects and new development south of Betteravia Road the staff will determine if studies are needed..... The MM shall only apply to south of Betteravia Road as noted on the Res. Management Map.	6.162
4.4-16 4.4-17 4.4-18		All of these paragraphs and MM need to add the phrase ...south of Betteravia Road.	6.163
4.4-18	10 Cul-4a Cul-4b	This paragraph is stating that all future projects will need to go through tribal consultants. This sounds like this is "a second bite at the apple. The city already went through consultation process for this General Plan update and Planning Area and there was no response. Why would the city force future projects to go through additional time and money for a second round of consultation. This needs to be revised.	6.164

		We understand that there may need to be consultation for projects south of Betteravia. Revise this paragraph and the MM.	6.164
4.4-19	4-5	This discussion needs to be very specific as only structures in the 4 sq mile area are considered potentially historic based on dates of when buildings were constructed. Only refer to this area for additional studies with future development. Also recommend the ordinance amendment to apply to this area and buildings that were built before 1960 and maybe even earlier.	6.165
4.5 Hydrology and Water Quality			
4.5-1		This whole chapter need to include details on the following items throughout the chapter because so many things have happened over the last 30 years to improve the quality of the surface water and groundwater basin. **Twitchell Dam.** Note when the Dam was built and what agencies manage the operation of the Dam. The Dam serves two purposes one is for flood control of the Santa Maria Valley. This is coordinated the BLM and County Flood Control. The second purpose is serving as recharging of the groundwater basin. Release of water and the overall dam operation is managed by the Santa Maria Water Conservation District which is run by an elected Board of Directors along with the Twitchell Management Authority that was set up by the court in the adjudication of the groundwater basin. The TMA has representatives from the city, agricultural and other ground water users. **State Water** Supplemental water was delivered to the Santa Maria Valley around 1996 as part of the Central Coast Water Authority construction of the pipeline. Santa Maria is the majority holder of the state water and pipeline project. The purpose of this 17,000 AFY (??) water allocation is to improve the groundwater quality and reduce pumpage from the groundwater basin. This allocation fluctuates depending on the snowpack in the Sierras. The state water is blended with historic ground water pumpage. **Waste Water Discharge:** This blende water improves water quality goes as far as improving the wastewater discharge at the treatment plant ponds that percolate in the groundwater basin and the city gets credit for this discharge in their water portfolio. The bottom line is that this whole section needs to discuss the benefit of state water in the	6.166

		Santa Maria valley and the reduction fo TDS in the ground water basin. There is really good information in the 2024 annual basin report. **Adjudication of the basin.** For over 10 years the city, farmers, and other groundwater users fought through a very expensive lawsuit on the status of the Santa Maria basin and the addition of state water. In 2007, the court determined that this basin was not in overdraft and appointed basin managers through the Twitchell Management Authority and the SM Valley Conservation District. The TMA prepares an annual report that reports to the court on the progress of this managed basin. RWQCB mainly monitors the water quality and TDS levels. **Agricultural conversation.** Most of this section needs to acknowledge and provide details that the conversion of city urban agricultural and the annexation area agricultural uses will result in substantial reduction of groundwater use. In most case active row crop production will require 4 AFY of water per acre of land whereas urban uses between .5 to 1 AFY per acre or less. The buildout of the city and the annexation will result in a net benefit to the groundwater basin. Also agricultural operators have become much more efficient in their water use. They use laser leveling and hoop houses and greenhouses, and other techniques to reduce water use. The TMA report shows documentation of this reduced water use. This needs to be noted throughout this section as a benefit to the ground water basin. **Reduced urban water use**. Finally, the 2024 report indicates a 40% - 50% reduction of water use per capita over the last 25 years. This is the result of higher density projects using less water and the increase in water costs that encourage water users to conserve. This is a big benefit to the basin and will continue. Add all this background information in this section. And include the detailed supply table from the 2024 report in this section.	6.166
	5	The last sentence needs to be changed to say…Groundwater blended is state water is used for industrial, municipal, and government uses within the city.	6.167
4.5-2	1	This paragraph seems to be focused on agricultural operations from 30 years ago. Agricultural operations are much more efficient and	6.168

		substantially reduce chemical use for food production. Also, urban agricultural operations in the city are not a major source of sediment and do not impact on the city storm drain system. Delete the third sentence as all the urban agricultural operations are located on the west side of the city and will not impact surface water in the city.	6.168
	2	The first third of the paragraph should be a separate paragraph as it is discussing the end of the SM River which is located 11 miles away. The rest of this paragraph lists all types of chemicals used in the valley, but it does not state that most of these chemicals are being substantially reduced by agricultural operators.	6.169
	3	TDS levels in the basin has been improving over the last 30 years based on all of the point noted above. The second sentence should be added to the Guadalupe paragraph above as it has nothing to do with the city of Santa Maria. The third sentence is poorly written as it does reflect what is happening in the basin as noted in all of the points discussed above. The water quality in the basin is improving with reduced TDS levels mainly because of the State water adding to the basin. Revise this whole paragraph…	6.170
	4	This whole section needs to be expanded to explain how the city of Santa Maria works with County of Santa Barbara Flood Control on major channels and basins that FC operate in the city. There is also no mention of the Santa Maria Levee and what it does for the northern half of the city of Santa Maria which historically flooded. Ther is no mention of Twitchell Dam and benefits provided to reduce flooding in the valley and the city. Where is Lake Guadalupe (which is misspelled throughout this section)? Is it west of Santa Maria…are you sure it is not Betteravia Lake? What is a seiche???	6.171
4.5-4	Fig 4.5-1	Should label Ranta maria river along with the location of the santa Maria Levee. Also label Orcutt Creek. Suggest providing a regional map that shows where Twitchell Dam is located as well as the Lake, and the end of the Santa Maria River. And other drainage features.	6.172

4.5-5	6	Need to include discussion on the Supreme Court Decision about waters of the US and what is the new definition.	6.173
4.5-11		Policy S-3.3 change ponds to **basins.** Revise Policy S-3.4 to state .. "**Coordinate with County Flood Control** to maintain and upgrade ...."	6.174
4.5-12		Change HYD-2 .....the GP update would **incrementally** increase the .... The second sentence needs to state that the SM Water conservation District and Twitchell Management Authority will assure the quality of the Groundwater Basin and the blended use of water with State Water and recharge is assuring the basin is in balance.	6.175
	3	Revise the first sentence ".....Santa Maria ~~River~~ Valley Basin within the **infill of the City of Santa Maria and the annexation area** which could **incrementally** reduce the	6.176
	4	Delete the last sentence as it does not make sense, you cannot reduce impervious surface while building buildings and parking lots???	6.177
	5	Delete the word River in the first line.... What is the amount of groundwater rights the city has based on the adjudication of the groundwater basin...as managed by the Twitchell Management Authority. The groundwater is augmented by state waste, discharged water, and other sources for the future growth of the city and the annexation area.	6.178
4.5-14	1	The Rivergate Roemer Specific plan area is in the 100-year flood plain and will need to be designed to raise the finish floor two feet above the flood plain. This development will also need to process LOMR map revision with FEMA.	6.179
	3	Correct the spelling of Guadalupe. Not sure if there is a Guadalupe Lake. What is a seiche? Show that the levee is protecting the city if anything happens with Twitchell dam. Delete reference to Lopez as that dam is 30 miles northeast of Satna Maria.	6.180
		Policy S-3.6 add BLM, ACOE, and other federal agencies coordinate with county and state and city with the Twitchell Dam and the Levee.	6.181
4.5-15		Impact HYD-5 this impact is wrong in that there is an adjudicated order management plan coordinated with Twitchell Management Authority and Santa Maria Water Conservation District. Rewrite the next two paragraphs to correct the agencies that manage the groundwater basin. The basin plan from RWQCB is mainly	6.182

		focused on surface water and groundwater quality. TMA and SNWCD are focused on quantity and state water additions to assure that the basin remains in balance.	6.182
4.5-16 4.5-17		Cumulative Impacts. This whole section needs to be revised to include the many points made in the comments above.	6.183
		The health of the groundwater basin both quality and quantity are well managed by the Twitchell Management Authority, and this chapter needs to document how this has happened over the last 20 years and how it will continue to be well managed and improved as the city of Satna Maria grows.	6.184
4.6 Noise			
4.6-4	3	Add in the paragraph…The **current** Santa Maria General Plan	6.185
4.6-5	Table 4.6-3	This table needs another column that identifies all segments of these roadways that have already existing sound walls or abutting structures that limit the noise level contours particularly along the US highway 101 on both sides of the highway.	6.186
4.6-10	Fig 4.6-1	This map needs to be updated to include the Enos Ranch apartment project and new school, Skyview Project, and other projects that have been approved in the last couple of years.	6.187
4.6-11	Fig 4.6-1	This exhibit needs to include Waller Park as it is included in the city of Santa Maria inventory. Also, the legend includes water which is incorrect. These are vernal pools and should be labeled correctly. Also, not sure why they are even listed on this figure as being relevant for noise contours??? Should label this noise contour map as adopted by the County Airport Land Use Commission 2023.	6.188
4.6-11	Fig 4.6-3	This map needs to be revised to clearly indicate where existing sounds walls and structures are located that mitigate noise impacts to the surrounding area. Most of 101 has high sounds walls so that noise contours do not go beyond these walls. The contours 65 and below should not be shown on this map as they do not apply particularly along 101. The city has done a good job over the last 30 years to reduce noise impacts to residential and other uses by requiring soundwalls where they can be built.	6.189
4.6-14	Table 4.6-4	This table needs to be revised to include the city ordinance that allows exterior noise level to be 75 dBa along major corridors. Also the city is	6.190

		now encouraging residential development without perimeter sound walls, so it results in higher noise levels in these projects These standards need to be documented in this table.	6.190
4.6-14	Table 4.6-5	This table needs to be revised as it is not correct. Daytime exterior noise level is 65 with 75 along major corridors.	6.191
4.6-15	7	This paragraph should also note that as more electric vehicles are added to the fleet of cars in the state the noise level along road ways will be reduced. As required by state law there will be only EV sold by 2035	6.192
4.6-19	7	This paragraph should also include Fairgrounds, sports fields, high school games, which are all near residential areas.	6.193
4.6-19	8	This paragraph and the following exhibit is wrong as future noise levels along roadways will be substantially reduced as EVs become the predominant vehicles and trucks in the state.	6.194
4.6-20	1	This whole paragraph is wrong as there will not be significant increases in traffic noise in the future. In fact, the noise levels on roadways will substantially be reduced based on EV and new technology. The second half of this paragraph was very disappointing, this EIR should include analysis of 8,000 new units in the annexation areas along with new schools, parks, commercial uses. Etc. What is the point of this IR if this analysis did not happen?	6.195
4.6-21	Fig 4.6-4	This map does not look much different from the existing map on page 4.6-12. The map needs to be corrected to adjust contour lines where major sound walls and buildings are located along 101 and that reduces noise along the freeway	6.196
4.6-22	Table 4.6-8	This seven-page table needs to be revised to address the reduction of vehicle noise from new EV standards being required by the state. This information needs to be added to the consultant model which will show that traffic noise will be reduced over the next 20-25 years.	6.197
4.6-30	Policy and Actions	All of these items need to be deleted as it is infeasible for development to pay for sound mitigation beyond their project. The idea that there is such a thing as noise reduction in-lieu fee is infeasible as there is no way to determine the cost of "quiet Pavement" throughout the city?????? Or the cost of off -site sound walls. All of these provisions need to be deleted.	6.198
4.6-30	NOI-1	For the most part this is standard condition, but the city should confirm that they have had these provisions reviewed by contractors in the area that use these requirements during construction	6.199
4.6-31	6	This paragraph should be revised based on the state requirements to have EV's for vehicles and trucks over the next 20-25 year along with	6.200

		hybrid working and mass transit which also will be electric that will substantially reduce roadway noise. This plan needs to address what the noise levels will be in 25 years not what they are today.	6.200
4.6-35 4.6-36		The Cumulative review needs to address the reduction in noise as both construction equipment and all vehicles transition to the use of electric vehicles. This is the future in California, and this document needs to reflect the future requirements. Para 1 on page 36 needs to be revised to state that traffic noise will be reduced and will not have a significant impact.	6.201
4.7 Transportation and Traffic			
4.7-1	1	There is a reference to a travel demand model evaluated by GHD date June 2025. But there is no indication that the TDM was reviewed by the public and other traffic consultants. Where is this study… it should be an Appendix. And it should be peer reviewed by local traffic engineers…why did they not do a VMT analysis also?? The city has an adopted screening tool for infill projects that do not have to do any further studies. This map needs to be added to this sections.	6.202
4.7-1	3	The list of uses needs to include truck hauling routes for agricultural products and industrial haul routes for VSFB and other industries.	6.203
4.7-2	9	Is this paragraph correct? I have worked on many projects along Betteravia and never heard of this classification for Betteravia??	6.204
4.7-3	Table 4.7-1	This table needs to be expanded 1. include the road right of way widths for each of these roadways. 2. how do complete streets change the width and design of these road segments? Do complete street standards only apply to new city streets? What is the whole right of way width needed for a complete street? Travel lanes, sidewalks, trees, bikeways. You should include a cross-section of what a complete street is? Or provide details in the appendix. 3. need definition for public alley ways 4. need to have definition of private roads and driveways for small lots and multifamily development that will not have complete street design. These private streets will not be maintained by the city so they will save maintenance costs for these private roads ,, they will be maintained by private HOA's.	6.205
		Active Transportation Plan should be included as an Appendix.	6.206
4.7-4	Fig 4.14-1	This map needs to be updated to include the connection to 101 and UVP, extension of Seaward Drive to 101. Revised the location of	6.207

		Bradley Road through Enos Ranch. Include the road pattern for the Blosser ranch Specific Plan. Include the roads for Area 9 and 7 that are part of the Circulation element Need to identify all of the measures A projects that are already funded.	6.208
4.7-5		All of the bikeways need to include the standards and widths for each bullet.	6.209
4.7-5		SMRT. This paragraph states that ridership is rapidly increasing. Need to provide a table of ridership over the last 10-20 years to prove this statement. Ther may be some routes that higher level of ridership particularly for the schools.	6.210
4.7-6		There are six bullets describing transits but there are more that need to be added SMOOTH, Dail a Ride, Senior Transits and Medical Transits that are provided by Marian and other medical services. These are important services that do not cost the city anything but serve needy clients.	6.211
4.7-6	GHG	Every reference to GHG emissions to 1990 levels need to include what the emission were in 1990. If I remember at the time California documents that GHG was at 540 MMT. What was the level in 2020? Was it achieved?	6.212
4.7-7		This document needs to include the 2021 Active Transportation Plan so readers can see where these bikeways are to be located. Did the ATP include the annexation areas? If not does this mean that the ATC now needs to be updated to plan bikeways in the annexation area? Why was it not part of this EIR and General Plan update?	6.213
4.7-8		SMRT..Did the Short-Range Transit Plan include a map? It should be included in this EIR to show what has been approved. Did the plan include the annexation area? if not, does this mean that this plan will need to be revised for the annexation area?	6.214
	5	This section needs to provide a map and table which shows existing traffic in the city and what is proposed by 2045. Along with LOS. I know that EIR's do not have to include traffic studies with LOS for roadways and intersections, but Table 4.6-8 future noise impacts provide the details on the traffic existing now versus what traffic is going to be generated in the next 25 years. There are roadways and intersections that will experience 2 to 5 times as much traffic as existing now. Where is the plan that identifies those roadways and intersections that will operate at LOS F at full build out. This EIR needs to include a map for the circulation element for 2045-2050.	6.215

		For example, Broadway south of Betteravia will have traffic increased from 47,500 ADT to 91,630 ADT. What does that mean for that road segment. Where is the plan for the future of the circulation element. What is this going to do for the AB 1600 fees and other funding sources for road improvements? This EIR and the General plan elements need to be consistent with each other and at this point they are not.	6.215
4.7-10		Bullets need to include the Travel Demand Model. Is this model to be used in the future by local traffic engineers to determine impacts on roadways and intersections? Or is the model the sole source of GHD and every traffic study in the future is only done by this firm?	6.216
		Delete Policy CIR-1.2 as privately maintained driveways and streets will not be designed to meet complete streets requirements. What is a Street Network? What is a Bikeway Network? What is the Pedestrian Priority Improvement network? Thes plans need to be in the EIR or an appendix.	6.217
		Policy CIR-1.3 Delete reference to private streets	
		Action CIR-2.2.2 another sentence should be added to this Action. The AB1600 traffic fees collected from development projects will be used as matching fund for future grants and funding programs.	
		Policy CIR-6.4 What is Transit Oriented Development? There is no mention of this in any part of this EIR. Should there be more information provided or reference the source for this?	
4.7-12		Delete CIR-6.1 This circulation Element and EIR should have included the citywide street design standards so the public would know what the city is planning. Again, here is a reference to a plan SM Regional Transit Standards? Does this plan already exist? When was it adopted?	6.218
		Action CIR-6.4.3 Delete second bullet as it is inconsistent with the Noise element and this EIR noise section. Delete the last to wo bullets as they are inconsistent with other policies. First most projects will have private streets, and the HOA's will not allow buses to come into these projects. Second, the last bullet is subjective and inconsistent with the Objective Design Standards that the city has adopted.	
		Policy CIR-7.2 this policy is inconsistent with the General Plan element they proposes to Annex 980 on the east side of the freeway. In fill should not take priority over the annexations. Revise this policy	

		to state that infill and annexations areas will prioritize mixed-use development	6.218
4.7-13		Again this whole page includes references to Bikeway Network, pedestrian Priority Improvement network and ATP but does not provide these maps. At he end of the page it says that there are no MM but what about major road improvements that will be needed to address 2-5 times as much traffic in the major streets and intersections in the city over the next 25 years.	6.219 6.220
4.7-14	Table 4.7-4	Why is new development being treated differently? Why do these projects have to reduce VMT to 24.2 and 32.8 %. This is infeasible and the law only requires a 17% reduction. The last sentence does not make sense as the CARB requirement is only 17%. Revise this sentence. Also what does the new state law AB130 do for VMT requirements?	6.221
4.7-15		Policy CIR-7.1 and Action CIR-7.1.1 It is important to note that most housing projects will be exempt from environmental review. They will not need to do traffic studies or address VMT because they will be infilled. Please add this note to these policies	6.222
		Policy CIR-7.2 see comment above to revise this Policy.	
	6	The sentence on page 4.7-14 says the city will be consistent with CARB standards but this paragraph says the city would be inconsistent. Please clarify which is correct.	6.223
4.7-15	7-8	So based on the two paragraphs does it mean that every future project that is not a housing project will be required to do an EIR because it will not be able to reduce the VMT's below 17% or if an employer it has to reduce VMT by 32.8%...Basically most new employers (retail and industrial /office uses) will have to make sure their employees do not have cars and can only ride bikes and buses or walk!! Or they will have to pay huge mitigation fees which have not yet been determined. Or will the Statement of Overriding Consideration for this EIR override the need for future VMT impacts.	6.224
4.7-16		Policy CIR-1.3 delete reference to private street	6.225
4.7-17		Same comments from above on the first three items.	6.226
		Policy CIR-1.9 this policy needs to be separated into two policies. the first should just focus on LOS for roadways and intersections and	6.227

		based on the Table in the noise section it is clear that the LOS in the city will be D, E, or f by full build out. There is no need to require Deficiency plans as we already know that most intersections on Broadway Betteravia and other major arterials will be significantly impacted in the future. The policy should focus on bicyclists with the known increase of traffic on the major corridors the city should be focus on moving bicyclists to other side streets.	6.227
		MM this infill buildout will result in significant traffic impacts throughout the city and needs to be addressed EIR. We need a detailed map that shows future roadways, and which intersections will exceed LOS D,E,F. . How is the city going to address these major impacts?	6.228
4.7-18	2	Does this Paragraph mean that the city will accept LOS D, E and F throughout the city at full build out. Also the third paragraph seems to imply that all future projects will need EIR's because they will not be able to reduce VMT below these new thresholds. Need to be clear that most housing projects will be exempt from CEQA and will not have to address VMT reductions because they are infill projects as indicated in the city screening tool	6.229
4.8 Utilities and Service Systems			
4.8-1	2	Also add to this paragraph that the adjudication included return flows from the wastewater treatment plant for the percolation ponds. This section should include how the city has been very successful in reducing water consumption per capita. The same is the reduction of water use in agricultural operations.	6.230
4.8-2	Table 4.8-1	This table needs to be formed on one full page to make it easier to read. Does this table and report from WSC qualify as a WSA per state law since there are more than 500 units?	6.231
4.8-3 4.8-4		Wastewater section. What is the current flow to the treatment plant? With a 50% increase in population over the next 25-30 years what will be the capacity of the plant at that time? Will there be the need for more upgrades to the plant or will the city build a new plant to serve development on the east side of the freeway?	6.232

		If all the effluent from new development on the east side of the freeway and the infill development is all going to the existing plant, then the existing trucklines and other pipelines be able to convey the wastewater to the plant or will there be major pipeline upgrades across the city to the plant. The information about wastewater is very important for the future of the city and City Council and LAFCO needs to know what is being planned. Please expand this section.	6.232
4.8-4		Stormwater basin…you should include A street basin and the north Blosser Basins as they are the biggest basins in the city. The Blosser Channel drops into the Blosser basin for infiltration and Water quality improvement before spilling into the Santa Maria River. It should include a fourth bullet that describes the Green Canyon Water shed and all of the improvements that have been constructed over the last 30 years to convey storm water through the southern portion of the city. The water conveyance starts with the Bradley square project with the channel and pipeline to the two basins at McCoy Lane the water then moves through the government center. There is a pipeline at the Miller Street and Betteravia intersection that takes the water through the OHS center then across Broadway through the west side to the Battles Channel and then to the Hobbs Basin. Prior to all of these improvements there was yearly flooding at Miller and Betteravia and in the residential areas on the west side of town.	6.233
4.8-5		Solid waste section needs more details. First this section needs to go over the process to establish the Los Flores Landfill and when it will be open and operational. Second, what will happen to the closure of the existing landfill? When will this happen? The land fill will still operate as a transfer station. Third there is no discussion about the food organic waste tha tis now required to be pick up for residential and commercial food related businesses. Fourth Need to have a discussion about the hazardous waste collection and how that is going to operate in the future .	6.234

		Fifth, why is the city considering hauling trash to Cold Canyon landfills, it is very far to travel daily? Is this correct? Is this only temporary until the Los flores Landfill is operational?	6.234
4.8-13	3	This paragraph needs to be revised to clearly state the City of Santa Maria has already installed a major water trunk line from the water tanks east of the city to Panther Drive. This trunk line will serve the annexation area.	6.235
4.8-14 4.8-15		This section indicates that the plant can serve full buildout of the general plan and annexation area. The question is if the plant is currently operating at 9.99 MGD and the proposed 16,140 units is 50% of the existing units then would not the new effluent be 5 MGD for a total of 15MGD which will exceed the sewer plant capacity. It does appear that the plant will need to be expanded so will the city be looking at upgrades in the future. It looks like the east side will not need a separate plant. If not, where are the major trunk lines that will convey effluent from the east to the existing wastewater plant? Are they sized correctly for future additional sewer? This information needs to be in this EIR document to confirm that the city will be able to serve the east side feasibly.	6.236
4.8-16 4.8-17		Again, this section lacks the needed information on how storm water conveyance will be handled on the east side of the freeway. How many access points are there along the levee to discharge storm water to the river? Or does the storm water follow the current drainage system to Jim May Park and then to the Blosser Basin and then to the river. This information needs to be part of this EIR and not deferred to a future analysis. If this regional drainage plan is not addressed, it could be a fatal flaw on the development of the annexation area. This cannot be deferred for future projects to figure out.	6.237
4.8-16		Already provided suggested changes to these goals and policies in the hydrology section and in the general plan.	6.238
4.8-17	1	This EIR should provide enough information for the overall regional infill drainage improvements for the 8,000 to be built as well as the annexation area. How will the drainage be conveyed to the river is the most important issue for the annexation area?	6.239
4.8-18		This whole page should be referring to and incorporating information from the 2024 annual report of the Santa Maria Valley Basin	6.240

		Management plan. This document has so much information about the health and management of the groundwater basin along with many great exhibits. I refer to this document anytime there are questions or discussions about the basin. On page 38-39 is the discussion on the projected water use by 2040 and the whole city with build out will be 18,700 AF. This information needs to be added to this section.	6.241
	3	What is the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan? When was it adopted and how often is it updated?	6.242
4.8-19	1	A 20% reduction would result in water use to be 85 gallons per day per capita	6.243
	3	This section should also include reference to the 2024 Basin Management Plan because it has the best information about the basin water supply and the water use throughout the basin. And note that the total city water use by 2045 will be estimated at 18,700 AF.	6.244
4.8-20	3	Again, the question is did the city decide not to build the Los Flores Landfill and instead plan on future trash transported to the Cold Canyon Landfill about 30 miles north of Santa Maria? The city staff report on December 5, 2023 still refers to the city use of the Los Flores landfill in the future. Please correct the record. What is the city going to do with the 1,500-acre Los Flores property if it is not going to be a landfill??	6.245
4.8-21	5	This paragraph needs to state the existing water use, projected new water and the total in 2045 at full build out. Has the city determined what water lines in the city will need to be upgraded if there is 8,000 more units in the city????	6.246
4.8-21	6	As noted earlier the math does not seem right and there could be up to 15MGD at full buildout which means there would have to be more upgrades to the plant. Please provide how the math was done. Also what major trucklines will need to be upgrades to serve the east side of the freeway.	6.247
4.8-22		Please correct the last paragraph about where future trash will be hauled to and what is planned for Los Flores?	6.248
4.9 Effects Found Not to be Significant			
4.9-1	3	Revise the second sentence. There is no view of the Santa Maria River except from the 101 bridge or the levee trail located to the north of the city. Name the ridges, rolling hills and the mountains to the east. Also note the Solomon Hills and Casmalia Hills to the south.	6.249

		This paragraph needs to include the newly adopted Objective Design Standards for housing and mixed-use projects.	6.250
	4	...and Objective Design Standards....	6.251
4.9-2	1	This paragraph is a repeat of Paragraph 3 on the previous page and should be deleted. If keep it needs to be rewritten per the comments above.	6.252
	2	Rewrite Policy REC-8.1 Protection of recreation use. Preserve and expand public parks and the levee trail that provide recreational, ecological and scenic benefits for residents. This is an important amendment because there is no publicly owned and designated open space in the city. The only designated COS is in active urban agricultural uses and privately owned.	6.253
	5	This paragraph references Executive Order N-79-20 requiring construction trucks will by electric by 2035. This order is not listed or considered in the Air Quality chapter fo this EIR or on page 4.2-23. This should be added and considered in reductions to AQ and GHG impacts.	6.254
4.9-3	1	Suggest listing all of the counties that 3CE serve.	6.255
4.9-5		Action S-1.1.4 Most of the historic buildings are single story and wood construction. How many buildings are constructed with unreinforced masonry material?	6.256
		Delete Action S-1.2.1 this is already in the Building Code and the zoning ordinance.	6.257
4.9-6		Action S-1.3.1 this action item can be deleted as this is already required by the building code. This will save the city time and money.	6.258
4.9-7	1	The reference to the escarpment should be clear that is about 20-30 feet in height and is not subject to landscapes in the City of Santa Maria or the annexation area.	6.259
4.9-8	1	This parfrahg needs to be revised. The first sentences need to state that “Areas of expansive soils are known **to be unlikely** within the city limits.. they are known to be in the southern portion of the Orcutt area.,,”	6.260
	3-4	This paragraph needs to be revised to state that over 100 years of development and construction in the city of Santa Maria and Orcutt there have been paleontological Resources found. The santa Maria valley has been historical flooded by the Sant Maria river and the Orcutt area s consist of historic sand dunes.	6.261
4.9-11	2-4	Ther is no mention of Allan Hancock college site and the 8-10 new elementary school sites and 3 junior high sites and 2 new high school sites.	6.262

		Need to include a map that shows how far existing and new school sites are from 101 and other truck routes through the city. Do the schools need to be .25 miles from these truck routes?	6.263
	5	This EIR should include a map that locates where these 90 active hazard sites are located. Are you including active and historic oil wells in this number?	6.264
4.9-12		This page should remove references to City Petroleum Engineer. Refer to new state law about setbacks for new oil development up to 3,200 feet from existing residential areas. Action S.4.1.3 and Action S-4.1.6 seem to be saying the same thing and one of them should be deleted.	6.265
4.9-13		Action S-4.2.5 does the city issue any permits for the railroad operations. Are they exempt from city permits?	6.266
4.9-15		Need a page break between the two action items	6.267
4.9-18	6	There is no land in the city that is zoned for agriculture. Ther are lands that are zoned for urban use that are currently in urban agricultural production. The second sentence needs to be revised "....the 2045 General Plan provides for the framework for development of up to 16,140 net new primary and up to 1,300 accessory units. The units will be distributed with 8,000 units as infill units and 8,140 units in the proposed 980 acre annexation area."	6.268
	7	The last sentence seems contrary to the requirement for infill development including ADU and JADU. This sentence should be revised to state that all neighborhoods can potentially have infill units.	6.269
4.9-19		Action LU-1.1.2 this action item should be deleted as the ODS has already been adopted or revised to state this.	6.270
		Policy LU-1.2 delete the word deteriorating and replaces it with **existing** neighborhoods Revise the next sentence with **"Accommodate growth while respecting surrounding agricultural lands outside of the adopted Sphere of Influence."**	6.271

		Policy LU-1.3 Areas of Change need to include reference to the annexation areas for the development of 8,000+ units and related other uses including schools, parks, commercial etc.	6.271
		Policy LU-1.5 There is no mention in the Elements or this EIR what the current job housing balance. What is it and how	
4.9-21	1	Ther is no mention of the mining that has been done in the Santa Maria Riverbed for gravel and sand for construction and other uses.	6.272
4.9-22		This paragraph should include the fact that there will be at least two more RHNA cycles and new housing assessments during the life of this 2045-2050 General Plan.	6.273
4.9-23		Frie Protection section needs to be expanded to provide existing setting for fire service including how many fire stations and how many current fire fighters are in the city, Then this section needs to provide details on the future needs of the fire department including how many fire stations will be needed as the city densifies with infill development and the future annexation areas. How many fire fighters will be needed and how many new fire stations? And how will they be funded? This EIR and General Plan should have provided these details now for the City Council to make an informed decision for future needs.	6.274
		The Police section needs to be expanded to include existing number of police officers and the existing police station and the needs for the future include how many more offices needs and will there be new substations in the north and east of the city? This information is needed to inform the city council about the future and how these services will be funded.	6.275
		The school section is sorely lacking in information about how many new schools are going to be needed for 16,140-unit residential units. 8 new elementary school sites need to be 10-12 acres 3 new Junior high sites are 20 acres in size and 2 High schools are 40-60 acres in size This is approximately 200 plus acres of school sites. Where will these sites be located? How is there going to be new school sites in the infill areas of the city? There is very little land of these sizes in the existing city. What are the plans for the annexation areas for new school sites. This is information that the City Council and LAFCO will need to make an informed decision about the future of the city.	6.276

		There is also no information about the plans for Allan Hancock College and there should be because it is a very important part of the future education of the residents of santa Maria and future job growth	6.276
4.9-24		This whole Park and Recreational Facilities section is fatally flawed as there is not enough land in the city to meet the old standards. O keep the current standards **of 2.5 acres per 1,000** residents the city will need to obtain another 145 acres of park land and sports fields. With half of these future residents in the infill of the city at least 75 acres of additional parkland would need to be found and it does not exist. An additional 75 acres would b3 planned fo the annexation areas. What is worst is if the city maintains that old standard of 5 acres per 1,000, then there would be the need to find 300 acres of additional lan for future parks. This section needs to provide details on where all this parkland will be found and how much it will cost the city over the next 30 years. This is a significant impact unless the city changes the policy to only require the same ratio of 2.5 acres per 1,000 that currently what the city has accomplished over the last 30 years or even reduce the acreage ratio to less in order to save costs in the future. This is a critical issue that needs to be fully analyzed in this EIR so the City Council can make an informed decision or the other option is to annexation of a whole lot more land for schools and parks The footnote at the bottom of this page needs to add other calculations including 5 aces per 1,000 at full build out would be about 840 acres and again this infeasible and unaffordable. Also, there is no mention of the parkland at Los Flores and how much money the parks department has spent at that park. If these 300+ acres are included in these acre numbers maybe the city can meet the 2.5-acre number. Finally, the last sentence on indicates that the only way to fund these hundreds of acres of park land and construction is to have future dwelling units pay for them…this is infeasible.	6.277

		Please answer all these questions in this section.	6.277
4.9-25		Library…it should be noted that libraries are experience a 30% reduction of use based on access to the internet and other technology. Also all new school sites have library resources. Where would new library buildings be located if needed. Agree that there are many commercial and office buildings that could be used for satellite library services.	6.278
		Wildfire analysis is wrong. This section needs to note that a majority of the city of santa Maria is surrounded by active agricultural production that limits potential for wildfires. The recently approve new CalFire map indicates that there is a potential for fire hazard in the Santa Maria Riverbed and in the Solomon Hills area south of Orcutt	6.279
4.9-26		Add a note that SMAPD now serves as the aerial firefighting base for CalFire.	6.280
5. Other CEQA Required Discussions			
5.1	2	What is the current job housing balance number? How is this plan going to meet a 1.2 job housing balance?	6.281
5.1		Policy LU-1.1 there is no definition in this document of in the elements of what a complete community means. This is very important to be clear as to what the city is looking for in the future.	6.282
		Why is there not an action item for the future planning of the annexation areas? This should be the highest priority for the city to plan the area east of the freeway.	6.283
5-2		As noted, previously this policy needs to be revised to state,,, respecting agricultural outside of the new SOI and annexation area by adopting the No Urban Growth Boundary agreement.	6.284
5-3		Also refer to the No Urban Growth agreement on areas outside of the new SOI and annexation area.	6.285
5-4	4	This paragraph needs to be revised to state that no known arch sites have been identified in the city over the last 35 years and they are not expected to be found north of Betteravia so there would not be impacts north of Betteravia. Even south of Betteravia it is unlikely to find resources since there has been so much agricultural activities on the undeveloped and.	6.286
6 Alternatives			

6.1		As noted previously the agricultural Identity objective needs to be revised or it will be used against the city by LAFCO for the proposed annexation areas.	6.287
6.4	4	Revise the words urban footprint to "city boundary" Delete or revise the second and third sentences as all of the MM are standard requirements and would apply today for current development projects except housing projects that are exempt from environmental review.	6.288
6-4		Revise the cultural Resource section to reflect the previous comments about no resources north of Betteravia so no more surveys will be required,	6.289
6-4 6-5 6.6		Make changes to these sections based on the comments provided previously.	6.290
6-6		Please add in this Description paragraph that the in-fill alternative will have 16,000 units and commercial office development all within the existing city limits. This alternative is fatally flawed as there is no room in the city for 200 acres of new schools and 100's of acres of new parks, The only way this kind of design could be accomplished is to allow many high-rise buildings and multi-level buildings on existing school sites. This would result in a negative impact on aesthetics.	6.291
		The ag section this alternative would retain the no Urban Growth Boundary in its current location. Delete the last sentence as most urban agriculture has urban land use designations on these lands for future development and these residentially designated lands have already been included in the Housing Element to meet RHNA numbers. This sentence is in error.	6.292
		All of the other sections need to be revised based on previous comments already made in this comment letter.	6.293
6-10		Alternative 3 Where is the map to show how many acres of land the Greater Annexation Alternative would plan? This alternative may be the best because it would give the city additional land for the building out as proposed along with the land for future school sites, and parks and the need for other services and job generating uses.	6.294
6-10-13		All these sections need to be revised per previous discussions.	6.295
6-14		The discussion on the infill Alternative avoids discussion on items that prove this alternative to be fatally flawed... Where will the 200 acres of new school sites be located? Where will hundreds of acres of parks be located?	6.296

		What about the huge impact on aesthetics when the city is developed with high rise buildings and two to three-story school buildings on the existing campuses? This will be a significant impact. What about the water and sewer lines that will impact and need to be upgraded to serve 16,000 units in the existing city? The infill option has only one net benefit impact and that is on agricultural	6.296
6-14		Table 6-1 this table should be formatted to be on one page to make it easier to ready.	2.297

Letter 6

COMMENTER: Laurie Tamura, Principal Planner of Urban Planning Concepts, Inc

DATE: September 26, 2025

Response 6.1

The commenter expresses concern about the length of the review period for the Draft General Plan and Draft EIR, and states that several issues should be addressed before approval.

The Draft EIR was circulated for a 45-day public review period that began on August 14, 2025 and ended on September 28, 2025. Two public meetings were held to receive comments on the Draft EIR, including a virtual meeting on August 19, 2025 and an in-person meeting at the City of Santa Maria Public Library on August 20, 2025.

The commenter provides a summary of their forthcoming comments. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.2

The commenter states that the document does not include information on how the annexation area will be developed to accommodate over 8,000 housing units and associated uses such as commercial areas, schools, parks, roads, and infrastructure.

The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis of potential environmental impacts associated with potential growth in the annexation area, as discussed in Subsection 2.6.3, *Annexation*, of the Draft EIR, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (Program EIRs). The footnote on page 2-16, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR explains that the City's annexation application would require approval by Santa Barbara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). Project-specific details are required to be addressed through future planning and subsequent environmental review, if required, at such time as new development in the annexation area is proposed. Project -specific details are required to be addressed through future planning and subsequent environmental review by the applicable agency, if required, at such time as new development in the annexation area is proposed. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.3

The commenter raises concerns that the Draft EIR does not identify locations for new schools to serve future residents. The commenter also raises concerns regarding overcapacity in schools.

The Draft EIR discusses potential environmental impacts to school services at a programmatic level in Subsection 4.9.3, *Public Services and Recreation*. The analysis concludes that impacts to school services from the 2045 General Plan Update would be less than significant. School site planning and land acquisition are the responsibility of local school districts and may occur at such time as proposed new development results in the need for new schools in Santa Maria. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.4

The commenter raises concerns about the City's parkland standard, questions what parks are included in the parkland total, and notes the absence of discussion regarding park-related costs in the Draft EIR. The commenter recommends reducing the City's park policy.

The parkland area referenced in Section 4.9.8, *Public Services and Recreation*, of the Draft EIR is based on the total acreage of existing City of Santa Maria parks. This data is presented in the table titled "Existing Parks" on page 97 of the City's Land Use and Community Design Existing Conditions Report, referenced in the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR does not discuss fiscal impacts of future development and maintenance as CEQA does not require analysis of fiscal impacts unless they have the potential to result in a physical environmental impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.5

The commenter states that the Draft EIR does not include information regarding necessary upgrades to water and sewer trunklines throughout the city or how wastewater treatment would be provided for the annexation area. They ask whether a new treatment plant is proposed or if effluent would be conveyed through existing major trunklines to the current facility. The commenter also raises questions about the extent of expansion needed at the existing plant to accommodate an increase in capacity and associated costs.

Section 4.8, *Utilities and Service Systems*, of the Draft EIR addresses water and wastewater service capacity. The analysis concludes that implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would increase demand for water, wastewater, and solid waste services, but these impacts would be less than significant due to existing system capacities, City policies, and compliance with applicable regulations. The costs of Infrastructure planning for future development are not evaluated in the Draft EIR, as CEQA does not require analysis of fiscal impacts unless they have the potential to result in a physical environmental impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.6

The commenter asserts that the Draft EIR does not adequately analyze the traffic impacts of a projected 50% increase in citywide traffic, lacks identification of roadway and intersection improvements needed to maintain LOS D, omits cost estimates for such improvements, and does not include a map of the proposed circulation system. The commenter states that the Noise section (Table 4.6-8) presents more detailed traffic-related data than is evaluated in the discussion of traffic impacts.

Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic*, of the Draft EIR evaluates potential traffic impacts based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT), consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, which replaced level of service (LOS) as the metric for determining transportation impacts under CEQA. While LOS is no longer considered a CEQA impact, it is discussed in the Draft EIR for informational purposes, including in Table 4.6-8 (Traffic Noise Modeling Data) and related discussions in Section 4.6, *Noise*. Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic*, of the Draft EIR also includes a list of proposed policies under the 2045 General Plan Update related to transportation planning and improvements. A map of the existing circulation system is also provided in the General Plan as Figure 4.7-1, Current Circulation Element Roadway Functional Classification. CEQA does not require analysis of fiscal

impacts or identification of specific roadway improvements unless they have the potential to result in a physical environmental effect. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.7

The commenter states that the Draft EIR and General Plan documents do not include a map or discussion of the approximately 1,500-acre Los Flores Park area owned by the City of Santa Maria, including the status or future plans for a previously proposed 300-acre landfill. The commenter questions why the EIR references hauling waste to Cold Canyon Landfill by 2034 instead of utilizing the City-owned site. Additionally, the commenter states the absence of discussion regarding the Los Flores park area, including trails and amenities funded by park and general funds, and requests clarification on future plans for this site.

The Draft EIR discusses solid waste disposal in Section 4.8, *Utilities and Service Systems*, which states that the Santa Maria Regional Landfill is expected to remain operational through 2034, and that after operation of the Santa Maria Regional Landfill ends, the City may divert waste to nearby facilities such as the Cold Canyon Landfill, which has sufficient capacity and is anticipated to operate through 2040. The Draft EIR concludes that regional landfill capacity is adequate to accommodate the increase in solid waste generated by buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update and that no significant impacts related to landfill capacity are expected.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for the Los Flores Park area mentioned by the commenter, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of such development, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.8

The commenter raises concerns about references to future environmental review.

The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15168 for long-range planning documents. As the 2045 General Plan Update does not include proposals for specific projects and it is not possible to know project specific details, including heights and density, at this time, the analysis within the Draft EIR analyzed the potential impacts that would result from implementation of the plan. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for specific developments projects, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of future potential development at a project level of detail, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. If required and necessary, environmental analysis of future projects may be conducted for projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update at the time that they are proposed. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.9

The commenter suggests editorial changes which do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA. This specific instance of editorial changes relates to the order the General Plan Update Elements are listed in the Executive Summary of the Draft EIR.

The commenter requests changes that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis. Therefore, this comment does not require a formal response pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(a), which states that lead agencies are required to evaluate comments on environmental issues raised in the Draft EIR and prepare written responses. Comments that do not relate to the adequacy of the environmental analysis, such as those focused on editorial changes, planning policy or implementation details outside the scope of the EIR, do not require a formal response under CEQA.

As this comment does not identify a new significant impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.10

The commenter suggests changes to the General Plan Update's objectives.

This comment pertains to the 2045 General Plan Update and does not raise a question or concern regarding the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update are noted and will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.11

The commenter requests additional detail in the Executive Summary regarding the project description, growth assumptions, and infrastructure needs for each alternative.

The Draft EIR Executive Summary provides a high-level overview of the alternatives, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15123, which describe the purpose of the Executive Summary in an EIR. Detailed descriptions of each alternative are provided in Chapter 6, *Alternatives*, of the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Executive Summary of the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.12

The commenter suggests revising a statement within the Executive Summary section of the Draft EIR regarding areas of known controversy.

The City circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR from February 15, 2025 through March 17, 2025 and received seven written responses from the public and government agencies. Chapter 1, Introduction, of the Draft EIR summarizes all comments received during the Notice of Preparation process, and describes areas of known controversy based on the comments received during the scoping process. Expansion of the annexation area into agricultural land was not identified as an area of controversy during the scoping period for the Draft General Plan EIR. The following language has been added to Chapter 1 of the Draft EIR:

> The Draft EIR was circulated for a 45-day public review period that began on August 14, 2025 and ended on September 28, 2025. Two public meetings were held to receive comments on the Draft EIR, including a virtual meeting on August 19, 2025 and an in-person meeting at the City of Santa Maria Public Library on August 20, 2025. The City of Santa Maria received nine comment letters on the Draft EIR. Comments on the Draft EIR and responses are provided in Chapter 2 of the Final EIR.

Potential impacts to prime agricultural land are addressed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*. This section determined the 2045 General Plan Update would result in the conversion of agricultural lands, including Important Farmland and lands under Williamson Act contracts (though currently in nonrenewal), particularly within the annexation area. While the plan includes policies to minimize impacts, these measures would not fully avoid or mitigate the loss of farmland. Therefore, the impact is considered significant and unavoidable.

Response 6.13

The commenter anticipates that updates to mitigation measures may be necessary and suggests that Table ES-1 is updated accordingly.

If changes to mitigation measures are warranted through the responses to the Draft EIR, such changes would be noted in the Final EIR including updates to the Table ES-1 in the Executive Summary. The commenter is not suggesting any changes to mitigation measures in this comment, so no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.14

The commenter recommends extending the General Plan horizon year to 2050.

This comment does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR but rather is a comment on the Draft General Plan. The commenter's preference will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. For context, the 2045 date was selected based on three Regional Housing Needs Allocation cycles (24 years) and a start date of the General Plan Update planning process in 2020. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.15

The commenter requests additional historical detail on past annexation efforts. The commenter also requests editorial changes which do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or CEQA.

The Draft EIR evaluates the 2045 General Plan Update in a manner consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15124, which outlines the required contents of a Project Description for an EIR, including a description of the project's objectives, intended uses, and a general statement of the project's location and setting. While the Draft EIR does not include a detailed history of the 1993 Sphere of Influence and annexation plan, it acknowledges that the 2045 General Plan Update builds upon the City's long-range planning framework, including prior annexation efforts. Additional historical and environmental setting information may be found in the City's General Plan Update materials available on the Imagine Santa Maria General Plan Update website. This includes the Draft General Plan, background reports, and maps that provide context for the planning area and proposed annexation. For more detailed historical documentation, including the 1993 Sphere of Influence Expansion EIR (SCH #90010930), the commenter may contact the City of Santa Maria Planning

Division to request archived planning documents. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9.

Response 6.16

The commenter suggests that the General Plan be labeled as a 2025 plan and expresses concern that the document refers to itself as a "blueprint" for the city, despite being a policy document without specific development plans. The commenter also requests that the language be revised to clarify that the bullet points listed on page 1-1 of the Draft EIR are not specific projects included in the General Plan or the Draft EIR.

The Draft EIR evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the 2045 General Plan Update, which is a policy document that does not include proposals for specific development projects. The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis of the potential environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the plan, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (Program EIRs). The reference to the General Plan serving as a "blueprint" reflects its role in guiding future land use and development decisions, not in prescribing specific development plans. The bullets referenced in the comment are intended to summarize the plan's guiding objectives and are not proposed projects included in the General Plan or the EIR. If required and necessary, environmental analysis of future projects may be conducted at the time they are proposed. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.17

The commenter suggests the EIR should more explicitly state its purpose and include specific growth assumptions throughout.

Chapter 1, *Introduction*, Subsection 1.1.2, of the Draft EIR states that the purpose of the EIR is to inform public agency decision-makers and the public about the significant environmental effects of the 2045 General Plan Update, identify ways to minimize those effects, and describe reasonable alternatives, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a) and Section 15168 for Program EIRs. Growth assumptions are addressed throughout the EIR, particularly in Subsection 2.4.5, *Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout*, Subsection 4.9.7, *Population and Housing*, and Section 5.1, *Growth Inducement*, of the Draft EIR, which discuss the potential for population increases and the potential environmental effects of development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.18

The commenter states that a full EIR on the infill and annexation for the city should have been prepared opposed to a programmatic one.

A Programmatic EIR was prepared consistent with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15168 (Program EIRs) and 15121(a), which allow a broad, policy-level analysis for long-range planning documents such as a General Plan Update. As explained in Subsection 1.1.2, *Purpose and Legal Authority*, on page 1-2 of the Draft EIR, this approach evaluates the potential environmental impacts of implementing the

General Plan at a conceptual level, while future site-specific projects will undergo additional CEQA review as needed. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.19

The commentor asks that a paragraph in Chapter 2, Project Description, of the Draft EIR be revised to correctly list the required and optional General Plan elements in the order specified by State law and to note that the General Plan horizon year should be 2050.

This comment focuses on editorial edits that do not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR nor would it change the analysis in the Draft EIR. For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9.

Response 6.20

The commentor asks that a footnote be revised to clarify that any development within the Sphere of Influence can and will be processed by the City of Santa Maria for annexation, with the County acting as a responsible agency for the annexation application.

The footnote on page 2-1 of the Draft EIR, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, defines the Sphere of Influence and describes its purpose for the purpose of the Draft EIR. The footnote on page 2-16, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR explains that the City's annexation application would require approval by LAFCo. Project-specific details are required to be addressed through future planning and subsequent environmental review, if required, at such time as new development in the annexation area is proposed. The applicable agency would oversee planning and subsequent environmental review, if required. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.21

The commenter requests that Figure 2-1 include areas outside of the city of Santa Maria including the 1,500 acre Los Flores property to the southwest of the Orcutt area. The commenter states that there will be a 300 acre landfill in this area.

The Draft EIR evaluates the 2045 General Plan Update and annexation areas anticipated within the General Plan Update. The Los Flores property referenced by the commenter is located southwest of the Orcutt area, and is outside of the City and its Sphere of Influence. The 2045 General Plan Update does not include or discuss plans for the alteration of Los Flores Park. The Draft EIR cannot evaluate the environmental impacts of a project that is not proposed as part of the 2045 General Plan Update as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.22

The commenter asks that a paragraph on page 2-4 in in Chapter 2, Project Description, be revised to correct the description of Santa Maria's location relative to U.S. 101, add information about a City-owned service road and water storage tanks, include details on the 1,500-acre Los Flores property (noting parks, trails, and a potential future landfill), and move the last sentence of the paragraph to the following paragraph.

In response to this comment, the following revision to Chapter 2, *Project Description*, has been made on page 2-4:

> The linear portion of Santa Maria is located on the east side ~~west side~~ of U.S. 101.

The remainder of the comment pertains to areas outside the scope of the 2045 General Plan Update or, similar to comment 6.9 above, includes editorial suggestions which would not alter the adequacy or analysis within the Draft EIR. Therefore, other than the revision to the cardinal direction above, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment. For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9.

Response 6.23

The commenter asks that the EIR include references to regional transit services provided by the Santa Maria Organization of Transportation Helpers (SMOOTH) and other medical or senior carriers and also include the Santa Maria Valley Railroad in the discussion of regional rail services.

The Draft EIR identifies major regional transportation providers relevant to the 2045 General Plan Update in Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic*, Subsection 4.7.1, *Setting*, and references regional rail services in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, Section 2.4, *Regional Setting,* and in Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting*, Section 3.1, *Setting*. The commenter's requested edits are informational and are not required to support the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.24

The commenter asks that a paragraph on page 2-4 of Chapter 2, Project Description, describe Santa Maria as the largest city in Santa Barbara County, as opposed to a suburban residential community. They also suggest that there are acreages listed in this paragraph that conflict with those listed in Table LU-1. The commenter also states that most of the 4,500 acres are in the Orcutt area and largely developed, and they request removal of three sentences due to these sentences being incorrect, according to the commenter.

The Draft EIR reflects the best available data from the City's Land Use and Community Design Existing Conditions Report. The acreage referenced in the Draft EIR is provided on page 12 of the City's Land Use and Community Design Existing Conditions Report. The Draft EIR does not include a Table LU-1. Table LU-1 in the General Plan Land Use Element has been removed in the final version of the General Plan.

In response to this comment the following revision to Chapter 2, *Project Description,* Subsection 2.3.2, Local Setting, has been made:

> The City of Santa Maria is characterized as a suburban residential community. The plan area covers approximately 15,058 acres within the city limits and approximately 4,500 acres within the SOI (City of Santa Maria 2020). ~~Approximately 27 percent of land within Santa Maria is occupied with residential uses, primarily consisting of single-family residences (22 percent). Agricultural uses occupy 14 percent of the city, airport uses occupy 11 percent, public and institutional uses occupy 11 percent, and commercial uses occupy 7 percent. Approximately 19 percent of the city is comprised of vacant land.~~ Residential land uses are distributed throughout the city. Non-residential land uses, including industrial and commercial, commonly line major

corridors in Santa Maria, including Broadway, Main Street, and Betteravia Road. Agricultural and vacant uses are located at the periphery of the city. The city is underlain by the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Subbasin. The local climate in Santa Maria is identified as a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters.

The additional detail requested by the commenter regarding the 4,500 acres being mostly developed is not necessary for the adequacy of the Draft EIR and would not alter the conclusions of the environmental analysis.

Response 6.25

The commenter suggests another occurrence of incorrect acreage.

As mentioned above in Response 6.24, the Draft EIR reflects the best available data from the City's Land Use and Community Design Existing Conditions Report. The commenter does not provide sufficient conflicting information or data to warrant a correction. As a result, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.26

The commenter notes that Public Facilities, Recreation and Parks, and Economic Development are optional General Plan elements. The commenter requests that these elements be identified as optional.

In accordance with the State of California Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation General Plan Guidelines (2017), the Public Facilities, Recreation and Parks, and Economic Development Elements of the General Plan are not required. The commenter's requested edits are informational and do not affect the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.27

The commenter expresses disappointment that zoning updates were not completed alongside the General Plan Update.

The City will include an updated zoning map to be approved concurrently with the adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update. A comprehensive update to the City's Zoning Ordinance will be a future planning effort. Updating zoning maps and the City's Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update land use designations would not result in a new or additional environmental impact. Therefore, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.28

The commenter suggests revising a paragraph on page 2-5 of Chapter 2, Project Description, of the Draft EIR to clarify that the General Plan Update is limited to goals and policies, without accompanying land use or zoning plans. They note that the document does not illustrate how the proposed 8,000 infill units will be developed or address planning for the annexation area.

Page 2-5 of Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR includes a paragraph that discusses zoning in the context of State law. Specifically, this paragraph states that under Government Code Section 65860, a property's zoning must be consistent with its General Plan land use designation. It

also references Government Code Section 65860(c), which requires that when a General Plan is amended or updated in a way that creates inconsistency with the Zoning Ordinance, the zoning ordinance must be amended within a reasonable time to achieve consistency. This paragraph is intended to summarize applicable statutory requirements. The following paragraph describes the 2045 General Plan Update as containing goals and policies to base land use and resource decisions on but has no mention of land use or zoning plans. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.29

The commenter suggests including support for expansion of Vandenberg Space Force Base in the Vision statement.

The Vision reflects the City's broad goals and priorities as defined in the 2045 General Plan Update. This comment does not pertain to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.30

The commenter asks the City to revise the agricultural objective as noted in other sections.

Refer to Response 6.10 for a discussion of commenter's suggested changes to the 2045 General Plan Update's objectives.

Response 6.31

The commenter asks the City to revise the order of the General Plan Update Elements and to include the housing element in the bullet point list on page 2-7 of Chapter 2, Project Description, of the Draft EIR.

For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9.

Response 6.32

The commenter expresses concerns over the number of land use designations.

This comment pertains to the content of the 2045 General Plan Update, and not to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.33

The commenter asks whether the Entrada Specific Plan will be retired.

This comment pertains to the content of the 2045 General Plan Update, and not to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.34

The commenter states that the section lacks detail regarding planned land uses and zoning for the annexation area, which is expected to accommodate 8,000–9,000 residential units, commercial uses at interchanges, medical expansion, six new schools, 50 acres of parks, and employment-generating uses. The commenter asks if these details need to be included in the EIR, and recommends creating a concept plan on how the annexation area will be developed and suggests using the 1993 land use plan as a reference. The commenter also requests deletion of the phrase "and public land uses in annexed lands outside of the current city limits."

As discussed in Response 6.8, the Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15168 for long-range planning documents and does not require site-specific planning or design details. The preferred Land Use Alternative selected by the City Council notes that the proposed 985-acre annexation area would contain approximately 3,900 new residential units, not 8,000-9,000 units as the commenter mentions. An additional approximately 5,500 residential units would be located within infill areas within the existing city boundaries. A concept plan for the full build out of the proposed annexation area is not a part of the EIR for the 2045 General Plan Update and future planning efforts in coordination with property owners, including new Specific Plan(s), will be required. As noted on page 2-15 of Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR, individual future projects may require separate environmental review under CEQA if they could result in impacts not addressed in the program-level analysis provided in the 2045 General Plan Update EIR. This clarification reinforces that while annexation is proposed, additional environmental review may be required for future development within the annexation area.

The deletion of words requested by the applicant are editorial in nature and would not impact the adequacy of the Draft EIR and would not change any analysis within the EIR. For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.35

The commenter states that the maps in the Noise section are inaccurate because they do not show most of the sound walls installed along U.S. 101, which are intended to reduce community noise impacts. They identify this as a significant error that should be corrected in Figure 2-6, the Noise Element, and throughout the EIR.

The noise modeling presented in the Draft EIR is based on a conservative assumption that does not account for potential noise-reducing features such as topography, vegetation, sound walls, or other structures that may attenuate noise from transportation sources along area roadways. As a result, actual conditions may be lower than the projected noise levels described in the Draft EIR, ensuring that the analysis remains protective of noise-sensitive receptors. Figure 2-6 in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and the Noise Element Figure N-3 show generalized noise conditions based on conservative assumptions and may not reflect all local features that may reduce noise levels, such as topography, vegetation, sound walls, or other physical barriers. In some locations, actual noise levels may be lower than those shown. The figures are intended to support City decision-making and should not be read as representing precise, site-specific conditions or all existing noise-reduction infrastructure. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.36

The commenter states there are errors in Figure 2-3 of Chapter 2, Project Description, including incorrect land use designations for the landfill, Santa Maria Cemetery, airport areas, Area 7, and Betteravia Plaza. They note that Special Planning (SP) lands are not shown and request that Figure 2-3 be corrected to reflect accurate land use designations.

In response to this comment, Figure 2-3 in Chapter 2, *Project Description,* has been revised to update the land use designations for the landfill*, Santa Maria Cemetery, airport areas, Area 7, and Betteravia Plaza*.

Response 6.37

The commenter indicates potential errors but does not specify a specific issue or provide conflicting information or recommended corrections.

No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.38

The commenter requests inclusion of an eastern island area in the annexation discussion. They also suggest that Figure 2-5 of the Draft EIR feature a concept layout illustrating the planned development of 8,000-9,000 units and associated uses. At minimum, they recommend including a list of anticipated needs for buildout within the annexation area.

The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis consistent with CEQA Guidelines and does not require site-specific planning or design layouts, which have not yet been developed for the annexation area. Figure 2-5 in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, of the Draft EIR identifies the planned boundary of the proposed annexation area. The eastern island the commenter refers to is already incorporated into the city limits and does not require annexation. As stated in Response 6.8, the 2045 General Plan Update does not propose specific new development or individual projects, and it is not possible to evaluate project-specific details such as the layout of the future units in the annexation area, as it would be speculative at this time. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.39

The commenter states that the Figure 2-6, in Chapter 2, Project Description, is inaccurate, as it does not reflect existing sound walls along U.S. 101 and other areas such as Blosser Road. The commenter requests that the map be revised to account for these noise-reducing features.

Refer to Response 6.35 for a discussion of projected noise levels and noise attenuation from sound walls in figures.

Response 6.40

The commenter recommends extending the planning horizon of the General Plan Update to 2050, citing the lengthy process to date and the substantial work that remains to be completed.

For a discussion of the extension of the General Plan horizon year, refer to Response 6.14.

Response 6.41

The commenter requests that Figure 2-1 be revised, noting inconsistencies with other tables that use different acreages.

For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests related to the description of the City of Santa Maria, refer to Response 6.24.

Response 6.42

The commenter requests clarification on the location and interpretation of the 1,504 acres of non-residential development referenced on page 2-14 of Chapter 2, Project Description, of the Draft EIR, asking whether the area is within city limits and currently undeveloped, or if it includes other areas targeted for future development. The commenter also expresses confusion about the bullet points, particularly the meaning of the 463 acres of commercial use shown in parentheses and whether this reflects a potential loss or zoning change that could impact sales tax revenue. Additionally, the commenter questions the reference to 7 acres of airport use and suggests that a map be included to help clarify the information presented in the table.

The acreages listed on page 2-14 of Chapter 2, Project Description, of the Draft EIR, reflect net changes associated with the 2045 General Plan Update. Parentheses indicate reductions in acreage relative to existing conditions, as stated on page 2-14 of Chapter 2, Project Description. As such, the parenthetical "(463) acres of commercial uses" shown in Subsection 2.6.5, Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout, indicates that the city would experience a reduction of approximately 463 acres of commercial uses through 2045. The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis and does not include parcel-specific mapping of these changes. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required based on this comment.

Response 6.43

The commenter states that the percentages listed on page 2-14 of the Draft EIR are incorrect and should be revised. The commenter also states that there are no lands in the city classified as vacant or agriculture, and all lands have city land use and zoning for future development.

Refer to Response 5.2 for a discussion of conversion of agricultural lands in the city and refer to Response 6.24 for a discussion of revisions to the Final EIR regarding percentages of land occupied by land use types. No land within city limits is designated or zoned specifically for agriculture; agricultural uses operate as transitional uses until development is planned for an area. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.44

The commenter states "Through 2050…" in reference to page 2-15.

The City acknowledges the commenter's interest in extending the 2045 General Plan Update horizon year to 2050. This topic is addressed in Response 6.14.

Response 6.45

The commenter states that the paragraph should clarify that most future housing projects will be exempt from CEQA based on newly adopted state laws. The commenter also states that the City will use this EIR as the primary environmental document for most future projects to streamline permitting and reduce costs, with only a few projects, such as future annexations, requiring additional review. They request adding this clarification to the "Intended Use of this EIR" section.

Section 2.7, *Intended Use of this EIR*, in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, explains that the EIR provides a programmatic review and can be used to focus environmental review for future activities under the 2045 General Plan. Section 2.7 also specifies that projects not anticipated by the 2045 General Plan or with effects not addressed in the EIR may require additional CEQA review. While the City recognizes that recent state laws may exempt certain housing projects from CEQA, this EIR is not intended to guarantee exemptions or replace CEQA requirements where applicable. Therefore, the existing Draft EIR language appropriately describes the intended use and flexibility of this document. As a result, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.46

The commenter suggests editorial edits or provides comments that do not pertain to the adequacy of the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Specifically, they recommend updating the City Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance, rezoning properties to align with the General Plan, adding references to infrastructure needs (water, wastewater, parks, schools), deleting references to natural/capital resource preservation or restoration, and making future study requirements more specific.

They also request the City forward the plan to LAFCo for approval of the Sphere of Influence and annexations.

For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9. For a discussion of the timing of updates to the City's zoning maps and the Zoning Ordinance following adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update, refer to Response 6.27.

The information provided by the commenter does not identify a new significant impact or provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis. Therefore, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment. However, as noted in the footnote on page 2-16 of Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the 2045 General Plan will be provided to Santa Barbara County LAFCo prior to a potential approval of the City's annexation application. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.47

The commenter requests that the second sentence of Subsection 3.1, Setting, in Section 3, Environmental Setting, of the Draft EIR state that the Sphere of Influence will also be expanded to enable annexations. The commenter also states that it would be more efficient for the Sphere of Influence amendment and annexations to occur simultaneously.

The sentence the commenter is referring is a description of the "plan area," stating it includes all land within the Sphere of Influence and includes the proposed annexation of 985-acres east of the city limits. The information the commenter is requesting is provided in Chapter 2, Project

Description, Section 2.5, *Plan Objectives,* and Policy LU-2.1: Planned Annexation Area on page 2-16, which states:

> "Expand Sphere of Influence and annex the Planned Annexation areas identified on the General Plan Land Use Map to meet housing and jobs development goals."

Because this clarification is already included in the Draft EIR, no revisions are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.48

The commenter requests that the description of the eastern edge of the city be updated to reference "a service road to the City of Santa Maria water tank complex" instead of "an internal farm road."

For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9.

Response 6.49

The commenter states that regional transit including SMOOTH, medical and senior transit throughout the city and that medical transit transfers residents to doctors in Santa Barbara. They state these specific transit providers should be mentioned on page 3-1 of the Draft EIR stating that details are important. They also stated they would like to see specifics regarding the reference to regional rail services, specifically they would like it to be stated that there is a bus stop at the IHOP on Main Street off ramp and that freight transit is provided by a Amtrak and SM Railroad spur from Guadalupe to the city of Santa Maria.

For a discussion of regional transportation services within the city and where they are discussed in the Draft EIR, refer to Response 6.23. This comment is editorial in nature and does not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or the environmental impact analysis.

Response 6.50

The commenter states that the final paragraph on page 3-1 of the Draft EIR is redundant and should be changed. The commenter recommends deletion of references to "agricultural and vacant use."

The information in the paragraph referenced by the commenter is mentioned throughout the Draft EIR but is applicable to the Environmental Setting chapter and appropriately discussed on page 3-1. Refer to Response 6.43 for a discussion of the use of the descriptive terms "vacant and agricultural" in the Draft EIR. No land within city limits is designated or zoned specifically for agriculture; agricultural uses operate as transitional uses until development is planned for an area. Refer to Response 5.2 for a discussion of conversion of agricultural lands in the city. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.51

The commenter states that there is a typo on page 3-2 of the Draft EIR.

The Final EIR language on page 3-2 has been revised as follows to correct the typo identified by the commenter:

"This EIR considers the potential impacts from buildout of the General Plan in 2045, compared to ~~exiting~~ existing conditions."

Response 6.52

The commenter states that the discussion under Subsection 4.1.1.a, California Agricultural Resources, in Section 4.1, Agricultural Resources, should be revised to provide details on the County of Santa Barbara and the Santa Maria Valley. The commenter also states that the definition of "Urban and Built-up Land" does not include the definition of urban density of up to 30 units per acre or more. The commenter requests this definition be expanded to include city boundaries and allowed uses.

As described in Subsection 4.1.1.a, *California Agricultural Resources*, the definitions *of "Urban and Built-up Land"* used in the Draft EIR are derived from the California Department of Conservation. The commenter's requested revisions are inconsistent with how these terms are defined by the California Department of Conservation. As a result, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.53

The commenter states that the acreage totals in Table 4.1-1, Summary of Important Farmland in the Plan Area and Annexation Area, do not seem right. The commenter also states that previously analyzed planning areas, such as Area 5B7, Area 7, Area 9 and the Airport Specific plan, should not be included in this table.

The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis of potential impacts to agricultural resources across the 2045 General Plan area, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (Program EIRs). Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, of the Draft EIR includes acreage based on data from the California Department of Conservation. Areas previously evaluated under separate CEQA documents are discussed under Impact AG-1 in Subsection 4.1.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, and their prior determinations are incorporated into the analysis. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment

Response 6.54

The commenter states that the Draft EIR should clarify that LAFCo is only responsible for consideration of the annexation areas.

As stated in Section 1.3, *Lead, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies*, Section 2.9, *Required Approvals*, and Subsection 4.1.1, *Setting*, LAFCo's consideration applies specifically to proposed annexation areas. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.55

The commenter states that Figure 4.1-1 is inaccurate because it does not clearly depict areas that have already been developed or approved, including Area 5B, Area 7, Area 9, the Windset Farms development, and the Airport Specific Plan. The commenter states that the map and associated acreage should exclude land in Orcutt, as this open space is not used for agricultural purposes (i.e., no row crops or grazing). The commenter requests that the figure be revised to reflect previously approved actions by LAFCo and the City.

As discussed in Response 6.53, Figure 4.1-1 was prepared to support the Draft EIR's program-level analysis of potential impacts to agricultural resources throughout the entire plan area, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (Program EIRs). No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.56

The commenter requests the City add Agricultural Preserve contract numbers and expiration dates to Figure 4.1-2 and remove the "Williamson Act Enrollment 2023" note from the legend.

Figure 4.1-2, Williamson Act Lands in the Plan Area, in Subsection 4.1.1.b, *Plan Area Agricultural Resources*, reflects the most current available data from the California Department of Conservation. The "Williamson Act Enrollment 2023" note corresponds to the yellow shaded lots on the map. These shaded lots represent three lots currently under Williamson Act Contracts in the 2045 General Plan area, the "Nonrenewal" status indicates that the three lots do not have pending renewals of their Williamson Act Contracts. The Agricultural Preserve contract numbers and expiration dates for these three lots are included in Subsection 4.1.1.b, *Plan Area Agricultural Resources.* These Williamson Contracts are further discussed under Impact AG-1, in Subsection 4.1.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures.* This analysis also includes the Agricultural Preserve contract numbers and expiration dates for the three lots identified in Figure 4.1-2. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.57

The commenter suggests deleting content relating to "*Regional Farmland Trends" from page 4.1-5 of the draft EIR as they believe it is not applicable to the project or the Santa Maria Valley.*

The discussion is consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. C, Contents of Environmental Reports, which describes the knowledge of the regional setting as critical to the assessment of environmental impacts. While the commenter is correct that the information provided within the regional setting discussion on page 4.1-5, under Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, in Subsection 4.1.1.b, *Plan Area Agricultural Resources*, may not directly relate to the plan area, the discussion on the regional setting is important to the overall environmental analysis and appropriately included per CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.58

The commenter states that Table 4.1-2 should be formatted to fit on one page. The commenter states that there has not been a loss of agricultural land since the annexations of the City of Santa Maria in 1993 and the 200 acres in the City of Guadalupe in 1995. The commenter states that the discussion under the Regional Farmland Trends heading on page 4.1-5 of the Draft EIR should refer to the history of the planning in the Santa Maria Valley over the last 30 years. The commenter requests that the City revise the whole section.

The comment related to the format of Table 4.1-2 does not pertain to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. The commenter's knowledge of the loss of agricultural land in the City of Santa Maria and the City of Guadalupe is acknowledged. As discussed in Response 6.57, the regional setting discussion in Subsection 4.1.1.b, *Plan Area Agricultural Resources*, does not cover the changes in planning within the city over the last 30 years because the discussion focuses on regional

setting information. Specific plan area setting information can be found in Subsection 4.1.1, *Setting*. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.59

The commenter requests that the City add a note to the discussion under the City of Santa Maria Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves discussion on page 4.1-8 that there are no agricultural preserves in the city of Santa Maria.

The discussion that the commenter is referring to can be found in Subsection 4.1.2.c, *Local Regulations*. The purpose of this discussion is to describe the local regulations that are applicable to the project, including the City of Santa Maria Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves. The information the commenter is requesting is provided on Figure 4.1-2, Williamson Act Lands in the Plan Area, as well as in Subsection 4.1.1.b, *Plan Area Agricultural Resources*, and under Impact AG-1, in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*. As the Draft EIR acknowledges that there are no agricultural preserves within the city of Santa Maria, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.60

The commenter states that there are not 5,116 acres of ag land in the plan area and that the analysis within Impact AG-1 should be based on the annexation area exclusively. The commenter asks where there are nine acres of grazing land, and if that grazing land is located in the annexation area.

The acreage of grazing land in the city is shown in Table 4.1-1, Summary of Important Farmland in the Plan Area and Annexation Area, and Figure 4.1-1, Important Farmland in the Plan Area, in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*. The approximately nine acres of the annexation area are listed as Farmland of Local Importance. The data shown in these locations are based on data from the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program. As discussed in Response 6.18, this Draft EIR includes environmental analysis of the whole plan area, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 (Program EIRs). As shown in Figure 4.1-1, Important Farmland in the Plan Area and Annexation Area, Grazing Land is represented by a light tan color, which appears in the southern portion of the city as well as the southern portion of the Sphere of Influence. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.61

The commenter states that the analysis under Impact AG-1 should mention that agricultural land within the City of Santa Maria had been previously approved under other EIRs for urban development with Statements of Overriding Consideration. They also state that the second and third paragraphs under Impact AG-1 should be combined into one paragraph.

The analysis under Impact AG-1 in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, acknowledges that areas identified as important farmland within the city were previously evaluated and approved for conversion of agricultural resources to non-agricultural uses under prior EIRs. The impact analysis also references the Statement of Overriding Considerations adopted by the City Council on September 15, 1994, for the EIR prepared for the City's Sphere of Influence Expansion (SCH#90010930), which documented the conversion of agricultural resources to non-agricultural uses.

For a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis, refer to Response 6.9. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.62

The commenter states that the reference to the Greenbelt and Urban buffer within the impact analysis for Impact AG-1 is important because it has been the guiding planning tool for the city over the last 30 years. They also state this buffer will be adjusted in the new Sphere of Influence and annexation area.

The comment does not request a change to the Draft EIR. The City's Greenbelt and Urban Buffer ordinance is discussed under Impact AG-1 in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*. As discussed in the impact discussion, potential impacts to agricultural resources within the areas immediately adjacent to the Area 9 Specific Plan area were determined to be less than significant as impacts would be offset by the establishment of the Greenbelt and Urban Buffer. The project does not include specific amendments to the City's Greenbelt and Urban Buffer. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.63

The commenter requests changes to the 2045 General Plan Goal COS-2, Action COS 2.1.2 and Policy LU-1.2.

For a discussion of recommended changes to the General Plan Update policy framework, refer to Response 6.16. This comment is regarding policy language included within the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented within the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update are noted and will be passed on to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.64

The commenter states that Figure 4.1-3 does not have a relationship with the proposed annexation and should be deleted. The commenter also states that the map shows incorrect land use designations and should include each of the Area numbers. The commenter ask specifically about the inclusion of Area 7 and the SMAP. They suggest either showing all the planning areas in the city or deleting the map.

In response to this comment, Figure 4.1-3, Previously Evaluated Land Use Changes, within Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, has been deleted from the Final EIR.

In addition, the following revisions have been made to the discussion of Impact AG-1:

> The California Department of Conservation currently lists several sites within the city as either Grazing Land, Prime Farmland, or Unique Farmland. However, these sites~~, shown as important farmland in Figure 4.1-3,~~ have previously undergone environmental review for the conversion of agricultural land.

Response 6.65

The commenter requests revisions to General Plan Update policies, including changes to Policies LU-9.2, LU-9.3, and LU-9.4, as well as deletion of Policy LU-9.2.

For a discussion of recommended changes to the General Plan Update policy framework, refer to Response 6.16. Changes to Policy LU-9.3 in the 2045 General Plan Update have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. This comment is regarding policy language included within the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented within the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update are noted and will be passed on to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.66

The commenter requests specific edits to the "Significance After Mitigation" discussion on page 4.1-13 of the Draft EIR. They request that the discussion state that the proposed Sphere of Influence expansion and annexation would convert agricultural land to urban uses. They also request deletion of the first sentence of the paragraph and inclusion of language stating that the City will plan land uses to incorporate a "Greenbelt and Urban Buffer" to respect surrounding agricultural lands outside the city.

The conversion of agricultural land to urban uses is discussed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, Subsection 4.1.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*. As discussed therein, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would allow for future conversion of Important Farmland and conflicts with agricultural zoning in the annexation area. The Draft EIR concludes this impact would be significant and unavoidable. Policies included in the 2045 General Plan Update would reduce potential adverse impacts related to the conversion of Important Farmland and Williamson Act contract lands in the annexation area to the extent feasible through preservation efforts and by requiring conservation easements. Refer to Response 6.62 for a discussion of comments related to "Greenbelt and Urban Buffer". No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.67

The commenter requests the first sentence of paragraph three on page 4.1-14 of the Draft EIR be changed from:

"Since the mid-20th century, the Santa Maria region has experienced steady urban expansion resulting in Important Farmland being incrementally converted to residential, commercial, and industrial uses (DOC 2015)."

to:

"The Santa Maria valley has over 180,000 (?) acres of prime land and an additional 100,000 (?) acres of non-prime and grazing lands. 30 years ago, the city of Santa Maria and Guadalupe annexed lands and there has been no annexations since. The city of Santa Maria annexed 2,000 acres and Guadalupe annexed 200 acres to provide land for the growth of these two cities. This is less than 1 % of the ag land in the valley."

The commenter states it is important to emphasize the efforts by the City, County, and LAFCo over the past 30 years to plan growth while protecting agriculture and asserts that now is the time to allow another small annexation for future growth. The commenter also states that most of the current paragraph is incorrect and needs revision.

The language presented in Subsection 4.1.a, *Cumulative Impacts*, in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources,* describes the potential cumulative impacts to agricultural resources due to implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. The Draft EIR is intended to evaluate potential environmental impacts and does not advocate for or against approval of the 2045 General Plan Update. The commenter's recommended revision would introduce language intended to justify annexation and emphasize policy efforts, which is outside of the scope of the Draft EIR. The commenter does not identify specific factual inaccuracies or provide evidence requiring correction. Therefore, no changes are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.68

The commenter states that the first 14 pages of Section 4.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, are routine information in every EIR. the commenter recommends that Table 4.2-4, Ambient Air Quality Data, be shifted to the following page so the table is on one page opposed to being split between two pages.

The commenter is correct that the first 14 pages of Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas*, provide readers with context of the surrounding area, applicable regulatory setting, and an explanation for how air quality is quantified and evaluated. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of editorial edits, such as reformatting Table 4.2-4, *Ambient Air Quality Data*.

Response 6.69

The commenter questions the accuracy of the first sentence regarding the Earth's surface temperature and suggests including global population growth over the last 200 years.

The commenter is referring to the first sentence in the second paragraph of Subsection 4.2.1.a, *Air Quality Setting*. The statement that the Earth's surface would be approximately 33 degrees Celsius cooler without greenhouse gases is supported by the World Meteorological Organization (2013), as cited in the Draft EIR. Global population trends are not relevant to this project and need not be discussed in this Draft EIR. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.70

The commenter states that the discussion under the heading "California GHG Emissions Inventory" on page 4.2-9 in Section 4.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas, subsection 4.2.1.a, Air Quality Setting, should include a table provided by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) illustrating GHG levels beginning in 1990, which exceeded 500 million metric tons (MMT). The commenter notes that the State's goal is to reduce GHG emissions by 40 percent by 2030 and that the requested table would illustrate the extent of reductions achieved to date. The commenter states these reductions have resulted from measures such as vehicle modifications, decreased oil production activities, and building code requirements. The commenter requests that this information be added to the paragraph under the "California GHG Emissions Inventory" heading.

Pursuant to Table 2, Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector in 1990, of the Staff Report for the California 1990 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Level and 2020 Emissions Limit, the total GHG emissions

in 1990 were 433 MMT CO_2e. This value does not exceed 500 MMT as suggested by the commenter. The information provided by the commenter has no bearing on the analysis or conclusions of the Draft EIR, and therefore no changes are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.71

The commenter requests that all references to "1990 GHG levels" under the "California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32, and Senate Bill 32, and Assembly Bill 1279)" heading on page 4.2-14 in Section 4.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas, Subsection 4.2.2.b, State Regulations, include the specific value of over 500 MMT to illustrate the State's progress toward reduction goals.

Refer to Response 6.70 for a discussion of 1990 GHG emission levels.

Response 6.72

The commenter requests inclusion of 2013 baseline levels and current levels for each Senate Bill 1383 target, and states that the City has adopted organic waste collection in compliance with the law.

The level of detail provided on state regulations in Subsection 4.2.2.b, *State Regulations,* describes applicable state regulations for a programmatic analysis of the 2045 General Plan Update. Additional details regarding organic waste collection goals are provided in Section 4.8, *Utilities and Service Systems.* No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.73

The commenter suggests referencing the upcoming 2026 Building Code and its anticipated energy efficiency requirements.

The discussion under the "California Building Standards Code" heading in Subsection 4.2.2.b, *State Regulations*, explains the purpose and evolution of Title 24 standards, including the CALGreen Code and the recently adopted 2022 Energy Code. These standards are periodically updated to incorporate new technologies and methods that improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Future updates, such as the 2026 Building Code, will be implemented through the City's building permit process and are expected to further reduce GHG emissions. Future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to comply with the most current California Building Code. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.74

The commenter states that the discussion under the "City of Santa Maria" heading at the bottom of page 4.2-17, in Section 4.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas, Subsection 4.2.2.a, Local Regulations, implies all future projects in the City of Santa Maria will require greenhouse gas and air quality analyses, which they believe would be costly. The commenter questions why the City did not include GHG thresholds in the General Plan Update and asserts that infill projects should be considered GHG-reducing and exempt from further studies. The commenter also notes that most housing projects will be exempt from CEQA under state law and requests that this clarification be added to the paragraph.

Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion of individual projects requiring environmental review.

Response 6.75

The commenter questions the assumptions used in Table 4.2-5, CalEEMod Land Use Assumptions, and states the land use inputs do not reflect realistic development patterns.

Table 4.2-5, CalEEMod Land Use Assumptions, included in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*, summarizes CalEEMod inputs based on net changes in land use under the 2045 General Plan Update. The assumptions that inform these inputs are based on the buildout information included in Subsection 2.6.5, *Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout*, and are intended to support a conservative program-level emissions estimate, not to predict specific development outcomes. Additional details regarding the land use assumptions reflected in Table 4.2-5 are provided in Subsection 2.6.5, *Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout*, of Chapter 2, *Project Description*. Table 4.2-5 in Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions,* has been revised to correct the transposition of 1,021 to 1,012, consistent with Subsection 2.6.5, *Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout*:

Land Use Categories	New Uses	Reduction in Uses
Residential	+16,140 units	–
Mixed-Use (assumed to be office uses in CalEEMod)	+452 ac	–
Industrial	+7 ac	–
Recreational Parks	+33 ac	–
Planned Future Development (assumed to be office uses in CalEEMod)	~~+1,021~~ 1,012 ac	–
Commercial	–	-463 ac

N/A = not applicable; ac = acres

Response 6.76

The commenter states that the assumptions used in CalEEMod are outdated because the building code has been updated multiple times since 2019 and will be updated again in 2026. They note that these updates continue to improve energy efficiency in building and housing construction.

The commenter is correct that the CalEEMod assumptions incorporate the 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Title 24). CalEEMod is an emissions estimation model developed and periodically updated by the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association. The most recent iteration of the model (Version 2022.1.0.14) used for the purposes of this analysis utilizes the 2019 California Building Code (CBC). It is not known when CalEEMod will be updated to incorporate the 2025 CBC. As stated in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis,* the CalEEMod outputs represent a conservative assumption as the estimates do not account for additional energy efficiency improvements required by the 2022 Title 24 update or anticipated future updates, such as the 2025 standards. Using a conservative assumption is appropriate for a program EIR because there is insufficient detail to conduct project-level analysis, and attempting to do so would be inappropriately speculative. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.77

The commenter states that the VMT assumptions in Table 4.2-6 are incorrect and recommends referencing SBCAG's January 2025 zero emission vehicle report. The commenter also asserts that VMT assumptions should reflect future conditions rather than past data.

The VMT assumptions in Table 4.2-6, Plan 2045 VMT, in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*, are based on the Santa Maria Travel Demand Model prepared by GHD in June 2025 to support the Draft EIR. Annual VMT was estimated by multiplying daily VMT per household and per employee by projected increases in residential units and employment and then applying it to 365 days per year. This approach represents a conservative assumption because it applies daily VMT rates uniformly across all days of the year without accounting for reduced travel on weekends or holidays. Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, a conservative approach is appropriate for a program EIR because there is insufficient detail to conduct project-level analysis, and attempting to do so would be inappropriately speculative.

SBCAG did not produce a Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Report in 2025; however, the California Energy Commission released a Zero-Emission Resilient Transportation Blueprint report which was prepared by CALSTART. While the California Energy Commission's Santa Barbara Zero-Emission Resilient Transportation Blueprint may provide useful context on future electrification and resiliency strategies, its inclusion in this EIR would not alter the methodology or assumptions used in this analysis. Incorporating it as a reference would not change the conclusions of the Draft EIR as the analysis must rely on existing, verifiable data rather than speculative projections about future technology adoption or behavioral changes. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.78

The commenter states that the City has not completed a review to establish GHG thresholds and questions why this has not been completed. They also ask if every project in the future is going to have to complete a GHG analysis. The commenter states that most housing projects are now exempt from CEQA and will continue to be exempt in the future, and requests that this information be included in the paragraph.

This comment regarding the City's GHG threshold review does not pertain to the Draft EIR's environmental analysis. Citywide GHG thresholds, though not included as part of the 2045 General Plan Update, are proposed to be established by Action COS-1.1.1 in Conservation and Open Space Element of the 2045 General Plan Update. Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion regarding future individual projects requiring environmental review. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.79

The commenter requests changes to the 2045 General Plan Action COS-5.1.3 and also requests that any updates to the Conservation and Open Space Element are also made in the EIR for consistency.

In response to this comment, Action COS-5.1.3 was revised in the 2045 General Plan Update to remove mention of the Santa Barbara County Congestion Management Program and revisions have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR.

Response 6.80

The commenter states that Table 4.2-5 and Table 4.2-6 need to be recalculated because many of the buildout assumptions are incorrect. They assert that by 2045-2050, air quality impacts will be substantially reduced and that the Table 4.2-7 should average impacts over the next 20–25 years as

development occurs. The commenter also notes that the table does not indicate it assumes full buildout impacts in 2045 and requests that the table be corrected based on a new CalEEMod run.

Refer to Response 6.75 for a discussion regarding Table 4.2-5, CalEEMod Land Use Assumptions, in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*. Refer to Response 6.77 for a discussion regarding Table 4.2-6, Plan 2045 VMT. Table 4.2-7, Estimated Operational Emissions, was prepared using the same methodology and assumptions as the other two tables to ensure consistency throughout the Draft EIR. The analysis appropriately assumes full buildout conditions for 2045, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, which governs program-level EIRs. Furthermore, CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(a)(3) requires an existing conditions baseline to not include hypothetical conditions. Accordingly, emissions are representative of the full buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update compared to existing buildout. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.81

The commenter states that the first sentence under the operations discussion for Impact AQGHG-2 on page 4.2-25 should be deleted. They state that the Draft EIR already concludes there will be a significant impact and a statement of overriding considerations has been adopted, therefore requiring future projects to conduct air quality and GHG studies would be unnecessary and costly. The commenter again states that many housing projects will be exempt from CEQA and requests that this be clarified. The commenter further asserts that, without adopted thresholds, requiring such studies is inefficient and recommends deleting mitigation measure AQGHG-2, stating that standard air quality and GHG measures are already addressed through building codes.

As analyzed Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*, operational impacts from implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would generate long term regional air pollutant emissions and concludes that operational air quality and greenhouse gas impacts would be significant and unavoidable. Refer to Responses 6.85 and 6.86 for a discussion regarding modeling assumptions and lack of project-specific details. As such, the Draft EIR concluded operational impacts would be significant and unavoidable as future individual projects may still exceed SBCAPCD thresholds. It is important to note that a statement of overriding considerations has not yet been adopted for this Draft EIR and if a statement of overriding considerations were to be adopted, it would be done so by the City Council.

Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2 is included to reduce the severity of operational impacts to the extent feasible, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1), which requires lead agencies to adopt feasible mitigation measures that minimize significant environmental effects, even if those effects cannot be completely avoided. In response to this comment, Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2 has been revised as follows:

AQGHG-2 Project-Level Air Quality Analysis and Mitigation

The City shall require<u>, where it is determined as necessary,</u> applicants for future discretionary development projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update to prepare a project-specific air quality analysis in accordance with SBCAPCD Environmental Review Guidelines. The analysis shall quantify construction and operational emissions and compare estimated emissions to the SBCAPCD's adopted thresholds of significance for criteria air pollutants. If the analysis determines that emissions would exceed any of the applicable thresholds, the project applicant

shall implement all feasible mitigation measures to reduce emissions to below the thresholds. All mitigation measures shall be documented and verified by the lead agency prior to project approval or issuance of grading/building permits.

Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion of future environmental review for individual projects. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.82

The commenter suggests deleting or revising the "Significance After Mitigation" discussion following Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2. They state additional air quality and GHG studies based on this Programmatic EIR analysis that has already run CalEEMod on the proposed full build out should not be required.

The Significance After Mitigation discussion in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*, summarizes potential air quality and GHG impacts of the 2045 General Plan after mitigation. Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion of potential future environmental review for individual projects. Refer to Response 6.81 for a discussion of the applicability of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.83

The commenter requests revising the discussion of construction-related activities under Impact AQGHG-3 to include that state law will soon require most construction equipment to be electric or hybrid, and that most diesel equipment will be retired.

Refer to Response 4.3 for a discussion of changes related to construction equipment in Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3. The analysis under Impact AQGHG-3 in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis,* estimates potential construction-related emissions and associated health risks based on current conditions and regulatory requirements. Although the commenter is correct that state law may change in the future, the analysis in this EIR uses a conservative assumption based on existing environmental and regulatory conditions. This approach is standard for a program-level EIR because specific details of future projects are unknown, and predicting future equipment types or regulatory changes would be inappropriate speculative. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.84

The commenter suggests Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 be reviewed by local contractors to receive their opinion on its relevance, and to delete the mitigation measure if it is no longer relevant.

Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3, *Construction Equipment Exhaust Control Measures,* in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis,* remains relevant because it provides a feasible mechanism to reduce diesel particulate matter emissions from heavy-duty off-road equipment during construction near sensitive receptors. While future state regulations may reduce the use of diesel equipment, the timing and availability of compliant equipment cannot be guaranteed for all projects over the planning horizon. This measure ensures that, where commercially available, Tier 3 or higher engines or CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters are used.

The Draft EIR was available for public review from August 14, 2025, through September 28, 2025, and the City did not receive any comments from local contractors regarding the relevance or

feasibility of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.85

The commenter states that the City should have created thresholds of significance for greenhouse gas emissions concurrently with the General Plan update process.

The comment regarding the City's GHG Thresholds does not pertain to the Draft EIR's environmental analysis. Refer to Response 6.78 for a discussion of establishment of GHG thresholds for the city. The commenter's opinion will be passed on to decision makers for their consideration. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.86

The commenter asks clarification on the baseline of 1990 GHG levels.

Refer to Response 6.70, for a discussion of total GHG emissions in 1990. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.87

The commenter suggests revision of Goal COS-6, encourages the City to be carbon neutral per state law, and suggests GHG levels will be exceeded by full buildout of the General Plan.

In response to this comment, Goal COS-6 has been revised in the 2045 General Plan Update to indicate the City strives to be carbon neutral and revisions have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR.

The commenter's recommendation to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045–2050 has been acknowledged, as well as their assertion that GHG levels will be exceeded with full buildout of the General Plan. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.88

The commenter states the City is served by PG&E and not Southern California Edison.

In response to the commenter's statement, the following corrections have been made in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis, of* the EIR:

> Future development would also be served by ~~Southern California Edison~~ Pacific Gas and Electric or Central Coast Community Energy, both of which are required to increase its renewable energy procurement in accordance with SB 100 targets.

Response 6.89

The commenter requests that the instance of Goal COS 6 in Impact AQGHG-5 of Section 4.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas, *and subsequent instances are removed as it is previously listed*.

Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of editorial changes which do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.90

The commenter suggests the plan consistency discussion on in Subsection 4.2.3, Impact Analysis, of Section 4.2, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas be revised for clarity and to change the discussion of VMT inconsistency to consistent.

This discussion distinguishes between consistency with relevant regional plans such as SBCAG's 2050 RTP/SCS and the California Air Resources Board's (CARB's) 2022 Scoping Plan, and applicable goals and policies and inconsistency with specific performance targets. CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d) requires disclosure of both areas of consistency and areas where conflicts remain. The analysis discloses which applicable goals and policies the 2045 General Plan Update would be consistent with and which applicable goals and policies the 2045 General Plan Update may conflict with.

As discussed under Impact TRA-2 of Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic*, Subsection 4.7.3, *Impact Analysis*, 2045 citywide VMT rates with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not meet the 17 percent VMT reduction target required for consistency with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b). Though there may be measures to reduce VMT in the future, there are no feasible General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could reduce citywide VMT rates below this target and the applicability of future VMT reduction measures would be speculative. Therefore, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.91

The commenter suggests the first row of Table 4.2-8 be revised to clarify the number of planned residential units in infill locations and annexation areas.

The consistency statement provided in Table 4.2-8, Plan Consistency with the SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS, in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis,* describes the relationship between the 2045 General Plan Update and Policy 1.1: Land Use of the SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS. The statement identifies that the plan would facilitate development of 16,140 net new residential units in infill and urbanized areas near services and transit, along with generating 23,750 net new jobs to improve the jobs-housing balance. The additional details requested by the commenter would not affect the determination that the 2045 General Plan Update is consistent with Policy 1.1: Land Use of the SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.92

The commenter suggests the second row of Table 4.2-8 is revised to make the discussion conclude consistent based on state law. The commenter suggests correcting that PG&E works with 3CE.

The consistency statement provided in Table 4.2-8, Plan Consistency with the SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS, in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*, identifies consistency with some components of Policy 1.2, such as compliance with Title 24 and SBCAPCD rules, and inconsistency with others, specifically the potential inability to achieve State goals for carbon neutrality by 2045 as outlined in CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan and AB 1279. CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d) requires disclosure of inconsistencies with applicable regional plans, and this analysis fulfills that CEQA Guidelines requirement.

Refer to Response 6.88, for a discussion regarding applicable utility providers in Santa Maria. The following edit has been made to Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis, of* the EIR:

Inconsistent: Future development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the latest Title 24 Green Building Code and Building Efficiency Energy Standards and would also be served by ~~Southern California Edison~~ Pacific Gas and Electric or Central Coast Community Energy, both of which are required to increase its renewable energy procurement in accordance with SB 100 targets.

Response 6.93

The commenter suggests removing the last two sentences of the first paragraph of Page 4.2-33 and suggests the City cannot be held to a 2022 Ozone Plan in 2045.

The sentences referenced by the commenter in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*, support the EIR's obligation to disclose potential inconsistencies with currently adopted State and regional plans, including CARB's 2022 Scoping Plan and SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS. This disclosure is required under CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), which states that an EIR must discuss any inconsistencies between the proposed project and applicable regional plans. The discussion reflects the State's adopted goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045 (AB 1279 and Executive Order B-55-18) and evaluates the plan against those requirements based on information available at the time of EIR preparation. The analysis does not speculate about future amendments and provides transparency regarding current standards. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.94

The commenter suggests that Table 4.2-9 be revised to fit onto one page, opposed to being split between two, and to clarify development will happen throughout the 2045 General Plan Update implementation and will include many air quality measures. The commenter suggests the energy discussion should reflect that the City is part of 3CE. The commenter suggests development will be net zero GHG emissions by 2045.

Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of editorial changes which do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis.

Table 4.2-9 in Subsection 4.2.3, *Impact Analysis*, presents a conservative estimate of operational GHG emissions based on full buildout conditions and current regulatory requirements. This approach is appropriate for a program-level EIR as specific project details and the timing of future regulatory changes cannot be predicted without speculation. While future development under the 2045 General Plan Update would occur over a 20-year horizon, and would be expected to implement additional air quality and GHG reduction measures, including compliance with SB 100 renewable energy targets and vehicle electrification goals, it would be inappropriately speculative to quantify these measures at this stage of review. Therefore, the table reflects a conservative assumption to ensure disclosure of potential impacts consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15144 and Section 15125(d). No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.95

The commenter suggests the first two paragraphs on Page 4.2-34 are incorrect as new development will emit net zero GHG emissions by 2045-2050 based on state law.

Refer to Response 6.94 for a discussion of conservative assumption analysis based on current regulatory requirements. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.96

The commenter suggests the cumulative discussion on Pages 4.2-34 through 4.2-36 be revised to address state requirements to be net zero by GHG. The commenter states it is not appropriate to hold future development to the standards of existing plans. The commenter suggests infill and annexation development will address the requirement to reduce air quality and GHG emissions through the 2045 General Plan Update horizon.

Refer to Responses 6.93 and 6.94 for discussions regarding the comparison of the proposed project's emissions based on existing regulatory requirements and the appropriateness of comparing the proposed project to existing applicable emissions targets. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.97

The commenter suggests revising paragraph two on Page 4.3-1 to reference prior biological surveys conducted by Rincon and other consultants in the Santa Maria Valley. The commenter states that these reports show very few biological resources in the area due to historic agricultural use.

The paragraph referenced by the commenter, in Subsection 4.3.1, *Setting*, describes the most up-to-date and publicly available information sources used to prepare the environmental setting for Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*. These sources include federal and State databases such as United States Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation tool, California Department of Fish and Wildlife California Natural Diversity Database, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Protected Resources, as well as regional datasets and the City's Existing Conditions Report. This approach is appropriate for a program-level EIR because it provides comprehensive coverage of sensitive biological resources across the entire plan area. While Rincon has conducted biological surveys in the plan area related to other projects, these surveys were conducted for specific projects and are not relevant to the General Plan Update considered in this EIR. Future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to conduct site-specific surveys, as necessary, to assess site-specific biological resources at individual project sites. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.98

The commenter suggests the use of the phrase "open space" in the third paragraph on page 4.3-1 is not correct and state the land is agricultural land. They assert that the EIR should clarify that areas such as 5B, 7, 9, and the Santa Maria Public Airport are designated for future residential, commercial, and industrial uses. They also request revising the percentage to show that over 85 percent of this land is designated for urban uses and that the current 29 percent agricultural/open space designation is an interim condition before full development occurs.

The land use designations described in the third paragraph in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities*, are sourced from the General Plan Land Use Classifications table in the City's Land Use and Community Design Existing Conditions Report (https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/_files/ugd/e3bef4_f63eb5691b0d4fd8bb3a312f68badc5b.pdf). These designations reflect the most current and up-to-date land use classifications for the plan area and were used to describe existing setting for the biological resources analysis. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.99

The commenter states that there is very little area with undistributed native habitat and Figure 4.3-1 shows most of this land located south of Orcutt.

As described in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities*, the plan area contains substantial urban and suburban development. However, there are some areas of relatively undisturbed natural habitats. Figure 4.3-1, Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area, corroborates this statement, showing the majority of the plan area containing "Developed-Ruderal-Landscaped" area with only a few occurrences of various natural habitats such as Western Oak Woodland and Savanna and Chaparral in the southern portion of the plan area. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.100

The commenter states that Figure 4.3-1 is incorrect and should be revised to reflect the existing biological conditions of various areas throughout Santa Maria. Specifically, the commenter requests changes to the display of the Santa Maria Cemetery, Santa Maria Landfill, Rivergate Specific Plan Area, Guggia and DeBarnardi property, Santa Maria Airport, Area 9, Area 7, and Area 5B.

In response to this comment, Figure 4.3-1, Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area, located in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities* has been revised in the Final EIR to remove sites that are now under construction or have already been developed and have little to no vegetation on the site.

Response 6.101

The commenter suggests that the last two sentences of paragraph one and paragraph three on page 4.3-3 be removed. The commenter states the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) description is not an accurate reflection of the Santa Maria Valley. *The commenter further states that agricultural operations occur in the plan area.*

The language the commenter is referring to in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities*, provides a broad description of regional conditions from CDFW. This level of detail is appropriate for the Draft EIR as it is a programmatic EIR prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. Programmatic EIRs are intended to evaluate impacts on a plan-wide scale rather than provide site-specific detail. A generalized description provides consistency across the analysis and avoids unnecessary speculation about localized variations.

The environmental setting of agricultural operations in the plan area is described in the "Agricultural – Field and Row Crops" portion of the setting discussion, which explains the predominance of cultivated lands and why biological resources are generally limited in these areas. Agricultural lands typically lack native vegetation and provide minimal habitat value due to ongoing disturbance and crop management practices. This context supports the conclusion that the existing language is sufficient for describing biological conditions at the program level. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.102

The commenter suggests removing the fourth paragraph on page 4.3-3, stating barren land does not exist in the Santa Maria Valley.

The paragraph in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities*, referred to by the commenter, provides a general description of what "barren land" describes. Barren land exists in the plan area as not all agricultural land is viable. Barren lands are discussed in Subsection 4.3.1a, *Barren Lands,* and are defined as habitat that is characterized by an absence of vegetation and includes any habitat with less than two percent total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10 percent cover by shrub or tree species. Barren lands include urban areas categorized as developed, ruderal, and landscaped and in agricultural areas, includes disked or plowed agricultural fields. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.103

The commenter suggests removing paragraph five on page 4.3-3 and asserts the information is not applicable to Santa Maria.

The commenter is referring to the discussion of evergreen orchards in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities.* Evergreen orchards exist in the Santa Maria River Valley in the plan area. Evergreen orchards as defined in the Draft EIR and by CDFW are orchards typically dominated by a single species of tree, such as almonds, apples, apricots, peaches, pecans, and walnuts for deciduous orchards and avocados, grapefruit, lemons, limes, olives, oranges, and tangerines for evergreen orchards. Agricultural – Orchard is identified on Figure 4.3-1, Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area, and is shown to occur in various parts of the city. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.104

The commenter asks to clarify paragraph two on page 4.3-4 the location of Pine/Cypress habitat.

The California Mixed Evergreen Forest and Woodland habitats in the plan area are identified as Agricultural – Vineyard and Bush Fruit on Figure 4.3-1, Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area, located in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities,* and is shown to occur in the western and southwestern portions of the city. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.105

The commenter suggests removing paragraphs four and five on page 4.3-4 and asserts the information is not applicable to Santa Maria.

The Chaparral habitat in the plan area are identified as Agricultural – Vineyard and Bush Fruit on Figure 4.3-1, Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area, located in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities,* and is shown to occur in the southern portion of the city. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.106

The commenter suggests removing the word ruderal from paragraph two of page 4.3-5.

"Ruderal" describes areas where plants grow on ground disturbed by human activity. This term is defined in in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities*. Ruderal areas occur in the

plan area and are therefore relevant to the Draft EIR. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.107

The commenter suggests removing paragraph three of page 4.3-5 and asserts the information is not applicable to Santa Maria.

Refer to Response 6.102 for a discussion of barren lands and their presence in the city.

Response 6.108

The commenter suggests minor language changes to paragraph four of page 4.3-5 and states that vernal pools need to be described in this paragraph.

Vernal pools are defined as a type of temporary wetland that support plants and animals that are specifically adapted to living with very wet winter and spring conditions followed by very dry summer and fall conditions. This term is defined in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities*. Vernal pools are defined in the subsequent paragraph following the discussion of wetlands and streams. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.109

The commenter suggests that Figure 4.3-2 should be corrected to include recent base aerial imagery.

Figure 4.3-2, Wetlands Within the Plan Area, located in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities,* uses the most up to date 2025 base aerial imagery provided by ESRI. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.110

The commenter states that Figure 4.3-2 should show that Santa Maria Wastewater Treatment Plant and Laguna County Sanitation District discharge ponds are not freshwater ponds and identify basins for flood control recharge.

Based on on-the-ground expertise from the City of Santa Maria, Figure 4.3-2, Wetlands Within the Plan Area, located in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities,* has been updated to remove the "Freshwater Pond" label from the Santa Maria Wastewater plant and LCSD plant discharge ponds. Flood control and recharge basins are discussed in Section 4.8, *Utilities and Service Systems*.

Response 6.111

The commenter states paragraph two on page 4.3-7 should be deleted and states there are no barren lands in Santa Maria.

Refer to Response 6.102 for a discussion of barren lands and their presence in the city.

Response 6.112

The commenter suggests that the bulleted list on page 4.3-7 should be moved to precede the special status plant species discussion.

In response to the commenter's statement, Subsection 4.3.1.b, *Special Status Species,* has been moved from its previous location following the "Barren Lands" paragraph to immediately follow the "Valley Foothill Riparian" paragraph, as shown below:

Valley Foothill Riparian

Valley foothill riparian is a native vegetation community that contains mostly winter deciduous trees, such as native cottonwood (*Populus* spp.), California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), and valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). The canopy height can grow up to 98 feet in a mature riparian forest. Typical understory shrub layer species include native California blackberry, blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), poison oak, and willows (*Salix* spp.). This vegetation community is found in valleys bordered by sloping alluvial fans, slightly dissected terraces, lower foothills, and coastal plains. They are generally associated with low velocity flows, flood plains, and gentle topography. Valleys provide deep alluvial soils and a high water table. The substrate is coarse, gravelly or rocky soils more or less permanently moist. Valley foothill riparian habitats provide food, water, migration and dispersal corridors, and escape, nesting, and thermal cover for an abundance of wildlife (CDFW 2025a).

b. Special Status Species

For the purposes of this analysis, special-status species were considered listed or non-listed special-status species if they were classified as one or more of the following:

- **Listed Special-Status Species**
  - Species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), including proposed and candidate species.
  - Species listed as candidate, threatened, or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).
  - Plant species protected by the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) (State Rare).
- **Non-listed Special-Status Species**
  - Species designated as Fully Protected (FP), Species of Special Concern (SSC), or Watch List (WL) by the CDFW
  - Birds designated as a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) by USFWS
  - Sensitive species designated by USFWS
  - Sensitive species designated by the United States Forest Service (USFS)
  - Plants assigned a California Rare Plant Rank of 1 through 4 by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS)
  - Species protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
  - Bats considered by the Western Bat Working Group to be "High" or "Medium" priority
  - Species designated as locally important by the Local Agency and/or otherwise protected through ordinance, local policy, Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), or Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs).

    Queries of the USFWS's IPaC, CNDDB, and CNPS's online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (CRPR) were conducted to obtain comprehensive information regarding special-status species and sensitive vegetation communities

known or with potential to occur in the plan area. Queries of the CNPS inventory and CNDDB database included the *Santa Maria* and *Twitchell Dam* United States Geological Service (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The results of these scientific database queries are provided as Appendix B of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Special-Status Plant Species

Based on the database queries and literature review, a total of 17 special-status plant species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the plan area (Appendix B). Of these species, 13 were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area. Appendix B shows the special-status plant species and habitat requirements for each species within the vicinity of the plan area.

Response 6.113

The commenter suggests that the reference to Appendix B in paragraph one on page 4.3-8 be changed to Appendix C.

In response to the commenter's statement, the following revision has been made to Subsection 4.3.1.b, *Special Status Species*:

> The results of these scientific database queries are provided as Appendix C ~~B~~ of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Response 6.114

The commenter suggests paragraph two on page 4.3-8 is revised to be more specific to the Santa Maria Valley, including the use of grasslands for cattle grazing and California tiger salamander habitat and removing the description of Roosevelt Elk in Santa Maria Valley.

Refer to Response 6.101 for a discussion of the descriptions of regional conditions from CDFW.

Response 6.115

The commenter suggests revising paragraph one on page 4.3-9 to clarify oak woodlands are not located in Santa Maria.

As described on page 12 of the City's Environmental Existing Conditions Report prepared by the City of Santa Maria in 2020, the Santa Maria River Valley includes oak woodland as a major plant association. The Draft EIR relies on readily available information including the previously prepared Existing Conditions Report to inform the EIR. No changes to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.116

The commenter suggests deleting paragraphs two and three on page 4.3-9 and asserts the information is not relevant to the area evaluated in the EIR.

As described on page 12 of the City's Environmental Existing Conditions Report prepared by the City of Santa Maria in 2020, the Santa Maria River Valley includes riparian scrub as a major plant association. Therefore, the two paragraphs cited by the commenter, which address various types of riparian woodland and shrubland, are applicable to the analysis in this EIR. The Draft EIR relies on

readily available information including the previously prepared Existing Conditions Report to inform the EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.117

The commenter suggests revising the Appendix B reference on page 4.3-10 to Appendix C. The commenter requests clarification on the area evaluated for special status plant species to occur.

In response to the commenter's statement, the following revisions have been made in Subsection 4.3.1.b, *Special Status Species,* of the EIR:

> Based on the database queries and literature review, a total of 17 special-status plant species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the plan area (Appendix ~~B~~C). Of these species, 13 were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area. Appendix ~~B~~C shows the special-status plant species and habitat requirements for each species within the vicinity of the plan area.
>
> Based on the database queries and literature review, a total of 31 special-status invertebrate, fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the plan area (Appendix ~~B~~C). Appendix ~~B~~C, the Potential to Occur Table, describes habitat suitability for each special-status species and identifies the distance from the plan area at which each associated habitat type occurs, typically within 2 or 5 miles.

Response 6.118

The commenter states that paragraphs two and three on page 4.3-10 clarify that the potential for the 13 special status plant species to occur in the plan area is very unlikely as infill development has already reduced suitable habitat and the annexation area has been in continuous agricultural production for more than 100 years.

The discussion referred to by the commenter regarding special status species in Subsection 4.3.1.b, *Special Status Species*, identifies the potential for these special status plant species to occur as low. While urban infill has contributed to the low potential to occur for special status plant species, the reason for the plant species low potential to occur is not relevant to the potential impacts to these biological resources. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.119

The commenter states the last two paragraphs on page 4.3-11 should be listed in bullets for clarity. The commenter provides suggestions regarding the descriptions of habitat for southern vernal pools, steelhead trout, la Graciosa thistle, and California red-legged frog. The commenter also states there is no mention of Lompoc yerba santa.

Subsection 4.3.1.d, *Sensitive Communities and Critical Habitat,* provides separate headers for sensitive communities and critical habitats to distinguish between the two. The only sensitive community in the plan area, Southern Vernal Pool, is described under the Sensitive Communities header. Critical habitats, including those for steelhead trout, La Graciosa thistle, California red-legged frog, and Lompoc yerba santa, are described under the Critical Habitat header. Converting the text from paragraph format to a bullet list would not affect the analysis or conclusions of the Draft EIR. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of editorial changes that do not

pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.120

The commenter states that paragraph three on page 4.3-12 should be deleted. The commenter states that this paragraph is confusing and not relevant to Santa Maria as it references the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains. The commenter suggests Figure 4.3-4 is inaccurate, as Santa Maria may serve as an area of wildlife connectivity but only a portion of the city is identified as Connections with Implementation Flexibility.

The reference to the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains in Subsection 4.3.1.e, *Wildlife Movement Corridors*, is consistent with the information presented on page 13 of the City's Environmental Existing Conditions Report, as cited in the EIR. Although the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains lie outside of the plan area, the riverbed is identified as a wildlife movement corridor in Figure 4.3-4, Wildlife Connectivity Within the Plan Area, extends into these ranges.

Figure 4.3-4, Wildlife Connectivity Within the Plan Area, located in Subsection 4.3.2.a, *Federal Regulations*, uses the most up to date 2025 base aerial imagery provided by ESRI. The plan area does not function entirely as a wildlife movement corridor because it is generally developed; however, as shown in Figure 4.3-4, some rural and undeveloped locations retain potential for habitat connectivity. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.121

The commenter states that the Clean Water Act discussion on page 4.3-15 needs to discuss the Supreme Court's decision on Water of the United States.

The Draft EIR does not identify any specific impacts to Waters of the United States. Therefore, discussion of Sackett vs. EPA (May 2023) in which the Supreme Court narrowed the definition of Waters of the United States under the Clean Water Act is not necessary in the Clean Water Act discussion in Subsection 4.3.2.a, *Federal Regulations*, as it is not relevant or applicable to the analysis in the Draft EIR.

The 2045 General Plan Update has the potential to impact "Waters of the State." Waters of the State are discussed in Subsection 4.3.2.b, *State Regulations,* under the "Clean Water Act Section 401, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act" heading. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.122

The commenter asks if the United States Supreme Court's decision on Water of the United States has an influence on the definition of Waters of the State.

This comment does not pertain to the analysis in the Draft EIR. However, the 2045 General Plan Update is subject to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, and any updates or amendments to the Act resulting from the Supreme Court's decision in Sackett vs. EPA (May 2023) would apply to the General Plan as relevant. Refer to Response 6.121 for a discussion on the rationale for not including a discussion of the Supreme Court's decision in Sackett vs EPA (May 2023) on the definition of Waters of the United States. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.123

The commenter states the methodology discussion on page 4.3-20 should be revised to clarify that future infill projects and development in the Planning Area will not have biological impacts or trigger the need for surveys; the commenter suggests surveys would only be required for areas south of the airport and in the southernmost sections of the Orcutt Sphere of Influence.

Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion on future individual projects requiring environmental review.

Response 6.124

The commenter suggests revising the Impact BIO-1 Summary to clarify biological impacts would only happen to the southernmost areas of the Orcutt area.

The Impact Summary statement under Impact BIO-1 is intended to provide a brief overview of the overall impact and is not meant to describe the specific locations where impacts may occur. The analysis under Impact BIO-1 in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* identifies where biological impacts have the potential to occur in the plan area. This analysis specifically discusses grassland, chaparral, riparian, wetland, and oak woodland communities that could serve as habitat for special-status species. Figure 4.3-1, Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area, in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities*, illustrates the distribution of these habitat types in the plan area. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.125

The commenter states the Impact BIO-1 discussion should clarify that special status species only occur in the southernmost areas of the Orcutt area. The commenter also states there is no incremental loss of habitat, fragmentation of open areas, or loss of wildlife corridors.

Grassland, chaparral, riparian, wetland, and oak woodland communities can serve as habitat for special-status species. These vegetation communities are shown in Figure 4.3-1, Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area, in Subsection 4.3.1.a, *Land Cover and Vegetation Communities.* While incremental habitat loss, fragmentation of open space, or disruption of wildlife corridors may not be occurring at present, such impacts could occur with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a), the EIR identifies all potentially significant environmental effects of a proposed project, including those related to biological resources. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.126

The commenter states that Policy COS-1.1 should be deleted as it is infeasible and inconsistent with infill development and the annexation areas.

Policy COS-1.1 is proposed as part of the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, removing its reference from the Draft EIR would not change its applicability to future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. In addition, the policy is relevant to the analysis under Impact BIO-1 because it seeks to protect and expand natural habitat, wildlife corridors, natural wetlands, and other natural lands throughout the city and its Sphere of Influence. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.127

The commenter states that Policy COS-1.3 should be revised to state the only place for planting biodiversity species is in City parks.

This comment does not pertain to the to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.128

The commenter states the Impact BIO-1 discussion should be revised to indicate the 13 special status plant species are not located in the City, Sphere of Influence, or annexation area.

Refer to Response 6.118 for a discussion of the location of special status plant species in the plan area.

Response 6.129

The commenter states that the second paragraph of the Impact BIO-1 discussion should be deleted since none of the special status plant species mentioned are located in Santa Maria.

As documented in Appendix C, Potential to Occur Table, either suitable habitat for 13 special status plant species exists in or near the plan area, or there have been recorded occurrences of these species in the plan area. Although the likelihood of these species occurring in the plan area is low, it is not zero. Because the potential to occur cannot be entirely ruled out, a potentially significant impact must still be disclosed and evaluated in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.130

The commenter states that the Special-Status Wildlife species discussion in Impact BIO-1 clarifies that no wildlife species are found in Santa Maria or the annexation area, and no additional biological studies are needed in these areas.

Refer to Responses 6.124 and 6.125 for a discussion on where special-status species may occur in the plan area. Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion on future individual projects requiring environmental review.

Response 6.131

The commenter asks what the "Plan Area" is for reptiles. They also suggest revising the reptiles discussion in Impact BIO-1 to a no significant impact conclusion based on the idea that no species have been found in Santa Maria or the annexation area.

The "Plan Area" is defined in Subsection 2.3.1, *Regional Location*. It is defined as all land in the Santa Maria Sphere of Influence and includes the annexation of areas east of the city limits. Similar to the discussion in Response 6.129, although the likelihood of special status reptiles to occur in the plan area is low, it is not zero. Therefore, a potentially significant impact must be disclosed and evaluated in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.132

The commenter states the Mammals discussion in Impact BIO-1 is not relevant as there are no known bat colonies or badger dens in Santa Maria or the annexation area.

As disclosed in Appendix C, Potential to Occur Table, both pallid bat and American badger habitat exists in the plan area and there are recorded occurrences of these species within five miles of the plan area. As potential development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could result in permanent loss of suitable habitat, significant impacts to special status mammals cannot be ruled out. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.133

The commenter states the Invertebrates discussion in Impact BIO-1 should be revised to state none of the described invertebrates have been identified in Santa Maria or the annexation area.

As disclosed in Appendix C, Potential to Occur Table, there are recorded occurrences of vernal pool fairy shrimp and monarch butterflies within five miles of the plan area and suitable habitat for both species exist in the plan area. This information indicates these special status invertebrates have the potential to occur in the plan area and could therefore be impacted by potential development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.134

The commenter states the Birds discussion in Impact BIO-1 should be revised to remove the paragraph referencing burrowing owls claiming none have been identified in Santa Maria or the annexation area.

As disclosed in Appendix C, Potential to Occur Table, there are recorded occurrences of burrowing owls within five miles of the plan area and suitable habitat for them to exist in the plan area. This information indicates this special status bird has the potential to occur in the plan area and could therefore be impacted by potential development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.135

The commenter states the Amphibians discussion in Impact BIO-1 should be revised to clarify none of the described amphibians are located in the Santa Maria infill sites or the annexation area, and no additional studies are needed for these areas.

Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion on future individual projects requiring environmental review.

Response 6.136

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a) should be reduced to only focus on Santa Maria claiming it is not applicable to infill development or the annexation area. The commenter states most infill projects will be exempt from environmental review and the City should make clear there would be no need for most future biological studies.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a), in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* provides flexibility by stating that a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment is required only

"if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff." As such, the measure does not automatically require all future projects to prepare such an assessment; rather, it allows City staff to exempt projects when appropriate. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.137

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure BIO-1(b) should be deleted or be revised to only apply to the southern area of Orcutt as no special-status plants are in Santa Maria or the annexation area.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1(b) in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* applies to development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Mitigation Measure BIO-1(b) would be required only if the Biological Resources Screening Assessment (if required under Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that there is potential for significant impacts to federally or state-listed plants or regional population level impacts to species with a California Rare Plant Rank of 1B or 2B from project development. Refer to Response 6.136 for a discussion of the applicability of Mitigation Measure 1(a). If it is determined that a future individual project would not impact special status species, then this mitigation measure would not be triggered. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.138

The commenter states that Mitigation Measures BIO-1(c) and BIO-1(d) should be deleted claiming they are not applicable to Santa Maria or the annexation area.

Mitigation Measures BIO-1(c) and (d) in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* are applicable to development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Refer to Responses 6.129, 6.136, and 6.137 for an explanation of their applicability to future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Additionally, the mitigation measures are clear in that they only apply to future development that has the potential to impact special status species, as determined by site specific biological surveys. If it is determined that a future individual project would not impact special status species, then these mitigation measures would not be triggered. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.139

The commenter states that Mitigation Measures BIO-1(e) and BIO-1(f) should be deleted claiming they are not applicable to Santa Maria or the annexation area.

Mitigation Measures BIO-1(e) and (f) in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* are applicable to development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Refer to Responses 6.130, 6.131, 6.132, 6.133, 6.134, 6.135, 6.136, 6.137, and 6.138 for an explanation of their applicability to future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Additionally, the mitigation measures are clear in that they only apply to future development that has the potential to impact special status species, as determined by site specific biological surveys. If it is determined that a future individual project would not impact special status species, then these mitigation measures would not be triggered. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.140

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure BIO-1(g) is appropriate for inclusion in the EIR.

The commenter's support for the inclusion of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(g) in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* is acknowledged. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.141

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure BIO-1(h) should be deleted claiming it is not applicable to Santa Maria or the annexation area.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1(h) in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* is applicable to development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Refer to Responses 6.131 and 6.136 for an explanation of its applicability to future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Additionally, the mitigation measure is clear that it would apply to future development that has the potential to impact Northern California legless lizard, as determined by preliminary review conducted by City staff. If it is determined that a future individual project would not impact Northern California legless lizard, then this mitigation measure would not be triggered. No revisions to the Draft EIR are warranted in response to this comment.

Response 6.142

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure BIO-1(i) should be reduced to only state if bats are discovered then a standard study will apply.

The level of detail in Mitigation Measure BIO-1(i) in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* would ensure that the prescribed methods for avoidance and impact minimization to potential bat roosts are clear, enforceable, and practical. This level of detail is necessary because it provides specific steps and performance standards that agencies and contractors can follow, reducing ambiguity and ensuring compliance. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.143

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure BIO-1(j) should be clarified to state it only applies to sites with eucalyptus trees in the southern part of Santa Maria and the Orcutt area.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1(j), in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* is intentionally broad to provide flexibility for future conditions. Rather than narrowly applying to a specific area, the measure requires a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment only "if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff" and is further limited to development within undeveloped parcels. This approach allows City staff to evaluate potential impacts of development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan on monarch butterfly habitat as conditions evolve. While the southern portion of Santa Maria and the Orcutt area may currently represent the most likely locations for monarch butterflies, the measure avoids unnecessarily excluding other areas in the plan area that could support monarch habitat in the future. By allowing case-by-case review, the measure ensures that monarch butterflies receive appropriate protection wherever they occur, without imposing unnecessary requirements on projects where impacts are unlikely. Therefore, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.144

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure BIO-1(k) is too burdensome and states that very few projects in Santa Maria and the annexation area would require bird surveys.

The level of detail in Mitigation Measure BIO-1(k) in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* would ensure that the prescribed methods for avoidance and impact minimization to potential bird nests are clear, enforceable, and practical. This level of detail is required for the EIR because it provides specific steps and performance standards that agencies and contractors can follow, reducing ambiguity and ensuring compliance. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.145

The commenter states that the Significance After Mitigation discussion should state that the city of Santa Maria and the annexation area have no known special-status species and do not require additional surveys, aside from birds or bats.

Refer to Response 6.124, 6.125, and 6.129 for a discussion on the potential for special-status species to occur in the plan area. Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k), in Section 4.3, *Biological* Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures*, provide a comprehensive framework to address potential impacts by requiring site-specific biological assessments and surveys for future projects when warranted. These measures ensure that if nesting birds, bats, or other sensitive species are identified during project-level review, appropriate surveys and mitigation would be implemented. Therefore, the Draft EIR already accounts for the potential occurrence of special-status species and includes enforceable measures to protect biological resources as needed. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.146

The commenter suggests revising the Significance After Mitigation discussion to remove mitigation based on previous comments.

None of the Mitigation Measures previously mentioned by the commenter, Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k), in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures*, would be removed from the Draft EIR as they are all applicable and necessary to reduce potentially significant impacts to biological resources. Refer to Responses 6.136, 6.137, 6.140, 6.141, 6.142, 6.143, and 6.144 for a discussion of Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a), BIO-1(b), BIO-1(g), BIO-1(h), BIO-1(i), BIO-1(j), and BIO-1(k). No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.147

The commenter suggests revising the Impact BIO-2 Summary to clarify there are no wetlands in the infill portions of the City or the annexation area, and the only impact to wetlands would be during construction which would be minimized with applicable National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits.

Refer to Response 6.110 for a discussion of revisions to Figure 4.3-2. Refer to Response 6.124 for a discussion on the Impact Summary statement and its intent in the Draft EIR. The analysis that immediately follows the Impact Summary statement, in Subsection, 4.3.3.b, *Project Impact and Mitigation Measures,* provides the specifics requested by the commenter, including location of

wetlands in the plan area. In addition, the analysis in Impact BIO-2 explains that development facilitated by the plan would be subject to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements to protect water quality prior to, during, and post-construction. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.148

The commenter suggests revising the Impact BIO-2 discussion to state there are no marine habitats or freshwater ponds in Santa Maria or the annexation area. The commenter states Figure 4.3-2 needs corrections, and points out manmade basins and channels designed to dry up for most of the year.

Refer to Response 6.110 for a discussion of revisions to Figure 4.3-2. Additionally, the following revision has been made to Impact BIO-2:

> The CNDDB identifies southern vernal pool as a sensitive natural community which could occur in the plan area. According to the USFWS NWI, wetlands in and surrounding the City consist of ~~estuarine and marine habitats,~~ freshwater ponds, freshwater emergent wetlands, freshwater forested and shrub wetlands, and riverine habitats (USFWS 2025c). Development facilitated by the plan is not likely to result in the removal of large areas of riparian, wetland, or other sensitive natural community habitat, as development would generally occur in areas of the City that are developed and surrounded by existing development.

However, there remains potential to affect the few freshwater ponds, freshwater emergent wetlands, freshwater forested and shrub wetlands, and riverine habitats that are identified throughout the plan area. As stated in Subsection 4.3.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, 2025 data from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory indicate that wetlands in and around the City include freshwater ponds, freshwater emergent wetlands, freshwater forested and shrub wetlands, and riverine habitats. The National Wetlands Inventory is a reliable, government-managed resource widely used for environmental analysis in EIRs because it provides comprehensive and up-to-date wetland mapping data. Refer to Response 6.110 for a discussion on revisions to Figure 4.3-2. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.149

The commenter suggests deleting Policies COS-1.1 and COS-1.3 in the Impact BIO-2 discussion due to infeasibility, as well as revising Policy COS-1.5 to focus only on birds and bats.

