

Santa Maria General Plan

imagine



Final General Plan

February 12, 2026



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¹ All General Plan appendices are available at www.imaginesantamaria.com/resources.

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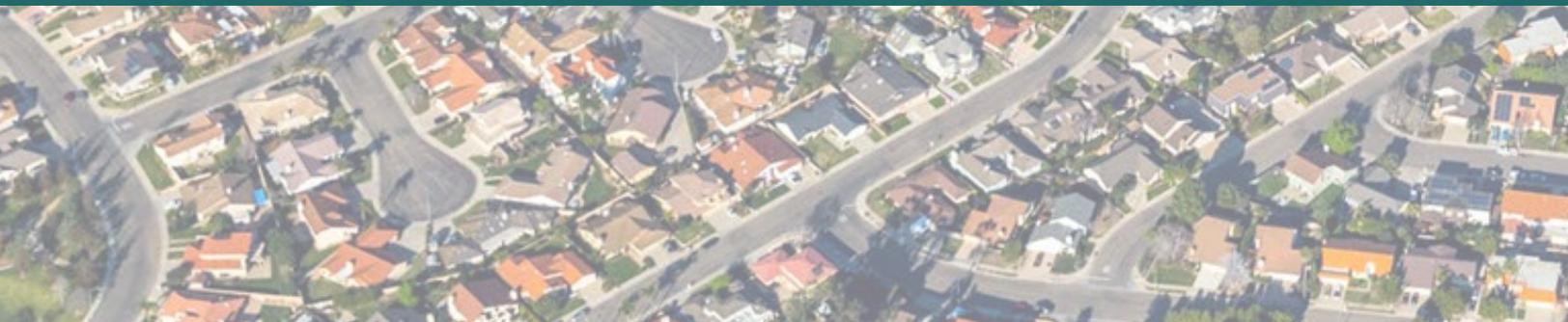
Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



Introduction

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Santa Maria City Hall

Introduction

This Introduction to the Santa Maria General Plan provides the foundation needed to understand and implement the General Plan. The *About the General Plan* section summarizes State requirements and the community outreach and policy development that shaped the Plan. The *Planning Context* section describes the regional and local setting, the Planning Area, Santa Maria’s planning history, and growth projections through the planning horizon of 2045. Finally, the *Guide to Using the General Plan* section defines key terms, introduces key aspects of Plan implementation and maintenance, and provides an overview of the Plan. The General Plan Introduction concludes with the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles that serve as the foundation of the General Plan.



City of Santa Maria gateway sign



Strawberries, a major agricultural export for the Santa Maria Valley.



Historic photo of the Broadway and Main Street intersection.

About the General Plan

General Plan Requirements

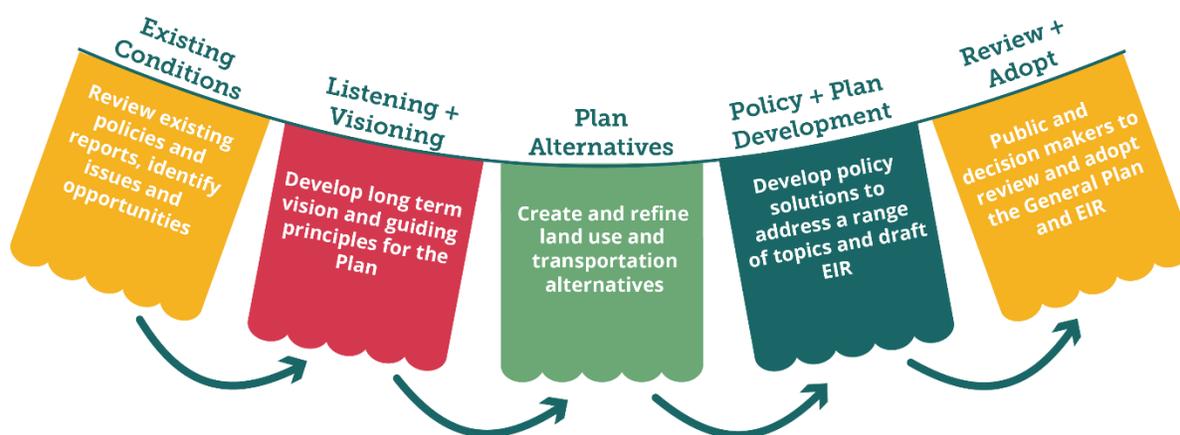
A General Plan is a policy document required by State law (Government Code Section 65300-65303.4) that provides a “long term, comprehensive, integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies” that reflect local conditions and community vision. State law requires that the general plan address the following eight mandatory elements: land use, housing, circulation, conservation, open space, environmental justice, safety, and noise. State law also allows for the inclusion of optional “elements” and organization of the elements to “accommodate local conditions and circumstances” (Government Code § 65300.7), subject to the City’s discretion.

Planning Process



In 2020, the City of Santa Maria embarked on a comprehensive update to its General Plan, called “Imagine Santa Maria,” to create a forward-looking document that will serve as the blueprint for the city through the year 2045. The update kicked off in January 2020 and concluded in March 2026. The General Plan update process included five phases: (1) existing conditions, (2) listening and visioning, (3) plan alternatives, (4) policy and plan development, and (5) review and adoption of the Plan, described in Figure INT-1: General Plan Update Process. Community input informed each of the five phases.

Figure INT-1: General Plan Update Process



The following is a summary of each phase. Work products prepared for each phase are included in the General Plan appendix.

- **Existing Conditions.** During the existing conditions phase, the City identified trends, issues, opportunities, and priorities, which were summarized in seven existing conditions reports: Environmental, Health and Environmental Justice, Infrastructure, Land Use and Community Design, Socioeconomics, Subareas, and Transportation and Mobility.
- **Listening and Visioning.** In this phase, community members shared their vision for the future, the qualities of Santa Maria to preserve, and the issues to address. Community engagement activities in this phase included community workshops, online surveys, and social media outreach. The listening and visioning phase resulted in a brief vision statement and a list of the community's guiding principles, which were approved by the City Council in April 2021.
- **Plan Alternatives.** The purpose of the Plan alternatives phase was to develop different land use, mobility, and urban design options that addressed the ideas expressed in the vision. This phase involved developing conceptual ideas for growth and development with the public, creating three discrete land use alternatives, and extensive community engagement to select and refine the preferred land use direction. The preferred land use designation map was endorsed by the City Council in November 2023.
- **Policy and Plan Development.** After the selection of the preferred land use designation map, City staff began work on the Policy Frameworks to highlight the key direction for each Element. Each Policy Framework was developed by incorporating findings from previous project phases, including technical analyses, relevant content from the existing General Plan, current planning best practices, requirements from State law, and feedback from community members, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members, Planning Commission, City Council, and City staff. This phase involved meetings between various City departments and the consultant team and a review of the goals, policies, and implementation actions for multiple elements by the TAC. During this phase, the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was completed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Both documents—the Draft General Plan and the Draft EIR—were released for public review and comment from August 14 to September 28, 2025.

- **Review and Adopt.** The final phase of work was the review and adoption of the General Plan. This phase involved community workshops on the Draft General Plan and Draft EIR, City Council and Planning Commission Study Sessions, public hearings, and formal adoption of the General Plan and certification of the EIR in March 2026.

Planning Context

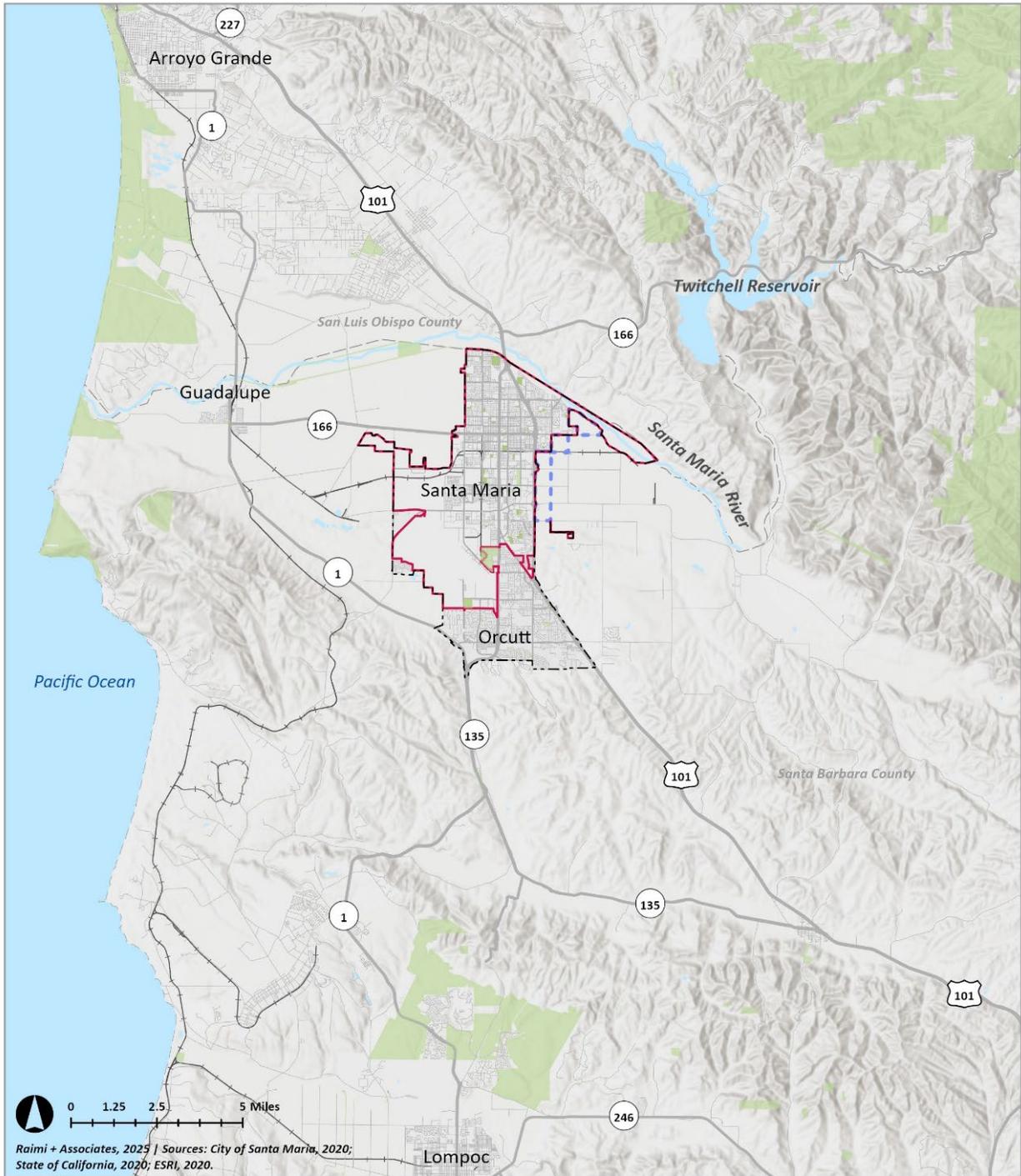
Regional and Local Setting

The City of Santa Maria is located along the Central Coast of California, in the northwest part of Santa Barbara County, as shown in Figure INT-2: Regional Location. Santa Maria is in the Santa Maria Valley, a valley renowned for its viticulture and agriculture. The city is immediately surrounded by the Santa Maria River to the north, unincorporated agricultural land to the east and west, and the unincorporated Community of Orcutt to the south. The Santa Maria River forms the Santa Barbara County and San Luis Obispo County line. Santa Maria is about 10 miles east of the Pacific Ocean, 13 miles west of Los Padres National Forest in the San Rafael Mountains, 25 miles south of San Luis Obispo, and 50 miles northwest of Santa Barbara. Santa Maria is connected regionally via US-101, State Route (SR)-1, and Main Street (SR-166), which run through or near Santa Maria. The Santa Maria Airport provides public and private aviation services.



Mural located on Broadway in Santa Maria's Downtown.

Figure INT-2: Regional Location



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

Planning Area

State law requires that a general plan must cover the territory within the boundaries of the adopting city or county as well as “any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency’s judgment bears relation to its planning” (Government Code Section 65300). The City of Santa Maria’s General Plan Planning Area¹ includes the following areas, as shown in Figure INT-3: Planning Area:

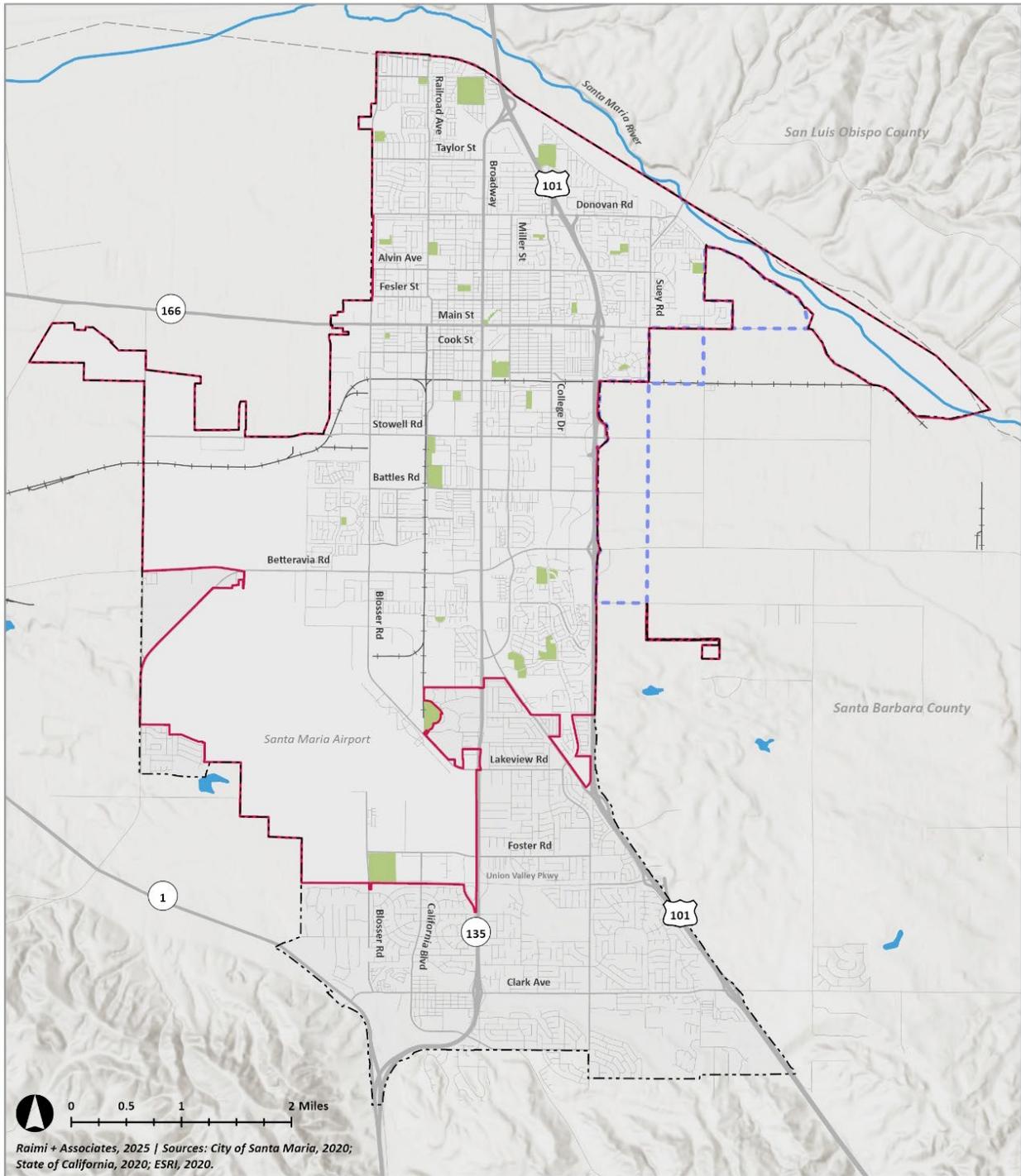
- **City limits.** City limits include the area within the current (as of 2025) boundaries of the City of Santa Maria.
- **Sphere of Influence (SOI).** As defined by the State General Plan Guidelines, the SOI is the “probable physical boundaries and service area” of the City. There are three main areas in the SOI: a triangular area of land along Betteravia Road on the western side of the City, the Tanglewood area to the west of Santa Maria Airport, and the unincorporated community of Orcutt.
- **The Planned Annexation Area.** There are three areas of unincorporated Santa Barbara County that are proposed for annexation into the City, totaling 985 acres. The first area proposed for annexation is generally bound by Panther Drive to the west, E. Main Street to the south, and the City limits 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, US-101 to the west, Prell Road to the south, and S. Suey Road to the east. As described in more detail in the Land Use Element, the Santa Barbara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) will determine whether the SOI boundaries will be revised to include the Planned Annexation Area and whether portions will be annexed into the City.



