

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 residents¹ 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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