As discussed under Response 6.126, Policy COS-1.1 is proposed as part of the 2045 General Plan Update; therefore, removing its reference from the EIR would not change its applicability to future development facilitated by the Plan. This applies to all policies proposed in the 2045 General Plan Update. This comment does not pertain to the to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.150

The commenter suggests revising the Mitigation Measure and Significance After Mitigation discussion in Impact BIO-2 to remove reference to any mitigation removed as a result of previous comments.

Refer to Response 6.146 for a discussion of mitigation measure applicability and changes to the Significance After Mitigation section.

Response 6.151

The commenter states Policies COS-1.1 and COS-1.3 should be deleted from Impact BIO-3 and Impact BIO-4 discussions, as well as revising Policy COS-1.5 to focus only on birds and bats. The commenter states Policy COS-3.1 should be revised stating an Urban Forest Management Plan has not been adopted and the infeasibility of expanding the urban canopy by 20 percent.

This comment does not pertain to the to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.152

The commenter states the Cumulative Impacts discussion on pages 4.3-38 and 4.3-39 should be revised to state there are no known special-status species or wetlands in the City or annexation area. The commenter suggests focusing on California tiger salamander vernal pools in the south at the airport and Area 7.

Refer to Response 6.124 for a discussion on the potential for special-status species to occur in the plan area. Refer to Response 6.147 for a discussion on wetlands in the plan area.

Response 6.153

The commenter states the EIR should include figures to page 4.4-2 showing the Historic Overlay District and where known resources are located. They also state this suggested map should also show potential cultural resources in Santa Maria.

The Historic Overlay District is a zoning designation intended to encourage but not mandate the preservation of architecturally significant structures. This zoning designation is not relevant to the discussion of existing historic and cultural resources within the city. However, the City provides a map showing Zoning Designations on their website, this map includes the designated Historic Overlay District. (https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/10037/638563088414970000) Known historical resources within the plan area are listed in Subsection 4.4.1.b, *Historic-Era Setting*, the location of these resources can be found on the City's website for Historical Landmarks and Objects of Historical Merit (https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/fa9559c0f4f6467989211f32fb788073). Inclusion of these maps in the EIR would not impact the overall analysis or conclusion of the analysis, and these maps are available to the public through the City's website. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.154

The commenter states that all regulations mentioned on pages 4.4-4 through 4.4-8 must include the respective dates of their adoption.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15125 requires an EIR to describe the existing environmental setting and identify applicable federal, state, and local plans, policies, and regulations relevant to the project. It requires a summary of these regulations to provide context for the analysis, but it does not explicitly require inclusion of adoption dates for all applicable federal and state laws. Subsection 4.4.2, *Regulatory Setting* identifies and summarizes applicable laws and regulations. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.155

The commenter suggests revising the Santa Maria Municipal Code to change the age requirement for historic buildings.

This comment does not pertain to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. However, the commenter's suggestion will be provided to the decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.156

The commenter suggests revising the Resource Management Element discussion on page 4.4-9 to state that this General Plan element is the old element, to include Figure RME-5 in the EIR and new General Plan elements, to add explanation to the low sensitivity for cultural resources in Santa Maria Valley, and to add that a historic riverbed is now a bluff north of Betteravia Road and some cultural resources sites are located in the Orcutt area near Orcutt and Solomon Creek. The commenter suggests adding this information to the Conservation and Open Space Element of the 2045 General Plan Update.

The discussion regarding the Resource Management Element in Subsection 4.4.2.c, *Local Regulations*, states that the element being discussed is the "City's current Resource Management Element." This discussion is a summary of the City's current Resource Management Element and is not part of the environmental impact analysis. The information requested by the commenter regarding cultural sensitivity is addressed in the impact analysis in Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources,* Subsection 4.4.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*. Regarding the information provided by the commenter about a historical riverbed and flooding in the Santa Maria Valley, without proper citations to include supporting evidence, this information cannot be relied upon for the EIR analysis. The historical setting information in the EIR is based on a review of readily available sources, including the City's list of Historical Landmarks and Objects of Historical Merit, the City's current Resource Management Element, the State Office of Historic Preservation website, and the National Park Service. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.157

The commenter states that the last paragraph on page 4.4-11 should clarify that before 1960 the City of Santa Maria had a population of about 35,000 and approximately 9,000 housing units, mostly

within a 4-square-mile area. The commenter notes that the City now has nearly 30,000 units, many of which were built over the last 70 years and are primarily tract homes and apartments. The commenter further suggests revising the City ordinance to specify that tract homes and units built after 1960 are not considered historic.

The specific information provided by the commenter does not pertain to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR, nor would the referenced information change the conclusion that, over the 20-year planning horizon through 2045, additional buildings will exceed the benchmark age threshold and may qualify as potential historic resources. Suggestions for revisions to documents outside the Draft EIR, such as the City ordinance referenced by the commenter will provided to decision makers for their consideration. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.158

In regards to Action COS 7.1.1, the commenter asks where the Historic Overlay District is located and where it should be expanded.

Refer to Response 6.153 for a discussion of the Historic Overlay District. This comment does not pertain to the to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will provided to decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.159

The commenter states that Mitigation Measure CUL-1 should be revised to note the City's ordinance is for buildings 50 years or older and development since 1960 should not be considered historic.

In response to the commenter's suggestion, the following revisions have been made:

CUL-1 Historical Built Environment

If determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, applicants for new discretionary development projects that propose to significantly alter or demolish any historic-age features (i.e., structures determined to be over 50 ~~45~~ years of age based on available City records, such as permitting records) shall be required to submit a historical resources evaluation prepared by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in architectural history or history (36 CFR Part 61). The report shall address areas containing buildings, structures, objects, sites, landscape/site plans, or other features that are 50 ~~45~~ years of age or older and are proposed to be altered or demolished as a part of the proposed project. The evaluation shall include an intensive-level evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and best practices meeting the State Office of Historic Preservation guidelines. All evaluated properties shall be documented on Department of Parks and Recreation Series 523 Forms. The historical resources evaluation report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval. If historical resources are identified through the survey and evaluation, the relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of the resource shall be completed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (Standards). Applicants shall submit a report to the City that identifies and

specifies the treatment of character-defining features and construction activities, and demonstrates how the project complies with the Standards and avoids the substantial adverse change in the significance of the historical resource as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b). The report shall be prepared by an architectural historian or historical architect meeting the Professional Qualifications Standards as defined by 36 CFR Part 61 and provided to the City for review and concurrence prior to project approval.

Page 4.4-11:

New residential, commercial, and industrial uses would be introduced through both new construction and the conversion of existing properties to different land use designations. The plan's emphasis on increased density and clustered development increases the likelihood of redevelopment, or additional development, on already-developed lots. Future development may involve renovations, demolitions, or new construction, which could affect historical resources that have not yet been formally evaluated but may be eligible for listing on the NRHP, CRHR, or local registers under CEQA. Over the 20-year planning horizon through 2045, additional buildings will surpass the ~~45~~50-year age threshold, making them potential historic resources. As a result, redevelopment activities could lead to the physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of such resources.

Response 6.160

The commenter suggests the second paragraph of the Impact CUL-2 discussion should be revised to clarify impacts to archaeological resources would occur only south of Betteravia Road.

The commenter's suggestion to limit the disclosure of potential impacts to archaeological resources in Subsection 4.4.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures,* to areas south of Betteravia Road would not provide adequate disclosure of the project's potential environmental impacts under CEQA. It is not possible to determine with certainty where archaeological resources may exist below the ground surface, and restricting the analysis to a single portion of the city could omit locations from environmental review where resources may be present. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2 requires that an EIR evaluate all potentially significant environmental effects of a project throughout the entire plan area. For this reason, the Draft EIR considers the potential for archaeological resources across the full plan area. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.161

The commenter suggests the third paragraph of the Impact CUL-2 discussion should be revised to clarify that impacts to archaeological resources would occur only south of Betteravia Road.

Refer to Response 6.160 for a discussion of potential impacts to archaeological resources.

Response 6.162

The commenter suggests Mitigation Measures CUL-2(a), CUL-2(b), and CUL-2(c) should only apply to development south of Betteravia Road.

Refer to Response 6.160 for a discussion of potential impacts to archaeological resources.

Response 6.163

The commenter suggests the Impact CUL-4 discussion and Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and CUL-4(b) are revised to only apply to development south of Betteravia Road.

Refer to Response 6.160 for a discussion of potential impacts to archaeological resources.

Response 6.164

The commenter states that the last paragraph of Impact CUL-4 implies all future projects will require tribal consultation, which the commenter views as unnecessary because consultation was already conducted for the General Plan update and planning area without response. The commenter expresses concern that requiring additional consultation would result in extra time and cost. They also request revisions to Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and (b) but do not specify which revisions they would like to see.

Subsection 4.4.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures,* explains that development facilitated by the plan would undergo project-specific tribal cultural resource consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21084.2 and Policy COS-7.3. PRC Section 21084.2 requires consultation only for projects that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource. This requirement does not apply to all future projects. For example, projects that are exempt from CEQA would not require consultation. The EIR accurately describes CEQA requirements, which mandate consultation only when a project could result in significant impacts to tribal cultural resources.

Because the commenter does not recommend any specific revisions to Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and (b) or provide evidence that any revisions are necessary, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.165

The commenter states that the Cumulative Impacts discussion on page 4.4-19 should specify that only structures within the 4-square-mile area are considered potentially historic based on construction dates. The commenter recommends limiting additional studies for future development to this area and suggests amending the ordinance to apply only to buildings in this area that were built before 1960, or possibly earlier.

Refer to Responses 6.157 and 6.160 for a discussion regarding structures that may qualify as potential historic resources and restricting environmental analysis to portions of the plan area, as opposed to the whole plan area. The comment regarding revisions to the ordinance does not pertain to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the revision of other City documents will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.166

The commenter suggests additional information regarding Twitchell Dam, the State Water Project, wastewater discharge, Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin adjudication, agricultural

conservation, and reduced urban water use be added to the setting of the Hydrology and Water Quality section.

The information provided by the commenter pertains primarily to water management and water supply. These topics are discussed in detail in Section 4.8, *Utilities and Service Systems*. The evaluation of hydrology and water quality considers potential impacts related to impairment of water quality, groundwater recharge, alterations of drainage patterns, pollutant release, and conflicts with water quality control plans and sustainable groundwater management plans. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.167

The commenter suggests revising the last sentence of the Groundwater discussion in Section 4.5, Hydrology and Water Quality, to state that groundwater blended is State water used for industrial, municipal, and government uses within the city.

The language the commenter refers to in Subsection 4.5.1.b, Groundwater, is accurate and describes the current use of groundwater in Santa Maria. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.168

The commenter suggests revising the first paragraph of the Surface Water Quality discussion in Section 4.5, Hydrology and Water Quality, to clarify that agricultural operations are not a substantial source of pollutants in Santa Maria and that all urban agricultural operations are located to the west of Santa Maria and would not impact surface water in Santa Maria.

The information included within Subsection 4.5.1.c, Surface Water Quality, is derived from the General Plan Environmental Existing Conditions Report, prepared by the City of Santa Maria in 2020. The General Plan Environmental Existing Conditions Report represents the most recent available information regarding stormwater runoff from agricultural operations in Santa Maria.

In response to this comment, the following revision has been made to Subsection 4.5.1.c, Surface Water Quality:

> Land use affects the quality of surface water in the city. There are large agricultural ~~operations~~ uses within the city ~~that~~ may contribute to surface water pollution. These ~~operations~~ uses are a ~~substantial~~ source of sediment which enters the city's storm drain system (City of Santa Maria 2020). Additionally, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer are pollutants associated with agricultural ~~operations~~ uses that affect surface water quality within the city. Pollutants within urbanized areas of the city, such as heavy metals hydrocarbons, detergents, fertilizers, and pesticides, and construction activities which can cause erosion are additional sources of surface water pollution which impact water quality within the city (City of Santa Maria 2020).

Response 6.169

The commenter suggests revising the second paragraph of the Surface Water Quality discussion in Section 4.5, Hydrology and Water Quality, to separate the discussion of the Santa Maria River from the rest of the paragraph, and to state that the chemicals mentioned in this discussion are being reduced by agricultural operators.

The comment pertaining to paragraph delineation does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR, nor would it change the analysis within the Draft EIR. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis.

The information on chemicals and total maximum daily loads provided in Subsection 4.5.1.c, Surface Water Quality, in the Draft EIR are based on information from the California State Water Board and represent existing conditions. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.170

The commenter states that the Groundwater Quality discussion in Section 4.5, Hydrology and Water Quality, should be revised to note that total dissolved solids levels have improved over the last 30 years. The commenter suggests adding the second sentence of the paragraph to the Surface Water Quality discussion and revising the whole paragraph.

The Groundwater Quality discussion in Subsection 4.5.1.c, *Water Quality*, accurately describes the current conditions of groundwater quality within the plan area and meets the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15125, which requires an EIR to describe the existing environmental setting and identify applicable federal, state, and local plans, policies, and regulations relevant to the project. This section specifies that the environmental setting must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, which serves as the baseline for determining the significance of impacts. The commenter's suggested revisions would not alter the analysis or conclusions within the EIR. Therefore, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.171

The commenter suggests revising the Flood Hazards discussion to include information on City collaboration with the County of Santa Barbara Flood Control and Water Conservation District, the Santa Maria levee, and the Twitchell Dam. The commenter asks where the location of Guadalupe Lake is and what a seiche is.

The Flood Hazards discussion in Subsection 4.5.1.c, *Water Quality*, sufficiently describes the current conditions of flood hazards within the plan area and meets the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15125, which requires an EIR to describe the existing environmental setting and identify applicable federal, state, and local plans, policies, and regulations relevant to the project. This section specifies that the environmental setting must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, which serves as the baseline for determining the significance of impacts. The commenter's suggested revisions would not alter the analysis or conclusions within the Draft EIR.

As discussed in Section 4.5.1.d, Guadalupe Lake is located approximately three miles from the city. A seiche is a standing wave that occurs in an enclosed or partially enclosed body of water, such as a lake. It is typically caused by external forces like strong winds, atmospheric pressure changes, or seismic activity. As discussed in Impact HYD-4, the city is not at risk of being inundated due to seiche. In response to this comment, the following revisions have been made to correct the spelling of "Guadalupe" in Subsection 4.5.1.c:

> Groundwater quality varies within the Santa Maria Valley. Total dissolved solids are known pollutants in groundwater within the Santa Maria Watershed. Additionally, petroleum production by-product (diluent) has been found in groundwater below the Guadalupe Dunes and nearby areas (City of Santa Maria 2020).

In addition, the following revisions have been made to correct the spelling of "Guadalupe" in Subsection 4.5.1.d:

> Santa Maria is approximately 11.4 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. According to the California Department of Conservation, no part of the city is within a tsunami hazard zone (DOC 2025). The city is approximately three miles from Guadalupe Lake. Due to the distance and intervening topography, the city is not at risk of being inundated due to a seiche.

Response 6.172

The commenter suggests revising Figure 4.5-1 to label the Santa Maria River, Santa Maria levee, and Orcutt Creek. The commenter suggest including a regional map to show the location of Twitchell Dam and Guadalupe Lake.

Figure 4.5-1, Flood Hazards in Santa Maria, in Subsection 4.5.2.a, *Federal Regulations*, illustrates flood hazards within the City and highlights the Santa Maria River and Guadalupe Lake as being within the 100-year floodplain. In response to this comment, Figure 4.5-1 has been updated in the Final EIR.

Response 6.173

The commenter suggests including a discussion on the Supreme Court decision regarding the definition of Waters of the United States in the Regulatory Setting discussion on page 4.5-5.

Refer to Response 6.121 for a discussion on the rationale for not including a discussion of the Supreme Court's decision in Sackett v. EPA (May 2023) on Waters of the United States.

Response 6.174

The commenter suggests revising the language in Policy S-3.3 to read "onsite detention basins" rather than onsite detention ponds. The commenter suggests revising Policy S-3.4 to state "Coordinate with County Flood Control to maintain and upgrade…".

This comment does not pertain to the to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.175

The commenter suggests revising the impact summary of Impact HYD-2 to state "Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan would incrementally increase…". The commenter suggests stating that the Santa Maria Water Conservation District and Twitchell Management Authority would assure adequate groundwater quality and groundwater elevations within the basin.

The commenter is referring to the Impact Summary statement in Subsection 4.5.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*. The Impact Summary statement is intended to provide a brief overview of the overall impact. The following impact analysis provides additional details regarding potential impacts of the 2045 General Plan Update. In addition, the first sentence of the impact analysis states that development facilitated by the plan would incrementally increase the amount of impervious surface area, as requested by the commenter. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.176

The commenter suggests revising the first sentence of Impact HYD-2 to clarify that impervious surface areas could be increased within the infill areas of Santa Maria and the annexation area, which would result in incremental reductions in recharge and infiltration. The commenter also suggests removing the word "River" from "Santa Maria River Valley Basin."

The reference to the Santa Maria River Valley Basin in Subsection 4.5.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, is correct as written in the Draft EIR and does not need to be changed. The commenter's statement that these changes would occur incrementally is conveyed in the first part of the sentence. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.177

The commenter suggests removing the last sentence in the second paragraph of the Impact HYD-2 discussion.

The sentence referred to by the commenter in Subsection 4.5.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, states that implementation of general plan policy S-3.3 would help reduce impervious surfaces associated with construction under the 2045 General Plan Update by requiring low-impact design features, such as permeable pavement. This policy is intended to minimize the amount of new impervious surfaces to the greatest extent feasible. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.178

The commenter asks for details regarding groundwater rights the City has based on the adjudication of the groundwater basin and notes groundwater supplies are augmented by other water supplies. The commenter also suggests removing the word "River" from instances of the use of "Santa Maria River Valley Basin."

Additional information on the City's groundwater rights is included in Subsection 4.5.2.c, *Local Regulations*. Refer to Response 6.176 for a discussion on the correct terminology for the Santa Maria River Valley Basin. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.179

The commenter states the Rivergate Roemer Specific Plan area is within the 100-year floodplain and development in that area will need to be elevated above the floodplain and a map revision will need to be processed with FEMA.

All new development facilitated by the General Plan Update would comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations governing development in flood hazard areas. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.180

The commenter suggests correcting the spelling of Guadalupe Lake in Impact HYD-4, adding an explanation that the levee protects Santa Maria in the event of a Twitchell Dam failure, and removing the reference to Lopez Reservoir due to its distance from Santa Maria. The commenter also requests a definition of a seiche.

The following revision has been made to Subsection 4.5.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*:

> "The city is approximately three miles from Guadalupe Lake."

The analysis in Impact HYD-4 indicates that the city is not within the dam inundation area for Lopez Reservoir or Twitchell Reservoir. Therefore, if either dam failed, the floodwaters would not be anticipated to reach the city, based on the California Division of Safety of Dams information as cited in Impact HYD-4. Refer to Response 6.171 for a definition of seiche.

Response 6.181

The commenter suggests that the Bureau of Land Management, United States Army Corps of Engineers, and other federal agencies should be added to Policy S-3.6 for coordination regarding dam and levee safety and inundation.

This comment does not pertain to the to the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.182

The commenter suggests that Impact HYD-5 is inaccurate, as there is an adjudicated order management plan coordinated with the Twitchell Management Authority and the Santa Maria Water Conservation District. The commenter requests the discussion be rewritten to define the agencies that manage the groundwater basin.

The Twitchell Management Authority prepares annual reports that document existing groundwater conditions in the Santa Maria Valley Basin and provide recommendations for management actions. While the Twitchell Management Authority plays an important role in monitoring and reporting, it does not enforce policies or conservation measures. This management authority differs from government agencies that implement and enforce Sustainable Groundwater Management Plans under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The Twitchell Management Authority's reports do not constitute a Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. A Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan includes components such as basin setting, water budgets, sustainable management criteria, projects and actions, and monitoring networks to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. The Twitchell

Management Authority's role is focused on reporting and recommending actions within the adjudicated framework, rather than implementing a comprehensive sustainability plan.

According to the City of Santa Maria's Urban Water Management Plan, the Twitchell Management Authority also functions as a transfer agency, facilitating permanent and temporary transfers of water rights within the Santa Maria River Valley Basin. However, these water transfers are administrative actions related to water allocation and are not connected to water quality, which is the focus of Section 4.5, *Hydrology and Water Quality*. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.183

The commenter suggests revising the Cumulative Impacts discussion on pages 4.5-16 and 4.5-17 based on previous comments on the Hydrology and Water Quality section.

The commenter's statement regarding the cumulative impacts discussion is general and does not include specific recommendations for edits or clarifications. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.184

The commenter suggests revising the Cumulative Impacts discussion on pages 4.5-16 and 4.5-17 to discuss the Twitchell Management Authority's influence on groundwater quality and quantity within the basin.

Refer to Response 6.182 for a discussion of the Twitchell Management Authority.

Response 6.185

The commenter suggests revising the Sensitive Receptors discussion on page 4.6-4 to clarify the noise-sensitive land uses listed are identified in the current General Plan.

The following revision has been made to Subsection 4.6.1.c, *Sensitive Receptors*, in response to this comment:

> The current Santa Maria General Plan Noise Element identifies noise-sensitive land uses as residential areas (including single-family, duplex, multiple-family, and mobile home), motels/hotels, schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, and places of worship (City of Santa Maria 2009), shown in Figure 4.6-1.

Response 6.186

The commenter suggests adding another column to Table 4.6-3 that identifies segments of roadways that have existing sound walls or abutting structures that limit noise levels.

The purpose of Table 4.6-3, Existing Traffic Noise Levels Along Roadway Segments within Subsection 4.6.1.d, *Existing Noise Environment*, is to list the existing traffic noise levels along roadway segments. This table displays the existing noise levels based on average daily trip roadway volume at a distance of 50-feet. The traffic noise levels in Table 4.6-3, as well as the noise contours depicted in Figure 4.6-3, are conservative estimates of existing noise along roadways. Traffic noise levels and

noise contours were determined using average daily traffic and estimated using the Federal Highway Administration Traffic Noise Prediction Model. The Traffic Noise Prediction Model takes into account speed limits, number of lanes, ground type, and vehicle mix. This approach provides a conservative estimate of actual noise levels, which may be attenuated as a result of sound walls, abutting structures, vegetation, or other obstructions to line-of-sight transmission. This approach to evaluating roadway noise levels follows the typical industry practice for General Plan level evaluation, and is appropriate for a programmatic environmental document. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.187

The commenter suggests updating Figure 4.6-1 to include the Enos Ranch project, Skyview Project, and other projects approved within recent years.

Figure 4.6-1 of the Draft EIR depicts noise sensitive land uses utilizing the City's existing land use map. Though additional noise sensitive land uses have been approved in recent years, this map is meant to be representative of land uses in the city and may not reflect all approved projects in the city. The figure is intended to support City decision-making and should not be read as representing precise, site-specific conditions or all existing noise sensitive land uses. In response to this comment, the following revision has been made to Subsection 4.6.1.c:

> The current Santa Maria General Plan Noise Element identifies noise-sensitive land uses as residential areas (including single-family, duplex, multiple-family, and mobile home), motels/hotels, schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, and places of worship (City of Santa Maria 2009), shown in Figure 4.6-1. Note, the figure is intended to support City decision-making and should not be read as representing precise, site-specific conditions or all existing noise sensitive land uses.

Response 6.188

The commenter suggests updating Figure 4.6-2 to include Waller Park, change the water label to vernal pools, and clarify this is the noise contour map adopted by the County Airport Land Use Commission.

Waller Park is not located within the city limits of Santa Maria and therefore is not included. In response to this comment, Figure 4.6-2 has been revised to remove water features.

For additional clarification regarding the source of the airport noise contours shown on Figure 4.6-2, the Aviation discussion in Subsection 4.6.1.d, *Existing Noise Environment*, is revised as follows:

> As shown in Figure 4.6-2, the airport 60-65 dBA CNEL noise contours adopted by the Santa Barbara County Airport Land Use Commission extend primarily over areas of the plan area that are primarily agriculture or open space.

Response 6.189

The commenter suggests Figure 4.6-3 be revised to indicate the locations of sound walls and structures that mitigate noise impacts. *The commenter suggests contours of 65 dBA and below should not be shown on the map as they do not apply to the area near US 101.*

This comment pertains to a figure included within the 2045 General Plan Update. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. Refer

to Response 6.186 for a discussion of the methodology for determining traffic noise levels and noise contours. Also refer to Response 6.35 for a discussion of how noise contours are represented in figures in the General Plan and Draft EIR. While areas of noise contours 65 dBA and below do not apply to areas directly adjacent to U.S. 101, these noise contours are applicable to several roadways throughout Santa Maria. The noise contour map shows generalized noise conditions based on conservative assumptions and may not reflect all local features that may reduce noise levels, such as topography, vegetation, sound walls, or other physical barriers. In some locations, actual noise levels may be lower than those shown. The figure is intended to support City decision-making and should not be read as representing precise, site-specific conditions or all existing noise-reduction infrastructure. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.190

The commenter suggests revising Table 4.6-4 to include the City ordinance that allows exterior noise to be 75 dBA along major corridors. The commenter notes the City is encouraging residential development without perimeter sound walls which would result in higher noise levels for these developments.

Table 4.6-4 is specific to the exterior noise standards established within the current Noise Element of the Santa Maria General Plan. A discussion of noise standards established by the City's Municipal Code is provided in Table 4.6-5. In response to this comment, the following revision has been made to Subsection 4.6.2.c:

> Municipal Code Section 5-5.09 requires the acquisition of a construction noise permit from the Noise Control Officer for exterior construction work conducted within a residential zone or within 500 feet of a residential zone only if such activities exceed the noise standards set forth in Municipal Code Sections 5-5.03 and 5-5.05. The permit would cover short-term or occasional, non-routine operations.
>
> Municipal Code Section 12-7.14(a) allows outdoor living areas in R-2 and R-3 multifamily zones to exceed typical noise standards up to "Normally Unacceptable" levels (75 dB or more), provided residents receive a notice warning that the area regularly experiences elevated urban noise from sources such as traffic, trains, aircraft, industry, and general activity.
>
> Municipal Code Section 12-49.09(c) prohibits vibration above the perception threshold of an individual at or beyond the property boundary of the source for more than three minutes in any one hour of the day between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. and for more than 30 seconds in any one hour between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Response 6.191

The commenter suggests revising Table 4.6-5 to 65 dBA for daytime exterior noise and 75 dBA for noise along major corridors.

Table 4.6-5 accurately describes the ambient base noise levels identified in Section 5-5.05 of the City's Municipal Code. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.192

The commenter suggests the Traffic Noise discussion on page 4.6-15 mention electric vehicles and associated traffic noise reduction.

While the State did implement mandates to phase out natural gas vehicle sales, these mandates were blocked by the United States Senate in May 2025. Given the uncertainty of legislation, it is speculative to assume that a ban on the sale of natural gas vehicles would occur. Furthermore, if a ban on the sale of natural gas vehicles occurs, it is likely that natural gas vehicles would continue to be used during a transitory period to electric vehicles. Due to the uncertainty regarding State legislation mandating electric vehicles, the Draft EIR does not consider a reduction in traffic noise occurring from a shift from natural gas vehicle to electric vehicle use, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.193

The commenter suggests the Traffic Noise discussion on page 4.6-15 include a discussion of fairgrounds, sports fields, and high school sporting events near residential areas.

Roadway vehicle noise impacts are evaluated based on average daily trip roadway volume for existing conditions and the amount of growth expected from future development facilitated by the plan, as well as data regarding speeds and number of lanes. The average daily trips and trip distribution data consider periods of time for high traffic and traffic around residential areas. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.194

The commenter suggests the Mobile Operational Noise discussion and exhibits in Impact NOI-1 are revised to reflect the concept that electric vehicles will occupy an increased number of cars on the roadway over time, thereby reducing traffic noise levels.

Refer to Response 6.192 for a discussion of electric vehicles and impacts to traffic noise levels. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.195

The commenter suggests revising the Impact NOI-1 discussion to account for electric vehicles occupying an increased proportion of vehicles on the roadway over time, thereby reducing traffic noise levels. The commenter suggest that Impact NOI-1 be revised to include analysis of the 8,000 new units in the annexation areas along with new schools, parks, commercial uses, etc.

Refer to Response 6.192 for a discussion regarding traffic noise associated with electric vehicles.

As discussed in Impact NOI-1, roadway segments located within the annexation area, shown in Figure 4.6-4, were not analyzed as they are not currently within Santa Maria city limits. As the 2045 General Plan does not include specific development proposals, the location of individual development in the annexation area, as well as the potential future traffic volumes of roadway segments located within the annexation area, is speculative. At the time an individual project is proposed within the annexation area, it would be required to undergo individual environmental

review to determine potential noise impacts of the individual project. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.196

The commenter suggests that Figure 4.6-4 be corrected to adjust contour lines where sound walls and buildings are located that reduce noise generated from traffic on US 101.

Refer to Responses 6.186 for a discussion of the methodology for determining traffic noise levels and noise contours. This comment pertains to a figure included within the 2045 General Plan Update. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision makers for their consideration. The noise contour map shows generalized noise conditions based on conservative assumptions and may not reflect all local features that may reduce noise levels, such as topography, vegetation, sound walls, or other physical barriers. In some locations, actual noise levels may be lower than those shown. The figure is intended to support City decision-making and should not be read as representing precise, site-specific conditions or all existing noise-reduction infrastructure. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.197

The commenter suggests revising Table 4.6-8 to account for electric vehicles occupying an increased proportion of vehicles on the roadway over time, thereby reducing traffic noise levels.

Refer to Response 6.192 for a discussion regarding traffic noise associated with electric vehicles. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.198

The commenter suggests Policy N-1.1 and Actions N-1.1.1, N-1.1.2, and N-1.1.3 included on page 4.6-30 be deleted due to their infeasibility.

In response to this comment, Action N-1.1.3 has been deleted from the 2045 General Plan Update and the Final EIR. Editorial edits to Policy N-1.1 and Actions 1.1.1. and N-1.1.2 in the General Plan have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR.

Response 6.199

The commenter suggests ensuring the City has the provisions of Mitigation Measure NOI-1 reviewed by construction contractors for individual developments.

As stated in Mitigation Measure NOI-1, during future individual developments, the City would include the listed noise reduction measures as conditions of approval, at which time the requirements for individual development will be reviewed by the construction contractor. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.200

The commenter suggests the Significance After Mitigation discussion within Impact NOI-1 is revised to reflect the concept that electric vehicles will occupy an increased number of cars on the roadway over time, thereby reducing traffic noise levels. The commenter asserts that the plan needs to address noise levels in 25 years rather than current noise levels.

Refer to Response 6.192 for a discussion regarding traffic noise associated with electric vehicles. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.201

The commenter suggests that the Cumulative Impacts discussion on pages 4.6-35 and 4.6-36 be revised to address noise reductions associated with the electrification of construction equipment and motor vehicles. The commenter states that traffic noise will be reduced compared to current conditions.

Refer to Response 6.192 for a discussion regarding traffic noise associated with electric vehicles. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.202

The commenter suggests that the City's transportation demand model evaluated by GHD should be included as an appendix and peer reviewed by local traffic engineers. The commenter asks why GHD did not do a VMT analysis. The commenter suggests that a map showing the locations of infill projects presumed to have a less than significant impact related to VMT are added to Section 4.7, Transportation and Traffic.

The methodology for determining VMT impacts in the Draft EIR is discussed in Subsection 4.7.3.a, *Methodology and Significance Thresholds.* This methodology relied on the City of Santa Maria travel demand model which includes a current baseline scenario and a 2045 future scenario to forecast traffic conditions on major roadways in the city and the Santa Maria Valley. This trip-based model estimates residential VMT per household and VMT per employee based on home-based trip activity to and from residences and workplaces within Santa Maria and the annexation area.

A standalone transportation report for the VMT analysis was not prepared as part of the project; instead, Subsection 4.7.3.b, includes a summary of VMT model methodology, supporting data, and outputs. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.203

The commenter suggests revising the Roadway Network and Functional Classifications discussion on page 4.7-1 to include truck hauling routes and industrial hauling routes as uses for roadways in Santa Maria.

In response to this comment, the following revision has been made to Subsection 4.7.1.a, *Roadway Network and Functional Classifications*, of the Final EIR:

> Santa Maria is served by a system of streets and paths that enable connections in the city and to the regional transportation system. They are classified by their function with different characteristics and accommodations for modes of travel and access to adjacent land uses. The system supports multiple modes of travel and contains network elements that support

vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit travel. In addition, roadways in Santa Maria provide routes for truck hauling and industrial uses hauling. The roadway classifications serve as the City's policy guidance for the development of multi-modal streets and balance all network elements.

Response 6.204

The commenter suggests ensuring the accuracy of the description of Betteravia Road on page 4.7-2.

The description of Betteravia Road in Subsection 4.7.1.b is accurate. As described on page 16 of the Transportation and Mobility Existing Conditions Report prepared in December 2020 by the City of Santa Maria, the portion of Betteravia Road from U.S. 101 to SR 135 is designated in the National Highway System.

Response 6.205

The commenter suggests revising Table 4.7-1 to include road right-of-way widths, add a definition for public alleyways, add a definition for private roads and driveways for small lots. The commenter suggests including information on complete street standards as they relate to width and design of road segments, where complete street standards apply, and inclusion of a cross-section of a complete street.

Table 4.7-1, Current Circulation Element Roadway Classification in Subsection 4.7.1.c, *Arterials, Collectors, and Local Roadways*, is based on information from the City's 2011 Circulation Element and includes the appropriate information to support the Traffic and Transportation environmental setting section of the Draft EIR. Additional definitions would not alter the conclusions or otherwise contribute substantively to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.206

The commenter suggests the Active Transportation Plan should be included as an appendix to the EIR.

The City's Active Transportation Plan is available on the City's website for review. The Draft EIR discusses the 2045 General Plan Update's consistency with the Active Transportation Plan but does not rely on the Active Transportation Plan to reach any conclusions regarding the environmental impacts of the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, this plan is not included as an appendix to the EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.207

The commenter suggests revising Figure 4.14-1 to include the connection to U.S. 101 and Union Valley Parkway and the extension of Seaward Drive to U.S. 101.

Figure 4.14-1 is derived from the General Plan Environmental Existing Conditions Report, prepared by the City of Santa Maria in 2020. The General Plan Environmental Existing Conditions Report represents the most recent available information regarding roadway classifications in Santa Maria. Referencing the adopted roadway classifications directly ensures consistency with official documents and avoids duplicating material that is already clearly defined and accessible in the city's

transportation planning framework. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.208

The commenter suggests revising Figure 4.14-1 to revise the location of Bradley Road, include the road pattern for the Blosser Ranch Specific Plan, include the roads for Area 9 and Area 7 part of the Circulation Element, and identify all Measure A projects already funded.

Refer to Response 6.207 for a discussion of Figure 4.14-1 and its source material.

Response 6.209

The commenter suggests the Existing and Planned Bikeways discussion on page 4.7-5 include standards and widths for Class I-IV bikeways.

The City utilizes Caltrans standards for the widths of Class I trails, Class II bicycle lanes, and Class IV separated bikeways. Standards for Class III bicycle routes are incorporated into roadway width standards. In response to this comment, the following revisions have been made to the Existing and Planned Bikeways discussion in Subsection 4.7.1.d, *Pedestrian and Bicycle Network*:

- Class I Shared Use Paths. Class I shared use paths are completely separated rights-of-way designated for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians, with crossflows by motorists minimized. Caltrans standards require a minimum width of eight feet for a one-way Class I bike path.
- Class II Bicycle Lanes. Class II bicycle lanes provide a striped or buffered right-of-way designated for the exclusive or semi-exclusive use of bicycles with through-travel by motor vehicles or pedestrians prohibited, but with vehicle parking and crossflows by pedestrians and motorists. Caltrans standards generally require a minimum width of four feet for a Class II bicycle lane.
- Class III Bicycle Routes. Class III bicycle routes are signed routes for bicyclists on low-speed, low-volume streets where lanes are shared with drivers. Caltrans standards for Class III bicycle routes are incorporated into roadway width requirements.
- Class IV Separated Bikeways. Class IV separated bikeways are on-street bicycle facilities with a physical barrier between the bicycle space and motor vehicle lanes, including bollards, curbs, or parking. Caltrans standards require a minimum width of five feet for a one-way Class IV separated bikeway.

Response 6.210

The commenter suggests revising the Santa Maria Regional Transit discussion on page 4.7-5 to include a table of ridership over the last 10-20 years to prove ridership has been increasing.

The Santa Maria Regional Transit discussion states that transit ridership is rapidly growing. In response to this comment, the text in Subsection 4.7.1.e, *Transit,* has been revised to include a source for this statement:

- **Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT).** The City of Santa Maria operates SMRT's local fixed route, regional bus service, and on-demand Microtransit and ADA paratransit bus services. SMRT ridership demographics reflect a broad cross-section of the service area, including seniors, persons with disabilities, K-12 students, college students, working professionals,

tourists and riders who choose to use transit instead of driving. Transit ridership is rapidly growing and is expected to continue to grow over the years to come (City of Santa Maria 2025).

In addition, the following resource has been added to the Transportation references in Section 7.1, *Bibliography*:

Santa Maria, City of. 2020. General Plan Environmental Existing Conditions Report. Accessed June 2025.

_____. 2025. SMRT Announces Route Adjustments in Response to Growing Ridership. https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/Home/Components/News/News/17738/ (accessed December 2025).

Response 6.211

The commenter suggests adding descriptions of the following transit services to the bulleted list on page 4.7-6: SMOOTH, Dial a Ride, and senior and medical transits provided by Marian and other medical services.

Medical transit provided by Marian relates to ambulance travel, which does not pertain to transit services such as buses and is therefore not discussed herein. In response to this comment, the following addition has been made in Subsection 4.7.1.e, *Transit*:

- **SMOOTH.** SMOOTH maintains and operates various contracts with local groups in Santa Barbara County to provide transportation assistance with emphasis for passengers requiring medical, physical, and social assistance. SMOOTH provides Senior Dial-A-Ride services in Santa Maria.

Response 6.212

The commenter suggests the AB 32 and SB 375 discussion on page 4.7-6 be revised to specify 1990 emissions levels, 2020 emissions levels, and discuss whether statewide emissions targets were met in 2020.

Refer to Response 6.70 for a discussion regarding greenhouse gas emissions levels. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.213

The commenter states that the EIR needs to include the Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan and asks if this plan includes the annexation areas and suggests that the plan may need to be updated if not.

Diagrams of the existing street network, bikeway network, and pedestrian network are included in the Circulation Element of the 2045 General Plan Update. The Active Transportation Plan does not include the annexation areas, as the plan was adopted in January 2021, prior to preparation of the 2045 General Plan Update. Updating the Active Transportation Plan is outside of the scope of the Draft EIR and does not pertain to the environmental analysis of the 2045 General Plan Update. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.214

The commenter states maps from the Santa Maria Regional Transit Short Range Transit Plan Update should be included in the EIR and asks if this plan includes the annexation areas and suggests that the plan may need to be updated if not.

The Short Range Transit Plan Update does not include the annexation areas, as this plan was updated in 2021, prior to preparation of the 2045 General Plan Update. The Short Range Transit Plan Update includes figures regarding the transit system which are available for review in the Short Range Transit Plan Update. Updating the Short Range Transit Plan is outside of the scope of the Draft EIR and does not pertain to the environmental analysis of the 2045 General Plan Update. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.215

The commenter suggests the Methodology discussion on page 4.7-8 include a map and table showing existing and proposed traffic in Santa Maria in 2045 along with level of service. The commenter acknowledges EIRs do not have to include level of service information. The commenter expresses concern for the future circulation with increased traffic and decreased level of service. The commenter requests a map in the EIR is included which shows circulation for 2045-2050. The commenter states the EIR and 2045 General Plan Update are not consistent with each other in regard to how they discuss LOS.

Refer to Response 6.6 for a discussion of LOS analysis in the Draft EIR. Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15046.3, VMT has replaced LOS as the metric for determining transportation impacts under CEQA. Accordingly, a discussion of future traffic and LOS is neither necessary nor appropriate to include the Draft EIR. A discussion of LOS in the city can be found in the General Plan Circulation Element under the "Traffic Level of Service" heading. A map of the existing circulation system is provided in the General Plan as Figure 4.7-1, Current Circulation Element Roadway Functional Classification. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.216

The commenter suggests Impact TRA-1 needs to include the Travel Demand Model and requests additional information regarding future transportation studies, specifically whether GHD would be required to complete all future transportation studies.

The Santa Maria Travel Demand Model is a trip-based model used in the evaluation of VMT and is discussed in Impact TRA-2 of the Draft EIR. The model is available by request to the City of Santa Maria and does not require future transportation studies to only be carried out by GHD. Refer to Response 6.202 for a discussion of the Travel Demand Model and the methodology for determining VMT impacts in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.217

The commenter suggests deleting Policy CIR-1.2 from Impact TRA-1, as privately maintained streets and driveways would not be designed to meet complete street requirements. The commenter requests the Street Network, Bikeway Network, and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams be included in the EIR.

Policy CIR-1.2 was not deleted from the 2045 General Plan Update but editorial revisions to the policy have been incorporated into the 2045 General Plan Update and carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR. Diagrams of the street network, bikeway network, and pedestrian priority improvement network are included in the Circulation Element of the 2045 General Plan Update. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.218

The commenter suggests changes to the following polices and actions listed in Impact TRA-1:

- *Delete the reference to private streets in Policy CIR-1.3.*
- *Add a sentence in Action CIR-2.2.2 that states AB1600 traffic fees will be used as matching fund for future grants or funding programs.*
- *Delete Policy CIR-6.1.*
- *Delete the second bullet in Action CIR-6.4.3 as it is inconsistent with the Noise Element and EIR noise section. Delete the last two bullets as they are inconsistent with other policies. The last bullet is inconsistent with adopted Objective Design Standards.*
- *Revise Policy CIR-7.2 to state infill and annexations areas will prioritize mixed-use development.*

Policy CIR-1.3 and Policy CIR-7.2 have been revised in the 2045 General Plan Update and changes have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. Action CIR-2.2.2, Policy CIR-6.1, and Action CIR-6.4.3 have not been revised in the 2045 General Plan Update. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no other changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.219

The commenter suggests the Bikeway Network, Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams, and Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan maps referenced in 2045 General Plan policies be included in the EIR.

Diagrams of the street network, bikeway network, and pedestrian priority improvement network are included in the Circulation Element of the 2045 General Plan Update. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.220

The commenter asks if mitigation to Impact TRA-1 needs to be included to address road improvements that will be needed as a result of traffic increases over the next 25 years.

Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include specific development plans, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of specific roadway improvements, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a

lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.221

The commenter asks why new development projects have to reduce VMT to 24.2 and 32.8 percent based on Table 4.7-4. The commenter states this is infeasible and the law only requires a 17 percent reduction. The commenter asks what AB 130 would do for VMT requirements.

Table 4.7-4 does not show mandatory VMT reductions; rather, this table shows projected per-unit VMT decreases from residential and non-residential developments from future development only (i.e., development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update).

AB 130 would not change the threshold of significance for VMT impacts pursuant to CEQA. Rather, AB 130 provides a means of mitigating VMT impacts from future projects through contribution to a state Transit-Oriented Development Implementation Fund. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.222

The commenter suggests noting on page 4.7-15 that Policy CIR-7.1 and Action CIR-7.1.1 will not pertain to most infill housing projects, which the commenter states would be exempt from environmental review. The commenter suggests revising Policy CIR-7.2 consistent with the comment on 6.218.

In response to this comment, Policy CIR-7.1 has been revised in the 2045 General Plan Update and changes have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR.

Response 6.223

The commenter states that page 4.7-14 is inconsistent with the statement on 4.7-15 which states the City would be inconsistent with CARB standards.

Impact TRA-2 states that future development alone would meet CARB's VMT reduction target, but concludes that future development combined with existing development (i.e., combined Future conditions forecast) would not meet the CARB reduction target. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.224

The commenter asks for clarification if VMT is considered a significant and unavoidable impact, if every future non-residential project would require an EIR.

As described in Impact TRA-2, potential future VMT impacts from individual developments in Santa Maria would be evaluated based on local VMT thresholds established by the City. Future non-residential projects would not by default be required to prepare an EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.225

The commenter suggests removing the reference to private streets in Policy CIR-1.3 on page 4.7-16.

This comment pertains to policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.226

The commenter states they have the same comments as above on Policy CIR-1.4 and Actions CIR-1.4.1 and CIR-1.4.2 on page 4.7-17.

This comment pertains to policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.227

The commenter suggests Policy CIR-1.9 should be separated into two policies covering level of service and bicyclists separately. The commenter states there is no need for deficiency plans as most intersections will be significantly impacted in the future.

In response to this comment, revisions to Policy CRI-1.9, CIR-1.10, and CIR-1.11 have been made in the 2045 General Plan Update to separate LOS and bicycle level of stress and changes have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR.

Response 6.228

The commenter suggests that infill development will result in significant traffic impacts that need to be addressed in the EIR, including a map that shows future roadways and intersections which will exceed level of service standards.

Refer to Response 6.6 for a discussion of LOS analysis in the Draft EIR. Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15046.3, VMT has replaced LOS as the metric for determining transportation impacts under CEQA. Accordingly, LOS is not evaluated as a potential environmental impact in the Draft EIR. A map of the existing circulation system is also provided in the General Plan as Figure 4.7-1, Current Circulation Element Roadway Functional Classification. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.229

The commenter asks if the second paragraph of the Cumulative Impacts discussion on page 4.7-18 means the City will accept level of service deficiencies throughout Santa Maria at full buildout. The

commenter asks for clarification on the third paragraph of the Cumulative Impacts discussion related to exemptions from CEQA for housing projects.

The paragraph referenced by the commenter explains that the cumulative impacts analysis considers all development anticipated under the General Plan and confirms that such development would be required to comply with local regulations and policies, including those in the Circulation Element. These policies govern how the circulation system, including roads, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, will function as growth occurs. The conclusion is that cumulative projects would not conflict with applicable plans or policies, resulting in a less-than-significant impact. The Draft EIR does not establish or modify LOS standards.

Refer to Response 6.8 for a discussion of future individual projects requiring separate environmental review. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.230

The commenter suggests adding to the Water Supply and Demand discussion on page 4.8-1 that the adjudication agreement included return flows from the wastewater treatment plant for percolation ponds. The commenter also suggests adding information that the City has been successful in reducing water consumption per capita and water use in agricultural operations.

Per capita water consumption is discussed in Impact UTIL-2 of the Draft EIR. Specifics regarding water types that are allocated to the City as result of the Santa Maria Groundwater Adjudication are not included in the evaluation of per capita water consumption as they do not have an influence on the environmental conclusions related to water supply in Impact UTIL-2. Impact UTIL-2 provides an analysis of the total amount of projected water supply and demand in the city. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.231

The commenter suggests reformatting Table 4.8-1 to put the table on one full page. The commenter asks if the table and Annexation Study Technical Memorandum prepared by WSC qualify as a Water Supply Assessment per state law.

The comment pertaining to reformatting Table 4.8-1 focuses on editorial edits that do not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis.

The Annexation Study Technical Memorandum prepared by WSC would not qualify as a Water Supply Assessment. A Water Supply Assessment would be required for a project-level development meeting any the definitions of project provided in California Water Code Section 10912(a). No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.232

The commenter suggests the Sewer Collection and Wastewater Treatment discussion on page 4.8-3 should include the current flow to the wastewater treatment plant, and an estimate of the capacity of the plant at full buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update. The commenter asks if there will be a need for upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant or development of a new plant, and if there will need to be upgrades to wastewater pipelines.

Future wastewater generation is discussed in Impact UTIL-1 of the Draft EIR. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include specific development plans, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of specific sewer pipeline upgrades, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.233

The commenter suggests the Stormwater Facilities discussion on page 4.8-4 should include information on the A Street basin and the North Blosser basins. The commenter provides information on the Blosser Channel and Blosser Basin. The commenter states that information should be added on the Green Canyon watershed and stormwater improvements constructed through the southern portions of Santa Maria. The commenter provides information on these improvements.

Subsection 4.8.1.c, *Stormwater Facilities* is based on information from the City's 2020 Urban Water Management Plan, 2009 Sewer System Master Plan, 2005 Storm Water Management Plan, 2020 Infrastructure Existing Conditions Report, and city input as these are readily available resources, and provide sufficient baseline data to support Subsection 4.8.1.c, Stormwater Facilities. Additional information regarding stormwater projects intended to reduce stormwater runoff would not further the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.234

The commenter suggests that the Solid Waste discussion on page 4.8-5 should include information on the Los Flores Landfill, information on what occurs when the existing landfill is closed, a discussion of food organic waste, hazardous waste collection, and justification for the use of Cold Canyon Landfill.

Subsection 4.8.1.d, *Solid Waste,* states that the Santa Maria Regional Landfill is expected to remain operational through 2034, and that after operation of the Santa Maria Regional Landfill ends, the City may divert waste to nearby facilities such as the Cold Canyon Landfill, which has sufficient capacity and is anticipated to operate through 2040. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for the Los Flores landfill mentioned by the commenter, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of such development, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact.

Organic waste reduction requirements are described in the California Senate Bill 1383 discussion in Subsection 4.8.2.b*, State Regulations,* of the Draft EIR. Hazardous waste disposal is described in the Chapter 8-11 discussion in Subsection 4.8.2.c*, Local Regulations,* of the Draft EIR and in Subsection 4.9.4*, Hazards and Hazardous Materials,* of the Draft EIR.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.235

The commenter suggests revising the Water discussion in Impact UTIL-1 to state that the City has installed a water line from water tanks east of Santa Maria to Panther Drive that will serve the annexation area.

Subsection 4.8.3.b, *Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, discusses existing infrastructure supporting the annexation area, and concludes that the existing infrastructure may not be adequate to support the level of development that would be facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. As development in the annexation area occurs, the City would be required to review existing infrastructure and determine whether additional improvements are necessary to ensure adequate service. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.236

The commenter suggests revising the Wastewater discussion in Impact UTIL-1 to clarify the calculations of wastewater generation and the locations of wastewater pipelines that would convey effluent from the east to the existing plant and the sizing of these pipelines.

As stated in Impact UTIL-1, the 2045 General Plan would facilitate development which, at full buildout, would result in a wastewater generation of 11.4 million gallons per day based on a generation factor of 68 gallons per day as stated in the City's 2020 UWMP. The wastewater treatment plant has a capacity of 13.5 million gallons per day.

Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of specific wastewater treatment pipeline improvements, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.237

The commenter suggests revising the Stormwater discussion in Impact UTIL-1 to include information on how stormwater conveyance will be handled on the east side of the freeway. The commenter suggests regional drainage cannot be deferred to future projects.

Drainage patterns are discussed in the Impact HYD-3 discussion of the Draft EIR. As described therein, runoff would be regulated under the State Water Resources Control Board's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges from Small General Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (Phase II MS4 Permit) and the Industrial General Permit. Individual developments that create or replace greater than or equal to 2,500 square feet of impervious surface would be required to implement BMPs and submit a Stormwater Control Plan listing applicable BMPs to the City for review and approval.

Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include specific development plans, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of drainage changes of such development, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.238

The commenter suggests revising the goals and policies listed on page 4.8-16 in accordance with previous comments.

This comment pertains to policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.239

The commenter suggests that Impact UTIL-1 should include information regarding overall regional infill drainage and drainage in the annexation area. The commenter asks how drainage from the annexation area will be conveyed to the river.

Refer to Response 6.237 for a discussion regarding stormwater conveyance. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.240

The commenter suggests that Impact UTIL-2 should include information from the 2024 Annual Report of the Santa Maria Valley Basin Management Plan, specifically page 38-39 of that plan, which includes a discussion of projected water use by 2040 of 18,700 acre-feet

The *2024 Annual Report of Hydrogeologic Conditions, Water Requirements, Supplies and Disposition* uses the 2020 UWMP and describes projected 2045 water use in the city as approximately 18,700 acre-feet. Pages 38-39 of the *2024 Annual Report of Hydrogeologic Conditions, Water Requirements, Supplies and Disposition* refers specifically to intra-basin water transfers related to the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, and discusses supply and demand of the basin. The Draft EIR discusses city water demand and supply from all applicable water sources. As such, relevant and applicable information from the *2024 Annual Report of Hydrogeologic Conditions, Water Requirements, Supplies and Disposition* has been incorporated into the Draft EIR.

The estimated 2045 water use of approximately 18,700 acre-feet is shown in Table 4.8-1 in the rows showing 2045 demand totals. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.241

The commenter states that the 2024 Annual Report of the Santa Maria Valley Basin Management Plan includes a discussion of projected water use for Santa Maria by 2040.

Refer to Response 6.240 for a discussion of the Santa Maria Valley Basin Management Plan. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.242

The commenter asks for additional information on the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan, including its adoption date and how often it is updated.

The City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan provides guidance to prepare and respond to water shortages in Santa Maria. The Water Shortage Contingency Plan is included as Appendix H of the City's 2020 UWMP. The City first adopted its 2005 Water Shortage Contingency Plan in 2007 and made subsequent updates in 2011 and 2021.

This comment does not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR or recommend additional information or analysis be added to the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.243

The commenter states that a 20 percent reduction in residential indoor water use, referenced on page 4.8-19, would result in water use to be 85 gallons per day per capita.

The City relies on a water demand factor of 118 gallons per capita per day, as stated in the City's 2020 UWMP, as a basis for projecting water demand in Santa Maria. This demand factor accounts for existing water reduction measures, including those included in the California Green Building Standards Code. The 20 percent reduction in residential indoor water use that the commenter refers to has been enforced by the California Green Building Standards Code starting in 2016. As such, residential indoor water use would continue to be reduced by 20 percent and would not further reduce residential water use to the commenter's estimated 85 gallons per capita per day. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.244

The commenter states the last paragraph of Impact UTIL-2 should reference the 2024 Basin Management Plan and note the total water use for Santa Maria is estimated at 18,700 acre-feet.

Refer to Response 6.240 for a discussion of the Santa Maria Valley Basin Management Plan. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.245

The commenter states that Impact UTIL-3 should clarify if the use of Cold Canyon landfill is temporary and if Los Flores landfill would be built.

As described in Impact UTIL-3, the Santa Maria Regional Landfill is expected to remain operational through 2034. After operation of the Santa Maria Regional Landfill ends, the City may divert waste to nearby facilities such as the Cold Canyon Landfill, which has sufficient capacity and is anticipated to operate through 2040. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for the Los Flores landfill mentioned by the commenter, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of such development, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.246

The commenter states that the Cumulative Impacts discussion on page 4.8-21 needs to describe existing water use and projected water use at 2045 total buildout. The commenter asks if the City has determined what water lines need to be upgraded to serve buildout.

Existing water use is estimated in Table 4.8-1 in Subsection 4.8.1.a, *Water Supply and Demand,* of the Draft EIR. Projected water use at full buildout on 2045 is provided in Impact UTIL-2.

Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans, the Draft EIR does not specify water lines that may need upgrades to serve future development, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.247

The commenter states that the Cumulative Impacts discussion on page 4.8-21 needs to account for up to 15 million gallons per day of wastewater effluent generation at full buildout. The commenter asks for clarification of how wastewater demand was calculated and which pipelines would be needed to serve development east of the freeway.

As stated in Impact UTIL-1, the 2045 General Plan would facilitate development which, at full buildout, would result in 11.4 million gallons of wastewater per day based on a generation factor of 68 gallons per day in the City's 2020 UWMP. The wastewater treatment plant has a capacity of 13.5 million gallons per day.

Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of specific wastewater treatment pipeline improvements, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.248

The commenter states that the Cumulative Impacts discussion on page 4.8-22 needs to clarify where future solid waste will be hauled and if the Los Flores landfill will be constructed.

Refer to Response 6.245 for a discussion of future solid waste. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.249

The commenter suggests revising the Aesthetics discussion on page 4.9-1 as there is no view of the Santa Maria River except from U.S. 101 bridge or levee trail north of Santa Maria. The commenter suggests adding the names of ridges, rolling hills, and mountains to the east, and noting the locations of the Solomon Hills and Casmalia Hills.

As shown in Figure 2-2, Santa Maria city limits contain portions of land abutting the Santa Maria River where the river and its foothills are visible. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

The comment pertaining to adding names of landscape features focuses on editorial edits that do not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR nor would it change the analysis in the Draft EIR. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis.

Response 6.250

The commenter suggests revising the second paragraph of the Aesthetics discussion on page 4.9-1 to include information on Objective Design Standards.

In response to this comment, the following revision has been made to Subsection 4.9.1, *Aesthetics*:

> The City has regulations for exterior lighting for commercial development, mixed-use development, Objective Design Standards for residential development, as well as specific standards for parking lots, signs, and for development within Airport Safety Zones (Chapters 12-33, 12-49, 12-32, 12-34, 12-21 and 12-24 of the Zoning Ordinance).

Response 6.251

The commenter suggests adding Objective Design Standards to the third paragraph of the Aesthetics discussion on page 4.9-1.

Refer to Response 6.251 for a discussion of Objective Design Standards. As described therein, a reference to Objective Design Standards has been added to Subsection 4.9.1, *Aesthetics,* of the Final EIR.

Response 6.252

The commenter suggests deleting the first paragraph on page 4.9-2 as it is repetitive of previous information in the Aesthetics discussion on page 4.9-1.

This comment focuses on editorial edits that do not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR nor would it change the analysis in the Draft EIR. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis.

Response 6.253

The commenter suggests revisions to Policy REC-8.1 on page 4.9-2 as there is no publicly owned and designated open space in Santa Maria.

This comment pertains to policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Response 6.254

The commenter suggests adding Executive Order N-79-20 described in the Energy discussion on page 4.9-2 in the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas chapter of the EIR.

Executive Order N-79-20 directs California to end the sale of new gasoline-powered passenger vehicles by 2035 and transition the state's transportation sector toward zero-emission electric vehicles. While the State did implement mandates to phase out natural gas vehicle sales, these mandates were blocked by the United States Senate in May 2025. Given the uncertainty of legislation, it is speculative to assume that a ban on the sale of natural gas vehicles would occur. Furthermore, if a ban on the sale of natural gas vehicles occurs, it is likely that natural gas vehicles would continue to be used during a transitory period to electric vehicles. Due to the uncertainty regarding State legislation mandating electric vehicles, the Draft EIR does not consider a reduction in energy use occurring from a shift from natural gas vehicle use to electric vehicle use, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.255

The commenter suggests that the Operational Impacts discussion on page 4.9-3 should list all of the counties that 3CE serves.

In response to this comment, the following revision has been made to the Operational Impacts discussion in Subsection 4.9.2*, Energy*:

> The City of Santa Maria is currently enrolled in the Central Coast Community Energy Program (3CE) which strives to source clean and renewable electricity at responsible rates for customers along the central coast of California within the 3CE service area which includes the counties of Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara.

Response 6.256

The commenter asks for clarification on Action S-1.1.4 on Page 4.9-5 related to the number of buildings constructed with unreinforced masonry.

This comment addresses policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.257

The commenter suggests deleting Action S-1.2.1 as this is already in the Building Code and zoning ordinance.

This comment addresses policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not

identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.258

The commenter suggests deleting Action S-1.3.1 as this is already required by the building code.

This comment addresses policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.259

The commenter suggests revising the Landslides discussion on Page 4.9-7 to clarify the escarpment is not subject to landscapes in Santa Maria or the annexation area.

As stated in Subsection 4.9.3, *Geology and Soils*, there is no proposed development or land use changes that would occur in the area of Santa Maria that contains the escarpment. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.260

The commenter suggests revising the first paragraph of Page 4.9-8 to indicate areas of expansive soil are known to be unlikely within city limits.

Given that the majority of the City of Santa Maria is considered unlikely to contain expansive soils, as shown in Figure S-3 of the Draft 2045 General Plan, the following language has been added to Subsection 4.9.3, *Geology and Soils*:

> Areas of expansive soils are known to exist in city limits; however, the majority of Santa Maria is considered unlikely to contain expansive soils (Safety Element of the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan Figure SE-3).

Response 6.261

The commenter suggests revising the Paleontological Resources discussion on Page 4.9-8 to state there have been few paleontological resources found in Santa Maria, and the Santa Maria Valley has been historically flooded and the Orcutt area consists of historic sand dunes.

The commenter's suggested additions do not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.262

The commenter states there is no mention of Allan Hancock College and new school sites in Santa Maria in the Schools discussion on Page 4.9-11.

As discussed in Response 6.8, the Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15168 for long-range planning documents and does not require site-specific planning or design details. The 2045 General Plan Update does not include specific proposals for the development of school facilities, including Allan Hancock College, and it is not possible to know project specific details at this time regarding potential improvements at school facilities or future new school facilities. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for specific developments projects, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of future potential development at a project level of detail, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time.

In response to the commenter's statement regarding Allan Hancock College, the following revision has been made to the Schools discussion in Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Services and Recreation*:

> There are 23 schools within city limits, including elementary, junior high and high schools, and Allan Hancock College.

Response 6.263

The commenter suggests including a map of existing and new school sites from US 101 and truck routes in the Schools discussion on Page 4.9-11. The commenter asks if schools need to be 0.25-mile from truck routes.

As discussed in Response 6.8, the Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15168 for long-range planning documents and does not require site-specific planning or design details. The proposed project does not include specific proposals for the development of school facilities and it is not possible to know project specific details at this time regarding potential improvements at school facilities or future new school facilities. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for specific developments projects, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of future potential development at a project level of detail, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.264

The commenter suggests revising the Hazardous Materials Sites discussion on Page 4.9-11 to include a map that locates the 90 active hazardous materials sites in Santa Maria. The commenter asks if this number includes active and historic oil wells.

Subsection 4.9.4, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, describes the approximately 90 active hazardous materials sites identified on the DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB GeoTracker databases. These do not include all active and historic wells in Santa Maria as not all well sites have posed a potential hazard.

The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15168 for long-range planning documents and does not include specific development proposals as part of the proposed project. Proximity to hazardous materials sites would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as part of City review for individual development projects. Accordingly, a map of hazardous materials sites throughout Santa Maria is not included in the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.265

The commenter suggests the policies and actions on Page 4.9-12 should remove references to the City Petroleum Engineer and should refer to new state law regarding setback for new oil development. The commenter suggests deleting either Action S-4.1.3 or S-4.1.6 due to repetitive information.

Action S-4.1.6 has been revised in the 2045 General Plan Update and changes have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR. This comment addresses policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.266

The commenter asks clarification on Action S-4.2.5 on Page 4.9-11 regarding if the City issues permits for railroad operations or if railroad operations are exempt from City permits.

Railroad operations and facilities permitting falls under the jurisdiction of the California Public Utilities Commission; the City does not issue permits for railroad operations. In response to this comment, Action S-4.2.5 has been deleted from the 2045 General Plan Update and changes have been carried over into the Final EIR, as appropriate. The revisions incorporated into the Final EIR do not otherwise change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Final EIR.

Response 6.267

The commenter suggests a page break between two action items is needed on Page 4.9-15.

This comment focuses on editorial edits that do not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR, nor would it change the analysis in the Draft EIR. Refer to Response 6.9 for a discussion of comments, recommendations, and requests that are editorial in nature and do not pertain to the adequacy of the Draft EIR or alter the environmental impact analysis.

Response 6.268

The commenter states there is no land in Santa Maria zoned for agriculture. The commenter suggests revising the first paragraph of the Land Use and Planning discussion on Page 4.9-18 to clarify the number of infill units and units in the annexation area.

The commenter correctly notes that there is no land in Santa Maria zoned for agriculture. Specifics on the proposed 2045 General Plan Update buildout is discussed in Section 2.6.5, *Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout*. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.269

The commenter suggests revising the last sentence of the second paragraph of the Land Use and Planning Discussion on Page 4.9-18 to clarify that all neighborhoods can potentially have infill units.

In response to this comment, the following change has been made to the Land Use and Planning Discussion in Subsection 4.9.5, *Land Use and Planning*:

> By ~~cusing new development away from established neighborhoods and~~ ensuring compatibility between new development and existing facilities through thoughtful land use planning, the policies help prevent community division and reduce the potential for significant environmental impacts.

Response 6.270

The commenter suggests deleting Action LU-1.1.2 on Page 4.9-19 as the Objective Design Standards have been adopted.

This comment addresses policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.271

The commenter suggests revisions to Policies LU-1.2, LU-1.3, and LU-1.5 on Page 4.9-19. The commenter asks information on the current jobs-housing balance in Santa Maria.

This comment primarily addresses policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.272

The commenter suggests including a mention of mining in Santa Maria for gravel and sand in the Mineral Resources discussion on Pages 4.9-20 and 4.9-21.

As described in Subsection 4.9.6, *Mineral Resources*, there are no mines or mineral extraction operations in the city and none are proposed. No gravel or sand mining exists in the city and is not required to be discussed. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.273

The commenter suggests revising the Population and Housing discussion on Page 4.9-22 to clarify there will be two additional RHNA cycles through the horizon of the 2045 General Plan Update.

In response this comment, the following revision has been made to Subsection 4.9.7, *Population and Housing*:

> The City's Sixth Cycle Housing Element indicates 5,418 residential units must be built by 2031 to satisfy the state required Regional Housing Needs Allocation. The plan would facilitate development that could help the City reach its housing needs goal. In addition, subsequent

Housing Element revisions would be made throughout the horizon of the 2045 General Plan Update in accordance with state law. These plans would facilitate development that could help the City reach its housing needs goal.

Response 6.274

The commenter suggests revising the Fire Protection discussion on Page 4.9-23 to provide information on the number of existing fire stations and firefighters in Santa Maria and the future needs of the fire department.

The following revision has been made to Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Services and Recreation*:

Fire protection services in Santa Maria are provided by the Santa Maria Fire Department (SMFD). SMFD provides a wide range of programs, which include fire suppression, all risk emergency services, public education programs, fire prevention, and life safety measures. SMFD also administers a hazardous materials business plan program in cooperation with Santa Barbara County. There are six fire stations in the city (City of Santa Maria 2025a).

SMFD operates five stations that serve the entire community and Fire Station No. 6 only serves the Santa Maria Public Airport (City of Santa Maria n.d.). There are currently five frontline fire engines and one ladder truck in service for the Santa Maria Fire Department. In addition, the department has an aircraft rescue and firefighting vehicle at the airport station, an urban search and rescue vehicle, three reserve engines, and a Type-III brush engine. For purposes of responding to structure fires, there are four engines and a truck available, leaving one engine free to cover the city. The fire department is currently budgeted for a total of 63 suppression personnel, with a ratio of 0.59 firefighters per 1,000 residents. Daily minimum staffing is 20 department personnel, including the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist and a Battalion Chief. The average response time of the Santa Maria Fire Department in 2019 was 4:06 minutes for all calls, and 5:32 minutes when considering only calls for structure fires (City of Santa Maria 2020a).

Development facilitated by the plan would be served by the Santa Maria Fire Department, which provides fire protection and emergency medical services throughout the city. As future buildout occurs, the City would evaluate fire service operations and deployment to ensure adequate coverage.

Response 6.275

The commenter suggests revising the Police Protection discussion on Page 4.9-23 to provide information on the number of existing police stations and police officers in Santa Maria and the future needs of the police department.

The following revision has been made to Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Services and Recreation*:

Law enforcement services are provided by the City of Santa Maria Police Department (SMPD). There is one police station located at 1111 West Betteravia Road and approximately 700 police department personnel (City of Santa Maria 2024). Professional police services include maintaining civil order, preventive patrol, investigations, traffic control and enforcement, criminalistics, crime prevention, drug enforcement, and abuse prevention. The department houses the public safety dispatch center for police and fire, which receives all emergency 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls for services (City of Santa Maria 2020a). The Santa Maria Police

Department Communications Center handles over 170,000 incoming calls for service every year (about 465 per day). There are 63,000 emergency 9-1-1 calls per year (about 172 per day).

Development facilitated by the plan would increase population and activity levels in Santa Maria, potentially leading to higher demand for police protection services. The Santa Maria Police Department would provide law enforcement citywide, with development required to undergo security review during the plan check process and to pay police mitigation fees under SMMC Chapter 8-15.

Response 6.276

The commenter suggests revising the Schools discussion on Pages 4.9-23 and 4.9-24 to include the number of new schools needed for full buildout, including the locations of such facilities, and any plans for Allan Hancock College.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for new school facilities, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of such development, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.277

The commenter suggests revising the Parks and Recreation Facilities discussion on Pages 4.9-24 and 4.9-25 as there is not enough land in Santa Maria to meet parkland standards. The commenter suggests adding detail on where additional parkland will come from. The commenter suggests adding other calculations to the footnote on Page 4.9-24 to describe the parkland needed to meet parkland standards at full buildout. The commenter suggests adding information on parkland at Los Flores and states that having future residential developers pay for parkland is infeasible.

The discussion in Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Facilities and Recreation*, pertaining to parkland acknowledges that the city's existing and future park service ratio with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would be below its service goal of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents and additional parkland would be required.

Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Facilities and Recreation*, discusses potential environmental impacts related to park services at a programmatic level. Project-specific details, including acquiring and development of parkland, are required to be addressed through future planning and subsequent environmental review. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for parkland at Los Flores, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of such development. Furthermore, Los Flores Park is not a City park as it is not located within city limits, and it is not readily accessible to city residents. The Draft EIR does not evaluate the feasibility of existing Municipal Code requirements. Santa Maria Municipal Code Section Chapter 8-15 currently requires developers to pay impact fees that would promote the maintenance and expansion of public parks. These impact fees would assist in maintaining and expanding parkland in Santa Maria. As such, the Draft EIR in accordance with California Government Code Section 65995(3)(h), deems the payment of impact fees to be full and complete mitigation. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.278

The commenter suggests revising the Other Public Facilities discussion on Page 4.9-25 to note that libraries are experiencing a reduction in use, note that all new school sites have library resources, and add information on where new library buildings would be located If needed.

Libraries are discussed in Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Facilities and Recreation,* of the Draft EIR, which concludes that impacts related to libraries would be less than significant. The commenter correctly notes that schools have library resources; however, library resources in schools are typically limited to use by students and not available to all members of the public. As a result, these library resources are not considered in Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Facilities and Recreation*, of the Draft EIR.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15145, if a lead agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact. Because the 2045 General Plan Update does not include future development plans for a new library facility, the Draft EIR does not evaluate the potential environmental impacts of such development, as such an evaluation would be speculative at this time. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.279

The commenter suggests revising the Wildfire discussion on Pages 4.9-25 and 4.9-26 to note the majority of Santa Maria is surrounded by agricultural production that limits wildfire. The commenter notes the new CalFire maps indicate there is potential for a fire hazard in the Santa Maria Riverbed and Solomon Hills area.

The discussion in Subsection 4.9.9, *Wildfire*, pertaining to fire risks states that Santa Maria is characterized by limited fire hazards, and describes the fire hazard severity zones identified by CalFire. The locations referenced by the commenter are designated as a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone, but are not classified as a High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.280

The commenter suggests revising the Wildfire discussion on Page 4.9-26 to note that the Santa Maria Police Department serves as the aerial firefighting base for CalFire.

In response to this comment, the following change has been made to Subsection 4.9.8, *Public Facilities and Recreation*, rather than the Subsection 4.9.9, *Wildfire*:

> Development facilitated by the plan would increase population and activity levels in Santa Maria, potentially leading to higher demand for police protection services. The Santa Maria Police Department would provide law enforcement citywide, with development required to undergo security review during the plan check process and to pay police mitigation fees under SMMC Chapter 8-15. <u>The Santa Maria Police Department also serves as an aerial firefighting base for CalFire.</u>

Response 6.281

The commenter suggests revising the Population and Economic Growth discussion on Page 5-1 to clarify the current job housing balance and explain how the 2045 General Plan Update is going to meet a jobs-to-housing ratio of 1.2.

This comment relates to the projected jobs included in the 2045 General Plan Update and does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Balancing jobs and housing is a policy objective handled through the 2045 General Plan Update and Housing Element under state planning law and RHNA requirements. CEQA Guidelines Section 15131 explicitly states that economic or social effects are not treated as significant environmental impacts unless they lead to a physical change in the environment. As such, Chapter 5, *Other CEQA Required Discussions,* Section 5.1.1 of the Draft EIR evaluates whether the project could induce growth or create environmental impacts associated with housing or employment changes. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.282

The commenter suggests revising Policy LU-1.1 to clarify the definition of a complete community.

This comment relates to policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.283

The commenter asks why there is not an action item for future planning in annexation areas.

Policy LU-2.3 in the General Plan addresses future planning in annexation areas. Policy LU-2.3 states "Future specific plans. Require specific plans or master plans in support of annexation in the Planned Annexation Area that are consistent with the following objectives:

- Prioritize new employment uses near existing institutions, such as educational or research and development (R&D) near Marian Regional Medical Center and Allaen Hancock College, and industrial or commercial uses adjacent to US-101 and along East Main to provide convenient access to regional transportation.
- Provide a diversity of higher density housing types for rental and ownership at a range of price points, to minimize land area expansion and conversion of agricultural lands.
- Design complete neighborhoods where residents have convenient walking and biking access to public facilities, services, and retail.
- Buffer schools, parks, and homes from infrastructure, major roadways, the Santa Maria regional landfill, industrial land uses, and other land uses that may produce odor or noise or negatively impact air quality.
- Support expansion of the Marian Regional Medical Center and other supportive medical offices in new development in close proximity to the existing Medical Center.

- Support higher education, including expansions of Allen Hancock College and other public, private, and post-secondary schools.
- Provide 5 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, per the City's park service standard, and plan for new public and recreational facilities.
- Develop a safe, connected network of sidewalks and trails that provides ample connections to destinations

This comment relates to the actions included in the 2045 General Plan Update itself and does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.284

The commenter suggests revisions to Policy LU-1.2 in accordance with previous comments on this policy.

Action LU-9.1.1 in the Land Use Element states the following: " As a part of the LAFCO Sphere of Influence boundary change and annexation process, the City will establish and maintain a stable Urban Growth Boundary to provide certainty for both urban development and agricultural operations." This comment is regarding policy language included in the 2045 General Plan Update that does not pertain to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be provided to decision-makers for their consideration. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.285

The commenter suggests Page 5-3 should include a reference to the No Urban Growth agreement on areas outside of the Sphere of Influence and annexation area.

Areas located outside of the City's proposed Sphere of Influence and annexation area are not currently in the jurisdiction of the City and could not be developed by the City until the boundary changes are approved by LAFCO. Accordingly, development located outside of the City's jurisdiction is not applicable to this Draft EIR. However, in anticipation of future Sphere of Influence boundary changes and annexations, Action LU-9.1.1 in the Land Use Element states the following: " As a part of the LAFCO Sphere of Influence boundary change and annexation process, the City will establish and maintain a stable Urban Growth Boundary to provide certainty for both urban development and agricultural operations." No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.286

The commenter states Section 5.2, Irreversible Environmental Effects, should be revised to state that no known archeological sites have been identified in the city over the last 35 years and they are not expected to be found north of Betteravia so there would not be impacts north of Betteravia. The

commenter contends that even south of Betteravia, it is unlikely to find resources since there have been agricultural activities on the undeveloped land.

Refer to Responses 6.160 through 6.163 for a discussion of cultural resources and how they are evaluated in the Draft EIR.

Response 6.287

The commenter states the Agricultural Identity objective needs to be revised or it will be used against the City by LAFCO for the proposed annexation areas.

Refer to Response 6.10 for a discussion of project objectives and how they were developed for the 2045 General Plan Update.

Response 6.288

The commenter states that the words "urban footprint" should be changed to "city boundary". The commenter also requests that the second and third sentences in Section 6.2.2.b., Biological Resources, are deleted or revised because the mitigation measures are standard requirements and would apply today for current development projects except housing projects that are exempt from environmental review.

Subsection 6.2.2.c., *Biological Resources*, has been updated as follows:

> Less growth and development outside of the existing ~~urban footprint~~ city boundary under the No Project Alternative would reduce the potential for habitat disturbance, leading to reduced impacts to biological resources.

Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k) are not standard City requirements. These mitigation measures go beyond existing City requirements contained in the Santa Maria Municipal Code and current General Plan. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.289

The commenter states that the Cultural Resource analyses in the Alternatives chapter should be revised to reflect their previous comments about no cultural resources being located north of Betteravia, so no more surveys will be required.

Refer to Responses 6.160 through 6.163 for a discussion of cultural resources and how they are evaluated in the Draft EIR.

Response 6.290

The commenter requests that changes to Sections 6-4, 6-5, and 6-6 are made based on comments provided previously.

This comment does not provide a specific concern regarding the contents or adequacy of the Draft EIR. CEQA Guidelines Section 15088 provides guidance on the preparation of response to comments and indicates that while lead agencies must evaluate all comments on environmental issues received on a Draft EIR they need only respond to comments related to significant environmental issues. Therefore, no response to this comment or changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.291

The commenter requests that the description of Alternative 2 (Infill Only Alternative) be updated to state that it will have 16,000 units and commercial office development within the existing city limits. The commenter states that Alternative 2 is fatally flawed because there is no room in the city for 200 acres of new schools and hundreds of acres of new parks, and that the only way this could be accomplished is to allow many high-rise buildings and multi-level buildings on existing school sites. The commenter states this would result in a negative impact on aesthetics.

Subsection 6.3.1, *Description*, has been updated as follows:

> For the purpose of this analysis, the Infill Only Alternative is assumed to result in a similar overall level of buildout and population growth compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, despite the exclusion of future development in the eastern annexation area. Therefore, this analysis assumes that the Infill Only Alternative would result in the addition of approximately 16,000 new residential units and up to 23,750 new jobs associated with new commercial development within city limits.

The Draft EIR discusses potential environmental impacts related to Alternative 2 at a programmatic level in Subsection 6.3.2, *Impact Analysis*. The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis of the proposed plan and plan alternatives, consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15168 for long-range planning documents. As Alternative 2 does not include proposals for specific projects, it is not possible to know project-specific details such as the locations and heights of new development, and the analysis in the Draft EIR analyzed the potential impacts that would result from implementation of Alternative 2 at a broad level. Project-specific details will be addressed through future planning and project-level environmental review.

Under CEQA, the alternatives analysis is intended to compare how reasonable alternatives would avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental impacts identified for the proposed plan, consistent with the rule of reason (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6). Environmental topics, such as aesthetics, that were screened out of full analysis in the Draft EIR because they would not result in significant impacts are not required to be analyzed for each alternative, unless an alternative would itself result in a new significant impact in one of those topics. As described in Section 6.3.1, *Description*, Alternative 2 would adopt the 2045 General Plan Update, including all goals and policies, as it is described in Section 2, *Project Description*. Alternative 2 does not include any additional revised policies, amendments to the existing zoning and land use regulations, or other changes to City ordinances that would permit increased building heights in comparison to the proposed plan. The City's Zoning Ordinance standards protect the visual character of the city by regulating the size, mass, and design of development projects. Consistent with the proposed plan, new development that would be facilitated by Alternative 2 would be subject to these standards, thereby preserving the city's visual character and ensuring compatibility with surrounding development and impacts would be similar to the proposed plan. As such, no other revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment. Nonetheless, the commenter's opinions regarding Alternative 2 will be shared with City decision makers.

Response 6.292

The commenter states Alternative 2 (Infill Only Alternative) would retain the No Urban Growth Boundary in its current location. The commenter requests that the last sentence of Section 6.3.2a., Agricultural Resources, be deleted because most urban agriculture has urban land use designations

on these lands for future development and these residentially designated lands have already been included in the Housing Element.

As stated in Subsection 6.3.2, *Agricultural Resources*, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program still designates areas in the city as Important Farmland; however, the conversion of these areas and associated land use changes has been previously evaluated in earlier environmental documents which are listed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*.

The Draft EIR acknowledges that conversion of farmland could occur under Alternative 2; however, these impacts were previously addressed by previous EIRs, including the Spere of Influence Expansion EIR (SCH #90010930), Area 9 Specific Plan EIR (SCH #2008071018), Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan Amendment Supplemental EIR (SCH #1994107909), and Betteravia Plaza General Plan Amendment, Land Use and Zone Change and Development Agreement EIR (SCH #2015011029). Though already identified as urban land use designations in City of Santa Maria planning documents, the Department of Conservation Important Farmland data has yet to be updated and information regarding previous environmental review has been provided to disclose all available information for the conversion of agricultural land in the city limits. As this comment does not identify a new or substantially different environmental impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no revisions to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.293

The commenter states that all other sections need to be revised per previous comments made in this comment letter.

This comment does not provide a specific concern regarding the contents or adequacy of the Draft EIR. CEQA Guidelines Section 15088 provides guidance on the preparation of response to comments and indicates that while lead agencies must evaluate all comments on environmental issues received on a Draft EIR they need only respond to comments related to significant environmental issues. Therefore, no response to this comment or changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.294

The commenter requests a map for Alternative 3 (Greater Annexation Alternative) that shows how many acres of land would be annexed. The commenter states that Alternative 3 might be the best because it would give the city additional land for buildout of the General Plan as well as for future school sites and parks.

Under CEQA, the alternatives analysis is intended to compare how reasonable alternatives would avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental impacts identified for the proposed plan, consistent with the rule of reason (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6). In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(d), the Draft EIR need only include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project. Alternative 3, as described in Chapter 6, *Alternatives*, Section 6.4.1, includes a description of Alternative 3 which indicates this alternative would include the annexation of a larger area east of the city limits. Project specific details regarding acreage, exact location, and projects are not available for evaluation of this alternative as there are no specific project proposals included in Alternative 3. However, the information available is sufficient to complete a broad evaluation, analysis, and comparison of this alternative to the proposed project. The commenter's opinion regarding the merits of Alternative 3 will be shared with City decisionmakers.

Response 6.295

The commenter states that Sections 6-10-13 need to be revised per previous discussions.

This comment does not provide a specific concern regarding the contents or adequacy of the Draft EIR. CEQA Guidelines Section 15088 provides guidance on the preparation of response to comments and indicates that while lead agencies must evaluate all comments on environmental issues received on a Draft EIR they need only respond to comments related to significant environmental issues. Therefore, no response to this comment or changes to the Draft EIR are required.

Response 6.296

The commenter states the discussion of Alternative 2 (Infill Only Alternative) does not adequately discuss items that prove this alternative to be fatally flawed including the location of new school sites, the location of new parks, aesthetic impacts associated with high rise buildings and two-to-three-story school buildings on existing school campuses, and water and sewer upgrades required to serve 16,000 additional units. The commenter states Alternative 2 has only one net benefit impact and that is on agricultural resources.

Refer to Response 6.291 for a discussion of revisions to Chapter 6, *Alternatives*. A discussion of the feasibility of Alternative 2 is included in Section 6.5, *Environmentally Superior Alternative*, of the EIR, which states, "Although the Infill Only Alternative would be the Environmentally Superior Alternative, this alternative would not fulfill the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update, including the provision of housing quality and various housing choices or improving opportunities for connected growth. Further, the Infill Only Alternative would not enhance new and existing neighborhoods such that each neighborhood would be a Complete Neighborhood or provide innovative housing and may result in the City failing to meeting its RHNA obligations in accordance with State law as it would significantly reduce the affordable housing options and limit new housing to infill only and redevelopment." The Draft EIR discusses potential environmental impacts related to Alternative 2 at a programmatic level in Subsection 6.3.2, *Impact Analysis*. The Draft EIR provides a program-level analysis of the proposed plan and plan alternatives, consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15168 for long-range planning documents. As Alternative 2 does not include proposals for specific projects, it is not possible to know project specific details, including locations, heights, or localized infrastructure upgrades at this time, and the analysis in the Draft EIR analyzed the potential impacts that would result from implementation of Alternative 2 at a broad level. Project-specific details will be addressed through future planning and project-level environmental review. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 6.297

The commenter suggests that Table 6-1 should be formatted to fit on one page to make it easier to read.

The formatting of Table 6-1 has been updated so that the table fits on one page. This correction does not affect the analysis or conclusions of the Draft EIR.

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY ACTION NETWORK
P.O. Box 6174
Santa Maria, CA 93456
info@sbcan.org
www.sbcan.org
Facebook.com/SBCANorg
805.563.0463

September 28, 2025

Dana Eady
City of Santa Maria
deady@cityofsantamaria.org

Re: Draft General Plan and Draft EIR

Dear Dana,

On behalf of Santa Barbara County Action Network, we congratulate you and the entire General Plan team on completing a thorough Draft Plan and Draft EIR. As you know, SB*CAN* has urged that the plan be based on the infill alternative and remains disappointed that the plan is based on the expectation of annexing nearly 1,000 acres of prime agricultural land. Given the Local Agency Formation Commission's history of not approving such annexations over the last couple of decades, this is a highly speculative expectation. Fortunately, the draft plan will provide sound guidance for the future even if the annexations don't happen. Unfortunately, a lot of planning effort is going into something that shouldn't—and likely—won't happen.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report identifies the impact of land use changes in the proposed annexation area on agricultural resources as significant and unavoidable, noting that no feasible mitigation is available. The fact is that these impacts are avoidable. The City's Alternatives Analysis (Feb. 2023) found that each of the Land Use Alternatives would be able to meet the needs of the community. In fact, the Infill Alternative was found to be able to provide the most capacity for housing. The City, therefore, must not find that the impact of land use changes in the proposed annexation area on agricultural resources is significant and unavoidable. The impact would be significant, but not unavoidable. 7.1

On March 3, 2025, SB*CAN* submitted comments on the Policy Frameworks. Some of our comments were supportive of the content and others suggested actions that may be too detailed for a general plan. Some of our other comments that don't appear to be addressed, but are at a level of detail that aligns with the rest of the document, are listed below. For reference we're including the Policy Framework identifiers and please reference our March 3 letter for more details.

HEJ 1.1: Trees planted as buffers should be drought tolerant. Explore sources of methane pollution and adopt policy actions to reduce these. 7.2

HEJ 1.3: Adopt policies to cause truck drivers to go slower for lower emissions and better safety.

HEJ 1.6: Identify remaining idle oil wells and adopt actions to remediate those and previously abandoned wells that may not be properly abandoned.

HEJ 2.2: Adopt policies to require installation of clean energy technology in all new homes.

CIR 1.1: Implement traffic calming to slow vehicles down, crosswalks with bulb-outs and other measures to reduce speed.

We also urge you, as we said at a Planning Commission study session, to restructure drainage channels to make them more like the creeks they had been at one time and to be a source of beauty and recreation. 7.3

There is a need for more parks, open space, hiking trails, off-street bikeways and generally safer streets. We urge you to provide for those in the general plan update.

Finally, in the time since the City sought comments on the Policy Frameworks, several legislative bills aimed at streamlining approval of housing development across California have passed into law and more may be in our future. In light of that, SB*CAN* urges the City to strongly consider health, environment, and safety impacts of all proposed developments in Santa Maria. 7.4

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Ken Hough, Co-Executive Director Jeanne Sparks, Co-Executive Director

cc: SB*CAN* Board of Directors

Letter 7

COMMENTER: Ken Hough and Jeanne Sparks, Co-Executive Directors of Santa Barbara County Action Network

DATE: September 28, 2025

Response 7.1

The commenter commends the City and General Plan team for producing a thorough Draft General Plan and Draft EIR. The commenter reiterates their longstanding support for the Infill Only Alternative and expresses concern that the Draft General Plan is based on the assumption of annexing nearly 1,000 acres of prime agricultural land. The commenter states that such annexations have not been approved by the Local Agency Formation Commission in recent decades. While the commenter emphasizes that significant planning resources are being directed toward a scenario that is unlikely to be realized. The commenter also challenges the Draft EIR's conclusion that impacts to agricultural resources from land use changes in the proposed annexation area are "significant and unavoidable," arguing that these impacts are avoidable under the Land Use Alternatives.

The commenter's preference for the Infill Only Alternative will be passed on to decision-makers for their consideration. While the commenter expresses concern about the likelihood of the proposed annexation being approved, the Draft EIR, in Chapter 1, Introduction, page 1-5, recognizes that annexation is a discretionary process subject to review and approval by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The 2045 General Plan Update establishes policies and land use designations intended to guide future growth within existing city limits and provide a framework for potential growth scenarios, including annexation, if approved by LAFCO. The Draft EIR evaluates impacts for both existing city limits and the proposed annexation area, and the 2045 General Plan Update is structured to function as a citywide policy document regardless of whether annexation is ultimately approved. Growth projections in the plan address annexation, and many policies, such as those for infill development, mixed-use corridors, housing diversity, and infrastructure planning, apply broadly and would continue to guide development even if annexation does not occur.

The commenter suggests that the impact of land use changes in the proposed annexation area on agricultural resources should not be considered unavoidable, citing the feasibility of meeting housing needs under the Infill Only Alternative. The commenter is correct that impacts to agricultural resources would be less than significant under the Infill Only Alternative. However, the detailed impact analysis in Chapter 4, Impact Analysis, evaluates the potential impacts of the 2045 General Plan Update as proposed, which includes the planned annexation areas. This approach is consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a), which requires that the EIR evaluate the significant environmental effects of a proposed project.

As discussed in Section 4.1, Agricultural Resources, on pages 4.1-1 through 4.1-15 of the Draft EIR, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update as proposed would result in significant and unavoidable impacts to agricultural resources. The commenter suggests this determination is inaccurate, claiming the City could avoid significant impacts to agricultural lands by adopting one of the alternatives described the City's Alternatives Analysis prepared in 2023: https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/_files/ugd/e3bef4_d80cf7b24f8e4aa580244179b5b883d1.pdf. Specifically, the commenter states the Infill Only Alternative as a feasible option that would meet community needs while avoiding annexation of agricultural lands, thereby reducing impacts to a less than significant level.

The City acknowledges that some alternatives, including the Infill Only Alternative, would result in reduced or avoided impacts to agricultural lands. However, as explained in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, potential impacts from alternatives are evaluated separately from the proposed project to explore feasible options that could reduce or avoid significant environmental effects. The project alternatives, discussed in Chapter 6, *Alternatives*, are not used to modify or reinterpret the impact conclusions of the proposed project.

As described in Section 15126 of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must evaluate potential significant impacts of the project as proposed, which is presented in Chapter 4, *Impact Analysis*, of the Draft EIR. This ensures that the environmental impacts of the actual project under consideration are clearly disclosed to decision-makers and the public. Therefore, while alternatives may demonstrate the potential to reduce impacts, they do not alter the significance determinations made for the proposed project Chapter 4, Impact Analysis.

In summary, the Draft EIR appropriately identifies impacts to agricultural resources based on the proposed project. The potential for reduced impacts under alternatives is addressed in Chapter 6, Alternatives. Therefore, consistent with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a), the Draft EIR concludes that the conversion of agricultural land under the proposed General Plan Update would result in a significant and unavoidable impact, and that no feasible mitigation is available to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Response 7.2

The commenter mentions they previously submitted comments on the Policy Frameworks document. The commenter reiterates several suggestions from their previously submitted comments that align with the level of detail in the 2045 General Plan Update and requests their consideration.

This comment pertains to the policies within the 2045 General Plan Update and does not raise a question or concern regarding the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. As this comment does not identify a new significant impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Comments related to policy content will be passed on to decision-makers for their consideration.

Response 7.3

The commenter encourages the City to restructure existing drainage channels to resemble natural creeks, enhancing their aesthetic and recreational value. Additionally, the commenter urges the 2045 General Plan Update to include provisions for more parks, open space, hiking trails, off-street bikeways, and safer streets to improve community livability and access to outdoor amenities.

The General Plan Update includes goals and policies that support enhancement of open space, parks, and multimodal infrastructure. These topics are addressed in the Draft EIR in several resource sections:

- Subsection 4.9.1, *Aesthetics*, evaluates potential impacts related to scenic quality and visual character. The Draft EIR concludes that development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would not substantially degrade public views or scenic resources and would result in less than significant impacts with adherence to existing Zoning Ordinance standards for size, mass, design, and lighting. While the comment suggests redesigning drainage channels to resemble natural creeks for aesthetic and recreational purposes, that specific topic is not part of

the proposed project and was not evaluated in the Draft EIR. This suggestion will be forwarded to decision-makers for consideration during the planning process.

- Subsection 4.9.8, *Recreation,* assesses the adequacy of existing parkland and recreational facilities. The Draft EIR determined that the 2045 General Plan Update would not result in the need for new or expanded facilities beyond what is planned, and impacts would be less than significant.
- Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic*, evaluates impacts to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and supports improvements consistent with the 2020 City of Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan: https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/27722/637510471193430000. The Draft EIR concludes that the 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with applicable transportation plans and would result in less than significant impacts.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 7.4

The commenter states that since the City solicited input on the Policy Frameworks, several new state laws have been enacted to streamline housing development approvals. In light of these changes, the commenter urges the City to carefully consider the health, environmental, and safety impacts of all proposed developments in Santa Maria.

The Draft EIR evaluates impacts related to air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, biological resources, hazards, noise exposure, and transportation across multiple sections:

- Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, a assesses emissions from construction and operation of future development, including impacts to sensitive receptors and consistency with regional air quality plans.
- Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* evaluates impacts to sensitive species and habitats, and provides mitigation measures to reduce or avoid potential impacts to biological resources.
- Section 4.5, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* addresses drainage, flood hazards, and water quality protection within the plan area.
- Section 4.6, *Noise,* evaluates construction and operational noise impacts, including vibration and noise exposure near sensitive land uses.
- Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic,* analyzes vehicle miles traveled, safety, and emergency access within the plan area.
- Subsection 4.9.3, *Geology and Soils*, reviews potential impacts related to seismic hazards, liquefaction, expansive soils, and other geotechnical conditions that could affect development under the 2045 General Plan Update.
- Subsection 4.9.4, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials,* reviews potential risks from the use and transport of hazardous materials, existing hazards, and emergency response.

The analysis within the Draft EIR considers the health, environmental, and safety impacts associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. The Draft EIR is a programmatic environmental document prepared under CEQA to evaluate the broad impacts of implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. The 2045 General Plan Update does not include specific development projects. Future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would undergo separate environmental review as determined by the City at the time a project application is submitted. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

SOMACH SIMMONS & DUNN
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

500 CAPITOL MALL, SUITE 1000, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
OFFICE: 916-446-7979 FAX: 916-446-8199
SOMACHLAW.COM

September 29, 2025

Via Electronic Mail

Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager
City of Santa Maria
Community Development Department, Planning Division
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, CA 93458
deady@cityofsantamaria.org

Re: Comments on the Draft Santa Maria 2045 General Plan Update and Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Dana Eady:

On behalf of the Grower-Shipper Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties (Grower-Shipper), we submit comments to the City of Santa Maria (City) on the Draft Santa Maria 2045 General Plan Update (General Plan) and its Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (SCH# 2025020584).

Grower-Shipper represents 150 growers, shippers, farm labor contractors, and supporting agribusinesses on matters related to agriculture within Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, including within and around Santa Maria. Grower-Shipper members grow important crops that are consumed locally, such as broccoli, strawberries, lettuce, vegetable transplants, flowers, tree fruit, and wine grapes, and statewide. Grower-Shipper's mission is to maintain a vibrant agricultural industry in the region by assisting members to address challenges and capitalize on strengths and opportunities. 8.1

Grower-Shipper thanks the City for the opportunity to again comment on the formulation of its General Plan. Grower-Shipper submitted comments on the General Plan Policy Framework on February 28, 2025, which are attached hereto and fully incorporated herein. Grower-Shipper appreciates the City's consideration of its initial comments and any revisions the City made to its proposed policies for the General Plan that are responsive to concerns expressed in Grower-Shipper's comments.

However, Grower-Shipper remains concerned about several proposed policies and actions included in the General Plan, specifically ones that would result in locating sensitive

uses and/or disadvantaged communities (DACs) near existing critical agricultural operations or that improperly identify the areas underlying those operations as DACs. Grower-Shipper is also concerned with potential regulatory conflicts and impediments to agriculture operations and transportation that appear likely with certain proposed policies and actions. Grower-Shipper is further concerned that the 2045 General Plan Update Draft EIR may not comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)[1] regarding its treatment of Health and Environmental Justice (EJ) Element and policies and actions. These concerns and others are discussed in more detail below. 8.1

A. The General Plan Improperly Identifies Several Unpopulated Areas as DACs

The General Plan EJ Element relies primarily on entire census tracts to determine DACs, which creates certain inaccuracies. The western portions of Census tracts 20.11, 24.09, and 24.10 are agricultural and industrial areas that are largely unpopulated and primarily include facilities and other operations rather than communities. Like census tract 25.03, which was excluded for a similar reason,[2] these tracts should be excluded as DACs from the General Plan EJ Element. At a minimum, the City should take a more granular approach and only identify the specific block groups, if any, within those larger tracts that accurately qualify as DACs—as it appears to do with the "5 block groups that are distributed across the city."[3] The City is under no obligation to define DACs using entire census tracts. Senate Bill (SB) 1000 (2016), codified in relevant part in Government Code section 65302(h), identifies DACs as an unspecified "area."[4] Similarly, section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code—referenced in SB 1000—mandates the identification of DACs based only on "areas."[5] 8.2

The General Plan's imprecise determination of DACs can and likely will result in new and increased restrictions on existing operations that support agricultural uses, and on the agricultural uses themselves, throughout the City and region. These operations and uses may even be completely halted by future policies, actions, and decisions intended to protect DACs that do not exist in these unpopulated areas. Obstructing established agricultural operations and uses in this manner controverts the California Right to Farm Act[6] and the Santa Barbara County Right-to-Farm Ordinance,[7] which prohibits a changed condition in a locality to result in agricultural operations and uses becoming nuisances.

Classifying large agricultural and industrial areas that are relatively unpopulated as DACs is unsupported and will result in significant adverse consequences for Grower-Shipper members. Restrictions placed upon these operations and uses can broadly affect local

[1] Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq. (CEQA Guidelines).
[2] Draft 2045 General Plan EJ Element, p. 4, fn. 2.
[3] *Id*., p. 3.
[4] Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (h)(4)(a).
[5] Health and Safety Code, § 39711, subd. (a).
[6] Cal. Civ. Code, § 3482.5, subd. (a).
[7] Santa Barbara County Code, § 3-23, subd. (d).

agricultural resources, resulting in adverse impacts to the local food supply and economy. This cannot be the City's desired result. Agricultural working lands and essential supporting land uses must not be identified as DACs. Accordingly, Grower-Shipper opposes the identification of census tracts 20.11, 24.09, and 24.10 as DACs and requests that the City reevaluate these areas for the next iteration of the General Plan EJ Element. 8.2

B. Several General Plan Policies and Actions Could Result in Adverse Consequences to Local Agricultural Operations and Resources and the Economy or May Conflict with or Impede Existing Statutes and Regulations

Several General Plan proposed policies and actions, discussed below, could result in unintended adverse consequences for the City's agricultural operations and resources and the local and regional economy and should be reconsidered.

Action COS-5.2.4, requiring an update to the Municipal Code to establish a minimum buffer between agricultural uses and development from sensitive land uses, directly threatens the City's agricultural resources and operations. While buffers could be one tool with limited utility, the most effective way to protect agricultural resources is to refrain from inducing sensitive or residential uses into or next to agricultural areas, both within and adjacent to the City, and to protect the vitality of essential agricultural activities and support facilities, rather than hindering them. Policy HEJ-1.1, discussed more below, likewise threatens agricultural resources and operations by imposing new restrictions on existing operations instead of protecting these resources in a manner that benefits the City and the region. Further, as discussed, introducing policies and actions that would restrict and potentially eliminate existing agricultural resources controverts the California Agricultural Protection Act and the Santa Barbara County Right-to-Farm Ordinance, as well as the California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act)[8] and, without sufficient analysis in the EIR, CEQA (discussed below). 8.3

Actions COS-4.1.1, COS-4.1.3, and COS-5.2.3, Policy S-3.2, Policy HEJ-1.4 and its actions, and Policy HEJ-1.8 introduce air, pesticide, and water quantity and quality controls that may conflict with or impede existing statutory and regulatory requirements for resources and hazards that are already highly regulated by laws and agencies like the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, the Federal Clean Water Act, the Regional and State Water Quality Control Board, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, and the County Agricultural Commissioner, to name only a few. Additional regulations of agricultural air emissions, pesticides, or water quantity and quality by the City are inappropriate and must be removed.

Actions CIR-4.2.2 and LU-4.1.2, Policy N-2.2 and its actions, and Policy HEJ-1.2 require transportation controls and related actions that will adversely affect the transportation of agricultural products. East-west movement of perishable and time-sensitive agricultural

[8] Cal. Gov. Code, § 51200 et. seq.

produce, vehicles, and equipment is essential to agriculture and the jobs and businesses it supports, both within and beyond the City. Transportation corridors must remain open and efficient. The City must provide adequate transportation options and must not allow its General Plan to restrict routes and timely movement of agricultural produce, equipment, and support vehicles.

Policies ECON-2.8, LU-2.1, and LU-2.3 (among others), and several General Plan maps, identify and discuss annexation of agricultural lands east of U.S. Highway 101 that would dramatically increase adverse impacts to agricultural resources, both from the immediate conversation of agricultural land and through additional regulatory requirements and conflicts from farming near unrelated urban uses. Grower-Shipper therefore opposes a subset of these annexations and notes that the resulting potentially significant impacts were not accurately identified, much less analyzed or mitigated to the maximum extent feasible, in the Draft EIR in violation of CEQA (discussed below). Grower-Shipper does not necessarily oppose the annexation of a limited portion of land north of Main Street, and the block immediately east of Marian Regional Medical Center, despite that these areas contain prime farmlands of exceptional quality, in recognition of the need to balance multiple priorities. However, the proposed Specific Plans for these annexed areas must include policies and requirements to minimize conflicts between the new urban uses and existing agricultural operations, in large part by locating sensitive uses—especially schools and childcare facilities—and active recreation and residential uses as far as possible from existing agricultural operations. 8.3

Importantly, the specificity and detail in the General Plan's proposed EJ policies and actions is not required. SB 1000 requires all general plans include an EJ Element and that the Element identify policies and objectives that, generally, reduce health risks to DACs by certain means such as a reduction in pollution exposure, and promote civic engagement and prioritize programs addressing the needs of DACs. It does not, however, require any level of specificity for these EJ policies or actions. Moreover, the Attorney General SB 1000 Best Practices[9] is not controlling authority.[10] At most, it may be considered persuasive, like a formal Attorney General legal opinion.[11] Notwithstanding, SB 1000 Best Practices does not claim that SB 1000 mandates specific general plan EJ policies or actions and acknowledges that "an effective environmental justice policy in one jurisdiction may not be relevant or effective in another…" and that "[a]nyone reviewing this document to determine SB 1000

[9] Available at https://oag.ca.gov/environment/sb1000.

[10] See, e.g., *Thorning v. Hollister School District* (1992) 11 Cal.App.4th 1598, 1604.

[11] Although, courts regularly find Attorney General opinions to not be persuasive (see, e.g., *People ex rel. Foundation for Taypayer & Consumer Rights v. Duque* (2003) 105 Cal.App.4th 259, 268; *Almond Alliance of California v. Fish & Game Com.* (2022) 79 Cal.App.5th 337, 358; *Sukut Construction, Inc. v. Rimrock CA LLC* (2011) 199 Cal.App.4th 817, 830; *Rideout Hospital Foundation, Inc. v. County of Yuba* (1992) 8 Cal.App.4th 214, 227), and, in any event, best practices are not classified as a formal opinion. The Attorney General labels them informally as "colleague letters."

compliance responsibilities should consult their own attorney for legal advice."[12] The Attorney General's suggestions and examples for policies and actions use flexible language, like "may" and could," indicating an agency *may* exercise its discretion, where appropriate, to develop a policy to address a particular concern.[13] At base, SB 1000 Best Practices does not give directions, it makes suggestions.

Thus, the City is not obligated to include the level of detail that it currently includes in some of its proposed EJ policies and actions. For example, proposed Policy HEJ-1.1 could and should be revised as follows:

> **Policy HEJ-1.1**: ~~**Protect against industrial**~~ **Reduce potential exposure to pollution**. ~~Prevent industrial and commercial facilities from exposing~~ Avoid siting sensitive land uses (e.g., schools, playgrounds, housing, hospitals, senior centers, and daycare centers), and/or land uses with a reasonable likelihood of accommodating DACs ~~to harmful air pollution and toxic chemicals, especially in DACs that have experienced disproportionate pollution burdens, by carefully analyzing proposed development and the expansion of~~ near agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses.

8.3

This policy revision would better address the fundamental need for good land use planning and compatibility to proactively prevent land use conflicts and resulting issues. It also better comports with the generalized directive in SB 1000 to "[i]dentify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities by means that include, but are not limited to, the reduction of pollution exposure…"[14] and would avoid conflicts with the California Agricultural Protection Act and the Santa Barbara County Right-to-Farm Ordinance.

Revising or eliminating the above-discussed proposed General Plan policies and actions would help to avoid unintended and significant adverse consequences to agricultural resources and operations and the economy and would not result in additional, increased, or disproportionate impacts to natural resources or DACs. The General Plan is in draft form, and its policies and actions are only proposed at this time. The City has the discretion to review and process feedback from stakeholders like Grower-Shipper and its members and make changes that will avoid the significant impacts discussed in this letter. Accordingly, Grower-Shipper requests that the City make these changes, and any others it may deem problematic for the City's agricultural community and local and regional economy.

[12] Attorney General SB 1000 Best Practices, pp. 2, 13.
[13] *Id*., pp. 13-14.
[14] Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (h)(1)(A).

C. The General Plan Draft EIR Fails to Sufficiently Analyze All General Plan Policies and Actions, in Violation of CEQA

The Santa Maria 2045 General Plan Draft EIR omits necessary analysis of several General Plan policies and actions. Critically, the Draft EIR appears to omit any analysis whatsoever of the General Plan EJ Element and its proposed EJ policies and actions. This oversight is problematic because several proposed EJ policies and actions, such as those promoting new infrastructure, would result in changes to the physical environment that could cause direct and reasonably foreseeable indirect significant adverse environmental impacts requiring analysis commensurate with their level of detail,[15] including in a cumulative scenario,[16] and potentially requiring mitigation pursuant to CEQA.[17] The Draft EIR also does not analyze the inherent conflict between some of the DACs identified in the EJ Element and existing zoning for agriculture and resulting impacts, and fails to identify any feasible mitigation measures that may reduce these impacts, in violation of CEQA.[18] The Draft EIR further fails to adequately analyze the effects of the General Plan's annexation policies on agricultural resources. The EIR summarizes previous environmental review of annexation areas located west of Highway 101 but does not analyze impacts to areas located east of the highway, despite that these areas contain important and prime farmland that will be threatened by urban encroachment resulting from annexation. 8.4

These omissions lessen the EIR's value as an informational document for decisionmakers and the public.[19] "The EIR is to inform other governmental agencies and the public generally of the environmental impact of a proposed project" and "to demonstrate to an apprehensive citizenry that the agency has, in fact, analyzed and considered the ecological implications of its action."[20] Grower-Shipper represents the local agricultural citizenry that is apprehensive about the environmental effects of the General Plan on agricultural uses and

[15] A program EIR (see CEQA Guidelines, § 15168), such as a general plan EIR, may analyze impacts at a less granular level than a project-specific EIR but still must address all reasonably foreseeable effects. (See fn. 17, *post*.) "The degree of specificity required in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity involved in the underlying activity which is described in the EIR." (CEQA Guidelines, § 15146.) Here, where the EJ policies and actions have a high degree of specificity, the EIR must analyze impacts resulting from those policies and actions at a corresponding degree.

[16] See CEQA Guidelines, § 15130.

[17] See Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21002, 21002.1, 21065.3, 21068; CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15121, 15126.2, 15126.4, 15358, [an EIR must analyze a project's direct and reasonably foreseeable indirect significant environmental effects related to a physical change and describe feasible measures that could minimize these effects]; see also, e.g., *Save the El Dorado Canal v. El Dorado Irrigation Dist.* (2022) 75 Cal.App.5th 239, 263.)

[18] See Pub. Resources Code, § 21002.1; CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15126, 15126.2, 15126.4.

[19] See Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21005, 21061; CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15003, subd. (c), 15121; *Sierra Club v. County of Fresno* (2018) 6 Cal.5th 502, 516, 520-21, internal citation omitted [omission of required discussion can result in EIR not "serv[ing] its purpose as an informational document;" "[t]he relevant informational document here is the EIR, and the EIR must communicate [to] 'the public and the government officials deciding on the project'"].

[20] CEQA Guidelines, § 15003, subds. (c),(d), citing *No Oil, Inc. v. City of Los Angele*s, 13 C. 3d 68 and *People v. County of Kern*, 39 Cal. App. 3d 830.

accordingly requests that the City prepare the analysis required under CEQA to adequately inform decisionmakers and the public about these impacts and mitigate them to the extent feasible.

Thank you for your consideration of this comment letter. Grower-Shipper retains the right to submit further comments and evidence, if warranted, up to the final public hearing on the matter.[21] We are happy to answer any questions the City may have. Please feel free to contact me at ktaber@somachlaw.com. Also, please add me the list of parties that receive all notices regarding the EIR and General Plan, including the Notice of Determination, when it is posted. 8.4

Sincerely,



Kelley M. Taber

Attachment

[21] See, e.g., *Bakersfield Citizens for Local Control v. City of Bakersfield* (2004) 124.Cal.App.4th 1184, 1200 [CEQA comments considered up to final project hearing].

ATTACHMENT

Grower Shipper
ASSOCIATION
of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties

February 28, 2025

Dana Eady
City of Santa Maria Planning Division Manager
deady@cityofsantamaria.org

Re: City of Santa Maria General Plan Policy Framework

Dear Ms. Eady,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the General Plan Policy Framework and to serve on the Technical Advisory Committee. In addition to the comments provided verbally at the most recent TAC meeting, we would like to highlight a few key points. We look forward to continuing to work with the City to further refine these policies as the foundational document for the forthcoming General Plan, and implementing the General Plan for many years to come.

In general, we suggest the documents are further refined to prevent potentially conflicting policy directives. We are also concerned with expansions of requirements that present feasibility limitations in the future (ex: wildlife corridors, ecological buffers, wilding). Several of the policies are beyond the scope and expertise of the City of Santa Maria and would be better left to the implementation and enforcement mechanisms already in place (ex: intent of ecological buffers addressed through CEQA, pesticide regulation within the regulatory authority of the County Ag Commissioner and CA DPR, and water quality regulatory authority of the Water Board, etc.).

Finally, we are concerned with the addition of development requirements and exactions, as well as regulatory policies, that go above and beyond the ample body of other existing and future regulatory mandates. If it moves forward in the Draft General Plan, this expansion will affect the feasibility and affordability of developing new and affordable housing, as well as business and employment opportunities (ex: Circulation, Community Benefits Agreements, Land Use, Recreation, Safety, etc.).

The following are some additional comments about the specific draft Goals, Policies, and Actions.

Conservation and Open Space Policy Framework

1. **Reduce mowing.** We support the regular maintenance of City lands to reduce invasive pests and diseases, but are concerned that a prescriptive reduction of mowing could also create problems with potential hosts and IPM practices,. One such example is the Impatiens Necrotic Spotted Virus (INSV): weed management plays an important role in breaking the host cycle and disease management, which can have potentially devastating impacts to neighboring agricultural areas.
2. **Agricultural Preservation.** We support the preservation of agricultural lands. We are unclear on what is meant by 2.1.2 and the type of easements intended. Other options for technical assistance and education with more specialized expertise in agriculture are available than what would be expected from the City.
3. **Sustainable Agriculture.** We share the interest in promoting sustainable agriculture. However, we would not expect the City to develop technical expertise, as there are other, more specialized resources available.

4. **Water Resources, Action 4.1.** Water is a very important resources for many beneficial uses in and around the City. This is also a very highly regulated space, both for municipal and agricultural uses, especially through the State and Regional Water Boards, not to mention the Basin Adjudication and SGMA. Many of the goals are already being addressed without the need for new programs or policy actions. We discourage the creation of additional layers of regulation or potential policy inconsistencies, as the requirements through other regulatory mechanisms only continue to increase.
5. **5.3 Agricultural air pollutant emissions.** Agriculture continues to advance in its practices, but many of the items identified in this section are beyond the scope of the City and should not be included in the General Plan. Farming practices are best addressed through specific technical expertise and limited by economic and technical feasibility. Action 5.3.3 is already being implemented by the County Agricultural Commissioner, with additional restrictions from CA Department of Pesticide Regulations (DPR), CalEPA, and USEPA. We generally support Action 5.3.4, although its goals are likely best achieved through thoughtful land use planning, especially of prospective annexations and siting of schools. It is also worth noting that vegetative buffers, if immediately adjacent to agricultural operations, can create challenges related to food safety, pests, and diseases.
6. **6.1 Greenhouse Gas Emissions.** Policies should balance what technology and practices are reasonably feasible, cost-effective, and available, and also consider potential impacts to jobs, businesses, and residents.
7. **8.2: Community environmental stewardship.** We believe that 8.2.4, 8.2.6, and 8.2.7 are duplicative of existing efforts and/or are better served by other sectors, rather than creating a new City mandate.

Noise Policy Framework

1. **N2.2 Industrial and agricultural traffic.** We oppose policies that limit routes and times of essential movement of goods, equipment, and people. Many agricultural operations are time-sensitive, and delays in cooling and access to equipment, and especially for fresh produce, are irreversible. We do support policies that facilitate smooth east-west corridors, and opportunities for improved movement could also benefit the noise being generated from multiple users.

Circulation Policy Framework

1. **CIR2.2 Transportation Planning.** We support the City's participation in multi-jurisdictional planning and funding efforts.
2. **CIR 7.2.** We support the City's infill efforts to meet urban needs while reducing pressure to annex agricultural lands.
3. **CIR-8.1: Parking.** As expressed in our comments on the Housing Element, we are concerned with parking policies that could be barriers to the construction or redevelopment of affordable housing, especially in situations where group employee transportation, such as CalVans, is available.

Economic Development Policy Framework

1. **Policy ED-2.1: Business-friendly regulation.** We strongly support the City's dedication to an environment that support business and jobs. We are concerned that some of the policies introduced elsewhere in the frameworks could inadvertently conflict with this important action. We further suggest that efficiency is prioritized for all businesses, including agriculture and supporting businesses, not just ag tech.
2. **Policy ED-2.3: Infill development.** As stated elsewhere, we support infill development as a means to achieve multiple goals.

Health and Environmental Justice Policy Framework

1. We will restate our objections to the use and narrative surrounding CalEnviroScreen 4.0, especially surrounding pesticides. First, pesticide *use* is not the same as *exposure*. Next, the tool uses census tracts, which include agricultural production areas outside of the City limits, which is misleading for the purposes of the City of Santa Maria. Additionally, in many cases, a closer look at the underlying data show that the City's "population characteristics scores" are almost always higher than the "pollution burden score." We urge you to reach out to the County Agricultural Commissioner to better understand the difference between use and exposure, as well as the robust and continually evolving regulatory mechanisms and monitoring already in place.
2. We object to the inaccuracies, selective references, and implications made regarding H-2A housing in this Framework. We ask references to H-2A in this Framework be removed to better fulfill the City's commitment to Fair Housing.
3. **HEJ 1.1.** This policy should also include the importance of citing sensitive sites away from existing and future commercial and industrial operations, and the concerns with the incursion of urban uses into industrial and commercial areas, including agricultural operations. A much deeper discussion on the implementation mechanism is warranted with stakeholders—in some cases, restrictions can be ¼ mile or more, and a 500 foot buffer would be far from adequate.
4. **HEJ 1.5.** This policy is beyond the scope of authority of the City of Santa Maria and duplicative of existing regulations and voluntary efforts. We ask that it be removed.

Land Use Policy Framework

1. **LU-1.1.3: Area 9.** We remain concerned with potential land use conflicts resulting from allowing low density residential development west of A Street in Area 9 that is unrelated to the neighboring industrial and agricultural uses. We are concerned that this would create predictable and significant conflicts for the existing and future industrial and agricultural uses, as well as prospective residents, and this change should be removed.
2. We support LU-1.2 re Infill for the reasons stated in the policy and throughout this letter.
3. **LU-2 Annexation.** We restate our previous objections to the annexation of certain agricultural lands (primarily along Highway 101). Although they are prime farmlands of exceptional quality, in recognition of the need to balance multiple priorities, we do not necessarily oppose the annexation of a limited portion north of Main Street and the block immediately east of Marian Regional Medical Center).
4. **LU 4.1.2 and LU 4.2 Mixed Use.** Preservation and improvement of east-west corridors in and through the City must remain a top priority for the safe and efficient movement of goods, equipment, and people. We are concerned with the scope of the proposed prohibitions on use, especially near but outside of the Downtown Specific Plan area.
5. **LU 6.6 Neighborhood Commercial.** The reductions seem contrary to other policies supportive of infill and an efficient urban footprint listed elsewhere.
6. **Goal LU-9: Agricultural areas.** We support policies that protect active agricultural cultivation and prevent predictable land use conflicts.
7. **Goal LU-13: Land use conflicts.** This goal and implementing policies are of the utmost importance. The type of buffers depend on the neighboring uses—for example, active recreation such as walking and biking, would not be an effective buffer for neighboring agricultural operations. Residential encroachment and incompatible neighborhood uses should also discourage or prohibit the encroachment of residential uses into industrial spaces, including active agricultural operations.

Public Facilities and Services Policy Framework

1. **PFS-5.2: School siting.** We are very concerned with the placement of schools in agricultural areas, as this will create a sensitive site and create numerous conflicts. Such school site placement must be discouraged by the sound planning practices listed throughout the Policy Frameworks. Language on school siting must also include strategic placement and prohibit encroachment to prevent significant land use conflicts, impacts to existing operations, and community discord.
2. **PFS-8 Police.** We have heard feedback from members concerned with response times, especially in the northern portion of the City. We further encourage close collaboration with the County Sheriff's Rural Crime Unit and other law enforcement agencies, as theft and vandalism pose significant hardships and cross jurisdictional boundaries.
3. We are generally supportive of appropriately sited parks and recreation opportunities for our community. However, active recreation is generally not compatible with active agricultural operations. We encourage the policy to include language about appropriate siting to prevent predictable land use conflicts.

Safety Policy Framework

1. **S-3.3: Agricultural runoff reduction.** Agriculture is already regulated under the Regional and State Water Board's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. This section contains inaccuracies and is beyond the City's authority and should be deleted.
2. The portions related to flooding and dam operations and releases should be reviewed and updated by Public Works for improved accuracy.
3. **S-4.3.2: City materials usage.** We are concerned that dictating the type of materials might not be as feasible in effectively controlling weeds, pests, and diseases, which could have negative consequences for the City and neighboring agricultural operations. Flexibility in the materials and methods used should be included.
4. **S-8.7.2: Water efficient and conservation.** This is already regulated through the Water Board, SGMA, and basin adjudication and does not need to be included.

Thank you for incorporating these comments and concerns as the City moves forward with next steps in the General Plan update process.

Sincerely,

Claire Wineman

Claire Wineman
President

Letter 8

COMMENTER: Kelley M. Taber, Attorney at Somach Simmons & Dunn

DATE: September 29, 2025

Response 8.1

The commenter expresses appreciation for the City's consideration of their previous input on the Policy Frameworks. The commenter raises concerns about several proposed policies and actions in the 2045 General Plan Update. Specifically, the commenter objects to policies that could result in the placement of sensitive uses or disadvantaged communities near existing agricultural operations, and to the designation of certain agricultural areas as disadvantaged communities. The commenter also identifies potential regulatory conflicts and operational impediments to agriculture and transportation stemming from the proposed policies. Additionally, the commenter questions whether the Draft EIR adequately addresses the Health and Environmental Justice Element compliance with CEQA.

The concerns raised in this comment primarily relate to the proposed 2045 General Plan Update policies and their potential implications for agricultural operations, land use compatibility, and the designation of disadvantaged communities. The comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update policies do not identify a new significant impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, and no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

While the 2045 General Plan Update includes policies that address environmental justice priorities, such as minimizing exposure to pollution for disadvantaged communities, the Draft EIR does not include a separate environmental justice chapter. These considerations are incorporated into the 2045 General Plan Update's policy framework and are addressed in the Draft EIR where relevant, such as Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas*, Section 4.6, *Noise*, and Section 4.9.5, *Land Use and Planning*. However, for purposes of consistency with the 2045 General Plan Update, this response notes that the City has removed the census tracts referenced by the commenter from the designated disadvantaged communities in the 2045 General Plan Update mapping. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 8.2

The commenter objects to the 2045 General Plan Update's identification of certain census tracts, specifically 20.11, 24.09, and 24.10, as disadvantaged communities, arguing that these areas are largely unpopulated and consist primarily of agricultural and industrial operations rather than residential communities. They assert that the use of entire census tracts to define disadvantaged communities is imprecise and inconsistent with Senate Bill 1000 and Government Code section 65302(h), which refer to disadvantaged communities as "areas" without specifying tract boundaries. The commenter warns that misclassifying these areas as disadvantaged communities could lead to inappropriate restrictions on agricultural operations, potentially violating the California Right to Farm Act and the Santa Barbara County Right-to-Farm Ordinance. They request that the City reevaluate these designations and, at minimum, apply a more granular approach using block group data to avoid unintended consequences for agricultural lands and supporting uses.

This comment pertains to specifics within the 2045 General Plan Update and does not raise a question or concern regarding the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. However, for purposes of consistency with the 2045 General Plan Update, this response notes that the City has removed the census tracts referenced by the commenter from the designated disadvantaged communities in the 2045 General Plan Update mapping. As this comment does not identify a new significant impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Comments related to policy content will be passed on to decision-makers for their consideration.

Response 8.3

The commenter objects to proposed 2045 General Plan Update policies that would impose new buffers and restrictions on agricultural operations, including COS-5.2.4 and HEJ-1.1, arguing they conflict with existing agricultural protections and CEQA. The commenter opposes additional City regulations on air, water, and pesticide use, stating these are already governed by state and federal agencies. The commenter objects to transportation policies that could impede movement of agricultural goods and oppose annexation of farmland east of U.S. 101 due to unmitigated impacts. The commenter supports limited annexation near Main Street if land use conflicts are minimized. The commenter argues that SB 1000 does not require the level of specificity included in the General Plan's environmental justice policies and actions. The commenter also recommends revising HEJ-1.1 to better reflect land use compatibility.

This comment pertains to specific policies in the 2045 General Plan Update and does not raise a question or concern regarding the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. The commenter's statement that 2045 General Plan Update policies aren't sufficiently evaluated in the environmental review of potential agricultural resource impacts is discussed below in Response 8.4. As this comment does not identify a new significant impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response. However, it is important to note that the purpose of a General Plan is to provide a long-term, visionary framework for guiding future growth and development. It establishes goals and policies that reflect community values and aspirations, and often uses flexible language to allow for interpretation based on the context of individual projects.

Comments related to policy content of the 2045 General Plan Update will be passed on to decision-makers for their consideration.

Response 8.4

The commenter asserts that the Draft EIR fails to analyze the environmental impacts of several proposed 2045 General Plan Update policies, particularly those in the Environmental Justice Element. The commenter argues that the omission of analysis for Environmental Justice policies and infrastructure proposals violates CEQA, as these actions could result in significant direct and indirect impacts. The commenter states that the Draft EIR does not address conflicts between disadvantaged communities designations and agricultural zoning, nor does it analyze annexation impacts east of U.S. 101 where prime farmland exists. The commenter requests that the City revise the Draft EIR to include analysis of potential impacts from the General Plan's Environmental Justice policies and actions, as well as annexation policies that could affect agricultural resources, and to identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce those impacts.

The Draft EIR was prepared as a Program EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, which is appropriate for evaluating the broad environmental effects of a general plan. As described in Chapter 1, *Introduction,* Subsection 1.1.2 of the EIR (pages 1-2 to 1-3), the Program EIR format allows for comprehensive analysis of cumulative and program-level impacts, with the understanding that future project-specific CEQA review will be conducted as needed for individual developments facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Consistent with CEQA, the Draft EIR is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with information that enables intelligent consideration of the environmental consequences of the plan. The Draft EIR identifies potentially significant environmental effects, discusses feasible mitigation measures, and evaluates alternatives to the proposed plan.

The Environmental Justice Element of the 2045 General Plan Update is addressed in the Draft EIR through its integration into the analysis of relevant environmental topics. For example, Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, and Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, evaluate the potential for physical environmental changes resulting from implementation of General Plan policies, including those that may be associated with Environmental Justice objectives. The Draft EIR identifies where impacts may be significant and unavoidable, such as the conversion of agricultural land in annexation areas in Impact AG-1, pages 4.1-9 to 4.1-13 of the Draft EIR, and discusses mitigation measures and policy-level strategies to reduce those impacts to the furthest extent possible. Similarly, as discussed in Impact AQGHG-1 on pages 4.2-21 through 4.2-23 of the Draft EIR, potentially significant impacts related to Air Quality and GHG are identified, such as increased emissions from future development, and includes mitigation measures and policy-level strategies to reduce potential impacts.