Agricultural land in Santa Maria.

¹ For information on growth projections, see the Land Use Element.

Figure INT-3: Planning Area



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



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

Brief Planning History of Santa Maria²

The first known inhabitants of the area now known as Santa Maria were the Chumash Native Americans. The Spanish were the first Europeans to settle in the area in the late 18th century to establish missions. Following Mexican independence in 1821, the Mexican government granted individual citizens land ownership, and the first town, called La Graciosa, was established near the present-day site of Orcutt in 1868. Four early settlers—Rudolph Cook, John Thornburg, Isaac Miller, and Isaac Fesler—settled on four quadrants of land that met at the intersection of Broadway (SR-35) and Main Street (SR-166) in the 1860s and 1870s.

Officials surveyed a grid pattern expanding from the intersection of Broadway and Main Street, and settlers eventually incorporated as Santa Maria in 1905. The early residential and commercial growth of the city occurred in Downtown Santa Maria, and today there is still a mix of residential, civic, and commercial uses in the gridded Downtown area.

The City of Santa Maria primarily grew by annexing surrounding land used primarily for farming or ranching. Creation of regional job centers, including the Vandenberg Space Force Base, played a significant role in mid-century (1950s – 1970s) residential growth of the city and future annexations. Most residential development from the mid-20th century onward has been in the form of single-family residential subdivisions developed at a lower density than the Downtown area. Today, the City of Santa Maria is home to a population of over 100,000 people, and though much has changed since its founding, it still boasts a mix of agriculture, residential, and employment uses centered around the historic Downtown. The 2045 General Plan builds upon the City's long-range planning framework, including prior annexation efforts.³



Historic photo of Broadway, looking north. Credit: Santa Maria Valley Historical Society.

² Source: City of Santa Maria Valley Historical Society, 2020.

³ For more detailed historical documentation, including the 1993 Sphere of Influence Expansion EIR (SCH #90010930), the public may contact the City of Santa Maria Planning Division to request archived planning documents.

Growth Projections

Growth projections refer to the amount of development likely to have occurred by the end of the planning horizon of the General Plan in 2045. The projections in Table INT-1: Growth Projections represent a probable amount of growth in the City of Santa Maria through the year 2045 based on the city’s historic pattern of growth, current and potential land available for development, and current and future economic and social conditions in Santa Maria. The projections were informed by job and population projections through the year 2050 from the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) and potential Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA).

The growth projections assume new development through the year 2045 will be consistent with development regulations established in this General Plan and in the City’s other regulatory documents, including the Zoning Ordinance and applicable Specific Plans. The growth projections do not assume full buildout of every parcel. Rather, they represent a realistic amount of housing and employment growth on land with potential for development based on actual densities and intensities of recent projects in Santa Maria. Actual growth in Santa Maria through the year 2045 will depend on several factors, including economic and social trends, natural hazards, economic conditions, developer interest, and the timeline of annexation.

Table INT-1: Growth Projections

	Existing (2022)	Projected (2045)	Net Change
Acreage within City Limits	15,058 acres	16,043 acres	985 acres
Population	108,600 people	141,480 people	32,880 people
Residential Units	28,200 units	44,340 units	16,140 units
Jobs	43,050 jobs	66,800 jobs	23,750 jobs

Sources: SBCAG Regional Growth Forecast 2050; City of Santa Maria, 2024

Guide to Using the General Plan

Definition of Key Terms

The following are key terms used consistently throughout this General Plan:

Goal: a general expression of community direction, expressed as future desired ends

Policy: a specific statement of intent or direction that guides decision-making and helps implement a goal

Implementation Action: a specific activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy

Standard: a rule or measure establishing a level of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied

Diagram: a graphic expression of the text of a particular policy

Implementation, Reporting, and Updates

Policies

Generally, future development regulations, plans, and decisions must be consistent with the policies of the adopted General Plan, including the zoning ordinance, specific plans, capital improvements, development agreements, and functional plans (e.g., for hazard mitigation, water management, and waste management). Goals are achieved through the implementation of policies.

Implementation Actions

This General Plan identifies implementation actions, referred to simply as 'actions' in the policy frameworks of each element, intended to advance General Plan policies. Implementation actions guide City staff and decision-makers. The City will need to allocate funding and staff time and may need to partner with local and regional nonprofit organizations and outside public agencies.

CEQA Tiering and Streamlining

With the adoption of the General Plan and the certification of the Program EIR, the environmental review for subsequent projects can be limited to those project-specific significant effects that either were not examined or not examined fully in the General Plan EIR (CEQA Guidelines §15168(c)).

Reporting

California Government Code requires that the planning agency “render an annual report to the legislative body (City Council) on the status of the Plan and the progress in its implementation” (Section 65400(b)).

Updates

State law also encourages annual reviews of implementation actions and recommends that the entire General Plan be thoroughly reviewed every five years to ensure it is still consistent with the community's goals. State law further requires that the Housing Element be reviewed and updated at least once every eight years.

Any part of a General Plan may be amended to accommodate changing conditions. Property owners, developers, the Planning Commission, the City Council, or City staff may propose amendments. The Planning Commission and the City Council must review any proposed changes at public hearings, and the potential of environmental impacts must be evaluated in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Plan Organization

The General Plan is organized into chapters (referred to as elements), comprised of the State-mandated elements (land use, circulation, housing, conservation and open space, noise, safety, and environmental justice) and additional optional elements (public facilities and services, recreation and parks, and economic development).

Each element of the General Plan is organized into three main sections: Background, Issues and Opportunities, and Policies. The Background section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the element. The Issues and Opportunities section describes the key issues and opportunities that shaped the element. Finally, the Policies section establishes regulatory standards and diagrams and outlines goals, policies, and implementation actions.

Elements

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element includes policies related to Santa Maria's citywide land use and development pattern, community design and public realm, land use compatibility, and regional coordination.

Circulation Element

The Circulation Element identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed transportation networks and related policies.

Housing Element

The Housing Element addresses current and projected housing needs by establishing policies and programs for improving housing and providing adequate housing for all income levels. The Housing Element was prepared separately from the remainder of the General Plan to comply with statutory deadlines. The Housing Element was adopted on December 5, 2023.

Conservation and Open Space Element

The Conservation and Open Space Element included policies related to the city's natural, cultural, historic, tribal, and open space resources.

Noise Element

The Noise Element includes policies related to mitigating the impact of noise and vibration on adjacent uses and the community.

Safety Element

The Safety Element includes policies related to identifying and mitigating hazards that may affect the city, including seismic and geologic hazards, wildland and urban fires, flood and dam inundation, hazardous materials and solid waste, airport hazards, and climate change.

Health and Environmental Justice Element

The Health and Environmental Justice Element includes policies to reduce pollution; promote safe and affordable housing; enhance opportunities to lead healthy lives through access to healthy food, active transportation, public facilities, and healthcare facilities; and foster greater civic engagement.

Public Facilities and Services Element

The Public Facilities and Services Element includes policies related to major infrastructure (water, wastewater, and stormwater), public facilities (City-owned public buildings and libraries as well as schools), and public services (police, fire, and solid waste).

Recreation and Parks Element

The Recreation and Parks Element includes policies related to recreational facilities, trails, recreational programming, arts and culture programming, and parks.

Economic Development Element

The Economic Development Element includes policies related to workforce development, local industry, regional partnerships, and tourism.

Appendices

Appendix A: Existing Conditions Reports

During the existing conditions phase, the City identified trends, issues, opportunities, and priorities, which were summarized in seven existing conditions reports: Environmental, Health and Environmental Justice, Infrastructure, Land Use and Community Design, Socioeconomics, Subareas, and Transportation and Mobility.

Appendix B: Community Engagement Summaries

A summary report was prepared for each engagement activity. These reports include an overview of the activity, participant demographics, discussion summaries, and survey results.

Appendix C: Plan Alternatives Memoranda

The Plan Alternatives Memoranda include the Alternatives Technical Memo, Alternatives Analysis, Fiscal Impact Analysis Memo, and Preferred Alternative Memo.

Appendix D: SB 1000 Disadvantaged Communities Methodology

The SB 1000 Disadvantaged Communities Methodology details the multistep process taken to identify disadvantaged communities in the Planning Area.

Appendix E: Emergency Evacuation Analysis

The emergency evacuation analysis identifies evacuation routes and their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios. The findings of the Senate Bill 99 and Assembly Bill 747 analyses have been incorporated into the Safety Element.

Appendix F: Related Laws and Legislation

This chapter identifies County, State, and federal regulations that guided the development of the General Plan.

Appendix G: Glossary

The Glossary includes definitions of terms used throughout the General Plan.

Vision and Guiding Principles

This section includes the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles approved by City Council in 2021 as a foundation for subsequent analysis and policy development.

Vision Statement

This Vision Statement describes Santa Maria as the community would like to see it in 2045:

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.

Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles establish the direction the community should follow and the major ideas that the General Plan should advance.

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. Development in the Planned Annexation Area, despite the presence of agricultural land, has been determined to be necessary for a balanced approach to future city growth under the preferred land use alternative.

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 Street 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% 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 access to 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, such as 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 pace 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.



Santa Maria
General Plan

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Land Use Element

Final Draft | February 6, 2026



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Introduction

The Land Use Element has the broadest scope of all required elements of a General Plan, regulating how land in a city is to be used in the future, as described in California Government Code Section 65302(a).

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

Those goals, policies, and actions establish a framework to guide future growth and development in Santa Maria. The aim is to create a “complete community” that offers a high quality of life for all residents by supporting and prioritizing local jobs, education and medical resources, public amenities, and daily needs in close proximity to safe neighborhoods. The Element emphasizes revitalization of Downtown and the Broadway (SR-135) and Main Street (SR-166) corridors, opportunities for job growth in industrial and commercial areas, and housing in different formats and levels of affordability, while making every effort to preserve agricultural areas while accommodating future growth. The Element also guides community design, addresses existing and potential land use conflicts, and informs ongoing regional collaboration.



Left: Enos Ranch Shopping Center. Top right: Hotel on North Broadway. Bottom right: Bill Libbon Elementary School. Credit: Ashley & Vance Engineering.



A multi-family apartment complex in Santa Maria.

Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Land Use Policies.

Santa Maria's Development Pattern

Historic Development Patterns

In recent decades, Santa Maria has been one of the fastest growing cities in the region. Historically, Santa Maria's growth has been accommodated by annexing and developing vacant or agricultural land. The city has developed primarily through the adoption of Planned Development overlay zones and Specific Plans, as complements to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The majority of Santa Maria features low-to-medium intensity development.

Existing Land Use

Santa Maria is nearly 20 square miles and consists of a variety of land use types and development patterns, including residential, commercial, industrial, airport, public, and agriculture. The section below describes existing land uses, which refers to the way land is currently developed and being used (as of 2020) within City limits. The current land use provides important context for the Issues and Opportunities section below and for the goals and policies set forth in the Policy Framework of this Element.

Residential

Residential is the most prevalent type of use in the city. Most residential development in Santa Maria is in the form of detached, single-family homes. These units are primarily located in subdivisions across the city and outside of the Downtown area, though some single-family units do exist in Downtown.

Condominiums, apartments, and mobile homes make up a small share of the city's residential land. Multi-family housing tends to be either 1) pockets within primarily single-family residential neighborhoods near Downtown or 2) along major corridors, as complexes with shared facilities, such as private open space, some of which include recreational amenities such as private clubhouses, pools, and landscaped areas.



*Single-family residence located in Sky View Estates
Credit: Coastal Community Builders.*



Centennial Gardens Apartments Subdivision.

Commercial

Commercial uses, including retail and office, most often front major roadways, such as Broadway, Main Street, and Betteravia Road, or are located near US-101. Many retail commercial uses near US-101 are located in outdoor shopping centers with a mix of major anchor retailers (such as Costco or the Home Depot) and smaller retailers. Most commercial uses Downtown—including retail, office, and restaurant land uses—have small building footprints due to small lot size, with the exception of the Santa Maria Town Center Mall and Town Center West.



Enos Ranchos Retail Commercial Shopping Center

Industrial

Industrial uses are most commonly located on the west side of the city near Blosser Road or along US-101 at the north end of the city.



Industrial business located in Santa Maria.

Airport

The Santa Maria Public Airport is located in the southwestern part of the city. The airport covers 2,598 acres and is immediately surrounded by compatible land uses, including agriculture, vacant land, and industrial land.

Public, Institutional, and Parks

The Public, Institutional, and Parks category includes the following uses:

- **Schools.** Public schools are distributed throughout the city and are often community focal points in residential neighborhoods. Hancock College is situated on nearly an entire block near US-101.
- **Places of Worship.** Churches and places of worship or assembly are distributed evenly across Santa Maria, found within residential neighborhoods, along major corridors, and in commercial or industrial areas.
- **Parks.** Like schools, parks are often located in residential neighborhoods and distributed throughout Santa Maria.
- **City facilities.** Most of the City of Santa Maria's government buildings, including City Hall and City offices, are located near the Downtown area. Other City facilities, including the City's wastewater treatment plant and Santa Maria Area Transit operations facility, are located at the edges of the city.
- **Healthcare facilities.** Community health facilities are located throughout the city. Marian Regional Medical Center, located on Main Street adjacent to US-101, is a campus-like hospital complex and is the largest medical use in the city.
- **Government facilities.** Most of the City of Santa Maria's government buildings, including City Hall and City offices, are located near the Downtown area. Other City facilities, including the City's wastewater treatment plant and Santa Maria Area Transit operations facility, are located at the edges of the city. Several facilities owned by the County of Santa Barbara are located along Foster Road.



Santa Maria High School

Agricultural

Most agricultural uses are located on the west side of the city, and immediately to the east and west of City limits. 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.

Vacant

Vacant land is most commonly located on the periphery of the city, including near the Santa Maria River, west of A Street in the western portion of the city, and near the Santa Maria Public Airport.

Existing Specific Plans

Specific Plans are optional, detailed planning documents used to implement the General Plan for a specific geographic area of the city. Like General Plans, they are adopted legislatively. Santa Maria has twelve approved Specific Plans; some include a residential component, while others only include non-residential components. Of the Specific Plans that include residential components, all but three are built out. As noted in the Policy Framework, some updates to the Specific Plans are necessary to remain consistent with the General Plan Land Use Element. Specific Plans are illustrated in Figure LU-2 and described below, in Table LU-2.