Regarding the annexation areas east of U.S. 101, the Draft EIR includes an analysis of land use changes and their potential to impact agricultural resources within Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*. As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description,* Subsection 2.6.3, *Annexation*, pages 2-12 to 2-13, the proposed annexation includes approximately 985 acres east of the highway, much of which is currently designated for agricultural use under County zoning and contains Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Williamson Act lands in nonrenewal status. As discussed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*, Williamson Act lands in the annexation area are all currently in nonrenewal, which starts a countdown to the expiration of the contract. This includes three contracts that are set to expire in January of 2026 (71AP072), 2027 (85AP008) and 2028 (70AP148). The analysis within Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources,* Subsection 4.1.3, *Impact Analysis*, pages 4.1-9 to 4.1-13, concludes that conversion of Important Farmland and conflicts with agricultural zoning in the plan area, including the annexation area east of U.S. 101, cannot be fully mitigated, even with policies promoting agricultural preservation and conservation easements. Accordingly, impacts to agricultural resources in the annexation areas are identified as significant and unavoidable, and cumulative impacts to farmland conversion would also be significant. Therefore, the Draft EIR does include both analysis of previously evaluated areas and new areas proposed for annexation and identifies significant and unavoidable impacts where appropriate.

No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

California Department of Transportation

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5
50 HIGUERA STREET | SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401-5415
(805) 549-3101 | FAX (805) 549-3329 TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov

September 29, 2025

SCH #2025020584
SB/Var.

Dana Eady
Planning Division Manager
City of Santa Maria
110 South Pine Street Suite 101
Santa Maria, CA 93442

Re: City of Santa Maria 2045 General Plan Update Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Dear Ms. Eady:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the City of Santa Maria 2045 General Plan (General Plan) Update Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Caltrans' Local Development Review (LDR) branch is the conduit for reviewing projects and plans (i.e., General Plans) that may impact the State Highway System (SHS). Proposed land use developments and local plans, proposed near the SHS, are reviewed to ensure consistency with our mission and statewide planning priorities. To make this vision a reality, California has identified eight priority areas. The California Transportation Plan 2050 Goals include: Safety, Climate, Equity, Accessibility, Quality of Life & Public Health, Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure.

The following comments are based on our review of the August 2025 General Plan DEIR and Circulation Element. 9.1

Project Understanding

The City of Santa Maria is updating their General Plan to reflect the City's vision throughout the year 2045. The planning horizon is approximately twenty years, during which time City decision makers will rely on the General Plan as the basis for making decisions on matters such as land use, transportation, open space, environmental quality, and safety. The local highway network in the City of Santa Maria, consists of the following: US 101, State Route (SR)166, and SR 135.

General Comments

Caltrans supports the objective: Transportation Innovation – designed to create a balanced, equitable, affordable, and reliable transportation network where pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles, rail, and transit can safely and efficiently navigate to/from their destinations. Caltrans views all transportation improvements as opportunities to improve safety, access, and mobility for all users and recognizes bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes as integral parts of the transportation network. Caltrans looks forward to reviewing and providing feedback on land use developments that are proposed in and around the SHS. Early coordination with Caltrans is encouraged. 9.1

Lead Agency

As the Lead Agency, the City of Santa Maria is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the SHS.

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

With the enactment of Senate Bill (SB) 743, Caltrans is focused on maximizing efficient development patterns, innovative travel demand reduction strategies, and multimodal improvements. For more information on how Caltrans assesses VMT analysis for land use projects, please refer to the Caltrans Transportation Impact Study Guide.

The project VMT analysis and significance determination are undertaken in a manner consistent with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research's (OPR) Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA. Per the DEIR, this project is found to have a significant VMT impact with no feasible policies or mitigation measures that could reduce citywide rates of VMT below the 17% reduction target by the horizon year 2045. However, VMT is projected to decrease for both per household and per employee VMT between the existing baseline year and horizon year. 9.2

Caltrans supports both Policy CIR-7.2: Prioritize land use development patterns that reduce VMT and Policy LU-4.3: Mixed-use development. Efficient land use can place housing closer to jobs and amenities creating shorter trips for all users. Denser land use offers an opportunity to connect users to their destinations with an integrated multimodal network featuring transit, shared mobility, biking, walking, and other low-carbon modes. The state supports reducing VMT in ways that increase the likelihood that people will use and benefit from a multimodal transportation network.

No mitigation measures were listed for reducing VMT in the DEIR. Caltrans encourages the City to consider creating a VMT Mitigation Impact Fee programs to help reduce impacts on the SHS. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plans and Trip

Reduction Programs should be considered for land development projects with significant and unavoidable impacts to further mitigate VMT. For more information visit Caltrans Transportation Demand Management Toolbox. 9.2

Complete Streets

Caltrans strongly advocates for the planning and implementation of Complete Streets. These streets prioritize the needs of all users, regardless of age or ability, by incorporating high-quality infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. Improvements may include features such as secure bicycle parking, pedestrian-friendly LED lighting, clear wayfinding signage, and seamless connections to nearby active transportation options or transit facilities. Complete Streets contribute to a range of positive outcomes, including improved regional connectivity, enhanced air quality, reduced traffic congestion, better first/last-mile connections for transit users, and overall increased safety for all modes of transportation. 9.3

The following comments are based on the DEIR and Circulation Element.

DEIR Transportation and Traffic 4.7:

- This section is missing a reference to the City's 2019 Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan when discussing relevant planning documents.

Santa Maria General Plan Circulation Element:

- Page 17 of the Circulation Element (Figure CIR-2: Bikeway Network) is missing several existing bikeways. For example, the following locations contain bikeway facilities that are missing or incorrect including SR 135 (Broadway) and SR 166 (Main Street).
- Page 17 of the Circulation Element (Figure CIR-2: Bikeway Network) is inconsistent with the Class I facilities proposed in the Recreation and Parks Element (Figure REC-2: Trail System). Please consider adjusting either figure to have consistent bikeway recommendations for Class I shared-use paths within the city limits. Inconsistencies are present in multiple locations such as Union Valley Parkway, the west side of Highway 101 from Betteravia Road to Battles Road, Foxenwood Lane, Pioneer Park region, South Miller Street, Santa Maria Way, Sunrise Drive, Blosser Road, La Brea Avenue, Blosser Road, Grogan Park region, Preisker Park region, Suey Road, and Panther Road. 9.4
- Page 20 of the Circulation Element, please include Main Street as a Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network to be consistent with the 2019 Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan.

Encroachment Permits
Please be aware that if any future work is completed in the State's right-of-way it will require an encroachment permit from Caltrans and must be done to our engineering and environmental standards, and at no cost to the State. The conditions of approval and the requirements for the encroachment permit are issued at the sole discretion of the Permits Office, and nothing in this letter shall be implied as limiting those future conditions and requirements. Project Oversite maybe needed depending on the complexity of the project. For more information regarding the encroachment permit process, please visit our Encroachment Permit Website at: https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep.

Equitable Access
If any Caltrans facilities are impacted by the project, those facilities must meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards after project completion. As well, the project must maintain bicycle and pedestrian access during construction. These access considerations support Caltrans' equity mission to provide a safe, sustainable, and equitable transportation network for all users. 9.5

Should you have any questions or need further clarification on the items discussed above, please contact me at (805) 888-1508 or email christopher.bjornstad@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Christopher Bjornstad

Chris Bjornstad
Associate Transportation Planner
District 5 Development Review

CC: Veronica Lezama, Branch Chief – Regional Planning &
Local Development Review (South)

Letter 9

COMMENTER: Chris Bjornstad, Associate Transportation Planner with Caltrans District 5

DATE: September 29, 2025

Response 9.1

The commenter summarizes the role of the California Department of Transportation in reviewing local plans that may affect the State Highway System and expresses general support for the 2045 General Plan Update's transportation objectives.

The information summarized by the commenter is included in Chapter 2, *Project Description,* pages 2-1 to 2-8, of the Draft EIR, which includes a discussion of the Circulation Element and its emphasis on multimodal transportation. Additional context is provided in Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting*, Section 3.1, *Setting,* page 3-1, which outlines the regional transportation context including U.S. 101, SR 166, and SR 135. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 9.2

The commenter summarizes Caltrans' approach to evaluating vehicle miles traveled impacts and states that the Draft EIR identifies a significant VMT impact with no feasible mitigation to meet the 17 percent reduction target by 2045, though they state VMT per household and per employee is projected to decrease. The commenter expresses support for General Plan policies and encourages the City to consider VMT mitigation strategies such as a VMT mitigation fee program, Transportation Demand Management plans, and trip reduction programs.

This information is discussed in Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic*, pages 4.7-1 to 4.7-18, which presents the VMT analysis and identifies a significant and unavoidable impact due to the inability to meet the 17 percent reduction target by 2045. Related policies are described in Subsection 4.7.3, *Impact Analysis*, pages 4.7-8 to 4.7-14, which explain how land use strategies such as mixed-use and infill development are intended to reduce VMT. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 9.3

The commenter summarizes Caltrans' support for Complete Streets and states that the Draft EIR Section 4.7, Transportation and Traffic, does not reference the City's 2019 Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan.

The commenter is correct that the Draft EIR does not currently reference the City's 2019 Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan when discussing relevant planning documents in Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic,* pages 4.7-7 through 4.7-8. A reference to this plan has been added to the Final EIR in Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic,* Subsection 4.7.2.c, *Local Regulations,* pages 4.7-7 through 4.7-8. The language within the Regulatory Setting discussion on pages 4.7-7 through 4.7-8 has been revised in the Final EIR to incorporate the following underlined language:

Santa Maria Regional (formerly Area) Transit Short Range Transit Plan Update

In 2018, the City of Santa Maria hired a consultant to update to its Short Range Transit Plan. This plan is the guiding document for the City's public transit program. Before this update, the most recent full update was completed in 2008, with a subsequent update in 2015 that focused on Santa Maria Regional Transit's (SMRT's) evening service and fare policy. In 2021 the City prepared an Addendum to the Short Range Transit Plan incorporating post-COVID route and schedule revisions. The current Short Range Transit Plan includes a series of service recommendations in four categories: performance improvement, service enhancement, policy, and innovation/technology.

Santa Maria Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan

The Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan was adopted in January 2019 to guide the transformation of Santa Maria's Downtown streets into vibrant, multimodal corridors. Funded through a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant, the plan builds on the City's Downtown Specific Plan and Caltrans' Main Street, California program to promote Complete Streets principles. The plan provides conceptual design guidance for Broadway and Main Street, aiming to improve safety, walkability, and livability while accommodating all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicles. Key goals include reducing lane widths, adding bike facilities, widening sidewalks, and enhancing intersections with traffic calming and landscaping. The plan emphasizes community engagement and reflects input from extensive public outreach, prioritizing beautification, connectivity, and economic revitalization. While the plan does not constitute final design approval, it establishes a framework for future engineering and implementation phases in partnership with Caltrans and identifies potential funding strategies for phased improvements.

The addition of the summary of the Santa Maria Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan into Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic,* Subsection 4.7.2.c, *Local Regulations,* does not change the environmental analysis or conclusions in the Draft EIR. In addition to this reference, acknowledging the 2045 General Plan Update's compliance with the 2019 Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan, the Draft EIR also discusses multimodal transportation planning and related policies in *Section 4.7, Transportation and Traffic,* Subsection 4.7.3, *Impact Analysis*, pages 4.7-8 to 4.7-14, including policies that support pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure. The Draft EIR describes applicable local planning documents such as the 2020 City of Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan in Subsection 4.7.2.c, *Local Regulations,* pages 4.7-7 through 4.7-8.

Response 9.4

The commenter summarizes concerns related to the bikeway and pedestrian network mapping in the General Plan Circulation Element. Specifically, they note that Figure CIR-2 (Bikeway Network, page 17 of the Circulation Element) omits existing bikeways along SR 135 (Broadway) and SR 166 (Main Street), and is inconsistent with Class I shared-use path recommendations shown in Figure REC-2 (Trail System) of the Recreation and Parks Element. They also suggest that Main Street be included in the Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network to align with the 2019 Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan.

This comment pertains to the 2045 General Plan Update and does not raise a question or concern regarding the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. The figure referenced by the commenter appears in the 2045 General Plan Update Circulation Element but does not appear in the EIR. As this comment does not identify a new significant impact, provide substantial evidence of a deficiency in the environmental analysis, or propose feasible mitigation measures, no changes to the Draft EIR are required in response.

Comments related to the 2045 General Plan Update will be passed on to decision-makers for their consideration. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

Response 9.5

The commenter summarizes standard requirements for future work within the State's right-of-way, noting that such work will require an encroachment permit from Caltrans and must meet Caltrans engineering and environmental standards. The commenter also states that any impacted Caltrans facilities must comply with ADA standards and maintain bicycle and pedestrian access during construction to support equitable access.

The commenter is correct that future work within the State's right-of-way would be required to comply with Caltrans procedures, permitting, and standards. This comment does not raise specific concerns or recommendations related to the Draft EIR. No revisions to the Draft EIR are required in response to this comment.

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3 Recirculation Not Warranted

The Final EIR contains revised chapters of the Draft EIR. The minor revisions to the Draft EIR would not result in new significant impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant impacts. The revisions to the Draft EIR chapters identify textual modifications to the Final EIR. The revised text serves to amplify, correct, supplement or clarify, information in the public review Draft EIR. It does not substantively affect the level of impact nor the conclusions presented. Therefore, recirculation of the Draft EIR is not warranted.

CEQA requires recirculation of a Draft EIR only when "significant new information" is added to a Draft EIR after public notice of the availability of the Draft EIR has occurred but before the EIR is certified (Public Resources Code Section 21092.1; CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5). Recirculation is not required where the new information added to the EIR merely clarifies or amplifies or makes insignificant modifications in an adequate EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(b)).

The relevant portions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 (items a, b, and e) read as follows:

(a) A lead agency is required to recirculate an EIR when significant new information is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the draft EIR for public review under Section 15087 but before certification. As used in this section, the term "information" can include changes in the project or environmental setting as well as additional data or other information. New information added to an EIR is not "significant" unless the EIR is changed in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect (including a feasible project alternative) that the project's proponents have declined to implement. "Significant new information" requiring recirculation include, for example, a disclosure showing that:

1) A new significant environmental impact would result from the project or from a new mitigation measure proposed to be implemented.
2) A substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact would result unless mitigation measures are adopted that reduce the impact to a level of insignificance.
3) A feasible project alternative or mitigation measure considerably different from others previously analyzed would clearly lessen the environmental impacts of the project, but the project's proponents decline to adopt it.
4) The draft EIR was so fundamentally and basically inadequate and conclusory in nature that meaningful public review and comment were precluded.

(b) Recirculation is not required where the new information added to the EIR merely clarifies or amplifies or makes insignificant modifications in an adequate EIR.

(e) A decision not to recirculate an EIR must be supported by substantial evidence in the administrative record.

Revisions to the Final EIR are briefly summarized in the following discussion:

- Revisions to the Executive Summary carry over language from Chapter 1, *Introduction,* and clarify the dates of circulation of the Notice of Preparation.

- Revisions to Chapter 2, *Project Description;* Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources;* and Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions,* clarify typographical errors and update existing setting information.
- Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 has been revised to incorporate Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District current best practices.
- Revisions to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* clarify typographical errors and order of presented information in the existing setting sections.
- Mitigation Measure CUL-1 has been revised to update the years of age threshold for buildings, structures, objects, sites, landscape/site plans, or other features to be consistent with existing City of Santa Maria Municipal Code.
- Revisions to Section 4.5, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* clarify typographical errors and remove irrelevant information from figures.
- Revisions to Section 4.6, *Noise,* clarify typographical errors, add clarifying language regarding uses of figures, and adds relevant regulatory setting information.
- Revisions to Section 4.7, *Transportation,* clarify existing roadway uses, bicycle path requirements, existing public transportation, regulatory setting information, and typographical errors in the setting section.
- Revisions to Section 4.9, *Effects Found Not to be Significant,* include typographical errors, clarifications regarding Objective Design Standards, clarifications regarding service areas of providers, clarifications of existing setting of the city, and clarifications of existing setting of city services.
- Revisions to Chapter 6, *Alternatives,* add clarifying language related to the Infill Only Alternative and agricultural land.

These edits to the listed EIR Chapters and Sections would not result in any secondary or otherwise undisclosed effect. Recirculation is not required where new information added to the EIR merely makes minor modifications in an EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5[b]). Therefore, the revisions to the aforementioned EIR Chapters and Sections would be consistent with the minor modifications as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(b).

The information and revised wording of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 and Mitigation Measure CUL-1 added to this Final EIR would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact, nor a new significant environmental impact that would result from the revised mitigation. These mitigation measures were already included within the impact analysis and these revisions make corrections to mitigation to include current best practices and Santa Maria municipal code requirements. Recirculation is not required where new information added to the EIR merely clarifies or amplifies or makes minor modifications in an EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5[b]).

Revisions to the Draft EIR would not result in an impact that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect. Finally, additional information provided in this Final EIR does not present a feasible project alternative or mitigation measure considerably different from others previously analyzed in the EIR that the City has declined to adopt and that would lessen an environmental impact.

The information added to this Final EIR supplements, clarifies, amplifies, and corrects information in the Draft EIR. The City has reviewed the information in the Final EIR and has determined that it does not change any of the basic findings or conclusions of the EIR, does not constitute "significant new information" pursuant to *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15088.5, and does not require recirculation of the Draft EIR. This decision is supported by substantial evidence provided in this EIR.

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Appendix A

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Statutory Requirements

When a Lead Agency makes findings on significant environmental effects identified in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the agency must also adopt a "reporting or monitoring program for the changes to the project which it has adopted or made a condition of approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment" (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21081.6(a) and California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Guidelines Sections 15091(d) and 15097). The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) is implemented to ensure that the mitigation measures and project revisions identified in the EIR are implemented. Therefore, the MMRP must include all changes in the proposed project either adopted by the project proponent or made conditions of approval by the Lead or Responsible Agency.

Administration of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

The City of Santa Maria (City) is the Lead Agency responsible for the adoption and implementation of the MMRP. According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15097(a), a public agency may delegate reporting or monitoring responsibilities to another public agency or to a private entity that accepts the delegation. The City may delegate responsibility for verifying and documenting compliance with the MMRP to an Applicant as coordinator of the project and its construction, and the Applicant will be responsible for compliance. However, until mitigation measures have been completed, the City, as the Lead Agency, remains responsible for ensuring that the implementation of the measures occurs in accordance with the program.

Mitigation Measures

Table ES-1 is structured to enable quick reference to mitigation measures and the associated monitoring program based on the environmental resource. The numbering of mitigation measures correlates with numbering of measures found in Chapter 4, Environmental Impact Analysis, of the EIR.

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Table ES-1 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions						
AQGHG-2 Project-Level Air Quality Analysis and Mitigation. The City shall require, where it is determined as necessary, applicants for future discretionary development projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update to prepare a project-specific air quality analysis in accordance with SBCAPCD Environmental Review Guidelines. The analysis shall quantify construction and operational emissions and compare estimated emissions to the SBCAPCD's adopted thresholds of significance for criteria air pollutants. If the analysis determines that emissions would exceed any of the applicable thresholds, the project applicant shall implement all feasible mitigation measures to reduce emissions to below the thresholds. All mitigation measures shall be documented and verified by the lead agency prior to project approval or issuance of grading/building permits.	The project applicant shall submit all mitigation measures to the lead agency for review and approval prior to project approval or issuance of grading/building permits.	The lead agency shall verify compliance with mitigation measures during construction.	Lead agency			
AQGHG-3 Construction Equipment Exhaust Control Measures. For individual discretionary and ministerial residential projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update that would develop three or more units; would involve demolition, mass grading, or excavation and trenching phases longer than two months; and would be located within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors, the City shall enforce a project specific Condition of Approval requiring the following: a. Off-road diesel equipment 25 horsepower (hp) or greater shall be equipped with engines compliance with, or certified to meet or exceed, the California Air Resources Board's Tier 4 Final engine emissions standards. Where available, off-road construction equipment should be zero-emission. Alternative/renewable fuels such as compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, or propane should be utilized to the maximum extent feasible when zero-emission is not available. Commitments to Tier 4 and/or zero-emission equipment shall be included in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts; successful contractors shall demonstrate the ability to supply the compliant construction equipment for use prior to ground-disturbing and construction activities. b. All portable generators shall be powered by a source other than diesel fuel or gasoline (i.e. battery, natural gas, propane etc.).	The project applicant shall submit the construction equipment exhaust control documentation to the City for review and approval prior to project approval or issuance of grading and construction permits.	City staff shall spot check for compliance during construction.	City of Santa Maria			
Biological Resources						
BIO-1(a) Biological Resources Screening and Assessment. For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City Staff, the City shall require project applicants to engage a qualified biologist (having the appropriate education and experience level) to perform a baseline Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. If it is determined that the project has no potential to impact biological resources, no further action is required. If the project would have the potential to impact biological resources, prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a project-specific biological analysis to document the existing biological resources within a project footprint plus a minimum buffer of 500 feet around the project footprint, as is feasible, and to determine the potential impacts to those resources. The project-specific biological analysis shall evaluate the potential for impacts to all biological resources including, but not limited to special-status species, nesting birds, wildlife movement, sensitive plant communities, critical habitats, and other resources judged to be sensitive by local, state, and/or federal agencies. If the project would have the potential to impact these resources, the following mitigation measures (Mitigation Measures BIO-1[b] through BIO-1[k]) shall be incorporated, as applicable, to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. Pending the results of the project-specific biological analysis, design alterations, further technical studies (e.g., protocol surveys) and consultations with the USFWS, CDFW, and/or other local, state, and federal agencies may be required. Note that specific surveys described in the mitigation measures below may be completed as part of the project-specific biological analysis where suitable habitat is present.	The applicant shall submit the results of the baseline Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to the City prior to project approval or issuance of grading and construction permits. If required, the applicant shall submit the biological assessment to the City prior to project approval or issuance of grading and construction permits.	The City shall ensure that the applicable biological resource assessment has been completed and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure.	City of Santa Maria			
BIO-1(b) Special-status Plant Species Surveys. For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that there is potential for significant impacts to federally or state-listed plants or regional population level impacts to species with a CRPR of 1B or 2B from project development, a qualified biologist shall complete surveys for special-status plants prior to any vegetation removal, grubbing, or other construction activity (including staging and mobilization). The surveys shall be floristic in nature and shall be seasonally timed to coincide with the target species. All plant surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist during the blooming season prior to development permit approval. All special-status plant species identified on site shall be mapped onto a site-specific aerial photograph or topographic map with the use of Global Positioning System unit. Surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the most current protocols established by the CDFW, USFWS, and the local jurisdictions if said protocols exist. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, and the CDFW and/or USFWS, as appropriate, for review and/or approval. If special-status plants are not found during special-status plant surveys, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2B plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys, the Mitigation Measures BIO-1(c) and BIO-1(d) shall be implemented.	The applicant shall submit the survey results to the City and CDFW and/or USFWS, as appropriate, for review and/or approval prior to project approval or issuance of grading and construction permits.	The City and CDFW and/or USFWS, as appropriate, shall review the survey results and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure.	City of Santa Maria; CDFW; USFWS			

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
BIO-1(c) Special-status Plant Species Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation. If federally-listed and/or state-listed individuals, and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys (pursuant to Mitigation Measure BIO-1[b]) and would be directly impacted by development, then the project shall be re-designed to avoid impacting listed plant species or CRPR 1B or 2 populations, where feasible. Rare and listed plant occurrences that are not within the immediate disturbance footprint but are located within 50 feet of disturbance limits shall have bright orange protective fencing installed at least 30 feet beyond their extent, or other distance as approved by a qualified biologist, to protect them from harm. Prior to initiation of construction activities the project proponent shall submit a site plan depicting the location(s) of special-status plants and avoidance buffers to the City for review and approval. If special-status plants can be avoided, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations cannot be avoided, then Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) shall be implemented.	The applicant shall submit a site plan depicting the location(s) of special-status plants and avoidance buffers to the City for review and approval prior to the issuance of grading or construction permits.	The City shall review the site plan and avoidance buffers and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure.	City of Santa Maria			
BIO-1(d) Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan. If federally- and/or state-listed plants, non-listed special-status plant populations, sensitive natural communities, or waters of the US and/or State cannot be avoided and will be impacted by development facilitated by the plan, the City shall require mitigation at a minimum ratio of 1:1 per acre of impact (and 1:1 per tree), to be determined in coordination with CDFW and USFWS as and if applicable, for each species as a component of habitat restoration. A habitat mitigation and monitoring plan (HMMP) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and submitted to the City for review and approval. The HMMP shall include, at a minimum, the following components. 1. Description of the project/impact site (i.e., location, responsible parties, areas to be impacted by habitat type). 2. Goal(s) of the compensatory mitigation project (type[s] and area[s]) of habitat to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved; specific functions and values of habitat type[s] to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved). 3. Description of the proposed compensatory mitigation site (location and size, ownership status, existing functions, and values). 4. Implementation plan for the compensatory mitigation site (rationale for expecting implementation success, responsible parties, schedule, site preparation, planting plan). 5. Maintenance activities during the monitoring period, including weed removal as appropriate (activities, responsible parties, schedule). 6. Monitoring plan for the compensatory mitigation site, including no less than quarterly monitoring for the first year (performance standards, target functions and values, target acreages to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved, annual monitoring reports). 7. Success criteria based on the goals and measurable objectives; said criteria to be, at a minimum, at least 80 percent survival of container plants and 30percent relative cover by vegetation type or other industry standards as determined by a qualified restoration specialist. 8. An adaptive management program and remedial measures to address any shortcomings in meeting success criteria. 9. Notification of completion of compensatory mitigation and agency confirmation. 10. Contingency measures (initiating procedures, alternative locations for contingency compensatory mitigation, funding mechanism). 11. All nursery plants used in restoration shall be inspected for sudden oak death. If a federally and/or state-listed plant species has the potential be impacted, an HMMP shall be submitted to the USFWS and/or CDFW for review, and federal and/or state take authorization may be required by these agencies. Within 30 days of completion of monitoring, a final monitoring report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval, documenting compliance with the HMMP and achievement of success criteria.	The applicant shall submit the HMMP to the City, and CDFW and/or USFWS, as applicable, for review and approval prior to the issuance of grading and construction permits. Within 30 days of completion of monitoring, a final HMMP monitoring report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval, documenting compliance with the HMMP and achievement of success criteria.	The City, CDFW and/or USFWS shall review and approve the HMMP for compliance prior to issuance of the grading and construction permits.	City of Santa Maria			
BIO-1(e) Endangered/Threatened Special-status Species Habitat Assessments and Protocol Surveys. For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that suitable habitat may be present for federal- or state-listed, candidate, or proposed species, the City shall require protocol habitat assessments/surveys be completed in accordance with current CDFW and/or USFWS protocols prior to issuance of any construction permits. If, through consultation with the CDFW and/or USFWS, it is determined that protocol habitat assessments/surveys are not required, the project applicant shall be required to complete and document this consultation and submit it to the City prior to issuance of any construction permits. Each protocol has different survey and timing requirements. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring they understand the protocol requirements and shall hire a qualified biologist to conduct protocol surveys. (Note: if a federally and/or state-listed wildlife species will be impacted, federal and/or state take authorization may be required by USFWS and CDFW.)	The applicant shall submit results of required protocol survey(s) and consultation with CDFW and/or USFWS to the City for review and approval prior to the issuance of any grading and construction permits.	The City shall review the survey results and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure	City of Santa Maria			
BIO-1(f) Endangered/Threatened Animal Species Avoidance and Minimization. For development facilitated by the plan where potential impacts to aquatic and/or terrestrial animal species are identified by the project specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment required under Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a), the following measures shall be applied.	These measures shall be implemented during grading and construction activities. The applicant shall provide monthly maintenance reports during construction to the City	City staff shall spot check for compliance during construction.	City of Santa Maria			

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
1. Ground disturbance shall be limited to the minimum necessary to complete the project. A qualified biologist shall flag the project limits of disturbance. Areas of special biological concern within or adjacent to the limits of disturbance shall have highly visible orange construction fencing installed between said area and the limits of disturbance. 2. All projects occurring within/adjacent to aquatic habitats (including riparian habitats and wetlands) shall be completed between April 1 and October 31,if feasible, to avoid impacts to sensitive aquatic species. Any work outside these dates would require project-specific approval from the City and maybe subject to regulatory agency approval. 3. All projects occurring within or adjacent to sensitive habitats that may support federally and/or state-listed endangered/threatened species shall have a CDFW- and/or USFWS-approved biologist present during all initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities. Once initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities have been completed, said biologist shall conduct daily pre-activity clearance surveys for endangered/threatened species. Alternatively, and upon approval of the CDFW and/or USFWS, said biologist may conduct site inspections at a minimum of once per week to ensure all prescribed avoidance and minimization measures are fully implemented. 4. No endangered/threatened species shall be captured and relocated without express permission from the CDFW and/or USFWS. 5. If at any time during project construction an endangered/threatened species enters the construction site or otherwise may be impacted by the project, all project activities shall cease. A CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist shall document the occurrence and consult with the CDFW and USFWS, as appropriate, to determine whether it was safe for project activities to resume. 6. For all work occurring in areas where endangered/threatened species may be present and are at risk of entering the project site during construction, the applicant shall install exclusion fencing along the project boundaries prior to start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The placement of the fence shall be at the discretion of the CDFW/USFWS approved biologist. This fence shall consist of solid silt fencing placed at a minimum of three feet above grade and two feet below grade and shall be attached to wooden stakes placed at intervals of not more than five feet. The applicant shall inspect the fence weekly and following rain events and high wind events and shall be maintained in good working condition until all construction activities are complete. 7. All vehicle maintenance/fueling/staging shall occur not less than 100 feet from any riparian habitat or water body, including seasonal wetland features. Suitable containment procedures shall be implemented to prevent spills. A minimum of one spill kit shall be available at each work location near riparian habitat or water bodies. 8. No equipment shall be permitted to enter wetted portions of any affected drainage channel or wetland. 9. At the end of each workday, excavations shall be secured with a cover or a ramp provided to prevent wildlife entrapment. 10. All trenches, pipes, culverts, or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling. 11. Considering the potential for the project to impact federally and state-listed species and their habitat, the City shall contact CDFW and USFWS to identify mitigation banks within Santa Barbara County during project development. If the results of the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determine that impacts to federally and state threatened or endangered species habitat are expected, City and/or applicant shall explore species-appropriate mitigation bank(s) servicing the region for purchase of mitigation credits. 12. Prior to grading and construction in natural areas of containing suitable upland habitat, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey as determined necessary during the biological analysis (Mitigation MeasureBIO-1[a]). The survey should include a transect survey over the entire project disturbance footprint (including access and staging areas), and mapping of suitable habitat features, such as burrows, that are potentially suitable for listed species. If any listed species are detected, no work shall be conducted until the individual(s) leaves the site of their own accord, unless federal and/or state “take” authorization has been issued for relocation. Typical preconstruction survey procedures, such as burrow scoping and burrow collapse, cannot be conducted without federal and state permits. If any life stage of listed species are found within the survey area, the City and/or applicant shall consult with the USFWS and CDFW to determine the appropriate course of action to comply with the FESA and CESA, if permits are not already in place at the time of construction	compliance monitoring staff to document compliance with the measures.				
BIO-1(g) Worker Environmental Awareness Program. For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels and prior to construction activities (including staging and mobilization), the City shall require the project proponent to arrange Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) training for all construction personnel to attend, conducted by a City-approved biologist, to aid workers in recognizing special-status resources that may occur in the construction area. The specifics of this program shall include identification of the sensitive species and habitats, a description of the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review of the limits of construction and mitigation measures required to reduce impacts to biological resources within the work area. A fact sheet conveying this information shall also be prepared for distribution to all contractors, their employers, and other personnel involved with construction. All employees shall sign a form provided by the trainer indicating they have attended the WEAP training and understand the information presented to them. The form shall be submitted to the City to document compliance.	City compliance monitoring staff shall review WEAP information prior to the training and verify the selected biologist is qualified with the appropriate professional qualification standards. The applicant shall provide the attendance log that includes the names and signatures of all personnel that have received the training to City compliance monitoring staff for verification prior to any ground disturbing activities in the project area.	The City shall review training materials, notification, and attendance log and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure.	City of Santa Maria			

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
BIO-1(h) Northern California Legless Lizard Avoidance and Minimization. For all development facilitated by the plan in undeveloped areas and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, a pre-construction clearance survey for Northern California legless lizard shall be conducted by a City-approved qualified biologist within 48 hours prior to the start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The survey shall cover the entire disturbance footprint within suitable habitats with moist loose soil, plus a minimum 100-foot buffer, where permissible, and should identify all special-status wildlife species observed on the project site. During the pre-construction survey the qualified biologist shall inspect under logs, leaf litter, or other suitable refuge. If Northern California legless lizards are identified, individuals shall be relocated by a qualified biologist to suitable cover with loose soils a minimum of 500 feet from the project site, as accessible. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, for review and approval.	A report of the survey results conducted within 48 hours prior to the start of construction shall be submitted to the City, for review and approval.	The City shall review the survey results and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure.	City of Santa Maria			
BIO-1(i) Roosting Bat Surveys and Avoidance Prior to Removal. For all development facilitated by the plan that will require the removal of large trees (greater than 20 inches in diameter at five feet from the ground), abandoned buildings, bridges, or other suitable roosting structure identified during a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment prior to tree and/or structure removal, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused survey of all trees and structures to be removed or impacted by construction activities to determine whether active roosts of special-status bats are present on site. Tree or structure removal shall be planned for either the spring or the fall, and timed to ensure both suitable conditions for the detection of bats and adequate time for tree and/or structure removal to occur during seasonal periods of bat activity exclusive of the breeding season, as described below. Trees and/or structures containing suitable potential bat roost habitat features shall be clearly marked or identified. If no bat roosts are found, the results of the survey will be documented and submitted to the City within 30 days of the survey, after which no further action will be required. If roosts are present, the biologist shall prepare a site-specific roosting bat protection plan to be implemented by the contractor following the City's approval. Additionally, the qualified biologist shall determine compensatory mitigation for temporary or permanent habitat loss due to tree removal, in conjunction with CDFW. The plan shall incorporate the following guidance as appropriate: ▪ When possible, removal of trees/structures identified as suitable roosting habitat shall be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, including the following: ▫ Between September 1 and about October 15, or before evening temperatures fall below 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or more than 0.5inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs. ▫ Between March 1 and April 15, or after evening temperatures rise above 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or no more than 0.5 inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs. ▪ If a tree/structure must be removed during the breeding season and is identified as potentially containing a colonial maternity roost, then a qualified biologist shall conduct acoustic emergence surveys or implement other appropriate methods to further evaluate if the roost is an active maternity roost. Under the biologist's guidance, the contractor shall implement measures similar to or exceeding the following: ▫ If it is determined that the roost is not an active maternity roost, then the roost may be removed in accordance with the other requirements of this measure. ▫ If it is found that an active maternity roost of a colonial roosting species is present, the roost shall not be disturbed during the breeding season(April 15 to August 31). ▪ Tree removal procedures shall be implemented using a two-step tree removal process. This method is conducted over two consecutive days and works by creating noise and vibration by cutting non-habitat branches and limbs from habitat trees using chainsaws only (no excavators or other heavy machinery) on day one. The noise and vibration disturbance, together with the visible alteration of the tree, is very effective in causing bats that emerge nightly to feed to not return to the roost that night. The remainder of the tree is removed on day two. ▪ Prior to the demolition of vacant structures within the project site, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused habitat assessment of all structures to be demolished. The habitat assessment shall be conducted enough in advance to ensure the commencement of building demolition can be scheduled during seasonal periods of bat activity (see above), if required. If no signs of day roosting activity are observed, no further actions will be required. If bats or signs of day roosting by bats are observed, a qualified biologist will prepare specific recommendations such as partial dismantling to cause bats to abandon the roost, or humane eviction, both to be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, if required. ▪ If the qualified biologist determines a roost is used by a large number of bats (large hibernaculum), bat boxes shall be installed near the project site. The number of bat boxes installed will depend on the size of the hibernaculum and shall be determined through consultation with CDFW. If a maternity colony has become established, all construction activities shall be postponed within a 500-foot buffer around the maternity colony until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have dispersed. Once it has been determined that the roost is clear of bats, the roost shall be removed immediately.	Results of the survey(s) shall be submitted to the City within 30 days of completion. If necessary, the biologist shall provide a roosting bat protection plan for City review and approval. The qualified biologist shall determine compensatory mitigation, as applicable, in conjunction with CDFW.	The City shall review the survey results and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure. The City shall conduct spot checks during construction to ensure compliance with the roosting bat protection plan.	City of Santa Maria; CDFW			

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
BIO-1(j) Monarch Butterfly Avoidance and Minimization. For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, the City shall require that all construction activities (including equipment staging, grading, and construction) shall be avoided during the monarch butterfly overwintering season between October 15 through March 15, if practicable. In the event construction activities cannot be avoided during the overwintering season, the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a survey for roosting monarch butterflies within seven days prior to initiation of construction activities to determine their presence/absence. If no monarch butterflies are observed during pre-construction surveys, no further actions are necessary. In the event construction pauses for a period of 7 days or more, if construction is planned to restart during the monarch butterfly overwintering season (October 15 through March 15), the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a new survey in accordance with the requirements of this mitigation measure. If construction activities occur during the overwintering season and monarch butterflies are present, the qualified biologist shall establish a protective buffer, ranging from 100 to 300 feet from the roosting site in which monarch butterflies are aggregating. The buffer shall be delineated on site by the biologist with flagging or staking visible by construction personnel. The construction contractor shall ensure no construction occurs within the protective buffer, including staging of equipment or stopping or idling in the buffer, during the overwintering season. In the event construction activities, or other use of equipment, is needed to work within the buffer, the qualified biologist shall be present on site to monitor construction activities and determine if the work is disturbing the aggregated butterflies. If the biologist determines the work is disturbing the butterflies, the biologist shall have the authority to stop work within the protective buffer at any time. In addition, due to the regular movement of the butterflies and locations of the aggregations, the biologist shall have the discretion to adjust the protective buffers, as necessary.	City staff shall conduct a preliminary review of undeveloped parcels prior to the initiation of construction activities. If necessary, the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct pre-construction survey(s) within seven days prior to initiation of construction activities. The applicant shall consult with a qualified biologist during construction.	The City shall review the survey(s) prior to project approval and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure. City compliance monitoring staff shall spot check in the field throughout grading and construction.	City of Santa Maria			
BIO-1(k) Pre- Construction Bird Surveys, Avoidance, and Notification. For all development facilitated by the plan, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, construction activities initiated during the bird nesting season (February 1 – September 15), involving removal of vegetation (e.g. trees and shrubs), abandoned structures, or other nesting bird habitat, a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted no more than 5 days prior to initiation of ground disturbance and vegetation removal. The nesting bird pre-construction survey shall be conducted on foot and shall include a buffer around the construction site at a distance determined by a qualified biologist, including staging and storage areas. The minimum survey radius surrounding the work area shall be the following: 250 feet for non-raptors and 1,000 feet for raptors. The survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist familiar with the identification of avian species known to occur in the Santa Maria region. If construction lapses for seven days or longer, the qualified biologist shall conduct another focused survey before project activities are reinitiated. If nests are found, an avoidance buffer shall be determined by the biologist dependent upon the species, the proposed work activity, and existing disturbances associated with land uses outside of the site. The qualified biologist shall observe the active nest to establish a behavioral baseline of the adults and nestlings, if present. The qualified biologist shall continuously monitor the active nests to detect signs of disturbance and behavioral change as a result of construction impacts, such as noise, vibration, odors, or worker/equipment motion. If signs of disturbance and behavioral changes are observed, the qualified biologist shall cease work causing those changes and may contact CDFW or USFWS for guidance. The buffer shall be demarcated by the biologist with bright orange construction fencing, flagging, construction lathe, or other means to demarcate the boundary. All construction personnel shall be notified of the buffer zone as an “Ecologically Sensitive Area” and to avoid entering the buffer zone during the nesting season. No ground disturbing activities shall occur within the buffer until the biologist has confirmed that breeding/nesting is completed and the young have fledged the nest. Encroachment into the buffer shall occur only at the discretion of the qualified biologist on the basis that the encroachment will not be detrimental to an active nest. A report summarizing the pre-construction survey(s) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and shall be submitted to the City prior to the commencement of construction activities. Project site plans shall include a statement acknowledging compliance with the federal MBTA and California Fish and Game Code that includes avoidance of active bird nests and identification of Best Management Practices to avoid impacts to active nests, including checking for nests prior to construction activities during February 1 to September 15, and what to do if an active nest is found so that the nest is not inadvertently impacted during grading or construction activities.	The applicant shall submit the results of the pre-construction survey(s) prepared by a qualified biologist to the City prior to the commencement of construction activities. The City shall verify that project site plans include a statement acknowledging compliance with the federal MBTA and California Fish and Game Code.	The City shall review the survey(s) prior to project approval and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure. City compliance monitoring staff shall spot check in the field throughout grading and construction.	City of Santa Maria			
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources						
CUL-1 Historical Built Environment. If determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, applicants for new discretionary development projects that propose to significantly alter or demolish any historic-age features (i.e., structures determined to be over 50 years of age based on available City records, such as permitting records) shall be required to submit a historical resources evaluation prepared by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards in architectural history or history (36 CFR Part 61). The report shall address areas containing buildings, structures, objects, sites, landscape/site plans, or other features that are 50 years of age or older and are proposed to be altered or demolished as a part of the proposed project. The evaluation shall include an intensive-level evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and best practices meeting the State Office of Historic Preservation guidelines. All	The applicant shall submit the historical resources evaluation report prepared by a qualified architectural historian to the City for review and concurrence prior to project approval.	The City shall review and approve the historic resources evaluation prior to project approval.	City of Santa Maria			

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
evaluated properties shall be documented on Department of Parks and Recreation Series 523 Forms. The historical resources evaluation report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval. If historical resources are identified through the survey and evaluation, the relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of the resource shall be completed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (Standards). Applicants shall submit a report to the City that identifies and specifies the treatment of character-defining features and construction activities, and demonstrates how the project complies with the Standards and avoids the substantial adverse change in the significance of the historical resource as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b). The report shall be prepared by an architectural historian or historical architect meeting the Professional Qualifications Standards as defined by 36 CFR Part 61 and provided to the City for review and concurrence prior to project approval.						
CUL-2(a) Archaeological Resources Assessment. If determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, applicants for new discretionary development projects that involve ground disturbance activities (that may include but are not limited to, pavement removal, potholing, grubbing, tree removal, and grading) shall be required to submit to the City an archaeological resources assessment prepared by a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in either prehistoric or historic archaeology. Assessments shall include a CHRIS records search at the NWIC and a SLF Search from the NAHC. The records searches shall characterize the results of previous cultural resource surveys and disclose any cultural resources that have been recorded and/or evaluated in and around the development site. A qualified archaeologist shall conduct a Phase I pedestrian survey for those projects which include development in archaeologically sensitive areas, as designated by the City, to locate any surface cultural materials. If the Phase I archaeological survey identifies resources that may be affected, the applicant shall also conduct Phase II testing and evaluation. If resources are determined significant or unique through Phase II testing and site avoidance is not possible, the qualified professional shall identify appropriate site-specific mitigation measures in the Phase II evaluation. These measures may include, but would not be limited to, a Phase III data recovery program, avoidance, or other appropriate actions to be determined by a qualified archaeologist. If significant archaeological resources cannot be avoided, impacts may be reduced to less than significant level by filling on top of the sites rather than cutting into the cultural deposits. Alternatively, and/or in addition, a data collection program may be warranted, including mapping the location of artifacts, surface collection of artifacts, or excavation of the cultural deposit, to characterize the nature of the buried portions of sites. Curation of the excavated artifacts or samples would occur as specified by the archaeologist. The City shall review and approve the archaeological resources assessment prior to project approval.	The applicant shall submit the archaeological resources assessment prepared by a qualified archaeologist to the City for review and concurrence prior to project approval.	The City shall review and approve the archaeological resources assessment prior to project approval.	City of Santa Maria			
CUL-2(b) Unanticipated Discoveries. For new development projects where a Phase I archaeological survey identifies archaeological resources that may be affected, project applicants shall be required to retain a qualified cultural resource specialist to monitor construction activities that involve ground disturbing activities within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource. If archaeological resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work in the immediate area shall halt and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Archaeology shall be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. If determined to be necessary by the qualified archaeologist, the evaluation may require preparation of a treatment plan and archaeological testing for CRHR eligibility. If the discovery proves to be significant under CEQA and cannot be avoided by the project, additional work, such as excavating the cultural deposit to fully characterize its extent and collecting and curating artifacts, may be determined to be necessary by the qualified archaeologist to mitigate any significant impacts to cultural resources. If archaeological resources of Native American origin are identified during construction, a qualified archaeologist shall consult with the City to begin Native American consultation procedures. Periodic reports of the find and subsequent evaluations shall be submitted to the City during construction.	If necessary, the Applicant shall submit to the City a contract or Letter of Commitment with a qualified archaeologist prior to the issuance of project approval and the issuance of grading and construction permits. The City shall verify the selected archaeologist is qualified with the appropriate professional qualification standards.	City permit compliance staff shall confirm monitoring by the City-approved archaeologist and City grading inspectors shall spot check fieldwork. Periodic reports of the find and subsequent evaluations shall be submitted to the City during construction.	City of Santa Maria			
CUL-2(c) Workers Environmental Awareness Program. For new development projects where a Phase I archaeological survey identifies archaeological resources that may be affected, project applicants shall ensure a City-approved archaeologist provides a cultural resources awareness training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The WEAP shall be conducted prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area. The WEAP would include relevant information regarding sensitive cultural resources, including applicable regulations, protocols for avoidance, and consequences of violating State laws and regulations. The WEAP shall also describe appropriate avoidance and impact minimization measures for cultural resources that could be located at the project site and would outline what to do and who to contact if any potential cultural resources or tribal cultural resources are encountered.	City compliance monitoring staff shall review WEAP information prior to conducting the training. The City shall review and approve the selected archaeologist to ensure qualification with the appropriate professional qualification standards. The applicant shall provide the attendance log that includes the names and signatures of all personnel that have received the training to City compliance monitoring staff for verification prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area.	The City shall review training materials and attendance log and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure.				

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
CUL-4(a) Workers Environmental Awareness Program. For any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to invite a City-approved archaeologist to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The City would also invite consulting Tribe(s) to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness training program for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The WEAP training shall be conducted prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area. The WEAP would include relevant information regarding sensitive cultural resources and tribal cultural resources, including applicable regulations, protocols for avoidance, and consequences of violating State laws and regulations. The WEAP will also describe appropriate avoidance and impact minimization measures for tribal cultural resources that could be located at the project site and would outline what to do and who to contact if any potential cultural resources or tribal cultural resources are encountered. The WEAP would emphasize the requirement for confidentiality and culturally appropriate treatment of any discovery of significance to Native Americans and would discuss appropriate behaviors and responsive actions, consistent with local tribal values.	City compliance monitoring staff shall review WEAP information prior to conducting the training. The City shall invite consulting Tribe(s) to the WEAP training. The applicant shall submit the attendance log that includes the names and signatures of all personnel that have received the training to City compliance monitoring staff for verification prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area.	The City shall review training materials and attendance log and provide confirmation of compliance with the conditions outlined in the measure.				
CUL-4(b) Tribal Cultural Monitoring. For any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to retain a tribal monitor to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities that will occur within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource.	If necessary, the Applicant shall submit to the City a contract or Letter of Commitment with a tribal monitor prior to the issuance of project approval and the initiation of ground-disturbing activities.	City staff shall spot check for compliance during construction.	City of Santa Maria			
Noise						
NOI-1 Conditions of Approval to Reduce Construction Noise. The City of Santa Maria shall review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, require construction contractors to implement the following feasible measures as standard conditions of approval. Construction plans submitted to the City shall include construction noise analysis and identify these measures on demolition, grading, and construction plans submitted to the City. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall verify that grading, demolition, and/or construction plans submitted to the City include these notations prior to issuance of demolition, grading and/or building permits. Project specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site specific conditions. ▪ **Mufflers**. During excavation and grading construction phases, all construction equipment, fixed or mobile, shall be operated with closed engine doors and shall be equipped with properly operating and maintained mufflers consistent with manufacturers' standards. ▪ **Stationary Equipment**. All stationary construction equipment shall be placed so that emitted noise is directed away from the nearest sensitive receptors. ▪ **Equipment Staging Areas.** Equipment staging shall be located in areas that will create the greatest distance feasible between construction-related noise sources and noise-sensitive receptors. ▪ **Smart Back-up Alarms**. Mobile construction equipment shall have smart back-up alarms that automatically adjust the sound level of the alarm in response to ambient noise levels. Alternatively, back-up alarms shall be disabled and replaced with human spotters to ensure safety when mobile construction equipment is moving in the reverse direction in compliance with applicable safety laws and regulations. ▪ **Electrically-Powered Tools and Facilities.** Electrical power shall be used to run air compressors and similar power tools and to power any temporary structures, such as construction trailers or caretaker facilities, where feasible. ▪ **Noise Disturbance Coordinator.** The project applicant shall designate a "noise disturbance coordinator" responsible for responding to any local complaints about construction noise. The disturbance coordinator shall determine the cause of any noise complaint and shall require that reasonable measures be implemented to correct the problem. A telephone number for the disturbance coordinator and the City shall be posted at the construction site. ▪ **Temporary Noise Barriers.** Erect temporary noise barriers, where feasible, when construction noise is predicted to exceed the acceptable standards (e.g., 80 dBA Leq at residential receptors, schools or other sensitive receptors during the daytime) or when the anticipated construction duration is greater than is typical (e.g., two years or greater). Temporary noise barriers shall be constructed with solid materials (e.g., wood) with a density of at least 1.5 pounds per square foot with no gaps from the ground to the top of the barrier. If a sound blanket is used, barriers shall be constructed with solid material with a density of at least 1 pound per square foot with no gaps from the ground to the top of the barrier and be lined on the construction side with acoustical blanket, curtain or equivalent absorptive material rated sound transmission class (STC) 32 or higher.	Construction plans shall note construction hours, truck routes, and required noise reduction measures, and shall be submitted to the City for approval prior to grading and construction permit issuance for each project phase. Noise reduction measures shall be identified and described for submittal to the City for review and approval prior to issuance of grading and construction permits. They shall be adhered to for the duration of the project. The applicant shall provide and post signs stating these restrictions at construction site entries. Signs shall be posted prior to commencement of construction and maintained throughout construction. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall confirm that construction noise reduction measures are incorporated in plans prior to approval of grading and construction permit issuance.	City staff shall ensure compliance throughout all construction phases. Building inspectors and permit compliance staff shall periodically inspect the site for compliance with activity schedules and respond to complaints.	City of Santa Maria			

Mitigation Measure	Plan Requirements and Timing	Monitoring	Responsible Agency or Party	Compliance Verification Initial	Compliance Verification Date	Compliance Verification Comments
NOI-2 Conditions of Approval to Reduce Construction Vibration. The City of Santa Maria shall review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, require construction contractors to implement the following feasible buffers for construction equipment as standard conditions of approval. Construction plans submitted to the City shall include construction vibration analysis and identify the following buffer distances during demolition, grading, and construction plans submitted to the City. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall verify that grading, demolition, and/or construction plans submitted to the City include these notations prior to issuance of demolition, grading and/or building permits. Project specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site specific conditions. To reduce potential construction vibration impacts, the City of Santa Maria shall require the following: ▪ Prior to the issuance of a building permit for a project requiring pile driving during construction, the project applicant shall prepare a groundborne noise and vibration analysis to assess and mitigate potential noise and vibration impacts related to the following construction activities: 1) within 135 feet of fragile structures such as historical resources; 2) within 100 feet of non-engineered timber and masonry buildings (e.g., most residential buildings), or within 75 feet of engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster); 3) use of a vibratory roller within 40 feet of fragile historical resources or 25 feet of any other structure; or 4) use of a dozer or other large earthmoving equipment within 20 feet for a fragile historical structure or 15 feet of any other structure. The noise and vibration analysis shall be conducted by a qualified and experienced acoustical consultant or engineer. The vibration levels shall not exceed the City's architectural damage thresholds (e.g., 0.12 in/sec PPV for fragile or historical resources, 0.2 in/sec PPV for non-engineered timber and masonry buildings, and 0.3 in/sec PPV for engineered concrete and masonry). If vibration levels would exceed this threshold, alternative uses such as drilling piles as opposed to pile driving, static rollers as opposed to vibratory rollers, and lower horsepower earthmoving equipment shall be used. If necessary, construction vibration monitoring shall be conducted to ensure the FTA's vibration thresholds are not exceeded.	Construction plans shall note construction hours, truck routes, and required vibration reduction measures, and shall be submitted to the City for approval prior to grading and construction permit issuance for each project phase. If necessary, based on the findings of the groundborne noise and vibration analysis, vibration reduction measures shall be identified and described for submittal to the City for review and approval prior to issuance of grading and construction permits. They shall be adhered to for the duration of the project. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall confirm that construction vibration reduction measures are incorporated in plans prior to project approval and issuance of grading and construction permits.	City staff shall ensure compliance throughout all construction phases. Building inspectors and permit compliance staff shall periodically inspect the site for compliance with applicable mitigation. If necessary, construction vibration monitoring shall be conducted.	City of Santa Maria			



City of Santa Maria
2045 General Plan Update

Final Environmental Impact Report, Volume 2
Draft Environmental Impact Report, as Revised

SCH# 2025020584

prepared by

City of Santa Maria
City of Santa Maria Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, California 93458
Contact: Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager

prepared with the assistance of

Rincon Consultants, Inc.
1530 Monterey Street, Suite D
San Luis Obispo, California 93401

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RINCON CONSULTANTS

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Executive Summary

This document is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed City of Santa Maria (City) 2045 General Plan Update, hereafter referred to as the "plan." This executive summary summarizes the characteristics of the plan, EIR alternatives, and the environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with implementation of the plan.

Project Synopsis

Lead Agency Contact Person

Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager
City of Santa Maria Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street Suite 101
Santa Maria, CA 93458

Project Description

This EIR has been prepared to examine the potential environmental effects of the plan. The following is a summary of the full project description, which can be found in Chapter 2, Project Description.

The plan is an update to the City's current General Plan, which includes the following chapters: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Safety Element, Health and Environmental Justice Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, Noise Element, Public Facilities and Services Element, Recreation and Parks Element, and Economic Development Element. The plan establishes the City's vision for future development through the horizon year of 2045. The plan will serve as the City's primary guide for future land use and development decisions in a way that meets the community needs and priorities while serving as a key tool for influencing and improving the quality of life for residents and businesses. As such, it serves as the "blueprint" for future development and conservation of a community. The 2045 General Plan Update, together with the already adopted 6th Cycle Housing Element, will help the City plan for important community issues, such as community growth; housing, mobility, and infrastructure needs; climate change; and environmental protection. It will also set the stage for future social, physical, and economic development of the city.

Project Objectives

The2045 General Plan Update presents a vision for the future of the City and a set of objectives for how the City would achieve that vision. This vision and its objectives capture the City's key aspirations for the future. As discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description, the objectives for the plan, are as follows:

- **Agricultural Identity.** Continue to support the agricultural industry and its workforce. Balance the protection of prime agricultural land with the development necessary to support continued population growth and the diversification of the local economy.

- **Culture, History, and Art.** Celebrate and share Santa Maria's multicultural heritage and contemporary diversity. Preserve historic resources, foster the arts, maintain a strong sense of community through cultural festivals, and invite visitors to enjoy the richness of local expression and resources.
- **Community Design.** Create public spaces that reflect the community identity, foster civic pride, and invite community members to gather, both informally and for events. Design streets, buildings, and landscaping that reflect the community's history, culture, and natural environment. Use lighting, street trees, benches, and other amenities to make sidewalks and public spaces safe and welcoming, with a focus on the Downtown and along the Main and Broadway corridors.
- **Community Health.** Grow and expand physical and mental healthcare services to meet the needs of all residents. Improve community health by addressing the environmental justice priorities of disadvantaged communities, including seniors, low-income households, linguistically isolated families, the homeless, and youth, who comprise 35 percent of residents. Minimize residents' potential for exposure to noise, pesticides, and industrial pollution. Foster healthy lifestyles by expanding safe and attractive options for physical activity and by expanding healthy food access.
- **Natural Environment and Resilience.** Conserve water resources in the city and support efforts to maintain the Santa Maria River. Expand opportunities to enjoy the area's natural resources and the region's beauty. Safeguard the community from natural hazards, including those exacerbated by climate change.
- **Housing Quality and Choice.** Develop a high-quality and diverse housing supply at all levels of affordability that preserves Santa Maria as a place where families can establish roots and today's youth can afford to stay. Balance the growth of housing and the economy so that people can live and work in Santa Maria. As new housing types are introduced, (e.g., accessory dwelling units (ADUs), adapt parking, transportation, and other community features. Develop workforce housing solutions that provide safe, healthy, and comfortable homes for workers and their families.
- **Resilient Economy.** Cultivate a diverse and resilient economy in which local businesses and families thrive and job growth keeps apace with housing development. Grow the existing economic base in agriculture, retail, healthcare, and business services, and expand into new industries. Ensure access to high quality education that is aligned with local industries and entrepreneurship.
- **Connected Growth.** To accommodate projected population, housing, and jobs growth, focus on improvements to existing neighborhoods along with infill and vacant site development. Expand beyond current City limits when needed, weighing the short and long term environmental, economic, infrastructure, public service, and fiscal trade-offs. Establish strong cultural, design, and physical connections between newly developed areas and the rest of Santa Maria.
- **Transportation Innovations.** Develop a balanced, equitable, affordable, and reliable transportation network where pedestrians, cyclists, trucks, cars, rail, and transit can safely and efficiently navigate to destinations within Santa Maria. Focus on maintaining existing roadways, expanding walking and biking options, and reducing congestion and maintenance costs. Transform corridors and streets from points of conflict among people, cyclists, cars, and trucks into places that bring neighborhoods and families together. Prepare for and expand regional connections with enhanced bus, rail, and air service. Prepare for technological advances like

autonomous vehicles and remote work, and take advantage of opportunities and incentives to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

- **Infrastructure, Utilities, Facilities, and Services**. Provide residents and businesses with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure and utilities, including water, wastewater, flood control, gas, phone, cable, and broadband internet. Deliver high-quality services and facilities for all community members, including expedient emergency response, accessible health care, high-quality education and career training, and convenient and equitable access to well-maintained parks and recreational facilities.
- **Governance and Engagement.** Continue to conduct and increase meaningful and inclusive civic engagement that empowers a diversity of perspectives in public decision-making. Provide residents and businesses with high-quality, equitable, and accessible customer service, including City communications and events in multiple languages and interpretation services. Partner with community organizations and institutions to build trust and increase participation, including among youth, who will be the City leaders in 2045.

Alternatives

As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this EIR examines alternatives to the plan. Studied alternatives include the following three alternatives. Based on the alternatives analysis, Alternative 2 was determined to be the environmentally superior alternative.

- Alternative 1: No Project Alternative
- Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative
- Alternative 3: Greater Annexation Alternative

Refer to Chapter 6, Alternatives, for the complete EIR alternatives analysis.

Areas of Known Controversy

The EIR scoping process did not identify any areas of known controversy for the plan. Responses to the Notice of Preparation of a Draft EIR circulated by the City from February 15, 2025 through March 17, 2025 and input received at the EIR scoping meeting held by the City on February 27, 2025 are summarized in Chapter 1, Introduction.

Issues to be Resolved

There are no CEQA-related issues to be resolved at this time.

Issues Not Studied in Detail in the EIR

Impacts related to Aesthetics, Energy, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services and Recreation, and Wildfire were found to be less than significant. Discussion of these impacts is included in Chapter 4.9, Effects Found Not to be Significant, of the EIR.

Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table ES-1 summarizes the environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and residual impacts (the impact after application of mitigation, if required) associated with implementation of the proposed project. Impacts are categorized as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the proposed plan is approved pursuant to Section15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse, but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures. However, mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.
- **No Impact.** The proposed project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

Table ES-1 Summary of Environmental Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
Agricultural Resources		
Impact AG-1. Land use changes in the annexation area have the potential to conflict with existing zoning for agriculture. There are no feasible mitigation measures that would avoid or fully mitigate for the conversion of Farmland or agriculturally zoned lands. As a result, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact.	No feasible mitigation is available.	Significant and unavoidable
Impact AG-2. The 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with existing zoning for forest land, timberland, or timberland production, nor result in the loss of forest land or convert forest land to non-forest uses. There would be no impact.	None required	No impact
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions		
Impact AQGHG-1. The 2045 General Plan Update would result in new emissions that may exceed the 2022 Ozone Plan's direct and indirect emissions inventory for the County. As a result, the plan would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the 2022 Ozone Plan. This impact would be significant and unavoidable.	No feasible mitigation is available.	Significant and unavoidable
Impact AQGHG-2. The 2045 General Plan Update could result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of all criteria pollutants for which the plan region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard. Even with implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2, impacts would be significant and unavoidable**.**	**AQGHG-2 Project-Level Air Quality Analysis and Mitigation**. The City shall require applicants for future discretionary development projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update to prepare a project-specific air quality analysis in accordance with SBCAPCD Environmental Review Guidelines. The analysis shall quantify construction and operational emissions and compare estimated emissions to the SBCAPCD's adopted thresholds of significance for criteria air pollutants. If the analysis determines that emissions would exceed any of the applicable thresholds, the project applicant shall implement all feasible mitigation measures to reduce emissions to below the thresholds. All mitigation measures shall be documented and verified by the lead agency prior to project approval or issuance of grading/building permits.	Significant and unavoidable
Impact AQGHG-3. Construction activities for projects lasting longer than two months or located within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. However, with implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3, This impact would be less than significant.	**AQGHG-3 Construction Equipment Exhaust Control Measures.** For individual discretionary and ministerial residential projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update that would develop three or more units; would involve demolition, mass grading, or excavation and trenching phases longer than two months; and would be located within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors, the City shall enforce a project specific Condition of Approval requiring off-road heavy-duty diesel engines to meet CARB-certified Tier 3 or higher emission standards or employ CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters to the	Less than significant after mitigation

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	extent that this equipment is commercially available. "Commercially available" shall be defined as the availability of required equipment in geographic proximity to the project site and within a reasonable timeframe relative to critical path construction timing. If Tier 3 or higher emission standard equipment or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available, documentation shall be provided by the project applicant to the City stating that Tier 3 equipment or higher emission standard or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available with supporting evidence from the contractor. If CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters are utilized, they shall be kept in working order and maintained in operable condition according to manufacturer's specifications, as applicable.	
Impact AQGHG-4. Future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would not create objectionable odors that could affect a substantial number of people or expose future residents to odors that would produce a public nuisance or hazard. This impact would be less than significant**.**	None required	Less than significant
Impact AQGHG-5. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would generate GHG emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment and conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. This impact would be significant and unavoidable.	No feasible mitigation is available.	Significant and unavoidable
Biological Resources		
Impact BIO-1. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could have a substantial adverse effect on special-status species, either directly or as a result of habitat modification. Implementation of federal, State, and local regulations and policies, as well as Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k) would ensure that impacts from development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update on candidate, sensitive, or special-status species would be less than significant. This impact would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.	**BIO-1(a) Biological Resources Screening and Assessment.** For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City Staff, the City shall require project applicants to engage a qualified biologist (having the appropriate education and experience level) to perform a baseline Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. If it is determined that the project has no potential to impact biological resources, no further action is required. If the project would have the potential to impact biological resources, prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a project-specific biological analysis to document the existing biological resources within a project	Less than significant after mitigation

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	footprint plus a minimum buffer of 500 feet around the project footprint, as is feasible, and to determine the potential impacts to those resources. The project-specific biological analysis shall evaluate the potential for impacts to all biological resources including, but not limited to special-status species, nesting birds, wildlife movement, sensitive plant communities, critical habitats, and other resources judged to be sensitive by local, state, and/or federal agencies. If the project would have the potential to impact these resources, the following mitigation measures (Mitigation Measures BIO-1[b] through BIO-1[k]]) shall be incorporated, as applicable, to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. Pending the results of the project-specific biological analysis, design alterations, further technical studies (e.g., protocol surveys) and consultations with the USFWS, CDFW, and/or other local, state, and federal agencies may be required. Note that specific surveys described in the mitigation measures below may be completed as part of the project-specific biological analysis where suitable habitat is present. **BIO-1(b) Special-status Plant Species Surveys.** For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that there is potential for significant impacts to federally or state-listed plants or regional population level impacts to species with a CRPR of 1B or 2B from project development, a qualified biologist shall complete surveys for special-status plants prior to any vegetation removal, grubbing, or other construction activity (including staging and mobilization). The surveys shall be floristic in nature and shall be seasonally timed to coincide with the target species. All plant surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist during the blooming season prior to development permit approval. All special-status plant species identified on site shall be mapped onto a site-specific aerial photograph or topographic map with the use of Global Positioning System unit. Surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the most current protocols established by the CDFW, USFWS, and the local jurisdictions if said protocols exist. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, and the CDFW and/or USFWS, as appropriate, for review and/or approval. If special-status plants are not found during special-status plant surveys, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2B plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys, the Mitigation Measures BIO-1(c) and BIO-1(d) shall be implemented.	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	BIO-1(c) Special-status Plant Species Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation. If federally-listed and/or state-listed individuals, and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys (pursuant to Mitigation Measure BIO-1[b]) and would be directly impacted by development, then the project shall be re-designed to avoid impacting listed plant species or CRPR 1B or 2 populations, where feasible. Rare and listed plant occurrences that are not within the immediate disturbance footprint but are located within 50 feet of disturbance limits shall have bright orange protective fencing installed at least 30 feet beyond their extent, or other distance as approved by a qualified biologist, to protect them from harm. Prior to initiation of construction activities the project proponent shall submit a site plan depicting the location(s) of special-status plants and avoidance buffers to the City for review and approval. If special-status plants can be avoided, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations cannot be avoided, then Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) shall be implemented. **BIO-1(d) Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan.** If federally- and/or state-listed plants, non-listed special-status plant populations, sensitive natural communities, or waters of the US and/or State cannot be avoided and will be impacted by development facilitated by the plan, the City shall require mitigation at a minimum ratio of 1:1 per acre of impact (and 1:1 per tree), to be determined in coordination with CDFW and USFWS as and if applicable, for each species as a component of habitat restoration. A habitat mitigation and monitoring plan (HMMP) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and submitted to the City for review and approval. The HMMP shall include, at a minimum, the following components. 1. Description of the project/impact site (i.e., location, responsible parties, areas to be impacted by habitat type). 2. Goal(s) of the compensatory mitigation project (type[s] and area[s]) of habitat to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved; specific functions and values of habitat type[s] to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved). 3. Description of the proposed compensatory mitigation site (location and size, ownership status, existing functions, and values).	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	4. Implementation plan for the compensatory mitigation site (rationale for expecting implementation success, responsible parties, schedule, site preparation, planting plan). 5. Maintenance activities during the monitoring period, including weed removal as appropriate (activities, responsible parties, schedule). 6. Monitoring plan for the compensatory mitigation site, including no less than quarterly monitoring for the first year (performance standards, target functions and values, target acreages to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved, annual monitoring reports). 7. Success criteria based on the goals and measurable objectives; said criteria to be, at a minimum, at least 80 percent survival of container plants and 30 percent relative cover by vegetation type or other industry standards as determined by a qualified restoration specialist. 8. An adaptive management program and remedial measures to address any shortcomings in meeting success criteria. 9. Notification of completion of compensatory mitigation and agency confirmation. 10. Contingency measures (initiating procedures, alternative locations for contingency compensatory mitigation, funding mechanism). 11. All nursery plants used in restoration shall be inspected for sudden oak death. If a federally and/or state-listed plant species has the potential be impacted, an HMMP shall be submitted to the USFWS and/or CDFW for review, and federal and/or state take authorization may be required by these agencies. Within 30 days of completion of monitoring, a final monitoring report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval, documenting compliance with the HMMP and achievement of success criteria. **BIO-1(e) Endangered/Threatened Special-status Species Habitat Assessments and Protocol Surveys.** For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that suitable habitat may be present for federal- or state-listed, candidate, or proposed species, the City shall require protocol habitat assessments/surveys be completed in accordance with current CDFW and/or USFWS protocols prior to issuance of any construction permits. If, through consultation with the CDFW and/or USFWS, it is determined that protocol habitat assessments/surveys are not required, the project applicant shall be required	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	to complete and document this consultation and submit it to the City prior to issuance of any construction permits. Each protocol has different survey and timing requirements. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring they understand the protocol requirements and shall hire a qualified biologist to conduct protocol surveys. (Note: if a federally and/or state-listed wildlife species will be impacted, federal and/or state take authorization may be required by USFWS and CDFW.) **BIO-1(f) Endangered/Threatened Animal Species Avoidance and Minimization.** For development facilitated by the plan where potential impacts to aquatic and/or terrestrial animal species are identified by the project-specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment required under Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a), the following measures shall be applied. 1. Ground disturbance shall be limited to the minimum necessary to complete the project. A qualified biologist shall flag the project limits of disturbance. Areas of special biological concern within or adjacent to the limits of disturbance shall have highly visible orange construction fencing installed between said area and the limits of disturbance. 2. All projects occurring within/adjacent to aquatic habitats (including riparian habitats and wetlands) shall be completed between April 1 and October 31, if feasible, to avoid impacts to sensitive aquatic species. Any work outside these dates would require project-specific approval from the City and may be subject to regulatory agency approval. 3. All projects occurring within or adjacent to sensitive habitats that may support federally and/or state-listed endangered/threatened species shall have a CDFW- and/or USFWS-approved biologist present during all initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities. Once initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities have been completed, said biologist shall conduct daily pre-activity clearance surveys for endangered/threatened species. Alternatively, and upon approval of the CDFW and/or USFWS, said biologist may conduct site inspections at a minimum of once per week to ensure all prescribed avoidance and minimization measures are fully implemented. 4. No endangered/threatened species shall be captured and relocated without express permission from the CDFW and/or USFWS. 5. If at any time during project construction an endangered/threatened species enters the construction site or otherwise may be impacted by the project, all project activities shall cease. A CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	shall document the occurrence and consult with the CDFW and USFWS, as appropriate, to determine whether it was safe for project activities to resume. 6. For all work occurring in areas where endangered/threatened species may be present and are at risk of entering the project site during construction, the applicant shall install exclusion fencing along the project boundaries prior to start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The placement of the fence shall be at the discretion of the CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist. This fence shall consist of solid silt fencing placed at a minimum of three feet above grade and two feet below grade and shall be attached to wooden stakes placed at intervals of not more than five feet. The applicant shall inspect the fence weekly and following rain events and high wind events and shall be maintained in good working condition until all construction activities are complete. 7. All vehicle maintenance/fueling/staging shall occur not less than 100 feet from any riparian habitat or water body, including seasonal wetland features. Suitable containment procedures shall be implemented to prevent spills. A minimum of one spill kit shall be available at each work location near riparian habitat or water bodies. 8. No equipment shall be permitted to enter wetted portions of any affected drainage channel or wetland. 9. At the end of each workday, excavations shall be secured with a cover or a ramp provided to prevent wildlife entrapment. 10. All trenches, pipes, culverts, or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling. 11. Considering the potential for the project to impact federally and state-listed species and their habitat, the City shall contact CDFW and USFWS to identify mitigation banks within Santa Barbara County during project development. If the results of the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determine that impacts to federally and state threatened or endangered species habitat are expected, City and/or applicant shall explore species-appropriate mitigation bank(s) servicing the region for purchase of mitigation credits. 12. Prior to grading and construction in natural areas of containing suitable upland habitat, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey as determined necessary during the biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]). The survey should include a transect survey over the entire	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	project disturbance footprint (including access and staging areas), and mapping of suitable habitat features, such as burrows, that are potentially suitable for listed species. If any listed species are detected, no work shall be conducted until the individual(s) leaves the site of their own accord, unless federal and/or state "take" authorization has been issued for relocation. Typical preconstruction survey procedures, such as burrow scoping and burrow collapse, cannot be conducted without federal and state permits. If any life stage of listed species are found within the survey area, the City and/or applicant shall consult with the USFWS and CDFW to determine the appropriate course of action to comply with the FESA and CESA, if permits are not already in place at the time of construction. **BIO-1(g) Worker Environmental Awareness Program.** For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels and prior to construction activities (including staging and mobilization), the City shall require the project proponent to arrange Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) training for all construction personnel to attend, conducted by a City-approved biologist, to aid workers in recognizing special-status resources that may occur in the construction area. The specifics of this program shall include identification of the sensitive species and habitats, a description of the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review of the limits of construction and mitigation measures required to reduce impacts to biological resources within the work area. A fact sheet conveying this information shall also be prepared for distribution to all contractors, their employers, and other personnel involved with construction. All employees shall sign a form provided by the trainer indicating they have attended the WEAP training and understand the information presented to them. The form shall be submitted to the City to document compliance. **BIO-1(h) Northern California Legless Lizard Avoidance and Minimization.** For all development facilitated by the plan in undeveloped areas and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, a pre-construction clearance survey for Northern California legless lizard shall be conducted by a City-approved qualified biologist within 48 hours prior to the start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The survey shall cover the entire disturbance footprint within suitable habitats with moist loose soil, plus a minimum 100-foot buffer, where permissible, and should identify all special-status wildlife species observed on the project site. During the pre-construction survey the qualified biologist shall inspect under logs, leaf litter, or other suitable refuge. If Northern California legless lizards are identified,	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	individuals shall be relocated by a qualified biologist to suitable cover with loose soils a minimum of 500 feet from the project site, as accessible. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, for review and approval. **BIO-1(i) Roosting Bat Surveys and Avoidance Prior to Removal.** For all development facilitated by the plan that will require the removal of large trees (greater than 20 inches in diameter at five feet from the ground), abandoned buildings, bridges, or other suitable roosting structure identified during a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment prior to tree and/or structure removal, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused survey of all trees and structures to be removed or impacted by construction activities to determine whether active roosts of special-status bats are present on site. Tree or structure removal shall be planned for either the spring or the fall, and timed to ensure both suitable conditions for the detection of bats and adequate time for tree and/or structure removal to occur during seasonal periods of bat activity exclusive of the breeding season, as described below. Trees and/or structures containing suitable potential bat roost habitat features shall be clearly marked or identified. If no bat roosts are found, the results of the survey will be documented and submitted to the City within 30 days of the survey, after which no further action will be required. If roosts are present, the biologist shall prepare a site-specific roosting bat protection plan to be implemented by the contractor following the City's approval. Additionally, the qualified biologist shall determine compensatory mitigation for temporary or permanent habitat loss due to tree removal, in conjunction with CDFW. The plan shall incorporate the following guidance as appropriate: ▪ When possible, removal of trees/structures identified as suitable roosting habitat shall be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, including the following: ▫ Between September 1 and about October 15, or before evening temperatures fall below 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or more than 0.5 inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs. ▫ Between March 1 and April 15, or after evening temperatures rise above 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or no more than 0.5 inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs. ▪ If a tree/structure must be removed during the breeding season and is identified as potentially containing a colonial maternity roost, then a	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	qualified biologist shall conduct acoustic emergence surveys or implement other appropriate methods to further evaluate if the roost is an active maternity roost. Under the biologist's guidance, the contractor shall implement measures similar to or exceeding the following: ▫ If it is determined that the roost is not an active maternity roost, then the roost may be removed in accordance with the other requirements of this measure. ▫ If it is found that an active maternity roost of a colonial roosting species is present, the roost shall not be disturbed during the breeding season (April 15 to August 31). ▪ Tree removal procedures shall be implemented using a two-step tree removal process. This method is conducted over two consecutive days and works by creating noise and vibration by cutting non-habitat branches and limbs from habitat trees using chainsaws only (no excavators or other heavy machinery) on day one. The noise and vibration disturbance, together with the visible alteration of the tree, is very effective in causing bats that emerge nightly to feed to not return to the roost that night. The remainder of the tree is removed on day two. ▪ Prior to the demolition of vacant structures within the project site, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused habitat assessment of all structures to be demolished. The habitat assessment shall be conducted enough in advance to ensure the commencement of building demolition can be scheduled during seasonal periods of bat activity (see above), if required. If no signs of day roosting activity are observed, no further actions will be required. If bats or signs of day roosting by bats are observed, a qualified biologist will prepare specific recommendations such as partial dismantling to cause bats to abandon the roost, or humane eviction, both to be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, if required. ▪ If the qualified biologist determines a roost is used by a large number of bats (large hibernaculum), bat boxes shall be installed near the project site. The number of bat boxes installed will depend on the size of the hibernaculum and shall be determined through consultation with CDFW. If a maternity colony has become established, all construction activities shall be postponed within a 500-foot buffer around the maternity colony until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have dispersed. Once it has been determined that the roost is clear of bats, the roost shall be removed immediately.	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	BIO-1(j) Monarch Butterfly Avoidance and Minimization. For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, the City shall require that all construction activities (including equipment staging, grading, and construction) shall be avoided during the monarch butterfly overwintering season between October 15 through March 15, if practicable. In the event construction activities cannot be avoided during the overwintering season, the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a survey for roosting monarch butterflies within seven days prior to initiation of construction activities to determine their presence/absence. If no monarch butterflies are observed during pre-construction surveys, no further actions are necessary. In the event construction pauses for a period of 7 days or more, if construction is planned to restart during the monarch butterfly overwintering season (October 15 through March 15), the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a new survey in accordance with the requirements of this mitigation measure. If construction activities occur during the overwintering season and monarch butterflies are present, the qualified biologist shall establish a protective buffer, ranging from 100 to 300 feet from the roosting site in which monarch butterflies are aggregating. The buffer shall be delineated on site by the biologist with flagging or staking visible by construction personnel. The construction contractor shall ensure no construction occurs within the protective buffer, including staging of equipment or stopping or idling in the buffer, during the overwintering season. In the event construction activities, or other use of equipment, is needed to work within the buffer, the qualified biologist shall be present on site to monitor construction activities and determine if the work is disturbing the aggregated butterflies. If the biologist determines the work is disturbing the butterflies, the biologist shall have the authority to stop work within the protective buffer at any time. In addition, due to the regular movement of the butterflies and locations of the aggregations, the biologist shall have the discretion to adjust the protective buffers, as necessary. **BIO-1(k) Pre- Construction Bird Surveys, Avoidance, and Notification.** For all development facilitated by the plan, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, construction activities initiated during the bird nesting season (February 1 – September 15), involving removal of vegetation (e.g. trees and shrubs),	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	abandoned structures, or other nesting bird habitat, a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted no more than 5 days prior to initiation of ground disturbance and vegetation removal. The nesting bird pre-construction survey shall be conducted on foot and shall include a buffer around the construction site at a distance determined by a qualified biologist, including staging and storage areas. The minimum survey radii surrounding the work area shall be the following: 250 feet for non-raptors and 1,000 feet for raptors. The survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist familiar with the identification of avian species known to occur in the Santa Maria region. If construction lapses for seven days or longer, the qualified biologist shall conduct another focused survey before project activities are reinitiated. If nests are found, an avoidance buffer shall be determined by the biologist dependent upon the species, the proposed work activity, and existing disturbances associated with land uses outside of the site. The qualified biologist shall observe the active nest to establish a behavioral baseline of the adults and nestlings, if present. The qualified biologist shall continuously monitor the active nests to detect signs of disturbance and behavioral change as a result of construction impacts, such as noise, vibration, odors, or worker/equipment motion. If signs of disturbance and behavioral changes are observed, the qualified biologist shall cease work causing those changes and may contact CDFW or USFWS for guidance. The buffer shall be demarcated by the biologist with bright orange construction fencing, flagging, construction lathe, or other means to demarcate the boundary. All construction personnel shall be notified of the buffer zone as an "Ecologically Sensitive Area" and to avoid entering the buffer zone during the nesting season. No ground disturbing activities shall occur within the buffer until the biologist has confirmed that breeding/nesting is completed and the young have fledged the nest. Encroachment into the buffer shall occur only at the discretion of the qualified biologist on the basis that the encroachment will not be detrimental to an active nest. A report summarizing the pre-construction survey(s) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and shall be submitted to the City prior to the commencement of construction activities. Project site plans shall include a statement acknowledging compliance with the federal MBTA and California Fish and Game Code that includes avoidance of active bird nests and identification of Best Management Practices to avoid impacts to active nests, including checking for nests prior to construction activities during February 1 to September 15, and what to do if an active nest is	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	found so that the nest is not inadvertently impacted during grading or construction activities.	
Impact BIO-2. Wetlands within the Plan Area may be affected by Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Development projects would be subject to adopted City regulations to minimize impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands. Compliance with the NPDES Construction General Permit, Santa Maria Municipal Code, proposed policies in the 2045 General Plan Update, and Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) would ensure potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands would be less than significant with mitigation.	Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) (listed above) are required.	Less than significant after mitigation
Impact BIO-3. Due to the existing level of development, there are no essential wildlife connectivity areas within the plan area. With adherence to the proposed policies of the 2045 General Plan Update and compliance with the Santa Maria Municipal Code, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would have a less than significant impact on the movement of native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species within the plan area, or on established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors.	None required	Less than significant
Impact BIO-4. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to adhere to the proposed policies of the 2045 General Plan Update and Santa Maria Municipal Code requirements related to protection of trees and biological resources. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Impact BIO-5. Implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with the provision of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan. No impact would occur.	None required	No impact

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources		
Impact CUL-1. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan has the potential to adversely affect previously unidentified historic-period resources. Implementation of applicable 2045 General Plan policies, State and federal regulations, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code would minimize adverse impacts on historical resources. With mitigation, impacts to historic-period resources would be less than significant.	**CUL-1 Historical Built Environment.** If determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, applicants for new discretionary development projects that propose to significantly alter or demolish any historic-age features (i.e., structures determined to be over 45 years of age based on available City records, such as permitting records) shall be required to submit a historical resources evaluation prepared by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in architectural history or history (36 CFR Part 61). The report shall address areas containing buildings, structures, objects, sites, landscape/site plans, or other features that are 45 years of age or older and are proposed to be altered or demolished as a part of the proposed project. The evaluation shall include an intensive-level evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and best practices meeting the State Office of Historic Preservation guidelines. All evaluated properties shall be documented on Department of Parks and Recreation Series 523 Forms. The historical resources evaluation report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval. If historical resources are identified through the survey and evaluation, the relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of the resource shall be completed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (Standards). Applicants shall submit a report to the City that identifies and specifies the treatment of character-defining features and construction activities, and demonstrates how the project complies with the Standards and avoids the substantial adverse change in the significance of the historical resource as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b). The report shall be prepared by an architectural historian or historical architect meeting the Professional Qualifications Standards as defined by 36 CFR Part 61 and provided to the City for review and concurrence prior to project approval.	Less than significant after mitigation
Impact CUL-2. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update has the potential to disturb or damage archaeological resources. Implementation of applicable 2045 General Plan policies, State and federal regulations, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code would minimize adverse impacts to archaeological resources. With mitigation, impacts to archaeological resources would be less than significant.	**CUL-2(a) Archaeological Resources Assessment**. If determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, applicants for new discretionary development projects that involve ground disturbance activities (that may include but are not limited to, pavement removal, potholing, grubbing, tree removal, and grading) shall be required to submit to the City an archaeological resources assessment prepared by a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in either prehistoric or historic archaeology. Assessments shall include a CHRIS records search at the NWIC and a SLF Search from the NAHC. The records	Less than significant after mitigation

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	searches shall characterize the results of previous cultural resource surveys and disclose any cultural resources that have been recorded and/or evaluated in and around the development site. A qualified archaeologist shall conduct a Phase I pedestrian survey for those projects which include development in archaeologically sensitive areas, as designated by the City, to locate any surface cultural materials. If the Phase I archaeological survey identifies resources that may be affected, the applicant shall also conduct Phase II testing and evaluation. If resources are determined significant or unique through Phase II testing and site avoidance is not possible, the qualified professional shall identify appropriate site-specific mitigation measures in the Phase II evaluation. These measures may include, but would not be limited to, a Phase III data recovery program, avoidance, or other appropriate actions to be determined by a qualified archaeologist. If significant archaeological resources cannot be avoided, impacts may be reduced to less than significant level by filling on top of the sites rather than cutting into the cultural deposits. Alternatively, and/or in addition, a data collection program may be warranted, including mapping the location of artifacts, surface collection of artifacts, or excavation of the cultural deposit, to characterize the nature of the buried portions of sites. Curation of the excavated artifacts or samples would occur as specified by the archaeologist. The City shall review and approve the archaeological resources assessment prior to project approval. **CUL-2(b) Unanticipated Discoveries**. For new development projects where a Phase I archaeological survey identifies archaeological resources that may be affected, project applicants shall be required to retain a qualified cultural resource specialist to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource. If archaeological resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work in the immediate area shall halt and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Archaeology shall be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. If determined to be necessary by the qualified archaeologist, the evaluation may require preparation of a treatment plan and archaeological testing for CRHR eligibility. If the discovery proves to be significant under CEQA and cannot be avoided by the project, additional work, such as excavating the cultural deposit to fully characterize its extent and collecting and curating artifacts, may be determined to be necessary by the qualified archaeologist to mitigate any significant impacts to cultural resources. If archaeological resources of Native American	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	origin are identified during construction, a qualified archaeologist shall consult with the City to begin Native American consultation procedures. Periodic reports of the find and subsequent evaluations shall be submitted to the City during construction. **CUL-2(c) Workers Environmental Awareness Program**. For new development projects where a Phase I archaeological survey identifies archaeological resources that may be affected, project applicants shall ensure a City-approved archaeologist provides a cultural resources awareness training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The WEAP shall be conducted prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area. The WEAP would include relevant information regarding sensitive cultural resources, including applicable regulations, protocols for avoidance, and consequences of violating State laws and regulations. The WEAP shall also describe appropriate avoidance and impact minimization measures for cultural resources that could be located at the project site and would outline what to do and who to contact if any potential cultural resources or tribal cultural resources are encountered.	
Impact CUL-3. Ground disturbing activities associated with development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could result in disturbance of human remains. Compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and Public Resources Code Section 5097.8 would ensure this potential impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Impact CUL-4. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update has the potential to disturb or damage tribal cultural resources. Implementation of applicable 2045 General Plan policies, State and federal regulations, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code would minimize adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources. With mitigation, impacts to tribal cultural resources would be less than significant.	**CUL-4(a) Workers Environmental Awareness Program.** For any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to invite a City-approved archaeologist to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The City would also invite consulting Tribe(s) to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness training program for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The WEAP training shall be conducted prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area. The WEAP would include relevant information regarding sensitive cultural resources and tribal cultural resources, including applicable regulations,	Less than significant after mitigation

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	protocols for avoidance, and consequences of violating State laws and regulations. The WEAP will also describe appropriate avoidance and impact minimization measures for tribal cultural resources that could be located at the project site and would outline what to do and who to contact if any potential cultural resources or tribal cultural resources are encountered. The WEAP would emphasize the requirement for confidentiality and culturally appropriate treatment of any discovery of significance to Native Americans and would discuss appropriate behaviors and responsive actions, consistent with local tribal values. **CUL-4(b) Tribal Cultural Monitoring.** For any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to retain a tribal monitor to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities that will occur within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource.	
Hydrology and Water Quality		
Impact HYD-1. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in construction and operational activities which may contribute to soil erosion and degraded water quality. Development facilitated by the plan would be required to adhere to existing NPDES permits and Municipal Code requirements which would minimize the potential for development to degrade water quality. This impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Impact HYD-2. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would increase the amount of impervious surface area and increase groundwater demand in Santa Maria. Compliance with the Central Coast RWQCB, Municipal Code, and 2045 General Plan Update policies would ensure the proposed Plan would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge. This impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
Impact HYD-3. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would potentially alter the existing drainage pattern on individual project sites throughout the city. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to adhere to existing NPDES Permit and Municipal Code requirements which would ensure development would not substantially alter existing drainage patterns. This impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Impact HYD-4. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update may occur in flood hazard areas. Compliance with applicable municipal code requirements and proposed Safety Element policies would ensure development within areas subject to inundation would be sited, designed, and constructed as to not exacerbate risks from release of pollutants from inundation. This impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Impact HYD-5. There is no sustainable groundwater management plans for the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin; however, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be subject to the Basin Plan. Future development facilitated by the plan would not conflict with the Basin Plan as it would be required to adhere to federal, State, and local regulations to minimize water quality impacts in compliance with the Basin Plan. This impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Noise		
Impact NOI-1. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in construction noise that may impact nearby noise-sensitive land uses. The plan would introduce new noise sources and contribute to an increase in long-term operational noise levels within the city limit as well as the annexation area. Implementation of required noise-reduction mitigation, as well as policies and actions in the plan, would minimize disturbance to noise-sensitive land uses. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would avoid or fully mitigate for the increase in construction and traffic noise in the plan area. As a result, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact.	**NOI-1 Conditions of Approval to Reduce Construction Noise**. The City of Santa Maria shall review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, require construction contractors to implement the following feasible measures as standard conditions of approval. Construction plans submitted to the City shall include construction noise analysis and identify these measures on demolition, grading, and construction plans submitted to the City. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall verify that grading, demolition, and/or construction plans submitted to the City include these notations prior to issuance of demolition, grading and/or building permits. Project specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site specific conditions. ▪ **Mufflers**. During excavation and grading construction phases, all construction equipment, fixed or mobile, shall be operated with closed	Significant and unavoidable

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
	engine doors and shall be equipped with properly operating and maintained mufflers consistent with manufacturers' standards. ▪ **Stationary Equipment**. All stationary construction equipment shall be placed so that emitted noise is directed away from the nearest sensitive receptors. ▪ **Equipment Staging Areas**. Equipment staging shall be located in areas that will create the greatest distance feasible between construction-related noise sources and noise-sensitive receptors. ▪ **Smart Back-up Alarms**. Mobile construction equipment shall have smart back-up alarms that automatically adjust the sound level of the alarm in response to ambient noise levels. Alternatively, back-up alarms shall be disabled and replaced with human spotters to ensure safety when mobile construction equipment is moving in the reverse direction in compliance with applicable safety laws and regulations. ▪ **Electrically-Powered Tools and Facilities**. Electrical power shall be used to run air compressors and similar power tools and to power any temporary structures, such as construction trailers or caretaker facilities, where feasible. ▪ **Noise Disturbance Coordinator**. The project applicant shall designate a "noise disturbance coordinator" responsible for responding to any local complaints about construction noise. The disturbance coordinator shall determine the cause of any noise complaint and shall require that reasonable measures be implemented to correct the problem. A telephone number for the disturbance coordinator and the City shall be posted at the construction site. ▪ **Temporary Noise Barriers**. Erect temporary noise barriers, where feasible, when construction noise is predicted to exceed the acceptable standards (e.g., 80 dBA Leq at residential receptors, schools or other sensitive receptors during the daytime) or when the anticipated construction duration is greater than is typical (e.g., two years or greater). Temporary noise barriers shall be constructed with solid materials (e.g., wood) with a density of at least 1.5 pounds per square foot with no gaps from the ground to the top of the barrier. If a sound blanket is used, barriers shall be constructed with solid material with a density of at least 1 pound per square foot with no gaps from the ground to the top of the barrier and be lined on the construction side with acoustical blanket, curtain or equivalent absorptive material rated sound transmission class (STC) 32 or higher.	

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
Impact NOI-2. Construction activity from buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update would generate groundborne vibration, potentially affecting nearby land uses. Implementation of required mitigation, as well as policies and actions in the plan, would ensure vibration levels would not exceed applicable thresholds for building damage. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant with mitigation.	**NOI-2 Conditions of Approval to Reduce Construction Vibration**. The City of Santa Maria shall review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, require construction contractors to implement the following feasible buffers for construction equipment as standard conditions of approval. Construction plans submitted to the City shall include construction vibration analysis and identify the following buffer distances during demolition, grading, and construction plans submitted to the City. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall verify that grading, demolition, and/or construction plans submitted to the City include these notations prior to issuance of demolition, grading and/or building permits. Project specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site specific conditions. To reduce potential construction vibration impacts, the City of Santa Maria shall require the following: ▪ Prior to the issuance of a building permit for a project requiring pile driving during construction, the project applicant shall prepare a groundborne noise and vibration analysis to assess and mitigate potential noise and vibration impacts related to the following construction activities: 1) within 135 feet of fragile structures such as historical resources; 2) within 100 feet of non-engineered timber and masonry buildings (e.g., most residential buildings), or within 75 feet of engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster); 3) use of a vibratory roller within 40 feet of fragile historical resources or 25 feet of any other structure; or 4) use of a dozer or other large earthmoving equipment within 20 feet for a fragile historical structure or 15 feet of any other structure. The noise and vibration analysis shall be conducted by a qualified and experienced acoustical consultant or engineer. The vibration levels shall not exceed the City's architectural damage thresholds (e.g., 0.12 in/sec PPV for fragile or historical resources, 0.2 in/sec PPV for non-engineered timber and masonry buildings, and 0.3 in/sec PPV for engineered concrete and masonry). If vibration levels would exceed this threshold, alternative uses such as drilling piles as opposed to pile driving, static rollers as opposed to vibratory rollers, and lower horsepower earthmoving equipment shall be used. If necessary, construction vibration monitoring shall be conducted to ensure the FTA's vibration thresholds are not exceeded.	Less than significant

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
Impact NOI-3. Buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update could expose people residing or working in the plan area to excessive noise levels from airport noise. Implementation of policies and actions in the plan would ensure this impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Transportation and Traffic		
Impact TRA-1. The 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS, the Sant Maria Active Transportation Plan, or any other applicable program, plan, ordinance, or policy relevant to the transportation system. This impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Impact TRA-2. The future (2045) citywide rates of VMT with the 2045 General Plan Update would not meet the 17% VMT reduction target required to be consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15064.3(b). There are no feasible General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could reduce citywide rates of VMT below the VMT reduction target. As a result, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact.	No feasible mitigation is available.	Significant and unavoidable
Impact TRA-3. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would comply with State, Santa Maria Fire Department, and City requirements related to transportation design safety and emergency access. With adherence to these requirements, the 2045 General Plan Update would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or result in inadequate emergency access, and this impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant
Utilities and Service Systems		
Impact UTIL-1. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would increase demand for additional utility infrastructure which may require relocation or construction of utility facilities or services to serve plan buildout beyond existing conditions, specifically within the annexation area. However, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be constructed consistent with applicable City code, buildings standards, and engineering standards. Therefore, these impacts would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant

Impact	Mitigation Measure (s)	Residual Impact
Impact UTIL-2. The overall growth anticipated by the 2045 General Plan Update would generate additional water demand in Santa Maria that could exceed projected water supplies during some Multiple Dry-Years. With the implementation of existing policies and programs, this impact would be less than significant**.**	None required	Less than significant
Impact UTIL-3. The 2045 General Plan Update would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure. New development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with applicable solid waste reduction statutes and regulations. This impact would be less than significant.	None required	Less than significant

1 Introduction

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) examines the potential environmental effects of the proposed City of Santa Maria (City) 2045 General Plan Update ("plan"). The environmental review process for the plan, and legal basis for preparing an EIR, are described below.

1.1 Environmental Impact Report Background

1.1.1 Overview of the Plan

State law (Government Code Section 65300) requires that each city and county adopt a comprehensive general plan. Elements of the City's existing General Plan have been updated between 1991 and 2023. The proposed 2045 General Plan Update is a comprehensive effort to update the existing General Plan and responds to current local and regional conditions, as well as changes in State law that may not have been in effect when the General Plan was written. The proposed 2045 General Plan Update has been organized into the following elements: Land Use; Circulation; Safety; Health and Environmental Justice; Conservation and Open Space, Noise, Public Facilities and Services; Recreation and Parks; Economic Development; and Housing Element. The Housing Element was adopted in December 2023. Together, these elements cover all topics required to be included in a General Plan under State law.

The General Plan defines the policy framework by which the City's physical and economic resources are to be managed and used over the next 20 years. City decision-makers will use the General Plan as a blueprint for:

- Choices about the use of land
- Protection of environmental resources
- Conservation and development of housing
- Provision of supporting infrastructure and public and human services
- Protection of people and property from natural and man-made hazards

Through the General Plan, the City informs its stakeholders (residents, property owners, businesses, developers, etc.) of its goals, policies, and standards, and thereby communicates expectations of the public and private sectors for meeting community objectives.

Since the plan serves as a constitution for future development in Santa Maria, any future decisions by the City affecting land use and development must be consistent with the adopted General Plan. An action, program, or project would be considered consistent with the General Plan if, considering all of its aspects, it will further the objectives and policies of the General Plan or not obstruct their attainment.

The plan contains goals, policies, and implementation programs to implement the City's overarching objectives. Goals are statements that provide direction and state the desired end condition. Policies establish basic courses of action to achieve these goals, and directly guide the response of elected and appointed officials to development proposals and related community actions. Implementation programs are specific actions, procedures, standards or techniques that the City must take to help achieve a specified goal or implement an adopted policy.

1.1.2 Purpose and Legal Authority

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a) (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3), the purpose of an EIR is to:

> Inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project.

This EIR fulfills the requirements for a Program EIR. Although the legally required contents of a Program EIR are the same as those of a Project EIR, Program EIRs are by necessity more conceptual and may contain a more general discussion of impacts, alternatives, and mitigation measures than a Project EIR. As provided in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, a Program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that may be characterized as one large project. Use of a Program EIR provides the City (as Lead Agency) with the opportunity to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures and provides the City with greater flexibility to address environmental issues and/or cumulative impacts on a comprehensive basis. Agencies generally prepare Program EIRs for programs or a series of related actions that are linked geographically, are logical parts of a chain of contemplated events, rules, regulations, or plans that govern the conduct of a continuing program, or are individual activities carried out under the same authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways. By its nature, a Program EIR considers the broad effects associated with implementing a program (such as a General Plan or Specific Plan) and does not, and is not intended to, examine the specific environmental effects associated with specific projects that may be accommodated by the provisions of General or Specific Plans.

Once a Program EIR has been prepared, subsequent activities within the program must be evaluated to determine what, if any, additional CEQA documentation needs to be prepared. If the Program EIR addresses the program's effects as specifically and comprehensively as possible, many subsequent activities could be found to be within the Program EIR scope and additional environmental documentation may not be required (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[c]). When a Lead agency relies on a Program EIR for a subsequent activity, it must incorporate applicable mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the Program EIR into the subsequent activities (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[c][3]). If a subsequent activity would have effects not contemplated or not within the scope of the Program EIR, the Lead Agency must prepare a new Initial Study leading to a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or a plan level EIR. In this case, the Program EIR serves a valuable purpose as the first-tier environmental analysis. CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(b) encourage the use of Program EIRs, citing five advantages:

- Provision of a more exhaustive consideration of impacts and alternatives than would be practical in an individual EIR.
- Focus on cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis.
- Avoidance of continual reconsideration of recurring policy issues.
- Consideration of broad policy alternatives and programmatic mitigation measures at an early stage when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with them.
- Reduction of paperwork by encouraging the reuse of data (through tiering).

As a wide-ranging environmental document, the Program EIR uses expansive thresholds as compared to the project-level thresholds that might be used for an EIR on a specific development

project. It should not be assumed that impacts determined not to be significant at a program level would not be significant at a project level. In other words, determination that implementation of the plan as a program would not have a significant environmental effect does not necessarily mean that an individual project would not have significant effects based on project-level CEQA thresholds, even if the project is consistent with the plan.

This EIR has been prepared to analyze potentially significant environmental impacts associated with future development resulting from implementation of the plan and provides appropriate and feasible mitigation measures or plan alternatives that would minimize or eliminate these impacts. Additionally, this EIR provides the primary source of environmental information for the City of Santa Maria, which is the Lead Agency, to use when considering approval and implementation of the plan.

This EIR is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with information that enables intelligent consideration of the environmental consequences of the plan. This EIR identifies significant or potentially significant environmental effects, as well as ways in which those impacts could be reduced below applicable thresholds of significance, whether through the imposition of mitigation measures or through the implementation of specific alternatives to the plan. In a practical sense, this EIR functions as a tool for fact-finding, allowing concerned citizens and City staff an opportunity to collectively review and evaluate baseline conditions and plan impacts through a process of full disclosure.

1.2 Scope and Content

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft EIR was circulated to potentially interested parties on February 15, 2025. The NOP, included in Appendix A, indicated that all issues on the City's environmental checklist would be discussed in the EIR. These include:

- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

This EIR evaluates potential impacts in each of these areas. Impacts regarding the CEQA topics of Aesthetics, Energy, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, and Wildfire were determined to not be significant and are analyzed in Section 4.10 of this EIR.

The focus of this EIR is to:

- Review and evaluate potentially significant environmental impacts that could occur as a result of the growth and development envisioned in the plan
- Identify feasible mitigation measures that may reduce or eliminate potentially significant effects associated with the plan
- Disclose any potential growth-inducing and/or cumulative impacts associated with the plan
- Examine a reasonable range of alternative growth scenarios (including growth according to the existing General Plan, reduced growth, and alternative locations within the City for growth) that could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the plan, while eliminating and/or reducing some or all of its potentially significant adverse environmental effects

The City staff circulated a NOP of this EIR from February 15, 2025 through March 17, 2025 and received seven written responses. The responses, included in Appendix A, are addressed, as appropriate, in the analysis contained in the various sections of Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. The City staff also conducted a scoping meeting on February 27, 2025 with three members of the public in attendance. Few comments were made during the meeting, with most focusing on the proposed annexation area. One attendee inquired about the proposed plan's intentionss for Mahoney Ranch. Staff clarified that the plan does not propose changes to Mahoney Ranch. However, concerns were noted regarding potential future development in the area, particularly due to the presence of California tiger salamander (CTS) and other sensitive species. No specific questions were raised regarding the EIR itself. Table 1-1 shows a summary of the written comments. The NOP and written comments are included in Appendix A.

Table 1-1 NOP Comments and EIR Response

Commenter	Issue Area/Issues Raised	Where Addressed in the EIR
Agency Comments		
Santa Barbara County Flood Control & Water Conservation District	Recommends all development of one acre or greater adhere to the City of Santa Maria and County of Santa Barbara Flood Control District's Standard Conditions of Project Plan Approval.	Section 4.5, *Hydrology and Water Quality*
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	Requests the EIR include a discussion pertaining to the direct and indirect biological impacts creation of trails and trail management would have on habitats and special status species.	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*
	Requests that the EIR analyze impacts to local wildlife movement.	
	Requests that the EIR provide an adequate, complete, and detailed disclosure about the effects the proposed plan would have on the environment	*Executive Summary*
	Requests the EIR include a complete discussion of the purpose and need for, and description of the proposed plan.	Chapter 2, *Project Description*
	Requests the EIR include an alternative analysis that would reduce biological resources impacts	Chapter 6, *Alternatives*
	Requests that the EIR include an adequate biological resource baseline assessment	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*
	Requests that the EIR provide a thorough discussion of direct and indirect impacts expected to affect biological resources with specific measures to offset such impacts .	
	Recommends the EIR evaluate the plan's potential cumulative impacts on biological resources	
	Recommends specific mitigation to reduce potential impacts to nesting birds as a result of plan implementation	
	Recommends the inclusion of feasible mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to biological resources in the EIR	
	Recommends the use of compensatory mitigation measures for potentially significant impacts to sensitive and special status plants, animals, and habitats.	

Commenter	Issue Area/Issues Raised	Where Addressed in the EIR
	For proposed mitigation lands, CDFW recommends the use of measures to protect the targeted habitat values in perpetuity.	
	Should the plan result in take of a species designated as endangered or threatened, or a candidate for listing under CESA, CDFW recommends that the plan proponent seek appropriate take authorization under CESA prior to plan implementation.	
	Expresses that CDFW does not support the translocation and transplantation as a primary mitigation strategy for unavoidable impacts to endangered, rare, or threatened plants and animals.	
	Requires that a Scientific Collecting Permit be obtained if there is a plan to capture and relocate wildlife	
	Requires that the plan applicant provide written notification to CDFW for any activities that would occur in streams, rivers, or lakes that would divert or obstruct the natural flow, change the bed, channel, or bank.	
	Strongly discourages development in or conversion of wetlands	
	Recommends the use of a native plant palette	
	Requests that any special status species and natural communities detected during plan surveys be reported through the California Natural Diversity Database	
Santa Barbara County Planning and Development	Requests that the EIR include analysis of the potential impacts to agricultural resources and policy consistency related to the establishment of a greenbelt and urban development buffer policy to preserve prime agricultural land	Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*
	Requests that the EIR include analysis of the potential impacts to agricultural resources and policy consistency related to future specific plans	
	Requests that the EIR include analysis of the potential impacts to agricultural resources and policy consistency related to LAFCO's policies encouraging conservation of prime agricultural lands	
	Requests that the EIR include analysis of the potential impacts to agricultural resources and policy consistency related to the premature intrusion of urbanization into a predominantly agricultural or rural area.	
	Requests the EIR analyze indirect impacts to county unincorporated areas including County roadways and any necessary roadway improvements related to the proposed plan.	Section 4.7, *Transportation*
	Requests that the EIR analyze the changes in land use patterns that could result from the 2045 General Plan Update and evaluate the consistency of those changes with adopted state, regional, and local plans and regulations.	Section 4.9, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*
	Requests that the EIR describe potential impacts related to energy usage and conservation, as well as potential inconsistencies with relevant energy reduction and sustainability plans and policies, that could occur from future development enabled under the 2045 General Plan Update	Section 4.9, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*

Commenter	Issue Area/Issues Raised	Where Addressed in the EIR
	Requests that the EIR evaluate (an) alternative(s) with a proposal that does not include annexation; a proposal that does not include new development on prime agricultural land; and a proposed that provides opportunities for housing development and growth through land use changes and increased densities of existing land within urban boundaries	Chapter 6, *Alternatives*
California Department of Conservation	Requests that the EIR discuss the loss or conversion of agricultural land and include the type, amount, and location of farmland conversion; impacts on current and future agricultural operations; cumulative impacts on agricultural land; implementation of any City or County Agricultural Mitigation Plans, Programs, or Policies; proposed mitigation measures; and the plan's compatibility with lands within an agricultural preserve and/or enrolled in a Williamson Act contract	Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*
	Requests that the EIR discuss the compatibility of the plan with the contract and local Wiliamson Act program requirements	
	Recommends that the environmental review address mitigation for the loss or conversion of agricultural land and provides mitigation measure examples	
Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District	Requests that the EIR analyze the plan's consistency with the District's Ozone Plan	Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*
	Requests that the EIR should present significance thresholds for ozone precursor emissions (reactive organic compounds [ROC], and oxides of nitrogen [NO_X]) and particulate matter and determine whether the proposed plan will produce emissions in excess of the thresholds.	
	Requests that the EIR include a description and quantification of potential air quality impacts associated with construction activities for the proposed plan. The analysis should consider the fact that multiple construction projects could occur simultaneously in any specific portion of the Plan area and provides examples of mitigation measures.	
	Requests that the EIR examine whether any of the land use designation and zoning changes associated with the proposed plan will result in air quality impacts to sensitive land uses such as residential, childcare facilities, schools, or senior living communities and provides examples of mitigation measures.	
	Recommends that sensitive land uses, such as residential, should not be sited within 500 feet of the highway. If, after consideration of the health concerns and other alternatives, sensitive uses are still planned within 500 feet of a freeway or a high traffic roadway, future development projects should be required to adopt design features to minimize exposure to roadway-related pollutants and mitigate potential impacts to the maximum extent feasible.	This comment is about the 2045 General Plan Update and not the environmental review process.
	Requests the EIR include a discussion of how materials will be removed in compliance with District Rule 1001 – National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) – Asbestos.	Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*

Commenter	Issue Area/Issues Raised	Where Addressed in the EIR
	Requests that the EIR include a quantification of GHG emissions from all plan sources (direct and indirect), present significance thresholds, and make a determination regarding the significance of impacts. Climate change impacts be mitigated to the extent reasonably possible, regardless of whether they are determined to be significant.	
Native American Heritage Commission	Recommends consultation with California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed plan as early as possible to avoid inadvertent discoveries of Native American human remains and best protect tribal cultural resources	Section 4.4, *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources*
Individual Commenters		
Laurie Temura	Provided comments and edits on the project description	Chapter 2, *Project Description*

Source: Appendix A

The Draft EIR was circulated for a 45-day public review period that began on August 14, 2025 and ended on September 28, 2025. Two public meetings were held to receive comments on the Draft EIR, including a virtual meeting on August 19, 2025 and an in-person meeting at the City of Santa Maria Public Library on August 20, 2025. The City of Santa Maria received nine comment letters on the Draft EIR. Comments on the Draft EIR and responses are provided in Chapter 2 of the Final EIR.

1.3 Lead, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies

The City of Santa Maria is the lead agency under CEQA for this EIR because it has primary discretionary authority to determine whether or how to approve the plan. CEQA Guidelines Section 15381 defines responsible agencies as other public agencies that are responsible for carrying out/implementing a specific component of a plan or for approving a plan that implements the goals and policies of a General Plan. There are no responsible agencies for the plan. Although not responsible agencies under CEQA, several other agencies have review authority over aspects of the plan or approval authority over plans that could potentially be implemented in accordance with various objectives and policies included in the plan. These agencies and their roles are listed below.

- The Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) has responsibility for approving the annexations to the City that might occur over the life of the plan.
- The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has responsibility for approving future improvements to the U.S. Highway 101 and State Route Highway 135.
- The CDFW has responsibility for issuing take permits and streambed alteration agreements for any projects with the potential to affect plant or animal species listed by the State of California as rare, threatened, or endangered or that would disturb waters of the State.
- Any other public agencies which may own land within City boundaries.

Trustee agencies have jurisdiction over certain resources held in trust for the people of California but do not have a legal authority over approving or carrying out the plan. CEQA Guidelines Section 15386 designates four agencies as trustee agencies: CDFW with regards to fish and wildlife, native plants designated as rare or endangered, game refuges, and ecological reserves; the State Lands Commission, with regard to state-owned “sovereign” lands, such as the beds of navigable waters

and State school lands; the California Department of Parks and Recreation, with regard to units of the State park system; and the University of California, with regard to sites within the Natural Land and Water Reserves System. The CDFW, due to the potential for rare or endangered species, is the only trustee agency for the plan.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development has authority over the City's Housing Element. The Housing Element has undergone separate CEQA review and for that reason is not part of the plan being evaluated in this EIR. The Housing Element and Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration were adopted on December 5, 2023.

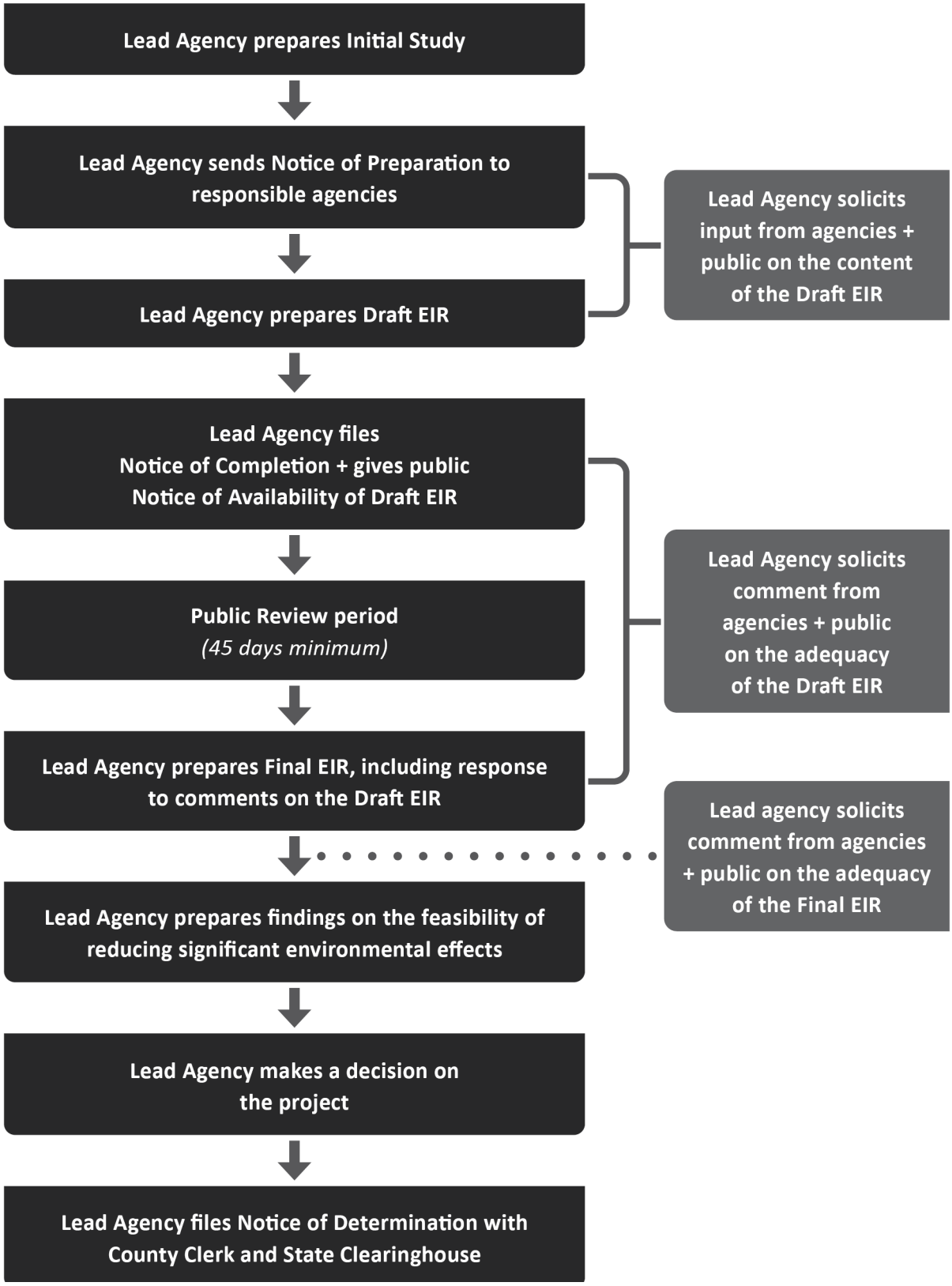
1.4 Environmental Review Process

The environmental impact review process required under CEQA is summarized below and illustrated in Figure 1-1. The steps appear in sequential order.

1. **Notice of Preparation Distributed.** Immediately after deciding that an EIR is required, the lead agency must file a NOP soliciting input on the EIR scope to "responsible," "trustee," and involved federal agencies; to the State Clearinghouse, if one or more state agencies is a responsible or trustee agency; and to parties previously requesting notice in writing. The NOP must be posted in the County Clerk's office for 30 days. A scoping meeting to solicit public input on the issues to be assessed in the EIR is not required but may be conducted by the lead agency. The NOP public comment period for the plan was from February 15 2025 to March 17, 2025 and a scoping meeting was held on February 27, 2025. Public comments were received in response to the NOP and scoping process.
2. **Draft EIR Prepared.** The Draft EIR must contain: a) table of contents or index; b) summary; c) project description; d) environmental setting; e) significant impacts (direct, indirect, cumulative, growth-inducing and unavoidable impacts); f) alternatives; g) mitigation measures; and h) irreversible changes.
3. **Public Notice and Review.** A lead agency must prepare a Public Notice of Availability of an EIR. The Notice must be placed in the County Clerk's office for 30 days (Public Resources Code Section 21092) and sent to anyone requesting it. Additionally, public notice of Draft EIR availability must be given through at least one of the following procedures: a) publication in a newspaper of general circulation; b) posting on and off the plan site; and c) direct mailing to owners and occupants of contiguous properties. The lead agency must consult with and request comments on the Draft EIR from responsible and trustee agencies, and adjacent cities and counties. When a Draft EIR is sent to the State Clearinghouse for review, the public review period must be 45 days, unless a shorter period is approved by the Clearinghouse (Public Resources Code 21091). Distribution of the Draft EIR may be required through the State Clearinghouse. This EIR will be circulated for a 45-day public review and will be sent to the State Clearinghouse.
4. **Notice of Completion.** A lead agency must file a Notice of Completion with the State Clearinghouse as soon as it completes a Draft EIR.
5. **Final EIR.** A Final EIR must include: a) any revisions to the Draft EIR; b) copies of comments received during public review; c) list of persons and entities commenting; and d) responses to comments.

6. **Certification of Final EIR.** The lead agency shall certify that: a) the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA; b) the Final EIR was presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency; and c) the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the Final EIR prior to approving a plan.
7. **Lead Agency Plan Decision.** A lead agency may: a) disapprove a plan because of its significant environmental effects; b) require changes to a plan to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects; or c) approve a plan despite its significant environmental effects, if the proper findings and statement of overriding considerations are adopted.
8. **Findings/Statement of Overriding Considerations.** For each significant impact of the plan identified in the EIR, the lead or responsible agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that: a) the plan has been changed to avoid or substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact; b) changes to the plan are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted; or c) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or plan alternatives infeasible. If an agency approves a plan with unavoidable significant environmental effects, it must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that set forth the specific social, economic, or other reasons supporting the agency's decision.
9. **Mitigation Monitoring/Reporting Program.** When an agency makes findings on significant effects identified in the EIR, it must adopt a reporting or monitoring program for mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of plan approval to mitigate significant effects.
10. **Notice of Determination.** An agency must file a Notice of Determination after deciding to approve a plan for which an EIR is prepared. A local agency must file the Notice with the County Clerk. The Notice must be posted for 30 days and sent to anyone previously requesting notice. Posting of the Notice starts a 30-day statute of limitations on CEQA challenges.

Figure 1-1 Environmental Review Process



2 Plan Description

The plan analyzed in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is the City of Santa Maria (City) 2045 General Plan Update, hereafter referred to as the "plan." This chapter of the EIR describes the key characteristics of the plan, including the plan proponent/lead agency, the geographic extent of the plan, plan objectives, required approvals, and the development forecasted by the plan.

2.1 Plan Purpose

The plan is an update to the City's current General Plan, which includes the following chapters: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Safety Element, Health and Environmental Justice Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, Noise Element, Public Facilities and Services Element, Recreation and Parks Element, and Economic Development Element. The plan establishes the City's vision for future development through the horizon year of 2045. The plan will serve as the City's primary guide for future land use and development decisions in a way that meets the community needs and priorities while serving as a key tool for influencing and improving the quality of life for residents and businesses. As such, it serves as the "blueprint" for future development and conservation of a community. The 2045 General Plan Update, together with the already adopted 6th Cycle Housing Element, will help the City plan for important community issues, such as community growth; housing, mobility, and infrastructure needs; climate change; and environmental protection. It will also set the stage for future social, physical, and economic development of the city.

2.2 Plan Proponent/Lead Agency

The City of Santa Maria is both the plan proponent and the lead agency for the proposed plan. The City's Community Development Department (located at 110 South Pine Street, Suite 101, Santa Maria, California 93458) prepared this EIR with the assistance of Rincon Consultants, Inc. and Raimi + Associates.

2.3 Plan Area Location and Environmental Setting

2.3.1 Regional Location

The City of Santa Maria is located in northern Santa Barbara County, surrounded by the hills of the Santa Maria River Valley (see Figure 2-1). The plan area involves all land within the Santa Maria Sphere of Influence[1] (SOI) and includes the annexation of areas east of the city limits (see Figure 2-2). The City of Santa Maria is generally bound by the Santa Maria River to the north, agricultural lands to the east and west, and the unincorporated town of Orcutt to the south.

[1] The term "sphere of influence" applies to the area designated by the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as the probable, future physical boundary or service area of the city. Overall, planning decisions made for the city are assumed to have a bearing on growth and development in these unincorporated adjacent areas. Areas not included as part of the annexation for the 2045 General Plan will continue to be deferred to the County land use designations and regulations in the SOI. Any development or change that happens in the SOI during the lifetime of the General Plan will occur under the jurisdiction of the County. Therefore, this EIR does not evaluate impacts resulting from future growth within the SOI, outside of the proposed annexation, as part of the proposed plan. However, where relevant, this EIR does evaluate potential impacts resulting from future growth within the city limits to lands within the SOI. The SOI is also included in the cumulative setting for this EIR.