Table LU-1: Existing Specific Plans

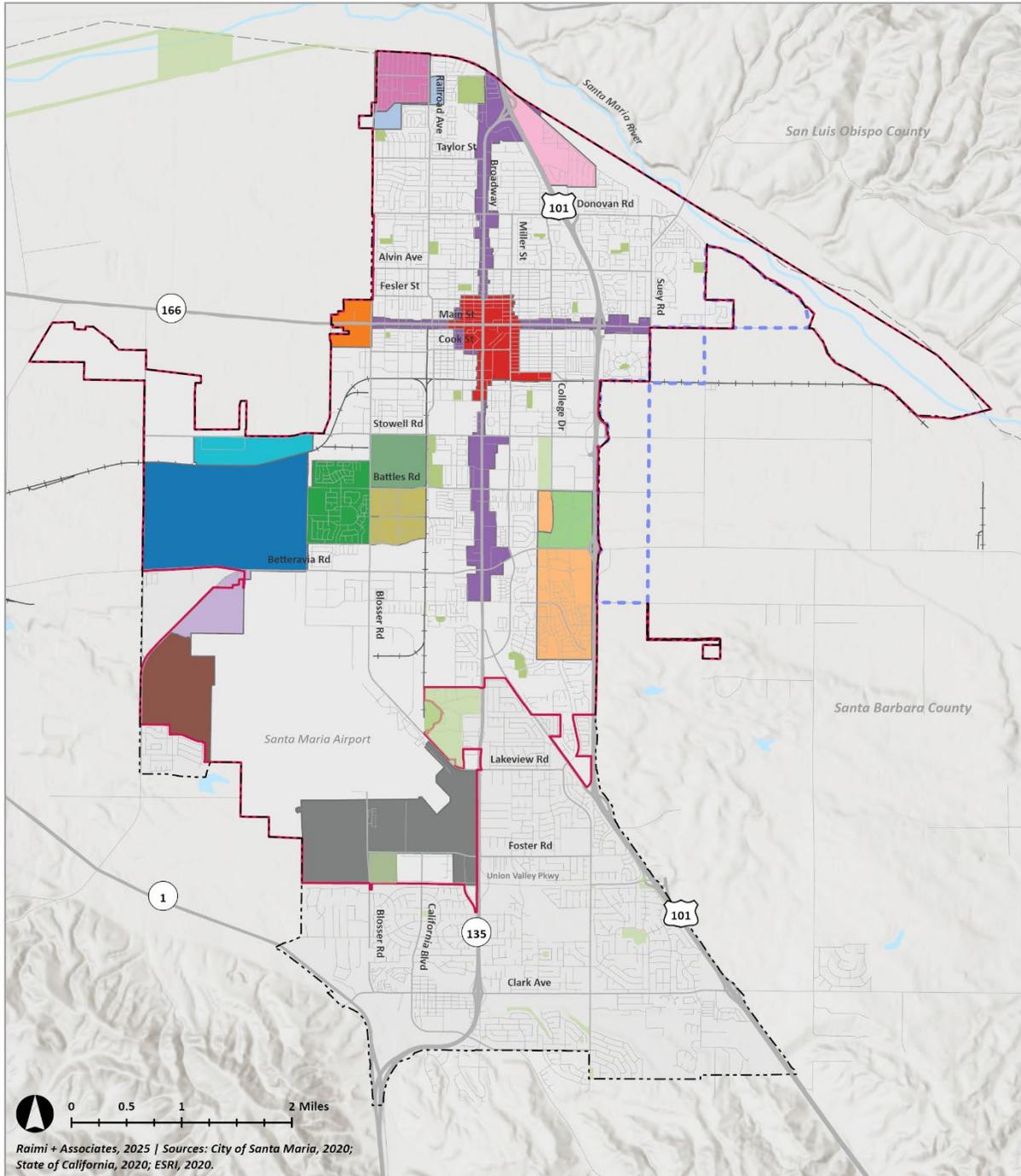
#	Plan Name	Description
1	Entrada Specific Plan (1976)	Establishes a vision and design guidelines for the Broadway and Main Street corridors.
2	Rivergate-Roemer Specific Plan (1994; amended in 2020)	This is a 194-acre site including 605 residential units, a 29-acre retail center, an elementary school, and 50 acres of parks, trails, and open space areas. This plan has been fully built out with the exception of 29 acres zoned C-2 to allow for future retail commercial and potentially mixed-use projects.
3	North Preisker Ranch Specific Plan (1999; amended in 2001)	This is a 144-acre site that includes a mix of low and low-medium density residential uses, community facilities, and recreational open space. This plan is fully built out with the exception of a 2.5-acre site.
4	Hidden Pines Specific Plan (1994; amended in 1999)	This is a 60-acre site at the northern edge of the city, with 20 acres designated for small-lot single-family residential use and 40 acres preserved as open space around the existing Blosser Retardation Basin. This plan is fully built out.
5	West Main Specific Plan (1994)	This is an 88-acre area focused on agricultural, community commercial, and light industrial uses.
6	Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan (1994; amended in 2011)	This is a 315-acre site that includes residential units, parks, schools, bikeways and trails, and a cultural center. The residential subdivisions in the plan area are Pacific Crest, Harvest Glen, Harvest Glen Gardens, St. Clair, and Centennial Gardens. This plan is fully built out.
7	Blosser Southeast Area 5B Specific Plan (2020)	Formerly part of the Blosser Southeast Specific Plan, this is a 145-acre area consisting of commercial uses, 1,105 residential units, public facilities, a 19-acre sports complex, a school site, and open space. The plan area is currently undeveloped but has entitlements that would permit 1,440 units (including ADUs)
8	Blosser-Southwest Specific Plan (1994; updated in 2010)	This is a 258-acre site planned primarily for residential uses of varying densities, with supporting neighborhood commercial development, an elementary school, and a community park. This plan is fully built out with the exception of a 10-acre parcel located at the NW corner of Blosser Rd. and Battles Rd.

9	Mahoney Ranch North Specific Plan (2008)	This is a 141-acre site that includes low-density residential, heavy commercial/manufacturing, and open space uses, with the majority of land preserved for agriculture and open space.
10	Mahoney Ranch South Specific Plan (2008)	This is a 319-acre site that includes agricultural and commercial uses, and 1,405 residential units on annexed land. However, there is no proposed development due to environmental constraints (e.g., California Tiger Salamander)
11	West Stowell Specific Plan (1994)	This is a 165-acre area that includes agriculture and related commercial and industrial uses. This plan is mostly built out.
12	Area 9 Specific Plan (2012)	This is an 890-acre area that includes employment, commercial, and residential uses. The Windset Farms Commercial Greenhouse facility and the Santa Maria Valley Railroad are located in this area. Portions of this area were rezoned from commercial/professional office to single-family residential during the 2025 General Plan Update.
13	Entrada Este Specific Plan (1994; updated in 1996, 2000, 2001, and 2012)	This is a 480-acre site that features residential subdivisions such as Bradley Square, several multi-family developments, retail, shopping centers, parks, basins, and trails. This plan is fully built out.
14	Enos Ranchos Specific Plan (2008)	Formerly part of the Entrada Este Specific Plan, this is a 121-acre site that includes retail, commercial shopping centers, office, warehouse, auto sales, and high-density residential uses, schools, and parks.
15	Santa Maria Airport Business Park Specific Plan (2000; amended in 2008 and 2020)	This site includes the 2,600-acre airport property, which includes a 740-acre business park and active open space, and commercial land uses around an 18-hole golf course.
16	Downtown Santa Maria Specific Plan (2008; amended in 2015)	This plan area includes 50 square blocks centered at the intersection of Broadway and Main Street and establishes land uses and building form regulations, including parking requirements, design guidelines, and architectural styles.



Single-family residential subdivision in the southern part of the city.

Figure LU-1: Existing Specific Plans



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Current Santa Maria City Limits | Entrada Specific Plan | Mahoney Ranch South Specific Plan |
| Current Sphere of Influence | Rivergate Roemer Specific Plan | West Stowell Specific Plan |
| Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence | North Preisker Ranch Specific Plan | Area 9 Specific Plan |
| Railroads | Hidden Pines Specific Plan | Entrada Este Specific Plan |
| Freeways and Highways | West Main Specific Plan | Enos Ranchos Specific Plan |
| Santa Maria River | Blosser-Southeast Specific Plan | Santa Maria Airport Business Park Specific Plan |
| Water | Blosser-Southeast Area SB Specific Plan | Downtown Specific Plan |
| Parks | Blosser-Southwest Specific Plan | Mahoney Ranch North Specific Plan |
| County Boundaries | | |

Community Design and Public Realm

Community design refers to the experience a person has when spending time in Santa Maria. Community design is impacted by several factors, including landscaping and greenery; public art; the location, scale, and architectural character of homes, stores, parks, offices, and other spaces; and how easily a person can travel between destinations. Quality community design, including beautiful, well-designed, pedestrian-scale buildings, streets, and public spaces, can increase civic pride, improve community safety, strengthen connections to local arts and culture, and make Santa Maria a more attractive place to live, visit, and work.

The “public realm” refers to the aspects of community design managed by the City. Features of the public realm, including accessibility, connectivity, and the quality of the pedestrian environment, are important characteristics of community design. Walkable neighborhoods with sidewalks and street trees often provide economic benefits, including higher property values, increased private investment, and tourism. Residents in walkable neighborhoods typically engage in more physical activity than residents in neighborhoods with low walkability, leading to improved public health outcomes.

The majority of Santa Maria’s public realm is auto-oriented, with wide roadways, long crossing distances, and few pedestrian amenities. Most streets do not have designated bicycle facilities but do have sidewalks. However, most sidewalks are generally narrow and close to vehicular traffic. There are few streetscape amenities —such as street trees, benches, trash cans, water fountains, or public art —and most street lighting consists of auto-oriented, tall cobra-head fixtures that illuminate the sidewalk unevenly. Despite these challenges, Downtown’s gridded street pattern makes it one of the most walkable areas of the city, and many residents living near Downtown and along Broadway and Main Street are within a five-minute walk of retail.

Land Use Conflicts

Land use conflicts may arise when development causes undesirable environmental consequences that affect the surrounding neighborhood, such as noise, dust, traffic congestion, lighting, visual or aesthetic impacts, odor, and drainage problems. Land use conflicts may potentially result in adverse health impacts to nearby residents.

Land use conflicts that may result in the most significant impacts to residents include:

- Industrial and/or trucking uses immediately adjacent to residential;
- Heavy commercial (commercial uses that take up a lot of land, may require transport of materials by truck, require large loading and docking areas, and where the possibility of noise generation may exist) immediately adjacent to residential;
- Agricultural uses immediately adjacent to residential;
- Heavy traffic impacting residential neighborhoods; and
- Airport noise impacts.

Most of Santa Maria’s existing land use conflicts are between residential and industrial uses. Many of these instances are along railroad lines. Though conflicting land use adjacencies are often buffered with walls or landscaping, they cannot completely mitigate impacts.

Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the policy direction of the Land Use Policies.

Jobs-housing imbalance. Though population growth has outpaced job growth in the past 20 years, in 2020, the jobs-housing balance was 1.45 jobs per housing unit. Lack of local jobs requires residents to travel outside the city for work. According to projections from the SBCAG, the trend will be exacerbated through 2050.

Land use conflicts. Industrial uses are occasionally located next to residential uses (and other sensitive uses). Residents living next to industrial facilities may be exposed to emissions, odors, noise, and other factors detrimental to public health.

Walkability. Downtown is the most walkable part of the city, but residents in most other areas of the city have less convenient walking access to schools, parks, and/or retail. In addition, the city's trail network is limited and lacks connectivity, hindering the ability of pedestrians to walk to destinations. Improving walkability and expanding the trail network can lead to improved health, increase opportunities for socialization, reduce dependency on vehicles, and improve the visual appearance of the city's street network.

Downtown Santa Maria. Downtown has a diverse mix of land uses and housing types, and it has many of Santa Maria's historic, civic, and cultural resources. This area has emerged as a focal point for potential transformation, serving as a primary gathering place for the community. Community feedback has indicated a strong interest in expanding Downtown amenities, including more public art, multifunctional gathering spaces, and placemaking initiatives that celebrate Santa Maria's unique culture. The City's ongoing efforts to implement the Santa Maria Downtown Specific Plan and Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan will revitalize the area with new employment opportunities and enhanced local identity and public realm. The City is partnering with developers for the construction of new multi-family housing with over 700 apartment units, mixed-use residential, and retail commercial projects in the heart of Downtown, at the intersection of Broadway and Main Street. Multi-family housing, ground floor commercial uses, new plazas, and gathering spaces are planned and are expected to be built within the next six years. Other private developments are also being built, including the recently completed Gateway Mixed-use project on the northwest corner of Main Street and Broadway and the planned conversion of the building formerly occupied by Mervyns and Fallas into apartments (construction anticipated to begin in 2025). These developments will help fulfill the Downtown vision of a vibrant and pedestrian-friendly destination environment.

Corridor revitalization. Two of the city's primary corridors, Main Street and Broadway, consist of low-intensity commercial and office projects and disconnected shopping centers. The General Plan Land Use Map (Figure LU-4) redefines these corridors as the only designated mixed-use areas of the city. This provides the opportunity for mixed-use corridors with higher intensity development in both vertical and horizontal formats. Additional revisions to the Entrada Specific Plan will be required to further implement the vision for both corridors.

Redevelopment opportunities. Though much of the vacant land in Santa Maria is part of either a Specific Plan or a development project in the pipeline, many of the developed areas have low improvement-to-land value ratios and/or a low Floor Area Ratio (FAR), indicating an opportunity for the redevelopment of these areas in the future. The updated General Plan Land Use map and General Plan policies provide direction for how and why areas should redevelop across Santa Maria to implement the General Plan vision.

Character and design. The majority of Santa Maria is auto-oriented, providing opportunities for improved public realm through streetscape design, amenities, and connectivity improvements. Commercial and industrial places and streets have some of the greatest potential for improved mobility, enhanced character, and placemaking due to low-rise development and large areas devoted to surface parking.

Annexation. Cities regulate and plan for land within their jurisdiction, known as city boundaries, and can pre-plan land within their Sphere of Influence, or land that is likely to fall under a city's jurisdiction in the future. A city may also grow beyond the existing city boundaries or Sphere of Influence. Annexation is the legal process of expanding a city's boundary by incorporating adjacent unincorporated land into its jurisdiction. The annexation process is overseen by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), an independent regulatory body with the authority to change city boundaries and spheres of influence.¹ To annex land, the City submits applications to LAFCO to expand its Sphere of Influence and annex unincorporated areas. More information regarding the LAFCO process for Sphere of Influence changes and annexations can be found on the LAFCO website at www.sblafco.org/.

Annexation serves as an opportunity for Santa Maria to grow responsibly, expanding needed jobs, housing, entertainment, public facilities, and services beyond the City's current limits. The area identified for planned annexation would expand the City's jurisdiction east of US-101, as identified on Figure LU-4 as "Planning Annexation." The planned annexation area offers a defined area of land to further design and develop through Specific Plans or Master Plans that would provide an appropriate mix of land uses and intensities.

Complete community: A complete community, or "complete neighborhood," supports people of all ages, income levels, and backgrounds in meeting their daily needs within a short walk, bike, bus ride, or vehicle trip from their home. The Santa Maria community emphasized the desire for the components of a complete community, including safe neighborhoods, housing options at various price points, quality local jobs, parks and recreation, walkable neighborhoods, and high-quality public services. The goals and policies in this Element set forth a path for evolving the existing City of Santa Maria to ensure complete neighborhoods and creating a complete neighborhoods within the Planned Annexation Area.

¹ (n.d.) *What Are LAFCOS?* California Association of Local Formation Commissions. Retrieved May 12, 2025, from https://calafco.org/About_LAFCOs

Land Use Policies

The Land Use Policies address the key issues and opportunities identified above and create a comprehensive roadmap for the future of how land is developed in Santa Maria.

The *Standards and Diagrams* section establishes regulatory standards and diagrams. A standard is a rule or measure establishing a level of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied. Likewise, a diagram is a graphic expression of the text of a particular policy.

The *Policy Framework* section outlines Land Use goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Land Use Element emphasize the City's desired development pattern, community design, compatibility of land uses, and regional coordination.

Policies are focused on a balanced mix of uses (Goal LU-1), a vibrant downtown (Goal LU-3), mixed-use corridors (Goal LU-4), varied housing stock (Goal LU-5), strong commercial (Goal LU-6) and industrial sectors (Goal LU-7), and a thriving airport (Goal LU-8), while preserving agricultural lands (LU-9) and utilizing annexation as a means of measured expansion (Goal LU-2).

The Element prioritizes community design and public realm improvements through emphasis on architectural and building design (Goal LU-10), urban design (Goal LU-11), and pedestrian-focused public spaces (Goal LU-12). Reducing land use conflicts (Goal LU-13) and requiring high-quality utilities, facilities, and services for existing and new development (Goal LU-14) will also improve the built environment in Santa Maria. Finally, regional and local planning agency coordination (Goal LU-15) will support issues of mutual concern, especially balancing growth with the preservation of agricultural areas in Santa Maria and the surrounding region.

Understanding Density and Intensity

State law requires that General Plans establish the maximum development intensity allowed within each designation. The two generally accepted metrics are dwelling units per acre for residential uses (density) and floor area ratio (FAR) for non-residential uses (intensity). Figure LU-3 below describes dwelling units per acre and FAR in further detail.

Figure LU-2: Density and Intensity

Dwelling Units per Acre (du/ac)

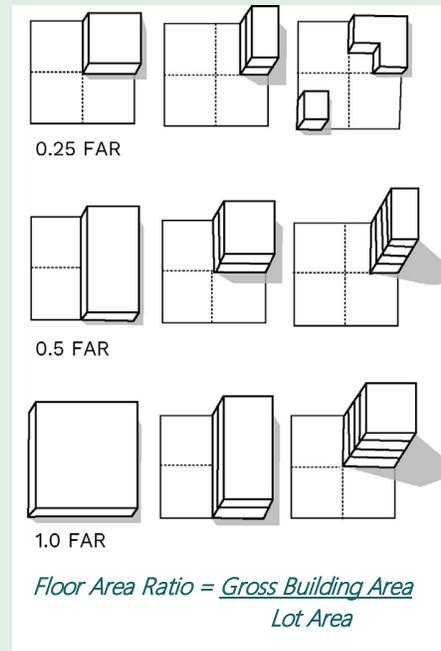
The term “density” is used for residential uses and refers to the population and development capacity of residential land. Density within the General Plan is described in terms of dwelling units per net acre of land (du/ac), exclusive of existing and proposed streets and rights-of-way.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Development intensity refers to the extent of development on a parcel of land or lot. FAR is used in the General Plan as a measure of non-residential or mixed-use development intensity.