Figure 2-1 Regional Location

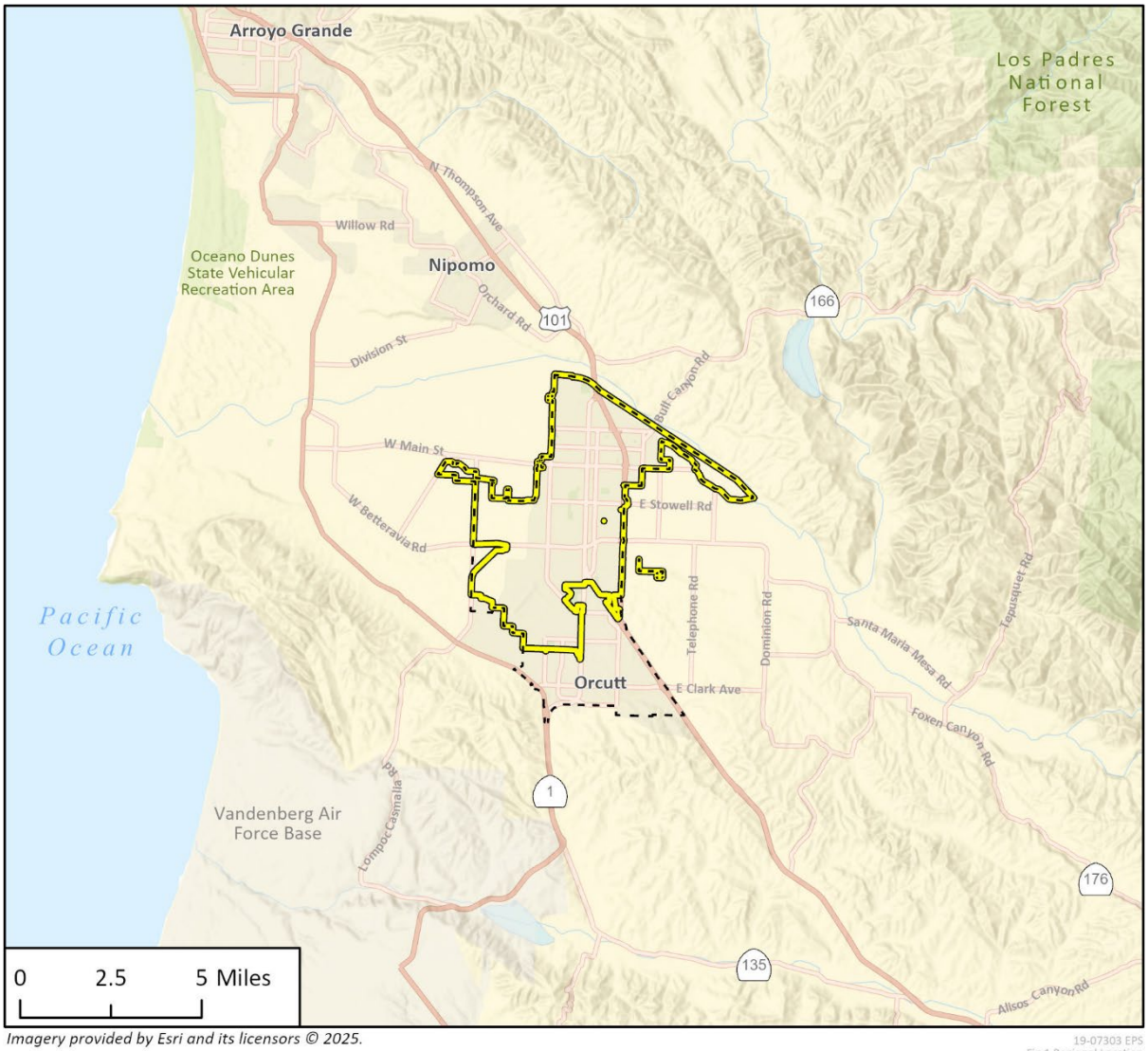
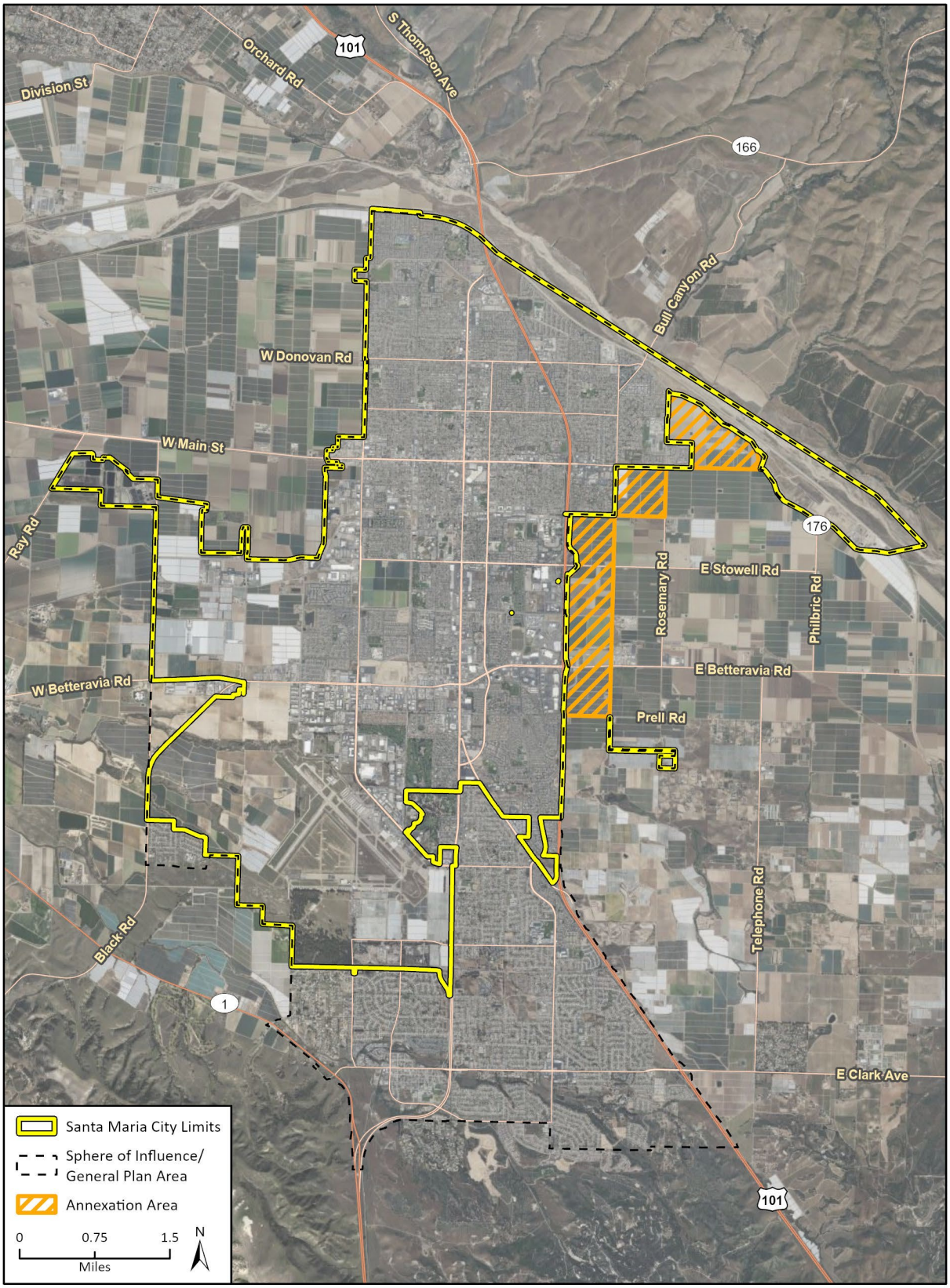


Figure 2-2 Plan Area Location



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19-07303 EPS
Fig 2 Project Location

U.S. Highway 101 (U.S. 101) forms the eastern edge of the city. A linear portion of Santa Maria is also located to the ~~west~~ east of U.S. 101. This portion of the city extends south from Prell Road then extends east along an internal farm road. Santa Maria is located approximately 25 miles south of San Luis Obispo, 50 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, 250 miles south of San Francisco and 170 miles north of Los Angeles.

Principal regional transportation facilities serving Santa Maria are U.S. 101, State Route 135 (SR 135), State Route 166 (SR 166), and the Santa Maria Valley Airport. Regional transit is provided by Santa Maria Regional Transit, Clean Air Express, and the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority. Regional rail is provided by Amtrak.

2.3.2 Local Setting

The City of Santa Maria is characterized as a suburban residential community. The plan area covers approximately 15,058 acres within the city limits and approximately 4,500 acres within the SOI (City of Santa Maria 2020). ~~Approximately 27 percent of land within Santa Maria is occupied with residential uses, primarily consisting of single-family residences (22 percent). Agricultural uses occupy 14 percent of the city, airport uses occupy 11 percent, public and institutional uses occupy 11 percent, and commercial uses occupy 7 percent. Approximately 19 percent of the city is comprised of vacant land.~~ Residential land uses are distributed throughout the city. Non-residential land uses, including industrial and commercial, commonly line major corridors in Santa Maria, including Broadway, Main Street, and Betteravia Road. Agricultural and vacant uses are located at the periphery of the city. The city is underlain by the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Subbasin. The local climate in Santa Maria is identified as a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters.

2.3.3 Existing Plan Area Characteristics

The plan area covers approximately 15,058 acres and 4,500 acres within the SOI.. Approximately 110,608 people live within the plan area as of January 2024, resulting in population density of approximately 640 people per square mile. There are 31,412 residential units within the plan area as of 2024 (California Department of Finance 2024).

The annexation area evaluated in the plan (discussed in detail in Section 2.6.3) covers 985 acres east of the City of Santa Maria's limits.

2.4 Regulatory Setting

State law (Government Code Sections 65300 through 65303.4) requires each municipality to adopt and periodically update its General Plan and requires that a General Plan include the following mandatory subject areas, or "elements": Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Safety, and Environmental Justice. Municipalities may also prepare optional elements that can be organized or combined at the municipality's discretion.

The plan has been organized into the following elements: Land Use; Circulation; Safety, Health and Environmental Justice; Conservation and Open Space; Noise; Public Facilities and Services; Recreation and Parks Element; and Economic Development. Together with the already adopted 6th Cycle Housing Element, these elements cover all topics required to be included in a General Plan under State law. The City of Santa Maria City Council adopted the 6th Cycle Housing Element on

December 5, 2023. The plan may require additional updates to the adopted Housing Element, although such updates are anticipated to be for consistency with the plan.

Under State law a property's zoning is required to be consistent with its General Plan land use designation (Government Code Section 65860). Section 65860(c) of the Government Code requires that when a General Plan is amended or updated in a way that makes the Zoning Ordinance inconsistent with the General Plan, "the zoning ordinance shall be amended within a reasonable time so that it is consistent with the general plan as amended."

2.5 Plan Objectives

The plan will serve as a long-term framework for future growth and development, represents the community's view of its future, and contains the goals and policies upon with the City Council, Planning Commission, and the entire community will base land use and resource decisions. The plan will provide a contemporary plan that will guide Santa Maria though the next 20 years. The primary objective of this plan is to update the existing Santa Maria General Plan in order for it to be compliant with State law.

The plan would implement the following vision to guide development.

Vision. Santa Maria in 2045 is a community where families can establish and maintain multi-generational roots. It is close-knit, culturally diverse, and economically inclusive. This is possible, in part, because Santa Maria offers affordable, safe, attractive, and healthy homes and neighborhoods for all residents. This is also possible because of the availability of high-quality education, jobs, and economic opportunity. Building from a strong foundation in the agricultural, retail, healthcare, and business services industries, Santa Maria has continued to diversify by expanding the training and skills of residents and by adapting to new technologies and broader economic trends. People are proud of their history and heritage. This is reflected in the diverse, well-preserved historical resources and the attractive, inviting streets and public gathering places. Museums, art venues, a strong civic sector, and the many welcoming community events and celebrations are all evidence of a vibrant local culture. Residents have convenient access on foot and by car, bus, and bicycle to jobs, schools, community amenities like parks and sports fields, and the region's natural environment. Public services are reliable, inclusive, and efficient, and the community is well-served by equitable, modern, and sustainable infrastructure, facilities, and utilities.

The City identifies the following 11 guiding principles, which also serve as the proposed plan objectives for the purposes of complying with CEQA.

- **Agricultural Identity.** Continue to support the agricultural industry and its workforce. Balance the protection of prime agricultural land with the development necessary to support continued population growth and the diversification of the local economy.
- **Culture, History, and Art.** Celebrate and share Santa Maria's multicultural heritage and contemporary diversity. Preserve historic resources, foster the arts, maintain a strong sense of community through cultural festivals, and invite visitors to enjoy the richness of local expression and resources.
- **Community Design.** Create public spaces that reflect the community identity, foster civic pride, and invite community members to gather, both informally and for events. Design streets, buildings, and landscaping that reflect the community's history, culture, and natural environment. Use lighting, street trees, benches, and other amenities to make sidewalks and

public spaces safe and welcoming, with a focus on the Downtown and along the Main and Broadway corridors.

- **Community Health.** Grow and expand physical and mental healthcare services to meet the needs of all residents. Improve community health by addressing the environmental justice priorities of disadvantaged communities, including seniors, low-income households, linguistically isolated families, the homeless, and youth, who comprise 35 percent of residents. Minimize residents' potential for exposure to noise, pesticides, and industrial pollution. Foster healthy lifestyles by expanding safe and attractive options for physical activity and by expanding healthy food access.
- **Natural Environment and Resilience.** Conserve water resources in the city and support efforts to maintain the Santa Maria River. Expand opportunities to enjoy the area's natural resources and the region's beauty. Safeguard the community from natural hazards, including those exacerbated by climate change.
- **Housing Quality and Choice.** Develop a high-quality and diverse housing supply at all levels of affordability that preserves Santa Maria as a place where families can establish roots and today's youth can afford to stay. Balance the growth of housing and the economy so that people can live and work in Santa Maria. As new housing types are introduced, (e.g., accessory dwelling units (ADUs)), adapt parking, transportation, and other community features. Develop workforce housing solutions that provide safe, healthy, and comfortable homes for workers and their families.
- **Resilient Economy.** Cultivate a diverse and resilient economy in which local businesses and families thrive and job growth keeps apace with housing development. Grow the existing economic base in agriculture, retail, healthcare, and business services, and expand into new industries. Ensure access to high quality education that is aligned with local industries and entrepreneurship.
- **Connected Growth.** To accommodate projected population, housing, and jobs growth, focus on improvements to existing neighborhoods along with infill and vacant site development. Expand beyond current city limits when needed, weighing the short and long term environmental, economic, infrastructure, public service, and fiscal trade-offs. Establish strong cultural, design, and physical connections between newly developed areas and the rest of Santa Maria.
- **Transportation Innovations.** Develop a balanced, equitable, affordable, and reliable transportation network where pedestrians, cyclists, trucks, cars, rail, and transit can safely and efficiently navigate to destinations within Santa Maria. Focus on maintaining existing roadways, expanding walking and biking options, and reducing congestion and maintenance costs. Transform corridors and streets from points of conflict among people, cyclists, cars, and trucks into places that bring neighborhoods and families together. Prepare for and expand regional connections with enhanced bus, rail, and air service. Prepare for technological advances like autonomous vehicles and remote work, and take advantage of opportunities and incentives to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- **Infrastructure, Utilities, Facilities, and Services**. Provide residents and businesses with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure and utilities, including water, wastewater, flood control, gas, phone, cable, and broadband internet. Deliver high-quality services and facilities for all community members, including expedient emergency response, accessible health care, high-quality education and career training, and convenient and equitable access to well-maintained parks and recreational facilities.

- **Governance and Engagement.** Continue to conduct and increase meaningful and inclusive civic engagement that empowers a diversity of perspectives in public decision-making. Provide residents and businesses with high-quality, equitable, and accessible customer service, including City communications and events in multiple languages and interpretation services. Partner with community organizations and institutions to build trust and increase participation, including among youth, who will be the City leaders in 2045.

2.6 Plan Characteristics

2.6.1 2045 General Plan Update Organization

The elements included in the plan are further described in this section.

- **Conservation and Open Space Element.** This element outlines the development, management, and preservation of natural, tribal, cultural, and historic resources within the plan area. Goals, policies, and actions within this element address climate change adaptation and resilience in relation to natural resources, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, urban forestry, and the use of open space for the conservation of natural, cultural, and other resources as well as for hazard mitigation.
- **Safety Element.** This element addresses natural and manmade safety hazards in Santa Maria, including geologic and seismic hazards, fire hazards, flooding, hazardous materials, and emergency response and establishes policies and actions to mitigate hazard impacts to people and property. The Safety Element also evaluates evacuation capacity under a range of hazard scenarios, identifies single-access neighborhoods, and establishes policies and actions to enhance evacuation capacity throughout the city, consistent with Assembly Bill (AB) 747 and Senate Bill (SB) 99. In accordance with SB 379, this element also includes a climate change vulnerability assessment and measures to address climate vulnerabilities and hazard mitigation and emergency response.
- **Land Use.** This element designates the placement and distribution of future development to facilitate orderly growth within the city. This element establishes future land use patterns and specifies appropriate residential density and development intensity. Goals and policies serve as a guide for decision makers to direct the development of the city. Additionally, this element provides an overall design framework for the city with the goal of preserving community character and highlighting community gateways and views.
- **Circulation.** This element provides a framework for the City's multimodal transportation network, addressing the movement of people and goods in and around Santa Maria, while ensuring the orderly improvement of the circulation system in response to the Land Use Element. This element also establishes policies related to the electrification of vehicles and commercial enterprises promoting Mobility as a Service (MaaS), complete streets (AB 1358) and VMT (SB 743).
- **Public Facilities and Services Element.** This element evaluates existing and future conditions related to the provision and maintenance of public buildings and services, including parks, schools, libraries, police, fire, and water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This element presents goals, policies, and actions related to public facilities and services in order to sustain existing households and businesses and accommodate future growth in population, employment, and development.

- **Recreation and Parks Element.** This element inventories existing park and recreational resources throughout the city and evaluates future conditions and needs related to parks and recreation. Goals, policies, and actions within this element aim to facilitate equitable distribution of resources and investments to meet the recreational needs of all community members.
- **Economic Development Element.** This element includes goals, policies, and actions related to the retention and expansion of existing business sectors, as well as diversifying the economy to develop new kinds of businesses in Santa Maria.
- **Noise Element.** This element identifies and evaluates sources of noise and groundborne vibration and aims to minimize excessive noise exposure and noise conflicts. This element would be consistent with the Santa Maria Public Airport Master Plan and include new noise contours.
- **Health and Environmental Justice Element.** This element identifies disadvantaged communities within the city and includes goals, policies, and actions to reduce pollution exposure, promote access to food, public facilities, and safe housing, and strengthen civic engagement in City planning and decision making.

The City recently updated its Housing Element. The Housing Element provides the City's action plan for meeting the City's 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 5,418 dwelling units for the 6th Cycle Housing Element (2023 to 2031). The Housing Element has undergone separate CEQA review and for that reason is not part of the plan being evaluated in this EIR. The Housing Element and Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration were adopted on December 5, 2023.

2.6.2 Land Use Designations

The current Santa Maria General Plan Land Use Element establishes 30 separate land use designations to provide a mixture of land uses for the City. The existing City of Santa Maria Land Use Designations Map is shown in Figure 2-3.

The plan would change the land use designation on select parcels, some of which will resolve inconsistencies between existing uses and the General Plan land use designations. In addition, the plan includes the following land use designation changes:

- Revise the High Density Residential (HDR) land use designation to increase the maximum allowed density from 22 dwelling units/acre to 30 dwelling units/acre.
- Eliminate the Medium Density Residential-10 (MDR-10) land use designation and reassign all parcels currently designated MDR-10 to MDR-12, which would have an allowed density of 12 dwelling units/acre.
- Add three new land use designations, Corridor Mixed Use (CMU), Downtown Specific Plan (SP) and Planned Annexation (PA).

Land use changes for the proposed annexation areas east of the city limits (the planned annexation areas) are discussed in detail in Section 2.6.3. Figure 2-4 depicts the proposed land use designations, including the changes in land use designations compared to the current General Plan. Proposed changes from the existing General Plan land use pattern include the following:

- A parcel along North Broadway from Low Density Residential and Community Commercial to Community Facilities (CF);
- Parcels along Main Street from Community Commercial to Corridor Mixed Use (CMU));
- Parcels along Broadway from Community Commercial to Corridor Mixed Use (CMU); and

- Allow Low Density Residential in Area 9 along A Stret in the western portion of the city.

Changes in land use designations within the General Plan would also necessitate revisions to the following Specific Plans:

- Amend the Entrada Specific Plan to reflect the new Corridor Mixed Use land use designation.
- Amend the Area 9 Specific Plan to allow low-medium density residential (LMDR) uses along A Street with a maximum of 10 dwelling units per acre.

2.6.3 Annexation

The plan would include the annexation of areas east of the city limits and SOI. There are three separate areas (shown in Figure 2-5) that would be included as part of the proposed annexation ("annexation area") that would total 985 acres and would consist of the following Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs):

128-094-042	128-093-001
128-094-014	128-093-021
128-094-012	128-093-022
128-064-007	128-093-023
128-071-006	128-093-024
128-092-001	128-064-010
128-092-002	128-094-016
128-092-003	128-094-047

The first area proposed for annexation is generally bound by Panther Drive to the west, E. Main Street to the south, and the city landfill parcels to the north and east. The second area proposed for annexation is generally bound by S. Suey Road to the west, E. Main Street to the north, E. Jones Street to the south, and Rosemary Road to the east. The third area proposed for annexation is generally bound by E. Jones Street to the north, U.S. 101 to the west, Prell Road to the south, and the Suey Road alignment to the east. Much of the annexation area is vacant or agricultural land.

Existing zoning and land use designations within the annexation area are determined by the County of Santa Barbara and consist primarily of agricultural land use designations (Agriculture II with a minimum lot size of 100 acres [AG-II-100] and Agriculture II with a minimum lot size of 40 acres [AG-II-40]). Land use changes for the annexation area would include the establishment of a new land use designation, Planned Annexation, which would allow for a mix of commercial, residential, industrial, and public land uses in annexed land outside of current city limits.

2.6.4 Noise Contour Revisions

The City of Santa Maria noise characteristics are described within the plan's Noise Element including descriptions of common sources of noise as well as goals and policies to lessen noise for sensitive land uses (e.g., residences, schools, medical facilities). As required pursuant to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Guidelines, the Noise Element would also include a map of noise contours as depicted via lines that represent equal levels of noise exposure across the city. Noise contours information informs planning decisions, including siting of potential future sensitive land uses. A map of the plan's noise contours is shown in Figure 2-6.

Figure 2-3 Existing Land Use Designations within the City of Santa Maria

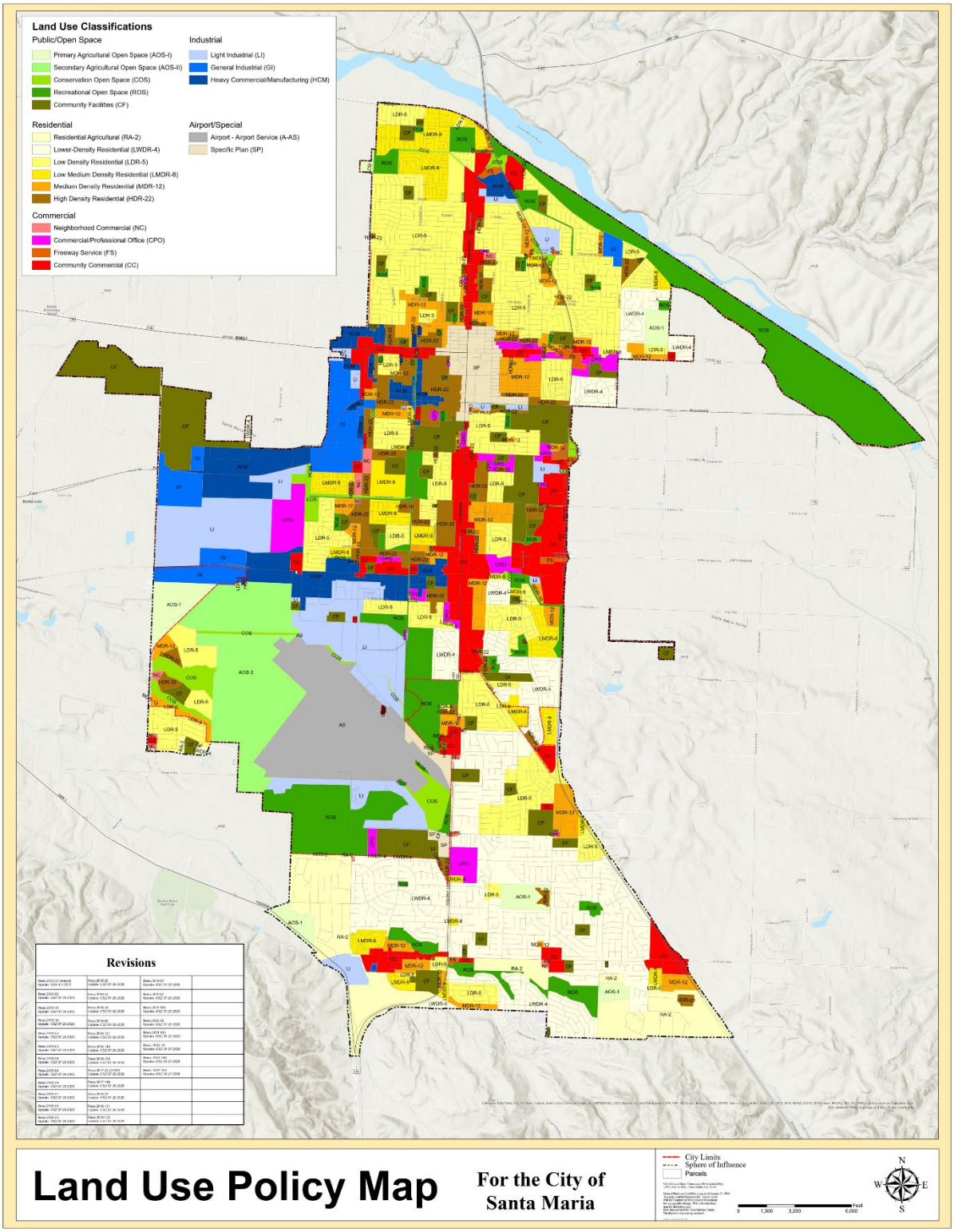


Figure 2-4 Proposed Land Use Designations

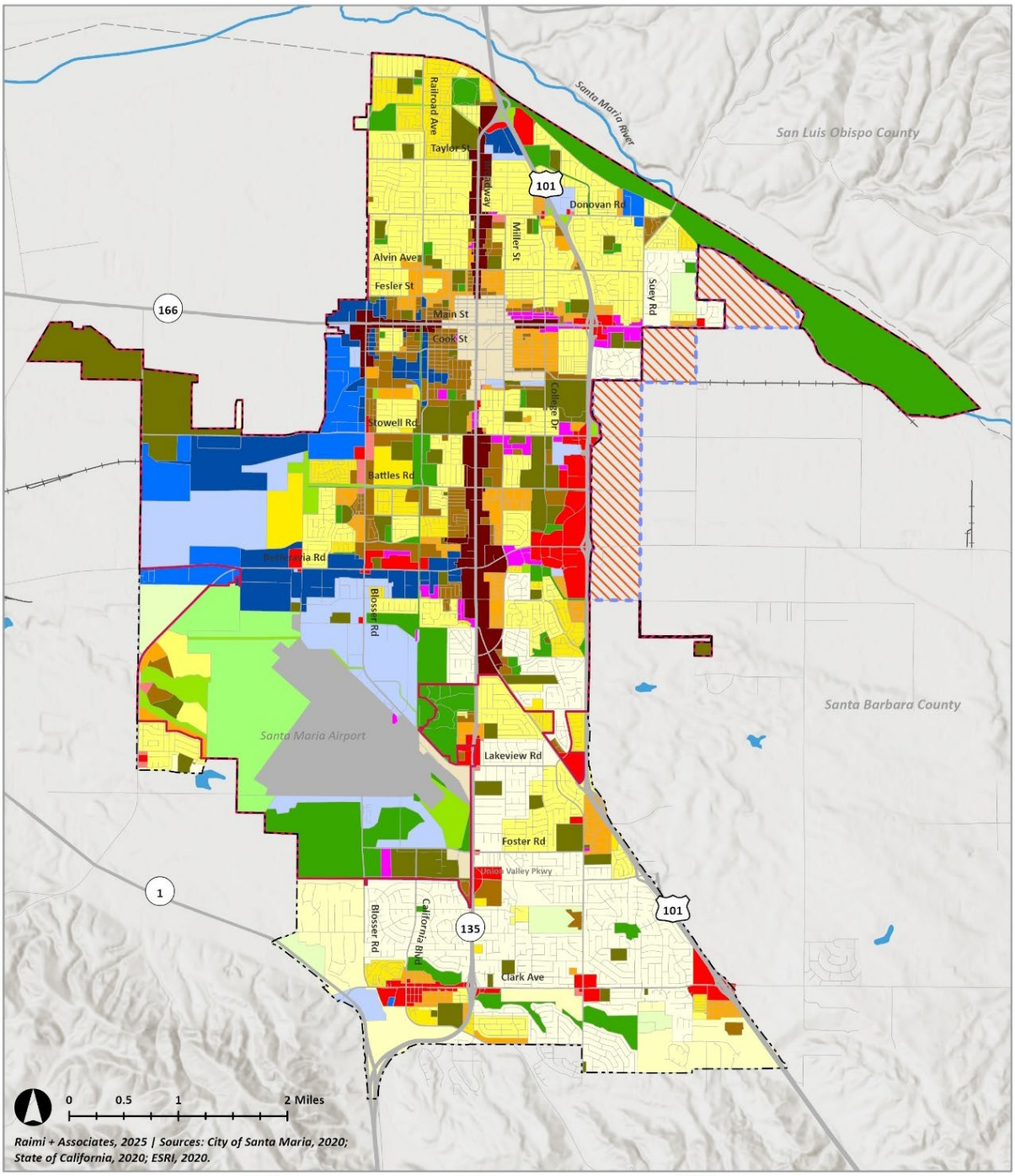
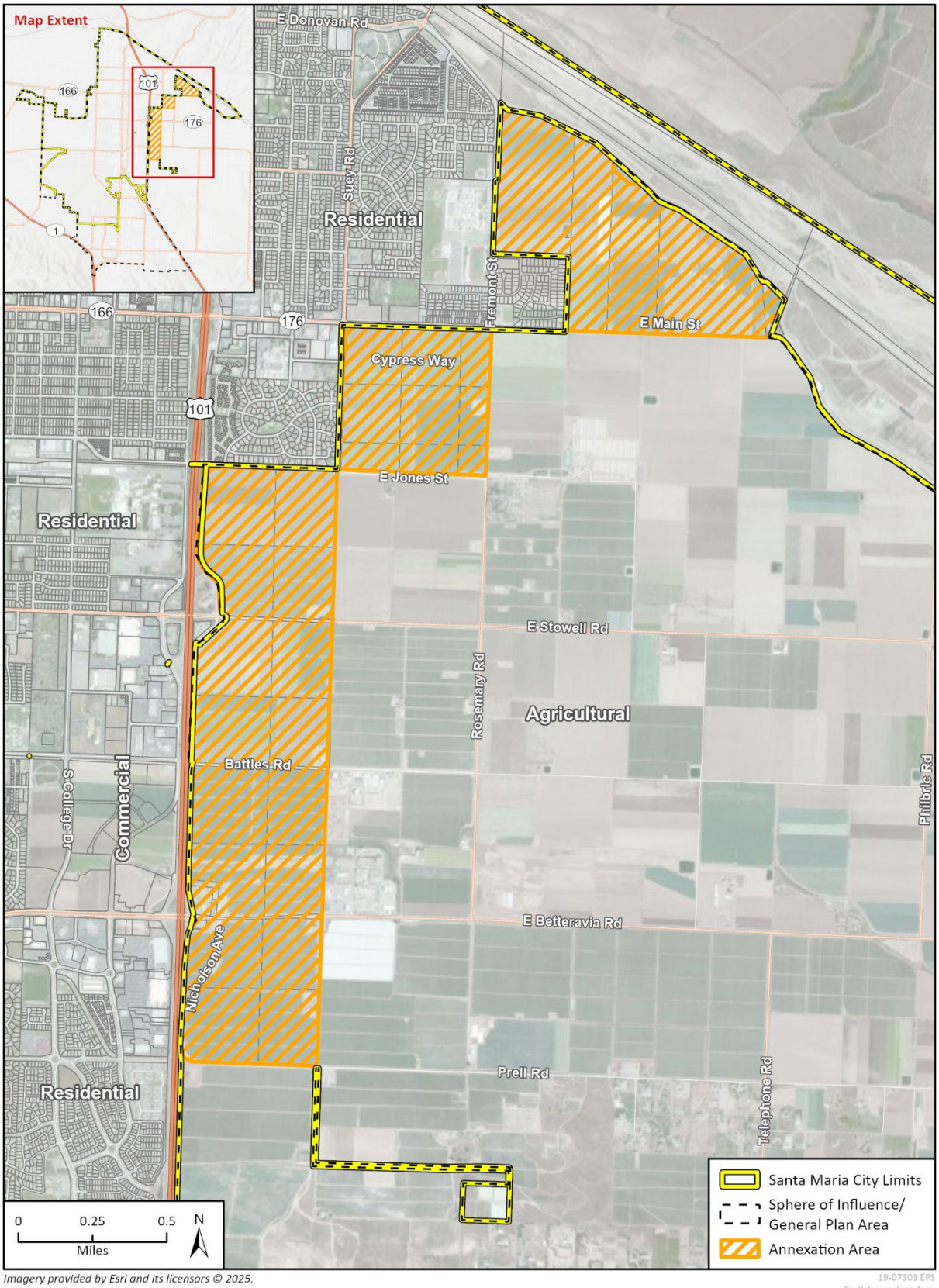


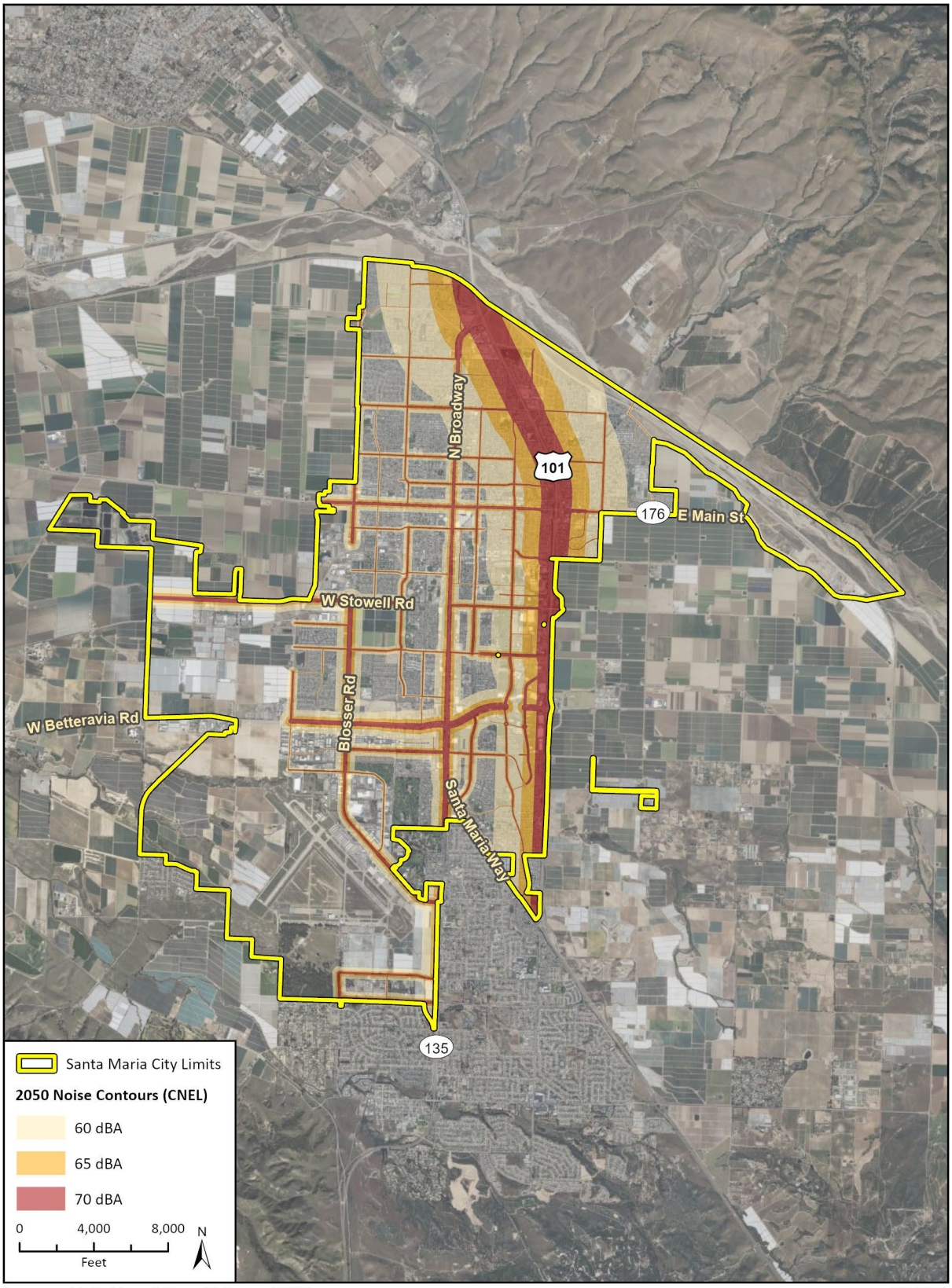
Figure 2-5 Proposed 2045 General Plan Annexation Area



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19-07303 EPS
Fig X Annexation Area

Figure 2-6 Proposed Noise Contours



Imagery provided by Microsoft Bing and its licensors © 2025.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X 2050 Noise Contours

2.6.5 Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout

For reasonable analysis purposes in this EIR, the City assumes the plan's buildout (of both residential and non-residential uses) within the city would occur by 2045. In the context of this EIR "buildout" of the plan is assumed to be a locally appropriate projection of development within the plan area based on updated land use designations and the proposed annexation rather than development of every parcel within the city. While complete buildout is not likely to occur by 2045, the buildout assumption used for this EIR represents the most conservative approach to evaluating the plan's potential environmental effects and satisfying the requirements of the CEQA Guidelines.

For the purposes of this EIR, "plan area" would refer to the City of Santa Maria, the proposed annexation area, and the Sphere of Influence.

Table 2-1 indicates the net change from 2022 conditions in Santa Maria to buildout of the plan by 2045.

Table 2-1 Existing and Proposed Plan Land Uses Components Summary

	Existing (2022)	Proposed (2045)	Net Change from Existing to Proposed
Acreage within City Limits	15,058 acres	16,043 acres	985 acres
Residential Units	28,200 units	44,340 units	16,140 units
Jobs	43,050 jobs	66,800 jobs	23,750 jobs

The plan would add 985 acres of land to the city limits and would provide the framework for development of up to 16,140 net new[2] primary and accessory dwelling residential units, including the development of 1,300 accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and an additional 23,750 jobs by buildout.

The plan would provide the framework for the development of up to 1,504 net new non-residential acres, with the following composition (numbers in parentheses indicate a reduction in acreage):

- (463) acres of commercial uses
- 452 acres of mixed uses
- 7 acres of Industrial/airport uses
- 33 acres of public and open space
- 1,012 acres of planned future development (specific plan and planned annexation areas)

Currently, approximately 32 percent of the city remains undeveloped. The undeveloped areas of the city are classified as vacant (19 percent) and agricultural (13 percent). The existing General Plan indicates the remaining 9 percent is classified as industrial. Many of the vacant parcels within the city, clustered between Battles Road, Betteravia Road, and U.S. 101 are either already slated for development or are located within a Specific Plan.

Specific land use designations proposed for the plan area are designed to ensure consistency with the updated Housing Element and existing land uses, such as industrial, heavy commercial, or agricultural. These land use changes would allow for increased residential density along Main Street and Broadway, as well as on opportunity sites with a high potential for redevelopment. Areas of the

[2] Net new means the change from City of Santa Maria existing (2024) development to full buildout of the proposed plan (i.e., 2045 General Plan) by 2045; this EIR analyzes the net change in terms of potential physical environmental impacts.

city with the most potential for change are concentrated in Downtown, neighborhoods in the City Core, Main Street and Broadway, Southwest Neighborhoods (northwest, west, and south of the airport), and areas proposed for annexation. The plan serves as the City's long-term development blueprint through 2045, contains goals and policies guiding land use and infrastructure decisions through 2045, and brings the General Plan up to date in response to latest State and regional plans and regulations related to climate-related hazards,[3] emergency evacuation routes and access, water supply, and mobility.

2.7 Intended Use of this EIR

This EIR provides a programmatic environmental review of implementing the plan. Subsequent activities falling under the plan will utilize this EIR to focus the environmental review of these consequent activities and to determine their effects. If a new project is proposed that is not anticipated by the plan, or that may result in project-level environmental effects not addressed in this program-level EIR, the future project would be evaluated as required under CEQA. This EIR is not intended to prohibit consideration of future projects or CEQA analysis of future projects.

2.8 Plan Implementation

Following adoption of the plan by the City Council, all subsequent activities and development within the City would be guided by the goals and policies in the plan. Therefore, the plan provides specific policy guidance for implementation of plan concepts. The City would also need to coordinate with Santa Barbara County, the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and other public agencies to implement policies that affect their respective jurisdictions or would affect the region. Implementing these policies in accordance with new development (residential, commercial, or industrial) would be subject to the City's established review and approval processes, with final review and approval by the appropriate departmental staff, and/or the appointed and elected officials. The principal responsibilities that City officials and staff have for plan implementation are briefly summarized below:

- Updating the City of Santa Maria Zoning Ordinance to achieve consistency with the adopted plan.
- Rezoning properties, as dictated by future development proposals.
- Approval of tentative maps, variances, planned development and conditional use permits, and other land use permits and entitlements.
- Approval of development agreements and issuance of related permits and approvals consistent with the plan.
- Analyzing and planning for public infrastructure such as roadway improvements, other capital improvements, and natural/capital resource preservation and/or restoration.
- Conducting or considering further focused planning studies, as appropriate to future development in the city.

[3] Pursuant to SB 379, which amended California Government Code Section 65302.

2.9 Required Approvals

With recommendations from the City's Planning Commission, the Santa Maria City Council would need to take the following discretionary actions in conjunction with the plan:

- Certification of the Final EIR and adoption of required findings, including required findings under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15090, 15091, and 15093[4]; and
- Approval and adoption of the plan.

[4] Santa Barbara County LAFCO must approve the City's annexation application, which would include certification of this Environmental Impact Report.

3 Environmental Setting

This chapter provides a general overview of the environmental setting for the proposed project. More detailed descriptions of the environmental setting for each environmental issue area can be found in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

3.1 Setting

The City of Santa Maria is located in northern Santa Barbara County, surrounded by the hills of the Santa Maria River Valley (see Figure 2-1). The plan area involves all land within the Santa Maria Sphere of Influence[1] (SOI) and includes the proposed annexation of 985-acres east of the City limits. The City of Santa Maria is generally bound by the Santa Maria River to the north, agricultural lands to the east and west, and the unincorporated town of Orcutt to the south.

U.S. Highway 101 (U.S. 101) forms the eastern edge of the city. A linear portion of Santa Maria is also located to the east of U.S.-101. This portion of the city extends south from Prell Road then extends east along an internal farm road. Santa Maria is located approximately 25 miles south of San Luis Obispo, 50 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, 250 miles south of San Francisco and 170 miles north of Los Angeles.

Principal regional transportation facilities serving Santa Maria are U.S. 101, State Route 135 (SR 135), State Route 166 (SR 166), and the Santa Maria Valley Airport. Regional transit is provided by Clean Air Express and the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority. Regional rail is provided by Amtrak.

The City of Santa Maria is characterized as a suburban residential community. The plan area covers approximately 15,058 acres within the City limits and approximately 4,500 acres within the SOI. Approximately 27 percent of land within Santa Maria is occupied with residential uses, primarily consisting of single-family residences (22 percent). Agricultural uses occupy 14 percent of the city, airport uses occupy 11 percent, public and institutional uses occupy 11 percent, and commercial uses occupy 7 percent. Approximately 19 percent of the city is comprised of vacant land. Residential land uses are distributed throughout the city. Non-residential land uses, including industrial and commercial, commonly line major corridors in Santa Maria, including Broadway, Main Street, and Betteravia Road. Agricultural and vacant uses are located at the periphery of the city. The city is underlain by the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Subbasin. The local climate in Santa Maria is identified as a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters.

[1] The term “sphere of influence” applies to the area designated by the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as the probable, future physical boundary or service area of the City. Overall, planning decisions made for the City are assumed to have a bearing on growth and development in these unincorporated adjacent areas. Areas not included as part of the annexation for the 2045 General Plan Update will continue to be deferred to the County land use designations and regulations in the SOI. Any development or change that happens in the SOI during the lifetime of the General Plan will occur under the jurisdiction of the County. Therefore, this EIR does not evaluate impacts resulting from future growth within the SOI, outside of the proposed annexation, as part of the proposed plan. However, where relevant, this EIR does evaluate potential impacts resulting from future growth within the City limits to lands within the SOI. The SOI is also included in the cumulative setting for this EIR.

3.2 EIR Baseline

Section 15125 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) "should include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published." Section 15125 states that this approach "normally constitute[s] the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant." This EIR evaluates impacts against existing conditions, at the time the notice of preparation was published, which was February 15, 2025. This EIR considers the potential impacts from buildout of the General Plan in 2045, compared to exiting conditions.

3.3 Cumulative Development

CEQA defines cumulative impacts as two or more individual actions that, when considered together, are considerable or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be insignificant when analyzed separately but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. Cumulative impact analysis allows an EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

Because the project is a general plan update, cumulative impacts are treated somewhat differently than would be the case for an individual development project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 provides the following direction relative to cumulative impact analysis and states that the following elements are necessary for an adequate discussion of environmental impacts:

> A summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include: a general plan, regional transportation plan, or plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A summary of projections may also be contained in an adopted or certified prior environmental document for such a plan. Such projections may be supplemented with additional information such as a regional modeling program. Any such document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the plan area, which refers to the area within the City Limits and annexation areas. For example, the transportation analysis, discussed in Section 4.8 *Transportation,* considers the overall change in vehicle miles travelled (VMT) due to implementing several development projects that would add to the buildout associated with implementing the project. These cumulative VMT calculations are accounted for in the analyses within Sections 4.2 *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, 4.6 *Noise* and 4.10 *Effects Found Not to be Significant*; therefore, these analyses would also be considered cumulative. Other impacts, such as geologic hazards, are site-specific impacts that are addressed on a project-by-project basis. Additionally, even when two projects occur in close proximity, their individual impacts would not necessarily compound or contribute to a greater cumulative effect. Therefore, the analysis of project impacts in this EIR also constitutes the cumulative analysis.

4 Environmental Impact Analysis

This Chapter discusses the possible environmental effects of the plan for the specific issue areas that were identified through the scoping process as having the potential to experience significant effects. A "significant effect" as defined by the *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15382:

> means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.

The assessment of each issue area begins with a discussion of the environmental setting related to the issue, which is followed by the impact analysis. In the impact analysis, the first subsection identifies the methodologies used and the "significance thresholds," which are those criteria adopted by the City and other agencies, universally recognized, or developed specifically for this analysis to determine whether potential effects are significant. The next subsection describes each impact of the proposed project, mitigation measures for significant impacts, and the level of significance after mitigation. Each effect under consideration for an issue area is separately listed in bold text with the discussion of the effect and its significance. Each bolded impact statement also contains a statement of the significance determination for the environmental impact as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the project is approved per Section 15093 of the *CEQA Guidelines*.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under Section 15091 of the *CEQA Guidelines*.
- **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures. However, mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.
- **No Impact.** The proposed project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

Following each environmental impact discussion is a list of mitigation measures (if required) and the residual effects or level of significance remaining after implementation of the measure(s). In cases where the mitigation measure for an impact could have a significant environmental impact in another issue area, this impact is discussed and evaluated as a secondary impact. The impact analysis concludes with a discussion of cumulative effects, which evaluates the impacts associated with the proposed project in conjunction with other planned and pending developments in the area listed in Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting*.

The Executive Summary of this EIR summarizes all impacts and mitigation measures that apply to the proposed project.

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4.1 Agricultural Resources

This section evaluates impacts on agriculture and forestry resources associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. Because this Program EIR is a long-term document intended to guide actions up to 2045, this analysis relies on program-level evaluation.

4.1.1 Setting

a. California Agricultural Resources

According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, over a third of the country's vegetables and two-thirds of the country's fruits and nuts are grown in California. In 2023, California's farms and ranches received $55.4 billion in cash receipts for their output. This represents a 1.4 percent increase in cash receipts compared to 2022. California agricultural exports totaled $23.6 billion in 2022, an increase of 4.4 percent from 2021. Top commodities for export included almonds, dairy and dairy products, pistachios, walnuts, and wine (California Department of Food and Agriculture 2024).

The California Department of Conservation (DOC) develops Important Farmland Maps as part of its Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) and includes the following definitions for Important Farmland and other non-farmland land uses (DOC 2025a):

1. **Prime Farmland.** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
2. **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
3. **Unique Farmland.** Farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
4. **Farmland of Local Importance.** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. In some counties, Confined Animal Agriculture facilities are part of Farmland of Local Importance, but they are shown separately.
5. **Grazing Land.** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.
6. **Urban and Built-up Land.** Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.

7. **Other Land.** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines and borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

b. Plan Area Agricultural Resources

Table 4.1-1, below, provides the acreage of each farmland type in the plan area and annexation area. As shown therein, the plan area contains approximately 5,116 acres of Important Farmland. Figure 4.1-1, shows the distribution of different Important Farmlands in the plan area. In addition to Important Farmland, the plan area also includes nine acres of Grazing Land which is considered Prime agricultural land by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) definition. There are no Williamson Act lands within the city limits but, as shown in Figure 4.1-2, the annexation area includes approximately 212 acres of Williamson Act lands.

It should be noted that the Williamson Act lands in the annexation area are all currently in nonrenewal, which starts a countdown to the expiration of the contract. This includes three contracts that are set to expire in January of 2026 (71AP072), 2027 (85AP008) and 2028 (70AP148). This is typically nine years for standard Williamson Act contracts and nineteen years for Farmland Security Zone contracts, which are a stricter version of the Williamson Act contract that offer greater property tax savings and longer-term protection for farmland (DOC 2025b). During this period, the land remains subject to all the restrictions and benefits of the Williamson Act contract until it fully expires. Nonrenewal allows landowners to eventually transition their land to other uses while still adhering to the contract's terms during the countdown period. At the end of the nonrenewal process, the contract will be terminated and the land will no longer be under contract as Williamson Act land.

Table 4.1-1 Summary of Important Farmland in the Plan Area and Annexation Area

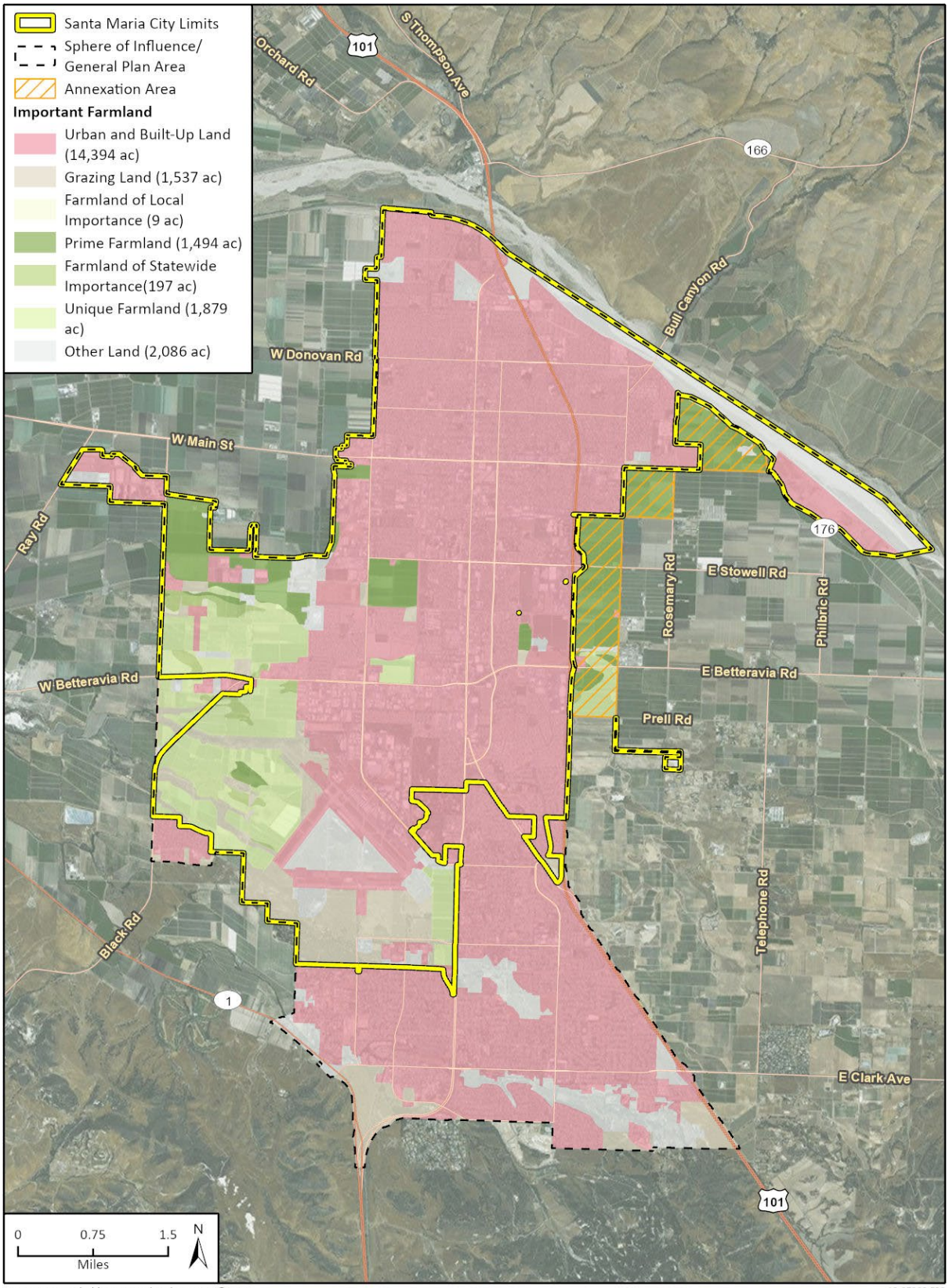
Farmland Designation	City Limits and SOI	Annexation Areas	Total Acreage
Prime Farmland	691	803	1,494
Farmland of Statewide Importance	190	7	197
Unique Farmland	1,745	134	1,879
Farmland of Local Importance	9	–	9
Grazing Land	1537	–	1,537
Total	**4,172**	**944[1]**	**5,116**

[1] The remaining 41 acres within the annexation area are not considered to be prime or unique farmland or farmland of local or statewide importance.

LAFCO and Farmland

In reviewing applications for proposed annexations, LAFCO is required to consider the proposals impact to agriculture, including prime agricultural land as defined in Government Code Section 56064. As described in Section ~~1.5~~ 1.3, *Lead, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies*, LAFCO is a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Federal, State, and local agencies, including Santa Barbara LAFCO, all operate under different laws and requirements, each setting out different definitions of prime farmland. The definition of agricultural lands and prime agricultural lands differ somewhat from the DOC definitions that are typically relied upon for CEQA analysis.

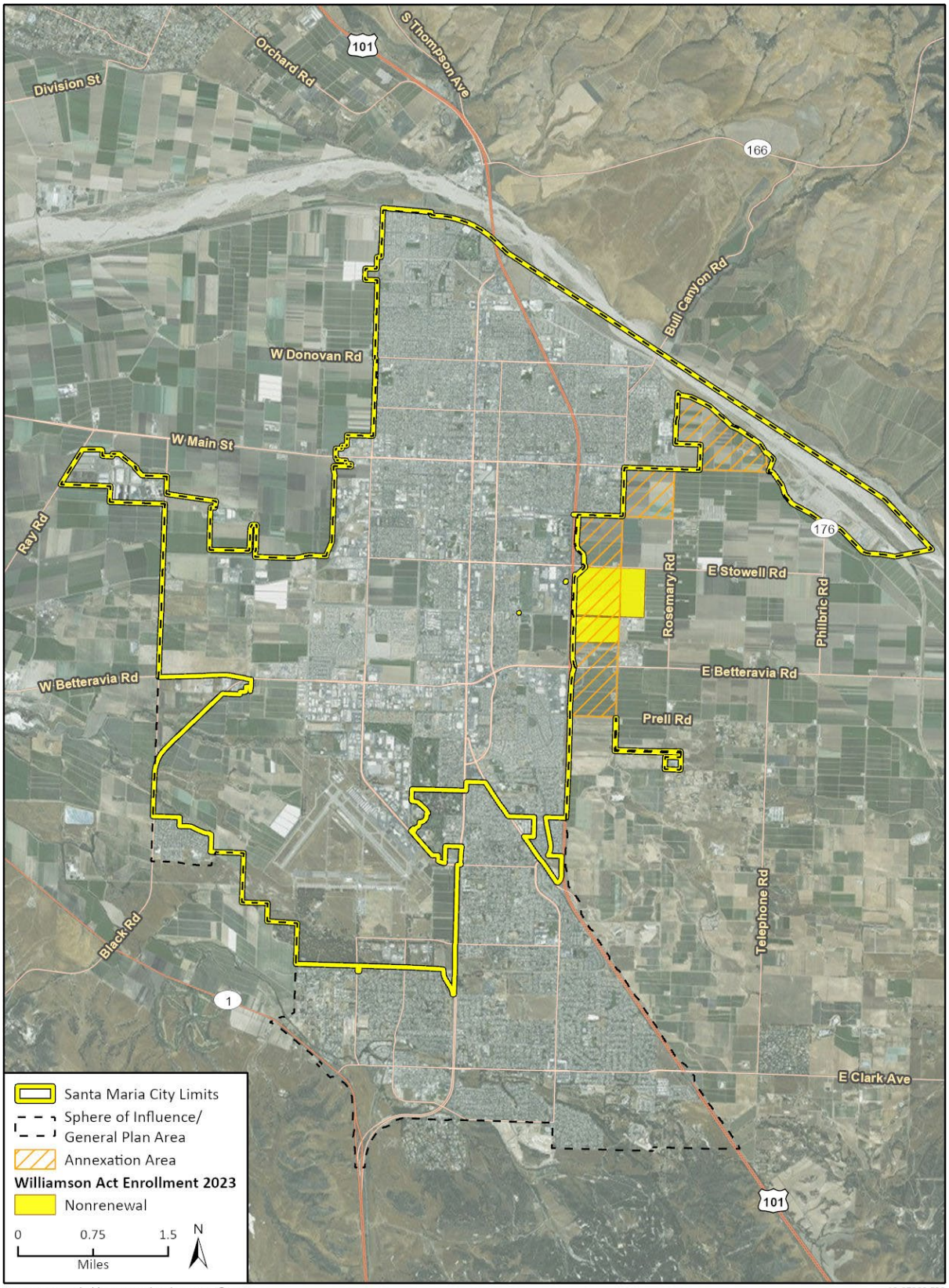
Figure 4.1-1 Important Farmland in the Plan Area



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Additional data provided by FMMP, 2020.

19-07303 EPS
Fig 4.1-1 Important Farmland in Plan Area

Figure 4.1-2 Williamson Act Lands in the Plan Area



Imagery provided by Esri and its licensors © 2025.
Additional data provided by CGS, 2023.

19-07303 EPS
Fig 4.1-2 Williamson Act in Plan Area

Land that would not qualify as Prime under USDA or FMMP definitions of Prime, may qualify as Prime under the LAFCO definition. For the proposed plan, the only land that this applies to is grazing land which meets the LAFCO definition of Prime agricultural land and is considered as Prime agricultural land within this analysis. As shown on Figure 4.1-1 and in Table 4.1-1, the plan area includes approximately 1,537 acres of grazing lands.

Regional Agriculture

Agriculture is an important part of the economy in Santa Barbara County. In 2023, the total gross value of agricultural crops and products was $1,875,978,000, which represents a 2.8 percent decrease, or $54,467,000, compared to the 2022 value of $1,930,455,000 (County of Santa Barbara 2024).

More specifically, agriculture has been a substantial part of Santa Maria's economy since the early 20th century, with the region's fertile soils and favorable climate supporting a variety of crops. The Santa Maria Valley is particularly known for its strawberries, which are a major contributor to the local economy. Other important crops include wine grapes, broccoli, and cauliflower, which benefit from the region's temperate climate and productive soils.

Regional Farmland Trends

Conversion of farmland is the loss of farmlands due to development or land use changes that do not support agricultural production. The FMMP, which is updated biennially, provides land use conversion information for decision makers to use in their planning for the present and future of California's agricultural land resources.

According to the DOC, irrigated farmland in California showed a net decrease of 56,186 acres between 2016 and 2018, an amount substantially higher than between 2014 and 2016 (11,165 acres). Prime Farmland, the highest quality farmland, decreased by 38,683 net acres, coupled with a Farmland of Statewide Importance decrease of 30,052 net acres. Partially offsetting these losses was the addition of 12,549 net acres of irrigated crops on lesser quality soils (DOC 2019).

Irrigated land conversions due to idling are often associated with water resource limitations, market conditions, and salinity-related land idling. Land was removed from irrigated categories at a rate 19 percent lower than compared with the prior update (128,105 acres between 2014 and 2016 compared to 152,627 acres between 2016 and 2018) (DOC 2019).

Table 4.1-2 shows the number of acres of Important Farmland that have been converted in Santa Barbara County from 2016 to 2018, the most recent and granular data available. As shown, the county lost 2,712 acres of agricultural land and gained 3,789 acres, resulting in a net increase of 1,077 acres.

Table 4.1-2 Farmland Conversion in Santa Barbara County

Farmland Designation	Total Acreage Inventoried 2016	Total Acreage Inventoried 2018	Total Acreage Inventoried Acres Lost (-)	Total Acreage Inventoried Acres Gained (+)	Total Acreage Inventoried Total Acreage Changed	Total Acreage Inventoried Net Acreage Changed	Percent of Inventoried Net Acreage Changed
Prime Farmland	66,979	67,819	955	1,795	2,750	840	+1.2%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	13,194	13,648	151	605	756	454	+3.4%
Unique Farmland	37,324	37,710	715	1,101	1,816	366	+1%
Farmland of Local Importance	8,950	8,347	819	288	1,179	-603	-6.9%
Important Farmland Subtotal	**126,447**	**127,524**	**2,712**	**3,789**	**6,501**	**1,077**	**+0.8%**

Source: DOC 2021

c. Forestry Resources

Forest Land, Timberland, Timber Production Zones

Forestry resources include forestland, timberland, and timberland production zones. Definitions used for forestland and timberland are those found in the California Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 12220(g) and 4789.2(g) and California Government Code (CGC) Section 51104(g). These codes define forestland, timberland, and timberland production zones as follows:

1. **Forest Land** is land that can support, under natural conditions, 10 percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, and that allows for the preservation or management of forest-related resources such as timber, aesthetic value, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreational facilities, and other public benefits (PRC Section 12220[g]).
2. **Timberland** means land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species are determined by the board on a district basis (PRC Section 4526[g]).
3. **Timberland Production Zones** or "TPZ" means an area which has been zoned pursuant to Section 51112 or 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, as defined in subdivision (h) (CGC Section 51104).

Within the plan area, there are no official timberland, forest land, or TPZ zoning districts or land use designations. Several locations in the plan area are covered with many trees, including scattered open spaces and parks. However, these concentrations of trees would not be considered forestland or timberland.

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

Various policies and regulations are enforced at the federal, state, and local level to protect agriculture, forestry, and timberland resources, as outlined below.

a. Federal Regulations

Farmland Protection Policy Act

The Farmland Protection Policy Act is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. It assures that to the extent possible federal programs are administered to be compatible with state, local units of government and private programs and policies to protect farmland. Projects are subject to Farmland Protection Policy Act requirements if they may irreversibly convert farmland (directly or indirectly) to nonagricultural use and are completed by a federal agency or with assistance from a federal agency.

b. State Regulations

Farmland Conservation Program Act

The California Farmland Conservancy Program Act, also known as Senate Bill (SB) 1142, established the California Farmland Conservancy Program, which provides grants for agricultural conservation easements. An agricultural conservation easement aims to maintain agricultural land in active production by preventing development on the subject parcel and prohibiting practices that would damage or interfere with the agricultural use of the land. Because the easement is a restriction on the deed of the property, the easement remains in effect even when the land changes ownership. While other benefits may accrue because the land is not developed (scenic and habitat values, for example), the primary use of the land is agricultural. Easements funded by the California Farmland Conservancy Program must be of a size and nature suitable for viable commercial agriculture.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The DOC prepares, updates, and maintains Important Farmland Series Maps (Maps) as part of the FMMP and as defined in subdivision (f) of Section 65560 of the Government Code, and prepares and maintains an automated map and database system to record and report changes in the use of agricultural lands every two years on even numbered calendar years. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called Prime Farmland. In preparing FMMP maps, the DOC considers all information collected or received on the amount of land converted to or from agricultural use, and between agricultural categories.

Right to Farm Act 1981

The Right to Farm Act (Civil Code Section 3482.5) is designed to protect commercial agricultural operations from nuisance complaints that may arise when an agricultural operation is conducting business in a "manner consistent with proper and accepted customs." The code specifies that established operations that have been in business for 3 or more years that were not nuisances at the time they began shall not be considered a nuisance as a result of new land use.

Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, Sections 51200 et seq. of the California Government Code, commonly referred to as the "Williamson Act," enables local governments to restrict the use of specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. Landowners enter into contracts with participating cities and counties and agree to restrict their land to agriculture or open space use for a minimum of 10 years. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market (speculative) value.

c. Local Regulations

Santa Maria Municipal Code

The Santa Maria Municipal Code includes provisions for agricultural use, specifically outlined in Chapter 12-2.04A. This chapter defines agricultural use as farming or ranching activities, which encompass the cultivation and growing of crops, as well as the raising and keeping of poultry or livestock. These regulations ensure that agricultural activities are conducted in a manner that supports the city's goals for land use and development while maintaining the integrity of agricultural lands.

City of Santa Maria Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves

Santa Maria administers its Agricultural Preserve Program under the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly known as the Williamson Act. This program is designed to conserve agricultural and open space lands through uniform rules that govern Williamson Act contracts. The city's Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves establish the basic requirements for all contracts, ensuring long-term conservation of agricultural lands and promoting sustainable farming practices (City of Santa Maria 2025).

4.1.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Agricultural and forestry impact assessments involved a review of data available through the Department of Conservation's FMMP and Williamson Act Land maps. An adverse effect would occur if a proposed development would have an impact on existing, mapped agricultural or forest land.

Significance Thresholds

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, impacts related to agricultural and forestry resources from implementation of the project would be significant if it would:

1. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use
2. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract

3. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))
4. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use
5. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?
Threshold 2:	Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?
Threshold 5:	Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Impact AG-1 LAND USE CHANGES IN THE ANNEXATION AREA HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CONFLICT WITH EXISTING ZONING FOR AGRICULTURE. THERE ARE NO FEASIBLE MITIGATION MEASURES THAT WOULD AVOID OR FULLY MITIGATE FOR THE CONVERSION OF FARMLAND OR AGRICULTURALLY ZONED LANDS. AS A RESULT, THIS WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT.

As noted in Table 4.1-1, the plan area (which includes the annexation area) contains approximately 5,116 acres of Important Farmland. Important Farmland (i.e., Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland) is mapped within City limits. There are nine acres of Grazing Land within the plan area which is considered Prime agricultural land by the LAFCO definition.

The plan emphasizes infill development in urbanized portions of the city. Infill development would generally limit agricultural resource impacts, since development would be located within existing urban areas. However, some future development, including development within the annexation area is anticipated in agricultural areas.

The California Department of Conservation currently lists several sites within the city as either Grazing Land, Prime Farmland, or Unique Farmland. However, these sites~~, shown as important farmland in **Error! Reference source not found.**~~, have previously undergone environmental review for the conversion of agricultural land.

The area west of A street and north of Betteravia Road was evaluated within the Sphere of Influence Expansion Environmental Impact Report (SCH #90010930) in 1994 and the Area 9 Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2008071018) in 2011 wherein impacts to agricultural resources were determined to be less than significant. The Environmental Impact Report for the City's Sphere of Influence Expansion (SCH#90010930) documented the conversion of these agricultural resources to non-agricultural uses, and the City Council Resolution No. 92-136 presented a Statement of Overriding Considerations, which the Council adopted on September 15, 1994. Santa Barbara LAFCO approved annexation of the project area to Santa Maria on November 23, 2004. Furthermore, in

order to mitigate the conversion of these agricultural resources, the City adopted a "Greenbelt and Urban Buffer" resolution in 1994 (Resolution 94- 9). The Greenbelt and Urban Buffer resolution established that the City would preserve agricultural and open space areas immediately adjacent to the City's Urban Boundary Limit. This resolution protects agricultural and open space areas adjacent to the city by prohibiting the city from expanding its Urban Boundary Limit into such areas. As such, the areas immediately adjacent to the Area 9 Specific Plan area would be preserved under this resolution. Because the impacts of the conversion of these agricultural resources on the site were previously offset by the establishment of the City's Greenbelt and Urban Buffer, impacts were found not to be significant (City of Santa Maria 2011). As such, conversion of the area known as Area 9 would not result in a significant impact to agricultural resources. Similarly, the area south of Main Street between Blosser Road and Hanson Way was evaluated within the Sphere of Influence Expansion Environmental Impact Report (SCH #90010930) in 1994. As part of the Sphere of Influence Expansion project, this area was assigned urban growth potentials as part of the West Main Specific Plan and did not include area identified for future agricultural use. Conversion of this area would not result in significant impacts as the area has been previously evaluated and slated for urban growth in previous environmental analyses.

The area east of South Blosser Road, south of West Stowell Road, and north of Battles Road was evaluated within the Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan Amendment Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SCH #1994107909) in 2020 wherein impacts to agricultural resources were determined to be less than significant. The Supplemental Environmental Impact Report determined that the Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan area has been anticipated for non-agricultural use, including residential development, since the evaluation of the City's Sphere of Influence Boundary Amendment and Concurrent Annexation Program in 1992. As part of the Sphere of Influence Boundary Amendment and Concurrent Annexation Program, this area was assigned residential growth potentials and did not include area identified for future agricultural use. As such, conversion of this area would not result in a significant impact to agricultural resources.

The area east of Blosser Road and south of Battles Road was evaluated within the Betteravia Plaza General Plan Amendment, Land Use and Zone Change and Development Agreement Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2015011029) in 2015. Impacts to agricultural resources within this Environmental Impact Report were determined to be less than significant as this area was identified an infill site located within the urbanized city, surrounded by urban development and is planned and zoned for future urban development. Prior to the preparation of the Betteravia Plaza General Plan Amendment, Land Use and Zone Change and Development Agreement Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2015011029), an Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared for this area indicating the site had a land use designation of Light Industrial and a zoning designation of Light Manufacturing that has since been changed to allow for retail commercial and professional office uses. As the area has been designated for development and has been previously evaluated in previous environmental documents, impacts related to the conversion of agricultural land would be less than significant.

As such, future development adjacent to agricultural land would not lead to farmland loss due to potential conflicts between existing farming operations and new urban or non-agricultural uses. The 2045 General Plan Update would result in less than significant impacts as it would not result in the conversion of farmland to non—agricultural uses that have not already been evaluated in previous environmental documents and would not result in conflicting uses introduced adjacent to existing farmland.

In addition to Important Farmland, the plan area contains three properties that are under Williamson Act contracts within the central portion of the proposed annexation area. As shown in Figure 4.1-2, these lands are currently in nonrenewal, which starts a countdown to the expiration of the contract. The contracts will expire on January 1, 2026 (71AP072), January 1, 2027 (85AP008), and January 1, 2028 (70AP148). During the non-renewal period, the land remains subject to all the restrictions and benefits of the Williamson Act contract until it fully expires. At the end of the nonrenewal process, the contract will be terminated and the land will no longer be under contract as Williamson Act land. As discussed within Chapter 2, *Project Description*, land use changes for the annexation area would include the establishment of a new land use designation, Planned Annexation, which would allow for a mix of commercial, residential, industrial, and public land uses in annexed land outside of current city limits. This could conflict with the existing Williamson Act contracts. However, as these lands are currently within nonrenewal and are set to expire, it is anticipated that the contracts will have expired by the time of plan buildout thereby reducing the likelihood of a direct conflict at the time of buildout. Further, development facilitated by the plan that would occur within Williamson Act land would be required to undergo individual environmental review at the time a project is proposed for both the proposed project and the annexation of the area. As it is not reasonably foreseeable for new discretionary development in the annexation area to be proposed, reviewed, and approved, between the date of publication of this EIR and the expiration date of the current remaining Williamson Act contracts in the annexation area, development facilitated by the plan would not result in the conversion of Williamson Act Lands. Impacts related to the conversion of Williamson Act lands would be less than significant.

The Conservation and Open Space Element and the Land Use Element of the plan seeks to encourage the continued operation of agricultural lands in and around Santa Maria. The goals and policies listed below from the General Plan address the preservation of agricultural lands:

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.
> >
> > **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.

Goal LU-1: Balanced mix of uses. A balanced mix of land uses meets the present and future housing, employment, and recreation needs of the community.

> **Policy LU-1.2: Infill development.** Prioritize the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized parcels with a focus on ~~infill of existing residential, commercial, and industrial capacity to~~ revitalizinge downtown and deteriorating neighborhoods, to the extent feasible. ~~Accommodate growth while making every effort to preserve agricultural lands and open space.~~

Goal LU-2: Annexation as outward growth. Santa Maria expands in an orderly and efficient manner to accommodate future growth.

> **Policy LU-2.1: Planned Annexation ~~a~~Area.** Expand Sphere of Influence and annex the Planned Annexation ~~a~~Areas identified on the General Plan Land Use Map to meet housing and jobs development goals.

Goal LU-9: Agricultural areas. Thriving agricultural lands generate fresh produce for the State and preserve Santa Maria's history as a farming community.

> **Policy LU-9.1: Agricultural resources.** ~~Accommodate future city growth while making every feasible effort to~~ Preserve agricultural resources in the city on land not proposed for future development, specifically those with State or local importance. Annexation into areas utilized for agriculture shall occur in an orderly and planned manner, consistent with the General Plan and LAFCO policies.
>
> **Policy LU-9.2: Agricultural land use conflicts.** Support ongoing agricultural activities by discouraging land uses that conflict with adjacent farming activities.
>
> **Policy LU-9.3: Agricultural buffers.** Update the Municipal Code to require buffers between new development and lands designated for ~~active~~ agricultural uses. Examples of buffers include but are not limited to roadways, stormwater basins, and landscaped or open space areas.
>
> **Policy LU-9.4: Agricultural land impact avoidance and minimization.** Require projects adjacent to agricultural land to prevent the spread of invasive plant species during construction.

A determination of the impacts to Important Farmland, agricultural zoning and conflicts with Williamson Act contracts would be made on a case-by-case basis as individual projects are proposed. A majority of development facilitated by the plan would likely not create significant impacts, particularly for development that would be located in urbanized areas of the city. However, because implementation of the plan would allow for future conversion of Important Farmland and conflict with agricultural zoning within the annexation area, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies which are intended to minimize future impacts to agricultural lands in and around Santa Maria. However, there is no set of General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could feasibly reduce the identified impact to agricultural lands in the annexation area.

Significance After Mitigation

Policies included in the 2045 General Plan Update would reduce potential adverse impacts related to the conversion of Important Farmland and Williamson Act contract lands within the annexation area to the extent feasible through preservation efforts and by requiring conservation easements. Nonetheless, even with compliance with General Plan actions, conversion of Important Farmland and conflicts with agricultural zoning could still occur. While these policies would help reduce the extent of farmland conversion and conflicts with agricultural zoning in the annexation area to the extent feasible, it would not be guaranteed that development facilitated by the plan would avoid or fully mitigate for the conversion of Farmland and agriculturally zoned lands within the annexation area. As a result, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 3:	Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)); timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526); or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?
Threshold 4:	Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Impact AG-2 THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH EXISTING ZONING FOR FOREST LAND, TIMBERLAND, OR TIMBERLAND PRODUCTION, NOR RESULT IN THE LOSS OF FOREST LAND OR CONVERT FOREST LAND TO NON-FOREST USES. THERE WOULD BE NO IMPACT.

As discussed above in Section 4.1.1(b), there are no zoned TPZs or forest lands within the plan area. Accordingly, the proposed land use pattern would not result in rezoning of any existing forest land or timberlands within the plan area. Because no forest land or timber areas are within the plan area, there would be no impact on conversion of forest land or conflicts with land zoned for forest land, timberland, or timberland production.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because there would be no impact.

4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15065[a][3]). A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, Environmental Setting, Subsection 3.3, Cumulative Development.

Since the mid-20th century, the Santa Maria region has experienced steady urban expansion resulting in Important Farmland being incrementally converted to residential, commercial, and industrial uses (DOC 2015). This trend has been especially pronounced in areas surrounding Santa

Maria, where population growth and housing demand have led to the conversion of prime farmland. Future development within the cumulative impact analysis area would convert agricultural land to non-agricultural uses and may result in conflicts with agricultural zoning and Williamson Act contracts. In addition, future development adjacent to agricultural land has the potential to result in a loss of farmland due to land use conflicts between existing agricultural activities and new non-agricultural development, which adds to the cumulative conversion of agricultural lands, including areas designated as Important Farmland by the FMMP. Cumulative impacts to agricultural resources would be significant.

As identified in Impact AG-1, the 2045 General Plan Update would result in conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural use and could conflict with agricultural zoning in the annexation area. Development facilitated by the plan could result in incompatibilities between new residences and adjacent agricultural uses resulting in the potential conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Implementation of 2045 General Plan policies would reduce the contribution of the plan to cumulative agricultural land impacts. However, these actions would not ensure that the future development facilitated by the plan in the annexation area could feasibly relocate or realign to avoid impacts, and impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. Therefore, cumulative impacts to agricultural resources would be significant, and the 2045 General Plan Update would have a cumulatively considerable contribution on agricultural resource impacts.

Because there is no forestland within the plan area or immediately adjacent areas, future development within the cumulative impact analysis area would not convert forestland to non-forest uses and thus, would not result in conflicts forest zoning. Cumulative impacts to forestland and timber resources would be less than significant.

4.2 Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This section describes current air quality conditions in and around the City of Santa Maria and evaluates the possible impacts related to air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that could result from implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. Information included in this section is based on the policies from the plan, Environmental Background Report (Santa Maria 2020) and the Santa Maria Municipal Code (Santa Maria 2024), as well as transportation VMT data produced by GHD in June 2025.

4.2.1 Setting

a. Air Quality Setting

Climate and Topography

The plan area is part of the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB) that includes all of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. The climate of the Santa Barbara County area and all of the SCCAB is strongly influenced by its proximity to the Pacific Ocean and the location of the semi-permanent high-pressure cell in the northeastern Pacific Ocean. The Mediterranean climate of the region produces moderate average temperatures, although slightly more extreme temperatures can be reached in the winter and summer. The proximity of the Pacific Ocean tends to moderate temperature near the coast while the steep mountain ranges produce a significant “orographic effect.” Orographic effect occurs when storms approaching the county from the Pacific Ocean are forced upward against the mountains resulting in increased precipitation release with topographic elevation. The orographic effect, in conjunction with steep, short watersheds occasionally result in flash flooding along the county's south coast.

Santa Barbara County is situated among a series of transverse mountain ranges, the only ranges within the continental United States to trend in an east-westerly direction. Most of the County's developed areas are located along the coastal plain and in the inter-mountain valleys, such as Santa Maria which is located within the Santa Maria Valley. The warmest months of the year in Santa Maria are July through October, with an average maximum temperature of 74 degrees Fahrenheit, while the coldest months of the year are December and January with an average minimum temperature of 39 degrees Fahrenheit. The climate is semi-arid, with rainfall concentrated in the winter months. Table 4.2-1 summarizes local climatic conditions.

Table 4.2-1 Climatic Conditions in Santa Maria

Average annual rainfall	13.9 inches
Average maximum temperature (annual)	74 °F
Average minimum temperature (annual)	39 °F
Warmest month(s)	July through September
Coolest month(s)	December & January

Source: U.S. Climate Data 2023.

Note: Data is based on historic climate in Santa Maria.

Air Pollutants of Primary Concern

The federal and State Clean Air Act (CAA) mandate the control and reduction of certain air pollutants. Under these laws, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the California Air Resource Board (CARB) have established the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and the California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) for "criteria pollutants" and other pollutants, which are discussed in more detail under Section 4.2.2, Regulatory Setting. Primary criteria pollutants are emitted directly from a source (e.g., vehicle tailpipe, an exhaust stack of a factory, etc.) into the atmosphere and include carbon monoxide (CO), VOC (volatile organic gases)/reactive organic gases (ROG),[1] nitric oxide (NO_X), particulate matter, sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and lead (Pb). Secondary criteria pollutants are created by atmospheric chemical and photochemical reactions primarily between ROG and NO_X. Secondary pollutants include oxidants, ozone (O_3), and sulfate and nitrate particulates (smog). The characteristics, sources and effects of criteria pollutants are discussed in the following subsections.

Ozone

O_3 is a highly oxidative unstable gas produced by a photochemical reaction (triggered by sunlight) between NO_X and ROG. ROG is composed of non-methane hydrocarbons (with specific exclusions), and NO_X is composed of different chemical combinations of nitrogen and oxygen, mainly nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2). NO_X is formed during the combustion of fuels, while ROG is formed during the combustion and evaporation of organic solvents. As a highly reactive molecule, O_3 readily combines with many different atmosphere components. Consequently, high O_3 levels tend to exist only while high ROG and NO_X levels are present to sustain the O_3 formation process. Once the precursors have been depleted, O_3 levels rapidly decline. Because these reactions occur on a regional rather than local scale, O_3 is considered a regional pollutant. In addition, because O_3 requires sunlight to form, it mainly occurs in concentrations considered serious between April and October. People most at risk from O_3 include people with asthma, children, older adults, and people who are active outdoors, especially outdoor workers. In addition, people with reduced intake of certain nutrients, such as vitamins C and E, are at greater risk from O_3 exposure. Depending on the level of exposure, O_3 can cause coughing and a sore or scratch throat; make it more difficult to breathe deeply and vigorously and cause pain when taking a deep breath; inflame and damage the airways; make the lungs more susceptible to infection; aggravate lung diseases such as asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis; and increase the frequency of asthma attacks (USEPA 2025a).

Carbon Monoxide

CO is a localized pollutant found in high concentrations only near its source. The primary source of CO, a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas, is automobile traffic's incomplete combustion of petroleum fuels. Therefore, elevated concentrations are usually only found near areas of high traffic volumes. When CO levels are elevated outdoors, they can be of particular concern for people with some types of heart disease. These people already have a reduced ability to get oxygenated blood to their hearts in situations where they need more oxygen than usual. As a result, they are especially vulnerable to the effects of CO when exercising or under increased stress. In these situations, short-

[1] CARB defines VOC and ROG similarly as, "any compound of carbon excluding carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, carbonic acid, metallic carbides or carbonates, and ammonium carbonate," with the exception that VOC are compounds that participate in atmospheric photochemical reactions. For the purposes of this analysis, ROG and VOC are considered comparable in terms of mass emissions, and the term ROG is used in this EIR.

term exposure to elevated CO may result in reduced oxygen to the heart accompanied by chest pain, also known as angina (USEPA 2025b).

Nitrogen Dioxide

NO_2 is a by-product of coal, oil, gas or diesel fuel combustion. The primary sources are motor vehicles and industrial boilers, and furnaces. The principal form of NO_x produced by combustion is nitric oxide (NO), but NO reacts rapidly to form NO_2, creating the mixture of NO and NO_2, commonly called NO_x. NO_2 is a reactive, oxidizing gas and an acute irritant capable of damaging cell linings in the respiratory tract. Breathing air with a high concentration of NO_2 can irritate airways in the human respiratory system. Such exposures over short periods can aggravate respiratory diseases leading to respiratory symptoms (such as coughing, wheezing, or difficulty breathing), hospital admissions, and visits to emergency rooms. Longer exposures to elevated concentrations of NO_2 may contribute to the development of asthma and potentially increase susceptibility to respiratory infections. People with asthma and children and the elderly are generally at greater risk for the health effects of NO_2 (USEPA 2025c). NO_2 absorbs blue light and causes a reddish-brown cast to the atmosphere and reduced visibility. It can also contribute to the formation of O_3/smog and acid rain.

Sulfur Dioxide

SO_2 is included in a group of highly reactive gases known as “oxides of sulfur.” The largest sources of SO_2 emissions are from fossil fuel combustion at power plants (73 percent) and other industrial facilities (20 percent). Smaller sources of SO_2 emissions include industrial processes such as extracting metal from ore and burning fuels with a high sulfur content by locomotives, large ships, and off-road equipment. Short-term exposures to SO_2 can harm the human respiratory system and make breathing difficult. People with asthma, particularly children, are sensitive to these effects of SO_2 (USEPA 2025d).

Particulate Matter

Suspended atmospheric PM_{10} (particular matter with diameter of 10 microns or less) and $PM_{2.5}$ (particulate matter with diameter of 2.5 microns or less) are comprised of finely divided solids and liquids such as dust, soot, aerosols, fumes, and mist. Both PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ are emitted into the atmosphere as by-products of coal, gas, or diesel fuel combustion and wind erosion of soil and unpaved roads. The atmosphere, through chemical reactions, can form particulate matter. The characteristics, sources, and potential health effects of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ can be very different. PM_{10} is generally associated with dust mobilized by wind and vehicles. In contrast, $PM_{2.5}$ is generally associated with combustion processes and formation in the atmosphere as a secondary pollutant through chemical reactions. PM_{10} can cause increased respiratory disease, lung damage, cancer, premature death, reduced visibility, surface soiling. For $PM_{2.5}$, short-term exposures (up to 24-hours duration) have been associated with premature mortality, increased hospital admissions for heart or lung causes, acute and chronic bronchitis, asthma attacks, emergency room visits, respiratory symptoms, and restricted activity days. These adverse health effects have been reported primarily in infants, children, and older adults with preexisting heart or lung diseases (CARB 2025a).

Lead

Pb is a metal found naturally in the environment, as well as in manufacturing products. The major sources of Pb emissions historically have been mobile and industrial. However, due to the USEPA ’s regulatory efforts to remove Pb from gasoline, atmospheric Pb concentrations have declined

substantially over the past several decades. The most dramatic reductions in Pb emissions occurred before 1990 due to the removal of Pb from gasoline sold for most highway vehicles. Pb emissions were further reduced substantially between 1990 and 2008, with reductions occurring in the metals industries at least partly due to national emissions standards for hazardous air pollutants (USEPA 2014). As a result of phasing out leaded gasoline, metal processing is currently the primary source of Pb emissions. The highest Pb level in the air is generally found near Pb smelters. Other stationary sources include waste incinerators, utilities, and Pb-acid battery manufacturers. Pb can adversely affect the nervous system, kidney function, immune system, reproductive and developmental systems, and cardiovascular system depending on exposure. Pb exposure also affects the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood. The Pb effects most likely encountered in current populations are neurological in children. Infants and young children are susceptible to Pb exposures, contributing to behavioral problems, learning deficits, and lowered IQ (USEPA 2025e).

Toxic Air Contaminants

In addition to the criteria pollutants discussed above, Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs) are airborne substances and a diverse group of air pollutants that may cause or contribute to an increase in deaths or serious illness, or that may pose a present or potential hazard to human health. TACs include both organic and inorganic chemical substances that may be emitted from a variety of common sources, including gasoline stations, motor vehicles, dry cleaners, industrial operations, painting operations, and research and teaching facilities. One of the main sources of TACs in California is diesel engine exhaust that contains solid material known as diesel particulate matter (DPM). More than 90 percent of DPM is less than one micron in diameter (about $1/70^{th}$ the diameter of a human hair) and thus is a subset of $PM_{2.5}$. Because of their extremely small size, these particles can be inhaled and eventually trapped in the bronchial and alveolar regions of the lungs (CARB 2025a).

TACs are different than criteria pollutants because ambient air quality standards have not been established for TACs. TACs occurring at extremely low levels may still cause health effects and it is typically difficult to identify levels of exposure that do not produce adverse health effects. TAC impacts are described by carcinogenic risk and by chronic (i.e., long duration) and acute (i.e., severe but of short duration) adverse effects on human health. People exposed to TACs at sufficient concentrations and durations may have an increased chance of getting cancer or experiencing other serious health effects. These health effects can include damage to the immune system, as well as neurological, reproductive (e.g., reduced fertility), developmental, respiratory, and other health problems (USEPA 2025f).

Air Quality Standards and Attainment

The federal and State governments have authority under the federal and State CAA to regulate emissions of airborne pollutants and have established AAQS for the protection of public health. An air quality standard is defined as "the maximum amount of a pollutant averaged over a specified period of time that can be present in outdoor air without harming public health" (CARB 2025b) The USEPA is the federal agency designated to administer air quality regulation, while CARB is the State equivalent in California. Federal and State AAQS have been established for six criteria pollutants: O_3, CO, NO_2, sulfur dioxide, $PM_{10,}$ $PM_{2.5}$, and lead. AAQS are designed to protect those segments of the public most susceptible to respiratory distress, such as children under the age of 14, the elderly (over the age of 65), persons engaged in strenuous work or exercise, and people with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases (USEPA 2025g). In addition to the federal criteria pollutants, the CAAQS also specify standards for visibility-reducing particles, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, and vinyl

chloride (CARB 2025c). Table 4.2-2 lists the current NAAQS as well as the CAAQS for regulated pollutants.

Table 4.2-2 Federal and State Ambient Air Quality Standards

Pollutant	Averaging Time	NAAQS	CAAQS
Ozone	1-Hour	–	0.09 ppm
	8-Hour	0.070 ppm	0.070 ppm
Carbon Monoxide	8-Hour	9.0 ppm	9.0 ppm
	1-Hour	35.0 ppm	20.0 ppm
Nitrogen Dioxide	Annual	0.053 ppm	0.030 ppm
	1-Hour	0.100 ppm	0.18 ppm
Sulfur Dioxide	Annual	–	–
	24-Hour	–	0.04 ppm
	1-Hour	0.075 ppm	0.25 ppm
PM_{10}	Annual	–	20 µg/m³
	24-Hour	150 µg/m³	50 µg/m³
PM_{25}	Annual	12 µg/m³	12 µg/m³
	24-Hour	35 µg/m³	–
Lead	30-Day Average	–	1.5 µg/m³
	3-Month Average	0.15 µg/m³	–

NAAQS = National Ambient Air Quality Standards; CAAQS = California Ambient Air Quality Standards; ppm = parts per million; µg/m³ = micrograms per cubic meter

Source: USEPA 2025h

USEPA and CARB designate air basins or portions of air basins and counties as being in "attainment" or "nonattainment" for each of the criteria pollutants. Areas that do not meet the AAQS standards are classified as nonattainment areas. Areas that are unclassified have insufficient monitoring data for a specific pollutant to determine attainment or nonattainment status, although unclassified areas are typically treated as attainment for a specific pollutant. Since attainment and nonattainment designation is pollutant-specific, an area may be classified as nonattainment for one pollutant and attainment for another. Similarly, because the State and federal standards differ, an area could be classified as attainment for the federal standards of a pollutant and as nonattainment for the State standards of the same pollutant. The NAAQS (other than O_3, PM_{10}, $PM_{2.5}$, and those based on annual averages or arithmetic mean) are not to be exceeded more than once per year. The NAAQS for O_3, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ are based on statistical calculations over one- to three-year periods, depending on the pollutant. The CAAQS are not to be exceeded during a three-year period. The attainment status for Santa Barbara County is included in Table 4.2-3.

Table 4.2-3 Attainment Status of Criteria Pollutants in Santa Barbara County

Pollutant	State Designation	Federal Designation
O_3	Nonattainment-Transitional	Unclassified/Attainment
PM_{10}	Nonattainment	Unclassified/Attainment
$PM_{2.5}$	Attainment	Unclassified/Attainment
CO	Attainment	Unclassified/Attainment
NO_2	Attainment	Unclassified/Attainment
SO_2	Attainment	Unclassified/Attainment

O_3 = Ozone; NO_2 = nitrogen dioxide; CO = carbon monoxide; SO_2 = sulfur dioxide; PM_{10} = particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or less; $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter 2.5 microns or less in diameter.

Sources: SBCAPCD 2025

The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBAPCD) monitors criteria pollutant levels to assure that air quality standards are met, and if they are not met, develops strategies to meet the standards. As shown in Table 4.2-3, Santa Barbara County is in non-attainment for the 8-hour ozone State standards and PM_{10} State standard (SBAPCD 2025).

More than 250 air quality monitoring stations operated by federal, State, and local agencies comprise the California Ambient Air Monitoring Network, including ten stations in Santa Barbara County (CARB 2025d). There are two existing monitoring stations in Santa Maria: Orcutt Road and 906 South Broadway. The Orcutt Road Station collects data on ozone, $PM_{2.5}$, PM_{10}; and the 906 South Broadway Station collects data on ozone, $PM_{2.5}$, PM_{10}, and NO_2. NO_2 data from the Santa Maria 906 South Broadway Station is only available for 2021, therefore, NO_2 data from the Lompoc-South H Street Station located approximately 27 miles south of the city is used as data from the Lompoc – South H Street Station is available through 2023. The data collected at these stations are generally considered to be representative of the baseline air quality experienced in Santa Maria.

Table 4.2-4 summarizes the annual air quality data for the local airshed. As shown, PM_{10} measurements exceeded the State standards once in 2021, three times in 2022, and ten times in 2023. No other State or federal standards were exceeded at these monitoring stations. Since CO and SO_2 are in attainment with the SCCAB region, these pollutants are not monitored at the nearest air monitoring stations and ambient air quality is not reported for these pollutants.

Table 4.2-4 Ambient Air Quality Data

Pollutant	2021	2022	2023
Ozone (ppm), Worst 1-Hour	0.075[1]	0.057[2]	0.060[2]
Number of days of State exceedances (>0.09 ppm)	0	0	0
Ozone (ppm), 8-Hour Average	0.050[1]	0.054[2]	0.053[2]
Number of days of State exceedances (>0.07 ppm)	0	0	0
Number of days of federal exceedances (>0.07 ppm)	0	0	0
Nitrogen Dioxide (ppm), Highest 1 Hour	25[1]	24[3]	25[3]
Number of days above CAAQS (>0.180 ppm)	0	0	0
Number of days above NAAQS (>0.100 ppm)	0	0	0
Particulate Matter <10 microns, μg/m^3, Worst 24 Hours [2]	56.1[1]	75.6[2]	114.5[2]
Number of days above State standard (>50 μg/m^3) [2]	1	3	10
Number of days above federal standard (>150 μg/m^3)[2]	0	0	0
Particulate Matter <2.5 microns, μg/m^3, Worst 24 Hours [3]	12.4[1]	13.5[2]	26.9[2]
Number of days above federal standard (>35 μg/m^3) [3]	0	0	0

Notes: ppm = parts per million; μg/m^3 = micrograms per cubic meter

[1] Data from the Santa Maria Station at 906 South Broadway

[2] Data from the Santa Maria Station at Orcutt Road

[3] Data from the Lompoc-South H Street Station

Source: CARB 2025d

Sensitive Receptors

Federal and State AAQS have been established to represent the levels of air quality considered sufficient, with an adequate margin of safety, to protect public health and welfare. They are designed to protect that segment of the public most susceptible to respiratory distress, such as children under 14; the elderly over 65; persons engaged in strenuous work or exercise; and people with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases.

Sensitive receptor locations are therefore typically associated with residences, schools, and hospitals. The Dignity Health – Marian Regional Medical Center is located at 1400 East Church Street in Santa Maria. Additional sensitive receptors in the plan area include residences and K-12 schools located throughout the city. Schools in Santa Maria are identified in Section 4.9, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*.

b. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Setting

Gases that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation in the atmosphere are called GHGs. Gases that are widely seen as the principal contributors to human-induced climate change include carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O), fluorinated gases such as hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) and perfluorocarbons (PFC), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6). Water vapor is excluded from the list of GHGs, because it is short-lived in the atmosphere, and its atmospheric concentrations are largely determined by natural processes, such as oceanic evaporation.

Different GHGs have varying global warming potentials (GWP). The GWP of a GHG is the potential of a gas or aerosol to trap heat in the atmosphere over a specified timescale (generally, 100 years). Because GHGs absorb different amounts of heat, a common reference gas (CO_2) is used to relate the amount of heat absorbed to the amount of the gas, referred to as “carbon dioxide equivalent”

(CO_2e), which is the amount of GHG multiplied by its GWP. CO2 has a 100-year GWP of 1. By contrast, methane has a 100-year GWP of 30, meaning its global warming effect is 30 times greater than CO2 on a molecule-per-molecule basis (United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] 2021).[2]

GHGs are emitted by natural processes and human activities. Of these gases, CO_2 and CH_4 are emitted in the greatest quantities from human activities. Emissions of CO_2 are usually by-products of fossil fuel combustion, and CH_4 results from off-gassing associated with leakage from natural gas pipelines and processes, agricultural practices and landfills. Human-made GHGs, which have greater heat-absorption potential than CO_2, include fluorinated gases and SF_6 (USEPA 2025h).

Climate change is the observed increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere, land and oceans along with other substantial changes in climate (such as wind patterns, precipitation, and storms) over an extended period. The term "climate change" is often used interchangeably with the term "global warming," but climate change is preferred, because it conveys that other changes are happening in addition to rising temperatures. The baseline against which these changes are measured originates from historical records that identify temperature changes that occurred in the past, such as during previous ice ages. The global climate is changing continuously, as evidenced in the geologic record, which indicates repeated episodes of substantial warming and cooling. The rate of change has typically been incremental, with warming or cooling trends occurring over the course of thousands of years. The past 10,000 years have been marked by a period of incremental warming, as glaciers have steadily retreated across the globe. However, scientists have observed acceleration in the rate of warming over the past 150 years. The IPCC expressed in their *Sixth Assessment Report* that the rise and continued growth of atmospheric CO_2 concentrations is unequivocally due to human activities (IPCC 2021). Human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land and has led the climate to warm at an unprecedented rate in the last 2,000 years. It is estimated that between the period of 1850 through 2019, a total of 2,390 gigatons of anthropogenic CO_2 was emitted. It is likely that anthropogenic activities have increased the global surface temperature by approximately 1.07 degrees Celsius between the years 2010 through 2019 (IPCC 2021).

GHGs in the atmosphere regulate the earth's temperature. Without the natural heat-trapping effect of GHGs, the earth's surface would be approximately 33 degrees Celsius cooler (World Meteorological Organization 2013). However, since 1750, estimated concentrations of CO_2, CH_4, and N_2O in the atmosphere have increased by 47 percent, 156 percent, and 23 percent, respectively, primarily due to human activity (IPCC 2021). GHG emissions from human activities, particularly the consumption of fossil fuels for electricity production and transportation are believed to have elevated the concentration of these gases in the atmosphere far beyond the level of concentrations that occur naturally.

[2] The IPCC's (2021) *Sixth Assessment Report* determined that methane has a GWP of 30. However, the 2017 *Climate Change Scoping Plan* published by CARB uses a GWP of 25 for CH_4, consistent with the IPCC's (2007) *Fourth Assessment Report*. Therefore, this analysis utilizes a GWP of 25.

GHG Emissions Inventory

Global GHG Emissions Inventory

In 2015, worldwide anthropogenic GHG emissions totaled 47,000 million metric tons (MMT) of CO_2e, which is a 43 percent increase from 1990 GHG levels (U.S. EPA 2021b). Specifically, 34,522 MMT of CO_2e of CO_2, 8,241 MMT of CO_2e of CH_4, 2,997 MMT of CO_2e of N_2O, and 1,001 MMT of CO_2e of fluorinated gases were emitted in 2015. The largest source of GHG emissions were energy production and use (includes fuels used by vehicles and buildings), which accounted for 75 percent of the global GHG emissions. Agriculture uses and industrial processes contributed 12 percent and six percent, respectively. Waste sources contributed three percent, and two percent was due to international transportation sources. These sources account for approximately 98 percent because there was a net sink of two percent from land-use change and forestry. (U.S. EPA 2021b).

United States GHG Emissions Inventory

Total U.S. GHG emissions were 6,558 MMT of CO_2e in 2019. Emissions decreased by 1.7 percent from 2018 to 2019; since 1990, total U.S. emissions have increased by an average annual rate of 0.06 percent for a total increase of 1.8 percent between 1990 and 2019. The decrease from 2018 to 2019 reflects the combined influences of several long-term trends, including population changes, economic growth, energy market shifts, technological changes such as improvements in energy efficiency, and decrease in carbon intensity of energy fuel choices. In 2019, the industrial and transportation end-use sectors accounted for 30 percent and 29 percent, respectively, of nationwide GHG emissions while the commercial and residential end-use sectors accounted for 16 percent and 15 percent of nationwide GHG emissions, respectively, with electricity emissions distributed among the various sectors (U.S. EPA 2021c).

California GHG Emissions Inventory

Based on the CARB California Greenhouse Gas Inventory for 2000-2022, California produced 371.1 MMT of CO_2e in 2022, which is 9.3 MMT of CO_2e lower than 2021 levels. The major source of GHG emissions in California is the transportation sector, which comprises 39 percent of the State of California's total GHG emissions. The industrial sector is the second largest source, comprising 23 percent of the State's GHG emissions while electric power accounts for approximately 16 percent (CARB 2025e). The magnitude of California's total GHG emissions is due in part to its large size and large population compared to other states. However, a factor that reduces California's per capita fuel use and GHG emissions as compared to other states is its relatively mild climate. In 2016, the State of California (State) achieved its 2020 GHG emission reduction target of reducing emissions to 1990 levels as emissions fell below 431 MMT of CO_2e (CARB 2021). The annual 2030 statewide target emissions level is 260 MMT of CO_2e (CARB 2017).

Potential Effects of Climate Change

Globally, climate change has the potential to affect numerous environmental resources though potential impacts related to future air temperatures and precipitation patterns. Scientific modeling predicts that continued GHG emissions at or above current rates would induce more extreme climate changes during the 21st century than were observed during the 20th century. The year 2022 was the sixth warmest year since global records began in 1880 at 0.86°C (1.55°F) above the 20th century average of 13.9°C (57.0°F). This value is 0.13°C (0.23°F) less than the record set in 2016 and it is only 0.02°C (0.04°F) higher than the last year's (2021) value, which now ranks as the seventh

highest (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2023). Furthermore, several independently analyzed data records of global and regional Land-Surface Air Temperature obtained from station observations jointly indicate that Land Surface Air Temperature and sea surface temperatures have increased.

Potential impacts of climate change in California may include reduced water supply from snowpack, sea level rise, more extreme heat days per year, more large forest fires, and more drought years. *California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment* (California Natural Resource Agency 2019) includes regional reports that summarize climate impacts and adaptation solutions for nine regions of the State and regionally specific climate change case studies. However, while there is growing scientific consensus about the possible effects of climate change at a global and Statewide level, current scientific modeling tools are unable to predict what local impacts may occur with a similar degree of accuracy. A summary follows of some of the potential effects that climate change could generate in California.

Air Quality

Scientists project that the annual average maximum daily temperatures in California could rise by 2.4 to 3.2°C in the next 50 years and by 3.1 to 4.9°C in the next century. Higher temperatures are conducive to air pollution formation and rising temperatures could therefore result in worsened air quality in California. As a result, climate change may increase the concentration of ground-level ozone, but the magnitude of the effect, and therefore its indirect effects, are uncertain. In addition, as temperatures have increased in recent years, the area burned by wildfires throughout the State has increased, and wildfires have occurred at higher elevations in the Sierra Nevada Mountains (California Natural Resource Agency 2019). If higher temperatures continue to be accompanied by an increase in the incidence and extent of large wildfires, air quality could worsen. Severe heat accompanied by drier conditions and poor air quality could increase the number of heat-related deaths, illnesses, and asthma attacks throughout the State. With increasing temperatures, shifting weather patterns, longer dry seasons, and more dry fuel loads, the frequency of large wildfires and area burned is expected to increase (California Natural Resources Agency 2021).

Water Supply

Analysis of paleoclimatic data (such as tree-ring reconstructions of stream flow and precipitation) indicates a history of naturally and widely varying hydrologic conditions in California and the west, including a pattern of recurring and extended droughts. Uncertainty remains with respect to the overall impact of climate change on future precipitation trends and water supplies in California. Year-to-year variability in Statewide precipitation levels has increased since 1980, meaning that wet and dry precipitation extremes have become more common (California Department of Water Resources 2018). For example, the winter of 2022-2023 had severe storms and flooding from increased rainfall and snowmelt, which the California Department of Water Resources identified as "the latest example that California's climate is becoming more extreme" (California Department of Wate Resources 2023). This uncertainty regarding future precipitation trends complicates the analysis of future water demand, especially where the relationship between climate change and its potential effect on water demand is not well understood. The average early spring snowpack in the western United States, including the Sierra Nevada Mountains, decreased by about 10 percent during the last century. During the same period, sea level rose over 0.15 meter along the central and southern California coasts. The Sierra snowpack provides most of California's water supply as snow that accumulates during wet winters is released slowly during the dry months of spring and summer. A warmer climate is predicted to reduce the fraction of precipitation that falls as snow and

the amount of snowfall at lower elevations, thereby reducing the total snowpack. Projections indicate that the average spring snowpack in the Sierra Nevada and other mountain catchments in central and northern California will decline by approximately 66 percent from its historical average by 2050 (California Natural Resource Agency 2019).

Hydrology and Sea Level Rise

Climate change could affect the intensity and frequency of storms and flooding (California Natural Resource Agency 2019). Furthermore, climate change could induce substantial sea level rise in the coming century. Rising sea level increases the likelihood of and risk from flooding. The rate of increase of global mean sea levels between 1993 to 2022, observed by satellites, is approximately 3.4 millimeters per year, double the twentieth century trend of 1.6 millimeters per year (World Meteorological Organization 2013; National Aeronautics and Space Administration 2023). Global mean sea levels in 2013 were about 0.23 meter higher than those of 1880 (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2022). Sea levels are rising faster now than in the previous two millennia, and the rise will probably accelerate, even with robust GHG emission control measures. The most recent IPCC report predicts a mean sea level rise ranging between 0.25 to 1.01 meters by 2100 with the sea level ranges dependent on a low, intermediate, or high GHG emissions scenario (IPCC 2021). A rise in sea levels could erode 31 to 67 percent of southern California beaches and cause flooding of approximately 370 miles of coastal highways during 100-year storm events. This would also jeopardize California's water supply due to saltwater intrusion and induce groundwater flooding and/or exposure of buried infrastructure (California Natural Resource Agency 2019). Furthermore, increased storm intensity and frequency could affect the ability of flood-control facilities, including levees, to handle storm events.

Agriculture

California has an over $51 billion annual agricultural industry that produces over a third of the country's vegetables and three-quarters of the country's fruits and nuts (California Department of Food and Agriculture 2022). Higher CO_2 levels can stimulate plant production and increase plant water-use efficiency. However, if temperatures rise and drier conditions prevail, certain regions of agricultural production could experience water shortages of up to 16 percent, which would increase water demand as hotter conditions lead to the loss of soil moisture. In addition, crop yield could be threatened by water-induced stress and extreme heat waves, and plants may be susceptible to new and changing pest and disease outbreaks (California Natural Resource Agency 2019). Temperature increases could also change the time of year that certain crops, such as wine grapes, bloom or ripen, and thereby affect their quality (California Climate Change Center 2006).

Ecosystems

Climate change and the potential resultant changes in weather patterns could have ecological effects on the global and local scales. Soil moisture is likely to decline in many regions due to higher temperatures, and intense rainstorms are likely to become more frequent. Rising temperatures could have four major impacts on plants and animals: timing of ecological events; geographic distribution and range of species; species composition and the incidence of nonnative species within communities; and ecosystem processes, such as carbon cycling and storage (Parmesan 2006; California Natural Resource Agency 2019).

4.2.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

Federal Clean Air Act

The U.S. Supreme Court determined in *Massachusetts et al. v. Environmental Protection Agency* et al. ([2007] 549 U.S. 05-1120) that the USEPA has the authority to regulate motor vehicle GHG emissions under the federal Clean Air Act. The USEPA issued a Final Rule for mandatory reporting of GHG emissions in October 2009. This Final Rule applies to fossil fuel suppliers, industrial gas suppliers, direct GHG emitters, and manufacturers of heavy-duty and off-road vehicles and vehicle engines and requires annual reporting of emissions. In 2012, the USEPA issued a Final Rule that established the GHG permitting thresholds that determine when Clean Air Act permits under the New Source Review Prevention of Significant Deterioration and Title V Operating Permit programs are required for new and existing industrial facilities.

In *Utility Air Regulatory Group v. Environmental Protection Agency* (134 Supreme Court 2427 [2014]), the Supreme Court held the USEPA may not treat GHGs as an air pollutant for purposes of determining whether a source can be considered a major source required to obtain a Prevention of Significant Deterioration or Title V permit. The Supreme Court also held that Prevention of Significant Deterioration permits otherwise required based on emissions of other pollutants may continue to require limitations on GHG emissions based on the application of Best Available Control Technology.

Federal Fuel Efficiency Standards (CAFE)

Under the CAA, corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards have been set for passenger cars and light trucks. The State of California has traditionally had a waiver to set its own more stringent fuel efficiency standards. In 2020, the NHTSA and USEPA implemented the Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient Vehicles Rule (SAFE Rule). Part One of the SAFE Rule revoked a waiver granted by USEPA to the State of California to enforce more stringent emission standards for motor vehicles those required by USEPA for the explicit purpose of GHG reduction. However, in 2021 the federal government formally proposed to roll back portions of the SAFE Rule, restoring California's right to enforce more stringent fuel efficiency standards (NHTSA 2022). In December 2021, the NHTSA finalized rules to repeal the SAFE I Rule established in 2020. However, the status of California's fuel efficiency standard waivers are again in question as of the writing of this document.

Construction Equipment Fuel-Efficiency Standard

USEPA sets emission standards for construction equipment. The first federal standards (Tier 1) were adopted in 1994 for all off-road engines over 50 horsepower (hp) and were phased in by 2000. A new standard was adopted in 1998 that introduced Tier 1 for all equipment below 50 hp and established the Tier 2 and Tier 3 standards. The Tier 2 and Tier 3 standards were phased in by 2008 for all equipment. The current iteration of emissions standards for construction equipment are the Tier 4 efficiency requirements, which are contained in 40 CFR Parts 1039, 1065, and 1068 (originally adopted in 69 Federal Register 38958 [June 29, 2004] and most recently updated in 2014 [79 Federal Register 46356]). Emissions requirements for new off-road Tier 4 vehicles were completely phased in by the end of 2015.

b. State Regulations

California Clean Air Act

The CCAA was enacted in 1988 (California Health & Safety Code Section 39000 et seq.). Under the CCAA, the State has developed the CAAQS, which are generally more stringent than the NAAQS. Table 4.2-2 lists the current State standards for regulated pollutants. In addition to the federal criteria pollutants, the CAAQS also specify standards for visibility-reducing particles, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, and vinyl chloride. Similar to the federal CAA, the CCAA classifies specific geographic areas as either “attainment” or “nonattainment” areas for each pollutant, based on the comparison of measured data within the CAAQS.

California Air Toxics Program

A TAC is an air pollutant that may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or serious illness, or which may pose a present or potential hazard to human health. TACs may result in long-term health effects such as cancer, birth defects, neurological damage, asthma, or genetic damage, or short-term acute effects such as eye watering, respiratory irritation, runny nose, throat pain, and headaches. TACs are considered either carcinogenic or non-carcinogenic based on the nature of the health effects associated with exposure.

In 1983, the California Legislature enacted a program to identify the health effects of TACs and to reduce exposure to these contaminants to protect the public health (Assembly Bill [AB] 1807: Health and Safety Code Sections 39650–39674). The Legislature established a two-step process to address the potential health effects from TACs. The first step is the risk assessment (or identification) phase. The second step is the risk management (or control) phase of the process.

The California Air Toxics Program establishes the process for the identification and control of TACs and includes provisions to make the public aware of significant toxic exposures and for reducing risk. Additionally, the Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Information and Assessment Act (AB 2588, 1987, Connelly Bill) was enacted in 1987 and requires stationary sources to report the types and quantities of certain substances routinely released into the air. The goals of the Air Toxics "Hot Spots" Act are to collect emission data, identify facilities having localized impacts, ascertain health risks, notify nearby residents of significant risks, and reduce those significant risks to acceptable levels. The Children's Environmental Health Protection Act, California Senate Bill (SB) 25 (Chapter 731, Escutia, Statutes of 1999), focuses on children's exposure to air pollutants. The act requires CARB to review its air quality standards from a children's health perspective, evaluate the Statewide air quality monitoring network, and develop any additional air toxic control measures needed to protect children's health.

State Implementation Plan

The SIP is a collection of documents that set forth the State’s strategies for achieving the AAQS. In California, the SIP is a compilation of new and previously submitted plans, programs (such as monitoring, modeling, and permitting), district rules, State regulations, and federal controls. CARB is the lead agency for all purposes related to the SIP under State law. Local air districts and other agencies, such as the Department of Pesticide Regulation and the Bureau of Automotive Repair, prepare SIP elements and submit them to CARB for review and approval. CARB then forwards SIP revisions to the USEPA for approval and publication in the Federal Register. The items included in the California SIP are listed in the Code of Federal Regulations at 40 Code of Federal Regulations 52.220.

The 2022 Santa Barbara County Ozone Plan is the SIP for Santa Barbara County. The 2022 Ozone Plan (2022 Plan) accommodates growth by projecting the growth in emissions based on different indicators. For example, population forecasts adopted by SCCAB are used to forecast population-related emissions. Through the planning process, emissions growth is offset by basin-wide controls on stationary, area, and transportation sources of air pollution.

In addition, the following California Code of Regulations would be applicable to the 2045 General Plan:

- **Engine Idling.** In accordance with Section 2485 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations, the idling of all diesel-fueled commercial vehicles (weighing over 10,000 pounds) during construction shall be limited to five minutes at any location.
- **Emission Standards.** In accordance with Section 93115 of Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, operation of any stationary, diesel-fueled, compression-ignition engines shall meet specified fuel and fuel additive requirements and emission standards.

California Advanced Clean Cars Program

Assembly Bill (AB) 1493 (2002), California's Advanced Clean Cars program (referred to as "Pavley"), requires CARB to develop and adopt regulations to achieve "the maximum feasible and cost-effective reduction of GHG emissions from motor vehicles." On June 30, 2009, the U.S. EPA granted the waiver of Clean Air Act preemption to California for its GHG emission standards for motor vehicles, beginning with the 2009 model year, which allows California to implement more stringent vehicle emission standards than those promulgated by the U.S. EPA. Pavley I regulates model years from 2009 to 2016 and Pavley II, now referred to as "LEV (Low Emission Vehicle) III GHG," regulates model years from 2017 to 2025. The Advanced Clean Cars program coordinates the goals of the LEV, Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEV), and Clean Fuels Outlet programs and would provide major reductions in GHG emissions. By 2025, the rules have been fully implemented, and new automobiles will emit 34 percent fewer GHGs and 75 percent fewer smog-forming emissions from their model year 2016 levels.

California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32, and Senate Bill 32, and Assembly Bill 1279)

California's major initiative for reducing GHG emissions is outlined in AB 32, the "California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006," which was signed into law in 2006. AB 32 codifies the statewide goal of reducing GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and requires CARB to prepare a Scoping Plan that outlines the main State strategies for reducing GHGs to meet the 2020 deadline. AB 32 requires CARB to adopt regulations to require reporting and verification of statewide GHG emissions. Based on this guidance, CARB approved a 1990 statewide GHG level and 2020 limit of 427 MMT CO_2e. The Scoping Plan was approved by CARB on December 11, 2008 and included measures to address GHG emission reduction strategies related to energy efficiency, water use, and recycling and solid waste, among other measures. Many of the GHG reduction measures included in the Scoping Plan (e.g., Low Carbon Fuel Standard, Advanced Clean Car standards, and Cap-and-Trade) have been adopted since approval of the Scoping Plan.

Senate Bill (SB) 32, signed into law on September 8, 2016, extends AB 32 by requiring the State to further reduce GHGs to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 (the other provisions of AB 32 remain unchanged). On December 14, 2017, CARB adopted the 2017 Scoping Plan, which provides a framework for achieving the 2030 target. The 2017 Scoping Plan relies on the continuation and

expansion of existing policies and regulations, such as the Cap-and-Trade Program, as well as implementation of recently adopted policies and policies, such as SB 350 and SB 1383 (see below). The 2017 Scoping Plan also puts an increased emphasis on innovation, adoption of existing technology, and strategic investment to support its strategies. As with the 2013 Scoping Plan Update, the 2017 Scoping Plan does not provide project-level thresholds for land use development. Instead, it recommends that local governments adopt policies and locally appropriate quantitative thresholds consistent with statewide per capita goals of 6 MT CO_2e by 2030 and 2 MT CO_2e by 2050 (CARB 2017). As stated in the 2017 Scoping Plan, these goals may be appropriate for plan-level analyses (city, county, subregional, or regional level), but not for specific individual projects because they include all emissions sectors in the State (CARB 2017).

AB 1279, "The California Climate Crisis Act," was passed on September 16, 2022, and declares the State would achieve net zero GHG emissions as soon as possible, but no later than 2045, and to achieve and maintain net negative GHG emissions thereafter. In addition, the bill states that the State would reduce GHG emissions by 85 percent below 1990 levels no later than 2045. The Draft 2022 Scoping Plan Update has been prepared to assess the progress towards the 2030 target as well as to outline a plan to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2045. The 2022 Scoping Plan Update focuses on outcomes needed to achieve carbon neutrality by assessing paths for clean technology, energy deployment, natural and working lands, and others, and is designed to meet the State's long-term climate objectives and support a range of economic, environmental, energy security, environmental justice, and public health priorities (CARB 2022).

Senate Bill 375

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375), signed in August 2008, enhances the state's ability to reach AB 32 goals by directing the CARB to develop regional GHG emission reduction targets to be achieved from passenger vehicles by 2020 and 2035. SB 375 aligns regional transportation planning efforts, regional GHG reduction targets, and affordable housing allocations. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are required to adopt a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which allocates land uses in the MPO's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Qualified projects consistent with an approved SCS or Alternative Planning Strategy (categorized as "transit priority projects") can receive incentives to streamline CEQA processing.

On March 22, 2018, CARB adopted updated regional targets for reducing GHG emissions from 2005 levels by 2020 and 2035. The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) adopted the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS to demonstrate that the SBCAG region would achieve emissions reductions consistent with targets set forth by SB 375.

Senate Bill 1383

Adopted in September 2016, SB 1383 (Lara, Chapter 395, Statues of 2016) requires the CARB to approve and begin implementing a comprehensive strategy to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants. SB 1383 requires the strategy to achieve the following reduction targets by 2030:

- Methane – 40 percent below 2013 levels
- Hydrofluorocarbons – 40 percent below 2013 levels
- Anthropogenic black carbon – 50 percent below 2013 levels

SB 1383 also requires the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), in consultation with the CARB, to adopt regulations that achieve specified targets for reducing organic waste in landfills.

Senate Bill 100

Adopted on September 10, 2018, SB 100 supports the reduction of GHG emissions from the electricity sector by accelerating the state's Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) Program, which was last updated by SB 350 in 2015. SB 100 requires electricity providers to increase procurement from eligible renewable energy resources to 33 percent of total retail sales by 2020, 60 percent by 2030, and 100 percent by 2045.

Executive Order B-55-18

On September 10, 2018, the former Governor Brown issued Executive Order (EO) B-55-18, which established a new statewide goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045 and maintaining net negative emissions thereafter. This goal is in addition to the existing statewide GHG reduction targets established by SB 375, SB 32, SB 1383, and SB 100.

Clean Energy, Jobs, and Affordability Act of 2022 (Senate Bill 1020)

Adopted on September 16, 2022, SB 1020 creates clean electricity targets for eligible renewable energy resources and zero-carbon resources to supply 90 percent of retail sale electricity by 2035, 95 percent by 2040, 100 percent by 2045, and 100 percent of electricity procured to serve all state agencies by 2035. This bill shall not increase carbon emissions elsewhere in the western grid and shall not allow resource shuffling.

California Building Standards Code

The CEC first adopted the Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings (CCR, Title 24, Part 6) in 1978 in response to a legislative mandate to reduce energy consumption in the State. Although not originally intended to reduce GHG emissions, increased energy efficiency, and reduced consumption of electricity, natural gas, and other fuels would result in fewer GHG emissions from residential and nonresidential buildings subject to the standard. The standards are updated periodically to allow for the consideration and inclusion of new energy efficiency technologies and methods.

Part 11 of the Title 24 Building Standards is referred to as the California Green Building Standards (CALGreen) Code and was developed to help the State achieve its GHG reduction goals under HSC Division 25.5 (e.g., AB 32) by codifying standards for reducing building-related energy, water, and resource demand, which in turn reduces GHG emissions from energy, water, and resource demand. The purpose of the CALGreen Code is to "improve public health, safety and general welfare by enhancing the design and construction of buildings through the use of building concepts having a positive environmental impact and encouraging sustainable construction practices in the following categories: (1) planning and design; (2) energy efficiency; (3) water efficiency and conservation; (4) material conservation and resource efficiency; and (5) environmental air quality." The CALGreen Code is not intended to substitute for or be identified as meeting the certification requirements of any green building program that is not established and adopted by the California Building Standards Commission. The CALGreen Code establishes mandatory measures for new residential and non-residential buildings. Such mandatory measures include energy efficiency, water conservation, material conservation, planning and design, and overall environmental quality.

On August 11, 2021, the CEC adopted the 2022 Title 24 Standards, which go into effect on January 1, 2023. The 2022 standards continue to improve upon the previous (2019) Title 24 standards for new construction of, and additions and alterations to, residential and non-residential buildings (CEC 2022a). The 2022 Title 24 Standards "build on California's technology innovations, encouraging energy efficient approaches to encourage building decarbonization, emphasizing in particular on heat pumps for space heating and water heating. This set of Energy Codes also extends the benefits of photovoltaic and battery storage systems and other demand flexible technology to work in combinations with heat pumps to enable California buildings to be responsive to climate change. This Energy code also strengthens ventilation standards to improve indoor air quality. This update provides crucial steps in the state's progress toward 100 percent clean carbon neutrality by midcentury" (CEC 2022b). The 2022 Energy Code is anticipated to reduce GHG emissions by 10 MMT of CO_2e over the next 30 years and result in approximately 1.5 billion dollars in consumer savings (CEC 2022c). Compliance with Title 24 is enforced through the building permit process.

c. Local Regulations

Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District

As the local air quality management agency, the SBCAPCD is required to monitor air pollutant levels to ensure that State and federal air quality standards are met and, if they are not met, to develop strategies to meet the standards. Depending on whether the standards are met or exceeded, the SCCAB is classified as being in "attainment" or "nonattainment." In areas designated as non-attainment for one or more air pollutants, a cumulative air quality impact exists for those air pollutants, and the human health impacts described in Section 2.1, *Environmental and Regulatory Setting*, are already occurring in that area as part of the environmental baseline condition.

Under State law, air districts are required to prepare a plan for air quality improvement for pollutants for which the district is in non-compliance. The *2001 Clean Air Plan* (2002) was the first plan prepared by SBCAPCD and established specific planning requirements to maintain the State one-hour O_3 standard. In 2006, CARB revised the CAAQS and added an 8-hour average to the O_3 standard. Both components of the standard must now be met before CARB can designate an area to be in attainment. The most recent *2022 Ozone Plan* was adopted by SBCAPCD in December 2022 and was the seventh update to the *2001 Clean Air Plan*. The *2022 Ozone Plan* addresses the State O_3 standards only because SBCAPCD is designated "attainment" for the federal 8-hour O_3 standards, including the most recent standard of 0.070 ppm promulgated by the United States EPA in 2015.

To minimize potential impacts from the plan emissions, the SBCAPCD implements rules and regulations for emissions that may be generated by various uses and activities. The rules and regulations detail pollution-reduction measures that must be implemented during construction and operation of Projects. Rules and regulations relevant to the plan include the following:

- **Rule 345 (Control of Fugitive Dust from Construction and Demolition Activities).** This rule establishes fugitive dust control requirements for any activity associated with construction or demolition of a structure or structures.
- **Rule 323.1 (Architectural Coatings).** This rule establishes volatile organic content limits for architectural coatings that are manufactured, blended, repackaged, supplied, sold, or offered for sale within the SBCAPCD. Rule 323.1 limits the volatile organic content to 50 grams per liter for flat coatings and 100 grams per liter for nonflat coatings and traffic marking coatings.

- **Rule 329 (Cutback and Emulsified Asphalt Paving Materials).** This rule establishes ROC content limits pertaining to the manufacture, application, and sale of cutback and emulsified asphalt materials for paving, construction, and maintenance of streets, highways, parking lots, and driveways.

SBCAG Connected 2050 RTP/SCS

The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS was adopted by Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) in 2021 and updated in April 2025, and it builds upon the goals, policies, and forecasts of preceding plans. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS demonstrates that the SBCAG region would achieve emissions reductions consistent with targets set forth by SB 375. GHG reductions achieved through the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS would result in corresponding reductions in energy consumption in the region. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS sets forth goals and objectives related to mixed-use development and the jobs-housing balance by allotting more housing to the southern portion of Santa Barbara County, as well as incorporating region-specific analysis of environmental justice indicators. Policies in the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS applicable to the plan include meeting SB 375 requirements, promoting renewable energy, and promoting alternative transportation (SBCAG 2025).

City of Santa Maria

The City of Santa Maria has not adopted a qualified greenhouse gas reduction plan pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5(b)(1). Therefore, this analysis does not utilize the tiering and streamlining provisions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5(b)(2) in evaluating the significance of the plan's impacts related to GHG emissions.

4.2.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Air Quality Methodology

The assessment of potential environmental impacts related to air quality is based on a review of regional air quality plans and data within the plan. As a programmatic document, this EIR presents a citywide assessment of the plan. Table 4.2-5 summarizes the land use assumptions used in the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod), which represent the net new uses from the 2045 General Plan Update as detailed under Section 2.6.5 of the *Project Description*:

Table 4.2-5 CalEEMod Land Use Assumptions

Land Use Categories	New Uses	Reduction in Uses
Residential	+16,140 units	–
Mixed-Use (assumed to be office uses in CalEEMod)	+452 ac	–
Industrial	+7 ac	–
Recreational Parks	+33 ac	–
Planned Future Development (assumed to be office uses in CalEEMod)	+~~1,021~~ 1,012 ac	–
Commercial	–	-463 ac

N/A = not applicable; ac = acres

Construction Emissions

Construction-related emissions are temporary but may still cause adverse air quality impacts. Construction of development associated with the 2045 General Plan Update would generate temporary emissions from three primary sources: the operation of construction equipment (e.g., scrapers, loaders, dump trucks, etc.); ground disturbance during site preparation and grading, which creates fugitive dust; and the application of asphalt, paint, or other oil-based substances. At this time, there is not sufficient detail to allow project-level analysis and thus it would be speculative to analyze project-level impacts. Rather, construction impacts for the 2045 General Plan Update are discussed qualitatively.

Operational Emissions

Operational emissions were estimated using CalEEMod, version 2022.1. CalEEMod uses default and project-specific information, including the plan's land uses, square footage for different uses (e.g., multi-family residence, hotel, etc.), and location, to estimate the plan's operational emissions. Land use assumptions are included in Table 4.2-5**.**

Operational emissions would be comprised of mobile source emissions, energy emissions, and area source emissions. Area source emissions are generated by landscape maintenance equipment, consumer products, and architectural coating. Emissions attributed to energy use include electricity and natural gas consumption for space and water heating. The energy use estimates account for the 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Title 24). This is a conservative assumption since the energy use estimates do not account for potential energy efficiency measures required by the subsequent Title 24 update in 2022, as well as anticipated future updates. Mobile source emissions were estimated using vehicle activity data presented in Section 4.7, *Transportation and Traffic*. Table 4.2-6 shows the 2045 General Plan Update's VMT per capita for 2045. Annual VMT were estimated by multiplying the daily VMT per household by the projected increase of 16,140 residential units and by 365 days per year. Similarly, daily VMT per employee was multiplied by the projected increase of 23,750 employees and by 365 days to estimate annual employee-related VMT. This approach represents a conservative assumption, as it applies daily VMT rates uniformly across all days of the year, without accounting for reduced travel on weekends or holidays.

Table 4.2-6 Plan 2045 VMT

Activity	VMT per Household	VMT per Employee
VMT	47.6	9.8

VMT = Vehicle Miles Traveled

Source: Santa Maria Travel Demand Model, GHD, June 2025.

Air Quality Significance Thresholds

This analysis follows the guidance and methodologies recommended in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines and SBCAPCD's *Scope and Content of Air Quality Sections in Environmental Documents* (2022a). Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, air quality impacts related to a project would be significant if the project would:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan;

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard;

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations; and/or
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.

According to the SBCAPCD *Scope and Content of Air Quality Sections in Environmental Documents*, a project would have a significant air quality impact on the environment if operation of the project would:

a) Emit from all project sources (both stationary and mobile) less than 240 pounds per day of ROC;
b) Emit from all project sources (both stationary and mobile) less than 240 pounds per day of NO_X;
c) Emit from all project sources (both stationary and mobile) less than 80 pounds per day of PM_{10};
d) Emit less than 25 pounds per day of ROC from motor vehicle trips only;
e) Emit less than 25 pounds per day of NO_X from motor vehicle trips only; and
f) Not cause or contribute to a violation of any California or National Ambient Air Quality Standard (except ozone); or
g) Not exceed the public notification health risk thresholds adopted by the SBCAPCD of 10 excess cancer cases in a million for cancer risk or a Hazard Index of more than 1.0 for non-cancer risk; or
h) Be consistent with the latest adopted in federal and State air quality plans for Santa Barbara County

The SBCAPCD *Scope and Content of Air Quality Sections in Environmental Documents* state that, due to the relatively low background ambient CO levels in Santa Barbara County, localized CO impacts associated with congested intersections are not expected to exceed the CO health-related air quality standards. As such, CO hotspot analyses are not required.

Plan Consistency

Consistency with land use and population forecasts in local and regional plans, including the 2022 Ozone Plan (previously known as the Clean Air Plan), is required under CEQA for all projects.

The 2022 Ozone Plan relies primarily on the land use and population projections provided by SBCAG and CARB on-road emissions forecast as a basis for vehicle emission forecasting (SBCAPCD 2022b). The 2022 Ozone Plan uses SBCAG's Countywide Regional Transportation Demand Model for on-road mobile source emissions estimates and SBCAG's socio-economic projections contained in the most recent RTP/SCS to form the basis for some stationary and area source growth forecasts.

The SBCAPCD's *Scope and Content of Air Quality Sections in Environmental Documents* States that any general plan amendment that would provide for increased population growth above that forecasted in the most recently adopted Ozone Plan is inconsistent with the Ozone Plan and may have a significant impact on air quality (SBCAPCD 2022a).

Toxic Air Contaminants

The USEPA considers those pollutants that could cause cancer risks between one in 10,000 (1.0×10^{4}) and one in one million (1.0×10^{-6}) for risk management. Proposition 65 (California Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6), enacted in 1986, prohibits a person in the course of doing business from knowingly and intentionally exposing any individual to a chemical that has been listed as known to the State to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable

warning. For a chemical that is listed as a carcinogen, the "no significant risk" level under Proposition 65 is defined as the level that is calculated to result in not more than one excess case of cancer in 100,000 individuals (1.0×10^{-5}). The SBCAPCD recommends the use of this risk level (also reportable as 10 in one million) as the significance threshold for TACs. The SBCAPCD also recommends that the non-carcinogenic hazards of TACs should not exceed a hazard index (the summation of the hazard quotients for all chemicals to which an individual would be exposed) of 1.0 for either chronic or acute effects (SBCAPCD 2022a).

GHG Methodology

GHG emissions result from both direct and indirect sources. Direct emissions include emissions from fuel combustion in vehicles and natural gas combustion from stationary sources. Indirect sources include off-site emissions occurring as a result of electricity and water consumption and solid waste. In addition, construction activities would result in direct and indirect emissions. Details for mobile source, energy source, and area source inputs included in the modeling of GHG emissions are provided above under Air Quality Methodology.

As discussed above, the 2045 General Plan Update is analyzed for consistency with the 2022 Scoping Plan and SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS.

GHG Significance Thresholds

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines States that a project may have a significant adverse impact if it would:

1. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment; and/or
2. Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

The majority of individual projects do not generate sufficient GHG emissions to directly influence climate change. However, physical changes caused by a project can contribute incrementally to cumulative effects that are significant, even if individual changes resulting from a project are limited. The issue of climate change typically involves an analysis of whether a project's contribution towards an impact would be cumulatively considerable. "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probable future projects (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064[h][1]).

According to the CEQA Guidelines, projects can tier from a qualified GHG reduction plan, which allows for project-level evaluation of GHG emissions through the comparison of the proposed project's consistency with the GHG reduction policies included in a qualified GHG reduction plan. This approach is considered by the Association of Environmental Professionals [AEP] (2016) in its white paper, *Beyond Newhall and 2020*, to be the most defensible approach presently available under CEQA to determine the significance of a project's GHG emissions.

The City of Santa Maria has not adopted a numerical significance threshold for assessing impacts related to GHG emissions. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update is evaluated based on consistency with the 2022 Scoping Plan and SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS.

b. Projects Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Impact AQGHG-1 THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD RESULT IN NEW EMISSIONS THAT MAY EXCEED THE 2022 OZONE PLAN'S DIRECT AND INDIRECT EMISSIONS INVENTORY FOR THE COUNTY. AS A RESULT, THE PLAN WOULD CONFLICT WITH OR OBSTRUCT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2022 OZONE PLAN. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE.

The SBCAPCD Guidelines State that a project is consistent with the 2022 Ozone Plan (previously known as the Clean Air Plan) if its direct and indirect emissions have been accounted for in the 2022 Ozone Plan's emissions forecast assumptions, and if it would incorporate the standard fugitive dust control measures recommended by SBCAPCD during construction activities.

Emissions Forecast Assumptions

The 2022 Ozone Plan's direct and indirect emissions inventory for the County as a whole is reliant on population projections provided by the SBCAG. SBCAG generates population projections based on local General Plans. In this case, SBCAG utilized population projections contained in the existing City of Santa Maria General Plan, which are based on existing and anticipated land uses in the city. As discussed in Section 4.9, *Effects Found Not to be Significant,* the proposed plan would add 16,140 additional residential units leading to an increase of approximately 58,265 new residents.[3] This estimate is based on the California Department of Finance's population estimates, which identified the average persons per household in Santa Maria as 3.61 in 2024 (DOF 2024) and assumes full occupancy of residential units at this rate. Actual population growth may be lower. According to the SBCAG Regional Growth Forecast 2050 for Santa Barbara County, the population of Santa Maria is expected to increase by 34,600 residents by 2050. The Plan's anticipated addition of roughly 58,265 residents by the year 2045 would exceed SBCAG's projection by roughly 23,665 residents or 31 percent. Although SBCAG would update their growth projections to be consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update during the next planning cycle, the level of population growth and associated development anticipated under the 2045 General Plan Update would substantially exceed the existing SBCAG population forecasts. In addition, as discussed below under Impact AQGHG-2, the 2045 General Plan Update would exceed SBCAPCD's construction and operational criteria pollutant thresholds, which represents a conflict with the goals and measures outlined in the 2022 Ozone Plan. Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Fugitive Dust Control Measures

Pursuant to SBCAPCD Guidelines to be consistent with the 2022 Ozone Plan, a project must incorporate the standard fugitive dust control measures recommended by SBCAPCD during construction activities. The 2045 General Plan Update contains the following policy and action that would require fugitive dust control measures and the use of SBCACPD's short-term construction emissions guidelines.

[3] This calculation represents a conservative analysis in which every potential residential unit (16,140 as described in Section 2.6.5, Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout) is occupied at the full potential persons per household rate.

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.

Policies included in the 2045 General Plan Update would ensure that future development facilitated by the plan would comply with SBCAPCD's standard fugitive dust control measures, ensuring consistency with this component of the 2022 Ozone Plan.

Mitigation Measures

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies which are intended to achieve consistency with the 2022 Ozone Plan's direct and indirect emissions inventory for the County. However, there is no set of General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could feasibly achieve consistency with SBCAG's population forecasts or reduce emissions in a manner that would be consistent with the 2022 Ozone Plan's direct and indirect emissions inventory for the County as a whole.

Significance After Mitigation

Policies included in the 2045 General Plan Update would ensure that future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would comply with SBCAPCD's standard fugitive dust control measures. However, because the 2045 General Plan Update would substantially exceed SBCAG's population forecasts and would result in new emissions that could exceed 2022 Ozone Plan's direct and indirect emissions inventory for the County as a whole, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 2:	Would the project result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard?

Impact AQGHG-2 THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COULD RESULT IN A CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE NET INCREASE OF ALL CRITERIA POLLUTANTS FOR WHICH THE PLAN REGION IS IN NON-ATTAINMENT UNDER AN APPLICABLE FEDERAL OR STATE AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARD. EVEN WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF MITIGATION MEASURE AQGHG-2, THIS IMPACT WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE.

Construction

Construction of development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update may involve activities that result in air pollutant emissions. Construction activities such as demolition, grading, construction worker travel, delivery and hauling of construction supplies and debris, and fuel combustion by on-site construction equipment would generate pollutant emissions. These construction activities would temporarily create emissions of dust, fumes, equipment exhaust, and other air contaminants, particularly during site preparation and grading. The extent of daily emissions, particularly ROC and NO_X emissions, generated by construction equipment, would depend on the quantity of equipment used and the hours of operation for each project. The extent of $PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10} emissions would depend upon the following factors: 1) the amount of disturbed soils; 2) the length of disturbance time; 3) whether existing structures are demolished; 4) whether excavation is involved; and 5)

whether transporting excavated materials offsite is necessary. Dust emissions can lead to both nuisance and health impacts.

SBCAPCD does not currently have quantitative thresholds of significance for plan-level construction that would apply to the 2045 General Plan Update. However, CEQA requires that the short-term impacts such as exhaust emissions from construction equipment and fugitive dust generation during grading be analyzed. If an individual project's construction emissions fall below the project-level thresholds, the plan's impacts on regional air quality would be individually and cumulatively less than significant. According to SBCAPCD's *Scope and Content of Air Quality Sections in Environmental Documents,* it recommends quantification of construction-related emissions and suggests a 25 tons per year threshold for ROC or NO_X as a guideline for determining the significance of construction impacts (SBCAPCD 2022a). This is a limit that requires offsets if the construction activity is for a project that requires SBCAPCD permits and also provides guidance for other construction projects involving standard grading and building activities. In addition, standard dust control measures must be implemented for any discretionary project involving earthmoving activities, regardless of size or duration. According to the SBCAPCD, proper implementation of these required measures reduces fugitive dust emissions to a level that is less than significant (SBCAPCD 2022a).

Construction of development envisioned under the 2045 General Plan Update would temporarily increase air pollutant emissions, possibly creating localized areas of unhealthy air pollution concentrations or air quality nuisances. To promote clean air quality to protect public health and safety and to minimize adverse air quality impacts, the 2045 General Plan Update includes Policies COS-5.1 through 5.3 and associated actions which would minimize emissions of air contaminants associated with buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update. These policies are listed below:

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 ~~Air Pollution Control District (~~APCD~~)~~ threshold standards as guidelines

Action COS-5.1.3: Ensure new development complies with the ~~Santa Barbara County Congestion Management Program (CMP),~~ 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, including 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 ~~SBCAPCD~~ 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, shall 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

While consistency with SBCAPCD's Guidelines through implementation of fugitive dust control measures would reduce impacts from construction emissions to less than significant for the majority of projects, specific project-level details are unknown at this level of planning and individual projects may still exceed SBCAPCD thresholds. Therefore, construction impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Operation

Reasonably expected future development from the 2045 General Plan Update would generate long-term regional air pollutant emissions, which would result from mobile sources (motor vehicle exhaust) and area sources, such as consumer products and natural gas combustion. Emissions from motor vehicle exhaust were estimated using VMT data for the 2045 General Plan Update (2045). The impact analysis is based on net new uses within the city as detailed in Section 2, *Project Description*.

Operation of development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would generate criteria air pollutant emissions associated with area sources (e.g., architectural coatings, consumer products, and landscaping equipment), energy sources (i.e., use of natural gas for space and water heating), and mobile sources (i.e., vehicle trips to and from the project site). The 2045 General Plan Update would increase residential, office, industrial, and recreational land uses under 2045 buildout, and would decrease commercial uses under 2045 buildout. Operational emissions were based on the plan characteristics described in Section 2, *Project Description,* and the new and reduced land uses categories proposed by the plan as compared to the existing City land use designations (Table 4.2-5). In addition, VMT per capita data presented in Table 4.2-6 were used to generate estimates of annual VMT.

Table 4.2-7 shows the net difference in operational emissions by subtracting net new uses by net reduction in uses. As shown in Table 4.2-7, the net new emissions would exceed SBCAPCD thresholds for all sources and mobile sources. Therefore, this impact would be potentially significant.

Table 4.2-7 Estimated Operational Emissions

Emissions Source	Maximum Daily Emissions (pounds per day)					
	ROC	NO_x	CO	SO_2	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$
New Uses						
Mobile	55	94	1,314	5	615	157
Area	2,491	32	3,724	<1	5	4
Energy	55	493	372	3	38	38
Total	**2,601**	**619**	**5,410**	**8**	**658**	**199**
Reduction in Uses						
Mobile	4	6	84	<1	39	10
Area	639	7	877	<1	9	9
Energy	14	122	103	1	9	9
Total	**657**	**135**	**1,064**	**1**	**57**	**28**
Net New Emissions						
Net New Emissions	**1,944**	**484**	**4,346**	**7**	**601**	**171**
Threshold (area + energy + mobile)	240	240	N/A	N/A	80	N/A
Threshold Exceeded?	**Yes**	**Yes**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes**	**N/A**
Threshold (mobile only)	25	25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Threshold Exceeded?	**Yes**	**Yes**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

ROC = reactive organic compounds, NO_x = nitrogen oxides, CO = carbon monoxide, SO_2 = sulfur dioxide, PM_{10} = particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or less, $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter 2.5 microns or less in diameter

Notes: All emissions modeling was completed using CalEEMod. See Appendix B for modeling results. Emissions presented are the highest of the winter and summer modeled emissions.

Mitigation Measures

AQGHG-2 Project-Level Air Quality Analysis and Mitigation

The City shall require, where it is determined as necessary, applicants for future discretionary development projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update to prepare a project-specific air quality analysis in accordance with SBCAPCD Environmental Review Guidelines. The analysis shall quantify construction and operational emissions and compare estimated emissions to the SBCAPCD's adopted thresholds of significance for criteria air pollutants. If the analysis determines that emissions would exceed any of the applicable thresholds, the project applicant shall implement all feasible mitigation measures to reduce emissions to below the thresholds. All mitigation measures shall be documented and verified by the lead agency prior to project approval or issuance of grading/building permits.

Significance After Mitigation

While consistency with SBCAPCD's Guidelines through implementation of fugitive dust control measures would reduce impacts from construction emissions to less than significant for the majority of projects, specific project-level details are unknown at this level of planning and individual projects may still exceed SBCAPCD thresholds. Therefore, construction impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2 would require project-specific air quality analyses and incorporation of mitigation for future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update.

However, because the nature and intensity of future projects are not known at this time, construction and operational impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 3:	Would the project expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Impact AQGHG-3 CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES FOR PROJECTS LASTING LONGER THAN TWO MONTHS OR LOCATED WITHIN 1,000 FEET OF SENSITIVE RECEPTORS COULD EXPOSE SENSITIVE RECEPTORS TO SUBSTANTIAL POLLUTANT CONCENTRATIONS. HOWEVER, WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF MITIGATION MEASURE AQGHG-3, THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Construction

Construction-related activities associated with new development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in DPM exhaust emissions from off-road, heavy-duty diesel equipment associated with site preparation (e.g., excavation, grading, clearing), building construction, and other construction activities. DPM is identified as a TAC by CARB. The potential cancer risk from the inhalation of DPM (discussed in the following paragraphs) outweighs the potential non-cancer health impacts (CARB 2025a) and is therefore the focus of this analysis.

Generation of DPM from construction typically occurs in a single area for a short period. Future construction would occur over approximately 20 years (assuming a buildout year of 2045), but use of diesel-powered construction equipment in any one area would likely occur in less than one year for an individual project and would cease when construction is completed in that area. It is impossible to quantify risk without identified specific project details and locations.

The extent of DPM emissions from any individual construction project depend upon the following factors: (1) the amount of disturbed soils; (2) the length of disturbance time; (3) whether existing structures are demolished; (4) whether excavation is involved; and (5) whether transporting excavated materials off site is necessary. DPM emissions would be reduced during the other phases of individual project construction because activities such as building construction and architectural coating require less diesel-fueled construction equipment.

SBCAPCD has not established plan-level significance thresholds for construction air pollutant emissions, and SBCAPCD CEQA guidance does not require preparation of a health risk assessment for short-term construction emissions. At this time, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update does not have sufficient detail (e.g., construction schedule, amount of soil export, specific buildout parameters) to allow for project-level analysis given that project-level details are not currently available for future individual development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. As a result, it would be speculative to analyze project-level impacts that could occur as a result of development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. In addition, SBCAPCD does not recommend project-level emissions thresholds for construction activity. Therefore, a qualitative approach to characterizing construction-related air emissions has been employed for this analysis.

According to the OEHHA, construction of individual projects lasting longer than two months or located within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors could potentially expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, which could result in potentially significant health risk impacts.

SBCAPCD recommends diesel equipment meeting the CARB Tier 3 or higher emission standards, which results in substantially lower TAC emissions than older construction equipment, be used in place of older construction equipment to the maximum extent feasible (SBCAPCD 2022a). As a

result, construction projects within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors, that have construction durations longer than two months, and are larger than single-family residences, ADUs, or duplexes could result in potentially significant health risk impacts if construction equipment does not meet CARB Tier 3 or higher for off-road heavy-duty diesel engines. Therefore, this impact would be potentially significant and would require implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3.

Operation

Development facilitated by the plan could accommodate a net increase of approximately 16,140 additional residential units and 23,750 new jobs in Santa Maria. CARB's guidelines do not designate residential uses as land uses that generate substantial TAC emissions. As a result, this analysis considers quantities of hazardous TACs that could be generated by new residential uses (e.g., cleaning solvents, paints, landscape pesticides, etc.) as below thresholds warranting further study under the California Accidental Release Program. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update in accordance with land use and zoning regulations would not site land uses that typically generate TACs near sensitive receptors. Additionally, new commercial, retail, or industrial uses that may include a new stationary TAC source, such as an emergency generator, the new stationary source would be required to apply for a permit-to-operate from SBCAPCD. The permitting process would ensure that the potential new stationary source would not present a significant health risk to nearby sensitive receptors. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update would not result in exposure of existing sensitive receptors to significant carcinogenic or toxic air contaminants and would be consistent with CARB and SBCAPCD guidelines.

To minimize health risks to sensitive receptors located near roadways, the 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policies that aim to improve air quality and minimize exposure to TAC:

- **Policy COS-6.2: Vehicle emissions reduction.** Reduce vehicle-generated air pollution and GHG emissions by expanding active transportation opportunities.
- **Policy COS-6.3: City vehicle fleet electrification.** Transition the City's vehicle fleet to electric/zero-emission vehicles.

Implementation of these policies would minimize the potential for sensitive receptors in the plan area to be exposed to significant health risks associated with roadway traffic or other operational sources of TACs that may result from new development under the 2045 General Plan Update.

Mitigation Measures

AQGHG-3 Construction Equipment Exhaust Control Measures

For individual discretionary and ministerial residential projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update that would develop three or more units; would involve demolition, mass grading, or excavation and trenching phases longer than two months; and would be located within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors, the City shall enforce a project specific Condition of Approval requiring the following: ~~off-road heavy-duty diesel engines to meet CARB-certified Tier 3 or higher emission standards or employ CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters to the extent that this equipment is commercially available. "Commercially available" shall be defined as the availability of required equipment in geographic proximity to the project site and within a reasonable timeframe relative to critical path construction timing. If Tier 3 or higher emission standard equipment or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available, documentation shall be provided by the~~

~~project applicant to the City stating that Tier 3 equipment or higher emission standard or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available with supporting evidence from the contractor. If CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters are utilized, they shall be kept in working order and maintained in operable condition according to manufacturer's specifications, as applicable.~~

a. Off-road diesel equipment 25 horsepower (hp) or greater shall be equipped with engines compliance with, or certified to meet or exceed, the California Air Resources Board's Tier 4 Final engine emissions standards. Where available, off-road construction equipment should be zero-emission. Alternative/renewable fuels such as compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, or propane should be utilized to the maximum extent feasible when zero-emission is not available. Commitments to Tier 4 and/or zero-emission equipment shall be included in applicable bid documents, purchase orders, and contracts; successful contractors shall demonstrate the ability to supply the compliant construction equipment for use prior to ground-disturbing and construction activities.

b. All portable generators shall be powered by a source other than diesel fuel or gasoline (i.e. battery, natural gas, propane etc.).

Significance After Mitigation

Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 would reduce potential residual health risk impacts associated with exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations of DPM and TACs. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 would require construction projects that may be a substantial source of health risk exposure to sensitive receptors to ~~utilize Tier 3 equipment or higher emission standard or Level 3 diesel particulate filters to the maximum extent feasible~~ align with the District's current recommendations for control of diesel exhaust and minimization of construction-related TAC exposure impacts, which reduce potential construction-related TACs exposure impacts to a less than significant level.

Threshold 4:	Would the project result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Impact AQGHG-4 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CREATE OBJECTIONABLE ODORS THAT COULD AFFECT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE OR EXPOSE FUTURE RESIDENTS TO ODORS THAT WOULD PRODUCE A PUBLIC NUISANCE OR HAZARD. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The occurrence and severity of objectionable odors depend on a number of factors, including the nature, frequency, and intensity of the source; the wind speeds and direction; and the sensitivity of the receiving location. Although objectionable odors seldom cause physical harm, they can be perceived as a nuisance, cause distress among the public, and result in citizen complaints.

The 2045 General Plan Update would facilitate the development of new housing units, which are odor-sensitive receptors, in areas with existing residential and commercial land uses. Construction activities for development forecasted in accordance with the 2045 General Plan Update may produce temporary odors. Examples of potential odors produced by construction activities include concentrations of unburned hydrocarbons from construction equipment tailpipes and reactive organic gases/compounds from architectural coatings. Such odors generally disperse rapidly from individual project sites, occur at magnitudes that would not affect substantial numbers of people, and would be limited to the temporary construction period.

The SBCAPCD *Scope and Content of Air Quality Sections in Environmental Documents* (2022) states that certain projects have the potential to cause significant odor impacts because of the nature of their operation and their location. Examples include fast food restaurants, bakeries, and coffee roasting facilities. In addition, wastewater treatment plants, landfills, confined animal facilities, composting stations, food manufacturing plants, refineries, and chemical plants. Although the annexation area east of the city limits would be located in proximity to agricultural operations, such operations are not typically associated with the generation of substantial or frequent odors. Agricultural activities in the region primarily involve crop cultivation and other practices that do not constitute significant odor sources under typical operating conditions. Thus, the potential for odor-related impacts on future development within the annexation area is considered minimal. The 2045 General Plan Update would not create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people or expose future residents to odor in concentrations that would produce a public nuisance or hazard. Therefore, odor impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because this impact would be less than significant.

Threshold 5:	Would the project generate GHG emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?
Threshold 6:	Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Impact AQGHG-5 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD GENERATE GHG EMISSIONS THAT MAY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND CONFLICT WITH AN APPLICABLE PLAN, POLICY, OR REGULATION ADOPTED FOR THE PURPOSE OF REDUCING THE EMISSIONS OF GREENHOUSE GASES. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE.

As discussed above under Section 4.2.3(a), Methodology and Significance Thresholds, the City of Santa Maria has not adopted a quantitative significance threshold for assessing impacts related to GHG emissions. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update is evaluated based on consistency with the 2022 Scoping Plan and SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS. Operational emissions are provided for informational purposes. Construction emissions are not provided as specific individual project-level details are unknown at this level of planning.

The principal State GHG reduction plans and policies are AB 32, SB 32, and AB 1279. The goal of AB 32 is to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The goal of SB 32 is to reduce GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. AB 1279 identifies a State-wide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045 and a goal of reducing GHG emissions by 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. The latest iteration of the Scoping Plan is the 2022 Scoping Plan, which focuses on outcomes needed to achieve carbon neutrality by assessing paths for clean technology, energy deployment, natural and working lands, and others, and is designed to meet the State's long-term climate objectives and support a range of economic, environmental, energy security, environmental justice, and public health priorities.

The 2045 General Plan Update would be generally consistent with these goals since future development would be required to comply with the latest Title 24 Green Building Code and Building Efficiency Energy Standards. Additionally, the 2045 General Plan Update includes the following goal, policies, and actions intended to reduce GHG emissions from building energy use.

Goal COS-6: Greenhouse gas emissions. The city ~~is~~ 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 ~~s~~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-6.4: 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.

Future development would also be served by ~~Southern California Edison~~ Pacific Gas and Electric or Central Coast Community Energy, both of which are required to increase its renewable energy procurement in accordance with SB 100 targets. Furthermore, development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the State's recycling and composting requirements for commercial businesses under AB 341, which requires businesses generating four or more cubic yards of solid waste per week to recycle, and AB 1826, which requires businesses generating two or more cubic yards of solid waste per week to recycle organic waste. Compliance with these state laws would maximize the plan's recycling and solid waste diversion.

Priority GHG reduction strategies outlined in the Scoping Plan include VMT reduction measures aimed at improving and increasing access to public transit by increasing density of development near transit, increasing service frequency, creating bus priority lanes, reducing or eliminating fares, and microtransit alternatives. The following 2045 General Plan Update goals, policies, and actions would reduce GHG emissions.

Goal COS-6: Greenhouse gas emissions. The city ~~is~~ 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 ~~s~~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.

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 ~~s~~State and federal grants for transitioning City vehicles to clean fuel sources and installing electric vehicle charging stations at City facilities.

Policies listed in Section 4.7, *Transportation,* would encourage active transportation and transit use in accordance with the 2022 Scoping Plan. However, as discussed under Impact TRA-2*,* the 2045 General Plan Update would not meet the 17 percent VMT reduction target set by CARB for the SBCAG region. As such, the forecasted VMT would not be consistent with climate goals established in the 2050 RTP/SCS.

As demonstrated above, the goal, policies, and actions provided in the 2045 General Plan Update to reduce GHG emissions from building use are consistent with measures in the 2022 Scoping Plan aimed at achieving the same thing. However, the 2045 General Plan Update would not reduce GHG emissions from vehicle use in a sufficiently to meet the 17 percent VMT reduction target established by CARB for the SBCAG region in the 2050 RTP/SCS. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update would conflict with the reduction of GHG emissions related to vehicle use goals of the 2022 Scoping Plan.

SBCAG has incorporated a sustainable community strategy into the 2050 RTP/SCS, which is designed to help the region achieve its SB 375 GHG emissions reduction target. The 2050 RTP/SCS demonstrates that the SBCAG region would achieve its regional emissions reduction targets for the 2020 and 2035 target years.

Table 4.2-8 Plan Consistency with the SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS

Policies	Plan Consistency
Policy 1.1: Land Use	
The planning, construction, and operation of transportation facilities shall be coordinated with local land use planning and should encourage local agencies to: 1. Make land use decisions that adequately address regional transportation issues and are consistent with the RTP-SCS. 2. Promote better balance of jobs and housing to reduce long-distance commuting by means of traditional land use zoning, infill development, and other, unconventional land use tools, such as employer-sponsored housing programs, economic development programs, commercial growth management ordinances, average unit size ordinances and parking pricing policies. 3. Plan for transit-oriented development consistent with the RTP-SCS by: a. Concentrating residences and commercial centers in urban areas near rail stations, transit centers and along transit development corridors. b. Designing and building "complete streets" serving all transportation modes that connect high-usage origins and destinations.	**Consistent:** The 2045 General Plan Update would facilitate the development of 16,140 net new residential units in infill and urbanized areas in proximity to services and transit which would encourage walking, bicycling, and the use of alternative transportation. The 2045 General Plan Update would also generate 23,750 net new jobs which would improve the balance of jobs and housing and reduce long-distance commuting.

Policies	Plan Consistency
4. Preserve open space, agricultural land and sensitive biological areas. 5. Identify, minimize and mitigate adverse environmental impacts and, in particular, require mitigation of traffic impacts of new land development through on-site and related off-site improvements for all modes of transportation, including incentives to encourage the use of alternative transportation modes. 6. Dissuade siting of new development in high-fire risk areas by means such as ensuring insurability and redundancy of ingress and egress.	
Policy 1.2: Air Quality	
Transportation planning and projects shall be designed to: 1. Lead to reductions in greenhouse gas and criteria pollutant emissions, consistent with the air quality goals of the region, including targets for greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles in 2020 and 2035 as required by Senate Bill 375 (SB 375). 2. Be in conformity with the Air Pollution Control District Ozone Plan and the State Implementation Plan (SIP) and meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards as required by the federal Clean Air Act.	**Inconsistent:** Future development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the latest Title 24 Green Building Code and Building Efficiency Energy Standards and would also be served by ~~Southern California Edison~~ Pacific Gas and Electric or Central Coast Community Energy, both of which are required to increase its renewable energy procurement in accordance with SB 100 targets. In addition, as discussed under Impact AQGHG-1, the 2045 General Plan Update would be consistent with the 2022 Ozone Plan, and would adhere to SBAPCD Rules 323.1, 329, and 345. Nonetheless, since specific project-level information is currently unknown, there is no guarantee the 2045 General Plan Update would be consistent with State legislation and the 2022 Scoping Plan with goals to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.
Policy 1.3: Alternative Fuels and Energy	
Transportation planning and projects shall: 1. Encourage the use of alternative fuels, and the application of advanced transportation and energy technologies to reduce vehicular emission production and energy consumption. **2.** Promote renewable energy and energy conservation, consistent with applicable federal, State, and local energy programs, goals, and objectives.	**Consistent.** The 2045 General Plan Update Policies COS-6.2 through 6.4 aim to reduce vehicle-generated air pollution and GHG emissions by expanding active transportation opportunities; transition the City's vehicle fleet to electric or zero-emission vehicles; and promote energy conservation through public awareness programs. Future development would also be required to comply with the latest Title 24 Green Building Code and Building Efficiency Energy Standards and incorporate energy efficient and sustainable designs and appliances.

Source: SBCAG 2025

The 2050 RTP/SCS states that one of the intents of the Sustainable Communities Strategy is "directly addressing regional jobs/housing imbalance by providing more housing on the jobs-rich South Coast and more jobs to communities in the North County" (SBCAG 2021). Improving the intra-County jobs/housing imbalance would decrease transportation demands on U.S. Highway 101, State Route 166, and State Route 1, which would reduce congestion and VMT. The plan would increase employment by adding 23,750 new jobs within the City, which would improve the City's jobs-housing ratio, reducing vehicle emissions. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update would be consistent with most of the policies in the SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS, with the exception of Policy 1.2. Overall, although the 2045 General Plan Update would be generally consistent most of the policies from the SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS, the plan would be inconsistent with Policy 1.2 from the SBCAG 2050

RTP/SCS and the 2022 Scoping Plan, since the plan has the potential to conflict with the State-wide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045. Therefore, this impact would be potentially significant.

GHG emissions associated with the 2045 General Plan Update are shown below under Table 4.2-9 for informational purposes only. As shown in Table 4.2-9, the plan would result in approximately 271,807 MT CO_2e per year.

Table 4.2-9 Operational GHG Emissions

Emission Source	Annual Emissions (MT CO_2e)
Net New Uses Operational	
Mobile	83,629
Area	1,145
Energy	229,129
Water	13,486
Waste	23,447
Refrigerants	57
Total	**350,894**
Net Reduction in Uses Operational	
Mobile	5,335
Area	296
Energy	63,577
Water	4,015
Waste	5,856
Refrigerants	8
Total	**79,087**
Net New Emissions	**271,807**

MT CO_2e = metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.
Source: CalEEMod worksheets are in Appendix B.

Mitigation Measures

There are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce plan area emissions of GHGs such that the plan would not potentially conflict with the State-wide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045.

Significance After Mitigation

No feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

4.2.4 Cumulative Impacts

Air Quality

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*.

As described under Impact AQGHG-1, the SBCAPCD's approach for assessing cumulative impacts is based on consistency with the latest adopted Ozone Plan. The population estimate under the 2045 General Plan Update is considered conservative, as it assumes full occupancy of all potential residential units at the maximum persons-per-household rate.[4] Actual population growth may be lower. Nonetheless, the 2045 General Plan Update would still result in exceedance of the population forecasts for the City of Santa Maria in the 2022 Ozone Plan and would potentially exceed SBCAPCD construction and operational criteria air pollutant thresholds. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update would have a cumulatively considerable contribution to impacts related to consistency with the latest adopted Ozone Plan

As identified under Impact AQGHG-2, the 2045 General Plan Update would exceed SBCAPCD operational emissions thresholds for ROC, NO_X, and PM_{10}. Additionally, at this stage of planning, project-specific details regarding construction activity are currently unknown and could potentially exceed SBCAPCD thresholds after mitigation. Therefore, even with implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2, the 2045 General Plan Update would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants for which the plan region is non-attainment.

As shown under Impact AQGHG-3, construction activity may result in a potentially significant impact related to DPM and TAC exposure within the City. Health risk impacts are localized to the immediate vicinity of DPM and TAC sources, such that people affected by construction-related TAC emissions generated at one housing site would likely not be affected by construction-related TAC emissions generated at another housing site should construction activities occur simultaneously. Discussion of these impacts considers the cumulative nature of the pollutants in the region; for example, the cancer risk and non-cancer risk thresholds have been set pursuant to existing cancer risks in the area and exceeding those thresholds would be considered a cumulative impact. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3 would reduce concentrations of DPM and TAC emissions from construction activity associated with future development under the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, the plan's contribution to cumulative air quality impacts related to these pollutants would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact.

Cumulative projects would adversely affect sensitive receptors from odor emissions if cumulative projects were typical odor-producing land uses. Construction of cumulative projects would result in construction equipment-related odors; however, the temporary nature of construction would ensure less than significant cumulative odor impacts. In addition, the 2045 General Plan Update would not facilitate the development of odor-generating sources. Therefore, operational odor

[4] This calculation represents a conservative analysis in which every potential residential unit (16,140 as described in Section 2.6.5, Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout) is occupied at the full potential persons per household rate.

impacts would be less than significant and the 2045 General Plan Update would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact related to odors.

GHG

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*.

GHG emissions and climate change are, by definition, cumulative impacts, because impacts of climate change are experienced on a global scale regardless of the location of GHG emission sources. As discussed in Section 4.2.1b, *Potential Effects of Climate Change*, the adverse environmental impacts of cumulative GHG emissions, including sea level rise, increased average temperatures, more drought years, and more large forest fires, are already occurring. As a result, cumulative impacts related to GHG emissions are significant. Thus, the issue of climate change involves an analysis of whether a project's contribution towards an impact is cumulatively considerable. As discussed under Thresholds GHG-1 and GHG-2, plan impacts related to GHG emissions would be significant and unavoidable since there is not guarantee the 2045 General Plan Update would be consistent with the State-wide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045. Therefore, GHG impacts would be cumulatively considerable.

4.3 Biological Resources

This section summarizes the biological resources in the plan area and analyzes the potential effects on biological resources related to implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. This section includes a brief summary of biological resources background information and a review of known biological resources as well as potential impacts to these resources as a result of implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. The background information and analysis in this section is partially based on the Environmental Background Report for the City of Santa Maria, prepared in December 2020 to support their General Plan Update.

4.3.1 Setting

This following information was obtained through a desktop literature review of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC); the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB); the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Protected Resources Application; the City of Santa Maria Existing Conditions Report (2020); and Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools (LANDFIRE) and CDFW vegetation datasets.

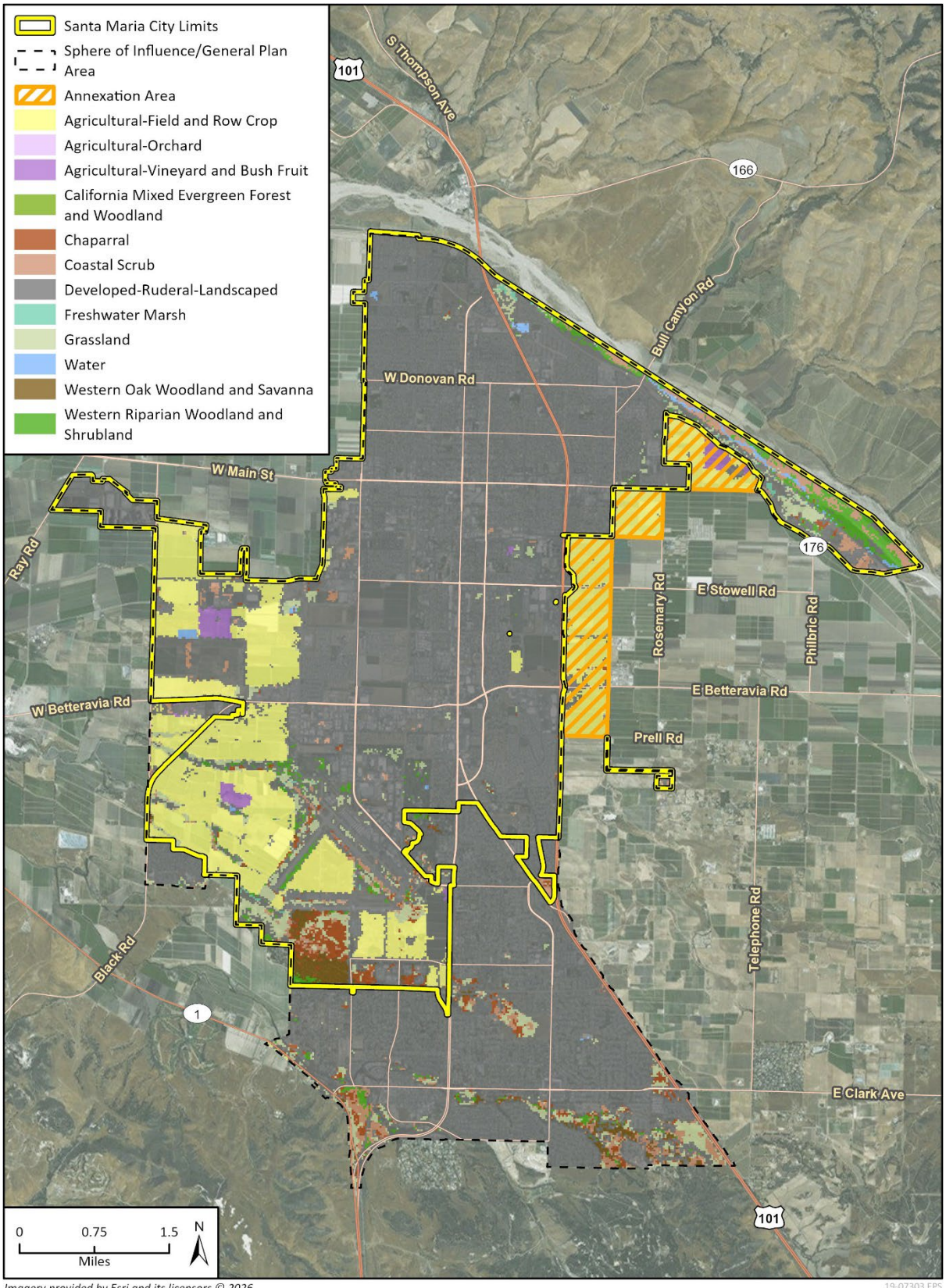
a. Land Cover and Vegetation Communities

Santa Maria has a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. Plants in this climate have adapted to grow in the early spring and winter, when water is available, and become mostly dormant in the long dry summers, when water availability is limited. The varied topography and soil types of the Santa Maria Valley have enabled a mix of native plant communities to exist in the region. Major land cover types in the Santa Maria River Valley include urbanized development, agricultural lands (which include barren land, dryland and irrigated grain crops, evergreen orchards, irrigated row and field crops, pastures, and vineyard vegetation communities), and open space (which includes annual and perennial grasslands, coast live oak woodlands, coastal scrub, eucalyptus groves, freshwater emergent wetlands, valley foothill riparian, chamise-redshank chaparral, mixed chaparral, closed-cone pine-cypress, montane riparian, and lacustrine and riverine vegetation communities). These vegetation communities were identified as occurring in the plan area by LANDFIRE's existing vegetation dataset and CDFW's California Wildlife Habitat Relationships classification scheme (CWHR) (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988, CDFW 2025a). Urbanized development contributes to the majority (71 percent) of the plan area, with the remaining areas consisting of agriculture (9 percent), open space (12 percent), and mixed agricultural-open space (8 percent) areas. Further descriptions of these vegetation communities are provided below and illustrated in Figure 4.3-1.

Land Cover

The plan area contains substantial urban and suburban development. There are, however, areas of relatively undisturbed natural habitats. Descriptions of the vegetation communities in the plan area are listed below, based on vegetation mapping using the LANDFIRE vegetation dataset and described using CDFW CWHR habitat descriptions. Figure 4.3-1 shows the vegetation communities and land covers within the plan area.

Figure 4.3-1 Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area



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Additional data provided by LANDFIRE, 2024; City of Santa Maria, 2026.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Vegetation Types

Agricultural – Field and Row Crops

Dryland Grain Crops

Vegetation in the dryland (non-irrigated) grain and seed crops habitat includes seed producing grasses – primarily barley, cereal rye, oats, and wheat, all of which are annuals. Non-irrigated grain and seed crops are often planted in the fall, and harvested in the spring, on lands with flat to gently rolling terrain. Grain crops reduce wildlife habitat richness and diversity, as they are usually established on fertile soils, which historically supported an abundance of plants and wildlife. Many species are now controlled by fencing (e.g. deer), trapping (e.g. wild pigs), and poisoning (e.g. rodents) to prevent excessive crop losses (CDFW 2025a).

Irrigated Row, Field, and Grain Crops

Irrigated row and field crops, including seed and grain crops, are generally located on flat to gently rolling terrain; flat terrain has often been leveled to facilitate irrigation and rolling terrain is usually irrigated by sprinklers. Irrigated row, field, and grain crops do not conform to normal habitat stages, and vegetation is variable in size, shape, and grow pattern based on crop type. Some crops may form 100 percent canopy while others may have bare space between rows. Crops may be annual or perennial, and may be planted in rotation with other irrigated crops.

Row and field crops are usually established on the State's most fertile soils, which historically supported an abundance of wildlife unequalled on other sites, but many species are now controlled by fencing (e.g. deer), trapping (e.g., wild pigs), and poisoning (e.g., rodents) to prevent excessive crop losses. However, availability of irrigation water during dryer months and drought benefits many wildlife species as a source of water (CDFW 2025a).

Barren Lands

Barren habitat is defined by the absence of vegetation, and includes any habitat with less than two percent total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10 percent cover by shrub or tree species. Barren lands within agricultural lands generally present in the form of disked or plowed agricultural fields (CDFW 2025a).

Agricultural – Orchard

Evergreen Orchards

Evergreen orchards are typically dominated by a single species of tree, such as almonds, apples, apricots, peaches, pecans, and walnuts for deciduous orchards and avocados, grapefruit, lemons, limes, olives, oranges, and tangerines for evergreen orchards. Trees range in height at maturity depending on the species, ranging from 10 feet for dwarf varieties to upwards of 60 feet. The understory is usually composed of bare soil or cover crops or low-growing grasses, which are often intensively managed. Orchards are planted on deep fertile soils which once supported productive and diverse natural habitats. The orchards still provide anthropogenic habitat that offers wildlife, such as deer and rabbit that commonly browse on the tree foliage, an area for foraging and cover that allows animals to move through the region. Many wildlife species act as biological control agents by feeding on weed seeds and insect pests (CDFW 2025a).

Agricultural – Vineyard and Bush Fruit

Vineyard

Vineyards are composed of single species planted in rows, usually supported on wood and/or wire trellises with open space between rows. Rows under the vines are often sprayed with herbicides to prevent growth of herbaceous plants. Between rows of vines, grasses and other herbaceous plants may be planted or allowed to grow as a cover crop to control erosion (CDFW 2025a).

California Mixed Evergreen Forest and Woodland

Closed-Cone Pine-Cypress

The closed-cone pine-cypress habitat is typically dominated by a single species of one of the closed-cone pines or cypress with variable height and canopy cover based on species makeup. Cypress-dominated habitats usually occur as "arboreal islands" amongst chaparral or forest types, and pine-dominated habitats are generally patches with surrounding chaparral, Montane Hardwood-Conifer or Mixed Conifer habitats. Great horned owls and red-tailed hawks will nest in closed-cone pine forests, and numerous other species make use of the closed-cone pine-cypress habitat for feeding and cover (CDFW 2025a).

Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus habitats generally include monotypic stands of *Eucalyptus spp.* and range from single-species thickets to scattered trees to dense stands with closed canopies. Tree heights typically range from 87 to 264 feet, depending on species and spacing. Eucalyptus woodlands are found at low elevations, where freezing is not a problem. Most eucalyptus have been artificially established, usually in and around urban/rural areas. However, eucalyptus grow quickly and can be invasive and are known to become established along stream courses or within natural habitats, encroaching upon and outcompeting existing native vegetation. Eucalyptus habitats serve as roosts, perches, and nest sites for a number of bird species, particularly raptors, as well as overwintering sites for monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) (CDFW 2025a).

Chaparral

Chamise-redshank and Mixed Chaparral

Chaparral habitats are dominated by shrubs, often with thick, stiff, waxy evergreen leaves, which grow to be dense, nearly impenetrable thickets. Mixed chaparral habitats are comprised of a variable patchwork of shrub species, such as buckwheat, chamise, toyon, poison oak, ceanothus, and manzanita, whereas chamise-redshank chaparral may consist of nearly pure stands (50 percent or more relative cover) of chamise or redshank, a mixture of both, or with other shrubs such as toyon, white sage, and ceanothus.

Mixed and chamise-redshank chaparral often occur as a mosaic on low to middle elevation slopes below several woodland and forest types. Compared to chamise-redshank chaparral, mixed chaparral generally occupies more mesic sites at higher elevations or on north-facing slopes. No wildlife species are restricted to only mixed chaparral habitat; however, chamise-redshank chaparral provides habitat for deer, small mammals, birds, and reptiles (CDFW 2025a).

Coastal Scrub

Coastal scrub is a native vegetation community that is typically found on stabilized backdune slopes, ridges, and flats along the coast. Soils are typically sandy to sandy loam. Central coastal scrub typically forms a mosaic with other communities including coast bluff scrub, maritime chaparral, coast live oak woodland, and coastal prairie. Vegetation in this habitat type is composed of soft scrub of moderate to high cover and is dominated by native mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), common California-aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia* var. *filaginifolia*), dune bush lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*), and sticky monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*). Central coastal scrub provides habitat for a variety of vertebrate species (CDFW 2025a).

Developed – Ruderal – Landscaped

Developed – ruderal – landscaped areas refer to those which have been temporarily or permanently disturbed by human activities and include, but are not limited to, areas of residential, commercial, and industrial development; areas of nonnative vegetation resulting from human activity and disturbance, such as grading; and areas of ornamental landscaping.

Barren Lands

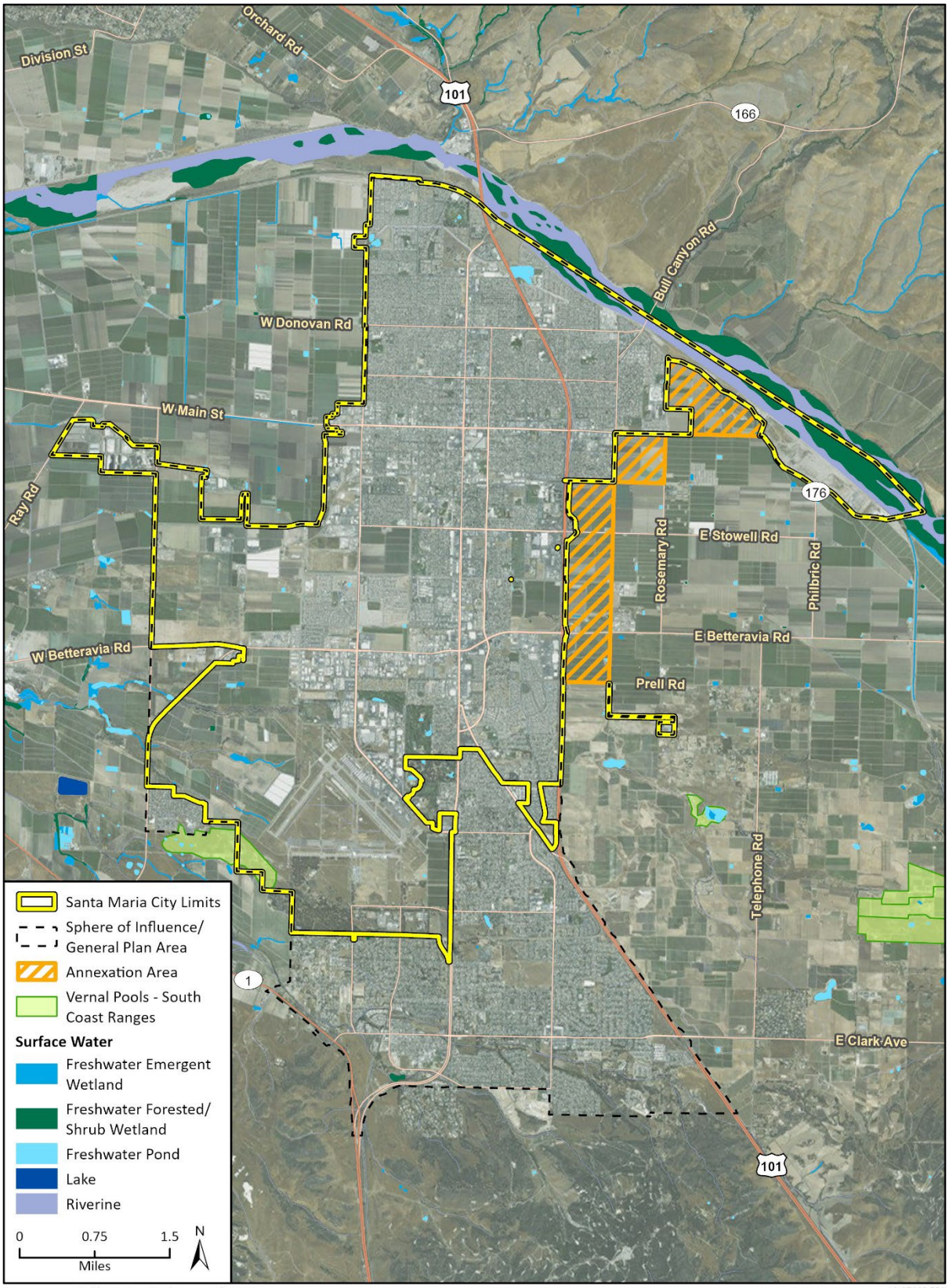
Barren habitat is defined by the absence of vegetation, and includes any habitat with less than two percent total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10 percent cover by shrub or tree species. Urban settings covered in pavement and buildings may also be classified as barren as long as vegetation, including non-native landscaping, does not reach the percent cover thresholds for vegetated habitats (CDFW 2025a).

Freshwater Marsh and Water

Wetlands and Streams

Wetlands and waterways, sourced from NWI and shown in Figure 4.3-2, are highly productive habitats for plants and wildlife. Coastal wetlands and riparian wetlands (linear areas adjacent to streams, creeks and drainages) are especially productive for plants, because recurrent flooding in these areas delivers influxes of soil and nutrients. Riverine refers to areas with intermittently or continuously running water, such as rivers and streams. Riverine habitats are found adjacent to riparian areas and can be contiguous to lacustrine and fresh emergent wetland habitats. Riverine areas provide habitat for many species of waterfowl, raptors, insectivorous birds, and mammals. Lacustrine refers to inland depressions or dammed riverine channels containing standing water and can vary from small ponds to large lakes or reservoirs. Lacustrine systems provide habitat for many species of small birds and raptors, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Permanent lacustrine systems support fish life, while intermittent types generally do not. Fresh emergent wetlands are characterized by frequently flooded areas with erect, herbaceous vegetation. Fresh emergent wetlands are among the most productive wildlife habitats in California, and provide food, cover, and water for more than 160 species of birds and numerous mammals, reptiles, and amphibians (CDFW 2025a).

Figure 4.3-2 Wetlands Within the Plan Area



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Additional data provided by NWI, 2024; BIOS, ds948, 2025; City of Santa Maria, 2026.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Wetlands

Santa Maria contains a number of United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-recognized wetlands, including freshwater ponds and freshwater emergent wetlands, concentrated in agricultural and open space areas, as well as freshwater forested and shrub wetland and riverine habitat along the Santa Maria River. These wetlands provide habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants; and provide a form of groundwater recharge and flooding prevention (City of Santa Maria 2020).

SOUTHERN VERNAL POOLS

Vernal pools are a type of temporary wetland that support plants and animals that are specifically adapted to living with very wet winter and spring conditions followed by very dry summer and fall conditions. Many specially-adapted crustaceans, amphibians, and insects occur only in vernal pools. Plant species associated with Southern Vernal Pools include Howell's foxtail (*Alopecurus howellii*), water pygmyweed (*Crassula aquatica*), needle spikerush (*Eleocharis acicularis*), common spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*), western marsh cudweed (*Gnaphalium palustre*), meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*), toad rush (*Juncus bufonius*), flowering quillwort (*Lilaea scilloides*) and rough-nutlet popcornflower (*Plagiobothrys trachycarpus*) (City of Santa Maria 2020).

Barren Lands

Barren habitat is defined by the absence of vegetation, and includes any habitat with less than two percent total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10 percent cover by shrub or tree species. Along rivers and streams, barren land includes vertical river banks and canyon walls (CDFW 2025a).

~~b. Special Status Species~~

~~For the purposes of this analysis, special-status species were considered listed or non-listed special-status species if they were classified as one or more of the following:~~

- ~~**Listed Special-Status Species**~~
  - ~~Species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), including proposed and candidate species.~~
  - ~~Species listed as candidate, threatened, or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).~~
  - ~~Plant species protected by the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) (State Rare).~~
- ~~**Non-listed Special-Status Species**~~
  - ~~Species designated as Fully Protected (FP), Species of Special Concern (SSC), or Watch List (WL) by the CDFW~~
  - ~~Birds designated as a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) by USFWS~~
  - ~~Sensitive species designated by USFWS~~
  - ~~Sensitive species designated by the United States Forest Service (USFS)~~
  - ~~Plants assigned a California Rare Plant Rank of 1 through 4 by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS)~~
  - ~~Species protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act~~
  - ~~Bats considered by the Western Bat Working Group to be "High" or "Medium" priority~~

- ~~Species designated as locally important by the Local Agency and/or otherwise protected through ordinance, local policy, Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), or Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs).~~

~~Queries of the USFWS's IPaC, CNDDB, and CNPS's online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (CRPR) were conducted to obtain comprehensive information regarding special-status species and sensitive vegetation communities known or with potential to occur in the plan area. Queries of the CNPS inventory and CNDDB database included the *Santa Maria* and *Twitchell Dam* United States Geological Service (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The results of these scientific database queries are provided as Appendix B of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).~~

Grassland

Annual Grassland

Annual grasslands are characterized by open grasslands composed primarily of non-native annual plant species, including wild oats (*Avena fatua*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), red brome (*Bromus rubens*), and foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*). This vegetation community occurs mostly on flat plains to gently rolling foothills. Species composition depends largely on weather patterns and livestock grazing. Fall rains cause germination of annual plant seeds. Plants grow slowly during the cool winter months, remaining low in stature until spring, when temperatures increase and stimulate more rapid growth. Many wildlife species use this community for foraging, such as black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and a variety of bird species (CDFW 2025a).

Perennial Grasslands

Perennial grassland habitats occur in two forms in California: coastal prairie, found in areas of northern California under maritime influence, and relics in habitats now dominated by annual grasses and forbs (see Annual Grassland description above). Coastal prairie perennial grassland habitats are dominated by perennial grass species such as California oatgrass, Pacific hairgrass, and sweet vernalgrass. Perennial grassland habitats typically occurs on ridges and south-facing slopes, alternating with forest and scrub in the valleys and on north-facing slopes.

Perennial grasslands provide high-quality habitat for many species, including the common garter snake, western terrestrial garter snake, northern harrier, barn owl, burrowing owl, western kingbird, Say's phoebe, barn swallow, western meadowlark, savannah sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, Townsend mole, coast mole, Botta's pocket gopher, western harvest mouse, California vole, long-tailed vole, and Oregon vole. Perennial grasslands often serve as feeding habitat for the turkey vulture, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, peregrine falcon, western bluebird, fringe-tailed bat, big brown bat, striped skunk, coyote, black-tailed jackrabbit, brush rabbit, Roosevelt elk, and black-tailed deer (CDFW 2025a).

Pasture

Pasture vegetation is a mix of perennial grasses and legumes that normally provide 100 percent canopy closure. Old or poorly drained pastures may have patches of weeds in excess. The mix of grasses and legumes varies according to management practices such as seed mixture, fertilization, soil type, irrigation, weed control, and the type of livestock on the pasture. Pastures are planted on flat and gently rolling terrain and may be irrigated. Pastures are used by a variety of wildlife

depending upon geographic area and types of adjacent habitats. Ground-nesting birds, including waterfowl, nest in pastures if adequate residual vegetation is present at the onset of the nesting season (CDFW 2025a).

Western Oak Woodland and Savanna

Coastal Oak Woodland

Coast oak woodland is a native vegetation community that consists of deciduous and evergreen hardwoods, typically dominated by coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*). Coast live oak woodlands are variable, ranging from dense woodlands (sometimes intergrading with mixed evergreen forests) on the more mesic north-facing slopes and canyons, to an open savanna on drier, more exposed slopes where the soils are usually shallower. The understory may range from absent to dense. Typical understory species include shade tolerant shrubs such as native blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*); and native herbaceous plants such as fiesta flower (*Pholistoma auritum*), miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*), and various fern species. Coastal oak woodlands are found in coastal foothills and valleys and provides important habitat for wildlife, including nesting sites, foraging areas for small mammals, and microclimates suitable for amphibians, reptiles, and fungi (CDFW 2025a).

Western Riparian Woodland and Shrubland

Montane Riparian

Montane riparian is a variably vegetated community largely consisting of broad-leaved winter deciduous trees up to 98 feet tall. Such species may include native cottonwood (*Populus* spp.), bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), and California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), with a sparse understory. This vegetation community is associated with lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and springs, where water may be permanent or ephemeral, and generally occurs below 8000 feet above mean sea level. Montane riparian habitats provide food, water, migration and dispersal corridors, and escape, nesting, and thermal cover for an abundance of wildlife (CDFW 2025a).

Valley Foothill Riparian

Valley foothill riparian is a native vegetation community that contains mostly winter deciduous trees, such as native cottonwood (*Populus* spp.), California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), and valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). The canopy height can grow up to 98 feet in a mature riparian forest. Typical understory shrub layer species include native California blackberry, blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), poison oak, and willows (*Salix* spp.). This vegetation community is found in valleys bordered by sloping alluvial fans, slightly dissected terraces, lower foothills, and coastal plains. They are generally associated with low velocity flows, flood plains, and gentle topography. Valleys provide deep alluvial soils and a high water table. The substrate is coarse, gravelly or rocky soils more or less permanently moist. Valley foothill riparian habitats provide food, water, migration and dispersal corridors, and escape, nesting, and thermal cover for an abundance of wildlife (CDFW 2025a).

c. Special Status Species

For the purposes of this analysis, special-status species were considered listed or non-listed special-status species if they were classified as one or more of the following:

- **Listed Special-Status Species**
  - Species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), including proposed and candidate species.
  - Species listed as candidate, threatened, or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).
  - Plant species protected by the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) (State Rare).
- **Non-listed Special-Status Species**
  - Species designated as Fully Protected (FP), Species of Special Concern (SSC), or Watch List (WL) by the CDFW
  - Birds designated as a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) by USFWS
  - Sensitive species designated by USFWS
  - Sensitive species designated by the United States Forest Service (USFS)
  - Plants assigned a California Rare Plant Rank of 1 through 4 by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS)
  - Species protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
  - Bats considered by the Western Bat Working Group to be "High" or "Medium" priority
  - Species designated as locally important by the Local Agency and/or otherwise protected through ordinance, local policy, Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), or Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs).

Queries of the USFWS's IPaC, CNDDB, and CNPS's online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (CRPR) were conducted to obtain comprehensive information regarding special-status species and sensitive vegetation communities known or with potential to occur in the plan area. Queries of the CNPS inventory and CNDDB database included the *Santa Maria* and *Twitchell Dam* United States Geological Service (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The results of these scientific database queries are provided as Appendix ~~B~~ C of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Special-Status Plant Species

Based on the database queries and literature review, a total of 17 special-status plant species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the plan area (Appendix ~~B~~C). Of these species, 13 were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area. Appendix ~~B~~C shows the special-status plant species and habitat requirements for each species within the vicinity of the plan area.

The 13 special-status plant species with the potential to occur in the plan area are listed below with their federal and/or State special-status designation:

- Miles' milk-vetch (*Astragalus didymocarpus var. milesianus*) – CRPR 1B.2
- California jewelflower (*Caulanthus californicus*) – Federally Endangered, State Endangered, CRPR 1B.1
- La Graciosa thistle (*Cirsium loncholepis*) – Federally Endangered, State Threatened, CRPR 1B.1

- Salt marsh bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus maritimus ssp. Maritimus*) – Federally Endangered, State Endangered, CRPR 1B.2
- Paniculate tarplant (*Deinandra paniculata*) – CRPR 4.2
- Dune larkspur (*Delphinium parryi ssp. blochmaniae*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Blochman's leafy daisy (*Erigeron blochmaniae*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Suffrutescent wallflower (*Erysimum suffrutescens*) – CRPR 4.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata var. puberula*) - CRPR 1B.1, USFS Sensitive
- Blushing layia (*Layia erubescens*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Large-flowered leptosiphon (*Leptosiphon grandifloras*) – CRPR 4.2
- Southern curly-leaved monardella (*Monardella sinuata ssp. sinuate*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) – Federally Threatened

Special-Status Wildlife Species

Based on the database queries and literature review, a total of 31 special-status invertebrate, fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the plan area (Appendix ~~B~~C). Of these species, 13 were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area, and 9 were identified with a moderate potential to occur within the plan area. Appendix B shows the special-status wildlife species and habitat requirements for each species within the vicinity of the plan area.

The 22 special-status wildlife species with low to moderate potential to occur in the plan area are listed below with their federal and/or State special-status designation:

- Vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*) – Federally Threatened
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus plexippus pop. 1*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, USFS Sensitive
- California tiger salamander – Santa Barbara County DPS (*Ambystoma californiense pop. 2*) – Federally Endangered, State Threatened, CDFW Watch List
- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) – Federally Endangered, CDFW Species of Special Concern
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) – Federally Threatened, State Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern
- Southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFS Sensitive
- Northern California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFS Sensitive
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) – State Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) - CDFW Fully Protected, CDFW Watch List
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) – State Candidate, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – Federally Threatened, State Endangered

- Northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Federally Designated, State Endangered, CDFW Fully Protected, USFS Sensitive
- California gull (*Laurs californicus*) - CDFW Watch List, USFWS BCC
- Yellow-billed magpie (*Pica nuttalli*) - USFWS BCC
- Black skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Lawrence's goldfinch (*Spinus lawrencei*) - USFWS BCC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) – Federally Endangered, State Endangered
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFS Sensitive, Western Bat Working Group "High" priority
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern

d. Nesting Birds

Suitable nesting sites for avian species protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and California Fish and Game Code (CFGC), including shrubs, trees, man-made structures, and the ground surface occur throughout the plan area. Some species prefer vegetation for nesting, including ornamental vegetation and some species can be found nesting in man-made structures, such as power poles or the eaves of buildings. Nesting birds may occur during the breeding season (generally February 1 through August 31 but beginning January 1 for some raptor species).

e. Sensitive Communities and Critical Habitat

Sensitive Communities

The CNDDB identifies one environmentally sensitive natural community in the city, Southern Vernal Pool, located west of the Santa Maria Public Airport (City of Santa Maria 2020).

Critical Habitat

As shown in Figure 4.3-3, according to the USFWS, designated critical habitat for California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) exists in the southernmost extents of City limits, south of the Santa Maria Airport. Designated critical habitat for La Graciosa thistle exists within the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. Designated critical habitat for steelhead trout exists through a small portion of the northeastern-most extents of City limits. Designated critical habitat for California red-legged frog exists along the southernmost border of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. Designated critical habitat for Lompoc yerba santa exists south of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area (USFWS 2025b).

f. Wildlife Movement Corridors

Wildlife movement corridors, or habitat linkages, are generally defined as connections between habitat patches that allow for physical and genetic exchange between otherwise isolated animal populations. Such linkages may serve a local purpose, such as providing a linkage between foraging and denning areas, or they may be regional in nature. Some habitat linkages may serve as migration corridors, wherein animals periodically move away from an area and then subsequently return. Others may be important as dispersal corridors for young animals. A group of habitat linkages in an area can form a wildlife corridor network.

The habitats within the linkages do not necessarily need to be the same or of the same quality as the habitats that are being linked. Rather, the linkage merely needs to contain sufficient cover and forage to allow temporary inhabitation by ground-dwelling species. Typically, habitat linkages are contiguous strips of natural areas, though dense plantings of landscape vegetation can be used by certain disturbance-tolerant species. Depending upon the species using a corridor, specific physical resources (such as rock outcroppings, vernal pools, or oak trees) may need to be located within the habitat link at certain intervals to allow slower-moving species to traverse the link. For highly mobile or aerial species, habitat linkages may be discontinuous patches of suitable resources spaced sufficiently close together to permit travel along a route in a short period of time. Migration corridors can be bordered on either site by urban land uses, and within the City limits these corridors often include barriers to movement such as developed areas and roads.

As shown in Figure 4.3-4, CDFW defines the area within the plan area as having "Limited Connectivity Opportunity". A small area of "Connections with Implementation Flexibility," which has connectivity importance, but has not been identified as a channelized area, species corridor, or habitat linkage is present in the southern extents of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. CDFW does not identify any essential habitat connectivity areas within the City's Sphere of Influence (CDFW 2025b). However, there is a potential that the Santa Maria River is used by wildlife to access habitats in the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains (City of Santa Maria 2020).

4.3.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

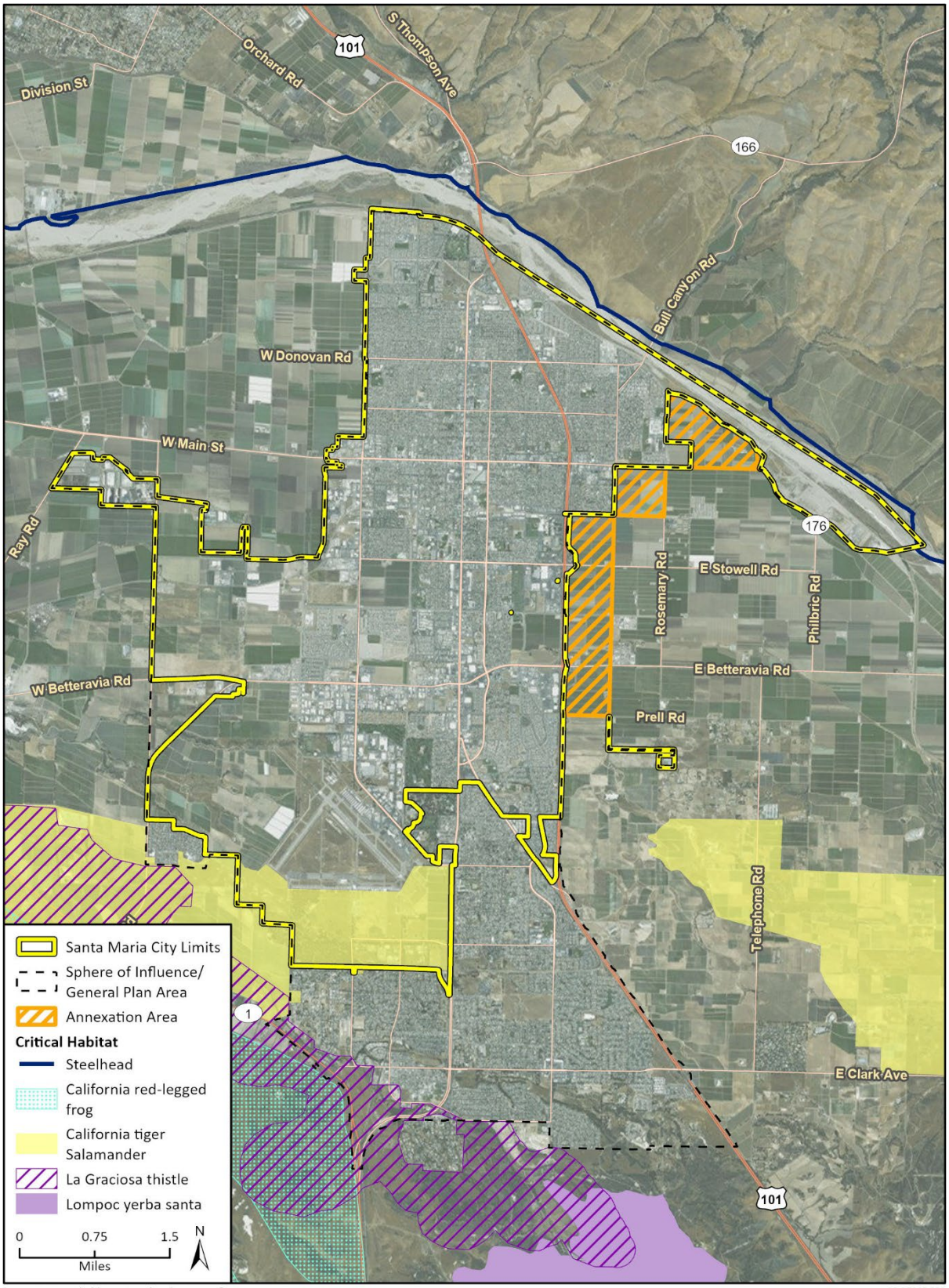
Federal Endangered Species Act

The FESA of 1973 and subsequent amendments provide for the conservation of endangered and threatened species, and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The FESA is intended to prevent the unlawful "take" of listed fish, wildlife, and plant species. Section 9(a)(1)(B) specifically states take of species listed as threatened or endangered is unlawful. Take is defined as any action that would harass, harm, pursue, hunt, wound, shoot, kill, trap, capture, or collect any threatened or endangered species. Section 10 of the FESA allows the USFWS to issue incidental take permits if take of a listed species may occur during otherwise lawful activities. Section 10(a)(1)(B) requires a Habitat Conservation Plan for an incidental take permit on non-federal lands. Section 7 of the FESA requires federal agencies to aid in the conservation of listed species, and to ensure that the activities of federal agencies will not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitat. The USFWS and NOAA are responsible for administration of the FESA and have regulatory authority over federally listed species.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The MBTA makes it unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, or kill migratory birds, and prohibits the removal of nests occupied by migratory birds. The USFWS has regulatory authority for the MBTA.

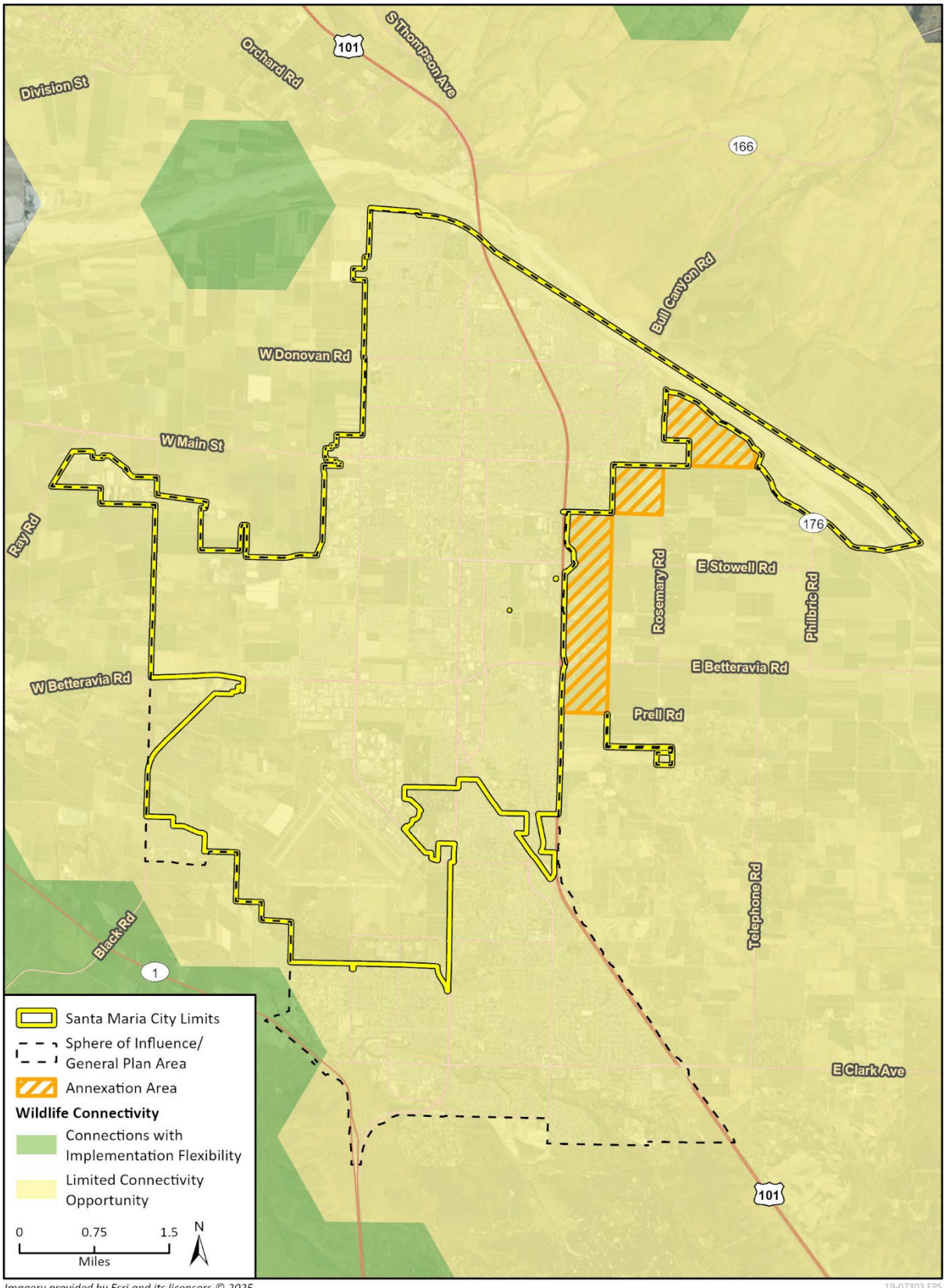
Figure 4.3-3 Critical Habitat Within the Plan Area



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Additional data provided by NOAA, 2023; USFWS, 2023.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Critical Habitat

Figure 4.3-4 Wildlife Connectivity Within the Plan Area



Imagery provided by Esri and its licensors © 2025.
Additional data provided by CDFW, 2025.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Wildlife Connectivity

Clean Water Act

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), under provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and USACE implementing regulations, has jurisdiction over the placement of dredged or fill material into "waters of the United States." Congress enacted the CWA "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." In practice, the boundaries of certain waters subject to USACE jurisdiction under Section 404 have not been fully defined. Previous regulations codified in 1986 defined "waters of the United States" as traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, all other waters that could affect interstate or foreign commerce, impoundments of waters of the United States, tributaries, the territorial seas, and adjacent wetlands.

USACE jurisdictional limits are typically identified by the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) or the landward edge of adjacent wetlands, where present. The OHWM is the "line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding area" (33 Code of Federal Regulations 328.3).

The USACE defines wetlands as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions" (33 CFR 328.3). The USACE's delineation procedures identify wetlands in the field based on indicators of three wetland parameters: hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

The USFWS also has responsibility for project review under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. This statute requires that all federal agencies consult with USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, and the State's wildlife agency (CDFW) for activities that affect, control, or modify streams and other water bodies. Under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, and CDFW review applications for permits issued under Section 404 and provide comments about potential environmental impacts.

b. State Regulations

California Endangered Species Act

The CDFW is responsible for administration of the CESA. For projects that may affect both a State and federal listed species, compliance with the FESA will satisfy the CESA, provided the CDFW determines that the federal incidental take authorization is consistent with the CESA.

"Take" is defined in CFGC Section 86 as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill." The CESA allows for take incidental to otherwise lawful activities under CFGC Section 2081. Project proponents wishing to obtain incidental take permits can do so through a permitting process outlined in California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 783. Additionally, some sensitive mammals and birds are protected by the state as Fully Protected Mammals or Fully Protected Birds, as described in the CFGC, Sections 4700 and 3511, respectively.

Projects that may result in a take of a California listed species require a take permit under the CESA. The federal and State acts lend protection to species considered rare enough by the scientific

community and trustee agencies to warrant special consideration, particularly with regard to protection of isolated populations, nesting or den locations, communal roosts, and other essential habitat. Unlike the FESA, the CESA prohibits the take of not just listed endangered or threatened species, but also candidate species (species petitioned for listing).

The CESA defines an endangered species as:

> …a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant which is in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range due to one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, or disease.

A threatened species is defined as:

> …a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and management efforts required by this chapter. Any animal determined by the commission as rare on or before January 1, 1985 is a threatened species.

Candidate species are defined as:

> …a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that the commission has formally noticed as being under review by the department for addition to either the list of endangered species or the list of threatened species, or a species for which the commission has published a notice of proposed regulation to add the species to either list.

Candidate species may be afforded temporary protection as though they were already listed as threatened or endangered at the discretion of the Fish and Game Commission. Unlike the FESA, CESA does not include listing provisions for invertebrate species. Article 3, Sections 2080 through 2085, of the CESA addresses the taking of threatened or endangered species by stating:

> …no person shall import into this State, export out of this State, or take, possess, purchase, or sell within this State, any species, or any part or product thereof, that the commission determines to be an endangered species or a threatened species, or attempt any of those acts, except as otherwise provided.

California Fish and Game Code - Nesting Bird Protection

According to CFGC Section 3503, it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird (except English sparrows [*Passer domesticus*] and European starlings [*Sturnus vulgaris*]). Sections 3503 and 3513 prohibit the taking of specific birds, their nests, eggs, or any portion thereof during the nesting season. Section 3503.5 specifically protects birds in the orders Falconiformes and Strigiformes (birds-of-prey). Section 3513 overlaps with the federal MBTA, prohibiting the take or possession of any migratory nongame bird.

California Native Plant Protection Act

The NPPA was enacted in 1977 and allows the California Fish and Wildlife Commission to designate plants as rare or endangered. Currently, 64 species, subspecies, and varieties of plants are protected as rare under the NPPA. The NPPA prohibits take of endangered or rare native plants but includes some exceptions for agricultural and nursery operations; emergencies; and after properly notifying

CDFW for vegetation removal from canals, roads, and other sites; changes in land use; and in certain other situations. Effective in 2015, CDFW promulgated regulations (14 CCR 786.9) under the authority of the NPPA, establishing that the CESA permitting procedures (CFG Code Section 2081) would be applied to plants listed under the NPPA as "Rare." With this change, there is little practical difference between regulations and protocols for plants listed under CESA and those listed under the NPPA.

Clean Water Act Section 401, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) have jurisdiction over “waters of the State,” which are defined as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state (California Water Code sec. 13050(e)). These agencies also have responsibilities for administering Section 401 of the CWA. In addition, where Federal jurisdiction is not asserted (for example, due to a lack of connectivity to a Relatively Permanent Waters and Traditional Navigable Waters), RWQCB assert jurisdiction over “waters of the State” pursuant to Section 13263 of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, which are defined as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the State. In this event, the SWRCB may issue general Waste Discharge Requirements regarding discharges to “isolated” waters of the State if limiting criteria are not exceeded (Water Quality Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ, Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Dredged or Fill Discharges to Waters Deemed by the USACE to be Outside of Federal Jurisdiction) or project-specific Waste Discharge Requirements.

The SWRCB and RWQCBs have not established regulations for field determinations of waters of the state except for wetlands. In many cases the RWQCBs interpret the limits of waters of the State to be bounded by the OHWM unless isolated conditions or ephemeral waters are present. However, in the absence of statewide guidance, each RWQCB may interpret jurisdictional boundaries within their region and the SWRCB has encouraged applicants to confirm jurisdictional limits with their RWQCB before submitting applications. As determined by the RWQCB, waters of the State may include riparian areas or other locations outside the OHWM, leading to a larger jurisdictional area over a given water body compared to the USACE.

Procedures for defining wetland waters of the State pursuant to the SWRCB’s State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State went into effect May 28, 2020. The SWRCB defines an area as wetland if, under normal circumstances:

> the area has continuous or recurrent saturation of the upper substrate caused by groundwater, or shallow surface water, or both; the duration of such saturation is sufficient to cause anaerobic conditions in the upper substrate; and the area’s vegetation is dominated by hydrophytes or the area lacks vegetation.

The SWRCB’s Implementation Guidance for the Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredge and Fill Material to Waters of the State (2020), states that waters of the U.S. and waters of the State should be delineated using the standard USACE delineation procedures, taking into consideration that the methods shall be modified only to allow for the fact that a lack of vegetation does not preclude an area from meeting the definition of a wetland.

California Fish and Game Code Section 1600 et seq.

Pursuant to CFGC Section 1600, CDFW has authority over all perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral rivers, streams, and lakes in the state, and requires any person, state or local governmental agency, or public utility to notify the CDFW before beginning any activity that would "substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel, or bank of, any river, stream, or lake, or deposit or dispose of debris, waste, or other material containing crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake" that supports fish or wildlife resources.

A stream is defined as a "body of water that flows at least periodically or intermittently through a bed or channel having banks and supports fish or other aquatic life. This includes watercourses having a surface or subsurface flow that supports or has supported riparian vegetation" (CCR, Title 14 Section 1.72). A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement may be required for any project that would result in an adverse impact to a river, stream, or lake. CDFW jurisdiction typically extends to the top of the bank and out to the outer edge of adjacent riparian vegetation if present. However, CDFW can take jurisdiction over a body of flowing water and the landform that conveys it, including water sources and adjoining landscape elements that are byproducts of and affected by interactions with flowing water without regard to size, duration, or the timing of flow.

CDFW Special Animals List

Special-status wildlife species are those species included on the CDFW "Special Animals" list. "Special Animal" is a general term that refers to all the taxa the CNDDB is interested in tracking, regardless of their legal or protection status (CDFW 2025c). The CDFW considers the taxa on this list to be those of greatest conservation need. The species on this list generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Officially listed or proposed for listing under the CESA and/or FESA
- State or Federal candidate for possible listing
- Taxa that meet the criteria for listing, even if not currently included on any list, as described in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15380
- Taxa considered by the Department to be a Species of Special Concern
- Taxa that are biologically rare, very restricted in distribution, declining throughout their range, or have a critical vulnerable stage in their life cycle that warrants monitoring
- Populations in California that may be on the periphery of a taxon's range but are threatened with extirpation in California

c. Local Regulations

Santa Maria Municipal Code

The City of Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapters 8-8 (Urban Forestry), 8-12A (Stormwater Runoff Pollution Prevention), 9-68 (Flood Damage Prevention), and 12-44 (Landscape Standards) implement measures which protect biological resources.

Chapter 8-8 implements the City's Urban Forestry Program, and provides a comprehensive urban forest management strategy which protects and enhances the City's urban forest and sets forth the following requirements related to trees within the City:

- Requires that one tree be planted for every forty feet of street frontage.
- Enforces the protection of City managed trees requires tree removals to be approved by the Recreation and Parks Commission.
- Requires provisions for tree protection and replacement during construction activities.
- Outlines the requirements for replacement trees, including that if healthy trees are removed, they are replaced at a two to one ratio according to the City's Landscape and Irrigation Standards (2007).
- Protects historic and heritage trees.

Chapter 8-12A implements requirements designed to reduce substantial adverse effects to water quality in the City. These include the following:

- Implementation of construction and operational Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce potential pollutants and protect water quality.
- Compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater discharge permits.
- Prohibition of discharge, modification, deposition, construction, or placement of material into a water course.

Chapter 9-68 implements requirements designed to minimize and prevent flood damage. These include:

- Restrictions around the alteration of natural floodplains, stream channels, and natural protective barriers.
- Minimizing filling, grading, dredging, and other development which may increase flood damage.
- Preventing and regulating the construction of flood barriers that would unnaturally divert floodwaters.
- Requires development permits and sets construction standards for projects within flood hazard or floodplains.

Chapter 12-44 implements landscaping design standards intended to preserve trees. These include:

- Listing of existing trees in excess of six inches in diameter and existing street trees within site planning documents.
- Restrictions on allowed grading alterations within three inches of a tree trunk.
- Requires approvals for tree removal and tree replacement

4.3.3 Impact Analysis

a. Significance Thresholds and Methodology

Methodology

The assessment of potential impacts to biological resources were informed based on a review of readily available information from the USFWS NWI, USFWS IPaC, CDFW CNDDB, the NOAA Protected Resources Application, the City of Santa Maria Existing Conditions Report (2020), and CDFW vegetation datasets. As a programmatic document, this EIR presents an assessment of the potential for adoption of the plan to result in significant impacts to biological resources. Because the EIR is a long-term document intended to guide actions for many years into the future, this analysis relies on program-level and qualitative evaluation.

The adoption of the 2045 General Plan does not include physical development that could directly impact biological resources. However, implementation of the 2045 General Plan would facilitate development within the City's SOI. Each proposed project under the 2045 General Plan would require subsequent analysis to evaluate project-specific impacts to biological resources, significance, need for project-specific mitigation, and any subsequent discretionary permits or coordination with resource agencies (e.g., USFWS, USACE, CDFW, RWQCB) that may be required.

Significance Thresholds

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project may be deemed to have a significant impact on biological resources if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
2. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
3. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means;
4. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites;
5. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; or
6. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Impact BIO-1 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COULD HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECT ON SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES, EITHER DIRECTLY OR AS A RESULT OF HABITAT MODIFICATION. IMPLEMENTATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL REGULATIONS AND POLICIES, AS WELL AS MITIGATION MEASURES BIO-1(A) THROUGH BIO-1(K) WOULD ENSURE THAT IMPACTS FROM DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE ON CANDIDATE, SENSITIVE, OR SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED.

As shown in Figure 4.3-1, the City is primarily developed; however, the plan area contains grassland, chapparal, riparian, wetland, and oak woodland areas which could serve as habitat for special status species. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, *Setting*, there are 13 special status plant species and 22 special status animal species with potential to occur within the plan area. Critical habitat for California tiger salamander is also present within the plan area. Potentially significant effects on candidate, sensitive, or special status species would occur if temporary disturbance during construction or permanent development facilitated by the plan would result in incremental direct loss of habitat, fragmentation of larger open areas and wildlife corridors, or disturbance of special status wildlife or vegetation species.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policies which would minimize impacts to protected biological resources and preserve habitats that may support special-status species and sensitive habitats, including nesting migratory birds:

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.

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.

Policy COS-1.5: Endangered, threatened, and special status species. Minimize potential impacts of development on federal or ~~s~~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-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.

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

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.

Policy PFS-2.3: Groundwater. Improve the long-term recharge of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin by retaining natural watershed areas, developing regional recharge basins, and minimizing impervious surfaces in new development.

~~**Policy PFS-2.6: Contaminant mitigation.** Manage contaminated sites to protect natural systems from groundwater infiltration and stormwater runoff.~~

Policy S-3.2: Agricultural runoff reduction. Work with the County of Santa Barbara to reduce off-site and urban flooding caused by agricultural runoff.

Special-Status Plants

Thirteen special-status plants have been documented in the plan area, including: Miles' milk-vetch, California jewelflower, La Graciosa thistle, salt marsh bird's-beak, paniculate tarplant, dune larkspur, Blochman's leafy daisy, Suffrutescent wallflower, Mesa horkelia, blushing layia, large-flowered leptosiphon, southern curly-leaved monardella, and spreading navarretia.

While these 13 special-status plants have a low potential to occur within the plan area, development facilitated by the plan could result in direct impacts to special-status plant species through vegetation removal, soil disturbance, and habitat modification during construction activities, potentially leading to the loss of individuals and degradation of habitat. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of habitat. Therefore, impacts to special-status plant species would be potentially significant.

Special-Status Wildlife

Thirteen special-status wildlife species were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area, and nine were identified with a moderate potential to occur within the plan area. Those with low potential to occur include southwestern pond turtle, tricolored blackbird, golden eagle, marbled murrelet, northern harrier, bald eagle, California gull, yellow-billed magpie, black skimmer, Lawrence's goldfinch, least Bell's vireo, pallid bat, and American badger. Those with moderate potential to occur include vernal pool fairy shrimp, monarch butterfly, California tiger salamander, Arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, western spadefoot, Northern California legless lizard, coast horned lizard, and burrowing owl.

Reptiles

Coast horned lizard and northern California legless lizard have a moderate potential to occur within the plan area, and southwestern pond turtles have low potential to occur within the plan area. Direct impacts to these species could occur if individuals are present in work areas during construction of development facilitated by the plan. Direct impacts to special-status reptile species could include injury or death as a result of individuals being crushed or buried by project vehicles, equipment, or displaced soil, entrapment of individuals in excavation areas, disturbance of individuals by construction-related noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities), impacts to vegetation used for food and shelter, reduction of refugia habitats, and accidental destruction of active burrows by construction vehicles or equipment. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat for these species. Potential indirect impacts resulting from development facilitated by the plan include the introduction or spread of invasive plant species, fugitive dust, standing water or food waste, and soil compaction that hinders burrowing. Indirect impacts to aquatic habitat for southwestern pond turtle include erosion, sedimentation, fire, and runoff of hazardous materials. Therefore, impacts to

coast horned lizard, northern California legless lizard, and southwestern pond turtle would be potentially significant.

Mammals

Bats have the potential to roost in buildings and trees, including street trees within the plan area. Impacts to pallid bats could occur if bat roosts are present in trees or buildings proposed for removal or in the vicinity of disturbance in undeveloped areas. These impacts could result in direct mortality or abandonment of maternal colonies, if present. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat. Impacts to pallid bat would be potentially significant.

If American badgers are present in disturbance areas or on access roads during construction of development facilitated by the plan, direct impacts to the species could occur; including injury or death resulting from vehicle collision, damage or destruction of occupied burrows, disturbance from construction noise/vibration, and loss or degradation of foraging habitat. Direct impacts may occur if disturbance at maternity dens resulting from construction noise/vibration or human presence negatively affects pup-rearing. The species may be indirectly impacted by impacts to its habitat including the spread of invasive plants, fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities), erosion, sedimentation, and runoff of hazardous materials. Additionally, soil compaction in work areas may reduce habitat for prey species. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat. Impacts to American badgers would be potentially significant.

Invertebrates

Monarch butterflies have the potential to overwinter in eucalyptus and pine-cypress groves throughout the plan area. Development facilitated by the plan could result in direct impacts to monarch butterfly if roosts are present in trees proposed for removal or in the vicinity of disturbance in undeveloped areas. Development facilitated by the plan could result in additional direct impacts to monarch butterflies could include disturbance of individuals by construction-related noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities), impacts to vegetation used for food and shelter, and reduction of refugia habitats. The species may be indirectly impacted by development facilitated by the plan due to habitat impacts, including the spread of invasive plants and fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities). Impacts to monarch butterfly would be potentially significant.

Vernal pool fairy shrimp are a federally threatened species with moderate potential to occur within the plan area. Suitable vernal pool habitat is present in the plan area near the Santa Maria Airport. If vernal pool fairy shrimp are present during construction and development facilitated by the proposed project, these species may be directly impacted through injury or mortality of individuals resulting from project vehicles or equipment, and habitat loss from leveling out or filling in the wetlands. Indirect impacts to vernal pool fairy shrimp could result from potential stormwater runoff from development activities entering potential suitable habitat during and post- construction. Stormwater runoff from development facilitated by the plan may result in degraded water quality and other essential water conditions that are required for species survival. Impacts to vernal pool fairy shrimp would be potentially significant.

Crotch's bumble bee is listed as a CDFW state candidate (SC) endangered species. The species inhabits various habitats in California between San Diego and Redding, including open grassland, shrublands, and chaparral in semi-urban settings. Crotch's bumble bee prefers food plant genera

including Antirrhinum, Phacelia, Clarkia, Dendromecon, Eschscholzia, and Eriogonum. The plan area is within the known range of this species, and suitable habitat and food genera are present in the vicinity of the plan area. While there are no CNDDB observations of this species in the plan area, based on the presence of suitable habitat as well as nearby occurrences and their transitory nature, this species has the potential to occur in the plan area. Impacts to Crotch's bumble bee would be potentially significant.

Birds

Construction activities associated with development facilitated by the plan could potentially result in impacts to birds and raptors, including tricolored blackbird, golden eagle, marbled murrelet, northern harrier, bald eagle, California gull, yellow-billed magpie, black skimmer, Lawrence's goldfinch, and least Bell's vireo. Development facilitated by the plan may result in direct impacts if they are disturbed by the noise and visual presence of personnel or equipment in construction areas or increased traffic in the vicinity (which may result in collisions). Indirect impacts resulting from development facilitated by the plan may include the introduction or spread of invasive plants, fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities), erosion, sedimentation, and the runoff of hazardous materials, all of which could degrade the quality of bird habitat (especially in riparian habitat areas) and the quality of foraging habitat. These impacts would be potentially significant.

If burrowing owls are present in disturbance areas when construction activities associated with development facilitated by the plan occur, the species may be directly impacted through injury or mortality of individuals resulting from collisions with construction vehicles or equipment; destruction of occupied burrows and/or active nest sites; and disturbance from increased vehicle traffic, noise at work sites (resulting from grading, helicopter activity, or other construction activities), and human presence that could result in an interruption of normal behaviors or nest abandonment. The species may also be subject to direct impacts due to the loss or degradation of foraging habitat in work areas resulting from vegetation clearing, ground disturbance, and/or permanent development. Development facilitated by the plan may also have indirect impacts to burrowing owl, including introduction or spread of invasive plants, fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities), erosion, sedimentation, and the runoff of hazardous materials which could indirectly impact burrowing owl by decreasing habitat value. In addition, development facilitated by the project may result in construction activities which increase soil compaction, which may impede burrow creation. Impacts to burrowing owl would be potentially significant.

If nesting birds are present at individual development sites, or immediate vicinity of individual sites, development facilitated by the plan could result in direct mortality through removal of active nests or disturbance levels that cause nest abandonment. Nesting birds and raptors have the potential to nest on buildings, in shrubs and trees, in rocky outcrops, and on bare ground throughout the City. Vegetation, including street trees, in the City can provide refuge cover from predators, perching sites, and favorable nesting habitat. Direct impacts to nesting birds may occur from disturbance due to increased noise, and human presence could result in nest abandonment or otherwise reduce nesting success due to development facilitated by the plan. Vehicle strikes resulting in injury or mortality may increase with additional vehicles and equipment being operated in the plan area. Development facilitated by the plan may also have indirect impacts to nesting birds, including fugitive dust generated by road grading, which can accumulate on surrounding vegetation and degrade the quality of nesting and foraging habitats for birds, and vegetation trimming, which may temporarily reduce the quantity and quality of habitat by decreasing vegetative cover. Development

facilitated by the plan may result in erosion and sedimentation, fire, hazardous materials, and invasive non-native plants which can also indirectly impact nesting and foraging habitats. Impacts to migration or foraging habitats during construction activities facilitated by the plan may have an indirect effect on birds that rely on these habitats but nest elsewhere.

Future development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the requirements of the MBTA and Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code, which include obtaining prior authorization by the USFWS before the take of a protected migratory bird species occurs, subject to USFWS requirements, and prohibiting the take, possession, or destruction of nests or eggs. However, existing City regulations do not mandate procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of the MBTA and Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code. Therefore, it is possible development facilitated by the plan could result in disturbance to birds or raptors and potentially violate the MBTA and Sections 3503, 3503.5, and/or 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code. As a result, impacts to nesting birds are potentially significant.

Amphibians

California tiger salamander, Arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, and western spadefoot have moderate potential to occur within the plan area. The plan area contains USFWS designated critical habitat for California tiger salamander (USFWS 2025). California tiger salamanders require access to both aquatic and upland habitat throughout their life cycle. They use standing bodies of fresh water, like ponds, vernal pools and other ephemeral or permanent water bodies for breeding, and require access to upland habitat that contains small animal burrows or underground hideaways for shelter and protection from predators and desiccation during nonbreeding periods (USFWS 2025b). Where suitable habitats are present, development facilitated by the plan may result in direct impacts from individuals being crushed by project vehicles and equipment, buried by displaced soil, or trapped in excavations as well as direct impacts from the loss or degradation of low-lying areas where pools form during rain events and upland burrowing habitat. If development facilitated by the plan were to occur within wetlands, streams, or upland habitat areas, impacts to California tiger salamander would be potentially significant.

Suitable wash and river habitats for Arroyo toad are present in the plan area, such as along the Santa Maria River. A CDFW designated critical habitat area for California red legged frog exists on the border of the southernmost extents of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. Suitable grasslands and vernal pool habitat for western spadefoot are present in the plan area. Where suitable habitats are present for these species, development facilitated by the plan may result in direct impacts from individuals being crushed by project vehicles and equipment, buried by displaced soil, or trapped in excavations as well as direct impacts from the loss or degradation of low-lying areas where pools form during rain events and upland burrowing habitat. Direct impacts to these species would be potentially significant.

Indirect impacts to special status species which utilize riparian corridors and other aquatic habitat (i.e. southwestern pond turtle, western spadefoot, California tiger salamander, Arroyo toad, California red-legged frog) could result from future development facilitated by the plan if suitable habitats are indirectly impacted by runoff of sediment and hazardous materials from disturbance areas, resulting in degraded water quality, or noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities). Construction activities that would disturb one or more acres of land are subject to the NPDES Construction General Permit. Compliance with the Construction General Permit requires the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) developed by a certified Qualified SWPPP Developer. The SWPPP includes project-specific BMPs to control

erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants from construction into stormwater. Typical BMPs include, but are not limited to, installation of silt fences, erosion control blankets, and anti-tracking pads at site exits to prevent off-site transport of soil materials. Section 8-12A.07 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code requires compliance with NPDES permit requirements. Section 8-12A.08 requires any construction activities to implement appropriate BMPs to prevent the discharge of sediment and potential pollutants.

Development facilitated by the plan would also be subject to the provisions of federal and State regulations protecting biological and water resources, including, but not limited to, FESA, CESA, CWA, and the NPPA. These regulations include requirements for biological studies where potential habitat exists, identification of potential jurisdictional waters, and consultation with applicable regulatory agencies where protected biological resources may occur. Compliance with these regulatory requirements would minimize indirect impacts to special status species that utilize aquatic and riparian habitat. Therefore, the plan would result in less than significant indirect impacts to special status species within aquatic or riparian habitat.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-1(a) Biological Resources Screening and Assessment

For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City Staff, the City shall require project applicants to engage a qualified biologist (having the appropriate education and experience level) to perform a baseline Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. If it is determined that the project has no potential to impact biological resources, no further action is required. If the project would have the potential to impact biological resources, prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a project-specific biological analysis to document the existing biological resources within a project footprint plus a minimum buffer of 500 feet around the project footprint, as is feasible, and to determine the potential impacts to those resources. The project-specific biological analysis shall evaluate the potential for impacts to all biological resources including, but not limited to special-status species, nesting birds, wildlife movement, sensitive plant communities, critical habitats, and other resources judged to be sensitive by local, state, and/or federal agencies. If the project would have the potential to impact these resources, the following mitigation measures (Mitigation Measures BIO-1[b] through BIO-1[k]) shall be incorporated, as applicable, to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. Pending the results of the project-specific biological analysis, design alterations, further technical studies (e.g., protocol surveys) and consultations with the USFWS, CDFW, and/or other local, state, and federal agencies may be required. Note that specific surveys described in the mitigation measures below may be completed as part of the project-specific biological analysis where suitable habitat is present.

BIO-1(b) Special-status Plant Species Surveys

For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that there is potential for significant impacts to federally or state-listed plants or regional population level impacts to species with a CRPR of 1B or 2B from project development, a qualified biologist shall complete surveys for special-status plants prior to any vegetation removal, grubbing, or other construction activity (including

staging and mobilization). The surveys shall be floristic in nature and shall be seasonally timed to coincide with the target species. All plant surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist during the blooming season prior to development permit approval. All special-status plant species identified on site shall be mapped onto a site-specific aerial photograph or topographic map with the use of Global Positioning System unit. Surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the most current protocols established by the CDFW, USFWS, and the local jurisdictions if said protocols exist. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, and the CDFW and/or USFWS, as appropriate, for review and/or approval.

If special-status plants are not found during special-status plant surveys, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2B plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys, the Mitigation Measures BIO-1(c) and BIO-1(d) shall be implemented.

BIO-1(c) Special-status Plant Species Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation

If federally-listed and/or state-listed individuals, and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys (pursuant to Mitigation Measure BIO-1[b]) and would be directly impacted by development, then the project shall be re-designed to avoid impacting listed plant species or CRPR 1B or 2 populations, where feasible. Rare and listed plant occurrences that are not within the immediate disturbance footprint but are located within 50 feet of disturbance limits shall have bright orange protective fencing installed at least 30 feet beyond their extent, or other distance as approved by a qualified biologist, to protect them from harm. Prior to initiation of construction activities the project proponent shall submit a site plan depicting the location(s) of special-status plants and avoidance buffers to the City for review and approval.

If special-status plants can be avoided, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations cannot be avoided, then Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) shall be implemented.

BIO-1(d) Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan

If federally- and/or state-listed plants, non-listed special-status plant populations, sensitive natural communities, or waters of the US and/or State cannot be avoided and will be impacted by development facilitated by the plan, the City shall require mitigation at a minimum ratio of 1:1 per acre of impact (and 1:1 per tree), to be determined in coordination with CDFW and USFWS as and if applicable, for each species as a component of habitat restoration. A habitat mitigation and monitoring plan (HMMP) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and submitted to the City for review and approval. The HMMP shall include, at a minimum, the following components:

1. Description of the project/impact site (i.e., location, responsible parties, areas to be impacted by habitat type).
2. Goal(s) of the compensatory mitigation project (type[s] and area[s]) of habitat to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved; specific functions and values of habitat type[s] to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved).
3. Description of the proposed compensatory mitigation site (location and size, ownership status, existing functions, and values).
4. Implementation plan for the compensatory mitigation site (rationale for expecting implementation success, responsible parties, schedule, site preparation, planting plan).

5. Maintenance activities during the monitoring period, including weed removal as appropriate (activities, responsible parties, schedule).
6. Monitoring plan for the compensatory mitigation site, including no less than quarterly monitoring for the first year (performance standards, target functions and values, target acreages to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved, annual monitoring reports).
7. Success criteria based on the goals and measurable objectives; said criteria to be, at a minimum, at least 80 percent survival of container plants and 30 percent relative cover by vegetation type or other industry standards as determined by a qualified restoration specialist.
8. An adaptive management program and remedial measures to address any shortcomings in meeting success criteria.
9. Notification of completion of compensatory mitigation and agency confirmation.
10. Contingency measures (initiating procedures, alternative locations for contingency compensatory mitigation, funding mechanism).
11. All nursery plants used in restoration shall be inspected for sudden oak death.

If a federally and/or state-listed plant species has the potential be impacted, an HMMP shall be submitted to the USFWS and/or CDFW for review, and federal and/or state take authorization may be required by these agencies.

Within 30 days of completion of monitoring, a final monitoring report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval, documenting compliance with the HMMP and achievement of success criteria.

BIO-1(e) Endangered/Threatened Special-status Species Habitat Assessments and Protocol Surveys

For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that suitable habitat may be present for federal- or state-listed, candidate, or proposed species, the City shall require protocol habitat assessments/surveys be completed in accordance with current CDFW and/or USFWS protocols prior to issuance of any construction permits. If, through consultation with the CDFW and/or USFWS, it is determined that protocol habitat assessments/surveys are not required, the project applicant shall be required to complete and document this consultation and submit it to the City prior to issuance of any construction permits. Each protocol has different survey and timing requirements. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring they understand the protocol requirements and shall hire a qualified biologist to conduct protocol surveys. (Note: if a federally and/or state-listed wildlife species will be impacted, federal and/or state take authorization may be required by USFWS and CDFW.)

BIO-1(f) Endangered/Threatened Animal Species Avoidance and Minimization

For development facilitated by the plan where potential impacts to aquatic and/or terrestrial animal species are identified by the project-specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment required under Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a), the following measures shall be applied.

1. Ground disturbance shall be limited to the minimum necessary to complete the project. A qualified biologist shall flag the project limits of disturbance. Areas of special biological concern within or adjacent to the limits of disturbance shall have highly visible orange construction fencing installed between said area and the limits of disturbance.

2. All projects occurring within/adjacent to aquatic habitats (including riparian habitats and wetlands) shall be completed between April 1 and October 31, if feasible, to avoid impacts to sensitive aquatic species. Any work outside these dates would require project-specific approval from the City and may be subject to regulatory agency approval.
3. All projects occurring within or adjacent to sensitive habitats that may support federally and/or state-listed endangered/threatened species shall have a CDFW- and/or USFWS-approved biologist present during all initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities. Once initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities have been completed, said biologist shall conduct daily pre-activity clearance surveys for endangered/threatened species. Alternatively, and upon approval of the CDFW and/or USFWS, said biologist may conduct site inspections at a minimum of once per week to ensure all prescribed avoidance and minimization measures are fully implemented.
4. No endangered/threatened species shall be captured and relocated without express permission from the CDFW and/or USFWS.
5. If at any time during project construction an endangered/threatened species enters the construction site or otherwise may be impacted by the project, all project activities shall cease. A CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist shall document the occurrence and consult with the CDFW and USFWS, as appropriate, to determine whether it was safe for project activities to resume.
6. For all work occurring in areas where endangered/threatened species may be present and are at risk of entering the project site during construction, the applicant shall install exclusion fencing along the project boundaries prior to start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The placement of the fence shall be at the discretion of the CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist. This fence shall consist of solid silt fencing placed at a minimum of three feet above grade and two feet below grade and shall be attached to wooden stakes placed at intervals of not more than five feet. The applicant shall inspect the fence weekly and following rain events and high wind events and shall be maintained in good working condition until all construction activities are complete.
7. All vehicle maintenance/fueling/staging shall occur not less than 100 feet from any riparian habitat or water body, including seasonal wetland features. Suitable containment procedures shall be implemented to prevent spills. A minimum of one spill kit shall be available at each work location near riparian habitat or water bodies.
8. No equipment shall be permitted to enter wetted portions of any affected drainage channel or wetland.
9. At the end of each workday, excavations shall be secured with a cover or a ramp provided to prevent wildlife entrapment.
10. All trenches, pipes, culverts, or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.
11. Considering the potential for the project to impact federally and state-listed species and their habitat, the City shall contact CDFW and USFWS to identify mitigation banks within Santa Barbara County during project development. If the results of the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determine that impacts to federally and state threatened or endangered species habitat are expected, City and/or applicant shall explore species-appropriate mitigation bank(s) servicing the region for purchase of mitigation credits.

12. Prior to grading and construction in natural areas of containing suitable upland habitat, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey as determined necessary during the biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]). The survey should include a transect survey over the entire project disturbance footprint (including access and staging areas), and mapping of suitable habitat features, such as burrows, that are potentially suitable for listed species. If any listed species are detected, no work shall be conducted until the individual(s) leaves the site of their own accord, unless federal and/or state "take" authorization has been issued for relocation. Typical preconstruction survey procedures, such as burrow scoping and burrow collapse, cannot be conducted without federal and state permits. If any life stage of listed species are found within the survey area, the City and/or applicant shall consult with the USFWS and CDFW to determine the appropriate course of action to comply with the FESA and CESA, if permits are not already in place at the time of construction.

BIO-1(g) Worker Environmental Awareness Program

For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels and prior to construction activities (including staging and mobilization), the City shall require the project proponent to arrange Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) training for all construction personnel to attend, conducted by a City-approved biologist, to aid workers in recognizing special-status resources that may occur in the construction area. The specifics of this program shall include identification of the sensitive species and habitats, a description of the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review of the limits of construction and mitigation measures required to reduce impacts to biological resources within the work area. A fact sheet conveying this information shall also be prepared for distribution to all contractors, their employers, and other personnel involved with construction. All employees shall sign a form provided by the trainer indicating they have attended the WEAP training and understand the information presented to them. The form shall be submitted to the City to document compliance.

BIO-1(h) Northern California Legless Lizard Avoidance and Minimization

For all development facilitated by the plan in undeveloped areas and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, a pre-construction clearance survey for Northern California legless lizard shall be conducted by a City-approved qualified biologist within 48 hours prior to the start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The survey shall cover the entire disturbance footprint within suitable habitats with moist loose soil, plus a minimum 100-foot buffer, where permissible, and should identify all special-status wildlife species observed on the project site. During the pre-construction survey the qualified biologist shall inspect under logs, leaf litter, or other suitable refuge. If Northern California legless lizards are identified, individuals shall be relocated by a qualified biologist to suitable cover with loose soils a minimum of 500 feet from the project site, as accessible. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, for review and approval.

BIO-1(i) Roosting Bat Surveys and Avoidance Prior to Removal

For all development facilitated by the plan that will require the removal of large trees (greater than 20 inches in diameter at five feet from the ground), abandoned buildings, bridges, or other suitable roosting structure identified during a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment prior to tree and/or structure removal, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused survey of all trees and structures to be removed or impacted by construction activities to determine whether active roosts of special-status bats are present on site. Tree or structure removal shall be planned for either the

spring or the fall, and timed to ensure both suitable conditions for the detection of bats and adequate time for tree and/or structure removal to occur during seasonal periods of bat activity exclusive of the breeding season, as described below. Trees and/or structures containing suitable potential bat roost habitat features shall be clearly marked or identified. If no bat roosts are found, the results of the survey will be documented and submitted to the City within 30 days of the survey, after which no further action will be required.

If roosts are present, the biologist shall prepare a site-specific roosting bat protection plan to be implemented by the contractor following the City's approval. Additionally, the qualified biologist shall determine compensatory mitigation for temporary or permanent habitat loss due to tree removal, in conjunction with CDFW. The plan shall incorporate the following guidance as appropriate:

- When possible, removal of trees/structures identified as suitable roosting habitat shall be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, including the following:
  - Between September 1 and about October 15, or before evening temperatures fall below 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or more than 0.5 inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs.
  - Between March 1 and April 15, or after evening temperatures rise above 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or no more than 0.5 inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs.
- If a tree/structure must be removed during the breeding season and is identified as potentially containing a colonial maternity roost, then a qualified biologist shall conduct acoustic emergence surveys or implement other appropriate methods to further evaluate if the roost is an active maternity roost. Under the biologist's guidance, the contractor shall implement measures similar to or exceeding the following:
  - If it is determined that the roost is not an active maternity roost, then the roost may be removed in accordance with the other requirements of this measure.
  - If it is found that an active maternity roost of a colonial roosting species is present, the roost shall not be disturbed during the breeding season (April 15 to August 31).
- Tree removal procedures shall be implemented using a two-step tree removal process. This method is conducted over two consecutive days and works by creating noise and vibration by cutting non-habitat branches and limbs from habitat trees using chainsaws only (no excavators or other heavy machinery) on day one. The noise and vibration disturbance, together with the visible alteration of the tree, is very effective in causing bats that emerge nightly to feed to not return to the roost that night. The remainder of the tree is removed on day two.
- Prior to the demolition of vacant structures within the project site, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused habitat assessment of all structures to be demolished. The habitat assessment shall be conducted enough in advance to ensure the commencement of building demolition can be scheduled during seasonal periods of bat activity (see above), if required. If no signs of day roosting activity are observed, no further actions will be required. If bats or signs of day roosting by bats are observed, a qualified biologist will prepare specific recommendations such as partial dismantling to cause bats to abandon the roost, or humane eviction, both to be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, if required.
- If the qualified biologist determines a roost is used by a large number of bats (large hibernaculum), bat boxes shall be installed near the project site. The number of bat boxes installed will depend on the size of the hibernaculum and shall be determined through consultation with CDFW. If a maternity colony has become established, all construction

activities shall be postponed within a 500-foot buffer around the maternity colony until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have dispersed. Once it has been determined that the roost is clear of bats, the roost shall be removed immediately.

BIO-1(j) Monarch Butterfly Avoidance and Minimization

For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, the City shall require that all construction activities (including equipment staging, grading, and construction) shall be avoided during the monarch butterfly overwintering season between October 15 through March 15, if practicable. In the event construction activities cannot be avoided during the overwintering season, the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a survey for roosting monarch butterflies within seven days prior to initiation of construction activities to determine their presence/absence.

If no monarch butterflies are observed during pre-construction surveys, no further actions are necessary. In the event construction pauses for a period of 7 days or more, if construction is planned to restart during the monarch butterfly overwintering season (October 15 through March 15), the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a new survey in accordance with the requirements of this mitigation measure.

If construction activities occur during the overwintering season and monarch butterflies are present, the qualified biologist shall establish a protective buffer, ranging from 100 to 300 feet from the roosting site in which monarch butterflies are aggregating. The buffer shall be delineated on site by the biologist with flagging or staking visible by construction personnel. The construction contractor shall ensure no construction occurs within the protective buffer, including staging of equipment or stopping or idling in the buffer, during the overwintering season. In the event construction activities, or other use of equipment, is needed to work within the buffer, the qualified biologist shall be present on site to monitor construction activities and determine if the work is disturbing the aggregated butterflies. If the biologist determines the work is disturbing the butterflies, the biologist shall have the authority to stop work within the protective buffer at any time. In addition, due to the regular movement of the butterflies and locations of the aggregations, the biologist shall have the discretion to adjust the protective buffers, as necessary.

BIO-1(k) Pre- Construction Bird Surveys, Avoidance, and Notification

For all development facilitated by the plan, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, construction activities initiated during the bird nesting season (February 1 – September 15), involving removal of vegetation (e.g. trees and shrubs), abandoned structures, or other nesting bird habitat, a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted no more than 5 days prior to initiation of ground disturbance and vegetation removal. The nesting bird pre-construction survey shall be conducted on foot and shall include a buffer around the construction site at a distance determined by a qualified biologist, including staging and storage areas. The minimum survey radii surrounding the work area shall be the following: 250 feet for non-raptors and 1,000 feet for raptors. The survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist familiar with the identification of avian species known to occur in the Santa Maria region. If construction lapses for seven days or longer, the qualified biologist shall conduct another focused survey before project activities are reinitiated. If nests are found, an avoidance buffer shall be determined by the biologist dependent upon the species, the proposed work activity, and existing disturbances associated with land uses outside of the site. The qualified biologist shall observe the active nest to establish a behavioral baseline of the adults and nestlings, if present. The

qualified biologist shall continuously monitor the active nests to detect signs of disturbance and behavioral change as a result of construction impacts, such as noise, vibration, odors, or worker/equipment motion. If signs of disturbance and behavioral changes are observed, the qualified biologist shall cease work causing those changes and may contact CDFW or USFWS for guidance. The buffer shall be demarcated by the biologist with bright orange construction fencing, flagging, construction lathe, or other means to demarcate the boundary. All construction personnel shall be notified of the buffer zone as an "Ecologically Sensitive Area" and to avoid entering the buffer zone during the nesting season. No ground disturbing activities shall occur within the buffer until the biologist has confirmed that breeding/nesting is completed and the young have fledged the nest. Encroachment into the buffer shall occur only at the discretion of the qualified biologist on the basis that the encroachment will not be detrimental to an active nest. A report summarizing the pre-construction survey(s) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and shall be submitted to the City prior to the commencement of construction activities.

Project site plans shall include a statement acknowledging compliance with the federal MBTA and California Fish and Game Code that includes avoidance of active bird nests and identification of Best Management Practices to avoid impacts to active nests, including checking for nests prior to construction activities during February 1 to September 15, and what to do if an active nest is found so that the nest is not inadvertently impacted during grading or construction activities.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a) would reduce potential impacts to special-status plant and animal species by requiring a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels, and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(b) and BIO-1(c) would reduce potential impacts to special-status plant species to a less than significant level by requiring preconstruction surveys and avoidance and minimization measures for special-status plant species. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) would reduce potential impacts to listed plants, non-listed special-status plant populations, sensitive natural communities, and waters to a less than significant level by requiring the preparation of, and adherence to, an HMMP if special-status species or habitat are present. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1(e) and BIO-1(f) would reduce impacts to endangered and threatened special-status species by requiring habitat assessments, protocol surveys, and avoidance and minimization measures for these species. Implementation of Mitigation measures BIO-1(g) would reduce potential impacts to special-status plants and wildlife during construction facilitated by the plan by facilitating a Worker's Environmental Awareness Program. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(h) would reduce potential impacts to Northern California legless lizard to a less than significant level by requiring preconstruction surveys and avoidance measures if Northern California legless lizard are present on a project site. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-(i) would reduce potential impacts to bat species to a less than significant level by requiring assessment and preconstruction surveys of potential building and tree removals, and avoidance of roosting bats. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(j) would reduce potential impacts to monarch butterfly to a less than significant level by requiring assessment of potential tree removals and avoidance of overwintering monarchs. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(k) would reduce potential impacts to nesting birds to a less than significant level by requiring preconstruction surveys for nesting birds and avoidance measures if nesting birds are present on a project site.

Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k).

Threshold 2:	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
Threshold 3:	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

Impact BIO-2 WETLANDS WITHIN THE PLAN AREA MAY BE AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE. DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO ADOPTED CITY REGULATIONS TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO RIPARIAN HABITAT, SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES, AND WETLANDS. COMPLIANCE WITH THE NPDES CONSTRUCTION GENERAL PERMIT, SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE, PROPOSED POLICIES IN THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, AND MITIGATION MEASURES BIO-1(A) AND BIO-1(D) WOULD ENSURE POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO RIPARIAN HABITAT, SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES, AND WETLANDS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.

The CNDDB identifies southern vernal pool as a sensitive natural community which could occur in the plan area. According to the USFWS NWI, wetlands in and surrounding the City consist of estuarine and marine habitats, freshwater ponds, freshwater emergent wetlands, freshwater forested and shrub wetlands, and riverine habitats (USFWS 2025c). Development facilitated by the plan is not likely to result in the removal of large areas of riparian, wetland, or other sensitive natural community habitat, as development would generally occur in areas of the City that are developed and surrounded by existing development. However, as shown in Figure 4.3-2, there are wetlands identified within the Annexation Area and throughout the plan area where development facilitated by the plan may occur which may be significantly degraded, or removed, by development projects. Development facilitated by the plan would be subject to Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapters 8-12A (Stormwater Runoff Pollution Prevention), and 9-68 (Flood Damage Prevention) and NPDES permit requirements to protect water quality prior to, during, and post-construction.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following proposed policies that would protect sensitive, riparian, creek, and wetland habitats:

> **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.
>
> **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.
>
> **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-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.

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

Policy PFS-2.3: Groundwater. Improve the long-term recharge of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin by retaining natural watershed areas, developing regional recharge basins, and minimizing impervious surfaces in new development.

~~**Policy PFS-2.6: Contaminant mitigation.** Manage contaminated sites to protect natural systems from groundwater infiltration and stormwater runoff.~~

Policy S-3.2: Agricultural runoff reduction. Work with the County of Santa Barbara to reduce off-site and urban flooding caused by agricultural runoff.

Implementation of proposed policies in the plan would ensure sensitive habitats are identified prior to project-specific siting and habitat areas are protected where applicable, and development facilitated by the plan would be subject to applicable federal, State, and City requirements, which would minimize potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands. However, unmitigated impacts to riparian and other sensitive natural communities resulting from development facilitated by the plan would still be potentially significant, requiring Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) to reduce potential impacts.

Mitigation Measure

Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) (listed above) are required to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a) would reduce potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands by requiring a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels, and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) would reduce potential impacts to sensitive natural communities and waters to a less than significant level by requiring the preparation of, and adherence to, an HMMP if special-status species or habitat are present. Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) and adherence to federal, State, and City requirements and proposed plan policies COS-1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 4.1, and 4.3, PFS-2.3 and 2.6, and S-3.2.

Threshold 4:	Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Impact BIO-3 DUE TO THE EXISTING LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT, THERE ARE NO ESSENTIAL WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY AREAS WITHIN THE PLAN AREA. WITH ADHERENCE TO THE PROPOSED POLICIES OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD HAVE A LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE MOVEMENT OF NATIVE RESIDENT OR MIGRATORY FISH OR WILDLIFE SPECIES WITHIN THE PLAN AREA, OR ON ESTABLISHED NATIVE RESIDENT OR MIGRATORY WILDLIFE CORRIDORS.

Due to the existing level of development, the plan area is not within an essential connectivity area as defined by CDFW (CDFW 2025b). Development facilitated by the plan would generally occur in areas that are developed or surrounded by existing development and urban disturbance, and no development is anticipated or planned within the Santa Maria River. As a result, development facilitated by the plan would not result in potentially significant impacts to wildlife movement because they would not obstruct wildlife corridors or fragment habitat such that wildlife movement is restricted.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following proposed policies, which would minimize impacts from any future development on sensitive habitat that could provide opportunities for wildlife movement:

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

With implementation of the proposed policies in the 2045 General Plan Update, as well as compliance with the Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapters 8-12A (Stormwater Runoff Pollution Prevention), and 9-68 (Flood Damage Prevention), development facilitated by the plan would have a less than significant impact on the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or on established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required because impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 5:	Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Impact BIO-4 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO THE PROPOSED POLICIES OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO PROTECTION OF TREES AND BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. THEREFORE, THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Potential impacts to trees and other biological resources, such as those resulting from tree and vegetation removal, may result from development facilitated by the plan. The plan area has trees within its developed and disturbed areas, as well as its surrounding parks and open space. Chapter 8-8 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code outlines permit requirements for tree maintenance and removal. Chapter 12-44 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code implements provides regulations governing trees in the City and codifies the protection of existing trees unless otherwise approved by City Parks Division as part of a development plan. Section 8-8.07 protects publicly owned trees from damage or injury. Section 8-8.08 and 8-8.09 provide requirements for vegetation protection plans and replacement for existing publicly owned trees and vegetation during construction projects. Pursuant to Section 8-8.10 and 8-8.14, any publicly owned or maintained tree damaged or removed is required to be replaced at a 2:1 ratio at a minimum size of a 24-inch box of a comparable size and species, unless specifically approved by the City Parks Division in accordance with the tree planting requirements outlined in Section 8-8.15. Additionally, Chapter 12-44 provides tree replacement requirements dependent on the size of the tree removed. Section 8-8.19 also protects historic and heritage trees from damage or removal.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following proposed policies that would protect biological resources and preserve trees and the urban forest:

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.