FAR represents the ratio between the total gross floor area of all buildings on a lot and the total land area of that lot. For example, a 20,000 square foot building on a 40,000 square foot lot yields a FAR of 0.5. A 0.5 FAR describes a single-story building that covers half of the lot, a two-story building covering approximately one-quarter of the lot, or a four-story building covering one-eighth of the lot.

These FAR calculations and gross floor area do not consider the square footage of any parking facilities (including but not limited to parking structures, surface parking, or underground parking) or other structures not designed for human occupation. Additionally, “lot,” as used here, may encompass multiple legal parcels which are planned as a cohesive development (e.g., mixed-use with townhomes and commercial development which may require subdivisions into separate legal parcels for financing and separate ownership).



Standards and Diagrams

This section establishes Santa Maria’s General Plan land use designations and regulating Land Use Map.

General Plan Land Use designations have been designed to reflect the range of uses necessary for the future development of the planning area. Each designation in Table LU-3 below provides a detailed description of each type of land use found within the General Plan Land Use Map, including the purpose, allowed uses, maximum density or intensity, and in some instances, maximum allowed height. More detailed regulations are included in the Zoning Ordinance. The General Plan Land Use Map depicts the location and extent of land use designations described in Table LU-3 throughout the city, the City's Sphere of Influence, and potential annexation areas. These designations should not be considered as being tied to a specific time in the future. The designation in one area may relate to currently developed uses, while others are oriented to development at an indefinite date in the future. Designations allowing for new uses do not necessarily constitute an abandonment of existing uses.

Table LU-2: Land Use Designations

Designation	Description
Residential	
Residential Agricultural (RA) or Very Low Density (VLDR) 	To create a transition area between agricultural and strictly urban uses, as well as provide for a particular residential lifestyle. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Single-family homes; non-commercial agricultural activities, the keeping of horses, and certain commercial agricultural activities on larger (suggested minimum of 5- to 10-acre) parcels. <u>Density:</u> Maximum 2.2 du/ac <u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> R-A, PD (Planned Development) Overlay
Lower Density Residential (LWDR) 	To encourage high-quality single-family residential development on larger lots. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Single-family homes. <u>Density:</u> Maximum 5.5 du/ac <u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> R-1, R-1-8,000 to R-1-10,000, PD Overlay
Low Density Residential (LDR) 	To encourage new areas with overall densities on standard-sized lots, providing the amenities and open spaces associated with traditional single-family areas. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Single-family homes. <u>Density:</u> Maximum 8 du/ac <u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> R-1, R-1-5,500 to R-1-6,500, PD Overlay
Low-Medium Density Residential (LMDR) 	To encourage densities that provide affordable single-family housing on small lots while at the same time maintaining adequate individual private open space, design flexibility, and the character of a single-family neighborhood. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Small lot single family, townhomes, rowhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes. <u>Density:</u> Maximum 10 du/ac <u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> RSL-1, RMH, R-1 4,500 to R-1-5,000, R-2, PD Overlay

<p>Medium Density Residential (MDR)</p> 	<p>Allows a mixture of unit types while maintaining the feeling of a single-family neighborhood.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Small lot single family, townhomes, rowhouses, and duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes; courtyard housing, and walk-up multi-family housing.</p> <p><u>Density:</u> Maximum 12 du/ac</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> R-2, PD Overlay</p>
<p>High Density Residential (HDR)</p> 	<p>To provide for an urban residential environment, preferably close to shopping facilities and existing activity centers, as well as provide an incentive for reinvestment in older established areas.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Townhomes, duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes, mobile homes, and multifamily housing.</p> <p><u>Density:</u> Maximum 30 du/ac</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> R-3, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Mixed-use</p>	
<p>Corridor Mixed-use (CMU)</p> 	<p>This will allow for multi-story, multi-use development that is contextual to adjacent residential uses. The intent is to allow for the creation of commercial uses mixed with multi-family housing.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Standalone or mixed retail, restaurants, service commercial (such as banks or real estate offices), service establishments (such as medical clinics and beauty shops), office buildings, hotels, multi-family housing, townhomes, and duplexes.</p> <p><u>Density:</u> Maximum 35 du/ac</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Maximum 2.0</p>
<p>Commercial</p>	
<p>Neighborhood Commercial (NC)</p> 	<p>To provide areas that offer convenience goods and services to local residents without disrupting the residential character of an area. These areas are intended to be small in size and not geared to providing a multitude of more specialized goods and services serving a city-wide market.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Supermarkets, convenience grocery stores, drug stores, laundromats, bakeries, and shoe repair shops.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Maximum 0.5</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> C-1, CC, CPO, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Community Commercial (CC)</p> 	<p>To include the majority of retail uses outside the central core, particularly along the development corridors that have emerged. The majority of these uses would be geared to the city-wide market.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Retail uses, including regional retail, service commercial, small offices, auto sales, and services.</p> <p>Commercial FAR: Maximum 0.5</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> C-1, CC, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Commercial/ Professional Office (CPO)</p> 	<p>To provide areas for offices, which may be compatible with a range of other uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Standalone office or business park development for professional medical, non-profit, and public offices, as well as a certain complementary commercial uses.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Maximum 1.0</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> CPO, PD Overlay</p>

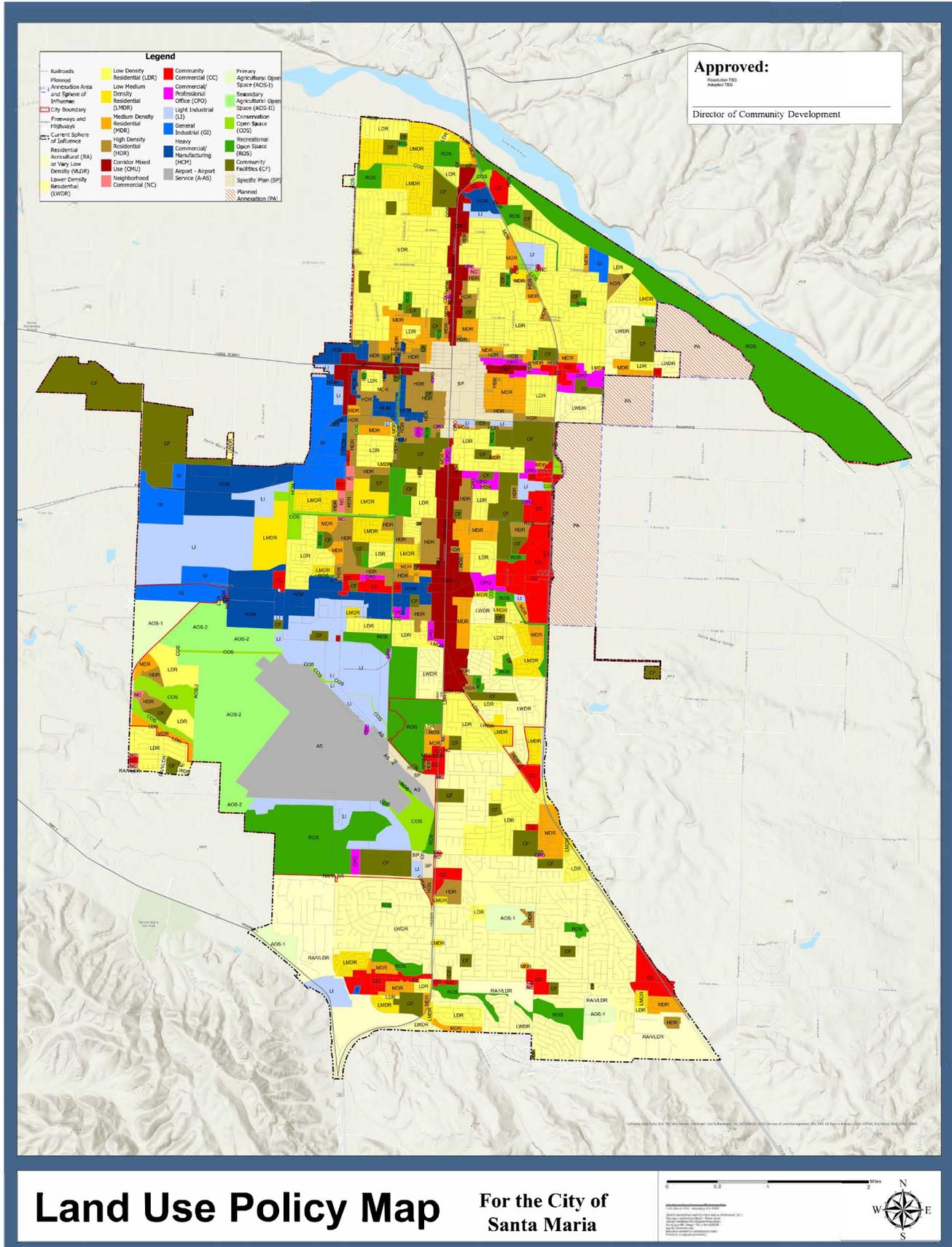
Industrial/Airport	
<p>Light Industrial (LI)</p> 	<p>To accommodate industrial uses that primarily conduct operations within the building, do not generate substantial negative environmental impacts, and are most compatible with adjacent non-industrial uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Research facilities, light assembly plants, non-public-oriented-offices and industrial support offices, and auto sales.</p> <p>Commercial FAR: Maximum 1.0</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> M-1, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Heavy Commercial/ Manufacturing (HCM)</p> 	<p>To permit activities that combine manufacturing and retail on the same site, along with other heavy commercial uses that are land intensive, involve transport of materials by heavy trucks, require large loading and docking areas, and may generate significant noise.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Lumberyards, boat works, warehouses, wholesale building supply dealers, mobile home sales, farm equipment sales, equipment repair.</p> <p>Commercial FAR: Maximum 1.0</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> CM, PD Overlay</p>
<p>General Industrial (GI)</p> 	<p>To provide areas for all types of heavy industrial uses, particularly those that need to be separated from other land uses because of the impacts associated with these activities, such as heavy truck traffic, noise, odor, or dust.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Range of intensive industrial uses, including heavy manufacturing and heavy trucking operations.</p> <p>Commercial FAR: Maximum 1.0</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> M-2, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Airport Service (AS)</p> 	<p>To facilitate the airport and airport-related commercial and industrial uses, to provide specific areas for aircraft operation and navigation aids, and to minimize hazards to the safe landing and take-off of aircraft.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Full range of airport service uses, including airport operation and support activities.</p> <p>Commercial FAR: Maximum 1.0</p> <p>Corresponding Zoning: AA, CZ, AS-I, AS-II, AS-III, PD Overlay</p>
Public and Open Space	
<p>Primary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-1)</p> 	<p>To preserve certain areas for present and future agricultural production, protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and/or act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Intensive crop agricultural uses.</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> OS, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Secondary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-2)</p> 	<p>To preserve certain areas for present and future agricultural production, protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and/or act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Less intensive agricultural uses, including grazing. Includes some lands that are not prime agricultural but are an agricultural buffer and are not now considered suitable for urban expansion.</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> OS, PD Overlay</p>

<p>Conservation Open Space (COS)</p> 	<p>To preserve certain areas for present and future agricultural production, protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and/or act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Includes areas subject to flood hazard, significant groundwater recharge areas, areas adjacent to creek beds, areas of surface and sub-surface mineral extraction, levee buffer, airport safety areas, and publicly owned landscaped areas.</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> OS, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Recreational Open Space (ROS)</p> 	<p>To protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and/or act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Includes existing and proposed recreational facilities, including parks; bikeways; equestrian trails; paths; commercial recreation facilities; selected public utility and railroad rights-of-way and associated uses; land reclamation projects; and publicly owned and operated sanitary landfill operations that have the potential for reclamation and development into the aforementioned recreational facilities.</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> OS, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Community Facilities (CF)</p> 	<p>To provide for necessary facilities for use by the public.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Range of public facilities, including schools and government buildings. Open space facilities, such as parks, are classified under "Open Space."</p> <p><u>Corresponding Zoning:</u> PF, PD Overlay</p>
<p>Other</p>	
<p>Downtown Specific Plan (SP)</p>	<p>The Downtown Specific Plan designation refers to the area within the Downtown Santa Maria Specific Plan. It includes 50 square blocks centered at Broadway/Main Street and establishes land uses and building form regulations, including parking. See the Specific Plan for further details and regulations.</p>
<p>Planned Annexation (PA)</p>	<p>To encourage comprehensive planning and urban design flexibility for large annexation land areas (over 60 acres) through the adoption of a specific plan or master plans following the General Plan Update process, as the City proceeds with annexation. Such flexibility allows the City to adopt a set of land use specifications and implementation programs tailored to the unique characteristics of each area.</p>

Notes:

1. *Single-family zones are subject to SB9, which was passed in 2021. This law allows parcels in single-family zones to be subdivided and duplexes built on each lot.*
2. *The maximum residential density of any residential land use designation may be exceeded to complement General Plan Housing Element policy (in accordance with the density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code).*

Figure LU-3: General Plan Land Use Map



Policy Framework

Citywide Framework and Development Pattern

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-1.1: Land use pattern. Implement the General Plan Land Use Map and corresponding Land Use Designations as described in Figure LU-3 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.

Action LU-1.1.4: Study the reduction or elimination of parking requirements (particularly for General Commercial uses) as a part of amendments to the Municipal Code and/or specific plans.

Policy LU-1.2: Infill development. Prioritize the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized parcels with a focus on revitalizing Downtown and deteriorating neighborhoods to the extent feasible.

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.

Goal LU-2: Annexation as outward growth. Santa Maria expands in an orderly and efficient manner to accommodate future growth.²

Policy LU-2.1: Planned Annexation Area. Expand Sphere of Influence and annex the Planned Annexation Area identified on the General Plan Land Use Map to meet housing and jobs development goals.

Action LU-2.1.1: In collaboration with the County of Santa Barbara, submit a LAFCO application to modify the City's Sphere of Influence to include the Planned Annexation Area.

Action LU-2.1.2: In collaboration with landowners, developers, and the County of Santa Barbara, submit LAFCO applications to annex the Planned Annexation Area.

Policy LU-2.2: Connections to annexed area. Require new development within future annexation areas to provide infrastructure, multimodal, and public realm connections to the developed core of Santa Maria.

Policy LU-2.3: 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 Allan 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 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.

² Please see the Economic Development Element for policies related to annexation.

Goal LU-3: Vibrant Downtown. An iconic and vibrant Downtown serves as the heart of Santa Maria.³

Policy LU-3.1: Specific Plan implementation. Implement the vision and strategies of the Downtown Specific Plan and Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan to create a walkable downtown destination.

Policy LU-3.2: Revitalization of shopping centers. Prioritize revitalization and infill efforts at the Santa Maria Town Center and Town Center West areas, consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan.

Policy LU-3.3: Downtown outdoor gathering. Prioritize new public and quasi-public multifunctional outdoor gathering spaces in Downtown redevelopment.

Policy LU-3.4: Downtown arts and culture. Infuse arts and culture in the Downtown through public art installations and placemaking initiatives.

Policy LU-3.5: Reduce surface parking in Downtown. Support parking solutions that reduce surface parking lots within the Downtown area to better utilize land and promote pedestrian walkability.

Action LU-3.5.1: Allow temporary events, art installations, and food truck vendors to use underutilized surface parking lots for activities that promote community and add to the local economy.

Policy LU-3.6: Shared parking facility. Continue to identify and develop shared parking facilities within the Downtown Specific Plan area to support future mixed-use developments in the area.

Policy LU-3.7: Pedestrian priority. Promote pedestrian walkways, sidewalks, paseos, plazas, and courtyards away from vehicular traffic to enhance walkability and pedestrian comfort within Downtown.

Goal LU-4: Mixed-use corridors. Lively corridors enhance the quality of life through mixed-use development.⁴

Policy LU-4.1: Corridor revitalization. Prioritize revitalization of the Main Street and Broadway corridors, focusing efforts to shape declining shopping centers into a vibrant, urban core offering housing, jobs, and entertainment in the center of Santa Maria.

Action LU-4.1.1: Revise the Entrada Specific Plan to prepare a comprehensive land use plan for an active, mixed-use corridor along Broadway and Main Street, consistent with the General Plan Land Use Map.

³ Please see the Economic Development Element for policies related to the downtown.

⁴ Please see the Economic Development Element for policies related to corridors.

Action LU-4.1.2: Work with Caltrans to improve the pedestrian amenities, access, and safety within the Downtown area and to investigate truck route alternatives that reduce impacts on the pedestrian-focused environment in Downtown.