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

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.

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

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-3.1: Urban forestry regulations. ~~I~~ 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.

~~**Policy COS-3.2: City canopy cover.** Facilitate new tree plantings per the City's Urban Forest Management Plan, with a specific focus on disadvantaged communities.~~

Development facilitated by the plan would adhere to the requirements of the Santa Maria Municipal Code and the proposed policies of the 2045 General Plan. Therefore, impacts related to conflict with local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources, including a tree preservation policy or ordinance, would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required because impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 6:	Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan**?**

Impact BIO-5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PROVISION OF AN ADOPTED HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN, NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN, OR OTHER APPROVED LOCAL, REGIONAL, OR STATE HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN. NO IMPACT WOULD OCCUR.

There are no habitat conservation plans, natural community conservation plans, or other approved local regional or state habitat conservation plans in the plan area. Therefore, development and improvements in the plan area would not conflict with such plans. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because there would be no impact.

4.3.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15065[a][3]). A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, Environmental Setting, Subsection 3.3, Cumulative Development.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City limits and annexation areas. Cumulative development has the potential to result in adverse effects to special-status species. Cumulative development could directly impact candidate, sensitive, or special-status species injury or death as a result of individuals being crushed or buried by construction vehicles, additional vehicles brought to an area by development, equipment, or displaced soil; entrapment of individuals in excavation areas, disturbance of individuals by construction-related noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities); impacts to vegetation used for food and shelter, reduction of refugia habitats, and accidental destruction of active burrows and nests by construction vehicles or equipment. Cumulative development could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat. Potential indirect impacts resulting from development facilitated by the plan include the

introduction or spread of invasive plant species, fugitive dust, standing water or food waste, and soil compaction that hinders burrowing. Additionally, cumulative development could indirectly impact candidate, sensitive, or special-status species, including critical habitat essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, through habitat degradation or removal. As a result, cumulative impacts are potentially significant.

The plan would not facilitate substantial permanent development in riparian habitat and would implement policies designed to preserve and restore habitat for special-status species. These include Policy COS-1.1 and Policy COS-1.5 which emphasize the protection of wildlife habitat. Furthermore, Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k) would ensure development facilitated by the plan would minimize potential impacts to special status plant and wildlife species and nesting birds. Therefore, the plan would not have a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative impacts on candidate, sensitive, or special-status species.

Cumulative development could indirectly impact natural water resources due to offsite polluted runoff or sedimentation. Cumulative development proposed in areas identified as jurisdictional waters and/or wetlands, streambed/banks, or riparian vegetation would be subject to the permit requirements of the USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW, pursuant to Section 404 and Section 401 of the CWA, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code. Applicable federal and State requirements would minimize potential indirect impacts to riparian habitat and wetlands to a less than significant level. However, direct impacts to streams, wetlands, and riparian vegetation resulting from degradation or removal of habitat would be potentially significant.

The plan would not facilitate substantial permanent development in wetland, stream, or riparian habitat and would implement policies designed to preserve and restore wetland and aquatic habitats. These include, but are not limited to, Policy COS-1.1 and Policy COS-4.1 which emphasize the protection of the Santa Maria River and other wildlife habitat. Furthermore, Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) would ensure development facilitated by the plan minimizes potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands. Therefore, the plan would not have a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative impacts on riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, or wetlands.

Due to the existing level of development, the cumulative development area is not located within a CDFW-designated essential wildlife connectivity area. The plan includes Policy COS-1.1 and COS-1.2 which seek to protect and enhance remaining natural habitat and wildlife corridors within the City. Therefore, cumulative development would have less than significant impacts on wildlife corridors.

Cumulative development would be required to adhere to applicable local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources enforced by the agencies that have jurisdiction over a project site. There is no Natural Community Conservation Plan or Habitat Conservation Plan within the proposed plan area; therefore, no cumulative impacts related to conflicts local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources or a Natural Community Conservation Plan or Habitat Conservation Plan would occur.

4.4 Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources

This section assesses potential impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources. This section includes a brief summary of cultural and tribal cultural resources background information and a review of known archaeological, built environmental, historical, and tribal cultural resources as well as potential impacts to these resources as a result of implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. The background information and analysis in this section is partially based on the Environmental Background Report for the City of Santa Maria, prepared in December 2020 to support their General Plan Update.

4.4.1 Setting

The cultural history of Santa Maria and the surrounding Santa Maria River Valley can be divided into three major eras: Native-American, Spanish-Mexican and Anglo-American. Remnants from these unique eras exist in the region as a diverse range of tribal, archaeological and architectural resources. The Santa Maria River Valley served as part of the larger Chumash territory that extended from the coast and Channel Islands and inland to include Santa Barbara, most of Ventura, parts of San Luis Obispo, Kern, and Los Angeles Counties. The late 18th and early 19th centuries saw the influx of Spanish-Mexican culture, with the establishment of large Spanish Land Grants in the area along the coast, while the modern Anglo-American era began in the late 19th century with the break-up and sale of the Spanish Land Grants (Santa Maria 2020).

a. Prehistoric Setting

Native American Era

The Chumash were the primary Native American inhabitants of Santa Maria before the arrival of Europeans. The earliest inhabitants of Southern California were transient hunters visiting the region approximately 12,000 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), who were the cultural ancestors of the Chumash. At the peak, the Chumash population was estimated to be in the tens of thousands, with territory of around 7,000 square miles that spanned from Malibu to Paso Robles, stretching inland to the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley (Santa Maria 2020).

Permanent Chumash villages included hemispherical dwellings arranged in close groups, with the chief having the largest for social obligations (Brown 2001). Each Chumash village had a formal cemetery marked by tall painted poles and often with a defined entrance area (Gamble et al. 2001). Archaeological studies have identified separate sections for elite versus commoner families within the cemetery grounds (King 1969).

The acorn was a dietary staple for the mainland Chumash, though its dominance varied by coastal or inland location. Chumash diet also included cattail roots, fruits and pads from cactus, and bulbs and tubers of plants such as amole (Miller 1988).

The Chumash people were known as skilled boat builders, allowing them to travel up and down the Pacific Coast and inhabit the Channel Islands. The wooden plank canoe was employed in the pursuit of marine mammals and fish as well as facilitating an active trade network between the mainland and the Channel Islands (Johnson 1987).

The Chumash villages became increasingly permanent over time, with chiefs and shaman priests generally at the highest positions of authority. Women could serve equally with men as chiefs and priests. One chief would often hold responsibility for multiple villages. The Chumash Native American population was decimated due to European disease in the 1700s and 1800s, spread primarily by Spaniards as the mission system was founded and as the region was increasingly colonized by Mexicans and Americans (Santa Maria 2020).

b. Historic-Era Setting

Spanish-Mexican Era

Spanish settlement of the Santa Maria Valley began with the establishment of Mission San Luis Obispo in 1772 and Mission La Purisima in Lompoc 1787. In 1821, Spain granted Mexico independence and soon after the Missions were secularized. Administrators were appointed to transfer such lands to private property owners and to proceed with secular development of the area. This is now known as the Rancho Era, which ended with the transfer of California from Mexico to the United States following the Mexican-American War (Santa Maria 2020).

Anglo-American Era

Americans from the United States began arriving in California in the 1840s. After gold was discovered elsewhere in California, settlers were drawn to the Santa Maria Valley by the possibility of free land, when mission lands were made available for private ownership. With the arrival of farmers and other settlers after California gained statehood, the Santa Maria River Valley became one of the most productive agricultural areas in the state. Four prominent settlers, Rudolph Cook, John Thornburg, Isaac Fesler, and Isaac Miller, each contributed 40 acres of land where their properties met at the present day intersection of Broadway and Main Street to form what was then called “Central City” in 1875. Ten years later, the city’s name was changed to “Santa Maria” (Santa Maria 2020).

Oil exploration began in the Santa Maria Valley in 1888, with large discoveries in the early 20th century. Oil discoveries rapidly attracted a growing population to the Santa Maria Valley, bringing about the need for local governance. In 1905, Santa Maria was incorporated as a general law city. Until 1954, the city remained four square miles in size. Since that time, annexations have increased the size to approximately 22 square miles (Santa Maria 2020).

Since 1957, the city’s economic and population growth has been influenced by growth of Vandenberg Air Force Base, 20 miles south of the city. In the 1970s, the Santa Maria Town Center mall was constructed (Santa Maria 2020). Since that time the City Council has worked to maintain Santa Maria’s status as a regional retail hub, continuously working to add retail outlets. Santa Maria remains the leader in retail sales growth for Santa Barbara County. Agriculture, however, remains the city’s chief economic influence. The Santa Maria Valley is home to several vineyards and wineries and primary crops include strawberries, celery, lettuce, peas, and squash. The Santa Maria Valley is also home to several cattle ranches.

Previously Identified Historical Cultural Resources

The history of Santa Maria is preserved in its Historic Overlay District, landmarks, and objects of historical merit. The historic landmarks and objects listed below were identified by the City’s Landmark Committee and determined to contain historical merit. Of these resources, the Minerva

Club is the only one listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and California Register of Historical Places (CRHR), none of the other resources below are listed on either register.

- The Minerva Club
- The First United Methodist Church
- Saint Peter's Episcopal Church
- The Martin Luther Tunnell Home
- The Santa Maria Inn
- The Reuben Hart Home
- Santa Maria High School
- The Landmark Building
- City Hall
- The Coca Cola Bottling Company
- Heritage Walk
- The Haslam Building
- Buena Vista Park
- Flagpole at the George S. Hobbs' Civic Center
- Site of Santa Maria's First Waterworks
- Site of the Pacific Coast Railroad Depot
- Four Corners Intersection at Main Street and Broadway
- Veterans' Memorial Community Center
- First Masonic Temple Site
- John Long House
- Orange Street Kindergarten
- Cypress Street Kindergarten
- St. Mary's Catholic Church
- Bell at El Camino School
- Site of Leo's Drive-In
- Bas Relief of Columbus' Ship, Santa Maria
- Santa Maria Civic Theater
- Zanettti Home
- Site of Rusconi's Café
- Waler House
- Franklin House
- Independent Order of Oddfellows and Haslam Building
- Rubel House

4.4.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

National Register of Historic Places

The NRHP was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as "an authoritative guide to be used by federal, State, and local governments, private groups and citizens to identify the Nation's cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be considered for protection from destruction or impairment" (36 Code of Federal Regulations 60.2). The NRHP recognizes properties that are significant at the national, state, and local levels. To be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a resource must be significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. Districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of potential significance must also possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A property is eligible for the NRHP if it meets any one of the following criteria:

- **Criterion A:** Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- **Criterion B:** Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past
- **Criterion C:** Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of installation, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction
- **Criterion D:** Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

In addition to meeting at least one of the above designation criteria, resources must also retain integrity. The National Park Service recognizes seven aspects or qualities that, considered together, define historic integrity. To retain integrity, a property must possess several, if not all, of these seven qualities, defined in the following manner:

- **Location:** The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred
- **Design:** The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property
- **Setting:** The physical environment of a historic property
- **Materials:** The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property
- **Workmanship:** The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory
- **Feeling:** A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time
- **Association:** The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property

Historic American Buildings Survey

The Historic American Buildings Survey, established in 1933 as the nation's first federal preservation program, set the standard for documenting historic architecture through a collaboration between the National Park Service, Library of Congress, and the American Institute of Architects. Designed to

mitigate the loss of architectural heritage, the Historic American Buildings Survey created a publicly accessible archive capturing a wide range of American building traditions. Its records support preservation, rehabilitation, and design efforts while contributing to public education and professional training. The program's enduring impact lies in its comprehensive documentation methods, alignment with national preservation standards, and its role in cultivating future preservation professionals.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act amended the Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 United States Code [USC] 431–433) and set a broad policy that archaeological resources are important to the nation and should be protected, and special permits required before the excavation or removal of archaeological resources from public or Indian lands. The purpose of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act was to secure, for the present and future benefit of the American people, the protection of archaeological resources and sites that are on public lands and Indian lands, and to foster increased cooperation and exchange of information between governmental authorities, the professional archaeological community, and private individuals having collections of archaeological resources and data that were obtained before October 31, 1979.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act established federal policy to protect and preserve the inherent rights of freedom for Native groups to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions. These rights include but are not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 sets provisions for the intentional removal and inadvertent discovery of human remains and other cultural items from federal and tribal lands. It clarifies the ownership of human remains and sets forth a process for repatriation of human remains and associated funerary objects and sacred religious objects to the Native American groups claiming to be lineal descendants or culturally affiliated with the remains or objects. It requires any federally funded institution housing Native American remains or artifacts to compile an inventory of all cultural items within the museum or with its agency and to provide a summary to any Native American tribe claiming affiliation.

b. State Regulations

California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA requires a lead agency (in this case, the City) to determine whether a project may have a significant effect on historical resources. Sections 21083.2 and 21084.1 of the Statutes of CEQA, Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5024.1, and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 were used as the guidelines for this evaluation. PRC Section 5024.1 requires that any properties that can be expected to be directly or indirectly affected by a proposed project be evaluated for CRHR eligibility. The purpose of the CRHR is to maintain listings of the state's historical resources and to indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from material impairment and substantial adverse change. The term "historical resources" includes a resource listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in, the CRHR; a resource included in a local register of historical

resources; and any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5[a]). The criteria for listing properties in the CRHR were expressly developed in accordance with previously established criteria developed for listing in the NRHP.

According to PRC Section 5024.1(c)(1-4), a resource may be considered historically significant if it retains integrity and meets at least one of the following criteria. A property may be listed in the CRHR if the resource:

1) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage.
2) Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past.
3) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values.
4) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Under CEQA, if an archeological site is not a historical resource but meets the definition of a "unique archaeological resource" as defined in PRC Section 21083.2, then it should be treated in accordance with the provisions of that section. A unique archaeological resource is defined in PRC Section 21083.2(g) as:

An archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria:

1) Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions and that there is a demonstrable public interest in that information.
2) Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type.
3) Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person.

Resources that neither meet any of these criteria for listing in the CRHR nor qualify as a unique archaeological resource under CEQA PRC Section 21083.2 are viewed as not significant. Under CEQA, "A nonunique archaeological resource need be given no further consideration, other than the simple recording of its existence by the lead agency if it so elects" (PRC Section 21083.2[h]).

Tribal cultural resources as defined in PRC Section 21074, should also be treated in accordance with the provisions of that section. A unique tribal cultural resource is defined in PRC Section 21074a) as:

1) Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following:
    a) Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources.
    b) Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in subdivision (k) of Section 5020.1.
2) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1 for the purposes of this

paragraph, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Native American Heritage Commission

PRC Section 5097.91 established the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), whose duties include the inventory of places of religious or social significance to Native Americans and the identification of known graves and cemeteries of Native Americans on private lands. PRC Section 5097.98 specifies a protocol to be followed when the NAHC receives notification of a discovery of Native American human remains from a County Coroner.

Assembly Bill 52

Assembly Bill (AB) 52, which took effect on July 1, 2015, amends PRC Section 5097.94 by adding eight new sections that relate to Native Americans and expands CEQA by establishing a formal consultation process for California Tribes that must be completed before a CEQA document can be certified. Any project that may affect or cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource would require a lead agency to consult with a California Native American Tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project. Consultation is beneficial because Tribes may have knowledge about the land and cultural resources that should be included in the environmental analysis for projects. The NAHC identifies Native American Tribes to be included in the process. PRC Section 21080.3.1 identifies timing and other protocols for the consultation process.

Section 21074 of AB 52 also defines tribal cultural resources as a new category of resources under CEQA. According to PRC Section 21074(a)(1), tribal cultural resources are either defined as sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, or objects with cultural value to a California Native American Tribe, or are listed in or eligible for the CRHR or a local historic register, or have been determined by the lead agency to be a tribal cultural resource. PRC Section 21084.2 establishes that a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource may have a significant effect on the environment. PRC Section 21084.3(a) states that the lead agency shall establish measures to avoid impacts that would alter the significant characteristics of a tribal cultural resource, when feasible.

Senate Bill 18

Senate Bill (SB) 18 establishes responsibilities for local governments to involve tribal organizations in early stages of land use planning for the purpose of protecting, or mitigating impacts to, cultural places. The provisions of SB 18 apply only to city and county governments and not to other public agencies. California Government Code Section 65352.3 (adopted pursuant to the requirements of SB 18) requires local governments to coordinate and consult with tribal organizations prior to the adoption or any amendment of a general plan or specific plan. Tribal organizations would be considered eligible to consult on a project if they were to have traditional lands in a local government's jurisdiction, and are identified, upon request, by the NAHC. Tribes have 90 days from the date on which they receive notification to request consultation unless a shorter timeframe has been agreed to by the tribe.

California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5

The disposition of human remains is governed by Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code (HSC) and PRC Sections 5097.94 and 5097.98 and falls within the jurisdiction of the NAHC. According to California HSC Section 7050.5(b), if human remains are discovered, the County Coroner must be notified within 48 hours and there should be no further disturbance to the site where the remains were found. If the remains are determined by the coroner to be Native American, the coroner is responsible for contacting the NAHC within 24 hours. California HSC Section 7051(a) prohibits all persons from removing or otherwise disturbing human remains that are inadvertently discovered before their significance may be determined. Section 7052 establishes a felony penalty for mutilating, disinterring, or otherwise disturbing human remains, except by relatives.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 sets provisions for the intentional removal and inadvertent discovery of human remains and other cultural items from federal and tribal lands. It clarifies the ownership of human remains and sets forth a process for repatriation of human remains and associated funerary objects and sacred religious objects to the Native American groups claiming to be lineal descendants or culturally affiliated with the remains or objects. It requires any federally funded institution housing Native American remains or artifacts to compile an inventory of all cultural items within the museum or with its agency and to provide a summary to any Native American tribe claiming affiliation.

California Penal Code Section 622.5

California Penal Code Section 622.5 provides misdemeanor penalties for damaging or destroying objects of historic or archaeological interest located on public or private lands, but specifically excludes the landowner.

California Public Resources Code Section 5097.5

PRC Section 5097.5 defines the unauthorized disturbance or removal of archaeological, historic, or paleontological resources located on public lands as a misdemeanor.

c. Local Regulations

Santa Maria Municipal Code

Chapter 8-3 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code authorizes the Parks and Recreation Commission to designate places, sites, buildings, structures, works of art and other objects within the incorporated limits of the City as having historic, cultural, aesthetic or other special character or interest in accordance with the following standards.

1. The landmark designated shall have historical, cultural, aesthetic or special character or interest for the general public and not be limited only in interest to a special group of persons, and be at least 50 years of age.
2. The designation of such as a landmark under this chapter shall not be detrimental to the general welfare of the community.
3. The designation of such landmark shall not require the expenditure of an unreasonable amount of money to carry out the purposes of this chapter. In applying this provision it is the intent of this chapter that whenever a landmark proposed to be so designated is private property,

expenditures for its upkeep, preservation, maintenance and protection shall be made by the owner thereof in all but the most exceptional cases. If upon careful review by the Recreation and Parks Commission it is proposed that public funds be expended for the preservation, restoration, maintenance or protection thereof, or any other purpose in connection with the designation, the recommendation made by the Recreation and Parks Commission to the City Council shall set forth that fact, and shall set forth in full the reasons therefor, and shall include a statement setting forth as accurately as possible the estimated cost in public funds which would be so involved. The City Council in acting upon the proposed designation shall also determine whether the expenditure of public funds in connection therewith is justified. In the event that such designation would be ineffective for the preservation, restoration or protection of the proposed landmark, without such expenditure, and the City Council determines that the expenditure is not justified, the place, site, building, structure, work of art or other object which is the subject of the proposal shall not be designated an historical landmark.

4. The designation of such landmark shall not infringe upon the right of a private owner thereof, if there is such, to make any and all reasonable uses of such landmark which are not in conflict with the purposes of this chapter.

Resource Management Element

Archaeological resources—such as artifacts, structures, and refuse—provide crucial insight into the cultural practices, environmental adaptations, and societal changes of past human populations. According to the City's current Resource Management Element, the Santa Maria Valley is generally not recognized as a major archaeological or paleontological resource area due to the limited number of recorded sites, certain parts of the city exhibit varying degrees of sensitivity. Figure RME-5 of the City's current Resource Management Element shows areas west of A Street and south of Foster Road are considered to have high to moderate archaeological sensitivity, suggesting a greater potential for encountering cultural materials during ground-disturbing activities. In contrast, the portion east of A Street, between West Carmen Lane and Foster Road, is categorized as having low sensitivity, and the area north of West Carmen Lane has negligible sensitivity.

4.4.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

The assessment of potential impacts to historic, archaeological, and tribal cultural resources was informed by a review of readily available information from sources including, but not limited to, the City's list of Historical Landmarks and Objects of Historical Merit, the City's Resource Management Element, the State Office of Historic Preservation website and the National Parks Service. As a programmatic document, this EIR presents a citywide assessment of the 2045 General Plan Update. Because this Program EIR is a long-term document intended to guide actions up to 2045, this analysis relies on program-level evaluation.

On April 7, 2025 the City of Santa Maria prepared and mailed letters to six local Native American Tribes who have requested notification under AB 52 and SB 18. Under AB 52 tribes have 30 days and under SB 18 tribes have 90 days to respond and request consultation. The City has not received any request for consultation from the tribes who received the notification letter. No other tribes

responded during the 30-day or 90-day period to request consultation, which elapsed on May 7th,2025 for AB 52 and on July 8th, 2025 for SB 18.

Significance Thresholds

The following thresholds of significance are based on Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines. For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the plan may have a significant adverse impact on cultural resources if it would do any of the following:

1. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5;
2. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5;
3. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries

Implementation of the plan may have a significant adverse impact on tribal cultural resources if it would do any of the following:

1. Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:
    a. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or
    b. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

The significance of a cultural resource and, subsequently, the significance of any impact are determined by consideration of whether that resource can increase our knowledge of the past. The determining factors are site content and degree of preservation. A finding of archaeological significance follows the criteria established in the CEQA Guidelines.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 (Determining the Significance of Impacts to Archaeological Resources) states:

- (3) […] Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the CRHR (PRC Section 5024.1, Title 14 CCR Section 4852).
- (4) The fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the CRHR, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to PRC Section 5020.1(k)), or identified in an historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in PRC Section 5024.1(g)) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be an historical resource as defined in PRC Sections 5020.1(j) and 5024.1.
- (b) A project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment.

Historical resources are "significantly" affected if there is demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its surroundings. Generally, impacts to historical resources can be mitigated to below a level of significance by following the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings or the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (Guidelines Section 15064.6(b)). In some circumstances, documentation of a historical resource by way of historic narrative photographs or architectural drawings will not mitigate the impact of demolition below the level of significance (Guidelines Section 15126.4(b)(2)). Preservation in place is the preferred form of mitigation for archaeological resources as it retains the relationship between artifact and context, and may avoid conflicts with groups associated with the site (Guidelines Section 15126.4 (b)(3)(A)). If an archaeological resource does not meet either the historical resource or the more specific "unique archaeological resource" definition, impacts do not need to be mitigated (Guidelines Section 15064.5(e)). Where the significance of a site is unknown, it is presumed to be significant for the purpose of the EIR investigation.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Impact CUL-1 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ADVERSELY AFFECT PREVIOUSLY UNIDENTIFIED HISTORIC-PERIOD RESOURCES. IMPLEMENTATION OF APPLICABLE 2045 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES, STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS, AND THE SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE WOULD MINIMIZE ADVERSE IMPACTS ON HISTORICAL RESOURCES. WITH MITIGATION, IMPACTS TO HISTORIC-PERIOD RESOURCES WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, all of the resources included in the NRHP, CRHR and the City's Historical Landmarks and Objects of Historical Merit list are considered historical resources. In addition to these known historical resources, there may be other unidentified historic resources which are eligible for inclusion in the NRHP, CRHR or the City's Historical Landmarks and Objects of Historical Merit list.

The 2045 General Plan Update would guide the general distribution, location, and extent of the various land uses in Santa Maria, but the plan does not propose or approve any specific development. As there is no development included in the plan, adoption of the plan would not directly alter any historical resources. The plan does include changes to land use designations with the intent of increasing density throughout certain areas of the city. These land use changes, and the increased development that could accompany them, have the potential to impact historical resources, including those already designated as historical as well as those which may be eligible in the future.

New residential, commercial, and industrial uses would be introduced through both new construction and the conversion of existing properties to different land use designations. The plan's emphasis on increased density and clustered development increases the likelihood of redevelopment, or additional development, on already-developed lots. Future development may involve renovations, demolitions, or new construction, which could affect historical resources that have not yet been formally evaluated but may be eligible for listing on the NRHP, CRHR, or local registers under CEQA. Over the 20-year planning horizon through 2045, additional buildings will surpass the 450-year age threshold, making them potential historic resources. As a result,

redevelopment activities could lead to the physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of such resources.

Goals and policies included in the Conservation and Open Space Element of the plan, listed below, would reduce impacts to historical, and potentially historical, resources:

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: ~~Partner~~ 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.

Future development would also be subject to the provisions of applicable federal and State cultural resource regulations, as well as Chapter 8-3 of the City's Municipal Code. As the plan's policies and actions may be subject to varied interpretation, Mitigation Measure CUL-1 would ensure effective implementation of Conservation and Open Space Element Actions COS-7.1.3 and COS-7.1.4. For any

new development that could affect known or potential historical resources, a qualified historian must prepare a historical resource evaluation to assess possible impacts. With implementation of this mitigation measure, development under the plan would have a less than significant impact on historical resources.

Mitigation Measures

CUL-1 Historical Built Environment

If determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, applicants for new discretionary development projects that propose to significantly alter or demolish any historic-age features (i.e., structures determined to be over ~~4~~50 years of age based on available City records, such as permitting records) shall be required to submit a historical resources evaluation prepared by a qualified architectural historian or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in architectural history or history (36 CFR Part 61). The report shall address areas containing buildings, structures, objects, sites, landscape/site plans, or other features that are ~~4~~50 years of age or older and are proposed to be altered or demolished as a part of the proposed project. The evaluation shall include an intensive-level evaluation in accordance with the guidelines and best practices meeting the State Office of Historic Preservation guidelines. All evaluated properties shall be documented on Department of Parks and Recreation Series 523 Forms. The historical resources evaluation report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval.

If historical resources are identified through the survey and evaluation, the relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of the resource shall be completed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (Standards). Applicants shall submit a report to the City that identifies and specifies the treatment of character-defining features and construction activities, and demonstrates how the project complies with the Standards and avoids the substantial adverse change in the significance of the historical resource as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b). The report shall be prepared by an architectural historian or historical architect meeting the Professional Qualifications Standards as defined by 36 CFR Part 61 and provided to the City for review and concurrence prior to project approval.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-1 would reduce potential adverse impacts on historical resources by requiring the identification and evaluation of historic-age built environment features consistent with State Office of Historic Preservation guidance, and—when applicable—ensuring conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. This process would promote responsible management of significant resources through avoidance, rehabilitation, or relocation where feasible, and ensure effective implementation of Conservation and Open Space Element Actions COS-7.1.3 and COS-7.1.4. Therefore, with implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-1, impacts to historical resources pursuant to §15064.5 would less than significant.

Threshold 2:	Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Impact CUL-2 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DISTURB OR DAMAGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES. IMPLEMENTATION OF APPLICABLE 2045 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES, STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS, AND THE SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE WOULD MINIMIZE ADVERSE IMPACTS TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES. WITH MITIGATION, IMPACTS TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The 2045 General Plan Update would guide the general distribution, location, and extent of the various land uses in Santa Maria, but the plan does not propose or approve any specific development. As there is no development included in the plan, adoption of the plan would not directly impact any archaeological resources. The plan does include changes to land use designations with the intent of increasing density throughout certain areas of the city, as well as annexation of undeveloped land east of the City Limits. These land use changes, and the increased development that could accompany them, have the potential to impact known as well as previously unidentified archaeological resources.

Effects on archaeological resources can only be determined once a specific project has been proposed because the effects are highly dependent on individual project site conditions and the characteristics of proposed ground disturbing activities. However, ground disturbing activities associated with development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update have the potential to damage or destroy archaeological resources that may be present on or below the ground surface. Potential impacts to archaeological resources are most likely to occur on undeveloped lots, areas that have not been studied through a cultural resource investigation, or when excavation extends to depths lower than previous disturbance. Consequently, damage to or destruction of previously unknown subsurface archaeological resources could occur as a result of development facilitated by the plan.

Goals and policies included in the Conservation and Open Space Element of the plan, listed below, would reduce impacts to archaeological resources:

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

> **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.

These goals, policies, and actions are intended to preserve and protect known as well as previously unidentified archaeological resources. Development facilitated by the plan would be subject to the provisions of applicable federal and State cultural resource regulations listed in Section 4.4.2, Regulatory Setting. These regulations require project-specific avoidance of archaeological resources, or if an archaeological resource cannot be avoided, implementation of mitigation in accordance with applicable federal and State law regarding data collection and preservation of archaeological

resources. However, there is potential for historic-aged and prehistoric archaeological resources to exist throughout the plan area which could be damaged or destroyed during ground-disturbing activities. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan's impact on archaeological resources is potentially significant and Mitigation Measures CUL-2(a) through CUL-2(c) are required.

Mitigation Measures

CUL-2(a) Archaeological Resources Assessment

If determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, applicants for new discretionary development projects that involve ground disturbance activities (that may include but are not limited to, pavement removal, potholing, grubbing, tree removal, and grading) shall be required to submit to the City an archaeological resources assessment prepared by a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in either prehistoric or historic archaeology. Assessments shall include a CHRIS records search at the NWIC and a SLF Search from the NAHC. The records searches shall characterize the results of previous cultural resource surveys and disclose any cultural resources that have been recorded and/or evaluated in and around the development site. A qualified archaeologist shall conduct a Phase I pedestrian survey for those projects which include development in archaeologically sensitive areas, as designated by the City, to locate any surface cultural materials.

If the Phase I archaeological survey identifies resources that may be affected, the applicant shall also conduct Phase II testing and evaluation. If resources are determined significant or unique through Phase II testing and site avoidance is not possible, the qualified professional shall identify appropriate site-specific mitigation measures in the Phase II evaluation. These measures may include, but would not be limited to, a Phase III data recovery program, avoidance, or other appropriate actions to be determined by a qualified archaeologist. If significant archaeological resources cannot be avoided, impacts may be reduced to less than significant level by filling on top of the sites rather than cutting into the cultural deposits. Alternatively, and/or in addition, a data collection program may be warranted, including mapping the location of artifacts, surface collection of artifacts, or excavation of the cultural deposit, to characterize the nature of the buried portions of sites. Curation of the excavated artifacts or samples would occur as specified by the archaeologist. The City shall review and approve the archaeological resources assessment prior to project approval.

CUL-2(b) Unanticipated Discoveries

For new development projects where a Phase I archaeological survey identifies archaeological resources that may be affected, project applicants shall be required to retain a qualified cultural resource specialist to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource. If archaeological resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work in the immediate area shall halt and an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Archaeology shall be contacted immediately to evaluate the find. If determined to be necessary by the qualified archaeologist, the evaluation may require preparation of a treatment plan and archaeological testing for CRHR eligibility. If the discovery proves to be significant under CEQA and cannot be avoided by the project, additional work, such as excavating the cultural deposit to fully characterize its extent and collecting and curating artifacts, may be determined to be necessary by the qualified archaeologist to mitigate any significant impacts to cultural resources. If archaeological resources of Native American origin are identified during construction, a qualified archaeologist shall consult

with the City to begin Native American consultation procedures. Periodic reports of the find and subsequent evaluations shall be submitted to the City during construction.

CUL-2(c) Workers Environmental Awareness Program

For new development projects where a Phase I archaeological survey identifies archaeological resources that may be affected, project applicants shall ensure a City-approved archaeologist provides a cultural resources awareness training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The WEAP shall be conducted prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area. The WEAP would include relevant information regarding sensitive cultural resources, including applicable regulations, protocols for avoidance, and consequences of violating State laws and regulations. The WEAP shall also describe appropriate avoidance and impact minimization measures for cultural resources that could be located at the project site and would outline what to do and who to contact if any potential cultural resources or tribal cultural resources are encountered.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-2(a) through CUL-2(c) would reduce potential adverse impacts on archaeological resources by requiring identification and evaluation of any archaeological resources that may be present prior to construction and by providing steps for the evaluation and protection of unanticipated finds encountered during construction. This process would promote responsible management of archaeological resources through avoidance, rehabilitation, or relocation where feasible, and ensure effective implementation of Conservation and Open Space Element Policy COS-7.5 and Actions COS-7.5.1 and COS-7.5.2. Therefore, with implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-2(a) through CUL-2(c), impacts to archaeological resources pursuant to Section 15064.5 would less than significant.

Threshold 3:	Would the project disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?

Impact CUL-3 GROUND DISTURBING ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COULD RESULT IN DISTURBANCE OF HUMAN REMAINS. COMPLIANCE WITH CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE SECTION 7050.5 AND PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE SECTION 5097.8 WOULD ENSURE THIS POTENTIAL IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Human burials outside of formal cemeteries can occur in prehistoric archaeological contexts, and the Santa Maria Cemetery lies within the plan area. Excavations during construction activities facilitated by the plan could have the potential to disturb human remains in the plan area which could include Native American burial sites.

Pursuant to California HSC Section 7050.5, if human remains are found, the County Coroner must be notified immediately, and no further disturbance would occur until the County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98. If the human remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the County Coroner would notify the NAHC, which would determine and notify a Most Likely Descendent (MLD). The MLD has 48 hours from being granted site access to make recommendations for the disposition of the remains. If the MLD does not make recommendations within 48 hours, the landowner would reinter the remains in a location that would not be affected by future ground-disturbing activities. Development facilitated by the

plan would comply with the provisions set forth pursuant to California HSC Section 7050.5 and PRC Section 5097.98. Therefore, although it is possible ground-disturbing activities related to project construction could disturb human remains beneath the project site, adherence to California HSC Section 7050.5 would ensure impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 4:	Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is: a. Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or b. A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Impact CUL-4 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DISTURB OR DAMAGE TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES. IMPLEMENTATION OF APPLICABLE 2045 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES, STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS, AND THE SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE WOULD MINIMIZE ADVERSE IMPACTS TO TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES. WITH MITIGATION, IMPACTS TO TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

As discussed in the Methodology section, the City of Santa Maria sent notification letters on April 7, 2025, to six local tribes under AB 52 and SB 18, but no requests for consultation were received during the respective 30- and 90-day response periods, which ended on May 7 and July 8, 2025.

Potential effects on tribal cultural resources can only be fully assessed once a specific project is proposed, as impacts are highly dependent on site-specific conditions and the nature and extent of ground-disturbing activities. Nevertheless, development facilitated by the plan may involve ground disturbance in areas that have not been subject to prior cultural resource studies, creating the potential to disturb or destroy previously unidentified tribal cultural resources. These impacts are more likely to occur on undeveloped parcels or in locations where excavation reaches below previously disturbed soils. As such, inadvertent impacts to tribal cultural resources could result from future development under the plan.

Future development facilitated under the plan that is subject to CEQA would be required to comply with the provisions of AB 52, including formal consultation with California Native American Tribes traditionally affiliated with the area, prior to project implementation. In compliance with AB 52, a determination of whether project-specific substantial adverse effects on tribal cultural resources would occur along with identification of appropriate, project-specific avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures would be required. Due to the programmatic nature of the plan, it is not possible to fully determine impacts. Impacts on tribal cultural resources can only be accurately

evaluated when a specific project is proposed, given that potential effects vary based on individual site conditions and the scope of planned ground-disturbing work. Although no specific tribal cultural resources eligible for the NRHP, CRHP or local register were identified as being impacted by the plan, it is possible for tribal cultural resources to exist throughout the plan area. Any future project implementation would require project-specific tribal cultural resources identification and consultation, and the appropriate avoidance, minimization, or mitigation would be incorporated.

Policies included in the Conservation and Open Space Element of the plan, listed below, would reduce impacts to tribal cultural resources:

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: ~~Partner~~ 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-7.1: 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-7.1.2: Enforce federal, State, and local regulations related to the preservation of historic and cultural resources.

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.

These policies and actions are intended to preserve and protect known and previously unidentified tribal resources. In addition to these local policies, development facilitated by the plan would be subject to the provisions of applicable federal and State tribal resource regulations, listed in Section 4.4.2, Regulatory Setting.

Development facilitated by plan would undergo project-specific tribal cultural resource consultation pursuant to the requirements of PRC Section 21084 and Policy COS-7.3, Tribal resource protection. There is always potential for unknown tribal cultural resources to exist throughout the plan area which could be damaged or destroyed during ground-disturbing activities. The following measures are included to mitigate potential impacts to less than significant, knowing that upon recognition, avoidance would be the preferred method when feasible. Therefore, the plan's impact on tribal cultural resources is potentially significant and Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and CUL-4(b) are required.

Mitigation Measures

CUL-4(a) Workers Environmental Awareness Program

For any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to invite a City-approved archaeologist to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness

training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The City would also invite consulting Tribe(s) to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness training program for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The WEAP training shall be conducted prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area. The WEAP would include relevant information regarding sensitive cultural resources and tribal cultural resources, including applicable regulations, protocols for avoidance, and consequences of violating State laws and regulations. The WEAP will also describe appropriate avoidance and impact minimization measures for tribal cultural resources that could be located at the project site and would outline what to do and who to contact if any potential cultural resources or tribal cultural resources are encountered. The WEAP would emphasize the requirement for confidentiality and culturally appropriate treatment of any discovery of significance to Native Americans and would discuss appropriate behaviors and responsive actions, consistent with local tribal values.

CUL-4(b) Tribal Cultural Monitoring

For any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to retain a tribal monitor to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities that will occur within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and CUL-4(b) would mitigate potential impacts to a less than significant level by requiring the identification and evaluation of any tribal cultural resources that may be present prior to construction and by providing steps for the evaluation and protection of unanticipated finds encountered during construction.

4.4.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City Limits and annexation areas. Cumulative development throughout the City of Santa Maria and the Santa Barbara County region has the potential to result in significant impacts on historical resources, particularly through the incremental alteration or demolition of historic structures and features associated with long-term growth and redevelopment. While many of these resources are known, others have not yet been evaluated and may be eligible for listing on the NRHP, CRHR, or local historic registers. Given the scale and pace of cumulative development activities, cumulative development and redevelopment could cause the loss of built-environment historical resources, resulting in a significant cumulative impact.

The plan would facilitate additional growth within the city, including on sites with known or potential historical resources. Although compliance with proposed policies within the plan would reduce impacts to these resources to the maximum extent feasible, cumulative development and redevelopment could nonetheless cause the loss of built-environment historical resources. Alteration or demolition of historical resources remains a possibility throughout the plan area and immediate surroundings with potentially cumulative impacts. As such, cumulative impacts to historical resources are considered significant. The 2024 General Plan Update would implement Mitigation Measure CUL-1, which requires identification and evaluation of historic-age built environment features consistent with State Office of Historic Preservation guidance, and ensures conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. All new development in the City and annexation areas would be required to be consistent with the goals and policies included in the Conservation and Open Space Element, and to comply with applicable federal and State cultural resource regulations, as well as Chapter 8-3 of the City's Municipal Code. Compliance with the goals and policies included in the Conservation and Open Space Element as well as applicable federal and State cultural resource regulations, in addition to implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-1 would ensure the plan's contribution to significant cumulative historical resource impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

Cumulative development throughout the City of Santa Maria and the Santa Barbara County region would result in development in previously undisturbed areas, contributing to regional impacts on archaeological resources. While impacts to archaeological resources are frequently mitigated on a project-by-project basis, certain archaeological resources may have regional significance, and the cumulative loss of archaeological resources may be considerable. As such, cumulative impacts to archaeological resources are considered significant. The 2024 General Plan Update would implement Mitigation Measures CUL-2(a) through CUL-2(c), which require the identification and evaluation of any archaeological resources that may be present prior to construction and by providing steps for the evaluation and protection of unanticipated finds encountered during construction. All new development in the City and annexation areas would be required to be consistent with the goals and policies included in the Conservation and Open Space Element, and to comply with applicable federal and State cultural resource regulations. Compliance with the goals and policies included in the Conservation and Open Space Element as well as applicable federal and State cultural resource regulations, in addition to implementation of required mitigation measures would ensure the plan's contribution to significant cumulative archaeological resources impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

The potential for disturbance of human remains is site-specific, such that the disturbance of remains at one site is generally not considered additive at another site. While cumulative development has the potential to uncover unidentified human remains, all cumulative development would be subject to the requirements set forth within California HSC Section 7050.5 and PRC Section 5097.98. These code sections set standard procedures for the discovery of human remains and further evaluation if the remains are determined to be of Native American origin. Consequently, cumulative impacts associated with potential disturbance of human remains would be less than significant.

Compliance with AB 52 and continued involvement with local tribes in regional planning efforts would support the identification of potential adverse impacts on known tribal cultural resources and facilitate the implementation of avoidance, minimization, or supplemental mitigation measures beyond those provided in Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and CUL-4(b). Therefore, cumulative impacts to tribal cultural resources would be less than significant.

4.5 Hydrology and Water Quality

This section evaluates the potential environmental effects related to hydrology and water quality associated with implementation of the plan. It discusses the regional and local watershed characteristics, including water quality, drainage and infiltration patterns, and flood hazards. The analysis includes a review of surface water, groundwater, water supply, water quality, flooding, and stormwater. Water supply is also discussed in Chapter 4.9, *Utilities and Service Systems*, as is wastewater conveyance and stormwater infrastructure. Issues regarding wetlands and waters of the U.S. are discussed in Chapter 4.3, *Biological Resources*. Erosion is further discussed in Chapter 4.9, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*.

4.5.1 Setting

The City of Santa Maria is located in the central coast area of California in northern Santa Barbara County. The weather in Santa Maria is characterized by a typical Mediterranean coastal climate, which is generally dry in the summer with mild, wet winters. Rainfall in the area is concentrated in the winter months with the wettest months being December, January, February, and March, which have average monthly rainfall totals of 2.12, 2.75, 2.99, and 2.64 inches, respectively (U.S. Climate Data 2025).

a. Surface Water

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) divides surface watersheds in California into 10 hydrologic regions. Santa Maria lies within the Central Coast hydrologic region, a large coastal region in central California that consists of approximately 11,300 square miles and includes all of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties, most of San Benito County, and portions of San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Ventura counties (DWR 2013).

Santa Maria is located within the Santa Maria watershed. The watershed drains approximately 1,880 square miles and includes all tributaries of the Cuyama River, Sisquoc River, and the Santa Maria River (City of Santa Maria 2020). The Santa Maria River, which flows 24 miles from the confluence of the Sisquoc River and Cuyama River to the Pacific Ocean flows around the northern edge of the city from west to east.

b. Groundwater

The city overlies the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin. A majority of the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin is adjudicated and is managed by the Northern Cities Management Area, Nipomo Mesa Management Area, and the Santa Maria Valley Management Area. There are some non-adjudicated areas within the Basin, which are managed by groundwater sustainability agencies formed by the County of San Luis Obispo, the City of Arroyo, and the County of Santa Barabara (County of San Luis Obispo 2025). The Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin covers approximately 288 square miles (City of Santa Maria 2020). The Santa Maria Valley Management Area includes approximately 175 square miles of the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin in northern Santa Barbara and southern San Luis Obispo Counties (City of Santa Maria 2020). The entire basin has a storage capacity of 2,300,000 acre feet (City of Santa Maria 2020). Lopez Reservoir and Twitchell Reservoir store stormwater for groundwater basin recharge. Groundwater is used for industrial, municipal, and agricultural uses within the city (City of Santa Maria 2020).

c. Water Quality

Surface Water Quality

Land use affects the quality of surface water in the city. There are large agricultural ~~operations~~ uses within the city ~~that~~ may contribute to surface water pollution. These ~~operations~~ uses are a ~~substantial~~ source of sediment which enters the city's storm drain system (City of Santa Maria 2020). Additionally, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer are pollutants associated with agricultural ~~operations~~ uses that affect surface water quality within the city. Pollutants within urbanized areas of the city, such as heavy metals hydrocarbons, detergents, fertilizers, and pesticides, and construction activities which can cause erosion are additional sources of surface water pollution which impact water quality within the city (City of Santa Maria 2020).

Pollutants of known concern in the Santa Maria Watershed include fecal coliform, nitrates, sediments, and ammonia in surface water; nitrates and total dissolved solids in groundwater; organochlorine pesticides in the Santa Maria River Estuary (located approximately 10 miles west of Santa Maria); and petroleum production by-product (diluent) in surface water of the Guadalupe Dunes which is located directly north and south of the Santa Maria River mouth and estuary and nearby areas (City of Santa Maria 2020). The Clean Water Act Section 303(d) requires States to keep registers of impaired waters that do not meet water quality standards. The Santa Maria River is included on the Section 303(d) list for nitrate pollutants from agriculture, domestic animals/livestock, natural sources, and urban runoff/storm sewers. In addition, Arsenic, Chloride, Chlorpyrifos, Cypermethrin, Cyhalothrin, DDD, DDE, DDT, Diazinon, Dieldrin, Endrin, Imidacloprid, Lead, Linurion, Manganese, Malathion, Nitrate, Oxyfluorfen, Prometryn, Pyrethroids, Selenium, Specific Conductivity, Temperature, Total Dissolved Solids, Toxicity, and Toxaphene are all listed pollutants for the Santa Maria River (California State Water Board 2024). The Santa Maria Watershed Toxicity and Pesticides total maximum daily load (TMDL)[1] is applicable to the following pollutants: Chlorpyrifos, Cypermethrin, DDD, DDE, DDT, Diazinon, Dieldrin, Endrin, Malathion, Nitrate, Toxicity, Pyrethroids, and Toxaphene. For all other pollutants TMDL are currently being drafted and are expected to be completed in 2035. The TMDL for Imidacloprid is expected to be completed in 2027 (California State Water Board 2024).

Groundwater Quality

Groundwater quality varies within the Santa Maria Valley. Total dissolved solids are known pollutants in groundwater within the Santa Maria Watershed. Additionally, petroleum production by-product (diluent) has been found in groundwater below the Guadalupe Dunes and nearby areas (City of Santa Maria 2020). The use and reuse of groundwater, coupled with the introduction of additives from municipal and agricultural use, and evaporation of much of the applied water, result in increasing mineralization of the groundwater (City of Santa Maria 2020). Surface waters serve as a major source of recharge for the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin.

d. Flood Hazards

Flood hazards can occur when the amount of rainfall exceeds the infiltration capacity of the surrounding landscape or the conveyance capacity of the stormwater drainage system. Flood risk is defined as an annual percent chance of flooding, or the probability that flooding would occur in any given year. Although a 100-year flood will, on average, occur once every 100 years, the probability

[1] A total maximum daily load (TMDL) is the maximum amount of a pollutant allowed to enter a waterbody to meet water quality standards (USEPA 2024).

of a 100-year flood is one percent for any particular year. Two 100-year floods could occur in the same year or even in the same month, but the likelihood that two 100-year flood events would occur consecutively is very small.

According to Flood Insurance Rate Maps prepared by FEMA, portions of Santa Maria lie within 1 percent annual chance (100-year) flood zones; these areas are located throughout the city, but are predominately concentrated along the city's northern border, along the Santa Maria River. Additionally, portions of Santa Maria lie within 0.2 percent annual chance (500-year) flood zones. These areas are concentrated near Main Street (S.R. 166) and Orcutt Creek (City of Santa Maria 2020). These areas are shown in Figure 4.5-1.

Santa Maria is approximately 11.4 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. According to the California Department of Conservation, no part of the city is within a tsunami hazard zone (DOC 2025). The city is approximately three miles from Guadalupe Lake. Due to the distance and intervening topography, the city is not at risk of being inundated due to a seiche.

4.5.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

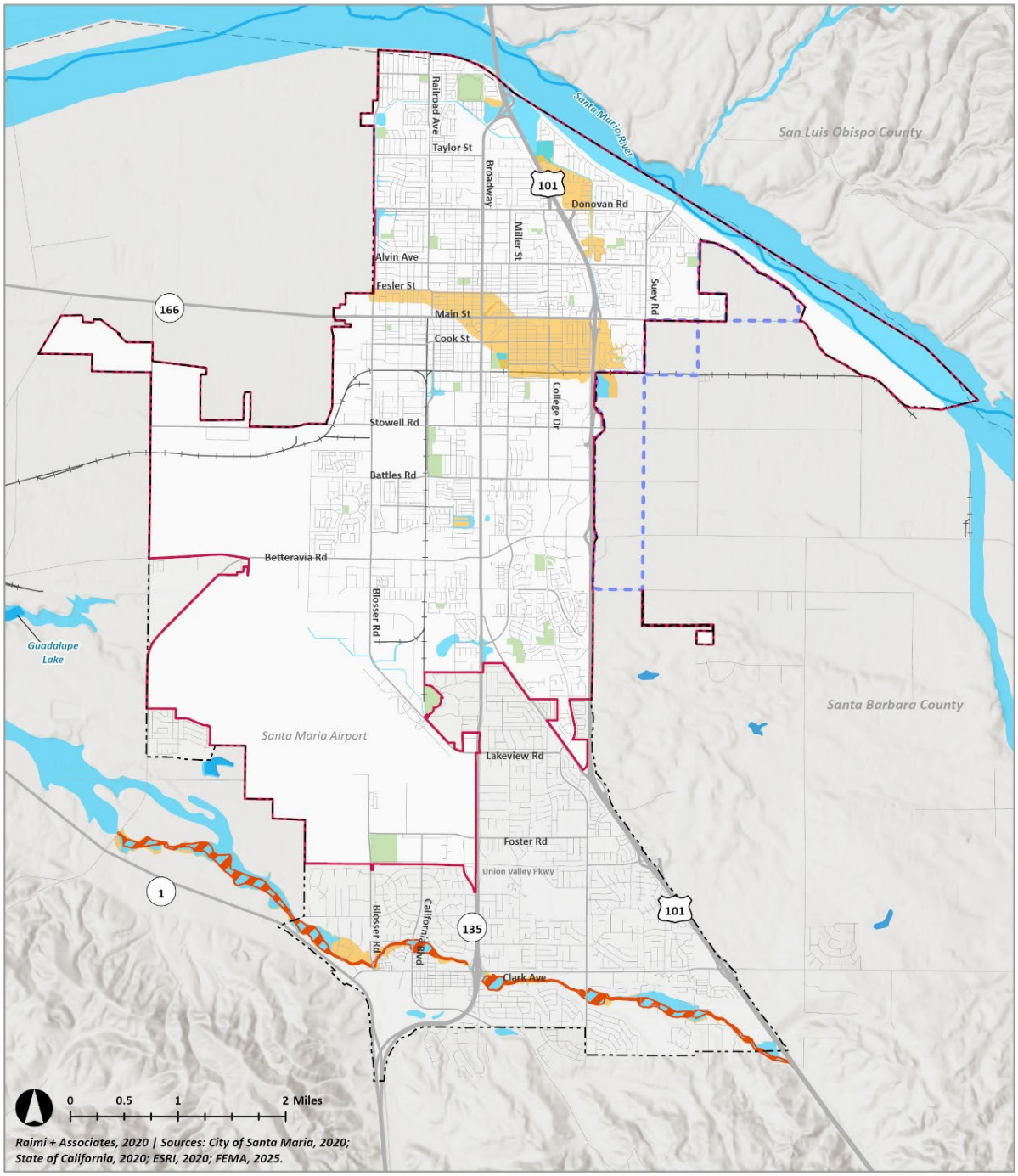
Clean Water Act

The federal Clean Water Act, enacted by Congress in 1972 and amended several times since, is the primary federal law regulating water quality in the United States and forms the basis for several State and local laws throughout the country. The Clean Water Act established the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States. The Clean Water Act gave the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) the authority to implement federal pollution control programs, such as setting water quality standards for contaminants in surface water, establishing wastewater and effluent discharge limits for various industry contaminants in surface water, establishing wastewater and effluent discharge limits for various industry categories, and imposing requirements for controlling nonpoint-source pollution. At the federal level, the Clean Water Act is administered by the USEPA and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). At the state and regional levels in California, the Clean Water Act is enforced by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs).

Clean Water Act Section 303(d)

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to identify water bodies that do not meet water quality objectives and are not supporting their beneficial uses. Each state must submit an updated biennial list, called the 303(d) list, to the USEPA. In addition to identifying the water bodies that are not supporting beneficial uses, the list also identifies the pollutant or stressor causing impairment and establishes a priority for developing a control plan to address the impairment. If a water body is designated as "impaired," then a TMDL is developed and identified for the affected water body. A TMDL establishes the maximum daily amount of a pollutant allowed in an identified water body and is used as a planning tool in addressing water quality impairments and improving water quality.

Figure 4.5-1 Flood Hazards in Santa Maria



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
- Parks

Flood Hazard Zones

- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- Regulatory Floodway

Clean Water Act Section 401

Under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, the RWQCBs have regulatory authority over actions in waters of the United States and/or the State of California through the issuance of water quality certifications, which are issued in conjunction with any federal permit (e.g., permits issued by the USACE under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, described below). Section 401 of the Clean Water Act provides the SWRCB and the RWQCBs with the regulatory authority to waive, certify, or deny any proposed activity that could result in a discharge to surface waters of the State. To waive or certify an activity, these agencies must find that the proposed discharge would comply with State water quality standards, including those protecting beneficial uses and water quality. If these agencies deny the proposed activity, the federal permit cannot be issued. This water quality certification is generally required for projects involving the discharge of dredge or fill material to wetlands or other bodies.

Clean Water Act Section 402

Section 402 of the Clean Water Act establishes the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations for stormwater and other pollutant discharges. Section 402 prohibits discharge of pollutants to waters of the United States unless they are regulated by an NPDES permit. Stormwater discharges are regulated under a variety of NPDES permits, including municipal, agricultural, industrial, construction, and low-threat discharge permits.

In 1987, Congress amended the Clean Water Act to require the implementation of a two-phased program to address stormwater discharges. Phase I of the NPDES program, promulgated by the USEPA in November 1990, requires NPDES permits for stormwater discharges from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s)[2] serving populations of 100,000 or greater, construction sites disturbing greater than five acres of land, and 10 categories of industrial activities.

The USEPA recognized that smaller construction projects (disturbing less than five acres) and small MS4s (serving populations smaller than 100,000) were also contributing substantially to pollutant discharges nationwide. Therefore, in order to further improve stormwater quality, the USEPA promulgated the NPDES Phase II program in January 2000, which requires NPDES permits for stormwater discharges from regulated small MS4s and for construction sites disturbing between one and five acres of land.

In California, the NPDES program is administered by SWRCB through the nine RWQCBs. Further discussion of the NPDES program and permits in California relevant to the project are provided in discussion of state and local regulations, below.

Clean Water Act Section 404

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, proposed discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States require USACE authorization. Waters of the United States generally include tidal waters, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams (including intermittent streams), and wetlands (with the exception of isolated wetlands).

[2] An MS4 is a conveyance or system of conveyances designed or used to collect or convey stormwater (e.g., storm drains, pipes, ditches) that are owned by a state, city, town, or other public entity.

National Flood Insurance Program

The National Flood Insurance Program is a program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide subsidized flood insurance for property owners in communities. The National Flood Insurance Program established regulations that limit development in flood-prone areas. The boundaries of flood-prone areas are delineated on FEMA's Flood Insurance Rates Maps, which provide flood information and identify the flood hazard in the community. In certain high-risk areas, federally regulated or insured lenders require property owners to have flood insurance before issuing a mortgage.

b. State Regulations

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1970

The federal Clean Water Act places the primary responsibility for the control of water pollution and planning the development and use of water resources with the states, although it does establish certain guidelines for the states to follow in developing their programs. California's primary statute governing water quality and water pollution is the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1970 (Porter-Cologne Act). The Porter-Cologne Act grants the SWRCB and the nine RWQCBs broad powers to protect water quality and is the primary vehicle for the implementation of California's responsibility under the federal Clean Water Act. The Porter-Cologne Act grants the SWRCB and RWQCBs the authority and responsibility to adopt plans and policies, to regulate discharges to surface water and groundwater, to regulate waste disposal sites, and to require cleanup of discharges of hazardous materials and other pollutants. The Porter-Cologne Act also establishes reporting requirements for unintended discharges of any hazardous substance, sewage, oil, or petroleum product. Each RWQCB must formulate and adopt a water quality control plan for its region. The regional plans are to conform to the policies set forth in the Porter-Cologne Act and established by the SWRCB in its State water policy. The Porter-Cologne Act also provides that a RWQCB may include in its region a regional plan with water discharge prohibitions applicable to particular conditions, areas, or types of waste. The City is within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Central Coast RWQCB (Region 3).

Phase II Municipal Storm Water Permit

The Municipal Storm Water Permitting Program regulates storm water discharges from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s). The NPDES MS4 permits in California are issued in two phases by the SWRCB and RWQCBs. Phase I MS4 permits are issued by the RWQCBs to medium (i.e., serving between 100,000 and 250,000 people) and large (i.e., serving more than 250,000 people) municipalities. Most of these permits are issued to a group of co-permittees encompassing an entire metropolitan area. The Phase II MS4 Permit is issued by the SWRCB and is applicable to smaller municipalities (i.e., populations of less than 100,000 people) and nontraditional small MS4s (e.g., military bases, public campuses, and prison and hospital complexes). The Phase II MS4 Permit (*Waste Discharge Requirements [WDRs] for Storm Water Discharges from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems [MS4s] General Permit],* Order No. 2013-0001-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000004) became effective on July 1, 2013 and covers Phase II permittees statewide, including the City of Santa Maria. The Phase I and Phase II MS4 Permits require the permittees to develop a storm water management program and individual dischargers to develop and implement Storm Water Management Plans (SWMP) to manage discharges to municipal storm drain systems.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014 is a comprehensive three-bill package that California Governor Jerry Brown signed into State law in September 2014. The SGMA provides a framework for sustainable management of groundwater supplies by local authorities, with a limited role for State intervention if necessary to protect the resource. The plan is intended to ensure a reliable groundwater supply for California for years to come. The SGMA requires governments and water agencies of high- and medium-priority basins to halt overdrafts of groundwater basins. The Santa Maria River Valley Basin is classified as a very low prioritization basin by the California department of Water Resources (DWR 2025). Because of this, and because the Basin is adjudicated as discussed previously, this basin is not subject to SGMA.

General Construction Activity Stormwater Permit

The *General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities*, Order No. 2022-0057-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000002 (Construction General Permit), adopted by the SWRCB, regulates construction activity that includes clearing, grading, and excavation resulting in soil disturbance of at least one acre of total land area. The Construction General Permit authorizes the discharge of stormwater to surface waters from construction activities. The Construction General Permit requires that all developers of land where construction activities will occur over more than one acre do the following:

- Complete a Risk Assessment to determine pollution prevention requirements pursuant to the three risk levels established in the Construction General Permit;
- Eliminate or reduce non-stormwater discharges to storm sewer systems and other waters of the United States;
- Develop and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that specifies Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will reduce pollution in stormwater discharges to the Best Available Technology/Economically Achievable/Best Conventional Pollutant Control Technology standards;
- Perform inspections and maintenance of all BMPs; and
- Conduct stormwater sampling, if required based on risk level.

To obtain coverage in accordance with the Construction General Permit, a project applicant must electronically file all permit registration documents with the SWRCB prior to the start of construction. Permit registration documents must include:

- Notice of Intent, including Risk Level determination;
- Site Drawings and Maps;
- SWPPP;
- Applicable plans, calculations, and other supporting documentation for compliance with existing permitted Phase I or Phase II municipal separate storm sewer system post-construction requirements or the post-construction standards of the Construction General Permit;
- Annual fee per the current 23 California Code of Regulations Chapter 9 fee schedule for NPDES stormwater permits; and
- All applicable additional Permit Registration Document information.

Typical BMPs included in in SWPPPs are designed to minimize erosion during construction, stabilize construction areas, control sediment, and control pollutants from construction materials.

Industrial General Permit

The Industrial General Permit is a regulatory framework issued by SWRCB under the NPDES program. The Industrial General Permit applies to various types of industrial facilities in California identified within the SWRCB's *List of Potentially Regulated Standard Industrial Classification Codes*. These facilities include manufacturing plants, commercial printing, air courier services, refuse systems, and others, which have the potential to discharge stormwater runoff into water bodies. To comply with the Industrial General Permit, the operators of these regulated industrial facilities must implement a SWPPP that outlines measures and BMPs the operator of an industrial facility must implement to prevent stormwater pollution. Operators of facilities regulated by the Industrial General Permit are also required to conduct stormwater monitoring of pollutants including, but not limited to, sediment, metals, oils, and total suspended solids. In addition, the Industrial General Permit requires industrial discharge to comply with TMDL implementation requirements for impaired water bodies.

California Toxics Rule

In May 2000, the USEPA promulgated the California Toxics Rule, which established numeric water quality criteria for toxic pollutants for waters in California. The California Toxics Rule provides water quality criteria for certain potentially toxic compounds for inland surface waters, enclosed bays, estuaries, and waters designated for human health or aquatic life uses. The California Toxics Rule is often used by the RWQCBs when establishing water quality objectives and TMDLs. Although the California Toxics Rule criteria do not apply directly to discharges of stormwater runoff, they are utilized as benchmarks for toxics in urban runoff and to evaluate the potential ecological impacts of stormwater runoff to receiving waters.

Antidegradation Policy

The State Antidegradation Policy (Resolution No. 68-16) was adopted by SWRCB in 1968 to protect surface water and groundwater from degradation. The Antidegradation Policy applies to the disposal of waste to high-quality surface water and groundwater. The Antidegradation Policy requires the water quality of these water bodies be maintained unless SWRCB finds the change will be consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state, will not unreasonably affect present and anticipated beneficial uses of the waters, and will not result in water quality less than that prescribed in policies regulating water quality. The Antidegradation Policy also requires the best practicable treatment or control of discharges to high-quality waters to assure pollution or nuisance will not occur and the highest possible water quality will be maintained.

c. Local Regulations

Water Quality Control Plan

The Central Coast RWQCB has adopted the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin* (the Basin Plan), which delineates water resource area boundaries based on hydrological features. For the purposes of achieving and maintaining water quality protection, specific beneficial uses have been identified for each of the surface waters and groundwater management zones described in the Basin Plan. Once beneficial uses are designated, appropriate water quality objectives are established, and

programs that maintain or enhance water quality are implemented to ensure the protection of beneficial uses.

The Basin Plan also established implementation programs to achieve water quality objectives to protect beneficial uses and require monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs. These objectives must comply with the State antidegradation policy (SWRCB Resolution No. 68-16), which is designed to maintain high-quality waters while allowing some flexibility if beneficial uses are not unreasonably affected.

Groundwater Sustainability Plan

SGMA requires that GSAs prepare Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) for high and medium priority basins. As discussed above, the Santa Maria River Valley Basin is a very low priority basin (DWR 2025). Because of this, and because the Basin is adjudicated as discussed previously, a groundwater sustainability plan has not been prepared for this basin.

Low Threat Discharge Permit

The Central Coast RWQCB has a general permit for discharges that pose a low threat to water quality (*Waste Discharge Requirements National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Discharges with Limited Threat to Water Quality;* Order No. R3-2022-0035, NPDES No. CAG99304). The permit's provisions cover discharges that contain minimal amounts of pollutants and pose little or no threat to water quality and the environment, including discharges of highly treated groundwater generated during aquifer pumping tests, dual-phase extraction or other remedial pilot tests, excavation dewatering, and pumping to contain groundwater plumes.

Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Post-Construction Stormwater Management Requirements

The Central Coast RWQCB adopted the *Post-Construction Stormwater Management Requirements for Development Projects in the Central Coast Region* (Resolution R3-2013-0032) in July 2013, which outlines runoff reduction and treatment requirements. Specifically, Resolution R3-2013-0032 outlines post-construction requirements for development projects in the Central Coast Region. The post-construction requirements mandate that development projects use Low Impact Development (LID) to detain, retain, and treat runoff. LID incorporates and conserves on-site natural features, together with constructed hydrologic controls to more closely mimic pre-development hydrology and watershed processes.

Santa Maria Municipal Code

The Santa Maria Municipal Code includes Chapter 8-12A Stormwater Runoff Pollution Prevention which regulates stormwater discharge throughout the city. These requirements include the control of the volume, rate, and potential pollutant load of water runoff from new development and redevelopment projects. Additionally, this section requires any person engaged in activities or operations, or owning facilities or property which will, or may, result in pollutants entering storm water, to implement BMPs to reduce the discharge of pollutants through operational activities such as use of chemicals, pressure washing, and car washing. Chapter 8-12A also includes requirements for construction activities to implement BMPs to reduce the release of pollutants and erosion during and immediately following construction activities. In addition to regulating stormwater discharge, Chapter 8-12A of the Santa Maria Municipal Code incorporates the Central Coast RWQBB *Post*

Construction Stormwater Requirements for Development Projects in the Central Coast Region (Resolution R3-2013-0032). Chapter 9-68 Flood Damage Prevention includes regulations to reduce flood losses associated with development in floodplains.

4.5.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

The impact analysis is based on an assessment of baseline conditions compared to land use changes and development that would be facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. This analysis identifies potential impacts related to hydrology and water quality resulting from construction, operation, and maintenance activities of future development that could occur under the plan. Potential impacts to hydrology and water quality are evaluated based on the adherence to local, State, and federal standards and implementation of BMPs for control of surface runoff and reduction of pollutants in stormwater runoff.

Significance Thresholds

CEQA Guidelines Appendix G provides the following significance thresholds to determine if a project would have a potentially significant impact on hydrology and water quality. For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the plan may have a significant adverse impact if it would:

1. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality;
2. Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin;
3. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:
    i. Result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;
    ii. Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;
    iii. Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or
    iv. impede or redirect flood flows;
4. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation; and/or
5. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Impact HYD-1 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD RESULT IN CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES WHICH MAY CONTRIBUTE TO SOIL EROSION AND DEGRADED WATER QUALITY. DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE PLAN WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO EXISTING NPDES PERMITS AND MUNICIPAL CODE REQUIREMENTS WHICH WOULD MINIMIZE THE POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT TO DEGRADE WATER QUALITY. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Construction

Future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in construction activities which may contribute to soil erosion and degraded water quality. Construction activities that would disturb one or more acres of land are subject to the NPDES Construction General Permit, which requires the development of a SWPPP developed by a certified Qualified SWPPP Developer. The SWPPP would include project-specific BMPs to control erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants from construction into stormwater. Typical BMPs include, but are not limited to, installation of silt fences, erosion control blankets, anti-tracking pads at site exits to prevent off-site transport of soil materials, and good-housekeeping BMPs to prevent leaks and spills. Additionally, all projects would be required to comply with the following policies included in the Safety and Public Facilities and Services Elements:

> **Policy S-3.2 Agricultural runoff reduction.** Work with the County of Santa Barbara to reduce off-site and urban flooding caused by agricultural runoff.
>
> **Policy S-3.3 Low impact design.** Require new development and redevelopment projects to incorporate low -impact design measures for stormwater management, such as bioswales, permeable pavement, and onsite detention ponds.
>
> **Policy S-3.4 Stormwater drainage system.** Maintain and upgrade the City's stormwater drainage system to increase the system's capacity and reduce flooding.
>
> **Policy PFS-3.1 Conveyance of surface drainage**. Convey surface drainage safely through the use of retardation basins, storm drains, recharge basins, and other infrastructure.

These policies would regulate surface drainage on individual project sites and reduce runoff during construction of future development. Additionally, future development would be subject to the Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapter 8-12A which further regulates stormwater discharge. Compliance with these regulations and policies would minimize potential impacts to water quality during construction. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Operation

Operation of future development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the provisions of California's Phase II MS4 Permit (for residential and commercial projects) and the Industrial General Permit (for industrial projects). Compliance with these permits would ensure that the amount of polluted stormwater runoff released from development facilitated by the plan would be minimized. This would reduce water quality impacts associated with future development.

As discussed in the Regulatory Setting section above, Chapter 8-12A of the Santa Maria Municipal Code requires the control of the volume, rate, and potential pollutant load of water runoff from new development and redevelopment projects. Additionally, this section requires any person engaged in activities or operations, or owning facilities or property which will, or may, result in pollutants entering storm water, to implement BMPs to reduce the discharge of pollutants through operational activities such as use of chemicals, pressure washing, and car washing. Implementation of these required BMPs would reduce the operational impact of development on surface or groundwater quality. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required because this impact would be less than significant.

Threshold 2:	Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

Impact HYD-2 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF IMPERVIOUS SURFACE AREA AND INCREASE GROUNDWATER DEMAND IN SANTA MARIA. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CENTRAL COAST RWQCB, MUNICIPAL CODE, AND 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE POLICIES WOULD ENSURE THE PROPOSED PLAN WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY DECREASE GROUNDWATER SUPPLIES OR INTERFERE SUBSTANTIALLY WITH GROUNDWATER RECHARGE. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Development facilitated by the plan would incrementally increase the amount of impervious surface area overlying the Santa Maria River Valley Basin within Santa Maria which could reduce the potential for groundwater recharge from surface water infiltration. As discussed in Impact HYD-1, compliance with the City's Municipal Code, as well as the Central Coast RWQCB post-construction requirements for stormwater management would reduce polluted stormwater runoff for new development and redevelopment projects within Santa Maria. The reduction of stormwater runoff can be achieved by increasing on site filtration through bio retention areas would also reduce the amount of impervious surface on the project site and therefore preserve groundwater recharge on site through pervious surfaces.

Development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with proposed general plan policy S-3.3, listed above under Impact HYD-1, which would require low impact design, including permeable pavement, to be incorporated into new development. This would also further reduce the amount of impervious surface on site thereby preserving groundwater recharge through pervious surfaces.

Furthermore, as discussed in the setting section above, the Santa Maria River Valley Basin is adjudicated. This means that the Santa Maria Valley Management Area has water rights to a set amount of groundwater from the Basin. Development facilitated by the plan would not utilize water that exceeds this allocation and therefore would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required because this impact would be less than significant.

Threshold 3:	Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would: i) Result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site; ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site; iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or iv) impede or redirect flood flows.

Impact HYD-3 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD POTENTIALLY ALTER THE EXISTING DRAINAGE PATTERN ON INDIVIDUAL PROJECT SITES THROUGHOUT THE CITY. DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO EXISTING NPDES PERMIT AND MUNICIPAL CODE REQUIREMENTS WHICH WOULD ENSURE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY ALTER EXISTING DRAINAGE PATTERNS. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Construction

Construction facilitated by the plan would alter the existing drainage patterns of individual project sites which has the potential to cause erosion and flooding, exceed stormwater drainage capacity, provide additional sources of polluted runoff, or alter flood flows. As described in Impact HYD-1, projects subject to the NPDES Construction General Permit would be required to prepare a SWPPP which includes project-specific BMPs to control erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants from construction into stormwater.

There are small areas within Santa Maria that would be rezoned under the plan that are within a flood zone, as shown in Figure 4.5-1. Section 9-68.104 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code includes methods of reducing flood losses including the protection of land uses vulnerable to floods from flood damage during construction, controlling the alteration of natural floodplains, and controlling filling, dredging, and other development activities which could increase flood damage. Compliance with these regulations in addition to the existing stormwater runoff regulations described in HYD-1 would reduce the risk of construction activities significantly impeding or redirecting flood flows. Overall, impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

Runoff during operation of development facilitated by the plan would be regulated under the Phase II MS4 Permit and the Industrial General Permit. Projects that create or replace greater than or equal to 2,500 square feet of impervious surface must implement post-construction BMPs and submit a Stormwater Control Plan listing applicable BMPs to the City for review and approval. Pursuant to the Santa Maria Municipal Code, post construction requirements for all non-industrial projects must comply with the RWQCB Central Coast Region Resolution No. R3-2013-0032. Industrial projects must comply with the Industrial General Permit. Compliance with existing regulations would ensure development facilitated by the plan would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of a site or area such that substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site, exceedance of the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems, or provision of additional sources of polluted runoff would occur.

As discussed above, there are small areas within Santa Maria that would be rezoned under the proposed project that are within a flood zone, as shown in Figure 4.5-1. Future subdivision projects facilitated by the plan would be required to adhere to Section 11-5.07 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code which requires proper drainage of the site including the development of drainage easements for flood control channels, conduits, or laterals inside or abutting the subdivision. Compliance with these regulations in addition to the existing stormwater runoff regulations described in Impact HYD-1 would reduce the risk of construction activities significantly impeding or redirecting flood flows. Overall, impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required because this impact would be less than significant.

Threshold 4:	In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the project risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

Impact HYD-4 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE MAY OCCUR IN FLOOD HAZARD AREAS. COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE MUNICIPAL CODE REQUIREMENTS AND PROPOSED SAFETY ELEMENT POLICIES WOULD ENSURE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN AREAS SUBJECT TO INUNDATION WOULD BE SITED, DESIGNED, AND CONSTRUCTED AS TO NOT EXACERBATE RISKS FROM RELEASE OF POLLUTANTS FROM INUNDATION. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Santa Maria is approximately 11.4 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. According to the California Department of Conservation, no part of the city is within a tsunami hazard zone (DOC 2025). The city is approximately three miles from Guadalupe Lake. Due to the distance and intervening topography, the city is not at risk of being inundated due to a seiche. Additionally, the city is not within the dam inundation area for Lopez Reservoir or Twitchell Reservoir (California Division of Safety of Dams [DSOD] 2025). As shown in Figure 4.5-1 portions of Santa Maria are within a 100-year or 500-year floodplain. Future development facilitated by the plan in a flood hazard zone would not risk pollutant release due to inundation since the city is not within a dam inundation hazard area. The California Building Code provides guidelines for development within flood hazard areas, including requirements that new development be elevated above the base flood elevations. Section 9-68.104 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code includes methods of reducing flood losses including the protection of land uses vulnerable to floods from flood damage during construction, controlling the alteration of natural floodplains, and controlling filling, dredging, and other development activities which could increase flood damage.

In addition to existing Municipal Code requirements, future development would be required to be consistent with the following proposed general plan policies included in the Safety Element

Policy S-3.1 Santa Maria River Levee development buffer. Require new development and sites undergoing redevelopment to provide a non-development buffer of 60 feet, measured from the toe of the Santa Maria River Levee, to provide access to the Santa Maria River levee for maintenance and repairs.

Policy S-3.5 NFIP participation. Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Policy S-3.6 Dam and levee inundation safety. Coordinate with the Santa Barbara County Flood Control District (SBCFCD) and other local and state agencies as required to remain current with dam and levee safety protocols.

Compliance with these policies would reduce flood damage to future development within the floodplain. With adherence to the Santa Maria Municipal Code requirements and General Plan Safety Element policies discussed above, development facilitated by the plan would not risk the release of pollutants due to inundation. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required because this impact would be less than significant.

Significance After Mitigation

Less Than Significant without Mitigation

Threshold 5:	Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Impact HYD-5 THERE IS NO SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THE SANTA MARIA VALLEY GROUNDWATER BASIN; HOWEVER, DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD BE SUBJECT TO THE BASIN PLAN. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE PLAN WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE BASIN PLAN AS IT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL REGULATIONS TO MINIMIZE WATER QUALITY IMPACTS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE BASIN PLAN. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The California Department of Water Resources has designated the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin as a very low priority basin (DWR 2025). As such there is no sustainable groundwater management plan prepared for this basin. Therefore, the plan would not conflict with a sustainable groundwater management plan.

Santa Maria is in the jurisdiction of the RWQCB Central Coast Region. The RWQCB Central Coast Region's Basin Plan functions as the master water quality control planning document for the region. The Basin Plan includes implementation programs to achieve water quality objectives (RWQCB 2019). As a result, construction of future development facilitated by the plan would be required to implement State and local regulatory requirements, including the provisions of the Construction General Permit, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code. Operations of future development facilitated by the plan would comply with the MS4 Permit, the Industrial General Permit, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code requirements for post-construction stormwater control. These regulatory requirements support the goal of the Basin Plan to minimize adverse impacts to water quality. Therefore, the plan would not conflict with or obstruct the implementation of a water quality control plan. This impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required because this impact would be less than significant.

Significance After Mitigation

Less Than Significant without Mitigation

4.5.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City Limits and annexation areas. The analysis in this section examines impacts of the plan on hydrology and water quality throughout the Santa Maria Watershed and the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin. Cumulative development would gradually increase development and population growth and would therefore increase the potential for impacts to hydrology and water quality, including increased stormwater runoff, erosion, pollutant discharge to waterbodies, increased risk of release of pollutants from inundation, increased demand for groundwater supplies, and decreased groundwater infiltration capacity. Impacts to hydrology and water quality that may be additive in nature, and thus cumulative. Potential cumulative impacts include violation of water quality standards, interference with groundwater recharge, increased erosion, increased non-point source pollution, and increased runoff. Cumulative development would increase erosion and sedimentation resulting from grading and construction, as well as changes in drainage patterns which could degrade surface and ground water quality. In addition, new development would increase the generation of urban pollutants that may adversely affect water quality in the long term.

All new development in the City and annexation areas would be required to comply with applicable water quality regulations. Compliance with these existing requirements would require implementation of BMPs to reduce impacts associated with stormwater and pollutant discharge during construction and operation of projects and reduce adverse changes to hydrology water quality. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to water quality and drainage patterns would be less than significant.

New development throughout the cumulative impact area would increase impervious surfaces and reduce groundwater recharge, but compliance with applicable policies related to impervious surfaces, such as the Central Coast RWQCB post-construction requirements for stormwater management, would reduce the amount of impervious surfaces and preserve groundwater recharge. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to groundwater recharge would be less than significant.

Cumulative development overlying the Santa Maria River Valley Basin would increase the amount of impervious surfaces and could combine with the effects of the development within Santa Maria to potentially reduce groundwater recharge to the basin. However, cumulative development relying on groundwater as a source of water supply would not combine with increased development within Santa Maria to decrease available water supplies in the Santa Maria River Valley Basin because the groundwater basin is adjudicated and the City has a set allotment of groundwater supplies. As a result, cumulative development could not legally utilize excess groundwater beyond the adjudicated allotment, and potential cumulative impacts to groundwater recharge and storage would be less than significant.

Compliance with applicable laws and regulations, such as the California Building Code and Section 9-68.104 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code would regulate development in flood prone areas and minimize the potential for release of pollutants from inundation. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to risk of release of pollutants would be less than significant.

The Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin does not have a sustainable groundwater management plan. However, cumulative development would be subject to compliance with the Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin. Cumulative development would be required to comply with the MS4 Permit, the Industrial General Permit, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code. These regulatory requirements support the goal of the Basin Plan to minimize adverse impacts to water quality. Therefore, cumulative impacts would be less than significant with compliance with these regulations.

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4.6 Noise

This section describes the existing conditions related to noise and vibration in the plan area, as well as the regulatory framework. This section also evaluates the possible impacts related to noise and vibration that could result from implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. Information included in this section is based on the policies from the plan, the Noise Element of the City's currently adopted General Plan (Santa Maria 2002), Environmental Background Report (Santa Maria 2020) and the Santa Maria Municipal Code (Santa Maria 2024), as well as transportation volume data produced by GHD in June 2025.

4.6.1 Setting

a. Fundamentals of Noise

Sound is a vibratory disturbance created by a moving or vibrating source, which is capable of being detected by the hearing organs. Noise is defined as sound that is loud, unpleasant, unexpected, or undesired and may therefore be classified as a more specific group of sounds. The effects of noise on people can include general annoyance, interference with speech communication, sleep disturbance, and, in the extreme, hearing impairment (Caltrans 2013). Noise levels are commonly measured in decibels (dB) using the A-weighted sound pressure level (dBA). The A-weighting scale is an adjustment to the actual sound pressure levels so that they are consistent with the human hearing response, which is most sensitive to frequencies around 4,000 Hertz and less sensitive to frequencies around and below 100 Hertz. Decibels are measured on a logarithmic scale that quantifies sound intensity in a manner similar to the Richter scale used to measure earthquake magnitudes. A doubling of the energy of a noise source, such as doubling of roadway vehicle volume, would increase the noise level by 3 dBA; reducing the energy in half would result in a 3 dBA decrease (Crocker 2007). Table 4.6-1 shows some representative noise sources and their corresponding noise levels in dBA.

Table 4.6-1 Typical A-Weighted Noise Levels

Indoor Noise Source	Noise Level (dBA)	Outdoor Noise Sources
(Threshold of Hearing in Laboratory)	0	–
Library	30	Quiet Rural Nighttime
Refrigerator Humming	40	Quiet Suburban Nighttime
Quiet Office	50	Quiet Urban Daytime
Normal Conversation at 3 feet	60	Normal Conversation at 3 feet
Vacuum Cleaner at 10 feet	70	Gas Lawn Mower at 100 feet
Hair Dryer at 1 foot	80	Freight Train at 50 feet
Food Blender at 3 feet	90	Heavy-duty Truck at 50 feet
Inside Subway Train (New York)	100	Jet Takeoff at 2,000 feet
Smoke Detector Alarm at 3 feet	110	Unmuffled Motorcycle
Rock Band near stage	120	Chainsaw at 3 feet
–	130	Military Jet Takeoff at 50 feet
–	140	(Threshold of Pain)

Source: Data compiled by Rincon in 2022.

Human perception of noise has no simple correlation with sound energy: the perception of sound is not linear in terms of dBA or in terms of sound energy. When combined, two sources do not "sound twice as loud" as one source. It is widely accepted that the average healthy ear can barely perceive changes of 3 dBA, increase or decrease (i.e., twice the sound energy), that a change of 5 dBA is readily perceptible, and that an increase (or decrease) of 10 dBA sounds twice (half) as loud (Caltrans 2013).

Sound changes in both level and frequency spectrum as it travels from the source to the receiver. The most obvious change is the decrease in sound level as the distance from the source increases. The manner by which noise declines with distance depends on factors such as the type of sources (e.g., point or line), the path the sound travels, site conditions, and obstructions. Noise levels from a point source (e.g., construction, industrial machinery, ventilation units) typically attenuate, or drop off, at a rate of 6 dBA per doubling of distance. Noise from a line source (e.g., roadway, pipeline, railroad) typically attenuates at about 3 dBA per doubling of distance (Caltrans 2013). The propagation of noise is also affected by the intervening ground, known as ground absorption. A hard site, such as a parking lot or smooth body of water, receives no additional ground attenuation and the changes in noise levels with distance (drop-off rate) result simply from the geometric spreading of the source. An additional ground attenuation value of 1.5 dBA per doubling of distance applies to a soft site (e.g., soft dirt, grass, or scattered bushes and trees) (Caltrans 2013).

Noise levels may also be reduced by intervening structures. The amount of attenuation provided by this "shielding" depends on the size of the object and the frequencies of the noise levels. Natural terrain features, such as hills and dense woods, and man-made features, such as buildings and walls, can alter noise levels. Generally, any large structure blocking the line of sight will provide at least a 5 dBA reduction in source noise levels at the receiver.

Noise Descriptors

The impact of noise is not a function of loudness alone. The time of day when noise occurs, its frequency, and the duration of the noise are also important. In addition, most noise that lasts for more than a few seconds is variable in its intensity. Consequently, a variety of noise descriptors have been developed.

One of the most frequently used noise metrics that considers both duration and intensity is the equivalent noise level (L_{eq}). The L_{eq} is defined as the single steady A-weighted level that is equivalent to the same amount of energy as that contained in the actual fluctuating levels over a period of time. Typically, L_{eq} is equivalent to a 1-hour period, even when measured for shorter durations, as the noise level of a 10- to 30-minute period would be the same as the hour if the noise source is relatively steady. L_{max} is the highest root mean square (RMS) sound pressure level within the sampling period, and L_{min} is the lowest RMS sound pressure level within the measuring period. Normal conversational levels at three feet are in the 60- to 65-dBA L_{eq} range and ambient noise levels greater than 65 dBA L_{eq} can interrupt conversations (Federal Transit Administration 2018).

Noise that occurs at night tends to be more disturbing than that which occurs during the day. Community noise is usually measured using Day-Night Average Level (L_{dn} or DNL), which is a 24-hour average noise level with a +10 dBA penalty for noise occurring during nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) hours, or Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL), which is the 24-hour average noise level with a +5 dBA penalty for noise occurring from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and a +10 dBA penalty for noise occurring from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. (Caltrans 2013). Noise levels described by DNL and CNEL usually differ by about 0.5 dBA and are, therefore, generally considered to be interchangeable.

Table 4.6-2 briefly defines measurement descriptors and other sound terminology used in this section.

Table 4.6-2 Sound Terminology

Term	Definition
Sound	A vibratory disturbance created by a vibrating object which, when transmitted by pressure waves through a medium such as air, can be detected by a receiving mechanism such as the human ear or a microphone.
Noise	Sound that is loud, unpleasant, unexpected, or otherwise undesirable.
Ambient Noise	The composite of noise from all sources near and far in a given environment.
Decibel (dB)	A unitless measure of sound on a logarithmic scale, which represents the squared ratio of sound-pressure amplitude to a reference sound pressure. The reference pressure is 20 micropascals, representing the threshold of human hearing (0 dB).
A-Weighted Decibel (dBA)	An overall frequency-weighted sound level that approximates the frequency response of the human ear.
Equivalent Noise Level (L_{eq})	The average sound energy occurring over a specified time period. In effect, L_{eq} is the steady-state sound level that in a stated period would contain the same acoustical energy as the time-varying sound that actually occurs during the same period.
Ambient Noise	The composite of noise from all sources near and far in a given environment.
Maximum and Minimum Noise Levels (L_{max} and L_{min})	The maximum or minimum instantaneous sound level measured during a measurement period.
Day-Night Level (DNL or L_{dn})	The energy average of the A-weighted sound levels occurring during a 24-hour period, with 10 dB added to the A-weighted sound levels occurring between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. (nighttime).
Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL)	The energy average of the A-weighted sound levels occurring during a 24-hour period, with 5 dB added to the A-weighted sound levels occurring between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. and 10 dB added to the A-weighted sound levels occurring between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Source: Data compiled by Rincon in 2022.

b. Overview of Groundborne Vibration

In environmental analysis, groundborne vibration of concern consists of the oscillatory waves that move from a source through the ground to adjacent structures. The number of cycles per second of oscillation comprises the vibration frequency, described in terms of hertz. The frequency of a vibrating object describes how rapidly it oscillates. Typically, groundborne vibration generated by human activities attenuates rapidly with distance from the source of the vibration.

While people have varying sensitivities to vibrations at different frequencies, in general they are most sensitive to low-frequency vibration. Vibration in buildings, such as from nearby construction activities, may cause windows, items on shelves, and pictures on walls to rattle. Vibration of building components can also take the form of an audible low-frequency rumbling noise, referred to as groundborne noise. Groundborne noise is usually only a problem when the originating vibration spectrum is dominated by frequencies in the upper end of the range (60 to 200 hertz), or when foundations or utilities, such as sewer and water pipes, physically connect the structure and the vibration source (FTA 2018). Although groundborne vibration is sometimes noticeable in outdoor environments, it is almost never annoying to people who are outdoors. The primary concern from vibration is that it can be intrusive and annoying to building occupants and vibration-sensitive land uses.

Vibration energy spreads out as it travels through the ground, causing the vibration level to diminish with distance away from the source. High-frequency vibrations diminish much more rapidly than low frequencies, so low frequencies tend to dominate the spectrum at large distances from the source. Discontinuities in the soil strata can also cause diffractions or channeling effects that affect the propagation of vibration over long distances (Caltrans 2020). When a building is impacted by vibration, a ground-to-foundation coupling loss will usually reduce the overall vibration level. However, under rare circumstances, the ground-to-foundation coupling may amplify the vibration level due to structural resonances of the floors and walls.

Vibration amplitudes are usually expressed in peak particle velocity (PPV). The PPV is normally described in inches per second (in/sec). PPV is defined as the maximum instantaneous positive or negative peak of a vibration signal. PPV is often used in monitoring of blasting vibration and other construction activity because it is related to the stresses that are experienced by buildings (Caltrans 2020).

c. Sensitive Receptors

The current Santa Maria General Plan Noise Element identifies noise-sensitive land uses as residential areas (including single-family, duplex, multiple-family, and mobile home), motels/hotels, schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, and places of worship (City of Santa Maria 2009), shown in Figure 4.6-1. Note, the figure is intended to support City decision-making and should not be read as representing precise, site-specific conditions or all existing noise sensitive land uses.

Vibration-sensitive receivers, which are similar to noise-sensitive receivers, include residences and institutional uses, such as schools, churches, and hospitals. However, vibration-sensitive receivers also include buildings where vibrations may interfere with vibration-sensitive equipment that is affected by vibration levels that may be well below those associated with human annoyance (e.g., recording studies or medical facilities with sensitive equipment).

d. Existing Noise Environment

Aviation

Airport noise associated with Santa Maria Airport operations is an additional noise source in the plan area. The Santa Maria Airport is located in the southern portion of the plan area, with flightpaths from the airport's runway being located in the plan area. Aircraft following these flightpaths would not generate substantial noise over the plan area. As shown in Figure 4.6-2, the airport 60-65 dBA CNEL noise contours adopted by the Santa Barbara County Airport Land Use Commission extend primarily over areas of the plan area that are primarily agriculture or open space.

The annual air show takes place over a few days in the fall exposes the area to higher-than-typical noise. In addition, military aircraft occasionally utilize the Santa Maria Airport for training. These temporary events do not have their own noise contours, as they are not considered part of the regular use of the Santa Maria Airport.

Roadways

The City's primary source of noise is traffic-related from on-road vehicles and trucks. Vehicular noise has three main component sources: engine/ transmission noise, exhaust noise, and tire noise. US-101, SR-135 (Orcutt Expressway/Broadway), SR-166 (Main Street) and Betteravia Road are some of

the main roadways of concern related to noise because they carry high traffic volumes. Since the US-101 travels through Santa Maria in the central portions of the City, it produces traffic noise that affects much of the area within the City. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) model RD-77-108 predicts noise levels through a series of adjustments to a reference sound level. These adjustments account for distances from the roadway, roadway vehicle volumes, vehicle speeds, car/truck mix, number of lanes, and road width. Table 4.6-3 provides existing roadway vehicle noise along roadways in the plan area. Figure 4.6-3 shows the existing 60, 65, and 70 dBA CNEL noise contours from roadways and highways in the plan area.

Table 4.6-3 provides existing roadway vehicle noise levels a distance of 50 feet from roadway segments in the plan area. Roadway vehicle noise impacts are analyzed based on average daily trip (ADT) roadway volume for existing conditions provided by GHD (GHD 2025), as well as data regarding speeds and number of lanes. Traffic noise modeling data are contained in Appendix C.

Table 4.6-3 Existing Traffic Noise Levels Along Roadway Segments

Roadway	Segment	Existing ADT	Existing Traffic Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)
US 101	N. of Clark Ave	45,500	81.8
US 101	S. of Clark Ave	35,800	80.8
US 101	N. of Santa Maria Wy Junction	57,000	82.9
US 101	S. of Santa Maria Wy Junction	59,000	82.8
US 101	N. of Betteravia Rd	68,000	83.7
US 101	S. of Betteravia Rd	57,000	82.9
US 101	N. of Stowell Rd	74,000	84.1
US 101	S. of Stowell Rd	68,000	83.7
US 101	N. of SR 166 (Main St)	70,000	83.8
US 101	S. of SR 166 (Main St)	74,000	84.1
US 101	N. of SR 135 (Broadway)	82,090	85.2
US 101	S. of SR 135 (Broadway)	67,000	84.3
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	N. of Clark Ave	29,500	74.4
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	S. of Clark Ave	20,100	72.7
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	N. of Foster Rd	37,000	75.4
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	S. of Foster Rd	24,600	73.6
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	N. of Lakeview Rd	32,000	74.7
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	N. of Miller St	43,000	76.0
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	S. of Miller St	37,500	75.4
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	N. of Santa Maria Way	41,000	75.8
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	S. of Santa Maria Way	44,500	76.2
Broadway (SR 135)	N. of Betteravia Rd	47,000	75.3
Broadway (SR 135)	S. of Betteravia Rd	47,500	76.0
Broadway (SR 135)	N. of Stowell Rd	40,500	72.6
Broadway (SR 135)	S. of Stowell Rd	44,500	72.8
Broadway (SR 135)	N. of Main St	28,500	71.4
Broadway (SR 135)	S. of Main St	26,500	70.6
Broadway (SR 135)	N. of Donovan Rd	27,000	71.1
Broadway (SR 135)	S. of Donovan Rd	27,500	71.2

Roadway	Segment	Existing ADT	Existing Traffic Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)
Broadway (SR 135)	W. of US 101	23,900	73.8
Main St (SR 166)	W. of Blosser Rd	14,200	70.7
Main St (SR 166)	E. of Blosser Rd	15,900	71.2
Main St (SR 166)	E. of Suey Rd	6,400	66.4
Main St (SR 166)	W. of Suey Rd	8,700	67.7
Main St (SR 166)	US 101 SB-Off Ramp	29,500	72.8
Main St (SR 166)	E. of Broadway (SR 135)	26,500	73.7
Main St (SR 166)	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	18,800	71.5
A St	S. of Betteravia Dr	3,450	58.7
A St	S. of Sonya Ln	3,650	64.2
Alvin Ave	W. of Railroad Ave	8,510	65.6
Alvin Ave	W. of College Dr	7,700	65.1
Alvin Ave	E. of Bradley Rd	6,670	64.5
Alvin Ave	W. of Suey Rd	3,440	61.6
Battles Rd	E. of Blosser Rd	10,740	67.1
Battles Rd	W. of Blosser Rd	9,320	63.6
Battles Rd	W. of Bradley Rd	7,670	68.0
Battles Rd	E. of Broadway (SR 135)	13,220	65.1
Battles Rd	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	11,650	64.6
Bay Ave	b/w Donovan Rd and Harding Ave	3,490	59.2
Betteravia Dr	E. of A St	14,630	71.5
Betteravia Dr	E. of Skyway Dr	15,390	71.7
Betteravia Dr	E. of Bradley Dr	38,460	75.9
Betteravia Dr	W. of College Dr	34,170	75.4
Betteravia Dr	W. of Depot St	20,620	72.9
Betteravia Dr	E. of Broadway (SR 135)	30,350	75.1
Blosser Rd	S. of Foster Rd	2,220	59.6
Blosser Rd	S. of Stowell Rd	24,120	72.5
Blosser Rd	b/w Boone St and Cook St	23,530	71.3
Blosser Rd	S. of Main St (SR 166)	24,960	70.0
Blosser Rd	S. of Alvin Ave	14,140	69.0
Blosser Rd	S. of Donovan Rd	15,200	69.4
Blosser Rd	N. of Taylor St	5,120	65.7
Blosser Rd	S. of Taylor St	7,970	67.7
Blosser Rd	N. of Canal St	2,700	62.9
Bradley Rd	S. of Cottage Ln	1,000	56.8
Bradley Rd	S. of Bello Rd	4,960	63.7
Bradley Rd	S. of Betteravia Dr	22,740	70.3
Bradley Rd	N. of Battles Rd	16,420	71.3
Bradley Rd	S. of Battles Rd	10,760	69.5
Bradley Rd	N. of Stowell Rd	14,860	67.0
Bradley Rd	b/w SR 101 SB-On Ramp and Cypress St (one-way)	3,750	62.4

Roadway	Segment	Existing ADT	Existing Traffic Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)
Bradley Rd	E. of College Dr	3,950	59.7
Bull Canyon Rd	N. of Panther Dr	260	50.8
California Blvd	S. of Foster Rd	1,460	58.3
Camino Colegio	E. of Miller St	1,280	54.8
Camino Colegio	W. of Miller St	1,400	55.2
Canal St	E. of Blosser Rd	1,140	54.6
Carlotti Dr	b/w Noble Wy and Paden St	5,490	64.0
Carlotti Dr	b/w Stanford Dr and Murray Dr	3,700	62.3
Carmen Ln	W. of Thornburg St	5,440	60.9
Carmen Ln	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	7,580	62.4
Centennial St	b/w Mt Whitney Wy and Panther Dr	1,480	55.5
Cesar E Chavez Dr	S. of Hidden Pines Wy	3,390	59.1
College Dr	E. of Santa Maria Wy	9,730	62.2
College Dr	N. of McCoy Ln (Roundabout)	11,240	66.9
College Dr	S. of McCoy Ln (Roundabout)	8,230	65.6
College Dr	S. of Sunrise Dr	10,960	62.7
College Dr	N. of Betteravia Dr	9,300	67.3
College Dr	S. of Betteravia Dr	10,840	66.8
College Dr	N. of Battles Rd	10,760	62.6
College Dr	N. of Stowell Rd	12,310	66.1
College Dr	N. of Boone St/Jones St	9,610	64.9
College Dr	S. of Boone St/Jones St	9,930	65.0
College Dr	N. of Main (SR 166)	8,620	64.5
College Dr	N. of Alvin Ave	5,820	62.8
College Dr	S. of Donovan Rd	8,020	64.2
Concepcion Ave	N. of Jones St	970	53.6
Cook St	W. of Depot St	6,190	64.6
Cook St	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	8,870	64.9
Cook St	E. of Broadway (SR 135)	8,990	64.9
Cook St	b/w Miller St and School St	3,150	60.2
Cook St	b/w East Ave and College Dr	2,190	58.7
Crossroad Ln	W. of Bradley Rd	4,800	63.4
Depot St	N. of Carmen Ln	4,500	63.3
Depot St	N. of Battles Rd	10,450	69.3
Depot St	N. of Stowell Rd	9,560	65.2
Depot St	N. of Main (SR 166)	8,940	64.8
Depot St	S. of Cook St	8,280	64.4
Donovan Rd	W. of Railroad Ave	11,580	66.9
Donovan Rd	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	17,390	69.5
Donovan Rd	E. of Broadway (SR 135)	16,580	69.7
Donovan Rd	W. of College Dr	19,010	70.3
Donovan Rd	E. of College Dr	23,900	71.3

Roadway	Segment	Existing ADT	Existing Traffic Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)
Donovan Rd	W. of Carlotti Dr	23,040	71.1
Donovan Rd	W. of Suey Rd	7,530	64.5
Enos Dr	E. of College Dr	2,850	58.3
Fairway Dr	E. of A St	2,700	62.2
Fairway Dr	E. of Skyway Dr	3,490	63.5
Farrell Dr	N. of Jones St	2,740	58.1
Fesler St	E. of Broadway (SR 135)	5,640	64.3
Fesler St	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	6,880	65.1
Fesler St	b/w Benwiley Ave and Railroad Ave	3,800	61.1
Foster Rd	W. of Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	4,190	62.9
Foxenwood Ln	S. of Foster Rd	810	52.9
Grant St	b/w Broadway (SR 135) and River Ranch Dr	5,230	61.0
Hidden Pines Wy	W. of Preisker Ln	7,950	65.5
Industrial Pkwy	E. of Skyway Dr	1,870	60.4
La Brea Ave	W. of Blosser Rd	1,910	59.4
Lynne Dr	b/w Lee Dr and Donovan Rd	5,670	61.3
Jones St	E. of Farrell Dr	7,990	66.9
Jones St	W. of Bradley Rd	4,400	64.3
McClelland St	S. of Cook St	3,330	59.0
McCoy Ln	E. of A St	2,880	58.4
McCoy Ln	E. of Skyway Dr	11,850	69.9
McCoy Ln	E. of Broadway (SR 135)	12,760	67.8
McCoy Ln	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	14,960	70.9
McCoy Ln	E. of College Dr (roundabout)	5,330	64.0
McCoy Ln	W. of College Dr (roundabout)	6,380	64.8
Miller St	N. of Battles Rd	14,540	68.7
Miller St	N. of Stowell Rd	13,420	64.1
Miller St	S. of Main (SR 166)	14,770	67.5
Miller St	S. of Alvin Ave	8,520	65.0
Miller St	b/w Lee Dr and Donovan Rd	4,160	59.0
Miller St	S. of Donovan Rd	5,840	63.5
Miller St	E. of Santa Maria Wy	11,120	67.5
Miller St	S. of Betteravia Dr	13,990	68.5
Morrison Ave	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	5,140	62.4
Morrison Ave	W. of Depot St	5,500	62.7
Palisade Dr	S. of Main (SR 166)	7,440	62.5
Panther Dr	S. of Suey Crossing Rd	4,810	59.2
Preisker Ln	N. of Broadway (SR 135)	10,880	66.4
Professional Pkwy	N. of McCoy Ln	2,760	58.2
Railroad Ave	N. of Fesler Ave	8,750	65.6
Railroad Ave	b/w Donovan Rd and Harding Ave	9,980	66.1
Railroad Ave	N. of Taylor St	6,160	61.2

Roadway	Segment	Existing ADT	Existing Traffic Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)
Railroad Ave	S. of Taylor St	7,780	65.1
Santa Maria Wy	S. of Miller Wy	10,470	67.0
Santa Maria Wy	S. of Dauphin St	10,420	69.4
Shepard Dr	N. of Battles Rd	1,900	56.6
Sierra Madre Ave	W. of Bradley Rd	1,350	57.9
Skyway Dr	S. of Industrial Pkwy	15,740	71.2
Skyway Dr	W. of Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	17,350	71.6
Skyway Dr	N. of Fairway Dr	16,540	71.4
Skyway Dr	S. of Fairway Dr	15,260	68.6
Skyway Dr	N. of Betteravia Dr	20,010	72.2
Skyway Dr	S. of Betteravia Dr	19,530	72.1
Sonya Ln	E. of A St	360	49.3
Southside Pkwy	E. of Centerpoint Pkwy	1,400	55.2
Southside Pkwy	W. of Bradley Rd (Roundabout)	4,940	60.7
Stowell Rd	W. of Bradley Rd	20,220	69.4
Stowell Rd	W. of Depot St	14,020	69.5
Stowell Rd	W. of Blosser Rd	9,510	69.3
Stowell Rd	W. of Hanson Wy	8,020	70.2
Suey Rd	N. of Jones St	5,300	65.0
Suey Rd	N. of Main (SR 166)	7,590	66.5
Suey Rd	N. of Alvin Ave	4,850	64.7
Sunrise Dr	W. of College Dr	2,440	57.6
Sunrise Dr	E. of Santa Maria Wy	2,910	58.4
Taylor St	W. of Railroad Ave	5,740	63.0
Taylor St	W. of Broadway (SR 135)	10,930	65.8
Thornburg St	N. of Betteravia Dr	6,150	62.7
Thornburg St	N. of Carmen Ln	3,710	61.8
Thornburg St	S. of Battles Rd	3,590	61.7
Union Valley Parkway	W. of Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	5,990	66.0
Union Valley Parkway	E. of Blosser Rd	1,630	60.7
Western Ave	N. of Stowell Rd	8,330	62.5
Western Ave	N. of Main (SR 166)	4,290	59.6
Western Ave	S. of Main (SR 166)	4,390	59.7
Westgate Rd	S. of Battles Rd	3,590	62.2
Westgate Rd	N. of Carmen Ln	1,640	58.8

ADT = average daily traffic; dBA = decibel using A-weighted sound pressure level; CNEL = Community Noise Equivalent Level

Source: Data provided by GHD in 2025.

Figure 4.6-1 Noise-Sensitive Land Uses/Receptors in Santa Maria

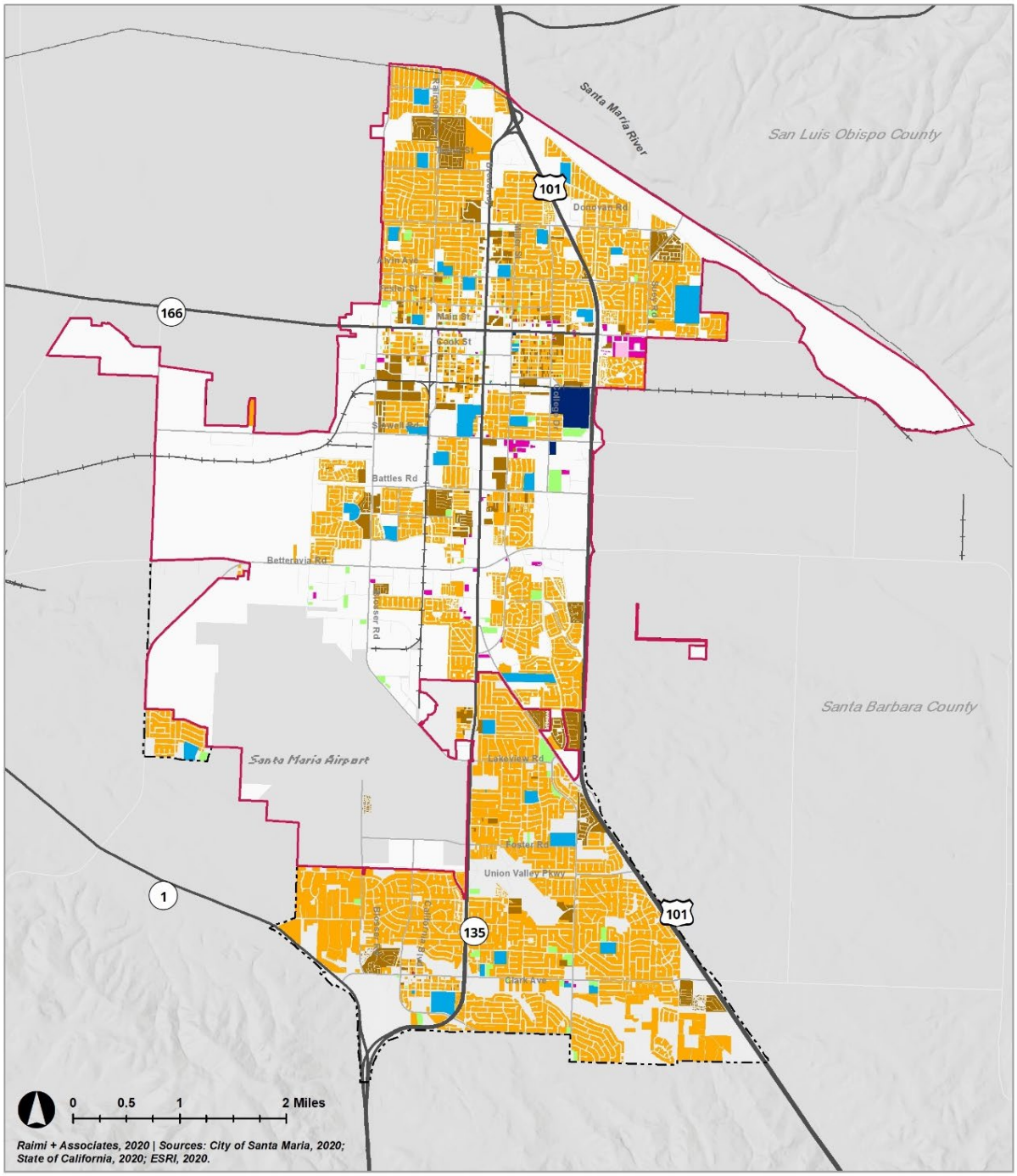


Figure 4.6-2 Santa Maria Airport Noise Contours

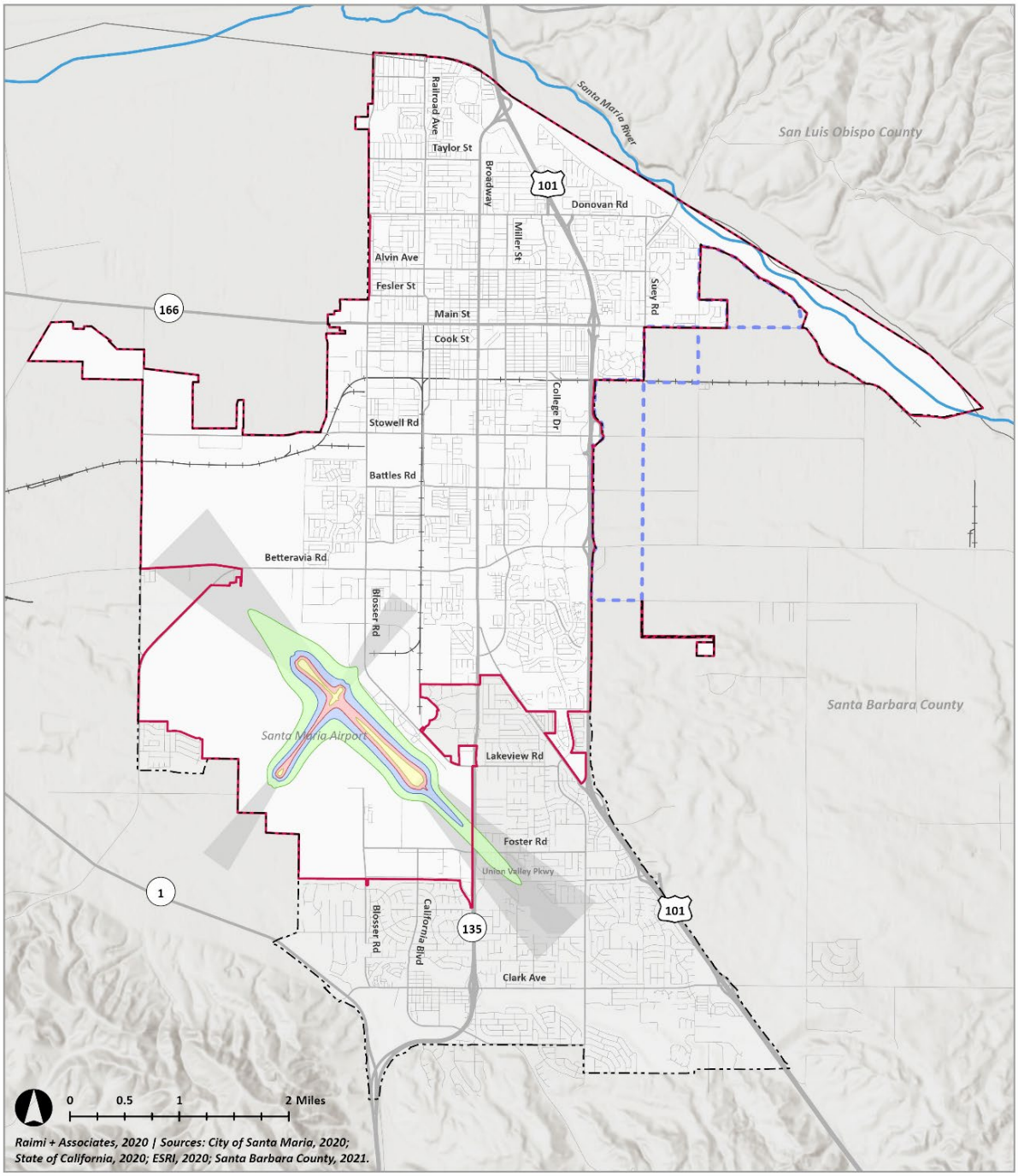
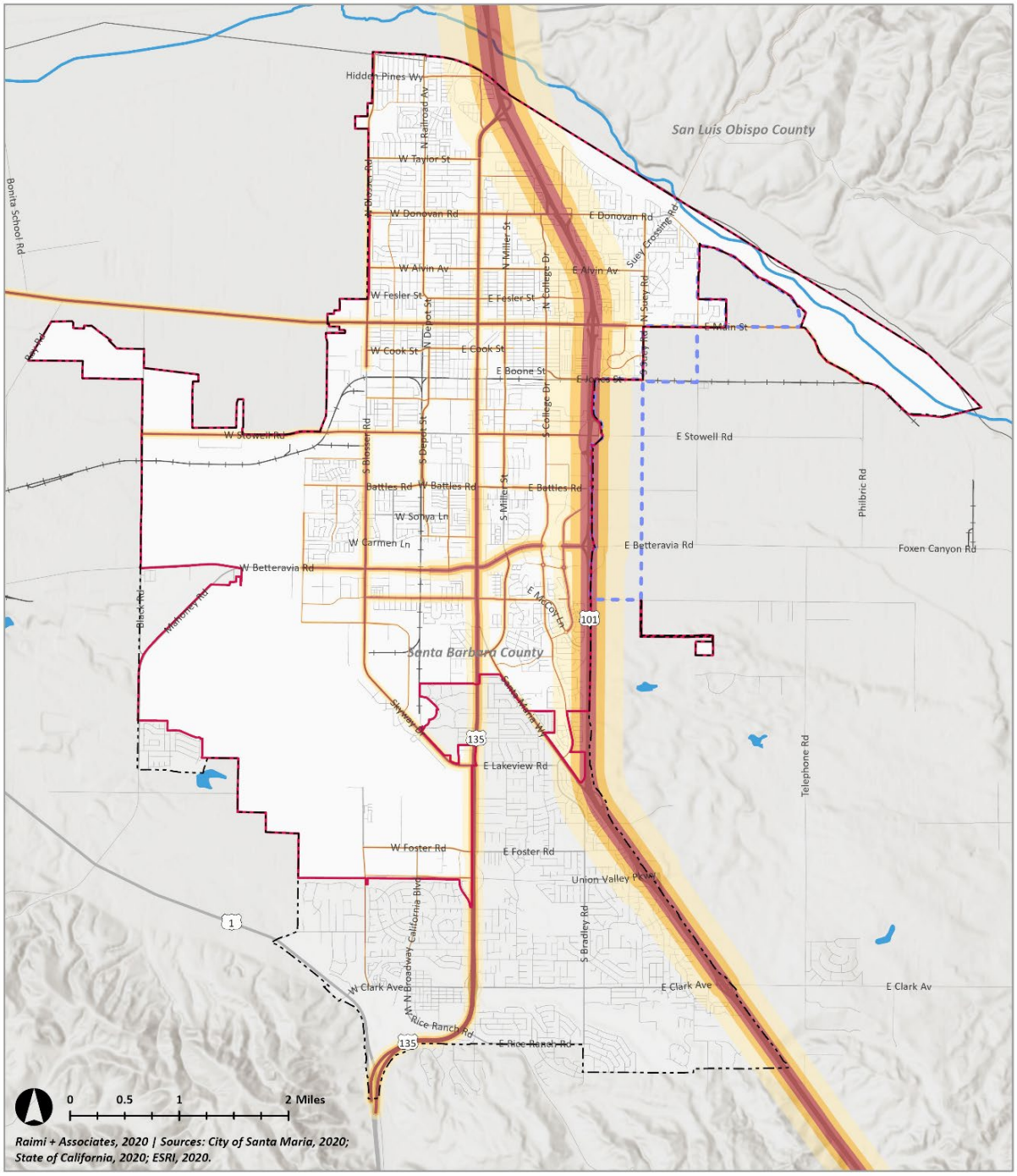


Figure 4.6-3 Existing Traffic Noise Contours



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

Existing Noise Contours (CNEL)

- 60 dBA
- 65 dBA
- 70 dBA

4.6.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

Federal noise standards established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are applicable to residential projects that receive funding from HUD. These standards are presented in 24 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 51. New construction proposed in high noise areas (exceeding 65 dBA L_{dn}) must incorporate noise attenuation features to maintain acceptable interior noise levels. A goal of 45 dBA L_{dn} is set forth for interior noise levels and attenuation requirements are geared toward achieving that goal. It is assumed that with standard construction, any building will provide sufficient attenuation to achieve an interior level of 45 dBA L_{dn} or less if the exterior level is 65 dBA L_{dn} or less. Approvals in a "normally unacceptable noise zone" (exceeding 65 dBA, but not exceeding 75 dBA) require a minimum of 5 dBA of additional noise attenuation for buildings having noise sensitive uses (e.g., residences) if the day-night average is greater than 65 dBA, but does not exceed 70 dBA, or a minimum of 10 dBA of additional noise attenuation if the day-night average is greater than 70 dBA, but does not exceed 75 dBA.

There are additional federal regulations that influence the audible landscape, especially for projects where federal funding is involved. For example, the FHWA requires abatement of highway traffic noise for highway projects through rules in the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR Part 772), the FTA, and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Each agency recommends thorough noise and vibration assessments through comprehensive guidelines for any highway, mass transit, or high-speed railroad projects that would pass by residential areas.

b. State Regulations

California Government Code Section 65302 encourages each local government entity to implement a noise element as part of its general plan. In addition, the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has developed guidelines for preparing noise elements, which include recommendations for evaluating the compatibility of various land uses as a function of community noise exposure.

California Building Code

California Code of Regulations Title 24, Building Standards Administrative Code, Part 2, Chapter 12, and the California Building Code codify the State noise insulation standards. These noise standards apply to new construction in California to control interior noise levels as they are affected by exterior noise sources and interior noise sources from separate areas. The regulations specify that interior noise levels shall not exceed 45 dBA CNEL/L_{dn} in any habitable room, as well as specifying sound transmission class requirements for walls, floors, and ceilings around sleeping units.

California Green Building Code

California Green Building Standards Code 2022 (CALGreen) Section 5.507.4, Acoustical Control, regulates construction of non-residential uses within the 65 dBA CNEL/L_{dn} contour of an airport, freeway, expressway, railroad, industrial noise source, or other fixed source. According to Section 5.507.4.1-2 “buildings exposed to a noise level of 65 dBA L_{eq}(1-hr) during any hour of operation shall employ sound-resistant assemblies as determined by a prescriptive method or performance method.”

Projects may demonstrate compliance through the prescriptive method if wall and roof-ceiling assemblies exposed to the noise source meet a composite sound transmission class rating of at least 50 or a composite outdoor/indoor transmission class rating of no less than 40, with exterior windows of a minimum sound transmission class of 40 or outdoor/indoor transmission class of 30. Projects may demonstrate compliance through the performance method if wall and roof-ceiling assemblies exposed to the noise source are constructed to provide an interior noise environment that does not exceed 50 dBA L_{eq}(1-hr) in occupied areas during hours of operations.

c. Local Regulations

Santa Maria General Plan Noise Element

The current Noise Element of the Santa Maria General Plan has established the following exterior noise standards, shown in Table 4.6-4

Table 4.6-4 City of Santa Maria Interior and Exterior Noise Standards

		Standard (dBA CNEL)	
Land Use Category	**Uses**	**Interior**	**Exterior**
Residential	Single Family, Duplex, Multiple Family, Mobile Home	45	60
Noise-Sensitive Land Uses	Motel, Hospital, School, Nursing Home, Church, Library, and Other	45	60
Commercial	Retail, Restaurant, Professional Offices	55	65
Industrial	Manufacturing, Utilities, Warehousing, Agriculture	65	70
Open Space	Passive Outdoor Recreation	–	65

Source: City of Santa Maria General Plan Noise Element, Table N-4

Santa Maria Municipal Code

Chapter 5-5 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code establishes certain policies to control unnecessary, excessive, and annoying noise in the city in the interest of public health and welfare. Municipal Code Section 5-5.04(a) states that a violation of the Noise Ordinance exists when the noise level exceeds the ambient noise level or the ambient base noise level, whichever is higher, as follows:

- By any amount for 30 minutes for any given hour, measured cumulatively;
- By five dBA for 15 minutes for any given hour;
- By 10 dBA for five minutes for any given hour;
- By 20 dBA at any time.

Table 4.6-5 shows the ambient base noise levels for residential, commercial, and industrial zones.

Table 4.6-5 Range of Intensities – Ambient Base Noise Level (dBA L_{eq})

Zones	Daytime (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.)	Nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.)
Residential	55	45
Commercial	65	60
Industrial	75	70

dBA = A-weighted decibel; L_{eq} = equivalent sound level

Source: Municipal Code Section 5-5.05, 2024.

Municipal Code Section 5-5.06(e) states that construction noise generated outside the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday or outside the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays (unless otherwise allowed by permit issued by the Noise Control Officer) is considered nuisance noise.

Municipal Code Section 5-5.09 requires the acquisition of a construction noise permit from the Noise Control Officer for exterior construction work conducted within a residential zone or within 500 feet of a residential zone only if such activities exceed the noise standards set forth in Municipal Code Sections 5-5.03 and 5-5.05. The permit would cover short-term or occasional, non-routine operations.

Municipal Code Section 12-7.14(a) allows outdoor living areas in R-2 and R-3 multifamily zones to exceed typical noise standards up to "Normally Unacceptable" levels (75 dB or more), provided residents receive a notice warning that the area regularly experiences elevated urban noise from sources such as traffic, trains, aircraft, industry, and general activity.

Municipal Code Section 12-49.09(c) prohibits vibration above the perception threshold of an individual at or beyond the property boundary of the source for more than three minutes in any one hour of the day between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. and for more than 30 seconds in any one hour between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

4.6.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Construction Noise

Construction noise that could result from future development facilitated by the plan is estimated based on reference noise levels published by the FTA.

Groundborne Vibration

Future development facilitated by the plan would not include substantial vibration sources associated with operation such as railroads and subways. Construction activities have the greatest potential to generate groundborne vibration affecting nearby noise-sensitive receptors. Groundborne vibration levels that could occur due to future development facilitated by the plan are estimated based on reference vibration levels published by the FTA.

Operational Stationary Noise

Stationary noise sources (i.e., on-site operational noise) for future development facilitated by the plan were analyzed in context of typical mechanical equipment on commercial, industrial, residential, and mixed-use development such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units.

Traffic Noise

Roadway vehicle noise levels for the plan were estimated using the FHWA roadway vehicle noise prediction model RD-77-108 methodology. Roadway vehicle noise impacts are analyzed based on ADT roadway volume for existing conditions and the amount of growth expected from future

development facilitated by the plan, as well as data regarding speeds and number of lanes. The FHWA model predicts noise levels through a series of adjustments to a reference sound level. These adjustments account for distances from the roadway, roadway vehicle volumes, vehicle speeds, car/truck mix, number of lanes, and road width.

This analysis utilizes the ADT volumes and trip distribution data produced by GHD for the plan area.

Significance Thresholds

The City of Santa Maria utilizes the following 2025 *CEQA Guidelines* Appendix G significance criteria questions related to Noise.

1. A substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies;
2. The generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels;
3. For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, the exposure of people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels.

Construction Noise

Although the Municipal Code has established hours of construction in Section 5-5.06(e) and requirements for the acquisition of construction noise permits in Section 5-5.09, the City of Santa Maria has not adopted a quantitative threshold for evaluating environmental impacts of construction noise. Therefore, this analysis relies on criteria established by FTA for assessing construction noise impacts based on the potential for adverse community reaction in its *Transit and Noise Vibration Impact Assessment Manual* (FTA 2018). For noise-sensitive receptors such as residential and school uses, the daytime noise threshold is 80 dBA L_{eq} for an 8-hour period.

Groundborne Vibration

The City has not adopted a significance threshold to assess groundborne vibration impacts during construction and operation. Therefore, FTA criteria are used to evaluate potential groundborne vibration impacts related to potential building damage from construction (FTA 2018). Construction vibration impacts from development would be significant if vibration levels exceed the FTA criteria shown in Table 4.6-6

Table 4.6-6 Vibration-Related Building Damage Thresholds

Building Category	PPV (in/sec)
I. Reinforced-concrete, steel or timber (no plaster)	0.5
II. Engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster)	0.3
III. Non-engineered timber and masonry buildings	0.2
IV. Buildings extremely susceptible to vibration damage	0.12

PPV = peak particle velocity

in/sec = inches per second

L_v = root mean square velocity in decibels (VdB) re 1 micro-inch/second

Source: FTA 2018

Operational Stationary Noise

The City has adopted noise standards in the Municipal Code that regulate operational stationary noise sources in the City. Operational noise would result in a significant impact if it exceeds the ambient base noise levels established for residential/noise-sensitive uses as shown in Table 4.6-5.

Traffic Noise

Although the City of Santa Maria does not have specific noise level criteria for assessing traffic noise impacts, a project is typically assumed to have a significant impact on the environment related to traffic noise if it would substantially increase the ambient noise levels for adjoining areas. The following thresholds of significance are similar to those recommended by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) (FICON 2020), which use criteria based on transportation noise increases and are commonly applied to roadway traffic noise analyses under CEQA. A significant impact would occur if traffic noise increases the existing noise environment by the following:

- Greater than 1.5 dBA CNEL increase for ambient noise environments of 65 dBA CNEL and higher
- Greater than 3 dBA CNEL increase for ambient noise environments of 60-64 dBA CNEL
- Greater than 5 dBA CNEL increase for ambient noise environments of less than 60 dBA CNEL

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project result in a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

Impact NOI-1 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD RESULT IN CONSTRUCTION NOISE THAT MAY IMPACT NEARBY NOISE-SENSITIVE LAND USES. THE PLAN WOULD INTRODUCE NEW NOISE SOURCES AND CONTRIBUTE TO AN INCREASE IN LONG-TERM OPERATIONAL NOISE LEVELS WITHIN THE CITY LIMIT AS WELL AS THE ANNEXATION AREA. IMPLEMENTATION OF REQUIRED NOISE-REDUCTION MITIGATION, AS WELL AS POLICIES AND ACTIONS IN THE PLAN, WOULD MINIMIZE DISTURBANCE TO NOISE-SENSITIVE LAND USES. HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO FEASIBLE MITIGATION MEASURES THAT WOULD AVOID OR FULLY MITIGATE FOR THE INCREASE IN CONSTRUCTION AND TRAFFIC NOISE IN THE PLAN AREA. AS A RESULT, THIS WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT.

Construction

Noise from future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would temporarily increase noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive receptors. Construction activities would generate noise from phases such as demolition, site preparation, grading, building construction, and paving activities. Each phase of construction has a specific equipment mix and associated noise characteristics, depending on the equipment used during that phase. Construction noise would typically be higher during the more equipment-intensive phases of initial construction (i.e., demolition, site preparation, and grading work) and would be lower during the later construction phases (i.e., building construction and paving). Since project-level details are not currently available for future projects that would be carried out under the plan, it is not possible to determine exact noise levels, locations, or time periods for construction of such projects, or construction noise at adjacent properties. However, Table 4.6-7 illustrates typical noise levels associated with construction equipment at a distance of 50 feet and 100 feet from construction noise sources.

Table 4.6-7 Typical Noise Levels for Construction Equipment

Equipment	Estimated Noise Levels at Nearest Sensitive Receptors (dBA L_{eq})	
	50 feet	100 feet
Air Compressor	80	74
Backhoe	80	74
Concrete Mixer	85	79
Dozer	85	79
Grader	85	79
Jack Hammer	88	82
Loader	80	74
Paver	85	79
Pile-drive (Impact)	101	95
Pile-driver (Sonic)	95	89
Roller	85	79
Saw	76	70
Scarified	83	77
Scraper	85	79
Truck	84	78

Source: Federal Transit Administration (FTA). 2018. *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment*. November.

Noise would typically drop off at a rate of about 6 dBA per doubling of distance. Therefore, noise levels would be about 6 dBA lower than shown in Table 4.6-7 at 200 feet from the noise source and 12 dBA lower at a distance of 400 feet from the noise source. The construction noise levels shown in Table 4.6-7 may exceed the daytime noise threshold for noise-sensitive receptors of 80 dBA L_{eq} for an 8-hour period, depending on the equipment used and the distance in which the equipment is operating compared to noise-sensitive receptors.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policy and actions intended to reduce the exposure of noise-sensitive receptors to temporary and construction noise:

> **Policy N-3.1: Construction noise mitigation.** Limit construction noise in residential areas to reduce noise impacts, especially in the early morning, late evening, weekends, and during holidays.
>
> > **Action N-3.11:** Develop criteria to clearly define conditions of approval for nighttime construction activities that will balance project requirements and minimize community disturbance and update the Noise Ordinance accordingly to establish approval criteria and thresholds for determining the need for additional noise attenuation strategies.
> >
> > **Action N-3.12:** Revise the Noise Ordinance to require appropriate noise attenuation strategies for any approved nighttime construction to minimize disturbance to the greatest extent feasible.
> >
> > **Action N-3.13:** Update the Noise Ordinance to require the use of mufflers on construction equipment and maintain physical separation of machinery maintenance areas from nearby residential areas.

Implementation of Policy N-3.1 and Actions N-3.11, N-3.12, and N-3.13, would reduce construction noise impacts associated with future development facilitated by the plan. However, as details of future construction activities are unknown at this time, construction noise could still exceed the daytime significance threshold or require activity during the more sensitive nighttime hours (e.g., concrete pours or pumps that need to run overnight for water resources projects). Consequently, construction noise impacts may exceed the daytime noise threshold for noise-sensitive receptors of 80 dBA Leq for an 8-hour period in many cases. Therefore, this impact would be potentially significant and Mitigation Measure NOI-1 would be required. It should be noted that the identification of this program-level impact does not preclude the finding of less-than-significant construction noise impacts for subsequent projects analyzed at the project level.

Operation

STATIONARY OPERATIONAL NOISE

Stationary operational sources of noise from future development facilitated by the plan are expected to include air conditioning units, loading dock activities, outdoor restaurant dining and music activities, and parking lot vehicle movements. Special noise generators such as music (live or otherwise), sound amplification devices, and tenant-specific noise sources would require a site-specific noise analysis prior to building permit approval.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policy and actions intended to minimize potential adverse noise-related impacts from stationary sources.

> **Policy N-1.4: Stationary Noise Sources.** Ensure outdoor machinery, appliances, and other noise-generating devices are located away from noise-sensitive uses and mitigated to reduce exposure to intrusive noise.
>
> > **Action N-1.4.1:** Update the Municipal Code to require mixed-use and commercial development applicants to locate noise-generating components such as loading areas, mechanical equipment, and other similar facilities as far from residential units as possible.
> >
> > **Action N-1.4.2:** Update the Municipal Code to establish a threshold for requiring additional noise buffering of machinery to reduce intrusive noise from new development. Such buffering may include, but is not limited to, acoustic paneling, sound-absorbing materials, and enclosures.

Implementation of these policies and actions would ensure that noise from new development is analyzed and avoided or mitigated to acceptable levels prior to approval of projects with the potential to generate noise from stationary sources, such as operational use of residential-scale air conditioning units, loading dock activities, outdoor restaurant dining and music activities, parking lot vehicle movements, and commercial and industrial equipment. Additionally, this would apply to special noise generators such as music (live or otherwise), sound amplification devices, and tenant-specific noise sources. Therefore, the plan's stationary operational noise impact would be less than significant.

MOBILE OPERATIONAL NOISE

Future development facilitated by the plan would allow additional development to occur within the city limit as well as in the annexation area, which would generate new vehicle trips that may increase the exposure of land uses along roadways to traffic noise. Figure 4.6-4 shows the 60, 65, and 70 dBA CNEL noise contours from roadways and highways for future (year 2050) roadway

vehicle scenarios. The complete distances (shown in feet) to the 60, 65, and 70 dBA CNEL noise contours from the center of each roadway segment are included in Appendix C. Table 4.6-8 shows the estimated increase in roadway vehicle noise on study roadway segments compared to existing conditions at 50 feet from the centerline of the nearest travel lane.

As shown in Table 4.6-8, significant traffic noise increases are anticipated along multiple roadway segments within the city limits as discussed in Section 4.6.3(a), Methodology and Significance Thresholds. Furthermore, roadway segments located within the annexation area, shown in Figure 4.6-4, were not analyzed as they are not currently within Santa Maria city limits. At the time an individual project is proposed within the annexation area, it would be required to undergo individual environmental review to determine potential noise impacts of the individual project. Along all other roadway study segments, traffic noise increases would be less than significant.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policies and actions that would reduce roadway vehicle noise:

Policy N-2.1: Major thoroughfare noise mitigation. Require future development and redevelopment to implement feasible noise mitigation measures along major thoroughfares like Main Street, Broadway, and U.S. Highway 101.

Action N-2.1.1: Coordinate with the California Department of Transportation to effectively attenuate State freeway and roadway noise through the use of 'quiet' paving materials, placement of noise barriers, berms, and landscaped open space within State right-of-way ~~for existing residences~~ and incorporating design features in new development to reduce future noise level increases.

Action N-2.1.2: Work with the California Department of Transportation to ensure adequate noise studies are prepared and noise mitigation measures are considered in State transportation projects

Action N-2.1.3: Regularly update the noise contour map to reflect changes in ambient noise levels from transportation sources as airport and roadway conditions and patterns within the city evolve.

Action N-2.1.4: Update the City's Municipal Code to require new residential and mixed-use development within the 60 dBA CNEL noise contours or higher of transportation corridors to submit an acoustical analysis and incorporate noise reduction strategies, such as vegetation buffers and physical sound barriers, as necessary to meet the requirements of the Noise Ordinance.

Policy N-2.2: Industrial and agricultural traffic noise reduction measures. Evaluate and identify measures and strategies to reduce traffic noise from industrial and agricultural truck traffic, and coordinate with local businesses to implement the measures and strategies as needed.

Action N-2.2.1: Coordinate with businesses to identify possible limitations on local truck traffic, including loading and unloading, specific routes, times, and speed limits appropriate for each zoning district, while ensuring compatibility with essential business operations.

Action N-2.2.2: Work with local businesses, Public Works, and law enforcement to minimize traffic noise by encouraging the use of preferred routes and delivery times.

Figure 4.6-4 Future 2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Contours

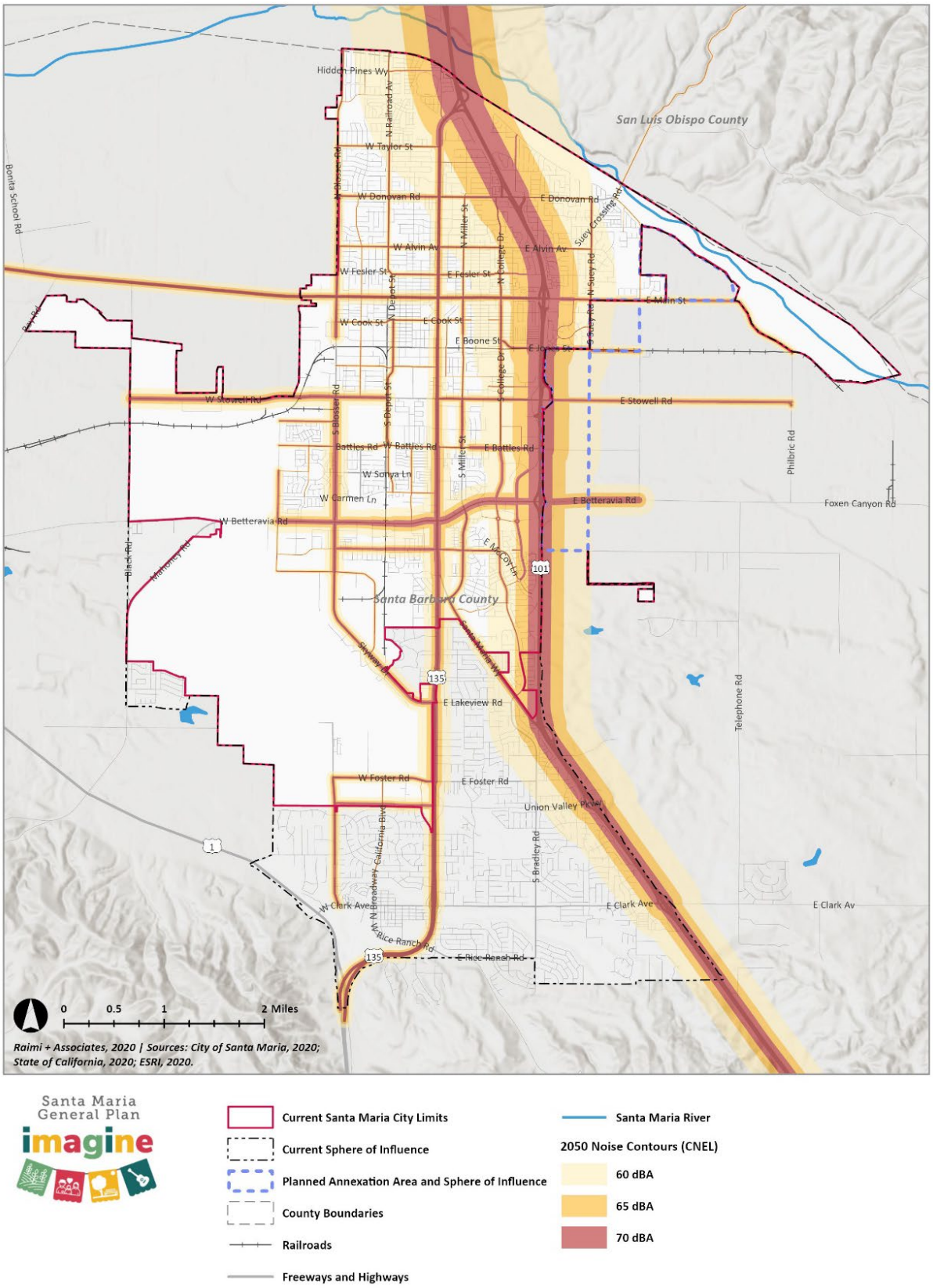


Table 4.6-8 Existing and Future Traffic Volumes and Noise Levels

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - N. of Clark Ave	29,500	37,580	74.4	75.4	1.1	1.5	N
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - S. of Clark Ave	20,100	25,120	72.7	73.7	1.0	1.5	N
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - N. of Foster Rd	37,000	79,580	75.4	78.7	3.3	1.5	**Y**
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - S. of Foster Rd	24,600	42,050	73.6	75.9	2.3	1.5	**Y**
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - N. of Lakeview Rd	32,000	56,990	74.7	77.2	2.5	1.5	**Y**
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - N. of Miller St	43,000	53,890	76.0	77.0	1.0	1.5	N
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - S. of Miller St	37,500	61,470	75.4	77.6	2.1	1.5	**Y**
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - N. of Santa Maria Way	41,000	69,330	75.8	78.1	2.3	1.5	**Y**
Orcutt Expressway (SR 135) - S. of Santa Maria Way	44,500	55,530	76.2	77.1	1.0	1.5	N
Broadway (SR 135) - N. of Betteravia Rd	47,000	74,580	75.3	77.3	2.0	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - S. of Betteravia Rd	47,500	91,630	76.0	78.8	2.9	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - N. of Stowell Rd	40,500	66,600	72.6	74.8	2.2	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - S. of Stowell Rd	44,500	88,700	72.8	75.8	3.0	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - N. of Main St	28,500	53,420	71.4	74.1	2.7	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - S. of Main St	26,500	50,360	70.6	73.4	2.8	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - N. of Donovan Rd	27,000	61,560	71.1	74.7	3.6	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - S. of Donovan Rd	27,500	49,310	71.2	73.7	2.5	1.5	**Y**
Broadway (SR 135) - W. of US 101	23,900	72,350	73.8	78.6	4.8	1.5	**Y**
Main St (SR 166) - W. of Blosser Rd	14,200	29,220	70.7	73.9	3.1	1.5	**Y**
Main St (SR 166) - E. of Blosser Rd	15,900	27,260	71.2	73.6	2.3	1.5	**Y**
Main St (SR 166) - E. of Suey Rd	6,400	19,050	66.4	71.1	4.7	1.5	**Y**
Main St (SR 166) - W. of Suey Rd	8,700	21,310	67.7	71.6	3.9	1.5	**Y**
Main St (SR 166) - US 101 SB-Off Ramp	29,500	48,790	72.8	75.0	2.2	1.5	**Y**

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
Main St (SR 166) - E. of Broadway (SR 135)	26,500	36,700	73.7	75.1	1.4	1.5	N
Main St (SR 166) - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	18,800	27,740	71.5	73.2	1.7	1.5	**Y**
A St - S. of Betteravia Dr	3,450	7,820	58.7	62.2	3.6	5.0	N
A St - S. of Sonya Ln	3,650	17,330	64.2	71.0	6.8	1.5	**Y**
Alvin Ave - W. of Railroad Ave	8,510	14,010	65.6	67.7	2.2	1.5	**Y**
Alvin Ave - W. of College Dr	7,700	21,860	65.1	69.7	4.5	1.5	**Y**
Alvin Ave - E. of Bradley Rd	6,670	20,130	64.5	69.3	4.8	1.5	**Y**
Alvin Ave - W. of Suey Rd	3,440	13,250	61.6	67.5	5.9	3.0	**Y**
Battles Rd - E. of Blosser Rd	10,740	17,860	67.1	69.3	2.2	1.5	**Y**
Battles Rd - W. of Blosser Rd	9,320	18,760	63.6	66.6	3.0	3.0	N
Battles Rd - W. of Bradley Rd	7,670	31,450	68.0	74.2	6.1	1.5	**Y**
Battles Rd - E. of Broadway (SR 135)	13,220	21,080	65.1	67.1	2.0	1.5	**Y**
Battles Rd - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	11,650	16,740	64.6	66.1	1.6	1.5	**Y**
Bay Ave - b/w Donovan Rd and Harding Ave	3,490	3,490	59.2	59.2	0.0	5.0	N
Betteravia Dr - E. of A St	14,630	45,090	71.5	76.3	4.9	1.5	**Y**
Betteravia Dr - E. of Skyway Dr	15,390	48,570	71.7	76.7	5.0	1.5	**Y**
Betteravia Dr - E. of Bradley Dr	38,460	67,060	75.9	78.3	2.4	1.5	**Y**
Betteravia Dr - W. of College Dr	34,170	83,220	75.4	79.2	3.9	1.5	**Y**
Betteravia Dr - W. of Depot St	20,620	60,520	72.9	77.6	4.7	1.5	**Y**
Betteravia Dr - E. of Broadway (SR 135)	30,350	66,480	75.1	78.5	3.4	1.5	**Y**
Blosser Rd - S. of Foster Rd	2,220	44,050	59.6	72.6	13.0	5.0	**Y**
Blosser Rd - S. of Stowell Rd	24,120	66,950	72.5	76.9	4.4	1.5	**Y**
Blosser Rd - b/w Boone St and Cook St	23,530	49,050	71.3	74.4	3.2	1.5	**Y**
Blosser Rd - S. of Main St (SR 166)	24,960	48,700	70.0	72.9	2.9	1.5	**Y**
Blosser Rd - S. of Alvin Ave	14,140	34,740	69.0	73.0	3.9	1.5	**Y**

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
Blosser Rd - S. of Donovan Rd	15,200	32,070	69.4	72.6	3.2	1.5	**Y**
Blosser Rd - N. of Taylor St	5,120	7,530	65.7	67.4	1.7	1.5	**Y**
Blosser Rd - S. of Taylor St	7,970	18,500	67.7	71.4	3.7	1.5	**Y**
Blosser Rd - N. of Canal St	2,700	3,170	62.9	63.6	0.7	3.0	N
Bradley Rd - S. of Cottage Ln	1,000	5,620	56.8	64.3	7.5	5.0	Y
Bradley Rd - S. of Bello Rd	4,960	6,640	63.7	65.0	1.3	3.0	N
Bradley Rd - S. of Betteravia Dr	22,740	34,340	70.3	72.1	1.8	1.5	**Y**
Bradley Rd - N. of Battles Rd	16,420	52,270	71.3	76.4	5.0	1.5	**Y**
Bradley Rd - S. of Battles Rd	10,760	26,750	69.5	73.5	4.0	1.5	**Y**
Bradley Rd - N. of Stowell Rd	14,860	25,010	67.0	69.2	2.3	1.5	**Y**
Bradley Rd - b/w SR 101 SB-On Ramp and Cypress St (one-way)	3,750	7,390	62.4	65.3	2.9	3.0	N
Bradley Rd - E. of College Dr	3,950	3,950	59.7	59.7	0.0	5.0	N
Bull Canyon Rd - N. of Panther Dr	260	3,360	50.8	61.9	11.1	5.0	**Y**
California Blvd - S. of Foster Rd	1,460	3,160	58.3	61.6	3.4	5.0	N
Camino Colegio - E. of Miller St	1,280	2,140	54.8	57.1	2.2	5.0	N
Camino Colegio - W. of Miller St	1,400	2,280	55.2	57.4	2.1	5.0	N
Canal St - E. of Blosser Rd	1,140	1,980	54.6	57.0	2.4	5.0	N
Carlotti Dr - b/w Noble Wy and Paden St	5,490	20,360	64.0	69.7	5.7	1.5	**Y**
Carlotti Dr - b/w Stanford Dr and Murray Dr	3,700	20,070	62.3	69.7	7.3	3.0	**Y**
Carmen Ln - W. of Thornburg St	5,440	5,110	60.9	60.7	-0.3	3.0	N
Carmen Ln - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	7,580	11,350	62.4	64.1	1.8	3.0	N
Centennial St - b/w Mt Whitney Wy and Panther Dr	1,480	1,480	55.5	55.5	0.0	5.0	N
Cesar E Chavez Dr - S. of Hidden Pines Wy	3,390	3,320	59.1	59.0	-0.1	5.0	N
College Dr - E. of Santa Maria Wy	9,730	26,090	62.2	66.5	4.3	3.0	**Y**

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
College Dr - N. of McCoy Ln (Roundabout)	11,240	16,150	66.9	68.5	1.6	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - S. of McCoy Ln (Roundabout)	8,230	21,020	65.6	69.7	4.1	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - S. of Sunrise Dr	10,960	24,390	62.7	66.2	3.5	3.0	**Y**
College Dr - N. of Betteravia Dr	9,300	36,140	67.3	73.2	5.9	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - S. of Betteravia Dr	10,840	16,250	66.8	68.5	1.8	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - N. of Battles Rd	10,760	35,740	62.6	67.8	5.2	3.0	**Y**
College Dr - N. of Stowell Rd	12,310	42,110	66.1	71.4	5.3	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - N. of Boone St/Jones St	9,610	46,900	64.9	71.8	6.9	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - S. of Boone St/Jones St	9,930	46,630	65.0	71.7	6.7	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - N. of Main (SR 166)	8,620	28,520	64.5	69.7	5.2	1.5	**Y**
College Dr - N. of Alvin Ave	5,820	21,110	62.8	68.4	5.6	3.0	**Y**
College Dr - S. of Donovan Rd	8,020	22,510	64.2	68.7	4.5	1.5	**Y**
Concepcion Ave - N. of Jones St	970	920	53.6	53.4	-0.2	5.0	N
Cook St - W. of Depot St	6,190	9,030	64.6	66.2	1.6	1.5	**Y**
Cook St - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	8,870	14,740	64.9	67.1	2.2	1.5	**Y**
Cook St - E. of Broadway (SR 135)	8,990	12,650	64.9	66.4	1.5	1.5	N
Cook St - b/w Miller St and School St	3,150	6,990	60.2	63.7	3.5	3.0	**Y**
Cook St - b/w East Ave and College Dr	2,190	5,360	58.7	62.6	3.9	5.0	N
Crossroad Ln - W. of Bradley Rd	4,800	8,470	63.4	65.9	2.5	3.0	N
Depot St - N. of Carmen Ln	4,500	9,040	63.3	66.3	3.0	3.0	N
Depot St - N. of Battles Rd	10,450	14,850	69.3	70.8	1.5	1.5	N
Depot St - N. of Stowell Rd	9,560	30,420	65.2	70.2	5.0	1.5	**Y**
Depot St - N. of Main (SR 166)	8,940	12,420	64.8	66.2	1.4	1.5	N
Depot St - S. of Cook St	8,280	32,050	64.4	70.3	5.9	1.5	**Y**
Donovan Rd - W. of Railroad Ave	11,580	20,010	66.9	69.3	2.4	1.5	**Y**

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
Donovan Rd - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	17,390	32,900	69.5	72.2	2.8	1.5	**Y**
Donovan Rd - E. of Broadway (SR 135)	16,580	18,940	69.7	70.3	0.6	1.5	N
Donovan Rd - W. of College Dr	19,010	25,650	70.3	71.6	1.3	1.5	N
Donovan Rd - E. of College Dr	23,900	38,800	71.3	73.4	2.1	1.5	**Y**
Donovan Rd - W. of Carlotti Dr	23,040	39,300	71.1	73.4	2.3	1.5	**Y**
Donovan Rd - W. of Suey Rd	7,530	11,150	64.5	66.2	1.7	1.5	**Y**
Enos Dr - E. of College Dr	2,850	3,440	58.3	59.1	0.8	5.0	N
Fairway Dr - E. of A St	2,700	6,180	62.2	65.8	3.6	3.0	**Y**
Fairway Dr - E. of Skyway Dr	3,490	5,930	63.5	65.8	2.3	3.0	N
Farrell Dr - N. of Jones St	2,740	3,500	58.1	59.2	1.1	5.0	N
Fesler St - E. of Broadway (SR 135)	5,640	16,860	64.3	69.0	4.8	1.5	**Y**
Fesler St - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	6,880	17,130	65.1	69.1	4.0	1.5	**Y**
Fesler St - b/w Benwiley Ave and Railroad Ave	3,800	6,210	61.1	63.2	2.1	3.0	N
Foster Rd - W. of Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	4,190	33,160	62.9	71.8	9.0	3.0	**Y**
Foxenwood Ln - S. of Foster Rd	810	1,120	52.9	54.3	1.4	5.0	**Y**
Grant St - b/w Broadway (SR 135) and River Ranch Dr	5,230	5,680	61.0	61.3	0.4	3.0	N
Hidden Pines Wy - W. of Preisker Ln	7,950	8,720	65.5	65.9	0.4	1.5	N
Industrial Pkwy - E. of Skyway Dr	1,870	5,010	60.4	64.7	4.3	3.0	**Y**
La Brea Ave - W. of Blosser Rd	1,910	15,730	59.4	68.6	9.2	5.0	**Y**
Lynne Dr - b/w Lee Dr and Donovan Rd	5,670	6,630	61.3	62.0	0.7	3.0	N
Jones St - E. of Farrell Dr	7,990	25,780	66.9	72.0	5.1	1.5	**Y**
Jones St - W. of Bradley Rd	4,400	22,960	64.3	71.5	7.2	1.5	**Y**
McClelland St - S. of Cook St	3,330	6,350	59.0	61.8	2.8	5.0	N
McCoy Ln - E. of A St	2,880	3,450	58.4	59.1	0.8	5.0	N
McCoy Ln - E. of Skyway Dr	11,850	20,720	69.9	72.4	2.4	1.5	**Y**

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
McCoy Ln - E. of Broadway (SR 135)	12,760	20,870	67.8	70.0	2.1	1.5	**Y**
McCoy Ln - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	14,960	30,060	70.9	74.0	3.0	1.5	**Y**
McCoy Ln - E. of College Dr (roundabout)	5,330	5,370	64.0	64.1	0.0	1.5	N
McCoy Ln - W. of College Dr (roundabout)	6,380	17,370	64.8	69.2	4.3	1.5	**Y**
Miller St - N. of Battles Rd	14,540	37,810	68.7	72.8	4.2	1.5	**Y**
Miller St - N. of Stowell Rd	13,420	24,030	64.1	66.6	2.5	1.5	**Y**
Miller St - S. of Main (SR 166)	14,770	29,430	67.5	70.5	3.0	1.5	**Y**
Miller St - S. of Alvin Ave	8,520	13,520	65.0	67.0	2.0	1.5	**Y**
Miller St - b/w Lee Dr and Donovan Rd	4,160	8,020	59.0	61.9	2.9	5.0	N
Miller St - S. of Donovan Rd	5,840	10,500	63.5	66.0	2.5	3.0	N
Miller St - E. of Santa Maria Wy	11,120	26,050	67.5	71.2	3.7	1.5	**Y**
Miller St - S. of Betteravia Dr	13,990	34,750	68.5	72.5	4.0	1.5	**Y**
Morrison Ave - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	5,140	7,440	62.4	64.0	1.6	3.0	N
Morrison Ave - W. of Depot St	5,500	7,330	62.7	63.9	1.2	3.0	N
Palisade Dr - S. of Main (SR 166)	7,440	8,080	62.5	62.8	0.4	3.0	N
Panther Dr - S. of Suey Crossing Rd	4,810	6,070	59.2	60.2	1.0	5.0	N
Preisker Ln - N. of Broadway (SR 135)	10,880	12,010	66.4	66.8	0.4	1.5	N
Professional Pkwy - N. of McCoy Ln	2,760	3,480	58.2	59.2	1.0	5.0	N
Railroad Ave - N. of Fesler Ave	8,750	13,740	65.6	67.5	2.0	1.5	**Y**
Railroad Ave - b/w Donovan Rd and Harding Ave	9,980	13,340	66.1	67.4	1.3	1.5	N
Railroad Ave - N. of Taylor St	6,160	12,730	61.2	64.3	3.2	3.0	**Y**
Railroad Ave - S. of Taylor St	7,780	16,170	65.1	68.2	3.2	1.5	**Y**
Santa Maria Wy - S. of Miller Wy	10,470	29,220	67.0	71.4	4.5	1.5	**Y**
Santa Maria Wy - S. of Dauphin St	10,420	32,950	69.4	74.4	5.0	1.5	**Y**
Shepard Dr - N. of Battles Rd	1,900	5,520	56.6	61.2	4.6	5.0	N

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
Sierra Madre Ave - W. of Bradley Rd	1,350	6,240	57.9	64.6	6.6	5.0	**Y**
Skyway Dr - S. of Industrial Pkwy	15,740	38,270	71.2	75.0	3.9	1.5	**Y**
Skyway Dr - W. of Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	17,350	39,260	71.6	75.1	3.5	1.5	**Y**
Skyway Dr - N. of Fairway Dr	16,540	40,390	71.4	75.3	3.9	1.5	**Y**
Skyway Dr - S. of Fairway Dr	15,260	39,010	68.6	72.7	4.1	1.5	**Y**
Skyway Dr - N. of Betteravia Dr	20,010	43,520	72.2	75.6	3.4	1.5	**Y**
Skyway Dr - S. of Betteravia Dr	19,530	36,890	72.1	74.9	2.8	1.5	**Y**
Sonya Ln - E. of A St	360	1,880	49.3	56.5	7.2	5.0	**Y**
Southside Pkwy - E. of Centerpoint Pkwy	1,400	1,700	55.2	56.1	0.8	5.0	N
Southside Pkwy - W. of Bradley Rd (Roundabout)	4,940	4,950	60.7	60.7	0.0	3.0	N
Stowell Rd - W. of Bradley Rd	20,220	38,840	69.4	72.2	2.8	1.5	**Y**
Stowell Rd - W. of Depot St	14,020	39,870	69.5	74.0	4.5	1.5	**Y**
Stowell Rd - W. of Blosser Rd	9,510	38,640	69.3	75.4	6.1	1.5	**Y**
Stowell Rd - W. of Hanson Wy	8,020	28,430	70.2	75.7	5.5	1.5	**Y**
Suey Rd - N. of Jones St	5,300	11,210	65.0	68.2	3.3	1.5	**Y**
Suey Rd - N. of Main (SR 166)	7,590	14,410	66.5	69.3	2.8	1.5	**Y**
Suey Rd - N. of Alvin Ave	4,850	12,460	64.7	68.8	4.1	1.5	**Y**
Sunrise Dr - W. of College Dr	2,440	2,570	57.6	57.9	0.2	5.0	N
Sunrise Dr - E. of Santa Maria Wy	2,910	3,080	58.4	58.7	0.2	5.0	N
Taylor St - W. of Railroad Ave	5,740	12,870	63.0	66.5	3.5	3.0	**Y**
Taylor St - W. of Broadway (SR 135)	10,930	15,210	65.8	67.2	1.4	1.5	N
Thornburg St - N. of Betteravia Dr	6,150	6,300	62.7	62.8	0.1	3.0	N
Thornburg St - N. of Carmen Ln	3,710	7,330	61.8	64.8	3.0	3.0	N
Thornburg St - S. of Battles Rd	3,590	8,730	61.7	65.6	3.9	3.0	**Y**
Union Valley Parkway - W. of Orcutt Expressway (SR 135)	5,990	35,530	66.0	73.7	7.7	1.5	**Y**

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	2050 GP - With Project ADT	Existing Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	2050 Roadway Vehicle Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA CNEL)	Roadway Vehicle Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)	Significance Threshold dBA	Significant? Y/N
Union Valley Parkway - E. of Blosser Rd	1,630	25,460	60.7	72.6	11.9	3.0	**Y**
Western Ave - N. of Stowell Rd	8,330	10,550	62.5	63.5	1.0	3.0	N
Western Ave - N. of Main (SR 166)	4,290	6,340	59.6	61.3	1.7	5.0	N
Western Ave - S. of Main (SR 166)	4,390	5,560	59.7	60.7	1.0	5.0	N
Westgate Rd - S. of Battles Rd	3,590	3,600	62.2	62.2	0.0	3.0	N
Westgate Rd - N. of Carmen Ln	1,640	1,640	58.8	58.8	0.0	5.0	N

ADT = average daily trips

Bold = significant increase

Source: GHD 2025.

Policy N-~~1.1~~2.4: Roadway vehicle noise reduction measures. Require projects that may result in a substantial increase in roadway traffic noise on area roadways to implement measures designed to reduce noise and minimize the impact on noise-sensitive land uses.

Action N-~~1.1~~2.4.1: Where cumulative roadway traffic noise would exceed the applicable traffic noise increase standards, require applicants for new development projects to retain a qualified acoustical consultant to prepare a Traffic Noise Reduction Study that specifies, at a minimum, the specific locations, extent, height of sound walls, and other design details ~~such as "quiet pavement" to reduce traffic noise impacts at impacted roadways~~. Project specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site specific conditions.

Action N-~~1.1~~2.4.2: For locations where a Traffic Noise Reduction Study identifies a need for sound barriers, require developers to contribute their fair share toward constructing new sound barriers (e.g., walls or solid fences) along ~~impacted~~ roadways where there are no driveways that would break continuity and along the residential portions or other sensitive receiver locations of such roadways. The study shall identify the appropriate sound barrier to reduce the noise impacts on the proposed development. ~~Sounds barriers should be continuous from grade to top, with no cracks or gaps, and have a minimum surface density of four pounds per square foot and a minimum height of six feet, as measured from the base elevation.~~

~~**Action N-1.1.3**: For locations where a Traffic Noise Reduction Study identifies a need for roadway improvements to reduce roadway traffic noise where sound barriers are determined not to be feasible, require developers to contribute their fair share toward installation of "quiet pavement" roadway improvements, such as rubberized asphalt or open-grade asphalt concrete overlays.~~

Implementation of these policies and actions would reduce operational vehicle trips and associated operational traffic noise to the extent feasible. However, the plan does not include policies or actions that could ensure traffic noise would be below the thresholds of significance. As a result, the potential increase in traffic noise would be a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

NOI-1 Conditions of Approval to Reduce Construction Noise

The City of Santa Maria shall review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, require construction contractors to implement the following feasible measures as standard conditions of approval. Construction plans submitted to the City shall include construction noise analysis and identify these measures on demolition, grading, and construction plans submitted to the City. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall verify that grading, demolition, and/or construction plans submitted to the City include these notations prior to issuance of demolition, grading and/or building permits. Project specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site specific conditions.

- **Mufflers.** During excavation and grading construction phases, all construction equipment, fixed or mobile, shall be operated with closed engine doors and shall be equipped with properly operating and maintained mufflers consistent with manufacturers' standards.

- **Stationary Equipment.** All stationary construction equipment shall be placed so that emitted noise is directed away from the nearest sensitive receptors.
- **Equipment Staging Areas.** Equipment staging shall be located in areas that will create the greatest distance feasible between construction-related noise sources and noise-sensitive receptors.
- **Smart Back-up Alarms.** Mobile construction equipment shall have smart back-up alarms that automatically adjust the sound level of the alarm in response to ambient noise levels. Alternatively, back-up alarms shall be disabled and replaced with human spotters to ensure safety when mobile construction equipment is moving in the reverse direction in compliance with applicable safety laws and regulations.
- **Electrically-Powered Tools and Facilities.** Electrical power shall be used to run air compressors and similar power tools and to power any temporary structures, such as construction trailers or caretaker facilities, where feasible.
- **Noise Disturbance Coordinator**. The project applicant shall designate a "noise disturbance coordinator" responsible for responding to any local complaints about construction noise. The disturbance coordinator shall determine the cause of any noise complaint and shall require that reasonable measures be implemented to correct the problem. A telephone number for the disturbance coordinator and the City shall be posted at the construction site.
- **Temporary Noise Barriers.** Erect temporary noise barriers, where feasible, when construction noise is predicted to exceed the acceptable standards (e.g., 80 dBA L_eq at residential receptors, schools or other sensitive receptors during the daytime) or when the anticipated construction duration is greater than is typical (e.g., two years or greater). Temporary noise barriers shall be constructed with solid materials (e.g., wood) with a density of at least 1.5 pounds per square foot with no gaps from the ground to the top of the barrier. If a sound blanket is used, barriers shall be constructed with solid material with a density of at least 1 pound per square foot with no gaps from the ground to the top of the barrier and be lined on the construction side with acoustical blanket, curtain or equivalent absorptive material rated sound transmission class (STC) 32 or higher.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure NOI-1, as well as implementation of policies and actions in the 2045 General Plan Update, would reduce potential impacts from noise during construction and operation by reducing noise source impacts, creating sound barriers where required/necessary, and promoting the reduction in traffic noise by projects included in the plan. These policies would help reduce the amount of traffic noise increases to the extent feasible. However, as details from individual development facilitated by the plan are unknown at this time, there is no feasible mitigation that would avoid or fully mitigate for the increase in construction and traffic noise in the plan area. As a result, potential construction noise impacts and operational traffic noise impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Operational stationary noise impacts would be less than significant without mitigation.

Threshold 2: Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Impact NOI-2 CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY FROM BUILDOUT OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD GENERATE GROUNDBORNE VIBRATION, POTENTIALLY AFFECTING NEARBY LAND USES. IMPLEMENTATION OF REQUIRED MITIGATION, AS WELL AS POLICIES AND ACTIONS IN THE PLAN, WOULD ENSURE VIBRATION LEVELS WOULD NOT EXCEED APPLICABLE THRESHOLDS FOR BUILDING DAMAGE. THEREFORE, THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.

Construction

Future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would involve construction activity that could intermittently generate groundborne vibration affecting nearby properties. Table 4.6-9 lists groundborne vibration levels from various types of construction equipment at various distances.

Table 4.6-9 Vibration Source Levels for Construction Equipment

Equipment		Approximate Vibration Level (in/sec PPV)			
		25 feet from Source	50 feet from Source	100 feet from Source	200 feet from Source
Caisson Drilling		0.089	0.031	0.011	0.004
Jackhammer		0.035	0.012	0.004	0.002
Large Bulldozer		0.089	0.031	0.011	0.004
Loaded Truck		0.076	0.027	0.010	0.003
Pile Driver (impact)	Upper range	1.519	0.537	0.190	0.067
	Typical	0.644	0.228	0.081	0.028
Pile Driver (sonic)	Upper range	0.734	0.260	0.092	0.032
	Typical	0.170	0.060	0.021	0.008
Small Bulldozer		0.003	0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Vibratory Roller		0.21	0.074	0.026	0.009

Source: Federal Transit Administration (FTA). 2018. *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment*. November.

As shown in Table 4.6-9, buildings and structures could experience the strongest vibration during the use of pile-drivers and vibratory rollers. Vibration levels from pile-drivers could approach 1.519 in/sec PPV at a distance of 25 feet from the source and 0.190 in/sec at 100 feet, and vibration levels from vibratory rollers could approach 0.21 in/sec PPV at a distance of 25 feet and 0.026 at 100 feet. The threshold for historic structures is 0.12 in/sec PPV; the threshold is higher for residential buildings at 0.2 in/sec PPV. Vibration levels from typical equipment, such as bulldozers and jackhammers, would not exceed the applicable thresholds for historic structures and residential buildings at a distance of 25 feet or greater. However, vibration levels from pile driving equipment and vibratory rollers may exceed the FTA thresholds.

Because project-level details are not currently available for future individual development facilitated by the plan, it is not possible to determine which projects may use pile driving or vibratory rollers and their exact vibration levels, locations, or time periods for construction of such projects. As a result, construction vibration levels may exceed the FTA's vibration levels for preventing architectural building damage.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following goal and policies intended to minimize groundborne vibration associated with construction activity:

Goal N-4: Vibration. The impacts of excessive ground-borne vibration from temporary and ongoing operations are limited.

> **Policy N-4.1.1:** Update the Municipal Code to require new vibration-sensitive uses within 200 feet of a potential vibration-causing source, including the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, to prepare a ground-borne vibration and noise assessment consistent with Federal Transit Administration-recommended methodology and criteria.
>
> ~~**Policy N-4.1.2: Ground-borne vibration mitigation.** Update the Municipal Code to establish building architectural and structural thresholds to prevent building damage from vibration.~~

Implementation of Policy N-4.1.1 and N-4.1.2 would reduce construction groundborne vibration impacts associated with future development facilitated by the plan. However, as project-level details of future construction activities are unknown at this time, it is not possible to determine which projects may use pile driving or vibratory rollers and their exact vibration levels, locations, or time periods for construction of such projects. Construction vibration levels may exceed the FTA's vibration levels for preventing architectural building damage. Therefore, groundborne vibration levels associated with construction activity may exceed the FTA's standards for building damage, resulting in a potentially significant impact requiring Mitigation Measure NOI-2.

Operation

New residential, commercial, industrial, and retail development facilitated by the plan would not involve substantial operational vibration sources such as railroads and subways. In addition, implementation of the plan would not directly increase rail activity in the plan area. Therefore, the plan's operational groundborne vibration impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

NOI-2 Conditions of Approval to Reduce Construction Vibration

The City of Santa Maria shall review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, require construction contractors to implement the following feasible buffers for construction equipment as standard conditions of approval. Construction plans submitted to the City shall include construction vibration analysis and identify the following buffer distances during demolition, grading, and construction plans submitted to the City. The City of Santa Maria Building Division shall verify that grading, demolition, and/or construction plans submitted to the City include these notations prior to issuance of demolition, grading and/or building permits. Project specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site specific conditions.

To reduce potential construction vibration impacts, the City of Santa Maria shall require the following:

- Prior to the issuance of a building permit for a project requiring pile driving during construction, the project applicant shall prepare a groundborne noise and vibration analysis to assess and mitigate potential noise and vibration impacts related to the following construction activities: 1) within 135 feet of fragile structures such as historical resources; 2) within 100 feet of non-engineered timber and masonry buildings (e.g., most residential buildings), or within 75 feet of

engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster); 3) use of a vibratory roller within 40 feet of fragile historical resources or 25 feet of any other structure; or 4) use of a dozer or other large earthmoving equipment within 20 feet for a fragile historical structure or 15 feet of any other structure. The noise and vibration analysis shall be conducted by a qualified and experienced acoustical consultant or engineer. The vibration levels shall not exceed the City's architectural damage thresholds (e.g., 0.12 in/sec PPV for fragile or historical resources, 0.2 in/sec PPV for non-engineered timber and masonry buildings, and 0.3 in/sec PPV for engineered concrete and masonry). If vibration levels would exceed this threshold, alternative uses such as drilling piles as opposed to pile driving, static rollers as opposed to vibratory rollers, and lower horsepower earthmoving equipment shall be used. If necessary, construction vibration monitoring shall be conducted to ensure the FTA's vibration thresholds are not exceeded.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of General Plan Policy N-4.1.1, and N-4.1.2 would reduce construction groundborne vibration impacts from development facilitated by the plan. Mitigation Measure NOI-2 provides more detail on how Goal N-4 and Policies N-4.1.1 and N-4.1.2 would be implemented to reduce construction groundborne vibration impacts in the project area by providing buffer screening distances for potential impacts and requiring a vibration analysis when vibration-intensive equipment are within those distances, which may include use of alternative equipment and/or vibration monitoring, as necessary. Together, implementation of this goal, policies, and Mitigation Measure NOI-2 would reduce this impact to a level of less than significant.

Threshold 3:	For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

Impact NOI-3 BUILDOUT OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COULD EXPOSE PEOPLE RESIDING OR WORKING IN THE PLAN AREA TO EXCESSIVE NOISE LEVELS FROM AIRPORT NOISE. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND ACTIONS IN THE PLAN WOULD ENSURE THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The nearest aircraft facility is the Santa Maria Airport, located in the southern portion of the city, shown in Figure 4.6-2. According to the most recent Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (SMALUCP 2023) for Santa Barbara County, portions of the plan area are located within the airport noise contours for Santa Maria Airport. As noted in Section 4.6.1(d), the annual air show and military aircraft training use of the airport can expose the area to higher-than-typical noise. These events only occur during a small fraction of the year, and are therefore considered temporary. The plan does not anticipate changes to the frequency or other operational components of these temporary activities, and as such they are not considered potential airport noise impacts associated with the plan.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policy and actions intended to minimize airport noise impacts:

Policy N-2.3: Airport noise mitigation. Require aviation easements and noise mitigation measures in new residential developments near the airport in the 60+ dB CNEL contour.

Action N-2.3.1: Encourage future Santa Maria Airport facility development or expansion to incorporate noise reduction measures to minimize stationary source noise impacts on surrounding areas where necessary.

Action N-2.3.2: Review and, as needed, revise land use designations to ensure consistency with the ALUCP noise contour maps.

Implementation of this policy and associated actions would ensure that noise from new developments facilitated by the plan are analyzed and mitigated to acceptable levels prior to approval of these projects. Therefore, the plan would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels, and this impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because this impact would be less than significant.

4.6.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*.

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Future development within the cumulative impact analysis area would increase noise and vibration levels and may result in a significant impact.

As discussed in Impact NOI-1, construction noise generated by future development facilitated by the plan, in combination with construction activities for other cumulative projects that may be constructed simultaneously could, without mitigation, substantially increase noise levels in the vicinity of future projects. Goals, policies and mitigation measures have been identified to help reduce noise from construction equipment from new development facilitated by the plan. Therefore, unless construction of cumulative projects, including new development facilitated by the plan, occur in close proximity to each other and simultaneously, noise from individual construction projects has a small chance of combining to create significant cumulative impacts. Although this scenario is unlikely, and policies, actions, and mitigation measures would be implemented to the extent feasible, the potential remains for a cumulatively considerable increase in construction noise from future development facilitated by the plan. The plan could result in a substantial contribution to this cumulatively significant impact. Therefore, the cumulative impact related to construction noise would be significant and unavoidable.

Future development facilitated by the plan would introduce new stationary noise sources to the ambient noise environment in and around the plan area, including new mechanical ventilation equipment. These sources may combine with noise from other nearby cumulative projects to result in higher noise levels. However, operational noise from these sources is localized and rapidly attenuates within an urbanized setting due to the effects of intervening structures and topography that block the line of sight, and due to other noise sources closer to receptors that obscure project-related noise. Implementation of the Santa Maria Municipal Code noise standards would ensure that noise from new stationary sources as part of cumulative development would be within

acceptable levels. Therefore, the cumulative impact related to operational stationary noise would be less than significant.

Traffic noise increases from development facilitated by the plan would contribute to noise level increases that exceed impact criteria and would be cumulatively considerable. Implementation of policies and actions in the 2045 General Plan Update would reduce the contribution of the plan to roadway traffic noise impacts. However, there is no feasible mitigation that would ensure that all future development facilitated by the plan could feasibly reduce traffic noise to avoid impacts. Therefore, in combination with traffic noise for other cumulative projects, the cumulative impact related to operational traffic noise would be significant and unavoidable.

Although there could be other cumulative projects simultaneously under construction near a development facilitated by the plan, the potential for construction groundborne vibration and noise impacts exists within a limited area (e.g., within approximately 25 feet for a vibratory roller). Since no two construction cumulative projects, including new development facilitated by the plan, would both be within 25 feet of a given sensitive structure, cumulative groundborne vibration and noise impacts would be less than significant.

Future development facilitated by the plan would expose people residing or working in the plan area to airport noise. Airport noise is localized to locations affected by airport operations and overflights (refer to Figure 4.6-2), and does not combine with noise from other nearby cumulative projects to result in higher airport noise levels. Implementation of Policy N-2.3 and Actions N-2.3.1 and N-2.3.2 would ensure that noise from new developments facilitated by the plan are analyzed and mitigated to acceptable levels prior to approval of these projects. Therefore, the cumulative impact related to operational stationary noise would be less than significant.

4.7 Transportation and Traffic

This section evaluates the 2045 General Plan Update's potential impact on the local and regional transportation system in Santa Maria, including potential impacts to vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The regulatory setting in this section is based on the City's General Plan Environmental Existing Conditions Report (City of Santa Maria 2020) and the current 2011 General Plan Circulation Element. The analysis in this section is based, in part, on the updated Circulation Element that is a component of the 2045 General Plan Update, on the basis that the updated Circulation Element will update setting information in the 2011 General Plan Circulation Element. The analysis in this section is also based, in part, on the City of Santa Maria travel demand model, evaluated by GHD in June 2025.

4.7.1 Setting

The City of Santa Maria is served by an extensive network of freeways, arterials, collectors, and local roads. The network provides a high level of north-south/east-west connectivity with adjacent counties (i.e., San Luis Obispo, Ventura, and Kern Counties) by way of United States Highway 101 (U.S. 101), State Route 135 (SR 135) and State Route 166 (SR 166) that traverse the city. SR 135 and SR 166 both junction State Route 1 (SR 1) to the west of the city.

a. Roadway Network and Functional Classifications

Santa Maria is served by a system of streets and paths that enable connections in the city and to the regional transportation system. They are classified by their function with different characteristics and accommodations for modes of travel and access to adjacent land uses. The system supports multiple modes of travel and contains network elements that support vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit travel. In addition, roadways in Santa Maria provide routes for truck hailing and industrial uses hauling. The roadway classifications serve as the City's policy guidance for the development of multi-modal streets and balance all network elements. Descriptions of roadway classifications and their characteristics in Santa Maria are described below. The location of existing roadways and their classifications are shown in Figure 4.14-1.

b. State Highways

U.S. 101 and State highways, city streets and county roads carry a large amount of traffic throughout Santa Barbara County. Given that the State highway network forms the primary backbone of the Santa Barbara County network, the State highway system within Santa Barbara County is described in further detail below.

State Route 1

SR 1 serves as a major north-south corridor traversing along most of the Pacific coastline of California. The route begins in Dana Point (I-5 Junction) and ends in Leggett (Junction 101). SR 1 is the longest route in California at approximately 655 miles.

Within Santa Barbara County, SR 1 is functionally a Principal/Minor Arterial facility. The route begins at the Cañada De Las Cruces at Junction U.S. 101 traversing north through the City of Guadalupe into San Luis Obispo County. SR 1 traverses to the west of the city of Santa Maria. The route encompasses approximately 51 miles.

SR 1 contains a combination of two to four lane conventional highway and two to four lane expressway sections. A two lane highway/expressway is one lane in each direction and a four lane highway/expressway is two lanes in each direction. This route serves as the major access arterial for surrounding communities i.e., Santa Maria, Guadalupe, Orcutt and Lompoc.

U.S. Highway 101

U.S. 101 serves as a major north-south coastal route extending from Los Angeles, California north through Oregon State ending in Tumwater, Washington. U.S. 101 is approximately 1,540 miles.

Within Santa Barbara County, U.S. 101 begins along the southern coast of Santa Barbara at the Santa Barbara/Ventura County line traversing north to the City of Santa Maria at the Santa Maria Way Interchange to SR 166 East Interchange. The route encompasses approximately 91 miles.

U.S. 101 contains a combination of four-six lane freeway/expressway lane sections. This route serves as the major access freeway/expressway for surrounding communities i.e., Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Goleta, Solvang, Buellton, Orcutt, and Santa Maria.

State Route 135 (Broadway)

SR 135 serves as a western north-south bypass corridor of U.S. 101 in northern Santa Barbara County. The route begins in Los Alamos (Junction US 101) passing north through Santa Barbara County to the SR 1 junction. At the SR 1 junction SR 135 heads east through the Orcutt community and further north to the City of Santa Maria, where it is known as Broadway. Broadway continues north through the city to the U.S. 101 interchange.

Broadway is functionally a Minor Collector/Principal Arterial facility. Approximately the first 9.6 miles is a 2-lane conventional highway, the next 7.1 miles is a 4-lane freeway/expressway and the remainder of its length is a four and six-lane conventional highway. This route serves as the major access arterial for surrounding communities i.e., Santa Maria, Orcutt and Los Alamos, and encompasses approximately 21 miles.

State Route 166

SR 166 serves as an east-west corridor connecting the Central Coast to the southern San Joaquin Valley. The west end route begins at SR 1 in Guadalupe, traversing approximately 11 miles east and ending at the U.S. 101 interchange within the city. The portion of SR 166 within the City boundaries is referred to as Main Street and is designated as a two to four-lane Primary Arterial.

East of the U.S. 101, SR 166 begins just north of Santa Maria at Junction 101 (San Luis Obispo County) traversing eastward along the San Luis Obispo/Santa Barbara County line into Kern County ending at SR 99 Junction near Mettler. This portion of the route is approximately 100 miles. SR 166 contains a combination of two-lane Principal and Minor Arterial to four-six lane Principal Arterial Conventional Highway.

Betteravia Road

Betteravia Road from U.S. 101 to Broadway (SR 135) is on the National Highway System. Even though this segment of Betteravia Road is still under the city's jurisdiction, the National Highway System designation helps to prioritize available federal funding for this segment of Betteravia Road.

c. Arterials, Collectors, and Local Roadways

The City of Santa Maria's circulation system is composed of a wide range of transportation facilities that serve two basic functions, mobility and land access. Arterials serve major activity centers, as well as neighboring areas, and the highest traffic volume corridors to provide a network of continuous routes and facilitate both local and inter-regional travel. Collectors provide local access to the overall roadway network, channeling traffic from local roadways into the arterial network. Local roads provide direct access to neighboring land and primarily facilitate local travel.

Table 4.7-1 identifies the roadway classification facility types in the current Circulation Element.

Table 4.7-1 Current Circulation Element Roadway Classification

Facility Type	Emphasis (Mobility versus Land Access)
Freeway	Reserved for limited access, uncontrolled, grade separated facilities, this classification includes US 101. The Freeway provides a high degree of mobility with no direct land access.
Primary Arterial	Provide mobility with intermittent access to Secondary Arterials with minimal direct land access.
Secondary Arterial	Provide mobility via access to Collector Roads and some Local Streets and accommodate access to major traffic generating land uses.
Collector Road	Connect Local Streets with Secondary Arterials and, occasionally, Primary Arterials, and also provide access to major land uses.
Local Streets	Provide access to adjacent land uses as well as access to Collector Roads.
Minor Streets	Provide access to adjacent land uses as well as to Local Streets and, occasionally, Collector Roads. Minor Streets occur only within and serve only residentially-zoned properties.
Roundabouts	Circular intersections that feature, among other important geometric components, a central island, a circulatory roadway, and splitter islands on each approach. Key to the proper implementation of these facilities is the understanding that roundabouts rely upon two basic and important principles: 1) Speed reduction through the facility, achieved through geometric design, which assures optimal operational benefits and safety enhancement; and, 2) The yield-at-entry rule, which requires traffic entering the intersection to yield to traffic that is traveling in the circulatory roadway when conflicts occur between them.

Source: Santa Maria General Plan Circulation Element, 2011

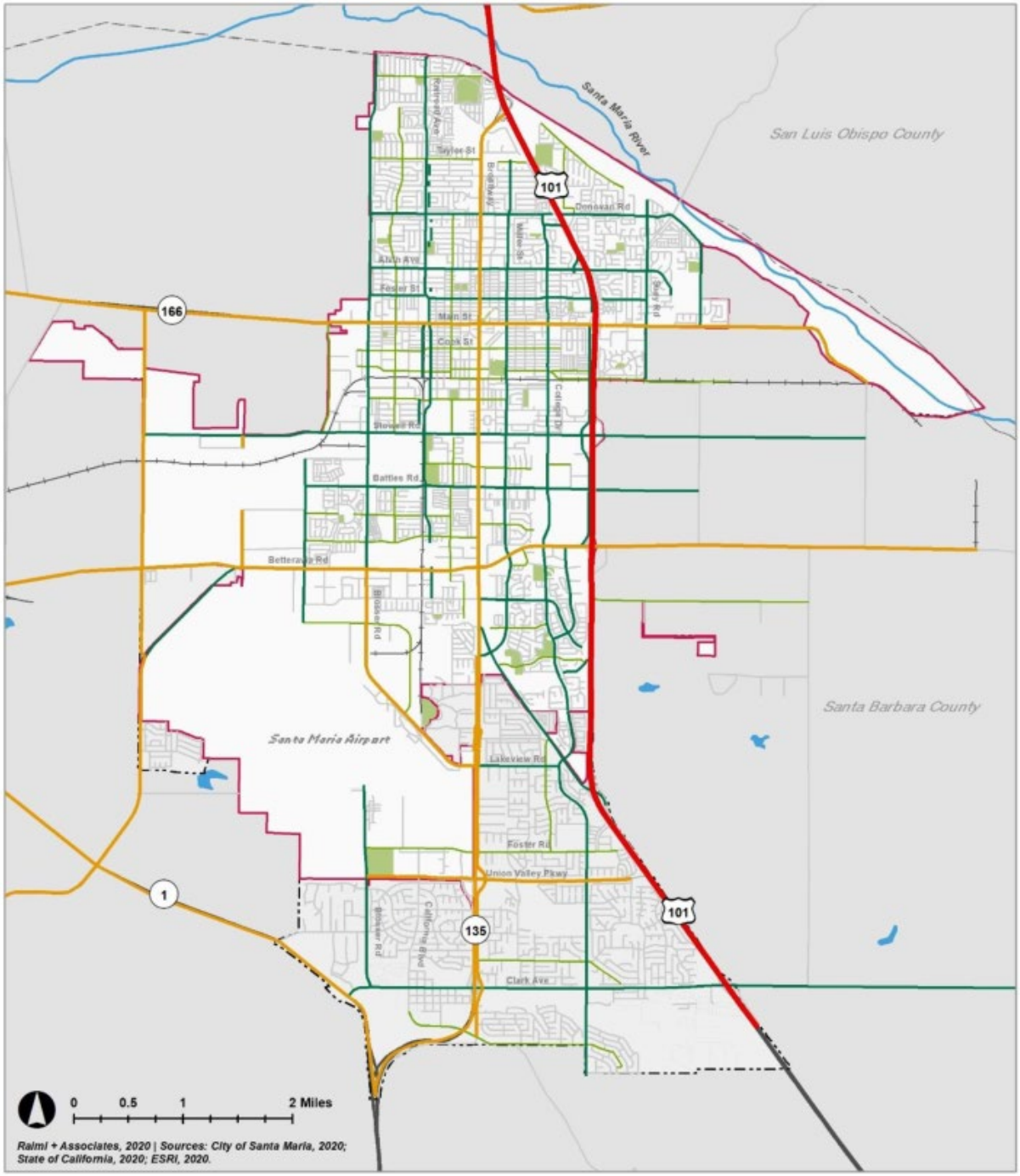
A map of major roadways by functional classification from the current Circulation Element is provided in Figure 4.14-1.

d. Pedestrian and Bicycle Network

Active Transportation Plan

The 2020 Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan was adopted by the City Council in January 2021. The Active Transportation Plan is a planning effort led by the City of Santa Maria to facilitate the design and implementation of a connected bicycle and pedestrian network to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation alternatives to the community.

Figure 4.14-1 Current Circulation Element Roadway Functional Classification



Existing and Planned Bikeways

In the current Circulation Element, existing and planned bicycle facilities are categorized based on the four classifications recognized by Caltrans, along with three subclassifications. These include:

- Class I Shared Use Paths. Class I shared use paths are completely separated rights-of-way designated for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians, with crossflows by motorists minimized. Caltrans standards require a minimum width of eight feet for a one-way Class I bike path.
- Class II Bicycle Lanes. Class II bicycle lanes provide a striped or buffered right-of-way designated for the exclusive or semi-exclusive use of bicycles with through-travel by motor vehicles or pedestrians prohibited, but with vehicle parking and crossflows by pedestrians and motorists. Caltrans standards generally require a minimum width of four feet for a Class II bicycle lane.
- Class III Bicycle Routes. Class III bicycle routes are signed routes for bicyclists on low-speed, low-volume streets where lanes are shared with drivers. Caltrans standards for Class III bicycle routes are incorporated into roadway width requirements.
- Class IV Separated Bikeways. Class IV separated bikeways are on-street bicycle facilities with a physical barrier between the bicycle space and motor vehicle lanes, including bollards, curbs, or parking. Caltrans standards require a minimum width of five feet for a one-way Class IV separated bikeway.

Bicycle-Transit Connections

The transit services of Santa Maria Regional Transit, The Breeze Bus, Clean Air Express, Guadalupe Flyer, and RTA-Route 10 all have buses that are equipped with bike racks capable of accommodating bicycles. This service enables riders to access destinations that are difficult to reach solely by bicycle, while it also expands the potential service area range of bus stops. Bicycle parking is not provided at most stops along these transit services, with the exception of the Santa Maria Transit Center. There are no reported bike lockers available for public use along the stops or at the Santa Maria Transit Center, but there are six reported bike lockers located at the Santa Maria Public Library.

Pedestrian Network

The Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan states that most trips begin and end as walking trips even when a car, bicycle, bus, or train is involved. Like the City of Santa Maria's existing bikeway network, the city's pedestrian conditions vary widely. Some locations have a comprehensive sidewalk network with crossings and signage, while infrastructure is limited in other locations.

e. Transit

This section describes the existing transit services in Santa Maria and regional services provided in Santa Barbara County and southern San Luis Obispo County. In addition, the City is currently updating its Short Range Transit Plan. This document focuses on service recommendations in four categories: performance improvement, service enhancement, policy, and innovation/technology.

The five transit service providers currently available to the residents of Santa Maria include:

- **Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT)**. The City of Santa Maria operates SMRT's local fixed route, regional bus service, and on-demand Microtransit and ADA paratransit bus services. SMRT ridership demographics reflect a broad cross-section of the service area, including seniors, persons with disabilities, K-12 students, college students, working professionals, tourists and

riders who choose to use transit instead of driving. Transit ridership is rapidly growing and is expected to continue to grow over the years to come. The routes currently provide public transportation to local employment centers including schools, health care facilities, and major attractors (shopping centers, educational government facilities, medical and other uses). These trips are matched with services that extend to neighborhoods within the city (City of Santa Maria 2025).

- **The Breeze Bus.** The Breeze Bus is a commuter service between Santa Maria, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Lompoc, Los Alamos, Buellton, and Solvang that operates Monday through Friday. This objective of this transit service is to accommodate working commuters with three trips daily.
- **The Guadalupe Flyer.** The Guadalupe Flyer is a single route, connecting destinations around Guadalupe with the Town Center Mall and Transit Center in Santa Maria, traveling approximately 12 miles from Guadalupe on SR 166.
- **Clean Air Express.** The Clean Air Express commuter bus service is a weekday commuter bus program serving residents of Lompoc, Santa Maria, Buellton, Solvang, and adjacent unincorporated areas commuting to their jobs in Goleta and Santa Barbara. The Clean Air Express is managed by SBCAG.
- **SMOOTH.** SMOOTH maintains and operates various contracts with local groups in Santa Barbara County to provide transportation assistance with emphasis for passengers requiring medical, physical, and social assistance. SMOOTH provides Senior Dial-A-Ride services in Santa Maria.
- **San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority**. San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLORTA) offers local and regional bus service to the South County portion of San Luis Obispo County and northern Santa Barbara County, including Santa Maria. Specifically, SLORTA links the Five Cities area (Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Oceano, Pismo Beach and Shell Beach), as well as Nipomo and Avila Beach.

4.7.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

United States Department of Transportation

The United States Department of Transportation provides a number of grant programs, primarily for the construction and upgrading of major highways and transit facilities. Many of these grants are administered by the State and regional governments. Use of federal grant funding also invokes the National Environmental Protection Act in some cases.

b. State Regulations

Caltrans Authority over the State Highway System

Caltrans is responsible for the planning, design, construction and maintenance of all interstate freeways and state routes. It builds, maintains, and operates the State Highway System in California with a goal to facilitate the safe and efficient use of the state transportation system for all users. Standards established in Caltrans' 2020 Transportation Impact Study Guide focus on the VMT metric. The 2020 Transportation Impact Study Guide acts as a replacement for the 2002 Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies but is only intended to be used with local land use projects and plans, not to be used for transportation projects on the State Highway System.

AB 32 and SB 375

With the passage of the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), the State committed itself to reducing statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. To meet the emission reduction goals of AB 32, the California's Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act, or SB 375, was enacted to direct the State's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) that demonstrates how the region will meet its emission reduction targets. The MPO for the Santa Barbara County region, including Santa Maria, is the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG).

As a companion document to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the SCS must include action items and financing decisions to achieve the GHG reduction target established by CARB. If the SCS does not meet the regional target, the MPO must produce an Alternative Planning Strategy that details an alternative plan to meet the target. SB 375 requires a greater level of land use planning coordination between local agencies (i.e., City of Santa Maria, Santa Barbara County) and MPOs (i.e., SBCAG) to meet the GHG targets established for Santa Barbara County

SB 743

SB 743, signed into law in 2013, directed OPR to develop revisions to the *CEQA Guidelines* by July 1, 2014 to establish new criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts and define alternative metrics instead of traffic level of service. SB 743 requires the new criteria to "promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses." It also states that alternative measures of transportation impacts may include "vehicle miles traveled, vehicle miles traveled per capita, automobile trip generation rates, or automobile trips generated." SB 743 changes the way that public agencies evaluate the transportation impacts of projects under CEQA by recognizing that roadway congestion, while an inconvenience to drivers, is not itself an environmental impact (Public Resource Code [PRC] Section 21099, subdivision [b][2]).

c. Local Regulations

Santa Barbara County Association of Governments Connected 2050 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy

SBCAG is required by State and federal law to prepare, update, and adopt a RTP every four years. The most recent update to the RTP was completed by SBCAG in 2021 (Connected 2050 RTP/SCS) and sets forth the long-range transportation planning goal describing how the region will meet its transportation needs for the 30-year period from 2020 to 2050. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS provides a collective vision for the region's future that balances transportation and housing needs with social, economic, and environmental goals. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS helps guide future planning efforts and policy decisions that affect transportation, including its relationship with housing and land use, with the goal to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions. The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS is based, in part, on SBCAG's Regional Growth Forecast which projects population and employment data to 2050. SBCAG designates Regional Housing Needs Allocation to jurisdictions based on the Regional Growth Forecast.

The Connected 2050 RTP/SCS includes five goal areas – Environment, Mobility & System Reliability, Equity, Health & Safety, and Prosperous Economy – with respective policies to meet each goal areas,

which are expected to result in significant benefits to the region, not only with respect to transportation and mobility, but also economic activity, safety, and social equity (SBCAG 2025).

Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan

The Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan was adopted by the City Council in January 2021. The Active Transportation Plan updates the 2009 Bikeway Master Plan and serves as a guidance document intended to support the provision of a connected bicycle and pedestrian network to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation choices in Santa Maria. Consistent with the 2017 Regional Transportation Planning Guidelines, this Active Transportation Plan emphasizes the need for both active transportation infrastructure planning and non-infrastructure program strategies to help meet the City's goals for transportation mobility and accessibility. Active transportation improvements contribute to parallel state and federal goals related to air quality compliance and climate change initiatives, including compliance with the California Complete Streets Act (AB 1358) and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as environmental justice and social equity initiatives to provide healthier mobility choices to disadvantaged communities.

Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan

Adopted in January of 2023, the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan for the Santa Maria Airport is provided by SBCAG's Airport Land Use Commission. The Airport Land Use Commission reviews land use plans and development proposals within Airport Influence Areas. Specifically, the Plan seeks to protect the public from the adverse effects of aircraft noise, to ensure that people and facilities are not concentrated in areas susceptible to aircraft accidents, and to ensure that no structures or activities encroach upon or adversely affect the use of navigable airspace. These plans also provide land use compatibility policies and criteria applicable to local jurisdictions in their preparation or amendments of General Plans.

Santa Maria Regional (formerly Area) Transit Short Range Transit Plan Update

In 2018, the City of Santa Maria hired a consultant to update to its Short Range Transit Plan. This plan is the guiding document for the City's public transit program. Before this update, the most recent full update was completed in 2008, with a subsequent update in 2015 that focused on Santa Maria Regional Transit's (SMRT's) evening service and fare policy. In 2021 the City prepared an Addendum to the Short Range Transit Plan incorporating post-COVID route and schedule revisions. The current Short Range Transit Plan includes a series of service recommendations in four categories: performance improvement, service enhancement, policy, and innovation/technology.

Santa Maria Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan

The Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan was adopted in January 2019 to guide the transformation of Santa Maria's Downtown streets into vibrant, multimodal corridors. Funded through a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant, the plan builds on the City's Downtown Specific Plan and Caltrans' Main Street, California program to promote Complete Streets principles. The plan provides conceptual design guidance for Broadway and Main Street, aiming to improve safety, walkability, and livability while accommodating all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicles. Key goals include reducing lane widths, adding bike facilities, widening sidewalks, and enhancing intersections with traffic calming and landscaping. The plan emphasizes community engagement and reflects input from extensive public outreach, prioritizing beautification, connectivity, and economic revitalization. While the plan does not constitute final design approval,

it establishes a framework for future engineering and implementation phases in partnership with Caltrans and identifies potential funding strategies for phased improvements.

4.7.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

VMT measures the amount of travel for all vehicles in a geographic region over a given period of time, typically a one-year period. VMT is calculated by adding up all the miles driven by all the cars and trucks on all the roadways in a region.

The analysis in this section is based, in part, on the City of Santa Maria travel demand model, which maintains a local traffic model for future traffic conditions for all major roadways in the city and along the Santa Maria Valley. The model consists of a base-year scenario (existing/baseline conditions) using the most recent data available, and a 2045 future year scenario (future conditions). The City of Santa Maria travel demand model is a trip-based model and identifies the following estimates:

- Residential VMT per household was estimated based on the VMT attributable to home-based trip productions, to and from residences in Santa Maria and the annexation area.
- VMT per employee was estimated based on the VMT associated with home-based work trips, to and from places of employment in Santa Maria and the annexation area.

Significance Thresholds

CEQA Guidelines Appendix G provides the following significance thresholds to determine if a project would have a potentially significant impact on transportation. For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update may have a significant adverse impact if it would:

1. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
2. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b);
3. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment); or
4. Result in inadequate emergency access.

The methodology for assessing impacts under thresholds 1, 3 and 4 is qualitative in nature and considers the existing regulations in place that would minimize potential impacts related to transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities; geometric design features; and emergency access.

The analysis of whether the project would conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) describes specific considerations for analyzing transportation impacts pursuant to SB 375. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) states that VMT is “generally” the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. No particular methodology or metric is mandated by Section 15064.3(b). Instead, the choice of methodology and metric is left to the discretion of the lead agency, bearing in mind the criteria the legislature had in mind for determining the significance of transportation impacts in SB 743. These were expressed in PRC Section 21099(b)(1), which states:

"[t]hose criteria shall promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses."

The assessment of VMT impacts for this EIR was determined by utilizing the City of Santa Maria travel demand model to forecast the typical daily weekday rates of VMT per household attributable to the residential population of Santa Maria, and VMT per employee attributable to jobs in Santa Maria.

SB 375 requires CARB to develop and set regional targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions from passenger vehicles. These targets are based on detailed calculations of the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions needed from various sectors of the economy in order to achieve the State's overall greenhouse gas reduction goals. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7(c), Thresholds of Significance, the City of Santa Maria has elected to adopt the VMT reduction target set by CARB for the SBCAG region as the threshold of significance for VMT impact determination. Using this threshold, VMT impacts would be considered potentially significant if the forecasted rate of residential VMT per household or VMT per employee for the project were to exceed 83 percent of the existing rate of VMT in each category (i.e., at least a 17% reduction in per-unit VMT would be required for an impact to be considered less than significant).

Table 4.7-2 summarizes the existing weekday daily rates of VMT and corresponding significance thresholds. The existing daily rate of residential VMT per household is estimated to be 52.2 miles and the existing daily rate of VMT per employee is estimated to be 11.1 miles per employee. VMT impacts resulting from the plan would therefore be considered significant if the forecasted year 2045 rate of residential VMT per capita under the proposed General Plan were to exceed 43.3 miles, or if the forecasted year 2045 rate of VMT per employee were to exceed 9.2 miles.

Table 4.7-2 VMT Impact Thresholds

Scenario	Residential VMT per Household	VMT per Employee
Existing Condition	52.2	11.1
Significant Impact Threshold (83 percent of Existing rate)	**43.3**	**9.2**

Source: Santa Maria Travel Demand Model, GHD, June 2025

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold:	Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Impact TRA-1 THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE CONNECTED 2050 RTP/SCS, THE SANT MARIA ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, OR ANY OTHER APPLICABLE PROGRAM, PLAN, ORDINANCE, OR POLICY RELEVANT TO THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The 2045 General Plan Update would result in additional residential and commercial density, which would increase multimodal trips (vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit) onto the circulation network. This increase in multiple modes of travel would be in conformance with the goals and policies contained in the following plans affecting the City's circulation network:

- SBCAG Connected 2050 RTP/SCS
- Local Roadway Safety Plan

- Active Transportation Plan

A brief discussion of the 2045 General Plan's consistency with SBCAG's Connected 2050 RTP/SCS, the City's Local Roadway Safety Plan, and the City's Active Transportation Plan is provided below.

Connected 2050 RTP/SCS

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies in the Circulation Element that facilitate development to promote regional transportation goals included in the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS to balance transportation and housing needs with social, economic, and environmental goals. These policies include:

Policy CIR-1.1: Complete Street planning and design. Ensure that complete streets infrastructure improves transportation choices for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation riders ~~and that users~~ of all ages and abilities. ~~are considered and included in the planning, design, approval, construction, and operation of new streets, and the alteration and maintenance phases of existing streets.~~

Policy CIR-1.2: Complete Streets construction. Construct City streets and ~~require new~~ private streets to be constructed and maintained to the extent feasible in accordance with the Street Network, Bikeway Network, and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams, the Active Transportation Plan, and standards established by the City Engineer that should be consistent with accepted standards such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) street design guidelines.

Policy CIR-1.3: Complete Streets in new development. Condition approvals of new development with street improvements and access provisions, to the extent feasible, that would be necessary to maintain multimodal operating standards and require complete street amenities consistent with the General Plan and accepted standards for new public and private streets.

Action CIR-1.3.1: Update the Santa Maria Municipal Code to establish active transportation infrastructure standards for new development, such as minimum requirements for bicycle storage/lockers and requiring integration with existing nearby bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure.

Policy CIR-2.2: Transportation planning. Update and implement transportation plans to be consistent with the General Plan.

Action CIR-2.2.1: Continue to participate in circulation and transportation planning with Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), and the State of California.

Action CIR-2.2.2: Seek inclusion in federal, state, and regional transportation improvement plans that support local capital improvements. These include the Federal Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), the Santa Barbara County Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP), and the County Regional Transportation Program (RTP).

Policy CIR-6.1: Public transit service and financial stability. Maintain and enhance convenient, safe, and reliable transit services..

Action CIR-6.1.1: Maintain the current level of bus services and expand such services as required when demand levels increase, covering new developments and underserved areas. This may include implementing flexible transit service (also known as microtransit) for off-peak hours, or providing night and weekend services where feasible.

Action CIR-6.1.3: Ensure transit services are affordable and accessible for people of every age, ability, or income. Serve disadvantaged communities, transit-dependent individuals, and major employment centers, ensuring that all stops and stations are ADA compliant.

Action CIR-6.1.5: Collaborate with regional transit agencies on coordinated scheduling to ensure seamless transfers, facilitating inter-city travel and access to regional employment centers and attractions.

Action CIR-6.1.6: Identify and secure stable funding sources for transit operations, maintenance, and capital projects. Explore federal, state, regional, and local funding opportunities, including potential value capture mechanisms from Transit-Oriented Development.

Policy CIR-6.4: Transit-supportive land use and urban design. Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) by encouraging and incentivizing mixed-use, compact developments around existing and planned transit stops and corridors.

Action CIR-6.4.1: Adopt accessible citywide street design standards that support transit operations and active transportation. Plan new developments with direct pedestrian and bike connections to transit stops and ensure building frontages are accessible to transit users.

Action CIR-6.4.2: Integrate transit planning and City planning efforts, including land use, housing, economic development, and environmental plans for a holistic approach to development. Require new development and redevelopment sites to provide transit stops consistent with Santa Maria Regional Transit Standards and documents.

Action CIR-6.4.3: Action CIR-6.4.3: Adopt comprehensive transit design guidelines that provide clear direction for planners and developers on designing new developments and redevelopments that integrate transit. These guidelines should:

- Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit stops, for safe, direct, and comfortable routes.
- Promote building orientation and entrances that face the street and transit stops, rather than being set back behind parking.
- Incentivize mixed-use development that places residential, commercial, and civic uses within easy walking distance of transit.
- Incorporate streetscape elements that enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage transit use, such as wide sidewalks, street trees, inviting public spaces, and appropriate lighting.
- Provide guidance on integrating transit stops directly into development sites for maximum convenience and visibility.
- Encourage human-scaled architecture and design that contributes to a vibrant and active public realm around transit facilities.

Policy CIR-7.1: Reduce VMT. Reduce VMT below regional averages on a "per resident" and "per employee" basis. ~~and disperse peak hour traffic to better utilize the existing and planned transportation infrastructure.~~

Action CIR-7.1.1: Maintain VMT thresholds consistent with State guidelines for use in evaluating potential traffic impacts from projects subject to CEQA.

Policy CIR-7.2: Prioritize land use development patterns that reduce VMT. In existing and future planned areas of the city, prioritize infill and mixed-use development and encourage new development in close proximity to existing employment, housing, schools, commercial centers, and other services and amenities.

With implementation of the policies included in the Circulation Element, the plan would encourage alternative travel, equitable access, and a reduction in vehicle trips, consistent with the regional transportation goals of the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS.

Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan

The Active Transportation Plan serves as a guidance document intended to support the provision of a connected bicycle and pedestrian network to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation choices in Santa Maria. The following 2045 General Plan Circulation Element policies would support active transportation projects identified in the Active Transportation Plan:

Policy CIR-1.4: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Consistent with the Bikeway Network and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams, develop bicycle and pedestrian facilities to meet the transportation and recreational needs of the residents throughout the city, and where possible, provide separate bikeway access to major destinations (e.g., schools, parks, and commercial and employment centers) to ensure safety.

Action CIR-1.4.1: Implement the bicycle and pedestrian projects identified in the Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagram and the Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan.

Action CIR-1.4.2: Pursue all applicable revenue sources for the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Policy CIR-1.5: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities in new development. Require pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly facilities consistent with the Bikeway Network and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams and the Active Transportation Plan when reviewing and approving private development applications, General Plan or zoning changes, and specific plans.

Policy CIR-1.6: Multimodal street standards. Maintain and update street standards that serve not just automobile operations, but also multimodal movement and adjacent land uses, including pedestrians, motorists, bicyclists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities, in a form that is compatible with and complementary to adjacent land uses, and promotes connectivity between uses and areas.

Policy CIR-5.1: Vision Zero. Advance efforts to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries attributable to collisions on City streets by developing and implementing a "Vision Zero" strategy to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all.

Action CIR-5.1.1: Monitor collision data and implement countermeasures to address identified collision patterns.

Action CIR-5.1.2: Implement safety improvements, including improvements consistent with those recommended by the Santa Maria Local Roadway Safety Plan (LRSP).

Policy CIR-5.2: Safe Routes to School. Promote pedestrian safety and connectivity between homes and schools by implementing infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming measures, and bike lanes) to ensure safe, accessible pathways for students.

Policy CIR-6.3: Integrated multimodal infrastructure. Develop a multimodal transit system that works for walking, biking, and shared mobility.

The 2045 General Plan Update would ensure adequate bicycle and pedestrian facilities are provided to promote safe multimodal circulation, and plan policies would be further supported by active transportation projects in the Active Transportation Plan. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with the Active Transportation Plan.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because this impact would be less than significant.

Threshold:	Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Impact TRA-2 THE FUTURE (2045) CITYWIDE RATES OF VMT WITH THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT MEET THE 17% VMT REDUCTION TARGET REQUIRED TO BE CONSISTENT WITH CEQA GUIDELINES 15064.3(B). THERE ARE NO FEASIBLE GENERAL PLAN POLICIES OR MITIGATION MEASURES THAT COULD REDUCE CITYWIDE RATES OF VMT BELOW THE VMT REDUCTION TARGET. AS A RESULT, THIS WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACT.

As described in Section 4.7.3(a), Methodology and Significance Thresholds, VMT impacts from the 2045 General Plan Update were analyzed using the City of Santa Maria travel demand model. VMT impacts would be considered significant if the forecasted rate of residential VMT per household of the project exceeded 43.3 miles or the VMT rate per employee for the project exceeded 9.2 miles. As shown in Table 4.7-3, the model-forecasted rates of residential VMT per household and VMT per employee for Future (Year 2045) conditions both exceed the significance threshold. Therefore, transportation impacts associated with VMT would be significant.

Table 4.7-3 Per Household and Per Employee Vehicle Miles Traveled

Scenario	VMT per Household	VMT per Employee
Existing/Baseline Conditions	52.2	11.1
Future (2045) Conditions	47.6	9.8
Significance Threshold	43.3	9.2
Impact Finding	Significant	Significant

Source: Santa Maria Travel Demand Model, GHD, June 2025

Although the overall average per-unit VMT in the horizon year does not meet the 17% VMT reduction target, it should be noted that the overall average per-unit VMT figure includes a mix of existing and future residential and non-residential developments. Table 4.7-4 shows the per-unit VMT of future development only as a separate calculation (i.e., what could be approved and built going forward under the 2045 General Plan Update.

Table 4.7-4 Vehicle Miles Traveled, Reduction from Existing

Scenario	VMT per Household	VMT per Employee
Existing/Baseline Conditions	52.2	11.1
Future (2045) Conditions	47.6	9.8
Reduction from Existing	-8.8%	-11.7%
Future Development Only	39.5	7.4
Reduction from Existing	-24.2%	-32.8%

Source: Santa Maria Travel Demand Model, GHD, June 2025

As shown in Table 4.7-4, evaluating future development alone (excluding existing development from the calculation) would meet CARB's VMT reduction target.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies in the Circulation Element that would shorten trips and increase the use of multi-modal transportation and thereby reduce per-unit VMT. These include:

Policy CIR-7.1: Reduce VMT. Reduce VMT below regional averages on a "per resident" and "per employee" basis. ~~and disperse peak hour traffic to better utilize the existing and planned transportation infrastructure.~~

Action CIR-7.1.1: Maintain VMT thresholds consistent with State guidelines for use in evaluating potential traffic impacts from projects subject to CEQA.

Policy CIR-7.2: Prioritize land use development patterns that reduce VMT. Prioritize infill and mixed-use development and encourage new development near existing employment, housing, schools, commercial centers, and other services and amenities.

Policy LU-4.3: Mixed-use development. Support vertical and horizontal mixed-use development, integrating residential uses along Broadway and Main Street to promote a pedestrian-focused environment in the core of the city and reduce vehicle trips.

Potential future VMT impacts from individual developments in Santa Maria would be evaluated based on local VMT thresholds established by the City. While the potential impacts of individual developments in Santa Maria are speculative, and in spite of the fact that future development alone (excluding existing development from the calculation) would meet CARB's VMT reduction target, the combined Future (2045) conditions forecast for the 2045 General Plan Update does not meet the 17% VMT reduction target, and would be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b), which is a potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

The 2045 General Plan Update includes policies which would reduce VMT to the extent feasible. However, given the legacy development pattern embodied in existing development in the city, there is no set of General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could feasibly reduce per-unit VMT below the threshold.

Significance After Mitigation

Because there is no set of General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could feasibly reduce per-unit VMT below the threshold beyond what has already been included, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

Threshold 3:	Would the project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment)?
Threshold 4:	Would the project result in inadequate emergency access?

Impact TRA-3 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD COMPLY WITH STATE, SANTA MARIA FIRE DEPARTMENT, AND CITY REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION DESIGN SAFETY AND EMERGENCY ACCESS. WITH ADHERENCE TO THESE REQUIREMENTS, THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE HAZARDS DUE TO A GEOMETRIC DESIGN FEATURE OR RESULT IN INADEQUATE EMERGENCY ACCESS, AND THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The Santa Maria Municipal Code includes a set of standard construction details, which include, but are not limited to, general specifications, drainage details, curb, driveway, sidewalk and access ramp details, typical street section, water system details and sanitary sewer system details. As individual developments are proposed, project applicants would be required to follow appropriate design guidelines in implementing roadway improvements that are necessary to alleviate transportation hazards. Therefore, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment).

Construction activities associated with new development facilitated by the plan could temporarily impair emergency access points used for emergency access vehicles. However, any construction on State highway systems (i.e., U.S. 101, SR 135, and SR 166) would be required to create a temporary traffic control plan that adheres to the standards set forth in the most recent version of the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Caltrans 2014, revised 2025). Construction within a public easement or right-of-way would be required to obtain an encroachment permit from the City's Public Works Department. Accordingly, construction activities would not result in substantial impairment of emergency access in Santa Maria.

Operation of development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could result in alterations to existing transportation infrastructure, including, but not limited to, sidewalks and driveways. Future development would be required to adhere to applicable state and City of Santa Maria Fire Department design standards for emergency vehicle access, such as California Code of Regulations Title 19, Article 3, Section 3.05 which requires access roads from every building to a public street to be all-weather hard-surfaced right-of-way not less than 20 feet in width.

In addition to existing State and local requirements, the 2045 General Plan Update proposes policies that would ensure transportation safety and maintain adequate emergency access. These policies include the following:

> **Policy CIR-1.3: Complete Streets in new development**. Condition approvals of new development with street improvements and access provisions, to the extent feasible, that would be necessary to maintain multimodal operating standards and require complete street amenities consistent with the General Plan and accepted standards for new public and private streets.

Action CIR-1.3.1: Update the Santa Maria Municipal Code to establish active transportation infrastructure standards for new development, such as minimum requirements for bicycle storage/lockers and requiring integration with existing nearby bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure.

Policy CIR-1.4: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Consistent with the Bikeway Network and Pedestrian Priority improvement Network diagrams, develop bicycle and pedestrian facili to meet the transportation and recreational needs of the residents throughout the city, and where possible, provide separate bikeway access to major destinations (e.g., schools, parks, and commercial and employment centers) to ensure safety.

Action CIR-1.4.1: Implement the bicycle and pedestrian projects identified in the Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagram and the Active Transportation Plan.

Action CIR-1.4.2: Pursue all applicable revenue sources for the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Policy CIR-1.9: Transportation studies. For all new larger developments or substantial improvements to existing development, require a transportation study to evaluate the potential effects on the transportation system associated with the proposed project prior to approval, including ensuring that the proposed project provides transportation amenities consistent with the General Plan. The requirement of transportation studies for new developments is at the discretion of City staff and determined on a case-by-case basis.

Policy CIR-1.10: Acceptable Traffic Levels of Service. ~~Multimodal operating standards~~. Maintain an acceptable peak hour level of service (LOS) of D or better, as determined using the most current edition of ~~based on~~ the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer, on all ~~at~~ arterial and collector roadways and at all signalized ~~street~~ intersections, except where achieving the LOS standard would result in unacceptable conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, or transit users. Deficiency plans shall be required for developments that cause intersections to cross the LOS threshold. Provide low-stress travel conditions for bicyclists that achieve Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) 2 or better on arterial and collector streets.

Traffic Impact Analyses: Traffic impact analyses (TIAs) shall be prepared using HCM-based methodologies or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer, consistent with the City's adopted traffic study guidelines.

Methodology: Where multiple methodologies are available to determine LOS, the City Engineer shall determine the appropriate analysis method based on facility type, context, and study purpose, including, as applicable:

- Control delay (seconds per vehicle) for signalized and unsignalized intersections; and
- HCM-defined performance measures for roadway segments, roundabouts, and other facilities.

Long-Range Planning Flexibility: For long-range planning horizons, area-wide planning efforts, or cumulative growth scenarios, LOS D need not be strictly maintained where the City determines that:

- Temporary or localized degradation of LOS is unavoidable; and

- Overriding transportation, land use, environmental, or community benefits justify the impact, supported by appropriate findings. Such determinations shall be made using HCM-based analysis or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer and documented in the applicable planning or environmental review documents. Downtown/Specific Plan Areas: Within designated specific plan areas or activity centers, including the Downtown Specific Plan area, projects that exceed City-established vehicle trip thresholds shall prepare a traffic impact analysis using HCM methodology or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer in accordance with City standards. Where the City determines that strict application of LOS D would conflict with adopted plan objectives, the City may approve alternative or equivalent transportation mitigation measures, including but not limited to multimodal improvements, transportation demand management strategies, or deficiency plans prepared consistent with State law.

Conditions of Development Approvals: Development approvals shall include conditions necessary to maintain or achieve LOS D unless alternative mitigation is approved pursuant to City policy.

Action CIR-1.10.1: Periodically review roadway and intersection performance using HCM metrics or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer and prioritize capital improvements to address identified deficiencies.

Policy CIR-1.11: Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress. Provide low-stress travel conditions for bicyclists that achieve Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) 2 or better on arterial and collector streets (see the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress standard above).

Policy CIR-2.1: Preservation of right-of-way. Require appropriate right-of-way dedications or public access easements of all new developments to facilitate the construction of transportation facilities shown in the Street Network, Bikeway Network, and Pedestrian Improvement Network diagrams as well as the bicycle and pedestrian projects recommended by the Active Transportation Plan, including protection of right-of-way for future streets and trails.

Policy CIR-5.2: Safe Routes to School. Promote pedestrian safety and connectivity between homes and schools by implementing infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming measures, and bike lanes) to ensure safe, accessible pathways for students.

In addition, future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be reviewed by City staff to ensure consistency with all applicable City and State design standards, including standards for project access points, location, and design, sight lines, roadway modifications, provisions for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connections, and emergency access. As a result, these impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because this impact would be less than significant.

4.7.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City Limits and annexation areas. All new development in the City and annexation areas would be required to comply with local regulations and policies related to the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Cumulative development in Santa Maria would be required to comply with 2045 General Plan Circulation Element policies. Accordingly, cumulative projects would have a less than significant impact related to conflicts with programs, plans, ordinances or policies addressing the circulation system.

Cumulative development could result in changes to regional baseline VMT conditions that conflict with *CEQA Guidelines* section 15064.3, subdivision (b) and therefore create a significant cumulative impact. As discussed in Impact TRA-2, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not meet the 17% VMT reduction target required to be consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b). Because the analysis for the 2045 General Plan Update is based on citywide VMT calculations in comparison to SBCAG regional VMT estimates, the 2045 General Plan's project-level significant and unavoidable impact on VMT implies that the 2045 General Plan Update would have a cumulatively considerable contribution toward regional cumulative VMT impacts. Therefore, cumulative VMT impacts would be significant, and the 2045 General Plan Update would have a cumulatively considerable contribution on VMT impacts.

Some types of transportation impacts are related to site- and project-specific characteristics, and conditions would not be significantly affected by other development outside Santa Maria. Compliance with applicable regulations and oversight, including Caltrans design guidelines, City design guidelines, and – for development outside Santa Maria – Santa Barbara County Fire Department standards would effectively reduce the potential for individual projects to create a cumulative transportation hazard or emergency access impacts within Santa Maria, as well as Santa Barbara County. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to transportation hazards and emergency access would be less than significant.

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4.8 Utilities and Service Systems

This section evaluates potential effects on utilities related to adoption and implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update by identifying existing and planned service availability and anticipated demands and determining whether any necessary utility upgrades would result in adverse environmental effects. Potential impacts related to stormwater runoff are evaluated and discussed in Section 4.5, *Hydrology and Water Quality*. Potential impacts related to the use of electricity and natural gas are evaluated and discussed in Section 4.10, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*.

4.8.1 Setting

a. Water Supply and Demand

The City of Santa Maria provides municipal drinking water supply within the City's water service area, which is generally bounded by the City limits and includes a portion of the annexation area. The remainder of the annexation area is served by private water wells. The City of Santa Maria water supply is comprised of a blend of groundwater and imported water from the State Water Project. The City owns a public water system with 22,888 active domestic water service connections which primarily serve residential, commercial, and industrial land uses within City Limits (2021). Water conservation has been a focus for the City and is reflected in the long-term demand forecasts. The City's water portfolio is comprised of the following water supply sources: local groundwater, purchased water from the State Water Project (SWP), associated return flows recaptured from the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin, assigned rights to water from the Basin as governed by a settlement agreement (*Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District vs. City of Santa Maria, et al., Case No. 770214)* and commonly known as the Santa Maria Groundwater Adjudication, and assigned rights to augmented yield from Twitchell Reservoir. The Twitchell Reservoir is located in southern San Luis Obispo County and northern Santa Barbara County, on the Cuyama River, approximately 4 miles northeast of the city.

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) operates the SWP and imported water supplies for the City are obtained from the SWP via a contract with Central Coast Water Authority (CCWA). The City has a Water Supply Agreement with CCWA for 17,820 acre feet per year of imported SWP water. However, based on the rainfall, Sierra snowpack, and State reservoir levels each year the percentage allocation of State Water varies. SWP water originates within the Feather River watershed, is captured in Lake Oroville, and flows via the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the California Aqueduct, and the Coastal Branch Extension, into CCWA's treatment and conveyance facilities. Pursuant to the Stipulation[1], Santa Maria agreed to import and use within the Basin no less than 10,000 acre feet per year of available SWP water, or the full amount of available SWP water if the amount available is less than 10,000 AF in a given year.

[1] The Santa Maria Basin (Basin) is adjudicated, and therefore, already managed. The City's rights to rely on Basin water resources for both pumping and storage are governed by a settlement agreement ("Stipulation") signed by a majority of the parties *(Santa Maria Valley Water Conservation District vs. City of Santa Maria, et al., Case No. 770214*), commonly known as the "Santa Maria Groundwater Adjudication." The Stipulation provides the City with quantifiable and certain water rights. Prior to the groundwater adjudication, these rights were not quantifiable. The Stipulation also establishes a framework for both permanent and temporary transfers of water rights within the Basin. Because the City has obtained quantifiable water rights, the City has greater flexibility in facilitating transfers and exchanges.

Groundwater for the City is supplied by six active wells in the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin. The Basin has a surface area of approximately 184,000 acres, or 287.5 square miles. The Basin is bounded by the San Luis and Santa Lucia Ranges on the north, by the San Rafael Mountains on the east, by the Solomon Hills on the south, by the Casmalia Hills on the southwest, and by the Pacific Ocean on the west. The City has an allowed groundwater pumping right of 5,100 AF per year (City of Santa Maria 2021).

The Twitchell Reservoir operates as a flood control and water conservation reservoir. Releases are controlled from Twitchell Reservoir to maximize recharge of the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin through percolation in the Santa Maria Riverbed. The settlement agreement sets the amount of the Twitchell yield at 32,000 AF per year. The City is entitled to 14,300 AF of that yield annually (City of Santa Maria 2021).

Table 4.8-1 shows the City's anticipated water supply and demand through 2045. Also shown is the water demand associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update, included as the "buildout" column. [2] As shown therein, the City projects that water demand would be met by existing water supplies in all years except Year Five of a multi-year drought in 2025 and 2030 (City of Santa Maria 2020a).

Table 4.8-1 Projected Water Supply and Demand in Acre-Feet

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	Maximum Buildout[1]
Normal Year						
Supply Totals	36,558	36,403	36,250	36,095	35,941	35,941
Demand Totals	15,026	17,247	17,869	18,490	18,716	20,237
Surplus	**21,532**	**19,156**	**18,381**	**17,605**	**17,225**	**15,704**
Single Dry-Year						
Supply Totals	26,419	26,571	26,724	26,876	27,029	27,029
Demand Totals	15,026	17,247	17,869	18,490	18,716	20,237
Surplus	**21,532**	**19,156**	**18,381**	**17,605**	**17,225**	**6,792**
Multiple Dry-Years						
Year One						
Supply Totals	29,189	29,662	30,136	30,610	31,084	31,084
Demand Totals	15,026	17,247	17,869	18,490	18,716	20,237
Surplus	**14,163**	**12,415**	**12,267**	**12,120**	**12,368**	**10,847**
Year Two						
Supply Totals	39,605	28,989	28,374	27,758	27,143	27,143
Demand Totals	15,026	17,247	17,869	18,490	18,716	20,237
Surplus	**24,579**	**11,742**	**10,505**	**9,268**	**8,427**	**6,906**

[2] Buildout assumed in the Annexation Study Technical Memorandum prepared by WSC in December 2024, was estimated to be 60,687. Population for the Annexation Study Technical Memorandum was calculated using the United States Census persons per household rate of 3.76. The plan's estimated addition of 16,140 units was multiplied by the persons per household rate of 3.76 for a total of 60,687 persons. This calculation represents a conservative analysis in which every potential residential unit (16,140 as described in Section 2.6.5, Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout) is occupied at the full potential persons per household rate.

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	Maximum Buildout[1]
Year Three						
Supply Totals	27,169	26,417	25,665	24,913	24,161	24,161
Demand Totals	15,026	17,247	17,869	18,490	18,716	20,237
Surplus	**12,143**	**9,170**	**7.796**	**6,423**	**5,445**	**3,924**
Year Four						
Supply Totals	30,126	30,121	30,116	30,111	30,106	30,106
Demand Totals	15,026	17,247	17,869	18,490	18,716	20,237
Surplus	**15,100**	**12,874**	**12,247**	**11,621**	**11,390**	**9,869**
Year Five						
Supply Totals	25,180	25,180	25,180	25,180	25,180	25,180
Demand Totals	25,735	25,396	25,058	24,720	24,382	20,237
Surplus	**(555)**	**(216)**	**122**	**460**	**798**	**4,943**

() indicates a negative number

[1] Water demand associated with implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update was determined in a Technical Memorandum prepared by WSC in December 2024 and is included as Appendix D to this EIR.

Source: City of Santa Maria 2020a

b. Sewer Collection and Wastewater Treatment

The City provides wastewater collection and treatment services within the wastewater service area, which includes the city limits and an area to the south of the city that is outside city limits. The City's wastewater treatment facility is rated to treat 13.5 million gallons per day of wastewater. The annexation area is not currently serviced by the City's wastewater collection and treatment services are instead serviced by Onsite Sewage Disposal Systems, or septic tanks. Liquid waste haulers permitted through the city that collect wastewater within the annexation area may dispose of liquid waste at the City of Santa Maria Septage Receiving Station at the treatment plant (City of Santa Maria 2025).

Sewer Collection

The City's wastewater collection system consists of eight wastewater basins with associated trunk sewers and one treatment plant. The basins generally drain east to west to trunk lines that run to the treatment plant. The treatment plan is located at 601 South Black Road within the City of Santa Maria's westernmost city limit. The wastewater collection system is comprised of approximately 250 miles of gravity-flow sewer pipes and mains, and one lift station with 0.2 mile of force main serving 117 residential parcels. Most of the older pipes are constructed of vitrified clay pipe and newer pipes of polyvinyl chloride pipe. Sewer mains range in size from four inches to 30 inches in diameter, with 60 percent constructed of vitrified clay pipe, 25 percent constructed of polyvinyl chloride, and the remaining constructed of presently unknown material.

Wastewater Treatment

The City owns and operates a treatment plant located at 601 Black Road. In March 2010, the hydraulic capacity of the existing facility was evaluated and improvements were made to the system to increase capacity from 9.5 Million Gallons Per Day (MGD) to 13.5 MGD (City of Santa Maria 2020b; City of Santa Maria, n.d.). The treatment processes consist of headworks, grit removal,

primary clarifiers, trickling filters, intermediate clarifier, secondary trickling filters, secondary clarifiers, gravity sludge thickeners, anaerobic digesters, and sludge drying beds. The treated wastewater is discharged to percolation ponds located adjacent to the site.

The average daily sewage flow as measured at the treatment plant, calculated by totalizing the flow over a period and dividing by the number of days in that period. In the case of average annual flow, the period is a 365-day calendar year. The Utilities Capacity Study lists average annual flow as 9.99 MGD in 2024 (City of Santa Maria 2015). The peak hour wet weather flow, which is the theoretical maximum sustained sewage flow the collection system will experience, was estimated as 19.98 MGD in 2024 (City of Santa Maria 2020b).

c. Stormwater Facilities

The City of Santa Maria and the Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (SBCFCD) provide stormwater conveyance, management, and recharge facilities in and around the city. The City and SBCFCD jointly developed regional recharge basins west of Blosser Road and south of Stowell Road (the Getty Basin, Hobbs Basin, and Kovar Basins). These basins are designed to retain stormwater and allow that water to percolate into the groundwater basin. Groundwater recharge programs currently replenish the Basin by recharging more than 20,000 AF of water annually through the Santa Maria River, local retardation basins, and regional recharge basins.

Stormwater within Santa Maria that does not infiltrate into the ground becomes surface runoff, which either flows into surface waterways or is channeled into the City's stormwater system. The flood control facilities owned and operated by the SBCFCD are key flood control facilities in the city. Channels owned and operated by the SBCFCD are currently listed as impaired waterbodies under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list. Once a water body has been added to the State's list of impaired waters it stays there until the State develops a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and the EPA approves it. Once a TMDL is developed, a water body is no longer on the 303(d) list, but it is still tracked until the water is fully restored. These flood control facilities are as follows:

- Blosser Channel. The concrete lined portion of the Blosser Channel flows northward along the western side of the city and discharges via a culvert to an earthen portion, which discharges through the levee to the Santa Maria River. High flows from Blosser Channel flow via a spillway into the Blosser Basin, which is a large flood control facility. Vegetation becomes established rapidly in the earthen portions and must be continually removed by the SBCFCD to protect against blockages and flooding.
- Bradley Channel. Bradley Channel, a concrete lined ditch, begins in the farm fields south of East Betteravia Road. This ditch runs north toward the Santa Maria River bordering the farm fields as it enters the residential neighborhoods north of East Jones Street. The flow source is almost entirely from heavily sediment-laden agriculture runoff. During storm events, it also receives some stormwater from City neighborhoods. Sediment is removed from the channel by the SBCFCD on a maintenance schedule. The earthen ditches upstream are sprayed with pesticides to control weeds. Sediment deposition and vegetation reduce volume capacity in the unlined ditches. As it enters the residential neighborhoods, the channel travels until it reaches the manmade lake at Jim May Park. This manmade lake operates as a settling basin for the Bradley Channel, which carries constant agricultural flows. The lake has no natural water source. It collects the agricultural flows, and in storm events, runoff from the surrounding neighborhoods combines with the agricultural flow. Flows from the Bradley Channel are directed under the US-101 freeway as the channel continues westward through the city where it eventually combines

with the Blosser Channel flow and discharges through the levee to the Santa Maria River. High flows are partially diverted into the Blosser Basin.

- Main Street Channel. Stormwater from the central part of the city discharges to the Main Street Channel through a large underground storm drainpipe that flows west along the south side of West Main Street. The Main Street Channel collects agricultural runoff and flow from the City's MS4. The Main Street Channel, which is a degraded, unlined roadside ditch that runs west from the western city limits at Hanson Way parallel to West Main Street for approximately 1.5 miles. At that point, it flows under West Main Street through a culvert and enters a SBCFCD facility known as the Unit II Ditch. The Unit II Ditch continues north for approximately two miles where it discharges through the levee to the Santa Maria River. Overflow from the Getty, Hobbs, and Kovar basins also discharge into the Main Street Channel.

The City of Santa Maria proactively manages stormwater within its city limits. Historically, the City has focused on the impacts of stormwater as it relates to flood control; however, in the last decade additional regulations have been adopted in the State of California which specifically address the discharge quality of stormwater from a City's stormwater conveyance system (City of Santa Maria 2025a). Discharges from the City's storm drain system to the Santa Maria River and ultimately the Pacific Ocean are regulated in accordance with the State Water Resources Control Board's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges from Small General Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (Phase II MS4), Order No. 2013-0001-DWQ (Division of Water Quality) NPDES No. CAS000004. In recent years, new developments in Santa Maria have been designed to comply with state regulations, incorporating features such as retention basins and bio swales to enhance stormwater infiltration and reduce stormwater runoff. The City and SBCFCD have instituted several programs to improve and increase groundwater recharge to the Santa Maria Basin, including adoption of Low-Impact Development guidelines and construction of recharge basins. These basins are intended to slow the movement of stormwater and allow the stormwater to percolate into the groundwater basin to recharge it.

d. Solid Waste

The City of Santa Maria provides solid waste collection services through its Utilities Department. The annexation area is currently serviced by MarBorg industries for solid waste collection. Residential trash collection is mandatory and occurs once per week, while recycling is collected every other week (City of Santa Maria 2025b). All municipal and MarBorg Industries collected solid waste is transferred to the Santa Maria Regional Landfill located at 2065 East Main Street in Santa Maria. The Santa Maria Regional Landfill has a maximum permitted daily throughput of 8,820 tons per week and a remaining capacity of approximately 2,845,000 cubic yards and is estimated to remain operational through 2034 (California Department of Resources, Recycling, and Recovery [CalRecycle] 2025a).

Beyond 2034, solid waste generated by the city may be diverted to other nearby landfills, such as the Cold Canyon Landfill. The Cold Canyon Landfill has a maximum permitted daily throughput of 1,650 tons per day and a remaining capacity of approximately 13,000,000 cubic yards and is estimated to remain operational through 2040 (CalRecycle 2025c).

e. Electricity, Natural Gas, and Telecommunications

Pacific Gas & Electric

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) provides transmission lines to convey electric power supply to Santa Maria. PG&E is one of the nation's largest electric and gas utility companies, and it maintains 106,681 circuit miles of electric distribution lines and 18,466 circuit miles of interconnected transmission lines (PG&E 2025).

Central Coast Community Energy

Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) is a Community Choice Aggregator established by local communities to source clean and renewable electricity and is responsible for procuring power for Santa Maria. In 2023, 3CE's power mix consisted of 30.3 percent renewable resources, 0.4 percent large hydroelectric facilities, and 69.3 percent unspecified power (3CE 2025).

Southern California Gas Company

Santa Maria is in the natural gas service area of the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) which spans central and southern California. SoCalGas' distribution network is composed of approximately 51,070 miles of gas mains across an approximate 20,000 square mile service territory (California Gas and Electric Utilities 2025). Natural gas supplied by SoCalGas is sourced from gas fields in several sedimentary basins in the western U.S. and Canada including supply basins located in New Mexico (San Juan Basin), West Texas (Permian Basin), Rocky Mountains, western Canada, and local California supplies (California Gas and Electric Utilities 2025).

Telecommunications

Telecommunication services, including broadband, cellular, and wireless services, are provided to residents and businesses from a variety of private companies, including national retailers Comcast, AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile and regional retailers such as Frontier, Hughesnet, Viasat, and Ranch WiFi (HighSpeenInternet.com 2025).

4.8.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations

Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 258 (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Subtitle D) contains regulations for municipal solid waste landfills and requires states to implement their own permitting programs incorporating the federal landfill criteria. The federal regulations address the location, operation, design, groundwater monitoring, and closure of landfills.

b. State Regulations

California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

In September 2014, Governor Brown signed legislation requiring that California's critical groundwater resources be sustainably managed by local agencies. The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act gives local agencies the power to sustainably manage groundwater and requires

groundwater sustainability plans to be developed for medium- and high-priority groundwater basins. The Santa Maria River Valley Basin is a very low priority basin (DWR 2025). Because of this, and because the Basin is adjudicated, a groundwater sustainability plan has not been prepared for this basin.

Water Conservation Act of 2009

The Water Conservation Act of 2009 (Senate Bill [SB] X7-7), effective November 9, 2009, requires each urban retail water supplier to develop urban water use targets and agricultural water suppliers to implement efficient water management practices. Because of the small size of the City of Solvang, it has fewer than 3,000 service connections, and is therefore not considered an "urban" water supplier.

Assembly Bill 1881

Assembly Bill (AB) 1881 expanded previous legislation related to landscape water use efficiency. AB 1881, the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006, enacted landscape efficiency recommendations of the California Urban Water Conservation Council for improving the efficiency of water use in new and existing urban irrigated landscapes in California. AB 1881 required the California Department of Water Resources to update the existing Model Local Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and local agencies to adopt the updated model ordinance or an equivalent. The law also requires the California Energy Commission to adopt performance standards and labeling requirements for landscape irrigation equipment, including irrigation controllers, moisture sensors, emission devices, and valves to reduce the wasteful, uneconomic, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy or water.

California Senate Bills 610 and 221 (Water Supply Assessment and Verification)

Senate Bills (SB) 610 and 221 amended State law, effective January 1, 2002, to improve the link between the information on water supply availability and certain land use decisions made by cities and counties. Both statutes require detailed information regarding water availability to be provided to city and county decision-makers prior to approval of specified large development projects with greater than 500 dwelling units or 500,000 square feet of commercial space. Both statutes also require this detailed information to be included in the administrative record that serves as the evidentiary basis for an approval action by the city or county on such projects. Under SB 610 water assessments must be furnished to local governments for inclusion in any environmental documentation for certain projects as defined in Water Code 10912 subject to CEQA. Under SB 221 approval by a city or county of certain residential subdivisions requires an affirmative written verification of sufficient water supply.

California Water Plan

The California Department of Water Resources is responsible for preparing and updating the California Water Plan, which is a policy document that guides the development and management of State water resources. The plan is updated every five years to reflect changes in resources and urban, agricultural, and environmental water demands. The California Water Plan suggests ways of managing demand and augmenting supply to balance water supply with demand.

California Urban Water Management Planning Act

In 1983 the California Legislature enacted the Urban Water Management Planning Act (Water Code Section 10610–10656). The Act states that every urban water supplier that provides water to 3,000 or more customers, or that provides over 3,000 acre-feet annually, should make every effort to ensure the appropriate level of reliability in its water service sufficient to meet the needs of its various categories of customers during normal, dry, and multiple dry years. The Act requires that urban water suppliers adopt an urban water management plan at least once every five years and submit them to the Department of Water Resources. Noncompliant urban water suppliers are ineligible to receive funding pursuant to Division 24, commencing with Section 78500, or Division 26, commencing with Section 79000, or receive drought assistance from the State until the Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) is submitted and deemed complete pursuant to the Urban Water Management Planning Act.

California Senate Bill 7x7 (Statewide Water Conservation)

In November 2009 the California State Legislature passed and the Governor approved a comprehensive package of water legislation, including SB 7x7 addressing water conservation. In general SB 7x7 requires a 20 percent reduction in per capita urban water use by 2020, with an interim 10 percent target in 2015. The legislation requires urban water users to develop consistent water use targets and to use those targets in their UWMPs.

Senate Bills 350 and 100

The Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015 (SB 350) requires the amount of electricity generated and sold to retail customers per year from eligible renewable energy resources to be increased to 50 percent by December 31, 2030. This act also requires doubling of the energy efficiency in existing buildings by 2030.

Adopted on September 10, 2018, SB 100 supports the reduction of GHG emissions from the electricity sector by accelerating the State's Renewables Portfolio Standard Program, last updated by SB 350. SB 100 requires electricity providers to increase procurement from eligible renewable energy resources to 33 percent of total retail sales by 2020, 44 percent by 2024, 60 percent by 2030, and 100 percent by 2045.

Senate Bill 1374

SB 1374 states that the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) must receive an annual report, including progress made by jurisdictions in regard to their advances on diverting construction and demolition waste material. The CIWMB specified that CalRecycle was required to adopt a model ordinance that would divert 50 percent to 75 percent of construction and demolition waste materials from landfills.

California Assembly Bill 939

AB 939 (Public Resources Code 41780) requires cities and counties to prepare integrated waste management plans and to divert 50 percent of solid waste from landfills beginning in calendar year 2000 and each year thereafter. AB 939 also requires cities and counties to prepare Source Reduction and Recycling Elements as part of the integrated waste management plans. These elements are designed to develop recycling services to achieve diversion goals, stimulate local recycling in manufacturing and stimulate the purchase of recycled products.

California Assembly Bill 341

The purpose of AB 341 is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by diverting commercial solid waste to recycling efforts and to expand the opportunity for additional recycling services and recycling manufacturing facilities in California. AB 341 required all businesses that generate four or more cubic yards of garbage per week and multi-family dwellings with five or more units to recycle by July 1, 2012. AB341 also sets a statewide goal of 75 percent waste diversion.

California Senate Bill 1016

SB 1016 requires that the 50 percent solid waste diversion requirement established by AB 939 be expressed in pounds per person per day. SB 1016 changed the California Department of Resources, Recycling, and Recovery's (CalRecycle) review process for each municipality's integrated waste management plan. After an initial determination of diversion requirements in 2006 and establishing diversion rates for subsequent calendar years, the Board reviews a jurisdiction's diversion rate compliance in accordance with a specified schedule. Beginning January 1, 2018, the Board will be required to review a jurisdiction's source reduction and recycling element and hazardous waste element once every two years.

California Senate Bill 1383

SB 1383 was adopted in September 2016 and establishes targets to achieve a 75 percent reduction in the level of Statewide landfilled organic waste from the 2014 level by 2025. The law grants CalRecycle the regulatory authority required to achieve the organic waste disposal reduction targets and establishes an additional target that not less than 20 percent of currently disposed edible food is recovered for human consumption by 2025. In addition, SB 1383 regulations require that jurisdictions conduct education and outreach on organics recycling to all residents, businesses, haulers, solid waste facilities, and local food banks and other food recovery organizations.

California Energy Commission

As the State's primary energy policy and planning agency, the California Energy Commission (CEC) collaborates with State and federal agencies, utilities, and other stakeholders to develop and implement State energy policies. Since 1975, the CEC has been responsible for reducing the State's electricity and natural gas demand, primarily by adopting new Building and Appliance Energy Efficiency Standards that have contributed to keeping California's per capita electricity consumption relatively low. The CEC is also responsible for the certification and compliance of thermal power plants 50 megawatts and larger, including all project-related facilities in California.

California Public Utilities Commission

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities operating in California. The energy work responsibilities of the CPUC are derived from the California State Constitution, specifically Article XII, Section 3 and other sections more generally, numerous State legislative enactments and various Federal statutory and administrative requirements. The CPUC regulates natural gas utility service for customers that receive natural gas from PG&E and other natural gas utilities across California.

California Green Building Standards

The California Green Building Standards Code, commonly referred to as "CALGreen" originally went into effect on August 1, 2009 and outlines architectural design and engineering principles that are in synergy with environmental resources and public welfare. CALGreen sets minimum standards for buildings, and since 2016, applies to new building construction and some alterations/additions within certain parameters. CALGreen establishes planning and design standards for sustainable site development, including water conservation measures and requirements that new buildings reduce water consumption by 20 percent below a specified baseline. CALGreen requires installations of 1.28 gallons-per-flush toilets and 0.5-gallon-per flush urinals for all non-residential projects as part of the prescriptive method of reducing indoor water use by the required 20 percent.

CALGreen lays out the minimum requirements for newly constructed residential and non-residential buildings to reduce GHG emissions through improved efficiency and process improvements. It also includes voluntary tiers to encourage building practices that improve public health, safety, and general welfare by promoting a more sustainable design. In addition, CALGreen includes several requirements related to solid waste diversion. Importantly, new non-residential construction is required to achieve at least 65 percent construction and demolition waste diversion and provide recycling areas for paper, cardboard, glass, plastics, metal, and organic waste. The 2022 CALGreen update primarily includes new requirements for the inclusion of electric vehicle charging stations and carbon dioxide monitoring and controls in classrooms. These requirements went into effect January 1, 2023.

c. Local Regulations

Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin Final Amended Judgement

The Final Amended Judgment for the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Basin establishes a legal framework for managing groundwater rights among various parties, including cities, water companies, and landowners. It affirms the City of Santa Maria and Golden State Water Company's prescriptive rights to groundwater against non-stipulating parties, grants return flow rights from imported water, and prioritizes the Northern Cities' rights to 7,300 acre-feet annually. The judgment enforces groundwater monitoring, restricts water export outside the basin, and protects overlying rights subject to prescriptive claims. It binds all current and future property owners in the basin, retains court jurisdiction for enforcement and future adjustments, and mandates compliance with state and federal water quality laws.

City of Santa Maria Urban Water Management Plan

The 2020 UWMP was adopted on June 15, 2021, and it serves as a critical document for long-term water planning, helping the city prepare for future growth and potential water shortages. Santa Maria's UWMP outlines comprehensive strategies to ensure sustainable water use, including water supply, conservation, and demand management (City of Santa Maria 2020a).

City of Santa Maria Sewer System Management Plan

The Sewer System Management Plan was adopted in July 2009 and outlines how the City should properly manage, operate, and maintain all portions of the City's wastewater collection and treatment system. It also provides methods to meet capacity to convey the City's peak wastewater flows, minimize the frequency of sewer system overflows, and mitigate the impacts that are

associated with any sewer overflows that may occur. The plan also seeks to meet all applicable regulatory notification and reporting requirements (City of Santa Maria 2009).

City of Santa Maria Municipal Code

Chapter 8-10

Chapter 8-10 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code outlines the regulations and requirements for water service within the city. It covers the procedures for applying for water service, the responsibilities of both the city and the customers, and the standards for water meters and connections. The chapter also details the billing process, including rates, payment schedules, and penalties for late payments. Additionally, it addresses issues related to water conservation, such as restrictions on water use during drought conditions and the implementation of water-saving measures. The overall goal is to ensure a reliable and efficient water supply for all residents and businesses in Santa Maria.

Chapter 8-10A

Chapter 8-10A of the Santa Maria Municipal Code addresses the prevention of cross connections in the City's water supply system. It establishes regulations to protect the public water supply from contamination due to backflow, which can occur when non-potable water or other substances enter the potable water system. The chapter outlines the requirements for installing and maintaining backflow prevention devices, conducting regular inspections, and ensuring compliance with state and federal standards. It also specifies the responsibilities of property owners and the city in preventing cross connections. The overall goal is to safeguard public health by maintaining the integrity and safety of the water supply.

Chapter 8-11

Chapter 8-11 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code addresses the regulations for refuse collection and recycling within the city. It outlines the responsibilities of both the city and residents in managing waste, including the mandatory use of city-provided containers for trash, recyclables, and green waste. The chapter specifies the collection schedules, container placement guidelines, and the types of materials that can be recycled. It also includes provisions for bulky item pickup and the proper disposal of hazardous waste. The goal is to ensure efficient waste management, promote recycling, and maintain a clean and healthy environment for the community.

Chapter 8-12

Chapter 8-12 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code focuses on water conservation and water supply regulations. It includes guidelines on permissible water usage, particularly emphasizing restrictions during drought conditions to ensure sustainable water management. The chapter also outlines requirements for maintaining water supply infrastructure, aiming to prevent leaks and ensure efficient operation. Additionally, it sets standards for wastewater treatment and discharge to protect water quality and public health. These regulations are designed to manage the city's water resources responsibly, ensuring long-term availability and environmental protection.

Chapter 8-14

Chapter 8-14 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code outlines the regulations for drainage fees within the area of North Blosser Road and Battles Road and the Orcutt Drainage Plan area. It specifies the

fees that property owners must pay to fund the construction, maintenance, and improvement of the city's drainage facilities. These fees are assessed based on the type and extent of development on a property, ensuring that the costs are fairly distributed among those who benefit from the drainage system. The chapter also includes provisions for fee adjustments, exemptions, and the process for appealing fee assessments. The overall goal is to ensure adequate funding for the city's drainage infrastructure, thereby reducing the risk of flooding and maintaining public safety.

Chapter 8-15

Chapter 8-15 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code implements a unified growth mitigation fee program to fund the acquisition, design and construction of certain public facilities and related equipment necessary to serve new development within the City. Pursuant to this code, growth mitigation fees would be imposed as a condition of approval of a development project prior to the distributions of permits and map approvals. The growth mitigation fee would fund water, wastewater, traffic, recreation and parks, police, fire, and library services within the city.

Chapter 8-21

Chapter 8-21 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code focuses on reducing the disposal of organic waste. This chapter was established in compliance with California Senate Bill 1383, which mandates significant reductions in organic waste to combat climate change. The regulations require residents and businesses to separate organic waste, such as food scraps and yard trimmings, from regular trash. The chapter also outlines the responsibilities of the city in providing organic waste collection services and ensuring compliance through monitoring and enforcement. Additionally, it includes provisions for public education and outreach to promote proper organic waste disposal practices. The overall goal is to reduce landfill waste, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and support environmental sustainability.

4.8.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

Impacts related to utilities and service systems were evaluated by forecasting utility demands associated with the 2045 General Plan Update and comparing estimated utility demands to current and planned service system capacity and availability. The following impact analysis relies on an Annexation Study Technical Memorandum prepared by WSC in December 2024 that evaluates water supply, wastewater generation, and wastewater system capacity and is included as Appendix E to this EIR. Utilities and service system demands of the 2045 General Plan Update have been quantified where possible, based on readily available information. Where insufficient data was able to quantify demands, such demands are discussed qualitatively in order to inform the impact analysis.

Significance Thresholds

CEQA Guidelines Appendix G provides the following significance thresholds to determine if a project would have a potentially significant impact on utilities and service systems. For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the proposed project may have a significant adverse impact if it would:

1. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects;
2. Not have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years;
3. Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments;
4. Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals; or
5. Fail to comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?
Threshold 3:	Would the project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

Impact UTIL-1 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD INCREASE DEMAND FOR ADDITIONAL UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH MAY REQUIRE RELOCATION OR CONSTRUCTION OF UTILITY FACILITIES OR SERVICES TO SERVE PLAN BUILDOUT BEYOND EXISTING CONDITIONS, SPECIFICALLY WITHIN THE ANNEXATION AREA. HOWEVER, DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED CONSISTENT WITH APPLICABLE CITY CODE, BUILDINGS STANDARDS, AND ENGINEERING STANDARDS. THEREFORE, THESE IMPACTS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Water

Growth and development facilitated by the plan would create additional demand for water. Development facilitated by the plan would generally occur in developed areas of Santa Maria with existing water infrastructure; however, increased density in undeveloped areas, such as in the planned annexation area, could require additional water infrastructure and upgrades to existing infrastructure. Potential environmental impacts associated with developing new water supply connections would be evaluated as part of the City's review of individual development applications for consistency with applicable policies of the plan and City Municipal Code requirements. Water infrastructure, such as pipelines, could require upgrades for future development which would result in ground disturbance. Generally, this ground disturbance would occur in previously disturbed or developed areas, reducing the potential for environmental impacts. Such facilities would be installed during individual project construction and generally within the disturbance area of such projects or the rights-of-way of previously disturbed roadways; therefore, the construction of these infrastructure improvements would not substantially increase a project's disturbance area or otherwise cause significant environmental effects.

The annexation area currently lacks water infrastructure that is adequately sized to support the level of development envisioned under buildout conditions of the plan. Future development within these areas may require installation of new utility infrastructure to support anticipated development. However, installation of new utility infrastructure would be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the City of Santa Maria Municipal Code, as well as relevant building and engineering standards. Potential environmental impacts of developing new water infrastructure would be evaluated as necessary as part of the City's review of individual development applications. Consequently, any potential impacts related to water infrastructure within these areas would be reduced to a less than significant level.

In addition, Chapter 8-10 and Chapter 8-10A of the Santa Maria Municipal Code address and minimize additional water demand. Specifically, Section 8-10.33 seeks to promote water conservation and prevent water waste through outdoor water use restrictions. Sections 8-10A.05 and 8-10A.06 outline the requirements for future development that require installation of cross connections to install and maintain backflow prevention devices, conduct regular inspections, and ensure compliance with state and federal standards. Furthermore, the plan includes the following proposed goal and policy related to water facilities:

Goal PFS-2: Water resources. High-quality drinking water supply meets existing and future water demands.

> **Policy PFS-2.1: Water system.** Maintain and expand the existing water system to meet the daily and peak demands of existing and future city residents and businesses.

Because the water connections associated with implementation of the plan would be installed during individual project construction and would generally be located within the disturbance area of such projects or the rights-of-way of previously disturbed roadways, the relocation or construction of water facilities would not be expected to result in significant environmental impacts. Potential environmental impacts of the relocation or construction of water facilities would also undergo individual environmental review at the time a project is proposed. This impact would be less than significant.

Wastewater

Development facilitated by the plan would generally occur within the city and on sites that are already developed or surrounded by existing wastewater facilities. The annexation area currently lacks wastewater infrastructure to support the level of development envisioned under buildout conditions of the plan Future development within these areas may require installation of new utility infrastructure to support anticipated development. However, installation of new utility infrastructure would be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the City of Santa Maria Municipal Code, as well as relevant building and engineering standards. Furthermore, the potential environmental impacts of implementing new wastewater, such as sewer infrastructure, would be evaluated as necessary as part of the City's review of individual development applications for consistency with applicable policies of the plan and City Municipal Code requirements. Consequently, any potential impacts related to wastewater infrastructure within these areas would be reduced to a less than significant level. The plan includes the following goal and policies to ensure wastewater infrastructure would be available to serve future development facilitated by the plan:

Goal PFS-1: Public infrastructure. Public infrastructure provides a high level of service for the existing population and keeps pace with planned growth.