Policy LU-4.2: Industrial on major corridors. Prohibit new industrial, manufacturing, and heavy polluting uses in the Main Street and Broadway Corridor Mixed-use designated areas, as they detract from creating a walkable mixed-use environment.

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.

Policy LU-4.4: Shared parking. Promote shared, flexible parking within the Corridor Mixed-use land use designation to encourage alternative modes of transportation and maximize land utility in the urban center of the city.

Action LU-4.4.1: Update the Zoning Code to allow shared, flexible parking within zones corresponding with the Corridor Mixed-use designation.

Goal LU-5: Housing stock. An adequate supply of high-quality local housing stock is available to residents of all ages and abilities.⁵

Policy LU-5.1: Housing variety. Continue to support a variety of housing types, unit sizes, and building densities in Santa Maria to support residents at differing life stages and socio-economic statuses.

Policy LU-5.2: Siting of infill development. Promote new infill housing in areas that are underutilized and in close proximity to parks, recreation, public amenities, and local goods and services.

Policy LU-5.3: Location of new housing. Discourage single-family housing production directly adjacent to high-intensity commercial and industrial uses, in favor of land use transitions and buffers between differing intensities of development.

Policy LU-5.4: Mobile homes as affordable housing. Maintain existing mobile home parks within the High-Density Residential land use designation as a means of affordable housing.

⁵ Please see the Housing, Economic Development, and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for policies related to the housing stock.

Action LU-5.4.1: Investigate the provision of a new City ordinance that restricts the conversion of senior-only category mobile home parks to all-ages mobile home parks in compliance with State Fair Housing laws.

Policy LU-5.5: High density near transit. Work with developers to provide higher-density residential near existing and planned transit as a means of reducing vehicle trips and improving connectivity.

Goal LU-6: Commercial areas. Commercial areas provide jobs, goods and services, hospitality, and office spaces while supporting a diversified local economy.

Policy LU-6.1: Community character. Maintain and improve the existing character of Santa Maria as a thriving community and the industrial and commercial center for northern Santa Barbara County and southern San Luis Obispo County.

Policy LU-6.2: Visitor-serving uses. Foster hospitality and tourism through new hotels, restaurants, wineries, taprooms, and entertainment – including museums, amphitheaters, and event spaces – within the Downtown area, along Broadway and Main Street, and at major US-101 interchanges.

Policy LU-6.3: Freeway-oriented commercial. Consolidate large format chain shopping retailers, known as “big box”, and auto sales along the US-101 corridor for easy access by the regional population.

Policy LU-6.4: Revitalized commercial shopping centers. Support public and private revitalization of old shopping centers into mixed-use pedestrian-oriented hubs that promote community and local businesses.

Policy LU-6.5: Expand medical offices. Work with property owners to provide a variety of office types, especially medical offices, in Commercial/Professional Office designated areas east of US-101 in an effort to expand healthcare outside of the Regional Medical Center.

Action LU-6.5.1: Evaluate the existing height limit for the Commercial/Professional Office zone designation and consider amending the Zoning Code to raise the maximum height limit in the zone to accommodate additional floors of office uses.

Policy LU-6.6: Neighborhood commercial. Design neighborhood commercial centers to serve the needs of the surrounding residents.

Action LU-6.6.1: Evaluate the existing height limit in the Convenience Center (CC) zone designation and consider amending the Zoning Code to lower the maximum height limit to reflect the appropriate neighborhood scale.

Action LU-6.6.2: Revise the Zoning Code for consistency with the adopted Active Transportation Plan to facilitate the accessibility of neighborhood commercial uses with active transportation (walking, biking).

Goal LU-7: Industrial districts. A strong industrial sector contributes to the local economy and job base in a manner that does not conflict with residential areas.

Policy LU-7.1: Employment diversity. Support a diverse mix of industrial, manufacturing, food processing, viticulture, research and development, laboratories, and other employment uses within the General Industrial, Light Industrial, and Heavy Commercial/Manufacturing land use designations.

Policy LU-7.2: Non-polluting industries. Encourage new, clean industries within the General Industrial and Light Industrial land use designations that do not produce significant air, water, or noise pollution.

Policy LU-7.3: Industrial infill. Promote infill of industrial, manufacturing, and warehousing development between Hanson Way and Blosser Road, and surrounding the Santa Maria Airport, consistent with the Airport Master Plan.

Goal LU-8: Santa Maria Public Airport. A thriving airport supports local tourism, public and private air travel, and business opportunities.⁶

Policy LU-8.1: Airport-related infill. Allow airport-related industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, and logistics infill in areas surrounding the Santa Maria Public Airport, consistent with the Santa Maria Airport Business Park Specific Plan, the Santa Maria Public Airport Master Plan, and the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Action LU-8.1.1: Collaborate with Airport officials to ensure any revisions to the Airport Master Plan are compatible with the General Plan Land Use Map and do not adversely affect established residential neighborhoods in the periphery.

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. 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.

⁶ Please see the Safety and Noise Elements for additional policies and actions related to areas in proximity to the airport.

Action LU-9.1.1: 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.

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 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.

Community Design and Public Realm

Goal LU-10: Architecture and building design. Building design and architecture enhance Santa Maria's character.

Policy LU-10.1: Objective Design Standards. Implement the Objective Design Standards to achieve visually interesting residential and mixed-use building designs that reflect the character of the Santa Maria Valley.⁷

Policy LU-10.2: Older building rehabilitation. Incentivize rehabilitation of older structures, especially within Downtown, to maintain quality neighborhoods, corridors, and centers.

Action LU-10.2.1: Advertise information on government programs that offer home repair and energy efficiency assistance, such as the Housing Improvement Program, at Santa Maria public offices such as City Hall, the Santa Maria Public Library, and Elwin Mussell Senior Center.

Action LU-10.2.2: Continue to administer Federal and State grant programs that support affordable housing, public services, public and non-profit facilities, and housing revitalization.

Policy LU-10.3: Passive energy-efficient design. Work with developers and property owners to encourage passive design techniques that reduce energy consumption and environmental impacts through building orientation, shading, ventilation, and other strategies.

⁷ Please see the Noise and Safety Elements for additional policies and actions related to building design.

Goal LU-11: Urban design. High-quality urban design enhances Santa Maria's character.

Policy LU-11.1: Arts and culture in the public realm. Integrate arts and cultural experiences into public spaces through temporary installations, permanent facilities such as museums and exhibits, and cultural events and programming throughout Santa Maria.

Action LU-11.1.1: Work with property owners and developers to activate and improve public-facing alleyways through temporary or permanent public art.

Policy LU-11.2: Gateways. Establish new gateway signage that marks the entrance into Santa Maria with a unique design that reflects the local community. Consider signage at the following locations:

1. Broadway and US-101
2. West Main Street and Blosser Road
3. Betteravia Road and US-101
4. East Main Street and US-101
5. Northbound Santa Maria Way at US-101

Goal LU-12: Pedestrian-focused public spaces. High-quality pedestrian-oriented public and quasi-public spaces enhance daily life in Santa Maria.⁸

Policy LU-12.1: Gathering places. Work with private developers to provide outdoor gathering places such as plazas, paseos, or courtyards in the Downtown, within the mixed-use corridors, and shopping centers across Santa Maria.

Action LU-12.1.1: Continue to support and sponsor Downtown Friday and similar regular community events in Downtown Santa Maria.

Policy LU-12.2: Pedestrian and bicycle connections. Work with private developers to provide pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity within neighborhoods and public spaces through complete sidewalks, designated bicycle lanes, sufficient secure bicycle parking for customers and tenants, and bus shelters, among other techniques.

Action LU-12.2.1: Implement the ongoing Safe Routes to Schools program and provide regular updates as needed.

Action LU-12.2.2: Investigate the possibility of a new Slow Streets Program to reduce vehicle speed on neighborhood streets and prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety within neighborhoods.

Policy LU-12.3: Pedestrian amenities. Require pedestrian amenities and enhancements, such as street trees, lighting, street furniture (including benches and trash receptacles), sidewalks, curb extensions, and landscaped strips, in all new and redeveloped commercial projects. Require the

⁸ Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for additional policies and actions focused on community spaces the promote physical activity.

pedestrian amenities included in the Objective Design Standards for all residential and mixed-use development projects.

Action LU-12.3.1: In public and private development, identify design techniques that can improve outdoor pedestrian comfort and minimize wind exposure.

Policy LU-12.4: Walking paths as buffers. Utilize walking paths and linear parks as a transition and/or buffer between non-compatible uses or noticeable changes in building scale or density.

Land Use Compatibility and Development

Goal LU-13: Land use conflicts. Conflicts between residential land uses, schools, and incompatible non-residential land uses are mitigated.⁹

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.

⁹ Please see the Recreation and Parks, Circulation, Noise, and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for policies and actions related to land use conflicts. Please see the Safety and Noise Elements for additional policies and actions related to areas in proximity to the airport.

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.

Goal LU-14: Utilities, facilities, and services. New and existing development within Santa Maria is sustained by high-quality utilities, facilities, and services.¹⁰

Policy LU-14.1: Privately funded utilities. Require developers to “pay their fair share” for utilities and services in new development, while continuing to identify funding sources to upgrade and maintain utilities and services within the existing city.

Policy LU-14.2: Public facilities and services. In compliance with State law, ensure AB 1600 fees and requirements placed on new development projects are sufficient to provide public facilities and services that maintain pace with housing production and all other development to maintain adequate levels of service across Santa Maria as the city grows.

Regional Coordination

Goal LU-15: Planning coordination. Santa Maria’s growth and land use planning are well coordinated within the region.

Policy LU-15.1: Common goal coordination. Work closely with neighboring agencies to coordinate planning efforts and support planning topics of mutual concern, such as balancing agricultural areas with urbanized areas and development growth, circulation, sustainability, parks, environmental justice, and health.

¹⁰ Please see the Recreation and Parks and Circulation Elements for additional policies and actions related to development impact and mitigation fees.

Action LU-15.1.1: Coordinate with Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, Santa Barbara County, LAFCO, and other regional agencies on an ongoing basis.

Policy LU-15.2: Internal and external coordination. Continue to coordinate planning efforts internally among all City departments and externally with property owners, residents and their representatives, and special districts.



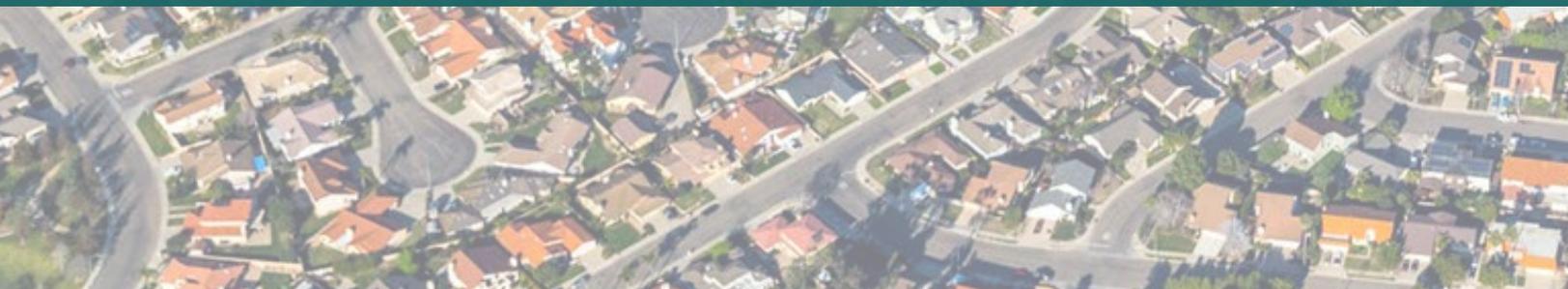
Santa Maria
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Circulation Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

California law mandates the development of a Circulation Element as part of the General Plan. The Circulation Element must contain the “general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals, any military airports and ports, and other local public utilities and facilities,” all correlated with the land use element of the General Plan per California Government Code Section 65302(b).

Santa Maria’s Circulation Element focuses on the street, bicycle, and pedestrian networks, safety, parking, transit, rail, and aviation facilities. Utility-oriented facilities, such as water and storm drainage, are addressed within the Public Facilities and Services Element.

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

The Circulation Policies focus on establishing and maintaining a citywide mobility network that meets the needs of users of all ages and abilities, including people walking, riding bicycles, using micromobility devices like e-scooters, riding on transit, and driving and riding in vehicles, as well as for trucking and goods movement. In support of that mobility network, policies also prioritize safety, parking, land use compatibility, equitable sharing of costs and benefits, and the mitigation of traffic and vehicle usage impacts.



Cyclists use a multi-use path.

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Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Circulation Policies.

Regulatory Setting

Regulations that affect the policy direction of this Element include:

AB 1358. Assembly Bill 1358 (AB 1358), the California Complete Streets Act, requires the City of Santa Maria to focus the update of the Circulation Element of the General Plan on a multimodal transportation system that accommodates all users, including motorists, transit vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and people of all ages and abilities. A few features of Complete Streets include sidewalks, bikeways, safe crossings, transit amenities, traffic calming, and universal accessibility elements.

SB 743. Senate Bill 743 (SB 743) took effect July 1, 2020, and fundamentally changed the way Transportation Analysis is conducted as part of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Automobile Level of Service, although permitted as a local policy threshold, is no longer considered an impact on the environment. Instead, Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) is now the primary transportation metric for evaluated projects under CEQA.

Measure A. Santa Barbara County's Measure A, approved by voters in November 2008 and scheduled to sunset in 2040, will provide more than \$1 billion of estimated local sales tax revenues for road repair, congestion relief, and transportation safety projects. Measure A also funds a portion of major regional transportation improvements, including interchange and highway projects throughout Santa Barbara County. Current programs in Santa Maria being funded by Measure A are Roadway Maintenance, Specialized Transit for Elderly and Disabled Program, Interregional Transit Program, Safe Routes to School, and the Clean Air Express.

AB 98. Assembly Bill 98 (AB 98) seeks to address environmental justice issues associated with the rapid expansion of warehouse uses in the state. AB 98 requires local agencies to update the circulation elements of their general plans to establish specific travel routes for the transport of goods and materials, avoiding sensitive land uses.

Existing Roadway Network

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 (US-101), Broadway (SR-135) and Main Street (SR-166) that traverse the city. Broadway and Main Street both intersect with State Route 1 (SR-1) to the south and west, respectively, of the city.

Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The condition of Santa Maria’s existing bicycle and pedestrian networks varies widely. Some locations have a comprehensive network, while infrastructure is limited in other locations. Network and spot improvements will help improve access, safety, and comfort, including crossing improvements, shared-use paths, and trails. These needs and priorities are addressed in the City’s Active Transportation Plan (ATP), which provides a long-term framework for expanding and enhancing bicycle and pedestrian facilities across the city.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are also used by people operating micromobility devices. Micromobility refers to all small, lightweight personal vehicles, including those powered or featuring power-assistance from motors, usually electric-powered. These include electric bicycles (e-bikes), electric scooters (e-scooters), electric skateboards, one-wheelers, and other new devices.

Santa Maria Regional Transit

Santa Maria is primarily served by the Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT) agency. 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. Private transit companies, though not operated by the City, provide additional services, such as Smooth’s Senior Dial-A-Ride. Transit ridership is rapidly growing and is expected to continue to grow in the years to come.



Santa Maria Transit Center.

Truck Routes

Santa Maria has two designated Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) truck routes, which are on US-101 and Broadway. US-101, Broadway (SR-135), Main Street (SR-166), and Betteravia Road carry the vast majority of STAA truck traffic in terms of absolute volumes. US-101 carries the highest percentage of STAA-sized vehicles, relative to the overall traffic on the route, followed by Main Street and Broadway. On average, STAA-sized trucks make up 5 percent of the overall truck traffic on the segments of State Highways within Santa Maria according to data from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Annual Average Daily Truck Traffic in 2018.

Aviation Facilities

Santa Maria Public Airport

The Santa Maria Public Airport, owned and operated by the Santa Maria Public Airport District, is the only public-use airport within the Santa Maria Valley. As defined by the FAA, the Santa Maria Public Airport is a primary commercial service airport, which serves the aviation needs of the local community and the region by providing support to commercial, aerial firefighting, military, and private aircraft. The Airport is also a hub for the City of Santa Maria's commercial and industrial sector, as a majority of the City's industrial land uses are located at or near the airport.

Heliports

The City of Santa Maria has four heliports: Marian Medical Center, Platform Harvest, Platform Hermosa, and Platform Hidalgo. The authority to regulate their development and use is shared among the heliport owners, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the State of California.



Santa Maria Public Airport. Credit: Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce

Railway Facilities

Passenger Railway Facilities

The Guadalupe Amtrak Station (GUA) is the closest passenger rail service to Santa Maria. There is a thruway bus service that connects passengers from GUA to the Santa Maria Amtrak Bus Stop (SAT), served by a curbside bus stop located next to the northbound off-ramp of US-101 and East Main Street.

Santa Maria Valley Railroad

The Santa Maria Valley Railroad (SMVRR) is a short line or Class III carrier service consisting of 14 miles of main line track interchanging with the Union Pacific Railroad tracks in Guadalupe. The railroad also operates transloading facilities located at 1599 A Street and the Betteravia Industrial Park on Betteravia Road. The SMVRR provides access to long-haul rail lines for commercial and agricultural customers in the Santa Maria Valley.



Guadalupe Amtrak Station (GUA). Credit: Amtrak.

Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the policy direction of the Circulation Policies. More information and technical details can be found in the *Transportation and Mobility Existing Conditions Report* included in Appendix A.

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). VMT measures the amount of travel by motor vehicles to and from residences, jobs, and other destinations. Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction targets are based on achieving a reduction in per capita VMT. With a compact land use pattern and a transportation system that provides improvements for all modes of transportation, the efficiency of the existing street system is increased.

Traffic volumes and Level of Service (LOS). US-101 interchanges with Santa Maria streets have level of service deficiencies. Interchanges at Main Street, Betteravia Road, and Stowell Road need operational and capacity improvements. Betteravia Road is the most congested corridor in the city, with several intersections and segments experiencing excessive or unacceptable delays. Main Street, Broadway, and Stowell Road also have many congested segments and intersections.

Travel time reliability. There is some travel time unreliability on US-101 around the Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo County border that extends to the Broadway off-ramp. Other study segments on Broadway, Main Street, and Betteravia Road have unreliable travel times due to congestion in the AM and PM peak hours.

Excess capacity. In contrast, several street segments are below traffic volume thresholds and have low delay given the excess roadway capacity. Reclassifying streets with excess travel lanes relative to actual volumes, and/or overly wide travel lane widths, provides opportunities to reallocate space in a manner that better serves all modes of travel. Such measures will also help to reduce motor vehicle speeds in many cases.



Entrances to US-101, a major thoroughfare for Santa Maria residents.

Pavement system management. Per the 2023 Pavement Management Report, the overall average pavement condition index (PCI) for the city is 69, and 58.9 percent of the city’s pavement is in very good to good condition. However, with the current level of funding at approximately \$4 million annually, pavement quality is forecasted to deteriorate over time.

Walkability. Downtown is the most walkable part of the city due to its proximity to retail, services, employment, and civic destinations. However, residents in most other areas of the city have less convenient walking access to schools, parks, and/or retail. Improving walkability via improved pedestrian connections and public realm design could improve health, reduce vehicle dependency, and improve the visual appearance of the city’s streets.

Safety. Speeding and automobile right-of-way violations are the top violation categories for the past five years of city collisions.

Transit service. The City has a population of residents who are designated as "at-risk" that struggle with low income, high and persistent poverty, high unemployment and underemployment, linguistic isolation, high housing costs, substandard housing, distressed neighborhoods, high transportation costs with low transportation access. The City’s public transit system is a vital lifeline service and is expected to continue to grow over the years to come.

Aviation facilities and services. The Santa Maria Public Airport has seen a decline in passenger travel over the last two decades as the number of enplanements was 23,008 in 2018, down from 47,741 in 2010 and 77,738 in 2000. In 2025, the Santa Maria Public Airport had nonstop service with Allegiant Airlines to Las Vegas, Nevada, and with American Airlines to Phoenix, Arizona.

Downtown Santa Maria. Downtown has a diverse mix of land uses and housing types, and as the heart of the city, it has many of Santa Maria’s historic, civic, and cultural resources. Implementation of the General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan could create opportunities for job and population growth and transformational improvements to the public realm.



Wide roads and limited pedestrian crossings limit walkability.

Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan. In 2015, the City updated its Downtown Specific Plan and identified the need for a multimodal streetscape plan. The goal of the plan was to address beautification in Downtown by transforming Broadway and Main Street into corridors that accommodate all users—from cyclists to transit riders to pedestrians—while also accommodating existing freight traffic until alternative truck routes become available. Since Main Street and Broadway are State highways, the transformation of these corridors must occur in partnership with Caltrans. The Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan was adopted by the City Council and is utilized as a part of the City’s Downtown redevelopment efforts. Its goals are to accommodate all users, including pedestrians, bicycles, transit riders, automobiles, and trucks. This Plan helps to define and rebrand Downtown into a community gathering place and a great place to live and visit. The Plan includes proposed roadway improvements, including raised cycle tracks, wider sidewalks, and on-street parking.

Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan. The 2020 Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan (ATP) was adopted in January 2021. Its goal is to “facilitate the design and implementation of a connected bicycle and pedestrian network to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transportation choices in the community.”

Safer Streets for Santa Maria Plan. The City’s Local Road Safety Plan (LRSP), adopted in 2022, identified, analyzed, and prioritized roadway safety improvements around the principles of what are referred to as the “4Es” of traffic safety: Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Services. The LRSP has been instrumental in securing State Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding awarded by Caltrans. In addition to citywide or systemic strategies, the plan identified three priority corridors for transportation safety grants:

- Broadway Corridor (US-101 to Betteravia Road)
- Main Street Corridor (Blosser Road to US-101)
- Miller Street Corridor (Donovan Road to Betteravia Road)



Community engagement for the City Active Transportation Plan at Open Streets Santa Maria (2019).

Short- and long-range transit plans. Every five to seven years, SMRT develops and adopts Short- and Long-Range Transit Plans. The plans include performance improvement, service enhancement, and innovation and technology recommendations. These plans serve as general business plans outlining the growth of the transit system. These indicate areas for the creation of new transit lines along with regional connectivity opportunities throughout Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties.

Bus rapid transit and autonomous shuttles. SMRT is planning to introduce new and enhanced forms of public transit to Santa Maria. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors are in development along Broadway, the city’s busiest transit corridor, and conceptual plans are in place to expand BRT lines on Main Street, Betteravia Road, and future high-intensity corridors. Similarly, work is underway to develop Autonomous Shuttle corridors for the implementation of driverless buses with an initial focus of connecting Allan Hancock College with the Transit Center as an initial pilot project.

Parking. The City’s 2018 parking ordinance allows developers to credit parking in the paved front setback and utilize tandem parking toward the required parking. The ordinance only affects medium- or high-density developments by allowing more flexibility for the development of infill lots with limited space available. In addition, the Downtown Specific Plan allows for shared/off-site parking, allowing for higher-density residential development.

Roundabouts. Roundabouts improve safety by reducing vehicle speeds and avoiding conflicting movements. In the past twenty-five years, modern roundabout designs have grown in popularity in the U.S. due to their safety, their ability to move more vehicles through intersections with less delay, and their lower long-term costs compared to signals that require electricity, maintenance, and replacement over time. When designed properly, roundabouts can easily accommodate large vehicles like fire service ladder trucks and freight trucks. It is important for the City to collaborate with local communities to be engaged and involved in the design and implementation of local roundabouts.



Landscaped roundabout at the intersection of S. College Drive and E. McCoy Lane. Credit: Google

Circulation Policies

The Circulation Policies address the key issues and opportunities identified above and establish a comprehensive roadmap for establishing and maintaining a citywide mobility network that meets the needs of users of all ages and abilities.

The *Standards and Diagrams* section establishes regulatory standards and diagrams. A standard is a rule or measure establishing a level of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied. Likewise, a diagram is a graphic expression of the text of a particular policy.

The *Policy Framework* section outlines Circulation goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The Circulation Policies are focused on establishing and maintaining safe and convenient travel options throughout Santa Maria with a citywide mobility network that meets the needs of all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, motorists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities. These goals and policies ensure that future land use, transportation, and transit planning are consistent with that focus on complete streets and a balanced network (Goals CIR-1 and CIR-6). Policies require that other City policies and plans related to transportation are consistent with this Element (Goal CIR-2) and that the funding for transportation improvements and maintenance are managed responsibly and shared equitably (Goal CIR-3). Policies also mitigate the impacts of traffic noise and heavy vehicles (Goal CIR-4) and seek to provide adequate parking options (Goal CIR-8). Together, these policy priorities should result in improved safety (Goal CIR-5) and reduced VMT (Goal CIR-7).

Standards and Diagrams

Street Classifications

The Santa Maria Street Network comprises freeways and four main street classifications, as described below:

- **Freeways** are designed for high-speed vehicular traffic with controlled/limited access.
- **Primary Arterials** serve as major routes for vehicular traffic, connecting freeways with secondary arterials, collectors, and local streets.
- **Secondary Arterials** serve to distribute vehicular traffic from primary arterials to collector and local streets and neighborhoods. They support moderate-distance travel and provide access to commercial and residential areas.
- **Collector Streets** provide connections for all modes of travel within and between residential areas and activity centers. They serve travel between arterial and local streets, within and between neighborhoods and major activity centers, and provide direct access to abutting properties.
- **Local Streets** provide direct access to abutting properties and for localized travel within residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and include both public and private streets.

Street Network

Figure CIR-1 presents the street classifications for each roadway segment. The figure also identifies proposed roadways within the planned annexation areas.

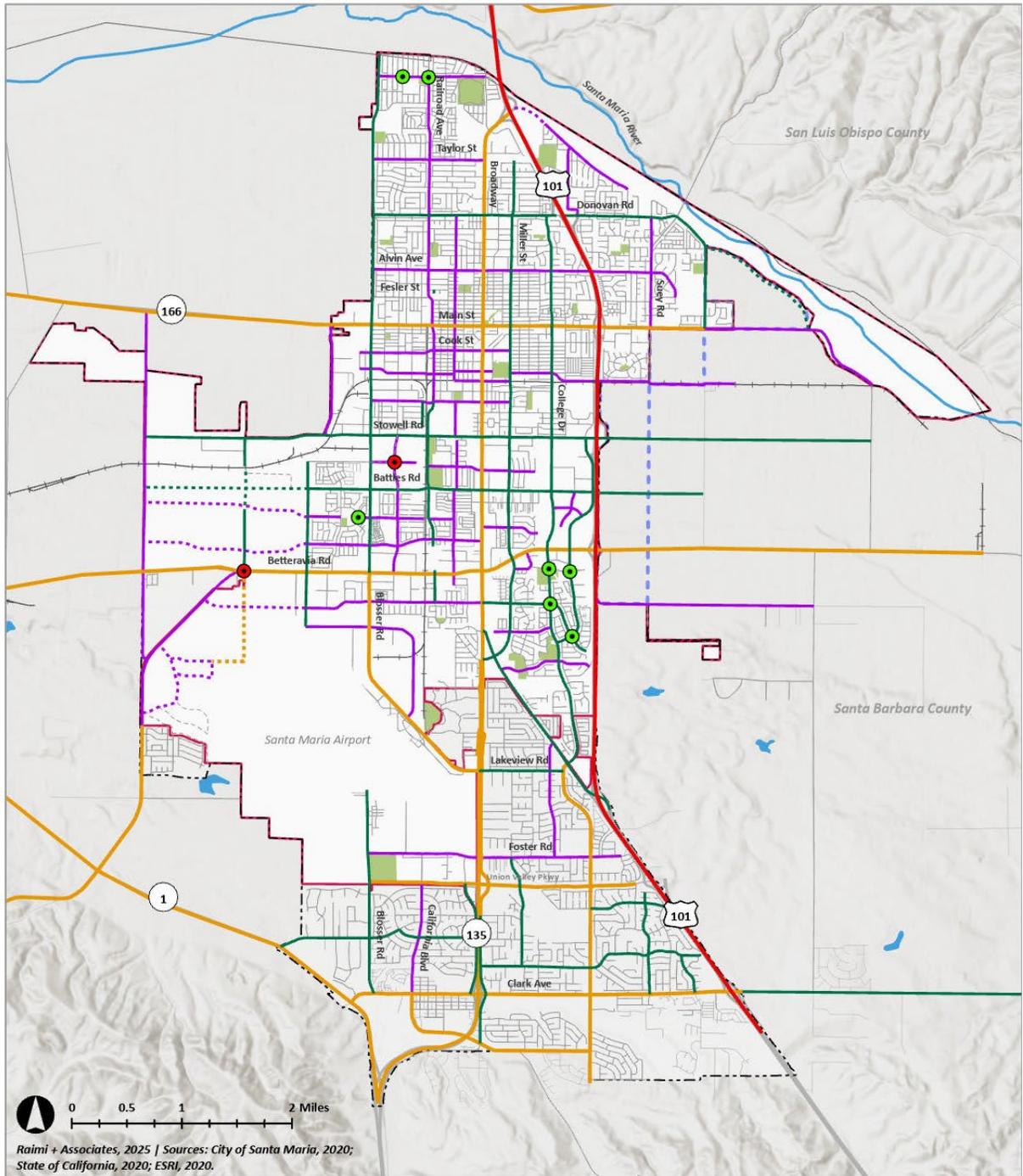


Protected bike lane installed on Blosser Road in 2023.



Roadway on Blosser Road with center landscaped median and bike lane.

Figure CIR-1: Street Network



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



Roadway Classification	--- Local	□ Current Santa Maria City Limits
— Freeway	Roundabouts	□ Current Sphere of Influence
— Primary Arterial	● Existing	□ Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
— Secondary Arterial	● Potential	— Railroads
— Collector		— Freeways and Highways
— Local		— Santa Maria River
Planned Roadway Classification		■ Parks
— Primary Arterial		■ Water
— Secondary Arterial		— County Boundaries
— Collector		□ Public Current Parcels

Traffic Level of Service

Traffic Level of Service (LOS) is a qualitative measure of traffic operating conditions, whereby a letter grade "A" through "F" is assigned to an intersection, or roadway segment, representing progressively increasing traffic congestion, as detailed below in Table CIR-1. LOS "A" represents free-flow operating conditions and LOS "F" represents over-capacity conditions. LOS calculation methods are documented in the Transportation Research Board, most recently in the publication Highway Capacity Manual, Sixth Edition, A Guide for Multimodal Mobility Analysis, 2016 (HCM 6).

Table CIR-1: Traffic Level of Service (LOS)

LOS	Type of Flow	Delay	Maneuverability	Stopped Delay per Vehicle— Signalized*	Stopped Delay per Vehicle— Un-signalized*
A	Stable Flow	Very slight delay. Progression is very favorable, with most vehicles arriving during the green phase not stopping at all.	Turning movements are easily made, and nearly all drivers find freedom of operation.	≤10.0	≤10.0
B	Stable Flow	Good progression and/or short cycle lengths. More vehicles stop than for LOS A, causing higher levels of average delay.	Vehicle platoons are formed. Many drivers begin to feel somewhat restricted within groups of vehicles.	>10.0 and ≤20.0	>10.0 and ≤15.0
C	Stable Flow	Higher delays resulting from fair progression and/or longer cycle lengths. Individual cycle failures may begin to appear at this level. The number of vehicles stopping is significant, although many still pass through the intersection without stopping.	Back-ups may develop behind turning vehicles. Most drivers feel somewhat restricted within groups of vehicles.	>20.0 and ≤35.0	>15.0 and ≤25.0

LOS	Type of Flow	Delay	Maneuverability	Stopped Delay per Vehicle— Signalized*	Stopped Delay per Vehicle— Un-signalized*
D	Approaching Unstable Flow	The influence of congestion becomes more noticeable. Longer delays may result from some combination of unfavorable progression, long cycle lengths, or high volume-to-capacity ratios. Many vehicles stop, and the proportion of vehicles not stopping declines. Individual cycle failures are noticeable.	Maneuverability is severely limited during short periods due to temporary back-ups.	>35.0 and ≤55.0	>25.0 and ≤35.0
E	Unstable Flow	Generally considered to be the limit of acceptable delay for most drivers. Indicative of poor progression, long cycle lengths, and high volume-to-capacity ratios. Individual cycle failures are frequent occurrences.	There are typically long queues of vehicles waiting upstream of the intersection.	>55.0 and ≤80.0	>35.0 and ≤50.0
F	Forced Flow	Generally considered to be unacceptable to most drivers. Often occurs with over-saturation. May also occur at high volume-to-capacity ratios. There are many individual cycle failures. Poor progression and long cycle lengths may also be major contributing factors.	Jammed conditions. Back-ups from other locations restrict or prevent movement. Volumes may vary widely, depending principally on the downstream back-up conditions.	>80.0	>50.0

*Seconds per vehicle.