> **Policy PFS-1.1: Resource and infrastructure capacities.** Maintain resource and infrastructure standards and capacities to meet the city's existing and future needs.
>
> **Policy PFS-1.2: Wastewater system.** Maintain a wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal system capable of meeting the daily and peak demand of existing and future city residents and businesses.

The development facilitated by the plan would generate wastewater that requires treatment before discharge or reuse. For example, the plan envisions residential development that would include bathrooms with toilets and showers that generate wastewater. As discussed within the City's UWMP, the per capita wastewater generation for the City service area is approximately 68 gallons per day (GPD) (City of Santa Maria 2020a). This per capita wastewater generation factor was calculated based on the volume of wastewater currently generated by the customers in the City's wastewater system. At maximum buildout of the plan, with the assumption that each estimated residential unit would be occupied at the maximum persons per household rate, there would be an estimated 58,265[3] net new residents, resulting in approximately 167,613 total City residents by 2045. Therefore, utilizing the generation factor of 68 GPD, the proposed plan would create 11,397,684 GPD or 11.4 MGD.

As discussed above in Section 4.9.1, *Setting*, the City owns and operates a municipal treatment facility which is designed to treat an average annual flow of 13.5 MGD. In 2024, the average annual flow was estimated to be 9.99 MGD and the average peak hour wet weather flow as 19.98 MGD in 2024 (City of Santa Maria 2020b). Based on the plan's projected wastewater demand of 11.4 MGD, the treatment plant would have a remaining average annual flow treatment capacity of 2.1 MGD.[4] As such, the treatment plant would have sufficient capacity to serve the development facilitated by the plan during peak hour wet weather flows (maximum flows).

Buildout of the plan would increase wastewater flows to the treatment plant as compared to the 2024 average annual flow estimated at 9.99 MGD. However, this increase in wastewater flow is anticipated at full buildout in 2045. The City has planned sewer collection system projects identified in the 2012 Utilities Capacity Study and within the City of Santa Maria's Capital Projects which are required to meet the planned buildout population (City of Santa Maria 2015; City of Santa Maria 2016). Further, planned Capital Improvement Projects identified by the city would need to be implemented to accommodate growth facilitated by the plan within the city (City of Santa Maria 2020). These include upgrades to meet treatment capacity and replacements of infrastructure that have exceeded their useful lifespan. However, installation of new utility infrastructure would be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the City of Santa Maria Municipal Code, as well as relevant building and engineering standards, such that the potential environmental impacts of implementing new wastewater infrastructure would be evaluated as part of the City's review of individual development applications for consistency with applicable policies of the plan and City Municipal Code requirements. Therefore, with or without these planned improvements, the plan would not result in the relocation or construction of wastewater facilities that would reasonably be expected to result in significant environmental impacts. Additionally, with the in-process

[3] This calculation represents a conservative analysis in which every potential residential unit (16,140 as described in Section 2.6.5, Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout) is occupied at the full potential persons per household rate of 3.61 as determined by the California Department of Finance.
[4] 2.1 MGD = 13.5 MGD – 11.4 MGD

improvements to the treatment plant, the treatment plant would have adequate capacity to serve the plan's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments. Potential environmental impacts of additional wastewater infrastructure would also undergo individual environmental review at the time a project is proposed. This impact would be less than significant.

Stormwater

Development facilitated by the plan within city limits would not result in a substantial increase in stormwater infrastructure because Santa Maria is developed and equipped with an existing stormwater drainage system. The annexation area currently lacks stormwater infrastructure to support the level of development envisioned under buildout conditions of the plan. Future development within these areas requires installation of new utility infrastructure to support anticipated development. However, installation of new utility infrastructure would be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the City of Santa Maria Municipal Code, as well as relevant building and engineering standards. Potential environmental impacts of developing new connections to storm drains would be evaluated as necessary as part of the City's review of individual development applications.

Development facilitated by the plan could introduce new impervious surfaces through the construction of paved areas which could increase stormwater discharge to existing stormwater drainage facilities; however, as described in Section 4.5, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, development would be required to comply with the provisions of California's Phase II MS4 Permit, Section 8-12A.08 of the City's Municipal Code, and RWQCB Central Coast Region Resolution No. R3-2013-0032, which are designed to control the volume and rate of stormwater runoff from new development and redevelopment projects. Existing regulations would ensure development facilitated by the plan would not result in substantial additional runoff, necessitating the expansion of stormwater infrastructure within the city. Stormwater infrastructure could be required to be upsized within the annexation area. As such, the potential environmental impacts of implementing new stormwater infrastructure would be evaluated as necessary as part of the City's review of individual development applications for consistency with applicable policies of the plan and City Municipal Code requirements. Additionally, the plan includes the following goals and policies related to stormwater facilities:

Goal PFS-3: Stormwater management. The stormwater management system mitigates flood risks, enhances water quality, and promotes environmental health.

> **Policy PFS-3.1: Conveyance of surface drainage.** Convey surface drainage safely through the use of retardation basins, storm drains, recharge basins, and other infrastructure.

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

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

Goal S-3: Flood and dam inundation. Impacts from flood and dam inundation to people and property are minimized.

> **Policy S-3.1: Santa Maria River Levee development buffer.** Require new development and sites undergoing redevelopment to provide a non-development buffer of 60 feet, measured from the toe of the Santa Maria River Levee, to provide access to the Santa Maria River levee for maintenance and repairs.
>
> **Policy S-3.3**: **Low-impact design.** Require new development and redevelopment projects to incorporate low -impact design measures for stormwater management, such as bioswales, permeable pavement, and onsite detention ponds.
>
> **Policy S-3.4: Stormwater drainage system.** Maintain and upgrade the City's stormwater drainage system to increase the system's capacity and reduce flooding.

Because new stormwater infrastructure would be evaluated as part of the City's review of individual development applications for consistency with applicable policies of the plan and City Municipal Code requirements, such that the potential environmental impacts of implementing new stormwater infrastructure would be evaluated as part of the City's review of individual development applications for consistency with applicable policies of the plan and City Municipal Code requirements, the plan would not result in the relocation or construction of stormwater facilities that would reasonably be expected to result in significant environmental impacts . Potential environmental impacts of additional stormwater infrastructure would also undergo individual environmental review at the time a project is proposed. This impact would be less than significant.

Natural Gas, Electricity, and Telecommunications

Connections to existing electrical and natural gas transmission and distribution systems in the city would be required to serve development facilitated by the plan. Development facilitated by the plan would occur on sites that are generally developed or surrounded by existing development served by existing natural gas and electrical infrastructure. Accordingly, development facilitated by the plan would generally have access to utility infrastructure and not require the installation of substantial electric or natural gas infrastructure to meet demands. However, increased density in the annexation area could require additional infrastructure and upgrades to existing infrastructure. These upgrades would be evaluated and provided in accordance with the rules and regulations of PG&E, SoCal Gas, and under the authority of the CPUC. Similar to electric and natural gas infrastructure, Santa Maria has existing telecommunications infrastructure for cable television, landline services, internet, and cellular phone service. Development facilitated by the plan would not require substantial telecommunications infrastructure to be constructed.

The potential environmental impacts of implementing new electric, natural gas, and telecommunications connections to development facilitated by the plan would be evaluated as part of the City's review of individual development applications for consistency with applicable policies of the plan and City Municipal Code requirements. Therefore, the plan would not result in the relocation or construction of natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications facilities that would reasonably be expected to result in significant environmental impacts . Potential environmental impacts of additional natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructure would also undergo individual environmental review at the time a project is proposed. This impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required because these impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 2:	Would the project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

Impact UTIL-2 THE OVERALL GROWTH ANTICIPATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD GENERATE ADDITIONAL WATER DEMAND IN SANTA MARIA THAT COULD EXCEED PROJECTED WATER SUPPLIES DURING SOME MULTIPLE DRY-YEARS. WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS, THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Development facilitated by the plan would increase the population of Santa Maria including within the annexation area, resulting in a corresponding increase in overall citywide water demand. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 4.10, *Effects Found Not to be Significant,* development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in an additional 16,140 net new residential units which corresponds to approximately 58,265 new residents. The City relies on a water demand factor of 118 gallons per capita per day, as stated in the City's 2020 UWMP, as a basis for projecting water demand in Santa Maria (City of Santa Maria 2020a). Accordingly, the addition of 58,265[5] residents would lead to a water demand of approximately 6,875,270 gallons per person per day, or 7,706.4 AFY[6].

Table 4.8-1 shows the City's anticipated water supply and demand through 2045. As shown therein, the City projects that water demand would be met by existing water supplies in all years except Year Five of a multi-year drought in 2025 and 2030 (City of Santa Maria 2020a). Furthermore, as shown in Table 4.8-1, the City anticipated surplus for Normal, Single-Dry, and the first four Multiple Dry-Years. The projected demand of the plan would be approximately 7,706.4 AFY, which is well within the projected demand and surplus of Normal, Single-Dry, and First, Second, and Fourth Multiple Dry-Years. Projected demand of the plan would not be met within 2040 and 2045 of Year Three of the Multiple Dry-Years scenario or during Year Five of the Multiple Dry-Years scenario. However, during these years, the City would implement its Water Shortage Contingency Plan that addresses stages of action to be undertaken by the City in response to water supply shortages, including more than a 50 percent reduction in water supply, and an outline of specific water supply conditions which are applicable to each stage. In addition to the stages of action, the City of Santa Maria is required to develop mandatory prohibitions against specific water use during shortages and consumption reduction methods in the most restrictive stages (City of Maria 2020a). Accordingly, the anticipated water consumption of the plan would be adequately met by the City's long-term water supply. Furthermore, individual projects would be reviewed by the Utilities Department at the time that they are proposed to ensure that adequate water supply would be available for an individual project.

In addition to the City's Water Shortage Contingency Plan, the City has adopted various policies and programs aimed at optimizing its available water resources, including groundwater, and implementing water conservation programs throughout its service area. This Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapter 12-44 implements California Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance to reduce

[5] This calculation represents a conservative analysis in which every potential residential unit (16,140 as described in Section 2.6.5, Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout) is occupied at the full potential persons per household rate of 3.61 as determined by the California Department of Finance.
[6] 58,265 people * 118 gallons per person per day = 6,875,270 gallons per day / 892.1 gallons per day in 1 (acre feet) year

potable water usage on landscaping. Additionally, the City of Santa Maria's Recreation and Parks Department initiated a program which requires the City's irrigation system to be regularly upgraded by replacing antiquated lines, heads, and valves. Furthermore, development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with Chapter 8-12 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code which includes guidelines on permissible water usage, particularly emphasizing restrictions during drought conditions to ensure sustainable water management. Additional water conservation requirements in times of drought are applicable to development in Santa Maria if the City Council declares a drought emergency and implements additional mandatory restrictions. These include, but are not limited to, posting notice of drought conditions in commercial establishments, prohibiting vehicle washing unless done at a commercial car washing facility, and allotment of water use quantity (rationing) if necessary. Additionally, the California Green Building Standards Code requires a 20 percent reduction in residential indoor water use that would lower potential water demand. The following goal and policies included in the plan would also assist to maintain water supply and encourage efficient water use:

Goal PFS-2: Water resources. High-quality drinking water supply meets existing and future water demands.

> **Policy PFS-2.1: Water system.** Maintain and expand the existing water system to meet the daily and peak demands of existing and future residents and businesses.
>
> **Policy PFS-2.2: Supply portfolio.** Improve the reliability of the water supply for current and projected demand by diversifying the City's water supply portfolio, including maintaining and increasing the City's groundwater wells, exploring additional sources of water supply, and supporting the State Water project.
>
> **Policy PFS-2-3: Groundwater.** Improve the long-term recharge of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin by retaining natural watershed areas, developing regional recharge basins, and minimizing impervious surfaces in new development.
>
> **Policy PFS-2.6~~7~~: Efficient water use.** Participate in and implement programs and measures that promote the efficient use of water

Future development facilitated by the plan would adhere to the water reduction policies and requirements described above. Furthermore, water suppliers are required to update their UWMPs every five years. As the current UWMP was prepared in 2020 and adopted by the City Council on June 15, 2021, the City is required to provide an update in 2025, which is anticipated to include the population projections as estimated by the plan. While water supply estimates are currently being updated as part of the City of Santa Maria's 2025 UWMP update, they were unavailable at the time of this EIR's publication. However, as described above, the water demand anticipated through buildout of the plan would be adequately met by the City's long-term water supplies as the City anticipated surplus for Normal, Single-Dry, and the first four Multiple Dry-Years. The projected demand of the plan would be approximately 7,706.4 AFY, which is well within the projected demand and surplus of Normal, Single-Dry, and First, Second, and Fourth Multiple Dry-Years. Therefore, the plan would have sufficient water supplies available to serve development facilitated by the plan and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required because impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 4:	Would the project generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?
Threshold 5:	Would the project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Impact UTIL-3 THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT GENERATE SOLID WASTE IN EXCESS OF STATE OR LOCAL STANDARDS OR IN EXCESS OF THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE. NEW DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE PLAN WOULD BE REQUIRED TO COMPLY WITH APPLICABLE SOLID WASTE REDUCTION STATUTES AND REGULATIONS. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Implementation of the plan would generate additional solid waste. Construction of future development would create construction debris, such as scrap lumber and flooring materials. Operation of future development would create typical household wastes associated with residential, office, and commercial uses. Future industrial development would also generate solid waste. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, and Section 4.10, *Effects Found Not to be Significant,* development facilitated by the SMGPU would result in an additional 16,140 net new residential units. Based on CalRecycle's solid waste generation factor of 12.23 pounds household per day, the development facilitated by the plan would result in approximately 197,393 pounds of solid waste per day.[7]

As described in Section 4.9.1, *Setting*, the Santa Maria Regional Landfill has a maximum permitted daily throughput of 8,820 tons per week and a remaining capacity of approximately 2,845,000 cubic yards and is estimated to remain operational through 2034 (CalRecycle 2025a). Development facilitated by the plan would generate approximately 1,381,751 pounds of solid waste per week[8], or 691 tons per week. This would represent approximately 7.8 percent of the total weekly permitted throughput of the Santa Maria Regional Landfill. Additionally, the 2045 General Plan Update would generate roughly 934,129 cubic yards of solid waste annually[9], translating to approximately 32.8 percent of the remaining capacity of the Santa Maria Regional Landfill for the first year of the plan.

Should the Santa Maria Regional Landfill cease operations, solid waste generated by the city may be diverted to other nearby landfills, such as the Cold Canyon Landfill. The Cold Canyon Landfill has a maximum permitted daily throughput of 1,650 tons per day and a remaining capacity of approximately 13,000,000 cubic yards and is estimated to remain operational through 2040 (CalRecycle 2025c). Solid waste generated by development facilitated by the plan would represent approximately 6 percent of the weekly throughput for the Cold Canyon Landfill.[10] So, while it is anticipated that implementation of the plan would increase solid waste generation, the remaining capacity of the Santa Maria Regional Landfill and other nearby landfills, such as the Cold Canyon Landfill, are anticipated to be able to accommodate this increase in solid waste generation.

AB 939 requires the City to divert 50 percent of solid waste from landfills, and SB 1383 would require the City to reduce organic waste disposal by 75 percent by 2025. New development would be required to comply with Chapter 8-21 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code, which includes requirements for mandatory municipal solid waste, recycling, and composting material disposal reductions, as well as compliance with the California Green Building Standards Code requirements

[7] 197,393 pounds/day = 16,140 units * 12.23 pounds/household/day
[8] 1,381,751 pounds/week = 197,393 pounds/day * 7 days
[9] 934,129 cubic yards/year = [(691 tons/day * 365 days) * 0.037037037 yd^3] * 100
[10] 11,550 tons/week =1,650 tons/day * 7 days; 6 percent = [691 tons/week/11,550 tons/week]*100

for diverting construction and demolition debris. Furthermore, the proposed 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policy to reduce solid waste generation:

> **Policy PFS-9.2: Waste reduction through design.** Promote sustainable building practices that reduce waste generation by encouraging developers to incorporate materials reuse, waste reduction, and recycling into their designs.

For the reasons described above, the plan would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals, and would comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required because impacts would be less than significant.

4.8.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, *Environmental Setting,* Subsection 3.3, *Cumulative Development*. By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City Limits and the annexation area.

Cumulative growth would increase the demand for water in Santa Maria. Based on the analysis in Impact UTIL-2, the City's long-term water supplies would be able to meet the demands of cumulative development in Santa Maria with an anticipated surplus for Normal, Single-Dry, and the first four Multiple Dry-Years. The projected demand of the plan would be approximately 7,706.4 AFY, which is well within the projected demand and surplus of Normal, Single-Dry, and First, Second, and Fourth Multiple Dry-Years. In addition, applications for new development projects would be reviewed by the City's Utilities Department at the time that they are proposed to ensure that adequate water supply would be available. If necessary, the City is able to implement mandatory prohibitions against specific water use during shortages and consumption reduction methods in the most restrictive stages. Accordingly, cumulative development would be adequately served by the City's long-term water supplies. Therefore, cumulative impacts to water would be less than significant.

Cumulative growth in Santa Maria would increase wastewater generation and demand on the treatment plant. As discussed in Impact UTIL-1, at full buildout, development facilitated by the plan is anticipated to result in 11.4 MGD, leaving a remaining average annual flow treatment capacity of 2.1 MGD. The City of Santa Maria anticipates and plans for future development through the plan, which is then utilized by the City to assess wastewater generation and infrastructure demand within the Sewer System Management Plan and Utilities Capacity Study. Within the City's Utilities Capacity Study and within the City of Santa Maria's Capital Projects, both identify treatment plant treatment facility upgrades needed to accommodate growth in the service area and maintain compliance with applicable regulatory standards for wastewater treatment and discharge. Planned Capital Improvement Projects identified by the city would also be implemented to further accommodate

growth facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Accordingly, with these planned upgrades, it is determined that capacity would exist to service the demand for wastewater treatment facilities. Therefore, cumulative wastewater impacts would be less than significant.

The City maintains an extensive stormwater drainage system permitted by the Phase II MS4 permit. Cumulative development would introduce incremental increases in needs for stormwater conveyance; however, due to the existing built-out nature of Santa Maria, new residential development within city limits is not anticipated to introduce substantial new areas of impervious surfaces such that expansion of existing stormwater conveyance infrastructure would be necessary. Development facilitated by the plan within the annexation area currently lacks stormwater infrastructure. However, future development within these areas would be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the City of Santa Maria Municipal Code, as well as relevant building and engineering standards. Implementation of minor additions to stormwater conveyance infrastructure are reviewed by the City on a project-by-project basis in order to ensure consistency with the MS4 permit, Title 14, Chapter 3 of the City's Municipal Code, and RWQCB Central Coast Region Resolution No. R3-2013-0032. Therefore, cumulative stormwater infrastructure impacts would be less than significant.

Telecommunications services in the cumulative impact analysis area are provided by private vendors, and telecommunications facilities are available throughout the cumulative impact analysis area. Connections for new telecommunications services are implemented on an as-needed basis, in accordance with applicable local, State, and federal regulations. Due to the developed nature of the cumulative impact analysis area, there are no anticipated limitations to the availability of telecommunications services that would require the development of substantial telecommunications infrastructure. Similar to telecommunications, electric and natural gas distribution systems provided by PG&E, 3CE, and SoCalGas, respectively, are available throughout the cumulative impact analysis area. Cumulative development would be required to adhere to energy efficiency standards established in Title 24 of the CCR, the California Energy Code, and applicable local building ordinances. Adherence to these requirements would further reduce the need for new electrical or natural gas infrastructure to accommodate cumulative demand. Therefore, cumulative impacts concerning telecommunications, electric, and natural gas infrastructure would be less than significant.

Cumulative growth would increase solid waste generation and increase the demand for landfill disposal, which could result in a potential cumulative impact on waste disposal services and facilities in the region. As discussed under Impact UTIL-2, beyond 2034, solid waste generated by the city may be diverted to other nearby landfills, such as the Cold Canyon Landfill. The Cold Canyon Landfill has a maximum permitted daily throughput of 1,650 tons per day and a remaining capacity of approximately 13,000,000 cubic yards and is estimated to remain operational through 2040 (CalRecycle 2025c). Solid waste generated by development facilitated by the plan would represent approximately 6 percent of the weekly throughput for the Cold Canyon Landfill.[11] So, while it is anticipated that implementation of the plan would increase solid waste generation, the remaining capacity of the Santa Maria Regional Landfill and other nearby landfills, such as the Cold Canyon Landfill, are anticipated to be able to accommodate this increase in solid waste generation. This would not substantially increase daily or annual waste disposal, or result in an exceedance of capacity at the Santa Maria Regional Landfill. Therefore, the plan would not result in a considerable contribution to cumulative impacts to waste disposal services and facilities in the region.

[11] 11,550 tons/week =1,650 tons/day * 7 days; 6 percent = [691 tons/week/11,550 tons/week]*100

4.9 Effects Found Not to be Significant

Section 15128 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) briefly describe any possible effects that were determined not to be significant. This section discusses why impacts to these environmental topics were determined to have a less than significant impact or no impact and therefore are not discussed in detail in the EIR as individual sections.

4.9.1 Aesthetics

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project would have a significant impact on aesthetics if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
3. In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality; or
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Impact Analysis

The Santa Maria General Plan does not identify scenic vistas or public viewing areas within city limits. However, the city contains views of natural aesthetic features including the Santa Maria River to the west of the city and rolling hills to the east. Title 12 of the City's Zoning Ordinance includes development standards which regulate the size, mass, and design of development projects to ensure the city maintains an overall cohesive character. Additional standards and guidelines exist for the treatment of historical structures and settings. Because development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be subject to Zoning Ordinance standards that regulate size, mass, and design, public views of significant visual resources would not be substantially blocked.

Pursuant to Section 15387 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City of Santa Maria is classified as an Urbanized Area. As stated above, the City's Zoning Ordinance standards protect the visual character of the city by regulating the size, mass, and design of development projects. New development facilitated by the plan would be subject to these standards. The City has implemented land uses in specific designated areas to provide visual compatibility with surrounding development.

The City has regulations for exterior lighting for commercial development, mixed-use development, Objective Design Standards for residential development, as well as specific standards for parking lots, signs, and for development within Airport Safety Zones (Chapters 12-33, 12-49, 12-32, 12-34, 12-21 and 12-24 of the Zoning Ordinance). Development facilitated by the plan would generate additional exterior lighting. Additional lighting generated by the development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with lighting standards as set forth in Chapters 12-33, 12-49, 12-32,

12-34, 12-21 and 12-24 of the Zoning Ordinance and as such, lighting would be reduced to be consistent with existing lighting standards and impacts would be less than significant.

While the Santa Maria General Plan does not identify designated scenic vistas or public viewing areas within city limits, the city contains natural visual features such as the Santa Maria River and the rolling hills that offer aesthetic value to the city. The City would implement the following policies within the proposed Recreation Element to preserve scenic areas within the city:

> **Policy REC-8.1: Protection of open space.** Preserve and expand open spaces in public parks that provide ecological and scenic benefits for residents.

Development facilitated by the plan would be subject to existing Zoning Ordinance standards that regulate size, mass, design, and lighting, thereby preserving the city's visual character and ensuring compatibility with surrounding development. Additional protections for Open Space Zones and historic settings would further ensure that scenic and aesthetic resources are not adversely affected. Therefore, potential impacts to aesthetic resources would be less than significant.

4.9.2 Energy

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on energy if it would:

1. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation; or
2. Conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Impact Analysis

Construction Impacts

Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would involve construction activities that would consume fuel (e.g., gasoline and diesel fuel) to operate heavy equipment, light-duty vehicles, machinery, and generators for lighting. In addition, temporary grid power would also be required to support construction trailers or electric construction equipment. Energy consumption during the construction of individual projects would be temporary in nature, and equipment used would be typical of construction projects in the region. In addition, construction contractors are required to demonstrate compliance with applicable California Air Resources Board regulations that restrict the idling of heavy-duty diesel motor vehicles and govern the accelerated retrofitting, repowering, or replacement of heavy-duty diesel on- and off-road equipment. Furthermore, in accordance with Executive Order N-79-20 it is anticipated construction trucks would transition most of their vehicle fleets to zero-emission vehicles by 2035. Construction activities would be required to utilize fuel-efficient equipment consistent with State and federal regulations and would comply with State measures to reduce inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy.

Operational Impacts

The City of Santa Maria is currently enrolled in the Central Coast Community Energy Program (3CE) which strives to source clean and renewable electricity at responsible rates for customers along the central coast of California within the 3CE service area which includes the counties of Santa Cruz, San

Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara. Since 2018, 3CE has enrolled 33 Central Coast communities and serves more than 1.1 million customers, representing 95 percent of the households and businesses in the central coast region. Although they have a variety of sources, the majority of their energy is produced via solar and wind. 3CE's standard rate sources 30 percent of energy from renewable sources and 70 percent from unspecified power sources.[1] 3CE also offers a prime rate which sources 100 percent of energy from renewable sources.

Development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with Chapter 9 of the City's Code of Ordinances, which adopts the State's energy efficiency regulations, including the California Energy Code and the California Green Building Standards Code—Part 11, Title 24, California Code of Regulations, to ensure development in Santa Maria promotes the State's energy efficiency goals through project design. Development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with policies outlined in the Conservation and Open Space Element that aim to increase community awareness and participation in energy efficiency improvements, reduce household energy demand, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and advance regional sustainability goals. These include:

> **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.
>
> **Policy PFS-6.4: Energy efficiency.** To reduce operating and maintenance costs, identify opportunities for environmental performance improvements (e.g., rooftop solar, equipment replacements, audits, retro-commissioning, and building retrofits) to City-owned buildings.

Implementation of these plan policies would further promote the State's energy efficiency goals by promoting alternative transportation, the use of energy efficient equipment, and energy retrofits. As development facilitated by the plan would receive electricity from 3CE, it would be powered by renewable energy mandated by Senate Bill 100. Implementation of the plan would not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Furthermore, adherence to the State's energy efficiency regulations, including the California Energy Code and California Green Building Standards Code, as well as policies within the plan would ensure the plan would not result in the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Therefore, these impacts would be less than significant.

4.9.3 Geology and Soils

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on geology and soils if it would:

[1] Unspecified power is electricity that has been purchased through open market transactions and is not traceable to a specific generation source.

1. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
    i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault;
    ii. Strong seismic ground shaking;
    iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction;
    iv. Landslides;
2. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil;
3. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potential result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse;
4. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property;
5. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water;
6. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature.

Impact Analysis

Earthquake Fault Rupture

According to the plan , several active faults exist within the region. These faults generally trend northwest. Active faults include the Santa Maria, San Luis Range (South Margin), Bradley Canyon, and Casmalia Faults. These faults are not delineated on California Department of Conservation Seismic Hazards Program information as being located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone (California Department of Conservation 2024).

Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could occur in areas with the potential for fault rupture and associated risk of loss, injury and death. Implementation of the proposed plan would facilitate residential development in Santa Maria. While additional residents, employees, and new structures would be exposed to the effects of existing seismic hazards, including fault rupture, seismic ground shaking, liquefaction, landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, and collapse from local and regional earthquakes, the plan itself would not exacerbate the risk of seismic hazards occurring. The plan would encourage new development and redevelopment of existing underutilized land uses, which could replace older buildings subject to seismic damage with newer structures built to current seismic standards that would better withstand the adverse effects of strong ground shaking. The California Building Code (CBC) regulates the design and construction of excavations, foundations, building frames, retaining walls, and other building elements to mitigate the effects of seismic shaking. Foundations and other structural support features would be required to be designed to resist or absorb damaging forces from strong ground shaking and liquefaction.

As such, development facilitated by the plan would not directly or indirectly cause or increase potential substantial adverse effects involving the rupture of a known earthquake fault. This impact would be less than significant.

Seismic Ground Shaking

The Santa Maria Fault, San Luis Range (South Margin), Bradley Canyon, and Casmalia Fault could potentially produce seismic ground shaking within the city in the event of an earthquake(Safety Element of the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan Figure SE-2). Development facilitated by the plan may be subject to ground shaking in the event of an earthquake originating along one of the faults designated as active in the vicinity of the city.

Development facilitated by the plan would not exacerbate a risk to public safety or destruction of property beyond what is already present in the region. Residential development would be required to adhere to the standards of the CBC which provides earthquake design requirements, including earthquake loading specifications for design and construction to resist effects of earthquake motions in accordance with the American Society of Civil Engineers Standard 7-05. The CBC also regulates the design and construction of excavations, foundations, building frames, retaining walls, and other building elements to mitigate the effects of seismic shaking. The impact to people, buildings, or structures from strong seismic ground shaking would be reduced by mandatory conformance with applicable building codes, and accepted engineering practices. In addition, the plan includes policies intended to reduce impacts by promoting safe design and construction practices for new development, encouraging enhanced safety standards in high-risk seismic and geologic areas, and supporting public outreach to raise awareness of local hazards and appropriate protective actions. These include:

Policy S-1.1: Mitigate seismic and geologic hazards. Ensure new development is designed and constructed to adequately mitigate seismic and geologic hazards through compliance with the City's Municipal Code ~~safety and development regulations~~.

Action S-1.1.1: Update the Municipal Code as new versions of the California Building Code are published, and review and adopt seismic safety standards as needed to reflect current, updated information on seismic hazards in relation to the city.

Action S-1.1.2: Review and update seismic and geologic hazard assessments and policies within the Safety Element and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) as new data becomes available.

Action S-1.1.3: Utilize the land use review processes to identify seismic and geologic hazard risk associated with proposed development and condition projects to mitigate risk to an acceptable level (acceptable level shall be consistent with the current California Building Code).

Action S-1.1.4: Enforce the Unreinforced Masonry Ordinance to require the rehabilitation of identified unreinforced masonry buildings in accordance with the "adopted by" dates outlined in the ordinance.

Policy S-1.2: Seismic and geologic safety standards. Establish enhanced seismic and geologic safety standards to be applicable to development in high-risk seismic and geologic hazard zones.

Action S-1.2.1: Update the Municipal Code to require development projects in high seismic and geologic risk areas conduct a geotechnical investigation and analysis by a state-licensed engineering geologist or civil engineer, with the resulting report to be included as a part of the land use and/or subdivision permit application. The geotechnical investigation report shall assess hazard risk and identify appropriate mitigation measures to reduce identified risks to an acceptable level.

Action S-1.2.2: Update the Municipal Code to prohibit the redevelopment of sites where habitable structures are significantly damaged or destroyed by a geologic hazard event, unless findings can be made by a state-licensed geologist that the proposed redevelopment would adequately mitigate future geologic hazard risks.

Policy S-1.3: Public information on seismic hazards. Inform the public of existing seismic and geologic hazards through community engagement efforts, along with actions they can take to protect themselves and their property from these hazards.

Action S-1.3.1: Publish a guide that outlines the permitting process for retrofitting older structures that do not adhere to current seismic and geologic building standards.

Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Liquefaction

Liquefaction is a phenomenon in which loose, saturated, granular soils behave similarly to a fluid when subjected to high-intensity ground shaking. Liquefaction occurs when three general conditions exist: shallow groundwater; low density, fine, clean sandy soils; and strong ground motion. Liquefaction-related effects include loss of bearing strength, amplified ground oscillations, lateral spreading, and flow failures.

According to the Safety Element of the City's proposed General Plan, liquefaction potential from ground shaking is generally low in Santa Maria due to the relatively deep groundwater levels. However, several areas of perched groundwater are listed in the Safety Element of the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan (Figure SE-1), resulting in potential liquefaction during an earthquake. Development facilitated by the plan would be required to adhere to the standards of the CBC, which includes mandatory site-specific geotechnical investigations for an individual project. Compliance with applicable building codes would reduce seismic ground shaking impacts with current engineering practices, and the plan would not exacerbate liquefaction potential in the Planning Area. The following plan policies would minimize impacts from liquefaction:

Policy S-6.4~~-~~5: Resilient critical facilities. Create resilient critical facilities that minimize the exposure of people and property from disasters.

Action S-6.45.1: Update the Municipal Code to require the siting of new critical public facilities outside of high hazard risk areas, including the 100-year flood zone, wildland urban interface zone, and areas with high liquefaction potential, unless the facilities can be designed in such a way that the risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level.

Action S-6.45.2: Identify existing critical facilities in high-risk hazard zones that require relocation or retrofits. Create a ranked list of critical facilities requiring relocation and/or retrofits based on the degree of hazard risk and the magnitude of adverse impacts to the community in the event the functionality of the facility is reduced or interrupted.

Compliance with the CBC and the proposed policy and actions in the plan would ensure that impacts related to liquefaction would be less than significant.

Landslides

The geologic character of an area determines its potential for landslides. Steep slopes, the extent of erosion, and the rock composition of a hillside all contribute to the potential for slope failure and

landslide events. In order to fail, unstable slopes need to be disturbed; common triggering mechanisms of slope failure include undercutting slopes by erosion or grading, saturation of marginally stable slopes by rainfall or irrigation; and, shaking of marginally stable slopes during earthquakes. Landslides and mudslides could potentially occur in areas with steep slopes or in areas containing escarpments. The only potential area subject to landslide risk within the city limits is the escarpment that runs in an east-west direction in the southern portion of the city. There is no proposed development or land use changes that would occur within this area.

Development facilitated by the plan would be required to adhere to the standards of the CBC, which includes mandatory site-specific geotechnical investigations for individual projects. If development facilitated by the plan were to occur in a location subject to landslide risk, it would be subject to further study and approval. Compliance with the City of Santa Maria's Code of Ordinances and policies in the plan would ensure that impacts related to landslides would be less than significant.

Erosion

Soil erosion or the loss of topsoil may occur when soils are disturbed but not secured or restored, such that wind or rain events mobilize disturbed soils, resulting in their transport offsite. Ground disturbing activities associated with development facilitated by the plan would have the potential to result in the removal and erosion of topsoil during grading and excavation. Construction activities that disturb one or more acres of land are subject to a General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities, Order No. 2022-0057-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000002 (Construction Stormwater General Permit), which would require the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that outlines project-specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants from construction into stormwater. Typical BMPs include, but are not limited to, installation of silt fences, erosion control blankets, and anti-tracking pads at site exits to prevent off-site transport of soil material. Chapter 9 of the City's Code of Ordinances includes methods of reducing flood loss as well as requirements for preventing, controlling and reducing storm water pollutants.

Construction activities would also be required to comply with CBC Chapter 70 standards, which are designed to ensure implementation of appropriate measures during grading and construction to control erosion and storm water pollution. Therefore, erosion from ground-disturbing activities associated with future development facilitated by the plan would be controlled through implementation of the requirements and BMPs in existing regulations, including the Construction Stormwater General Permit and Chapters 8, 9 and 11 of the City's Code of Ordinances. These Chapters include regulations for reducing and avoiding potential run-off and restricting certain uses that may prove hazardous to health, safety and property due erosion hazards. Compliance with the regulations discussed above would reduce the risk of soil erosion from construction activities to a less than significant level.

Geologic or Soil Instability and Expansive Soils

Impacts related to landslides and liquefaction are discussed above; therefore, this discussion focuses on impacts related to unstable or expansive soils because of lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse. Lateral spreading occurs because of liquefaction; accordingly, liquefaction-prone areas would also be susceptible to lateral spreading. Subsidence occurs at great depths below the surface when subsurface pressure is reduced by the withdrawal of fluids (e.g., groundwater, natural gas, or oil) resulting in sinking of the ground. Soils that volumetrically increase (swell) or expand when

exposed to water and contract when dry (shrink) are considered expansive soils. The soil's potential to shrink and swell depends on the amount and types of clay in the soil. Highly expansive soils can cause structural damage to foundations and roads without proper structural engineering and are generally less suitable or desirable for development than non-expansive soils.

Areas of expansive soils are known to exist within city limits; however, the majority of Santa Maria is considered unlikely to contain expansive soils (Safety Element of the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan Figure SE-3). Future development would be required to comply with the CBC's minimum standards for structural design and site development. The CBC provides standards for excavation, grading, and earthwork construction; fills and embankments; expansive soils; foundation investigations; and liquefaction potential and soils strength loss. Thus, CBC-required incorporation of soil treatment programs (replacement, grouting, compaction, drainage control, etc.) in the excavation and construction plans of future development facilitated by the plan could result in an acceptable degree of soil stability. Consistent with CBC requirements, development facilitated by the plan would require mandatory site-specific geotechnical investigations for individual development projects at the time they are proposed. Adherence to these requirements would achieve accepted safety standards for unstable geologic units or soils. In addition, although future development facilitated by the plan would potentially be subject to these hazards, the plan would not increase the potential for lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Septic Systems

The plan would generally emphasize development within the city where existing infrastructure exists, apart from the annexation area. New development within the city is not anticipated to include the use of septic systems. Chapter 8 of the Municipal Code requires owners connect to available city sewer and abandon septic systems per health department requirements. The annexation area would provide the potential for more rural development that may require the use alternative wastewater systems; however, future development within the annexation area will be subject to the development and approval of a specific plan, one component of which would be a public and private infrastructure plan. Any request to rely on septic systems would be reviewed on a project-by-project basis and would need to comply with local and state regulations and standards for onsite wastewater treatment systems. Therefore, impacts related to the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems would be less than significant.

Paleontological Resources

Fossils or assemblages of fossils that are unique, rare, diagnostically important, or are common but have the potential to provide valuable scientific information for evaluating evolutionary patterns and geologic processes may be significant paleontological resources. New or unique specimens can provide new insights into evolutionary history; however, additional specimens of even well represented lineages can be equally important for studying evolutionary pattern and process and evolutionary rates. As such, common fossils, especially vertebrates, may be scientifically important.

Future development facilitated by the plan would be subject to Public Resources Code Section 5097.5 which prohibits the removal or disturbance of paleontological resources without permission of the jurisdictional agency. Based on required compliance with the Public Resources Code, the plan would not disturb unique paleontological resources. As a result, potential impacts to paleontological resources would be less than significant.

4.9.4 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on hazards and hazardous materials if it would:

1. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials;
2. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment;
3. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school;
4. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment;
5. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area;
6. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan; or
7. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.

Impact Analysis

Hazardous Materials Transport, Use, and Disposal

Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would involve the use of potentially hazardous materials, such as vehicle fuels and fluids, which could be released, should a spill or leak occur. Contractors of individual development projects would be required to implement standard construction BMPs for the use or handling of such materials to avoid or reduce the potential for such conditions to occur. Storage and disposal of hazardous wastes is primarily regulated by the Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services which acts as the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA)[2] as certified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (County of Santa Barbara Public Health 2025). The transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be carried out in accordance with applicable local, State, and federal regulations regarding the handling of potentially hazardous materials. These include the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the California Hazardous Materials Management Act, and California Code of Regulations Title 22. Hazardous materials transported on State highways would be subject to California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requirements, as described in Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Additionally, Chapter 7-13 of the City's Code of Ordinances regulates the transport of hazardous materials within city limits. This chapter identifies specific roads and highways where vehicle transport of hazardous waste for which registration is required

[2] The CUPA regulates businesses that handle hazardous materials, generate or treat hazardous waste or operate aboveground or underground storage tanks. The primary goal of the CUPA Program is to protect public health and the environment by promoting compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

pursuant to Section 25163 of the Health and Safety Code is not permitted. Mandatory compliance with applicable local, State, and federal laws and regulations relating to the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials during construction and operation of future development facilitated by the plan would minimize the potential to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Upset and Accident Conditions

As described above in the *Hazardous Materials Transport, Use, and Disposal* subsection, the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous material would be conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including the City's Code of Ordinances Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the California Hazardous Materials Management Act, California Code of Regulations Title 22, and Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Future development facilitated by the plan that would require demolition or redevelopment of existing structures, particularly old structures, has the potential to expose workers and the public to asbestos. The California Health and Safety Code Section 19827.5 requires local agencies not issue a demolition or alteration permits until an applicant has assessed the potential for a structure to contain asbestos and demonstrated compliance with notification requirements under federal regulations involving hazardous air pollutants, including asbestos. California Code of Regulations Section 1532.1 requires testing, monitoring, containment, and disposal of lead-based materials, such that exposure levels do not exceed California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (CalOSHA) standards.

Future development facilitated by the plan could involve the use, storage, disposal, or transportation of hazardous materials. Hazardous material use and storage would primarily consist of common household hazardous materials such as solvents, paints, and chemicals used for cleaning and building maintenance, and landscaping supplies. These materials would not be different from household hazardous materials currently in use throughout the city. Residents and workers are anticipated to use limited quantities of products that could contain hazardous materials routinely for periodic cleaning, repair, and maintenance, or for landscaping and pest control. The disposal of hazardous household materials would be conducted in compliance with applicable regulations, pursuant to the Santa Barbara County CUPA. The Santa Maria Sanitary Landfill currently operates a household hazardous waste transfer and storage facility. This facility is open to the public two days per month. In addition to collecting household hazardous waste, the facility conducts random, solid waste load checks for hazardous materials.

Future development facilitated by the plan could include industrial uses which could sell, use, store, transport, or release substantial quantities of hazardous materials. The Santa Barbara County CUPA establishes a Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP) Program which requires businesses handling, using, or storing reportable amounts of hazardous materials to submit inventories, site maps, and other documentation relating to those materials to the CUPA, and to develop appropriate employee training and emergency procedures. After the HMBP is submitted to the CUPA, it would be reviewed for completeness and accuracy and would then be available to emergency first response agencies (County of Santa Barbara Public Health 2025). The Santa Maria Sanitary landfill does not service hazardous waste generated by commercial and industrial uses. Businesses must hire a hazardous waste transporter to dispose of their hazardous waste. This waste

is either transported to the Chemical Waste Management/Kettleman Hills facility (north), or to a transfer station in southern California, where it is shipped out of state.

Overall, applicable federal, State, and local regulations would minimize the potential for future development facilitated by the plan to create a significant hazard to the public or environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Schools

There are 23 schools within city limits, including elementary, junior high and high schools, and Allan Hancock College. As described above in the *Hazardous Materials Transport, Use, and Disposal* subsection, the transport of hazardous materials is required to comply with applicable regulations for the use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials. Future development facilitated by the plan, which would be reasonably anticipated to emit hazardous air emissions or would handle a hazardous substance within 0.25-mile of an existing school would be required to notify the affected school district, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21151.4. Compliance with existing regulations would reduce the potential for a school to be exposed to hazardous materials.

The plan would facilitate residential, commercial, open space and industrial development in the vicinity of some existing schools. However, the various land uses facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with applicable laws and regulations for the handling of hazardous materials. These land uses would not emit large quantities of hazardous materials or substances. Development of sites within the city may have pre-existing contamination and would be remediated through coordination with the appropriate regulatory agency pursuant to federal, State, and local regulations.

Regarding future schools that may be developed to accommodate forecasted population increases in Santa Maria, provisions of the California Education Code Section 17213 would apply. Section 17213 requires the City to ensure the chosen site for a proposed school is not on a current hazardous waste disposal site, is not on a hazardous substance release site identified by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and does not contain pipelines that carry hazardous substances. Therefore, the plan would not result in the handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials substances or waste within 0.25-mile of an existing or proposed school. This impact would be less than significant.

Hazardous Materials Sites

The DTSC's EnviroStor database and the State Water Resource Control Board's (SWRCB) GeoTracker database were reviewed to determine if hazardous materials sites exist within the Planning Area. Approximately 90 active hazardous material sites within city limits. These sites are primarily located in the southern half of the city with a slight concentration along Betteravia Road. Therefore, future development facilitated by the plan could occur on sites with underground storage tanks (USTs). Tank removal activities could pose both health and safety risks from tank contents or vapors to workers, tank handling personnel, and the public. Potential risks, if any, posed by USTs could be minimized by managing the tank according to existing standards contained in California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapters 6.7 and 6.75 (UST Program), as enforced and monitored by the City's Public Health Department. If contamination exceeds regulatory action levels, future developers would be required to undertake remediation procedures prior to grading and development under the supervision of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, depending on the nature of identified contamination. Furthermore, the plan would include the following policies

aimed to reduce environmental and public health risks by regulating oil-related land uses, promoting the safe handling and reduction of hazardous materials, and addressing potential exposures linked to solid waste site operations.:

Policy S-4.1: Crude oil extraction, production, and postproduction. Maintain and, as needed, update local land use regulations pertaining to crude oil extraction, production, and postproduction well site abandonment and closure.

Action S-4.1.1: Update the City's Petroleum Ordinance to maintain consistency with regulations and standards established by the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) and Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Division pertaining to petroleum extraction, processing, storage, and transport.

Action S-4.1.2: Update the minimum no-build easement buffer surrounding abandoned and existing oil wells to be consistent with current CalGEM policies for unimpeded access to well heads.

Action S-4.1.3: Require responsible parties to remediate abandoned oil sumps and contaminated soils, and to plug and abandon (or re-abandon) oil wells in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations upon termination of the associated contaminating use or facility. For abandoned sites, these requirements must be met prior to any new site development.

Action S-4.1.4: Refer development applications for oil extraction, production, storage, or transport uses and sites to the City Petroleum Engineer, or to the County Petroleum Engineer Energy, Minerals and Compliance Division, if authorized by the City Council for review and approval. This includes sites with existing or former operations related to oil extraction, production, storage, or transport.

Action S-4.1.5: Update the Municipal Code to require new development and redevelopment projects on sites with existing or abandoned oil wells, or a history of oil drilling operations to conduct a Phase I Environmental Assessment.

Action S-4.1.6: Conduct an environmental assessment prior to the development of newly annexed areas~~ations~~ containing or in proximity to active and plugged oil and gas wells to identify potential public health concerns. Based on the findings of the environmental assessment, require site remediation or restrict development in areas near active, idle, and/or abandoned oil and gas wells that could expose people to contamination.

Policy S-4.2: Hazardous materials. Ensure the safe use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials.

Action S-4.2.1: Continue to enforce regulations of hazardous materials established by the Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services Division and State Health and Safety Code.

Action S-4.2.2: Enforce and periodically review hazardous materials transport routes designated by the City and the California Highway Patrol to ensure routes limit exposure to existing sensitive land uses and critical facilities to the greatest extent feasible.

Action S-4.2.3: Maintain local hazardous materials disposal programs for businesses and residents to ensure safe disposal of hazardous materials.

Action S-4.2.4: Coordinate with the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Health Division and the California Highway Patrol to update and enforce local hazardous materials plans, programs, and transport routes.

~~**Action S-4.2.5:** Prior to issuance of a ministerial permit related to proposed railway facilities and related operations, require applicants submit written documentation that the Railroad Operations and Safety Branch (ROSB) of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has conducted review and inspection of the project, and found the project in compliance with all state and federal laws, regulations, orders, and directives relating to the handling and transportation of hazardous commodities.~~

Policy S-4.3: City hazardous materials usage. Reduce the use of hazardous materials in City operations.

Action S-4.3.1: Evaluate the feasibility of adopting procurement policies that prioritize the purchase of non-toxic and environmentally friendly products for City operations.

Action S-4.3.2: Maintain a list of pesticides and herbicides restricted for use on publicly owned land and implement integrated pest management practices and use of organic pesticides where feasible.

Policy S-4.4: Solid waste sites. Monitor and mitigate hazardous material exposure associated with solid waste site operations.

Action S-4.4.1: Update the Municipal Code to establish buffer zones surrounding solid waste sites to prohibit ~~by restricting~~ the placement of sensitive land uses adjacent to solid waste sites. Allowed uses in buffer zones may include green spaces ~~and parks~~.

~~**Action S-4.4.2:** Ensure all active and closed solid waste sites maintain gas collection systems to capture, manage, and potentially reuse methane for on-site and off-site use.~~

Future development facilitated by the plan would be required to identify and remove such hazardous materials in accordance with applicable State and local regulations. As a result, the plan would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment due to being located on a hazardous materials site. This impact would be less than significant.

Airport Land Use Hazards

The Santa Maria Airport is located in the southwestern portion of the city. The Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) (Santa Barbara County Association of Governments 2023) applies to development within the Santa Maria Airport's influence area. Future development facilitated by the plan could occur within the noise contours and/or the developable airport safety zones as delineated in the ALUCP. In accordance with California Public Utilities Code 21676 as well as Section 1.4.1, *General Plan Consistency*, of the Santa Maria ALUCP, Airport Land Use Committees (ALUC) must review general plans for consistency with the ALUCP.

The ALUC would review the plan for consistency with the Noise Compatibility Guidelines provided in the ALUCP, as well as height restrictions, land uses, densities and other specific development standards within the applicable airport safety zones. Additionally, specific future development that may affect navigable airspace would be subject to Federal Aviation Administration review, pursuant to the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 77.5, 77.7, and 77.9.

In addition to review by the ALUC, the following plan policies would minimize loss of life, injury, and property damage resulting from aircraft operations. Specifically, plan policies include the following:

> **Policy S-5.1: Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.** Maintain consistency between the City's General Plan and Municipal Code and the current Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.
>
> > **Action S-5.1.1**: Review and update the City's Land Use Element, Safety Element, and Zoning Code upon the adoption of an updated Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan to ensure consistency.
>
> **Policy S-5.2: Airport Commission and District project review.** Ensure new development within the Santa Maria Airport Area of Influence is consistent with the standards, regulations, and processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code, as described in the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.
>
> > **Action S-5.2.1:** Refer all applications for General Plan Land Use amendments within the Santa Maria Airport Area of Influence to the Santa Barbara County Airport Land Use Commission and the Santa Maria Public Airport District for review, consistent with the processes of Article 3.5 of the California Public Utilities Code.

Compliance with the ALUCP, review by the ALUC, and implementation of plan policies would ensure the plan would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the plan area. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Impairment of Emergency Response Plans

Construction activities associated with future development facilitated by the plan could interfere with adopted emergency response or evacuation plans because of temporary construction activities within rights-of-way, temporary construction barricades, or other obstructions that could impede emergency access. Temporary construction barricades or other obstructions that could impede emergency access on State highway systems would be subject to the standards set forth in the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices requires the creation and approval of temporary traffic control plans to be used for facilitating road users through a work zone (Caltrans 2014, revised 2025). Adherence to these requirements for construction activities would minimize potential impacts associated with the impairment or physical interference of an adopted emergency response plan or evacuation procedures for State highways. Construction that would occur within a public easement or right-of-way would be required to obtain an encroachment permit, which are issued by the City's Public Works Department. Public Works would review encroachment permit applications for compliance with local regulations to ensure construction activities would not impair emergency evacuation or emergency response plans.

Increased future development could result in additional traffic with the potential to hinder emergency response or evacuation routes. However, plan policies would support safe evacuation routes in the event of an emergency. Plan policies include the following:

> **Policy S-6.1: Emergency preparedness and response coordination.** Strengthen the City's emergency preparedness and response capabilities.
>
> > **Action S-6.1.1:** Maintain mutual aid agreements and establish shared resource networks within the Operational Area to provide additional emergency response capacity in the event of a large-scale disaster.

Action S-6.1.2: Participate in updates to the regional emergency, safety, and hazard plans, including the Santa Barbara County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Santa Barbara Operational Area Emergency Management Plan.

Engage Operational Area partners and the whole Community in the City's emergency planning efforts to ensure a cohesive and coordinated response in the event of a large-scale disaster consistent with Incident Command System (ICS)/SEMS/NIMS.

Action S-6.1.3: Continue to work with other jurisdictions and regional agencies to develop a multi-jurisdictional emergency preparedness and response team to oversee and advise emergency planning efforts**Action S-6.1.4:** Partner with local organizations and regional agencies to offer a broader range of training and educational opportunities for emergency response personnel, City staff, and residents with the goal of sharing best practices and encouraging cross-collaboration. This can be accomplished by organizing joint training and cross-training sessions and emergency drills with other agencies, organizations, or jurisdictions.

Policy S-6.2: Police response time. Identify minimum standards for police response time and ensure compliance with these standards for all areas within the City limits.

Action S-6.2.1: Continually monitor and report average law enforcement response time.

Action S-6.2.2: On an annual basis, evaluate police resource needs to achieve target response times, and include desired resources as needed.

Policy S-6.3: Police emergency response capability~~city~~. Maintain ~~adequate law enforcement capabilities and emergency response capacity.~~ a ratio of 1.3 sworn officers for every 1,000 residents to ensure that the Santa Maria Police Department is sufficiently staffed and equipped to meet the community's safety needs.

Action S-6.3.1: Evaluate law enforcement capacity and emergency response needs as new land is annexed and developed within the Santa Maria Police Department jurisdiction.

Policy S-6.~~4~~ 5: Resilient critical facilities. Create resilient critical facilities that minimize the exposure of people and property from disasters.

Action S-6.45.1: Update the Municipal Code to require the siting of new critical public facilities outside of high hazard risk areas, including the 100-year flood zone, wildland urban interface zone, and areas with high liquefaction potential, unless the facilities can be designed in such a way that the risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level.

Action S-6.45.2: Identify existing critical facilities in high-risk hazard zones that require relocation or retrofits. Create a ranked list of critical facilities requiring relocation and/or retrofits based on the degree of hazard risk and the magnitude of adverse impacts to the community in the event the functionality of the facility is reduced or interrupted.

Action S-6.45.3: Develop, prioritize, and implement a list of capital improvement projects to mitigate hazard risk for critical facilities:

- Prioritize improvement projects based on feasibility and impact, with emphasis on improvements that benefit disadvantaged communities.
- Identify and pursue sources of funding to support critical facility improvement projects.

Action S-6.4~~5~~.4: Install backup energy systems, such as generators, renewable energy, and battery storage systems, for existing and new critical facilities to ensure continuity of operation in the event of a disaster or hazard event.

Action S-6.4~~5~~.5: Conduct annual fire safety inspections for public buildings and recreational and utility infrastructure.

Policy S-6.~~5~~6: Emergency response training. Prepare and train City staff to support emergency responders in the event of a disaster.

Action S-6.~~5~~6.1: Update the Emergency Response Plan to designate roles and responsibilities for City staff by department, including non-leadership support roles.

Action S-6.~~5~~6.2: Designate alternative operating locations for critical City staff in the event that the primary location is inaccessible or unusable during and after an emergency.

Policy S-6.~~6~~7: Emergency plans. Maintain and update local emergency preparedness and response plans to ensure consistency between state, regional, and local safety requirements and current best management practices.

Action S-6.~~6~~7.1: Upon adoption of an updated City or Regional Safety Element, Hazard Mitigation Plan, emergency response plan, or airport land use plan, review and update all other relevant City safety and emergency plans and regulations for consistency.

Action S-6.~~6~~7.2: When updating a local safety or emergency plan, update hazard identification and mapping to include the most current state-approved data sources.

Policy S-6.~~7~~8: Community emergency preparedness and response. Create opportunities for meaningful community involvement throughout all aspects of emergency preparedness and response planning.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.1: Implement a community outreach program with diverse engagement methodologies to educate and prepare residents for potential hazards and emergency events that include multiple forms of media, including social media and print media, as well as in-person and virtual events.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.2: Integrate noticing for community outreach opportunities into a variety of City communications, including the City's website, social media pages, and utility and property tax bills.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.3: Establish community partnerships to assist in engaging disadvantaged and underserved populations.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.4: Ensure all emergency preparedness and response materials and plans are provided in all languages spoken by at least five percent of the city's population.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.5: Work with the community and experts to identify and incorporate accessible communications technologies and processes to ensure protective actions are rapidly disseminated to and understood by affected populations.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.6: Develop an interactive online map of publicly accessible hazards information relevant to Santa Maria that allows residents and property owners to view the location of hazards relative to their own property or location of residence. Integrate links to

emergency preparedness and resiliency resources for residents, including assistance programs for home retrofits for reducing hazard risk.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.7: Create a dedicated webpage on the City's website that provides current information on hazard events, proactive measures residents can make to protect themselves and their property, and resources that can be utilized in the event of a disaster. Use translation software to provide this information in all languages spoken by at least five percent of the population.

Action S-6.~~7~~8.8: Incorporate clear feedback loops that demonstrate to the community how their input has influenced local planning and programs related to hazards and emergency preparedness, and response.

Policy S-6.~~8~~9: Emergency response communication. Develop clear, accessible, and reliable communication methods for the entire community to be used in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Action S-6.~~8~~9.1: Upon the next update of the Emergency Response Plan, include a strategy that outlines communication protocols during and after disasters. This plan should include methods for information sharing among emergency service providers and the public and identify plans for communicating with individuals who speak languages other than English and individuals with visual and auditory impairments.

Policy S-7.3: Evacuation Assistance. Provide evacuation assistance to vulnerable populations in the event of an emergency.

Action 5-7.3.1: Develop a plan for providing evacuation assistance for vulnerable individuals. The plan should include strategies for evacuation assistance, including the following:

- Opportunities for utilizing public transit to support individuals who may not be able to self-evacuate, including those without vehicles, with disabilities, commuters, etc.
- Early evacuation warnings for individuals who may require longer to evacuate, including individuals with large animals, medical needs, etc.
- Communication plan for informing non-English speaking and auditory and visually impaired individuals during an evacuation order

Action S-7.3.2: Promote a neighborhood buddy system, including through the City Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, that organizes groups of three to five households to check in, share information, and assist one another with emergency response and evacuation.

Action S-7.3.3: Identify public facilities that can be retrofitted to be used as emergency shelters/centers that comply with FEMA, DOJ, and/or ARC requirements. Partner with community organizations to formalize agreements to establish additional facilities that serve as emergency shelters/centers. Identify and plan for Temporary Evacuation Points (TEPs).

Policy S-7.4: Community evacuation education. Ensure the community is informed of evacuation routes and procedures.

Action S-7.4.1: Develop a City webpage that provides a consolidated source of information related to evacuation, including evacuation routes, evacuation assistance, location of evacuation centers, and evacuation orders and updates.

Action S-7.4.2: Develop targeted outreach programs that provide evacuation information and training to residents in high-risk hazard areas.

Action S-7.4.3: Collaborate with local service providers and community leaders to educate vulnerable populations on evacuation preparedness, including individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals who speak a language other than English, individuals with a disability, and those in disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore, development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the road standards within Appendix D of the 2022 California Fire Code, Title 24, Part 9, and be reviewed by the Santa Maria Fire Department to ensure development would not interfere with evacuation routes or impede the effectiveness of evacuation plans. Implementation of the plan would not introduce new features or policies that would preclude implementation of or alter these plans or procedures. Therefore, the plan would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. This impact would be less than significant.

4.9.5 Land Use and Planning

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on land use and planning if it would:

1. Physically divide an established community; or
2. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Impact Analysis

Approximately 32 percent of the city remains undeveloped. The undeveloped areas of the city are classified as vacant (19 percent) and agricultural (13 percent). As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description,* the 2045 General Plan Update would add 985 acres of land to the city limits and would provide the framework for development of up to 16,140 net new primary and accessory dwelling residential units, including the development of 1,300 accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

The plan would implement policies and land use designations that identify the type and intensity of uses permissible in the city. Intensity and density standards are established for each land use classification. The intent of the land use designations is to adequately classify and distinguish the various land uses needed within the city. The Land Use Element of the plan contains policies which are designed to guide growth toward infill and revitalization areas while requiring context-sensitive transitions and buffers between incompatible uses. By ~~focusing new development away from established neighborhoods and~~ ensuring compatibility between new development and existing facilities through thoughtful land use planning, the policies help prevent community division and reduce the potential for significant environmental impacts. These include:

Policy LU-1.1: Land use pattern. Implement the General Plan Land Use Map and corresponding Land Use Designations as described in Figure LU-4 and in Table LU-2 to continue efforts to create a complete community.

Action LU-1.1.1: Following adoption of the General Plan Update, prepare a comprehensive update of the City's Zoning Code and Zoning Map with districts that mirror the General Plan designations and allow flexibility in uses without the need for Planned Development Overlay districts.

Action LU-1.1.2: Implement the Santa Maria Objective Design Standards and recommended Design Review process that streamlines the existing process of reviewing applications for the development of vacant sites or site redevelopment.

Action LU-1.1.3: Amend the Area 9 Specific Plan to allow low-density residential uses along A Street, consistent with the LMDR designation.

Policy LU-1.2: Infill development. Prioritize the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized parcels with a focus on revitalizing ~~infill of existing residential, commercial, and industrial capacity to revitalize~~ Downtown and deteriorating neighborhoods, to the extent feasible. ~~Accommodate growth while making every effort to preserve agricultural lands and open space.~~

Action LU-1.2.1: Implement the City's adopted specific plans to the extent feasible.

Policy LU-1.3: Areas of change. Focus new development, infill, and higher density or intensity development along the city's primary corridors (Main Street and Broadway), within the Downtown, and in surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy LU-1.4: Neighborhood preservation. Support the revitalization and enhancement of older neighborhoods in the Downtown and surrounding areas by continuing to invest in infrastructure and streetscape upgrades.

Policy LU-1.5: Job/housing balance. Achieve a job-to-housing ratio of 1.2 that balances new housing development and job production in Santa Maria over the General Plan horizon.

Policy LU-13.1: Land use buffers. Require the use of buffers between incompatible land uses by using context-appropriate buffers such as berms, walls, landscaping, bike paths, and arterial streets, where appropriate and depending on neighboring use, to avoid adverse impacts to either use.

Action LU-13.1.1: Update the City's municipal code to protect sensitive land uses by, for example, requiring a buffer between sensitive uses and local sources of air pollution such as industrial and commercial facilities (e.g., warehouses, processing plants, factories, landfills, hazardous waste facilities). Developments should incorporate appropriate mitigation measures that reduce potential pollution exposure.

Policy LU-13.2: Residential encroachment. Protect residential neighborhoods and schools from encroachment by incompatible nonresidential uses such as light industrial, general industrial, and heavy commercial/manufacturing, and the impacts associated with adjacent nonresidential activities.

Policy LU-13.3: Land use transitions. Require land use transitions of lower intensity commercial or mixed-use on the perimeter of heavy uses when adjacent to residential uses.

Policy LU-13.4: Incompatible neighborhood uses. Prohibit the development of industrial or manufacturing uses within neighborhoods or directly adjacent to established residential neighborhoods or schools.

Policy LU-13.5: Industrial and residential buffers. Mitigate the impacts of industrial land that exists adjacent to residential uses by permitting only light industrial uses in those areas, along with requiring the industrial development to provide appropriate buffers so that the use does not negatively impact the residential development.

Policy LU-13.6: Incompatible uses. Prohibit new residential development, and those retail, commercial, office, and/or consumer-oriented businesses in close proximity to the Airport which the City determines would conflict with the Airport Master Plan and Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), including through utilizing processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code.

Policy LU-13.7: Airport and residential buffers. Require transition zones and buffers between the Airport and new residential development in close proximity to the Airport, as defined by the ALUCP, to mitigate impacts of ongoing airport operations.

Policy LU-13.8: Development compatibility. Ensure that new development within the Santa Maria Airport Area of Influence is consistent with standards and regulations set forth by local and regional Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans.

Action LU-13.8.1: Review new development for consistency with the Santa Maria Airport Safety Zone Compatibility Criteria, Table 3-2, of the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, and with the regulations and processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code.

The plan would facilitate future development as envisioned by the City. The plan is an update to the City's General Plan and is intended to set forth guidance for orderly development in Santa Maria through the year 2045, in part, by establishing land uses throughout the city. As such, the plan itself is a land use plan, and therefore would not conflict with local land use plans, policies, or regulations. These include but are not limited to, the City's 16 Specific Plans and the Zoning Ordinance. The update would set forth goals and policies intended to reduce potential effects from individual development projects on the environment. There would be no impact.

4.9.6 Mineral Resources

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on mineral resources if it would:

1. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; or
2. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

Impact Analysis

The city is identified as a production-consumption region by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act(California Department of Conservation 2025). A production-consumption region is defined as a

region with naturally occurring concentrations of useful minerals in the Earth's crust that have the potential to be economically extracted. However, there are currently no mines or mineral extraction operations within the city and none are proposed. Based off the existing land uses within the city, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would not be conducive to resources extraction, only contemplating such activities within Open Space designated lands. Therefore, potential impacts to mineral resources would be less than significant.

4.9.7 Population and Housing

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on population and housing if it would:

1. Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure; or
2. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Impact Analysis

For reasonable analysis purposes in this EIR, the City assumes the 2045 General Plan Update's buildout (of both residential and non-residential uses) within the city would occur by 2045. In the context of this EIR, "buildout" of the plan is assumed to be a locally appropriate projection of development within the plan area based on updated land use designations and the proposed annexation rather than development of every parcel within the city. While complete buildout is not likely to occur by 2045, the buildout assumption used for this EIR represents the most conservative approach to evaluating the plan's potential environmental effects and satisfying the requirements of the CEQA Guidelines. Buildout of the city would be dependent on multiple factors, including local economic conditions, market demand, and other financing considerations. The buildout scenario for this EIR is estimated to be approximately 16,140 net new residential units by the year 2045 (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*). Additional development could take place in the annexed land to the east of the city's current limits. This area is currently used for agricultural activities but would be redesignated as Planned Annexation Area, which would allow a mix of industrial, residential, and commercial land uses (Santa Maria General Plan 2023). According to the California Department of Finance's population estimates, the average persons per household in Santa Maria was 3.61 in 2024 (DOF 2024). Assuming 3.61 persons per household, the 16,140 additional residential units could generate approximately 58,265 new residents.

However, the population growth associated with the plan would not be considered substantial unplanned growth. As a planning document, the plan would be a key tool to help the City plan and conduct growth. The plan includes goals and policies to accommodate the population growth anticipated by the plan would be supported by necessary public facilities and services, including:

> **Policy PFS-1.1: Resource and infrastructure capacities.** Maintain resource and infrastructure standards and capacities to meet the city's existing and future needs.
>
> **Policy PFS-1.2: Wastewater system.** Maintain a wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal system capable of meeting the daily and peak demand of existing and future city residents and businesses.

Policy PFS-2.1: Water system. Maintain and expand the existing water system to meet the daily and peak demands of existing and future city residents and businesses.

Policy PFS-2.2: Supply portfolio. Improve the reliability of the water supply for current and projected demand by diversifying the City's water supply portfolio, including maintaining and increasing the City's groundwater wells, exploring additional sources of water supply, and supporting the State Water project.

Policy PFS-2.3: Groundwater. Improve the long-term recharge of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin by retaining natural watershed areas, developing regional recharge basins, and minimizing impervious surfaces in new development.

Policy PFS-2.4: Regional coordination. Participate in regional coordination targeting aquifer recharge and sustainable groundwater supply.

Policy PFS-4.2: Infrastructure and municipal services. Ensure that annexed areas receive adequate infrastructure and municipal services, aligning with the City's overall growth plan.

Additionally, the State requires that all local governments adequately plan to meet the housing needs of their communities. Given that the State is currently in an ongoing housing crisis due to an insufficient housing supply, the additional residential units under the plan would further assist in addressing the existing crisis and meeting the housing needs of the City's communities. The City's Sixth Cycle Housing Element indicates 5,418 residential units must be built by 2031 to satisfy the state required Regional Housing Needs Allocation. In addition, subsequent Housing Element revisions would be made throughout the horizon of the 2045 General Plan Update in accordance with state law. These plans would facilitate development that could help the City reach its housing needs goal.

The plan would strive to accommodate projected population, residential, and jobs growth and focuses on improvements to existing neighborhoods along with infill and vacant site development. The plan would not include the displacement of individuals. The plan would include infill development and renovations to existing residential units to increase housing opportunities. Therefore, because the plan would be designed to accommodate for planned and orderly growth, as mandated by the State, development in accordance with the plan would not indirectly induce growth in the city. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.9.8 Public Services and Recreation

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on public services and recreation if it would:

1. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other objectives for any of the public services:
    a. Fire protection
    b. Police protection
    c. Schools

d. Parks
e. Other public facilities

2. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
3. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Impact Analysis

Future development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase in the city's population, which would result in an incremental increase in demand for fire protection, police protection, and other public services such as parks, recreational facilities, and libraries.

Fire Protection

Fire protection services in Santa Maria are provided by the Santa Maria Fire Department (SMFD). SMFD provides a wide range of programs, which include fire suppression, all risk emergency services, public education programs, fire prevention, and life safety measures. SMFD also administers a hazardous materials business plan program in cooperation with Santa Barbara County. There are six fire stations in the city (City of Santa Maria 2025a).

SMFD operates five stations that serve the entire community and Fire Station No. 6 only serves the Santa Maria Public Airport (City of Santa Maria n.d.). There are currently five frontline fire engines and one ladder truck in service for the Santa Maria Fire Department. In addition, the department has an aircraft rescue and firefighting vehicle at the airport station, an urban search and rescue vehicle, three reserve engines, and a Type-III brush engine. For purposes of responding to structure fires, there are four engines and a truck available, leaving one engine free to cover the city. The fire department is currently budgeted for a total of 63 suppression personnel, with a ratio of 0.59 firefighters per 1,000 residents. Daily minimum staffing is 20 department personnel, including the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist and a Battalion Chief. The average response time of the Santa Maria Fire Department in 2019 was 4:06 minutes for all calls, and 5:32 minutes when considering only calls for structure fires (City of Santa Maria 2020a).

Development facilitated by the plan would be served by the Santa Maria Fire Department, which provides fire protection and emergency medical services throughout the city. As future buildout occurs, the City would evaluate fire service operations and deployment to ensure adequate coverage. New development would be required to comply with fire safety and access standards set by the California Building Code and administered by the City's Building Division. In accordance with standard procedures, Santa Maria Fire Department would review project plans before permit issuance to confirm code compliance and adequate emergency access. Development would also be subject to fire mitigation fees under Santa Maria Municipal Code (SMMC) Chapter 8-15. The plan includes Policies PFS-8.1 and PFS-8.2 which focus on ensuring fast and effective emergency response by maintaining a five-minute response time citywide, guiding facility siting based on service needs, and requiring thorough fire department review of development plans to uphold safety standards and emergency access. Given the anticipated growth, increased demand may necessitate additional fire staffing and potentially new facilities. Any future facilities would be located in compliance with building and zoning regulations and undergo CEQA review to assess site-specific environmental impacts. While the exact size and location of any future fire department facilities are not yet known, and some may be located within existing structures, all future projects would be subject to

applicable building codes and CEQA review. Consequently, impacts related to fire services are anticipated to be less than significant.

Police Protection

Law enforcement services are provided by the City of Santa Maria Police Department (SMPD). There is one police station located at 1111 West Betteravia Road and approximately 700 police department personnel (City of Santa Maria 2024). Professional police services include maintaining civil order, preventive patrol, investigations, traffic control and enforcement, criminalistics, crime prevention, drug enforcement, and abuse prevention. The department houses the public safety dispatch center for police and fire, which receives all emergency 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls for services (City of Santa Maria 2020a). The Santa Maria Police Department Communications Center handles over 170,000 incoming calls for service every year (about 465 per day). There are 63,000 emergency 9-1-1 calls per year (about 172 per day).

Development facilitated by the plan would increase population and activity levels in Santa Maria, potentially leading to higher demand for police protection services. The Santa Maria Police Department would provide law enforcement citywide, with development required to undergo security review during the plan check process and to pay police mitigation fees under SMMC Chapter 8-15. The Santa Maria Police Department also serves as an aerial firefighting base for CalFire. The plan also includes policies to maintain effective law enforcement coverage, such as Policy PFS 7-1, which targets a service ratio of 1.3 sworn officers per 1,000 residents, and Policy PFS 7-2, which guides the siting of facilities to optimize response times. To meet future demands, additional police staffing or new facilities may be needed. While the exact nature and location of any new facilities are not yet known, and some may occupy existing structures, all future projects would be subject to applicable building codes and CEQA review. Consequently, impacts related to police services are anticipated to be less than significant.

Schools

Future development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase in population in the city, which would contribute to an increase in students who would be served by either Santa Maria-Bonita School District, Santa Maria Joint Union High School District, or the Orcutt Union School District. Future residential, commercial, and industrial development in Santa Maria would be required to pay state-mandated impact mitigation fees to provide funding for additional schools to serve the area, pursuant to Senate Bill 50. Pursuant to Section 65995(h) of the California Government Code the payment of statutory fees "…is deemed to be full and complete mitigation of the impacts of any legislative or adjudicative act, or both, involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property, or any change in governmental organization or reorganization." The mandatory payment of impact mitigation fees would serve as full and complete mitigation for future development. Additionally, the plan includes Policies PFS-10.1, PFS-10.2, PSF-10.3 and PFS-10.4 which aim to ensure that educational infrastructure and programming keep pace with community growth. They focus on monitoring enrollment trends, coordinating school siting in a way that respects nearby land uses, expanding access to inclusive and affordable educational programs, and supporting planned improvements at Hancock College in harmony with surrounding neighborhoods. As such, impacts to school facilities would be less than significant.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

Future development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase to the city's population, which would result in an incremental increase in demand on existing public parks and recreation facilities including playfields, performing arts centers, gymnasiums, community pools and aquatic centers. The City includes 25 percent of Waller Park, a Santa Barbara County facility, in its park service analysis as it is frequently used by residents which would increase the acreage of parkland from 234 acres to 271 acres (City of Santa Maria 2020a). The City's existing service ratio is approximately 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents for the existing 2024 population as reported by the California Department of Finance of 110,608 (California Department of Finance 2024).[3] With the implementation of the plan, the addition of a maximum of 58,265 residents would decrease the service ratio to 1.6 acres per 1,000 residents.[4] The City's park service ratio with the plan would be below its service goal of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. As such, the population growth associated with the plan would require the need for new parks.

Construction or expansion of future parks would require separate environmental review that could determine and require future project-specific construction-related mitigation measures. Pursuant to the Quimby Act park dedication ordinance, future development projects would be required to pay parkland dedication fees which, pursuant to Section 65995 (3) (h) of the California Government Code (SB 50, chaptered August 27, 1998), are "deemed to be full and complete mitigation of the impacts of any legislative or adjudicative act, or both, involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property, or any change in governmental organization or reorganization." In addition, pursuant to Chapter 8-15 of the SMMC, future development facilitated by the plan would be required to pay impact fees, which would promote the maintenance and expansion of public parks.

The plan includes Policies REC-1.2, REC-1.3, REC-1.4 and REC-1.5 which aim to enhance equitable and connected recreation opportunities across the city, and Policies REC-2.1, REC-2.2 and REC-2.3 which aim to ensure equitable access to open space and recreational opportunities by maintaining a citywide parkland standard, securing funding through mitigation fees and grants, and protecting existing park resources. The plan policies promote the use of temporary facilities to address short-term needs, encourage shared use of public lands, ensure consistent maintenance of existing infrastructure, and prioritize the development of a multi-use trail network that links neighborhoods, parks, and open spaces for a variety of users. With the existing and new policies and programs, in addition to existing Recreation and Parks mitigation fee regulations within Section 8-15of the SMMC which requires impact fees be paid for new dwelling units, impacts to parks and recreational facilities would be less than significant.

Other Public Facilities

Development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase in population which could result in an increased demand for library services. Pursuant to the SMMC Chapter 8-15, future development would be required to pay library mitigation fees. Given the demand for library services in the city, library staffing needs in Santa Maria are likely to increase, which could require the construction of new facilities. The plan includes Policies PFS-5.1, PFS-5.2, and PFS-5.3 which aim to ensure that library services grow with the community by maintaining adequate space and book collections, improving access through inclusive facilities and outreach methods, and expanding educational programming for youth through after-school and seasonal initiatives. Future facilities could be

[3] 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents = (271 acres of parks / 110,608 persons) * 1,000 persons
[4] 1.6 acres per 1,000 residents = (271 acres of parks / 168,873 persons) * 1,000 persons

located within the city but would require adherence to all applicable building and zoning codes and additional CEQA review to analyze project and location specific impacts. It is not possible to identify the specific nature, extent, and significance of physical impacts on the environment that could result from the construction and operation of future facilities without knowing the size and nature of the facility, or its location. For example, future facilities could feasibly be housed in an existing building, which would have a reduced physical impact on the environment than the construction of a new facility. As such, impacts related to library services would be less than significant.

4.9.9 Wildfire

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on wildfire if located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones and would:

1. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan;
2. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, or thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire;
3. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuelbreak, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risks or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?
4. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding, landslides, mud flows, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes

Impact Analysis

The potential for wildfire risks in Santa Maria is characterized by limited grassland and brush fires due to the absence of extensive tracts of mountainous and brush covered terrain. The most significant wildfire hazards in the city are associated with the coastal sage scrub and grass covered slopes in the Casmalia and Solomon Hills area, south of the city limits (Santa Maria 2025).

A Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) is a mapped area that designates zones (based on factors such as fuel, slope, and fire weather) with varying degrees of fire hazard (i.e., moderate, high, and very high). While FHSZs do not predict when or where a wildfire will occur, they do identify areas where wildfire hazards could be more severe and therefore are of greater concern. FHSZs are meant to help limit wildfire damage to structures through planning, prevention, and mitigation activities/requirements that reduce risk. The FHSZs serve several purposes: they are used to designate areas where California's wildland urban interface building codes apply to new buildings, they can be a factor in real estate disclosure, and they can help local governments consider fire hazard severity in the safety elements of their general plans.

As identified on the most recent FHSZ maps provided by CalFire, a portion of the annexation area is located within a moderate FHSZ. However, no portion of the city or annexation area is located within a high or very high FHSZ. (CalFire 2025). The nearest Very High FHSZ is to the east of the Santa Maria River. The implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not interfere with emergency evacuation plans or emergency response plans within a FHSZ or state responsibility area; exacerbate wildfire risks and thereby expose the public to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; require the installation or maintenance of associated

infrastructure within a FHSZ or state responsibility area; or expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslopes or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. Additionally, the plan includes Policies S-2.1 and S-2.2 which are intended to strengthen fire prevention and emergency preparedness by ensuring the City maintains adequate firefighting capacity and response times as development occurs, and by enforcing vegetation management through coordinated weed abatement efforts to reduce wildfire and urban fire risk. Due to the lack of fire hazard severity zones within the city and the new policies, impacts on wildfire would be less than significant.

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5 Other CEQA Required Discussions

This chapter discusses other issues as required by CEQA, in addition to the specific issue area discussed in Chapter 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

5.1 Growth Inducement

Section 15126(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of a proposed project's potential to foster economic or population growth, including ways in which a project could remove an obstacle to growth. Growth does not necessarily create significant physical changes to the environment. However, depending upon the type, magnitude, and location of growth, it can result in significant adverse environmental effects. The proposed project's growth inducing potential is therefore considered significant if project-induced growth could result in significant physical effects in one or more environmental issue areas.

5.1.1 Population and Economic Growth

As described in Table 2-1 of Chapter 2, *Project Description*, plan buildout is anticipated to enable an additional 16,140 residential units and 23,750 employees. As described in Section 4.10, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*, based on the California Department of Finance's population estimates, which identified Santa Maria's average household size of 3.61 persons per household, implementation of the plan could lead to an increase of approximately 58,265 residents[1] in the city. The plan could facilitate population growth in the area. However, the population growth associated with the plan would not be considered substantial unplanned growth. As a planning document, the plan would be a key tool to help the City plan and conduct growth. Implementation of the policies and associated actions included in the plan would assist in managing growth and infill development such that development and redevelopment would occur in an orderly manner. These policies and actions include the following:

> **Policy LU-1.1: Land use pattern.** Implement the General Plan Land Use Map and corresponding Land Use Designations as described in Figure LU-4 and in Table LU-3 to create a complete community.
>
> > **Action LU-1.1.1:** Following adoption of the General Plan Update, prepare a comprehensive update of the City's zoning code with districts that mirror the General Plan designations and allow flexibility in uses without the need for Planned Development Overlay districts.
> >
> > **Action LU-1.1.2:** Implement the Santa Maria Objective Design Standards and recommended Design Review process that streamlines the existing process of reviewing applications for the development of vacant sites or site redevelopment.
> >
> > **Action LU-1.1.3:** Amend the Area 9 Specific Plan to allow low-density residential uses along A Street, consistent with the LMDR designation.

[1] This calculation represents a conservative analysis in which every potential residential unit (16,140 as described in Section 2.6.5, Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout) is occupied at the full potential persons per household rate of 3.61 as determined by the California Department of Finance.

Policy LU-1.2: Infill development. Prioritize infill of existing residential, commercial, and industrial capacity to revitalize Downtown and deteriorating neighborhoods, to the extent feasible. Accommodate growth while making every effort to preserve agricultural lands and open space.

Action LU-1.2.1: Implement the city's adopted Specific Plans.

Policy LU-1.3: Areas of change. Focus new development, infill, and higher density or intensity development along the city's primary corridors (Main Street and Broadway), within the Downtown, and in surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy LU-1.4: Neighborhood preservation. Support the revitalization and enhancement of older neighborhoods in the Downtown and surrounding areas by continuing to invest in infrastructure and streetscape upgrades.

Policy LU-1.5: Job/housing balance. Achieve a job-to-housing ratio of 1.2 that balances new housing development and job production in Santa Maria over the General Plan horizon.

Policy LU-13.1: Land use buffers. Require the use of buffers between incompatible land uses by using context-appropriate buffers such as berms, walls, landscaping, bike paths, and arterial streets, where appropriate and depending on neighboring use, to avoid adverse impacts to either use.

Action LU-13.1.1: Update the City's municipal code to protect sensitive land uses by, for example, requiring a buffer between sensitive uses and local sources of air pollution such as industrial and commercial facilities (e.g., warehouses, processing plants, factories, landfills, hazardous waste facilities). Developments should incorporate appropriate mitigation measures that reduce potential pollution exposure.

Policy LU-13.2: Residential encroachment. Protect residential neighborhoods and schools from encroachment by incompatible nonresidential uses such as light industrial, general industrial, and heavy commercial/manufacturing, and the impacts associated with adjacent nonresidential activities.

Policy LU-13.3: Land use transitions. Require land use transitions of lower intensity commercial or mixed-use on the perimeter of heavy uses when adjacent to residential uses.

Policy LU-13.4: Incompatible neighborhood uses. Prohibit the development of industrial or manufacturing uses within neighborhoods or directly adjacent to established residential neighborhoods or schools.

Policy LU-13.5: Industrial and residential buffers. Mitigate the impacts of industrial land that exists adjacent to residential uses by permitting only light industrial uses in those areas, along with requiring the industrial development to provide appropriate buffers so that the use does not negatively impact the residential development.

Policy LU-13.6: Incompatible uses. Prohibit new residential development, and those retail, commercial, office, and/or consumer-oriented businesses in close proximity to the Airport which the City determines would conflict with the Airport Master Plan and Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), including through utilizing processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code.

Policy LU-13.7: Airport and residential buffers. Require transition zones and buffers between the Airport and new residential development in close proximity to the Airport, as defined by the ALUCP, to mitigate impacts of ongoing airport operations.

Policy LU-13.8: Development compatibility. Ensure that new development within the Santa Maria Airport Area of Influence is consistent with standards and regulations set forth by local and regional Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans.

Action LU-13.8.1: Review new development for consistency with the Santa Maria Airport Safety Zone Compatibility Criteria, Table 3-2, of the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, and with the regulations and processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code.

Growth in Santa Maria would occur regardless of implementation of the plan. While growth is anticipated by the plan that would exceed current projections by SBCAG, the growth would not be unplanned since it is contemplated by the plan. As described in the plan, the proposed project's vision for Santa Maria was developed with extensive community input and in recognition of the State's planning and housing priorities. The plan identifies major strategies and physical improvements for Santa Maria through 2045, including, but not limited to, use of mixed-use areas, strengthening locally owned business and community-supported tourism, enhancing existing neighborhoods, and maintaining adequate public facilities and services for anticipated growth. Because the plan is designed for orderly growth, as mandated by the state, the plan would not result in substantial impacts related to population and economic growth.

5.1.2 Removal of Obstacles to Growth

Development facilitated by the plan would require new utility connections, including connections to water, hydrants, sewers, electricity, telecommunications, or other utilities like stormwater facilities. The plan promotes mixed-use and infill development where existing infrastructure, including roads, water mains, and sewer mains, are present. Utility connections would generally occur within individual footprints or rights-of-way that were previously disturbed, minimizing the impact of development on existing infrastructure and services. The policies and programs of the plan would facilitate development in the Planning Area, thereby providing a roadmap for sustainable growth in Santa Maria. Therefore, the plan would not result in significant growth inducement due to the removal of an obstacle to growth.

5.2 Irreversible Environmental Effects

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(c) requires a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes that could result from a project, should a project be implemented. This chapter addresses non-renewable resources, the commitment of future generations to the proposed uses, environmental accidents, and irreversible impacts associated with the plan.

Implementation of the plan could irreversibly increase local demand for non-renewable energy resources such as petroleum products and natural gas. However, increasingly efficient building design would offset this demand to some degree by reducing energy demands of future development. As described in Section 4.10, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*, development facilitated by the plan would be subject to the energy conservation requirements of the California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6 of the California Code of Regulations, California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings) and Green Building Standards Code

(California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 11). The California Energy Code provides energy conservation standards for all new and renovated buildings, and Green Building Standards Code requires solar access, natural ventilation, and stormwater capture. New and existing development in Santa Maria is provided electricity procured by Central Coast Community Energy, which emphasizes the use of renewable energy resources. In accordance with Senate Bill 100, new and existing development will eventually be powered entirely by renewable energy procured by Central Coast Community Energy. Furthermore, the plan would implement several policies which would require efficient energy use and promote renewable energy programs. Consequently, development facilitated by the plan would not use unusual amounts of energy or construction materials. Consumption of these resources would occur with any development in the region and is not unique to the plan. Therefore, implementation of the plan would not result in significant irreversible environmental changes related to energy use.

Growth facilitated by the plan could require an irreversible commitment of fire protection, law enforcement, water supply, wastewater treatment, and solid waste disposal services. As discussed in Section 4.8, *Utilities and Service Systems,* and under public services and recreation in Section 4.9, *Effects Found Not to be Significant,* potential impacts to public services and utilities and service systems would be less than significant following implementation of policies included in the plan, as well as future project-specific environmental review that would be required for any future public service or utility facility constructed in accordance with the plan.

The anticipated increase in buildout associated with the plan could contribute to air quality. As described in Section 4.2, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, the plan has the potential to result in the irreversible emission of cumulatively considerable criteria pollutant emissions and exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Even with implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1 and AQ-2, which require use of fugitive dust control measures, project specific air quality analyses and mitigation, construction of those projects could result in an irreversible environmental effect in the Planning Area with regards to air quality emissions. The proposed plan would also have the potential to generate greenhouse gas emissions that may result in cumulatively considerable impacts as there is no guarantee the plan would be consistent with the State-wide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045.

Demolition and ground-disturbing activities facilitated by the plan could cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical, archaeological, or tribal cultural resource. Even with implementation of applicable plan policies and Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4 and TCR-1 and TCR-2, damage to or destruction of a known or previously unknown historical, archaeological, or tribal cultural resources could occur because of the proposed project. Therefore, the plan could irreversibly impact historical resources in the Planning Area.

5.2.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

Section 15126.2(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR describe any significant impacts, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to less-than-significant levels, as a result of implementation of the project. The following environmental issues were determined to result in potential significant and unavoidable impacts:

- Impact AG-1: Land use changes in the annexation area have the potential to conflict with existing zoning for agriculture. There are no feasible mitigation measures that would avoid or fully mitigate for the conversion of Farmland or agriculturally zoned lands..

- Impact AQGHG-1: The 2045 General Plan Update would result in new emissions that may exceed the 2022 Ozone Plan's direct and indirect emissions inventory for the County. As a result, the plan would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the 2022 Ozone Plan.
- Impact AQGHG-2: The 2045 General Plan Update could result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of all criteria pollutants for which the plan region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard.
- Impact AQGHG-5: Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would generate GHG emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment and conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.
- Impact NOI-1: Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in construction noise that may impact nearby noise-sensitive land uses. The plan would introduce new noise sources and contribute to an increase in long-term operational noise levels within the city limit as well as the annexation area.
- Impact TRA-2: The future (2045) citywide rates of VMT with the 2045 General Plan Update would not meet the 17 percent VMT reduction target required to be consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15064.3(b). There are no feasible General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could reduce citywide rates of VMT below the VMT reduction target.

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6 Alternatives

Section 15126.6 of the *CEQA Guidelines* provides guidance for the identification and evaluation of project alternatives in an EIR. The *CEQA Guidelines* state that an "EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives." This EIR examines a range of reasonable alternatives to the 2045 General Plan Update that would attain most of the basic plan objectives but may avoid or substantially lessen significant adverse impacts.

6.1 Alternatives Development and Screening Process

As stated in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the 2045 General Plan Update presents a vision for the future of the City and a set of objectives for how the City would achieve that vision. This vision and its objectives capture the City's key aspirations for the future. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the objectives for the plan, are as follows:

- **Agricultural Identity.** Continue to support the agricultural industry and its workforce. Balance the protection of prime agricultural land with the development necessary to support continued population growth and the diversification of the local economy.
- **Culture, History, and Art.** Celebrate and share Santa Maria's multicultural heritage and contemporary diversity. Preserve historic resources, foster the arts, maintain a strong sense of community through cultural festivals, and invite visitors to enjoy the richness of local expression and resources.
- **Community Design.** Create public spaces that reflect the community identity, foster civic pride, and invite community members to gather, both informally and for events. Design streets, buildings, and landscaping that reflect the community's history, culture, and natural environment. Use lighting, street trees, benches, and other amenities to make sidewalks and public spaces safe and welcoming, with a focus on the Downtown and along the Main and Broadway corridors.
- **Community Health.** Grow and expand physical and mental healthcare services to meet the needs of all residents. Improve community health by addressing the environmental justice priorities of disadvantaged communities, including seniors, low-income households, linguistically isolated families, the homeless, and youth, who comprise 35 percent of residents. Minimize residents' potential for exposure to noise, pesticides, and industrial pollution. Foster healthy lifestyles by expanding safe and attractive options for physical activity and by expanding healthy food access.
- **Natural Environment and Resilience.** Conserve water resources in the city and support efforts to maintain the Santa Maria River. Expand opportunities to enjoy the area's natural resources and the region's beauty. Safeguard the community from natural hazards, including those exacerbated by climate change.
- **Housing Quality and Choice.** Develop a high-quality and diverse housing supply at all levels of affordability that preserves Santa Maria as a place where families can establish roots and today's youth can afford to stay. Balance the growth of housing and the economy so that people can live and work in Santa Maria. As new housing types are introduced, (e.g., accessory dwelling

units (ADUs), adapt parking, transportation, and other community features. Develop workforce housing solutions that provide safe, healthy, and comfortable homes for workers and their families.

- **Resilient Economy.** Cultivate a diverse and resilient economy in which local businesses and families thrive and job growth keeps apace with housing development. Grow the existing economic base in agriculture, retail, healthcare, and business services, and expand into new industries. Ensure access to high quality education that is aligned with local industries and entrepreneurship.
- **Connected Growth.** To accommodate projected population, housing, and jobs growth, focus on improvements to existing neighborhoods along with infill and vacant site development. Expand beyond current City limits when needed, weighing the short and long term environmental, economic, infrastructure, public service, and fiscal trade-offs. Establish strong cultural, design, and physical connections between newly developed areas and the rest of Santa Maria.
- **Transportation Innovations.** Develop a balanced, equitable, affordable, and reliable transportation network where pedestrians, cyclists, trucks, cars, rail, and transit can safely and efficiently navigate to destinations within Santa Maria. Focus on maintaining existing roadways, expanding walking and biking options, and reducing congestion and maintenance costs. Transform corridors and streets from points of conflict among people, cyclists, cars, and trucks into places that bring neighborhoods and families together. Prepare for and expand regional connections with enhanced bus, rail, and air service. Prepare for technological advances like autonomous vehicles and remote work, and take advantage of opportunities and incentives to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- **Infrastructure, Utilities, Facilities, and Services**. Provide residents and businesses with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure and utilities, including water, wastewater, flood control, gas, phone, cable, and broadband internet. Deliver high-quality services and facilities for all community members, including expedient emergency response, accessible health care, high-quality education and career training, and convenient and equitable access to well-maintained parks and recreational facilities.
- **Governance and Engagement.** Continue to conduct and increase meaningful and inclusive civic engagement that empowers a diversity of perspectives in public decision-making. Provide residents and businesses with high-quality, equitable, and accessible customer service, including City communications and events in multiple languages and interpretation services. Partner with community organizations and institutions to build trust and increase participation, including among youth, who will be the City leaders in 2045.

Included in this analysis are three alternatives, including the CEQA-required “no project” alternative, that involve changes to the project that may reduce the project-related environmental impacts as identified in this EIR. Alternatives have been developed to provide a reasonable range of options to consider that would help decision makers and the public understand the general implications of revising or eliminating certain components of the 2045 General Plan Update.

The following alternatives are evaluated in this EIR:

- Alternative 1: No Project Alternative
- Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative
- Alternative 3: Greater Annexation Alternative

Detailed descriptions of the alternatives are included in the impact evaluation for each alternative. The potential environmental impacts of each alternative are discussed in Section 6.2 through Section 6.4. As required by CEQA, this section also includes a discussion of the "environmentally superior alternative" among those studied, included as Section 6.5 and summarized in Table 6-1.

6.2 Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

6.2.1 Description

Under the No Project Alternative, the City of Santa Maria would not adopt the 2045 General Plan Update. Instead, development would continue in accordance with the existing General Plan. This alternative assumes that current land use designations, policies, and growth projections would remain in effect, guiding future development and infrastructure decisions. For the purpose of this analysis, the No Project Alternative is assumed to result in reduced overall buildout potential compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, as it reflects continuation of existing land use designations and policies without the proposed changes that would facilitate additional growth.

While some development would still occur under existing entitlements and zoning regulations, the City would not implement the new land use strategies, environmental protections, or housing and mobility policies in the plan. As a result, the No Project Alternative would not fulfill the objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update because it would not fully address evolving community needs, state housing requirements (future RHNA cycles), or infrastructure demands anticipated through 2045. However, as discussed in detail in Section 6.2.2, this alternative would avoid the potential environmental impacts associated with the increased development intensity and expanded planning strategies in the plan.

6.2.2 Impact Analysis

a. Agricultural Resources

With reduced buildout potential compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, the No Project Alternative would place less development pressure on agricultural lands, resulting in reduced impacts to agricultural resources. The No Project Alternative would continue growth in accordance with the existing General Plan and as such, would not extend growth into tracts of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland in the annexation area. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not result in new land use changes on agricultural plans within the city or the annexation area, which includes Prime Farmland and Williamson Act lands. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have reduced impacts compared to the 2045 General Plan Update. Overall, the No Project Alternative would reduce impacts to agricultural resources to a less than significant level.

b. Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Air Quality: The lower level of development anticipated under the No Project Alternative would generate reduced vehicle trips and less energy use, resulting in reduced impacts on air quality and GHG emissions. However, the No Project Alternative would not implement the policies from the plan that aim to maintain air quality and protect public health in Santa Maria. Furthermore, this alternative would not be required to implement Mitigation Measures AQGHG-1 and AQGHG-2, which aim to reduce construction-related air pollutant emissions by requiring future development in

Santa Maria to implement best management practices consistent with Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBCAPCD) guidelines and require construction projects to utilize Tier 3 equipment of higher to reduce construction related TAC exposure. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, construction facilitated by the No Project Alternative has the potential to emit fugitive dust and criteria air pollutants that exceed SBCAPCD's standards. As such, impacts related to air quality would be reduced compared to the 2045 General Plan Update but would remain significant and unavoidable as fugitive dust and criteria air pollutant emissions from the No Project Alternative may still exceed SBCAPCD's standards.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The No Project Alternative would be generally consistent with the goals of the 2045 General Plan Update since future development would be required to comply with the latest Title 24 Green Building Code and Building Efficiency Energy Standards and applicable State law. However, the No Project Alternative would not include new policies aimed at reducing GHG emissions within the city. While development would be reduced in comparison to the 2045 General Plan Update, there is no assurance that the No Project Alternative would be consistent with the State-wide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045. While impacts would be reduced compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, impacts related to GHG emissions would remain significant and unavoidable due to potential inconsistencies with the State-wide target.

c. Biological Resources

Less growth and development outside of the existing ~~urban footprint~~ city boundary under the No Project Alternative would reduce the potential for habitat disturbance, leading to reduced impacts to biological resources. However, the No Project Alternative would not implement the policies from the 2045 General Plan Update that aim to enhance the protection of biological resources, such as development review and critical habitat protection. Specifically, the No Project Alternative would not implement Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k), which require future development to avoid, minimize, or offset impacts to sensitive species and habitats through surveys, construction buffers, habitat restoration, and compliance with agency regulations. As a result, development facilitated by the No Project Alternative has the potential to disturb special status plant species, endangered/threatened animal species, and important habitat. As a result, development facilitated by the No Project Alternative would have a greater potential to adversely affect biological resources compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, and overall impacts to biological resources would be significant and unavoidable.

d. Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

Cultural Resources: Given its lower buildout potential, the No Project Alternative would involve less ground disturbance overall and therefore reduce the likelihood of impacting cultural and tribal cultural resources. However, the No Project Alternative would not implement the policies from the 2045 General Plan Update that aim to protect historical and culturally significant resources. In the absence of new policies to protect historical and culturally significant resources or the plan-level mitigation measures associated with the 2045 General Plan Update, the No Project Alternative would be required to implement mitigation on a project-by-project basis. As a result, potential impacts to historical and culturally significant resources would be greater than under the 2045 General Plan Update, and would be significant and unavoidable.

Archaeological Resources: The No Project Alternative would result in reduced buildout potential compared to the 2045 General Plan Update and therefore have less potential to disturb subsurface archaeological resources. However, this alternative would not implement the policies from the 2045

General Plan Update that would require archaeological resources assessments or implement unanticipated discovery procedures for development involving ground-disturbing activities. In the absence of new policies to prevent the disturbance of subsurface archaeological resources, the potential for the No Project Alternative to substantially disturb archaeological resources is higher than the 2045 General Plan Update and would need to implement mitigation in order to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not implement Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4(b), which aim to protect archaeological and historical resources by requiring pre-construction surveys, construction monitoring, and procedures for the treatment of any discovered resources, necessary for reducing impacts. Therefore, potential impacts to cultural impacts under this alternative would be greater than under the 2045 General Plan Update .

Tribal Cultural Resources: Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, development facilitated by the No Project Alternative would be subject to the requirements of AB 52 and if required, SB 18. However, the No Project Alternative would not implement Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and CUL-4(b), which ensure tribal consultation and protection of tribal cultural resources through construction monitoring by tribal representatives and protocols for the discovery and treatment of tribal resources, and thus would not ensure project-specific tribal cultural resource identification and consultation, and the appropriate avoidance, minimization, or mitigation. In the absence of new policies to protect tribal cultural resources or the plan-level mitigation measures associated with the 2045 General Plan Update, the No Project Alternative would have greater impact on tribal cultural resources as the 2045 General Plan Update. Future development under the No Project Alternative would be required to implement mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts to tribal cultural resources. Therefore, potential impact to tribal cultural resources would be greater than under the 2045 General Plan Update, and would be significant and unavoidable.

e. Hydrology and Water Quality

Compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, the No Project Alternative would introduce reduced impervious surfaces and require reduced infrastructure extensions, reducing potential impacts on hydrology and water quality. Under the No Project Alternative, fewer residential units would be developed compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, consistent with existing land use designations and zoning. Ground-disturbing construction activities that could potentially affect water quality from sedimentation or accidental spills would occur following current adopted zoning. Any changes related to hydrology, water quality, watersheds and drainage patterns, flood and inundation hazards, and ground water resource management caused by changes in existing development would follow the currently adopted standards. Therefore, the No Project Alternative impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be less than significant, similar to the 2045 General Plan Update.

f. Noise

Although the No Project Alternative would involve less overall development than the 2045 General Plan Update, resulting in reduced construction activity and traffic volumes, its lack of policies and mitigation to address noise and vibration would ultimately lead to greater noise impacts. The No Project Alternative would not implement the policies from the 2045 General Plan Update that aim to promote land uses compatible with future noise levels or minimize transportation noise and other intermittent noise. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not implement Mitigation Measures NOI-1(a), NOI-1(b), or NOI-2, which require construction activities to follow noise-

reduction practices to minimize noise impacts on nearby sensitive receptors. Without implementation of these mitigation measures, potential construction and operation noise impacts would remain significant and unavoidable, and potential impacts from construction groundborne vibration would change from less than significant to significant and unavoidable. Therefore, overall noise impacts induced by the No Project Alternative would have slightly greater impacts than the 2045 General Plan Update related to construction noise, operational noise, and construction groundborne vibration. These impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

g. Transportation and Traffic

Lower buildout under the No Project Alternative would result in reduced daily trips and reduced roadway congestion compared to the 2045 General Plan Update. The No Project Alternative would not implement the goals and policies included in the 2045 General Plan Update to reduce VMT, including the promotion of different modes of transportation including transit and active transportation. Unlike the 2045 General Plan Update, the No Project Alternative would not place an emphasis on mixed-use and infill development in Santa Maria. Without policies to guide mixed-use and infill development, it is anticipated that regional VMT would increase as residents and employees commute longer distances. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would have slightly greater impacts on VMT, and impacts would remain significant and unavoidable

h. Utilities and Service Systems

As a result of the reduced development intensity, the No Project Alternative would generate lower demand on water, wastewater, energy, and solid waste systems. However, the No Project Alternative would not implement the policies included in the 2045 General Plan Update that aim to ensure citywide utility infrastructure supports development. As a result, overall demand would be lower, the absence of utilities planning and infrastructure policies could limit the City's ability to manage utility impacts efficiently. In addition, the No Project Alternative would not include the annexation area, unlike the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, the No Project Alternative would not require the establishment of new or expanded utilities infrastructure in order to service the city's expansion. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, development facilitated by the No Project Alternative would be required to comply with all applicable federal, State, and local regulations regarding water, wastewater, and waste disposal. Therefore, impacts would be slightly reduced overall due to lower development levels when compared to the 2045 General Plan and would remain less than significant.

6.3 Alternative 2: Infill Only Alternative

6.3.1 Description

Under the Infill Only Alternative, the City of Santa Maria would adopt the 2045 General Plan Update, including all goals and policies. However, the Infill Only Alternative would exclude the annexation of areas located east of the current City limits and direct development to areas within existing urban or suburban areas as infill, redevelopment, or increased densities. For the purpose of this analysis, the Infill Only Alternative is assumed to result in a similar overall level of buildout and population growth compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, despite the exclusion of future development in the eastern annexation area. Therefore, this analysis assumes that the Infill Only Alternative would result in the addition of approximately 16,000 new residential units and up to 23,750 new jobs associated with new commercial development within city limits.

While this alternative would reduce the geographic footprint of development, it would result in increased development pressure on existing neighborhoods and infrastructure. As a result, the Infill Only Alternative may not fulfill the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update because it would not fully address evolving community health needs, state housing requirements, or opportunities for connected growth anticipated through 2045. However, as discussed in detail in Section 6.3.2, this alternative would avoid environmental impacts in the annexation area, such as conversion of agricultural land, fragmentation of open space, or potential effects on biological resources, while potentially exacerbating environmental impacts associated with the increased development density in existing neighborhoods.

6.3.2 Impact Analysis

a. Agricultural Resources

By accommodating a similar amount of development entirely within existing City limits, the Infill Only Alternative would avoid the annexation area's agricultural lands and result in reduced impacts to farmland. While the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program still designates areas within the city as Important Farmland, the conversion of these areas and associated land use changes have been previously evaluated in earlier environmental documents which are listed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources*. Under this alternative, future growth would rely on redevelopment and increased densities within existing urbanized areas and locations already designated for urban development rather than expansion into agricultural lands. The Infill Only Alternative would not convert agricultural lands within city limits because lands within city limits currently used for agricultural purposes have been previously designated for planned urban redevelopment in specific plans or earlier iterations of the General Plan. As discussed in Section 4.1, *Agricultural Resources,* environmental documents such as the Sphere of Influence Expansion Environmental Impact Report (SCH #90010930), the Area 9 Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2008071018), the Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan Amendment Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SCH #1994107909),and the Betteravia Plaza General Plan Amendment, Land Use and Zone Change and Development Agreement Environmental Impact Report (SCH #2015011029) have evaluated impacts to agricultural resources from the conversion of agricultural lands within the city. As a result, these lands have land use and zoning designations intended for urban redevelopment and would not be considered a conversion of existing agricultural uses. The exclusion of future development in the eastern annexation area would reduce impacts to agricultural resources in comparison to the 2045 General Plan Update. However, because this alternative limits development to infill sites, it would constrain opportunities for housing diversity and connected growth compared to the proposed plan. As the Infill Only Alternative would not result in the conversion of agricultural lands within City limits nor would it include the annexation area, this impact would be reduced to less than significant.

b. Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Air Quality: The Infill Only Alternative assumes a similar level of buildout and a more compact development pattern, which together would help lower GHG emissions and vehicle-related air pollutants. This infill-oriented growth pattern would be more compact, reducing VMT per capita and enhancing opportunities for walking, biking, and transit use, potentially reducing criteria air pollutant and GHG emissions on a per capita basis. However, similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Infill Only Alternative would still have the potential to exceed SBCAPCD standards related to fugitive dust and criteria air pollutants. Therefore, implementation of Mitigation Measures AQGHG-1 and AQGHG-2, which aim to reduce construction-related air pollutant

emissions by requiring future development in Santa Maria to implement best management practices consistent with SBCAPCD standards and use of Tier 3 or higher construction equipment, would be required. As such, impacts related to air quality would be reduced compared to the 2045 General Plan Update but would remain significant and unavoidable as fugitive dust and criteria air pollutant emissions from the Infill Only Alternative may still exceed SBCAPCD's standards.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: While a more compact development pattern may support GHG reduction strategies, the City may still not achieve consistency with the statewide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045, and no feasible mitigation is available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, impacts associated with GHG emissions would be reduced compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, but would remain significant and unavoidable.

c. Biological Resources

Although total development would be similar to the proposed plan, growth under this alternative would be focused in previously urbanized or disturbed areas, resulting in less impact to natural habitats and biological resources overall. This could result in reduced impacts to biological resources, including habitat for special-status species potentially present in the eastern annexation area. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Infill Only Alternative would implement policies to enhance protection of biological resources, including development review and habitat conservation strategies. In addition, the Infill Only Alternative would implement Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k), which require future development to avoid, minimize, or offset impacts to sensitive species and habitats through surveys, construction buffers, habitat restoration, and compliance with agency regulations. This would reduce potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level. As a result, impacts to biological resources would be reduced compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, and would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

d. Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

While overall buildout would be similar to the proposed plan, the infill-focused growth pattern would focus development within existing City limits, where land is already disturbed. Development of previously disturbed lands would reduce the potential for disturbing previously unidentified cultural and tribal cultural resources, particularly in comparison to development of the annexation area identified in the 2045 General Plan Update. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Infill Only Alternative would implement General Plan policies that aim to protect cultural and archaeological resources and would incorporate Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4(b) as deemed necessary by the City, which aim to protect archaeological and historical resources by requiring pre-construction surveys, construction monitoring, and procedures for the treatment of any discovered resources. Implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce potential impacts to cultural resources to a less than significant level. The Infill Only Alternative would also comply with AB 52 and SB 18, and would implement Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and CUL-4(b), which ensure tribal consultation and protection of tribal cultural resources through construction monitoring by tribal representatives and protocols for the discovery and treatment of tribal resources. This would reduce potential impacts to tribal cultural resources to a less than significant level. Consequently, impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources would be reduced compared to the 2045 General Plan Update and would remain less than significant with mitigation.

e. Hydrology and Water Quality

Because it directs growth to areas with existing drainage infrastructure, the Infill Only Alternative would reduce impacts to hydrology and water quality. As a result, impacts to hydrology and water quality would remain similar overall, but would be more focused within already urbanized areas. Unlike the 2045 General Plan Update, the Infill Only Alternative would not develop open space or agricultural lands to the east of the City, thereby avoiding new impervious surfaces in greenfield areas and reducing potential impacts on undeveloped drainage systems and natural waterways. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, development under the Infill Only Alternative would be required to adhere to existing NPDES permits and municipal code requirements. In addition, the Infill Only Alternative would implement policies that aim to protect groundwater supplies, groundwater recharge, and reduce impacts due to the release of pollutants from inundation. Because this alternative would focus on redevelopment and infill, stormwater improvements would be focused on upgrades to existing drainage infrastructure rather than extending new systems. Development under the Infill Only Alternative would comply with all federal, State, and local regulations to minimize water quality impacts and would not conflict with the Basin Plan. Therefore, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be similar to those of the 2045 General Plan Update and would remain less than significant.

f. Noise

Although the scale of development would be similar to the proposed plan, infill development would occur in areas already exposed to urban activity, resulting in similar or slightly lower noise impacts overall. Construction-related noise could affect adjacent residences, schools, or care facilities located near infill sites. The Infill Only Alternative would implement policies aimed at reducing construction and operational noise, as well as groundborne vibration. Development facilitated by the Infill Only Alternative is expected to result in similar stationary noise and groundborne vibration levels as the 2045 General Plan Update. The Infill Only Alternative would include Mitigation Measures NOI-1(a) and NOI-1(b), which set conditions of approval for all development within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor and implementing roadway vehicle noise reduction measures. Focusing growth in already developed areas may also increase the likelihood of cumulative noise impacts along major corridors, such as Broadway and Main Street, due to traffic increases. However, similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, there would be no feasible mitigation that could avoid or fully mitigate the increase in construction and traffic noise in the plan area. As a result, potential construction noise impacts and operational traffic noise impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. Implementation of Mitigation Measure NOI-2, which requires construction vibration control measures to be incorporated, would reduce construction vibration impacts to a less than significant level. Overall, noise impacts would be similar to those of the 2045 General Plan Update and would remain significant and unavoidable.

g. Transportation and Traffic

Due to a more centralized pattern of growth, even with similar development levels, the Infill Only Alternative would result in reduced vehicle miles traveled and reduced congestion. This compact development pattern could reduce average trip lengths and improve access to services and jobs, particularly in areas already served by Santa Maria Area Transit (SMAT) and the city's active transportation network. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Infill Only Alternative would not conflict with the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS, the Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan, or any other applicable transportation plan or policy. Development facilitated by the Infill Only Alternative

would comply with State, Santa Maria Fire Department, and City requirements related to transportation design safety and emergency access. While the more compact pattern could slightly improve per capita VMT compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, the City as a whole would still not meet the 17 percent VMT reduction threshold required by SBCAG. Therefore, this impact would be slightly reduced over the 2045 General Plan Update but would still remain significant and unavoidable.

h. Utilities and Service Systems

While utility demand would be similar to the proposed plan, the Infill Only Alternative would allow for more efficient use of existing infrastructure within the City. Concentrating growth within City limits has the potential to improve service efficiency and reduce the need for new infrastructure extensions into greenfield areas. However, existing facilities may still require upgrades or capacity expansions to serve new development in the City limit. Like the 2045 General Plan Update, the Infill Only Alternative would be subject to applicable State and local requirements, and would be required to implement policies to ensure adequate public services. Therefore, impacts to utilities and service systems would be similar to those of the 2045 General Plan Update and would be less than significant with implementation of policies and mitigation measures.

6.4 Alternative 3: Greater Annexation Alternative

6.4.1 Description

Under the Greater Annexation Alternative, the City of Santa Maria would adopt the 2045 General Plan Update, including all goals, policies, and land use changes. However, the Greater Annexation Alternative would include a larger annexation area east of the current City limits. This alternative assumes a similar level of development density would occur in the larger annexation area, resulting in increased total development and an increased population compared to the 2045 General Plan Update. For the purpose of this analysis, the Greater Annexation Alternative is assumed to result in increased overall buildout potential and population growth compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, due to the inclusion of a larger annexation area and expanded Sphere of Influence.

The expanded geographic footprint of the Greater Annexation Alternative would fulfill many of the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update because it would have the capacity to meet state housing requirements and address some community needs; however, the distributed development that may occur under this alternative would not fully address evolving community health needs or opportunities for connected growth anticipated through 2045. However, as discussed in detail in Section 6.4.2, this alternative would result in greater environmental impacts across many resource areas as the increased footprint would reduce available agricultural land and increase VMT and associated criteria pollutant and GHG emissions.

6.4.2 Impact Analysis

a. Agricultural Resources

The Greater Annexation Alternative would allow for greater overall buildout than the proposed plan by expanding the annexation area, leading to increased impacts from the conversion of agricultural land. As a result, additional agricultural lands would potentially be converted to non-agricultural uses, including additional Prime Farmland outside City limits. Similar to the 2045 General Plan

Update, the Greater Annexation Alternative would require the implementation of policies and actions of the 2045 General Plan Update which aim to reduce potential impacts related to the conversion of agricultural lands and conflicts with agricultural zoning. However, due to increased conversion of agricultural lands within the greater annexation area, impacts to agricultural resources would be greater and would remain significant and unavoidable.

b. Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Air Quality: Under the Greater Annexation Alternative, higher levels of growth and a more dispersed development pattern would increase vehicle miles traveled and emissions, resulting in greater impacts to air quality and greenhouse gases. Under this alternative, growth would be more widespread, thereby increasing VMT per capita and reducing potential active transportation and transit uses. As such, mobile emissions of criteria air pollutants and GHGs would increase relative to the 2045 General Plan Update. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Greater Annexation Alternative would have the potential to exceed SBCAPCD standards related to fugitive dust and criteria air pollutants. Therefore, implementation of Mitigation Measures AQGHG-1 and AQGHG-2, which aim to reduce construction-related air pollutant emissions, would be required. Although implementation would serve to reduce construction-related air pollutant emissions, air pollutant emissions under this alternative would be greater than the 2045 General Plan Update and impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The increased development potential would also increase GHG emissions and as such, the City may not achieve consistency with the statewide target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2045, and no feasible mitigation is available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, impacts regarding GHG emissions would be greater than the 2045 General Plan Update, and would remain significant and unavoidable.

c. Biological Resources

With additional development in new areas outside the existing City limits, the Greater Annexation Alternative would increase the likelihood of disturbing sensitive biological resources. This alternative would increase the potential for impacts to biological resources, particularly in areas that support sensitive natural communities, wetlands, and habitat for special-status species within agricultural and open space areas of the larger annexation area. However, similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Greater Annexation Alternative would implement policies to protect biological resources, including habitat conservation strategies and development review procedures. Additionally, this alternative would implement Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k), which require future development to avoid, minimize, or offset impacts to sensitive species and habitats through surveys, construction buffers, habitat restoration, and compliance with agency regulations. This would reduce potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level. As such, while the Greater Annexation Alternative could result in greater biological resource impacts compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, impacts to biological resources would remain less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

d. Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

The expansion into previously undeveloped areas, combined with higher buildout potential, would increase the potential to affect previously undisturbed cultural and tribal resources under the Greater Annexation Alternative. As this alternative would have the potential to disturb a larger footprint and an increased area of previously undeveloped land, this alternative would result in a

greater potential to disturb previously unidentified cultural and tribal cultural resources. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Greater Annexation Alternative would implement General Plan policies to protect cultural and archaeological resources and would incorporate Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4(b), which aim to protect archaeological and historical resources by requiring pre-construction surveys, construction monitoring, and procedures for the treatment of any resources discovered. These measures would reduce impacts to a less than significant level. The Greater Annexation Alternative would also comply with AB 52 and SB 18, and implement Mitigation Measures CUL-4(a) and CUL-4(b), which ensure tribal consultation and protection of tribal cultural resources through construction monitoring by tribal representatives and protocols for the discovery and treatment of tribal resources. As such, impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources would be greater than the 2045 General Plan Update, but impacts to cultural resources and tribal cultural resources would remain less than significant with mitigation.

e. Hydrology and Water Quality

Under the Greater Annexation Alternative, greater development and a larger geographic footprint would introduce more impervious surfaces and infrastructure needs, contributing to greater impacts on hydrology and water quality. As a result, impacts to hydrology and water quality would increase as new development would occur within previously undeveloped areas. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Greater Annexation Alternative would result in development of open space and agricultural lands east of the City. However, under this alternative, a larger annexation area would be included, which would also increase the amount of new impervious surfaces in greenfield areas and increase potential impacts on undeveloped drainage systems and natural waterways. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the larger Annexation Alternative would be required to adhere to existing NPDES permits and municipal code requirements. Additionally, the Greater Annexation Alternative would also implement policies that aim to protect groundwater supplies, groundwater recharge, and reduce impacts due to the release of pollutants from inundation. Under this alternative, as under the 2045 General Plan Update, stormwater improvements would include the extension of new drainage infrastructure systems into the larger annexation area. However, because the annexation area would be larger under this alternative, new drainage infrastructure systems would need to be extended into a larger area. New development under the Greater Annexation Alternative would still be required to comply with all federal, State, and local regulations to minimize water quality impacts and would not conflict with the Basin Plan. Therefore, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would be greater than those of the 2045 General Plan Update but would remain less than significant.

f. Noise

The Greater Annexation Alternative would result in greater noise impacts due to increased construction activity and traffic generation in areas not previously developed. As such, some new development would occur in locations further from existing sensitive receptors. Construction-related noise would have a somewhat lower impact on residences, schools, or care facilities located near development within the larger annexation area. However, this alternative would still introduce increased daytime noise levels related to construction noise in close proximity to sensitive receptors.

The Greater Annexation Alternative would implement policies aimed at reducing construction and operational noise, as well as groundborne vibration. Development facilitated by the Greater Annexation Alternative would be expected to result in similar stationary noise and groundborne

vibration levels as the 2045 General Plan Update, albeit within a larger footprint. Under this alternative, Mitigation Measures NOI-1(a) and NOI-1(b) would still be required, setting conditions of approval for all development within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor and implementing roadway vehicle noise reduction measures.

The expanded footprint under this alternative may increase traffic noise along roadways with previously minimal traffic noise, thereby increasing ambient noise levels along affected roadways. However, as details from individual development facilitated by the plan are unknown at this time, there is no feasible mitigation that would avoid or fully mitigate the increase in construction and traffic noise. As a result, potential construction noise impacts and operational traffic noise impacts would remain significant and unavoidable, similar to the 2045 General Plan Update. As under the 2045 General Plan Update, future development facilitated by the Greater Annexation Alternative would involve construction activity that could intermittently generate groundborne vibration affecting nearby properties. Because project-level details are not currently available for future individual development facilitated by the Greater Annexation Alternative, it is not possible to determine which projects may use pile driving or vibratory rollers and their exact vibration levels, locations, or time periods for construction of such projects. As a result, construction vibration levels may exceed the FTA's vibration levels for preventing architectural building damage. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Greater Annexation Alternative would require Mitigation Measure NOI-2 to reduce construction vibration impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, overall noise impacts would be similar to those of the 2045 General Plan Update but would remain significant and unavoidable.

g. Transportation and Traffic

The higher buildout potential and more dispersed development pattern of the Greater Annexation Alternative would generate additional vehicle trips and increase roadway congestion relative to the 2045 General Plan Update. As such, under this alternative, the use of active transportation and transit may decrease as residents would be more dependent on private vehicles. The Greater Annexation Alternative development pattern would increase average trip lengths and require construction of new transit and active transportation infrastructure. As VMT and dependency on private vehicles would increase under the Greater Annexation Alternative, this alternative may conflict with the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS, the Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan, and other applicable transportation plans or policies.

Development facilitated by the Greater Annexation Alternative would be required to comply with State and City requirements related to transportation design safety and emergency access. As the Greater Annexation Alternative would increase the development footprint, per capita VMT compared to the 2045 General Plan Update may also increase, such that the City as a whole would not meet the 17 percent VMT reduction threshold required by SBCAG. Therefore, transportation impacts of the Greater Annexation Alternative would be greater than the 2045 General Plan Update and impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

h. Utilities and Service Systems

Serving an expanded urban area and a larger population under the Greater Annexation Alternative would increase demand on utility infrastructure and require new extensions, resulting in greater impacts to service systems. New development under this alternative would result in increased demand for water supply, wastewater treatment, solid waste disposal, and other utility services. Increased demands to previously undeveloped areas and requirements to expand utility provider

service areas would also generate a need for new infrastructure extensions. Existing facilities may also still require upgrades or capacity expansions. Similar to the 2045 General Plan Update, the Greater Annexation Alternative would be subject to applicable state and local requirements and implement policies to ensure adequate public services. Therefore, while impacts would be greater than those of the 2045 General Plan Update, impacts would remain less than significant.

6.5 Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA requires the identification of an Environmentally Superior Alternative among the alternatives considered. When the No Project Alternative is determined to be environmentally superior, CEQA also requires identification of the Environmentally Superior Alternative among the development options. Table 6-1 indicates whether each alternative's environmental impact is greater than, less than, or similar to that of the 2045 General Plan Update for each of the issue areas studied in addition to the overall impact finding (Less than Significant, Significant and Unavoidable, etc.). Based on the alternatives evaluation in Section 6.2 through Section 6.4, Alternative 2, Infill Only Alternative would be the Environmentally Superior Alternative.

Unlike the Greater Annexation Alternative, the Infill Only Alternative would concentrate development in already developed areas of the city by increasing densities and redevelopment. As a result, the Infill Only Alternative would have reduced impacts on agricultural lands, as this alternative would not include the annexation area, thus removing the potential for development to convert agricultural lands outside of the City limits. The Infill Only Alternative would also result in reduced impacts to air quality and GHG emissions, as infill development would encourage the use of active transportation and transit uses due to the proximity of services to residential development. Additionally, compared to the Greater Annexation Alternative, the Infill Only Alternative would have reduced impacts on biological and cultural resources due to the concentration of development within previously disturbed areas that have low potential for biological resources and low potential to uncover archaeological resources. The Infill Only Alternative would have reduced per capita VMT, as development within the infill areas would reduce buildout potential to a wider area, which would reduce mobile emissions in comparison to the Greater Annexation Alternative. Due to the reduced buildout potential and reduced buildout area, impacts related to hydrology and water quality would also be reduced compared to the Greater Annexation Alternative.

Although the Infill Only Alternative would be the Environmentally Superior Alternative, this alternative would not fulfill the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update, including the provision of housing quality and various housing choices or improving opportunities for connected growth. Further, the Infill Only Alternative would not enhance new and existing neighborhoods such that each neighborhood would be a Complete Neighborhood or provide innovative housing and may result in the City failing to meeting its RHNA obligations in accordance with State law as it would significantly reduce the affordable housing options and limit new housing to infill only and redevelopment.

Table 6-1 Impact Comparison of Alternatives

Issue	2045 General Plan Update Impact Classification	Alternative 1: No Project	Alternative 2: Infill Only	Alternative 3: Greater Annexation
Agricultural Resources	Significant and Unavoidable	+ Less than Significant	- Less than Significant	+ Significant and Unavoidable
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Significant and Unavoidable	- Significant and Unavoidable	- Significant and Unavoidable	+ Significant and Unavoidable
Biological Resources	Less than Significant with Mitigation	+ Significant and Unavoidable	- Less than Significant with Mitigation	+ Less than Significant with Mitigation
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources	Less than Significant with Mitigation	+ Significant and Unavoidable	- Less than Significant with Mitigation	+ Less than Significant with Mitigation
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less than Significant	= Less than Significant	= Less than Significant	+ Less than Significant
Noise	Significant and Unavoidable	+ Significant and Unavoidable	= Significant and Unavoidable	= Significant and Unavoidable
Transportation and Traffic	Significant and Unavoidable	+ Significant and Unavoidable	- Significant and Unavoidable	+ Significant and Unavoidable
Utilities and Service Systems	Less than Significant	- Less than Significant	= Less than Significant	+ Less than Significant

+ Greater impacts compared to the 2045 General Plan Update.

- Reduced impacts compared to the 2045 General Plan Update.

= Similar impacts compared to the 2045 General Plan Update.

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7.2 List of Preparers

This EIR was prepared by the City of Santa Maria, with the assistance of Rincon Consultants, Inc. Consultant staff involved in the preparation of the EIR are listed below.

Rincon Consultants, Inc.

Matt Maddox, AICP, MESM, Principal
Chris Bersbach, MESM, Project Manager
Leslie Slayday, MUP, Assistant Project Manager
Gianna Meschi, Environmental Planner
Nichole Yee, Environmental Planner
Megan Knight, Environmental Planner/Biologist
Zoe Zepp, Environmental Planner
Hannah Bireschi, Environmental Planner
Jesse McCandless, Noise Specialist
Ethan Knox, Environmental Planner
Antonia Davetas, MS, Environmental Planner
Michael Huang, Environmental Planner
Vivian Phan, MESM, GIS Analyst
Yaritza Ramirez, Publishing Specialist