Bikeway Classifications

Santa Maria utilizes the four classifications of bikeway facilities defined by Caltrans:

- **Multi-Use Paths (Class I Bikeways).** A path physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier, used by bicyclists, pedestrians, joggers, skaters, and other non-motorized travelers. They can provide recreational opportunities and serve as a direct connection to key destinations.
- **Bicycle Lanes (Class II Bikeways).** A portion of a roadway that has been set aside by striping and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bicycle lanes are intended to promote an orderly flow of bicycle and vehicle traffic. This type of facility is established by using the appropriate striping, legends, and signs.
- **Bicycle Routes (Class III Bikeways).** Class III bicycle routes are facilities where bicyclists share travel lanes with motor vehicle traffic. Bike routes must be of benefit to the bicyclist and offer a higher degree of service than adjacent streets. Class III bikeways are often located on residential streets.
- **Separated Bikeway (Class IV Bikeways).** A Class IV Bikeway is for the exclusive use of bicycles and includes a separation between the bikeway and adjacent vehicle traffic. The physical separation may include flexible posts, grade separation, inflexible physical barriers, or on-street parking. Separated bikeways operate in the same direction as vehicle traffic on the same side of the roadway, while two-way separated bikeways can also be used in some cases.

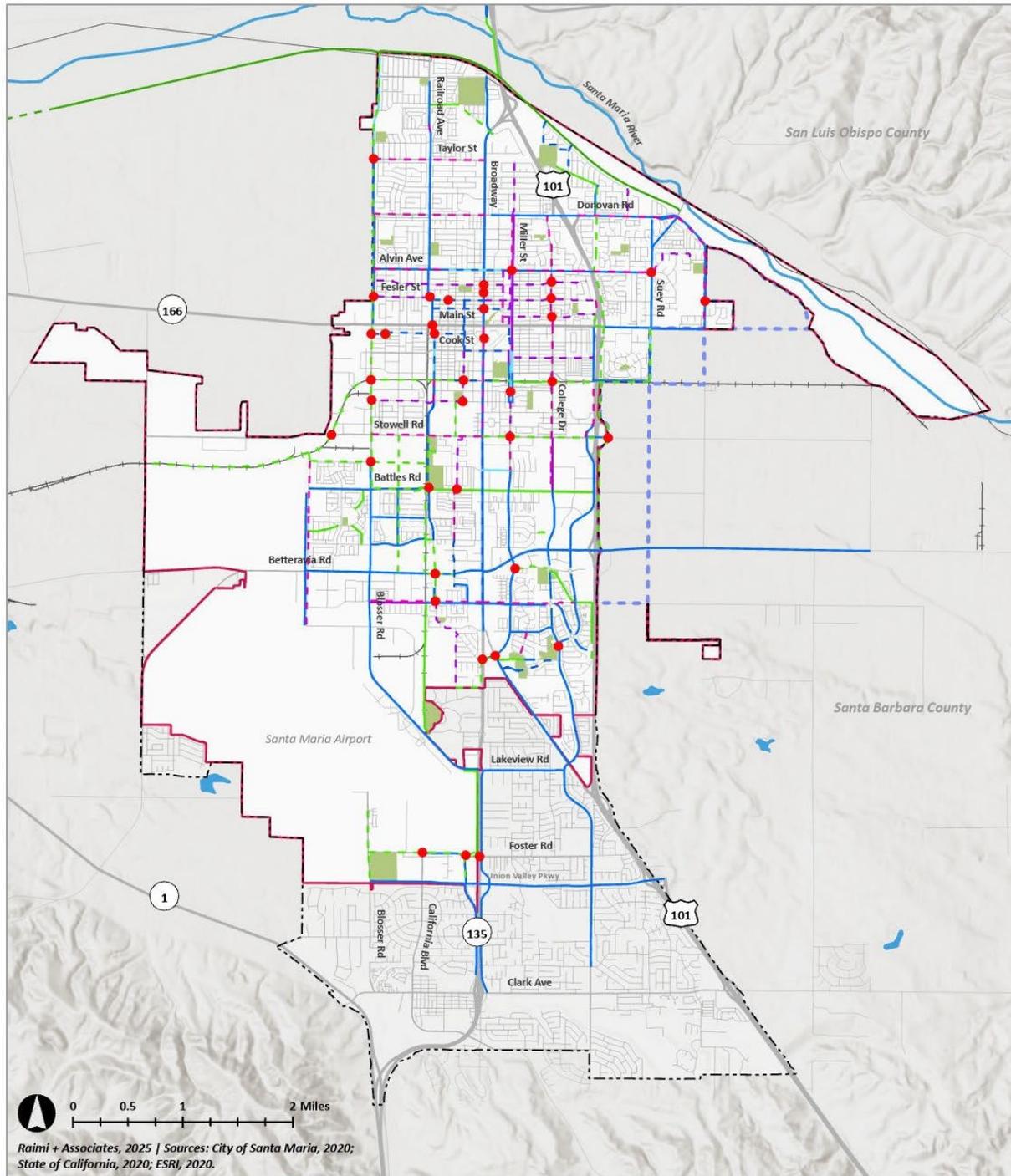
Bikeway Network

Figure CIR-2 presents the proposed Bikeway Network, which builds upon the foundation established by the City's previous planning efforts, including the 1994 Circulation Element, the 2009 Bikeway Master Plan, and the 2020 Active Transportation Plan (ATP). This updated network reflects a comprehensive strategy to enhance bicycle infrastructure citywide by integrating existing facilities with newly proposed routes.



Credit: Janene Scully

Figure CIR-2: Bikeway Network



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



- | Proposed Facilities | Existing Facilities | Other Features |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Class I Shared Use Path | Class I Shared Use Path | Current Santa Maria City Limits |
| Class II Bicycle Lanes | Class II Bike Lane | Current Sphere of Influence |
| Class II Buffered Bicycle Lanes | Class II Buffered Bike Lane | Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence |
| Class III Bicycle Route | Class III Bike Route | Railroads |
| Class IV Separated Bikeway | Santa Maria Levee Trail | Freeways and Highways |
| Santa Maria Levee Trail | | Santa Maria River |
| Crossing Improvement | | Parks |
| | | Water |
| | | County Boundaries |

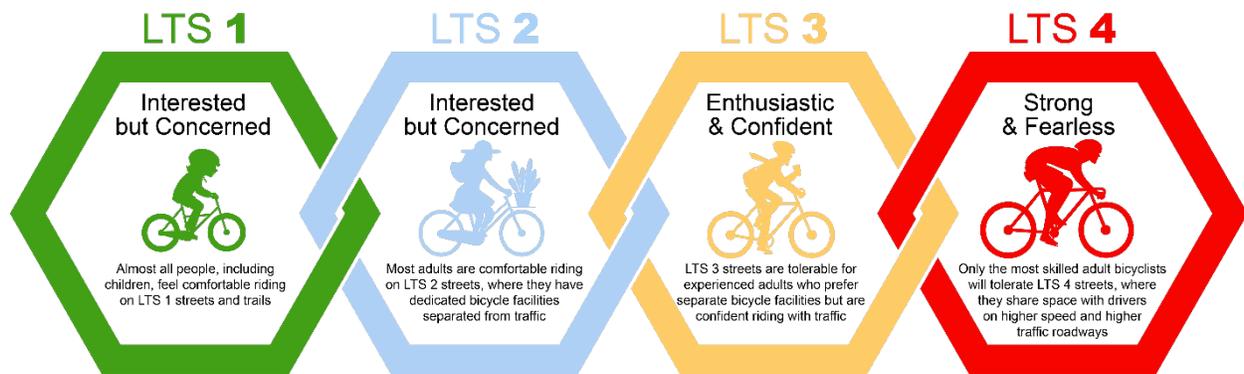
Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress

Like Vehicular LOS, Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) is a qualitative measure based on quantitative factors, calculated for roadway segments, intersection approach segments and intersection crossings. However, instead of measuring operating conditions, this method is based on roadway and bike facility conditions.

LTS is calculated using methods documented in Oregon Department of Transportation's Analysis Procedures Manual, most recently in Version 2, 2025, pages 10-41. Bicycle LTS quantifies the stress level of a given roadway segment by considering a variety of criteria, including traffic volumes, street width (number of lanes), speed limit or prevailing speed, presence and width of bike lanes, and the presence and width of parking lanes. Bicycle LTS quantifies the stress level of intersection approaches and crossings by considering those factors as well as the intersection controls, presence and length of right-hand turn lanes, presence of bicycle detection technology, and the positioning or loss of bicycle lanes approaching the intersection.

As illustrated in Figure CIR-3, bicycle LTS scores roadway facilities into one of four classifications or ratings for measuring the effects of traffic-based stress on bicycle riders, with 1 being the lowest stress or most comfortable, and 4 being the highest stress or least comfortable. An LTS score of 1 indicates the facility provides a traffic stress tolerable by most children and less experienced riders, such as multi-use paths that are separated from motorized traffic, or neighborhood streets with observed speeds under 25 mph. An LTS score of 4 indicates a stress level tolerable by only the most experienced cyclists who are comfortable with high-volume and high-speed, mixed traffic environments. LTS 3 and 4 represent high stress conditions for bicyclists and reflect the need for visibility and safety improvements. The figure below presents the four scoring classifications.

Figure CIR-3: Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress



E-Bikes and Other Micromobility Devices

E-bikes and other micromobility devices are legally allowed to be operated in Class 2, 3, and 4 bike facilities. Jurisdictions may limit micromobility use to certain speeds or certain features may be restricted when using Class 1 multi-use paths. E-bikes are defined in the California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 312.5 as “a bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor that does not exceed 750 watts of power.” Any electric-powered two-wheeled device, with or without pedals, which exceeds 750 watts or is capable of speeds over 28 mph is not legally allowed to be operated on public roads. These should be referred to as e-motos.

E-bikes are divided into three classes:

- **Class 1 E-Bikes** are equipped with a motor that only provides assistance while the rider is pedaling, and ceases to assist when the bicycle reaches 20 mph.
- **Class 2 E-Bikes** are equipped with a motor that can exclusively propel the bicycle (often activated by a thumb throttle), and ceases to propel when the bicycle reaches 20 mph. Some jurisdictions may restrict throttle assistance on multi-use paths or trails.
- **Class 3 E-Bikes** are equipped with a motor that only provides assistance while the rider is pedaling and ceases to assist when the bicycle reaches 28 mph. Riders must be at least 16 years old, and helmets are mandatory for riders of all ages. Passengers are not allowed on Class 3 e-bikes.

Other micromobility devices include:

- **E-Scooters** are defined by CVC Section 407.5 as “a two-wheeled device with handlebars, a floorboard or seat, and powered by an electric motor. E-scooters are not legally allowed to exceed 15 mph or be ridden on sidewalks. The rider must have a valid driver’s license and follow the same traffic rules as a bicycle rider.
- **E-Skateboards** are defined by CVC section 313.5 as “any wheeled device that has a floorboard designed to be stood upon when riding.” E-skateboards must meet certain size restrictions, are limited to speeds of 20 mph or less, and limited to roadways with posted speed limits of 35 mph or lower. Riders must be 16 years of age or older, and riders of any age must wear a helmet.



E-scooters parked in a designated e-scooter parking area.

Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network

Figure CIR-4 presents the Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network which depicts the existing and proposed pedestrian facilities and highlights the corridors and intersections prioritized for pedestrian improvements. The Improvement Network reflects the targeted recommendations for enhancements along key corridors and intersections that were identified in the 2020 Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan. Not all streets lacking sidewalks are recommended for improvement, due to constraints related to right-of-way availability and limited implementation resources. These priority locations are listed below:

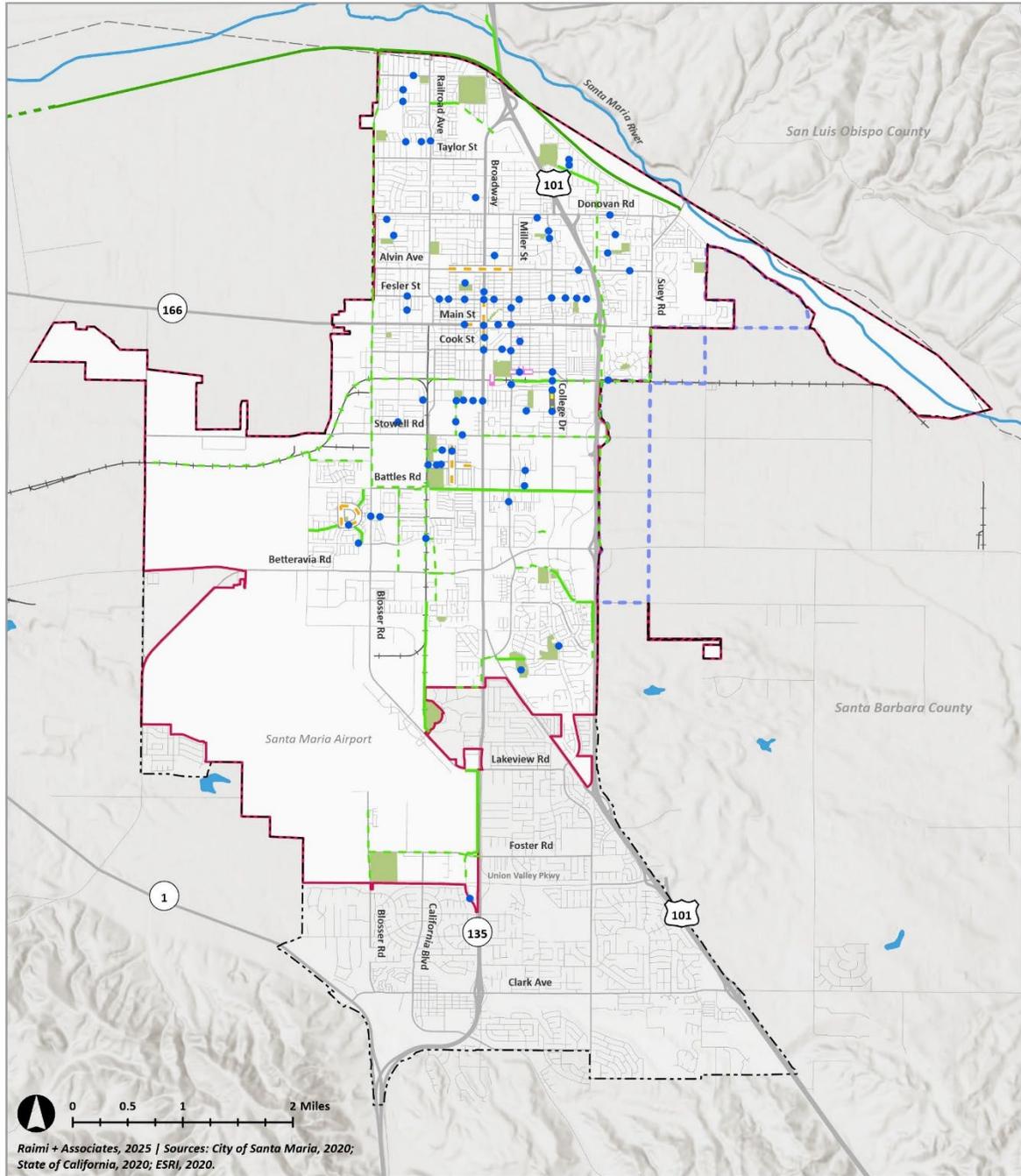
Priority Corridors

- Alvin Avenue
- Battles Road
- Betteravia Road
- Blosser Road
- Broadway
- College Drive
- Curryer Street
- Dena Way
- Depot Street
- Donovan Road
- Enos Drive
- Fesler Street
- Foster Road
- Hidden Pines Way
- La Brea Avenue
- Jones Street
- Main Street
- McClelland Street
- McCoy Lane
- Miller Street
- Morrison Avenue
- Pine Street
- Seaward Drive
- Stowell Road
- Suey Road
- Thornburg Street
- Western Avenue

Priority Intersections

- Pine Street and Fesler Street
- Fesler Street and McClelland Street
- Smith Street and Fesler Street
- College Drive and Fesler Street
- Fesler Street and Concepcion Avenue
- Fesler Street and Lucas Drive
- Fesler Street and Lucas Drive/Scott Drive
- Newlove Drive and Miller Street
- SMVRR Trail Extension and Battles Road
- Carmen Lane and SMVRR tracks
- College Drive and Camino Colegio
- College Drive and Jones/Boone Streets
- Morrison Avenue and Thornburg Street
- Thornburg Street midblock between Morrison Avenue and Stowell Road
- Morrison Avenue Lincoln Street
- Main Street and Broadway
- Boone Street and School Street
- Blosser Road and Sonya Lane
- Alvin Avenue and Curryer Street
- Cook Street and Miller Street
- Cook Street midblock between Miller Street and McClelland Street
- Morrison Avenue and Broadway
- El Medio Drive and Bethel Lane

Figure CIR-4: Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network



- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| ATP Proposed Facilities | Existing Facilities | Current Santa Maria City Limits |
| Class I Shared Use Path | Class I Shared Use Path | Current Sphere of Influence |
| Santa Maria Valley Levee Trail | Santa Maria Levee Trail | Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence |
| Lighting Improvement | Crossing Improvement | Railroads |
| Traffic Calming | Freeways and Highways | Santa Maria River |
| Sidewalk | Parks | Water |
| | County Boundaries | |

Policy Framework

Goal CIR-1: Complete Streets. Safe and convenient travel is provided throughout the community with a citywide network of complete streets that meet the needs of all users, including motorists, transit vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and people of all ages and abilities.¹

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 of all ages and abilities.

Action CIR-1.1.1: Pursue funding to retrofit existing public streets into complete streets.

Action CIR-1.1.2: Implement the improvements identified in the Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan, including raised cycle tracks, wider sidewalks, and on-street parking, incorporating input from recent Caltrans studies and further coordination with Caltrans where needed.

Action CIR-1.1.3: Educate the public on the importance of traffic safety in a multi-modal system through online resources, workshops, and webinars.

Policy CIR-1.2: Complete Streets construction. Construct City streets and 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-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.²

¹ Complete Streets as defined by AB 1358. See *Regulatory Setting* section for additional information.

² Please see the Conservation and Open Space, Recreation and Parks, and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for additional policies and actions focused on trails, infrastructure for physical activity, and multi-purpose open spaces and public lands.

Action CIR-1.4.1: Implement the bicycle and pedestrian projects identified in the Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagram above 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-1.5: 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.

Action CIR-1.6.1: Review current arterial, collector, and local street standards and update as necessary to conform to best practice classification standards (see Street Classifications standards above), including National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) street design guidelines. Alternatively, adopt and regularly update a City Engineering Design Manual to formalize roadway standards.

Policy CIR-1.7: Transportation network completion. Strive to complete the planned build-out of the street network as illustrated on the Street Network diagram and the bicycle and pedestrian improvements identified in the Bikeway Network and Pedestrian Priority Improvement Network diagrams and the Active Transportation Plan.

Action CIR-1.7.1: Review annually the functioning of the street system to identify problems and actively pursue implementation of improvements identified as needed in a timely manner.

Action CIR-1.7.2: Engage the community and transportation stakeholders to identify opportunities to add roundabouts to the street system.

Policy CIR-1.8: Transportation network completion in new development. Require new developments to align new streets with existing or approved streets wherever, in the opinion of the City Engineer, such is feasible.

Action CIR-1.8.1: Evaluate new developments to ensure that the safety, comfort, and convenience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users are given an equal level of consideration to motor vehicle operators.

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. Maintain an acceptable peak hour level of service (LOS) of D or better, as determined using the most current edition of the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) or other methodology formally adopted by the City Engineer, on all arterial and collector roadways and at all signalized intersections, except where achieving the LOS standard would result in unacceptable conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, or transit users (see the Traffic Level of Service standard above). Deficiency plans shall be required for developments that cause intersections to cross the LOS threshold.

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).

Action CIR-1.11.1: Develop access standards regarding new driveways and other encroachments to arterial and collector streets to optimize multimodal site access and minimize conflicts that are detrimental to safe and efficient operating conditions.

Action CIR-1.11.2: Plan the spacing between traffic signals to enhance pedestrian and bicycle crossings, optimize interconnection, and strive to implement signal timing that will result in fuel conservation while avoiding unnecessary delays to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Goal CIR-2: General Plan consistency. Local, regional, State, and private transportation plans, facilities, and services are consistent with the General Plan.

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 Priority 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-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).

Action CIR-2.2.3: Prepare an annual update to the Santa Maria Capital Improvement Program. This shall include a list of infrastructure improvements intended to be implemented by the City over the next five-year period, a priority ranking of those projects, and identification of the available sources of funding to finance the implementation of each improvement project.

Policy CIR-2.3: Air transportation. To support air transportation, ensure that circulation improvements surrounding the Santa Maria Public Airport are compatible with existing and future airport operations.³

³ Please see the Land Use and Safety Elements for related policies and actions.

Action CIR-2.3.1: Coordinate master plans with the Santa Maria Public Airport District (SMPAD), the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC), and SBCAG to facilitate consistency between the Santa Maria Circulation Element and the Airport Master Plan.

Goal CIR-3: Funding transportation improvements. The City's existing and future transportation needs are met through cost-effective operation and equitable distribution of funding for transportation improvements.⁴

Policy CIR-3.1: Distribution of costs. Equitably distribute the costs for transportation improvements among property owners/developers who benefit from new development and transportation system users.

Policy CIR-3.2: New development share of costs. Ensure that each new development, whether its impacts are individual or cumulative, pays its proportional share of the costs for any improvements or expansions needed on local or regional roadways when the City's existing revenue sources are not enough to fund those improvements. Any such street assessment district shall generate sufficient revenue to fund the long-term maintenance of the roadway at a target PCI of 80 in perpetuity.

Policy CIR-3.3: New private and public roadways: For each roadway that is constructed as part of new development, the City shall determine whether it (1) remains privately owned and privately maintained, (2) remains private but is included within a roadway maintenance district to be maintained by the City or its designee, or 3) is dedicated to the City and publicly maintained.

Policy CIR-3.4: Funding for pavement management system. Continue to secure adequate funding for the City's Pavement Management System (PMS) that identifies the required maintenance to maintain pavement quality through surface treatments, light rehabilitation, heavy rehabilitation, or reconstruction. Minimize asphalt pavement to be maintained by reducing existing paved areas or repurposing areas to be utilized for active transportation or transit.

Goal CIR-4: Land use compatibility. Transportation facilities and roadway improvements are compatible with land uses and minimize impacts on adjacent land uses.⁵

Policy CIR-4.1: Location of noise-sensitive land uses. Locate noise-sensitive land uses such as residences, hospitals, and schools away from heavily traveled arterials whenever possible. However, these uses may be located along heavily traveled arterials within the Downtown Specific Plan when designed in accordance with the Noise Element of the General Plan and City Ordinances. (Resolution 2008-163)

⁴ Please see the Land Use and Recreation and Parks Elements for additional policies and actions related to development impact and mitigation fees.

⁵ Please see the Recreation and Parks, Land Use, Noise, and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for policies and actions related to land use conflicts.

Policy CIR-4.2: Heavy vehicle traffic. Provide adequate facilities for heavy vehicle traffic for the transport of goods and materials that avoid sensitive uses and reduce the impact of such traffic on local circulation and residential environments.⁶

Action CIR-4.2.1: Regulate on-street parking of large vehicles such as trucks and RVs where necessary to discourage truck parking on public streets or in other locations where they are incompatible with adjacent land uses and cause visibility and safety problems.

Action CIR-4.2.2: Maintain a truck route plan identifying streets to be posted as designated truck routes to avoid sensitive uses, and to be posted with weight limit restrictions and accompanied with street design elements where possible to discourage their use by heavy vehicles.

Policy CIR-4.3: Coordination of transportation planning. Coordinate land use planning with existing and future transportation facilities so that transportation movement is neither impeded nor significantly impacts adjacent land uses.

Goal CIR-5: Safety. The transportation system is safe and eliminates traffic-related fatalities and reduces injury collisions.⁷

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.

Goal CIR-6: Public transit. Public transit service is frequent, efficient, cost-effective, and responsive to the needs of residents, workers, and visitors.

Policy CIR-6.1: Public transit service and financial stability. Maintain and enhance convenient, safe, and reliable transit services.

⁶ Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for policies and actions to mitigate the impacts of truck routes.

⁷ Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for additional policies and actions focused on transportation safety.

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-6.1.2: Promote public transit to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips. Identify and evaluate long-term transportation improvements including exclusive bus lanes, bus stop enhancements, bus rapid transit (BRT) and light rail facilities.

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-6.1.4: Deliver frequent and reliable service with minimal wait times and direct routes to key destinations. Provide real-time transit information through various channels (apps, digital signs) and integrate modern fare payment options.

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-6.2: Rights-of-way. Preserve railroad and utility rights-of-way to provide for future transportation system and facilities improvements.

Policy CIR-6.3: Integrated multimodal infrastructure. Develop a multimodal transit system that works for walking, biking, and shared mobility.

Action CIR-6.3.1: Develop mobility hubs that facilitate transfers between different local and regional transit modes (local buses, BRT, and/or future light rail) and other options such as shared micromobility and active transportation.

Action CIR-6.3.2: Invest in transit infrastructure such as bus lanes, and signal prioritization to make transit more attractive. Upgrade transit stops and stations to be universally accessible with comfortable seating, shelters, lighting, and real-time information.

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: 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.

Goal CIR-7: Vehicle miles traveled. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are reduced.

Policy CIR-7.1: Reduce VMT. Reduce VMT below regional averages on a “per resident” and “per employee” basis.

Action CIR-7.1.1: Maintain VMT thresholds consistent with State guidelines for use in evaluating potential traffic impacts from projects subject to CEQA.

Action CIR-7.1.2: Encourage large regional employers to provide subsidized public transportation or shuttle services for commuting employees.

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 near existing employment, housing, schools, commercial centers, and other services and amenities.

Goal CIR-8: Parking. Convenient on-street and off-street parking facilities are provided for motor vehicles and bicycles (including charging stations for electric vehicles).

Policy CIR-8.1: Parking. Require new developments to provide parking to meet their needs on-site or within proximity to their sites, except within the Central Business District. Required parking should meet demand without resulting in excess or underutilized parking supply.⁸

Action CIR-8.1.1: Develop parking and traffic control plans, including neighborhood parking districts, for those neighborhoods that are adversely impacted by increased density, spillover parking, and traffic from commercial areas.

Action CIR-8.1.2: Periodically review the Santa Maria Municipal Code parking requirements for vehicles, electric charging stations, and bicycles to ensure that adequate parking is provided.

Action CIR-8.1.3: Allow for the joint use of parking facilities to support mixed-use development (i.e., light commercial and residential) by reducing the need for separate facilities.

Action CIR-8.1.4: Review the design of new parking facilities to ensure that pedestrian circulation is adequately accommodated and pedestrian or bicycle access is not negatively affected or impeded.

Action CIR-8.1.5: Encourage safe and accessible bicycle and micromobility device parking for both short-term and long-term parking. Short-term parking is best provided by conveniently located, inverted U-shaped structures, securely attached to the ground, which provide for locking a bicycle or e-bike at two points on the frame. Long-term parking should be secure, have controlled access, be well-lit, well-maintained, and easy to access while rolling a bicycle or e-bike.

⁸ Please see Housing Element Program 3.E. to reduce the impacts of parking requirements on the production of housing by updating parking standards.



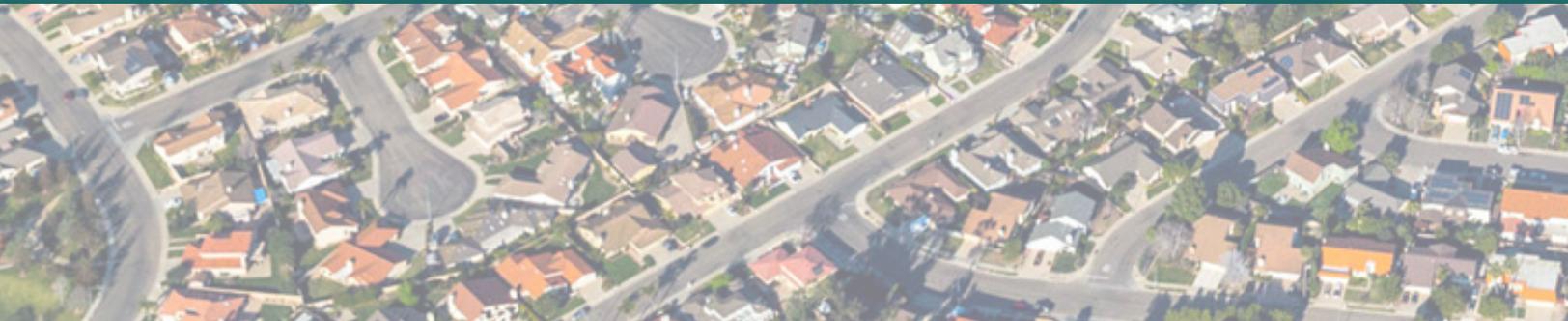
Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



Conservation and Open Space Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

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

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

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



Santa Maria River vegetation, US-101 and Preisker Lane



Santa Maria River and US-101

Background

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

Natural and Working Lands

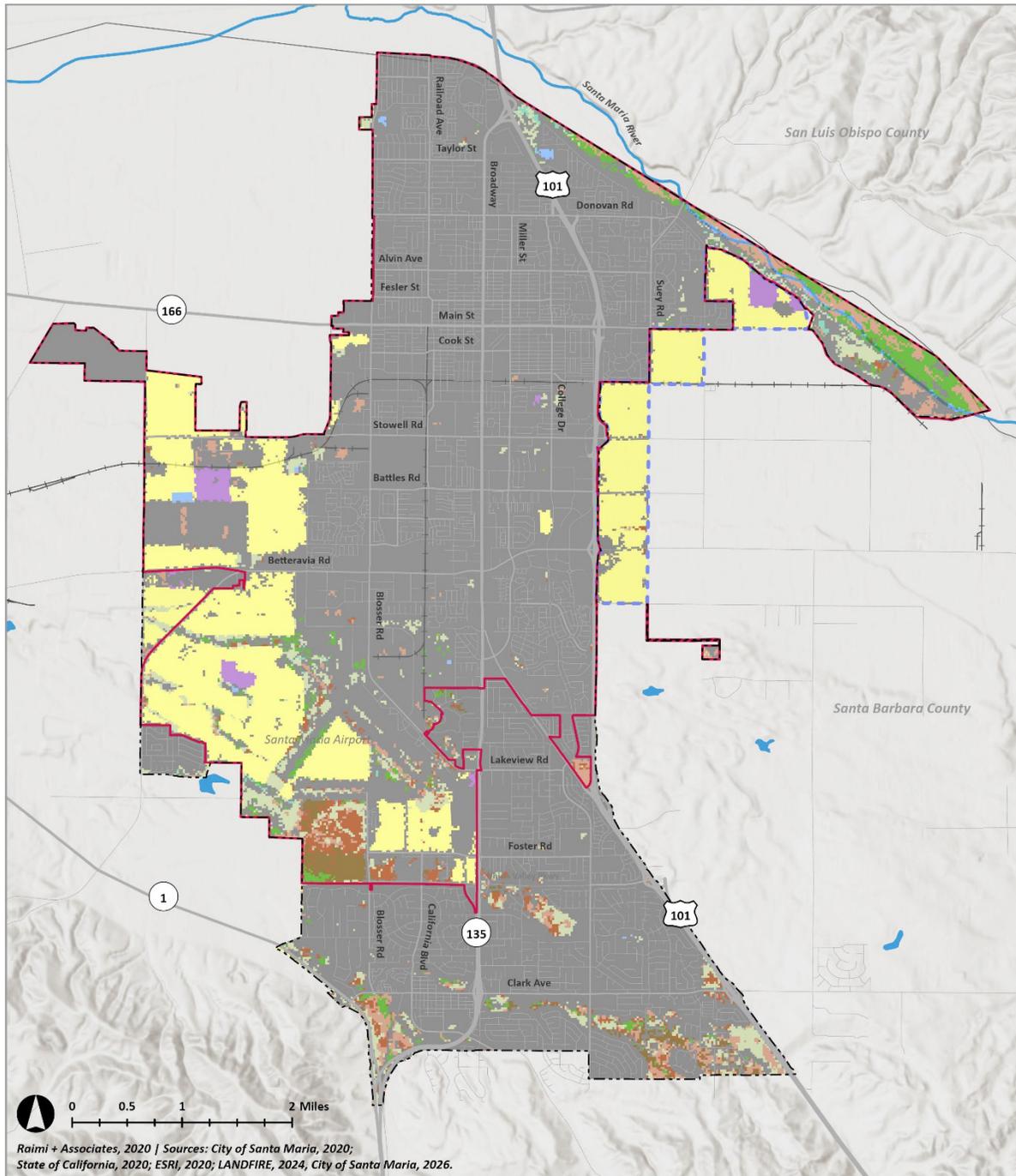
Wildlife Habitat

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

Wetlands

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

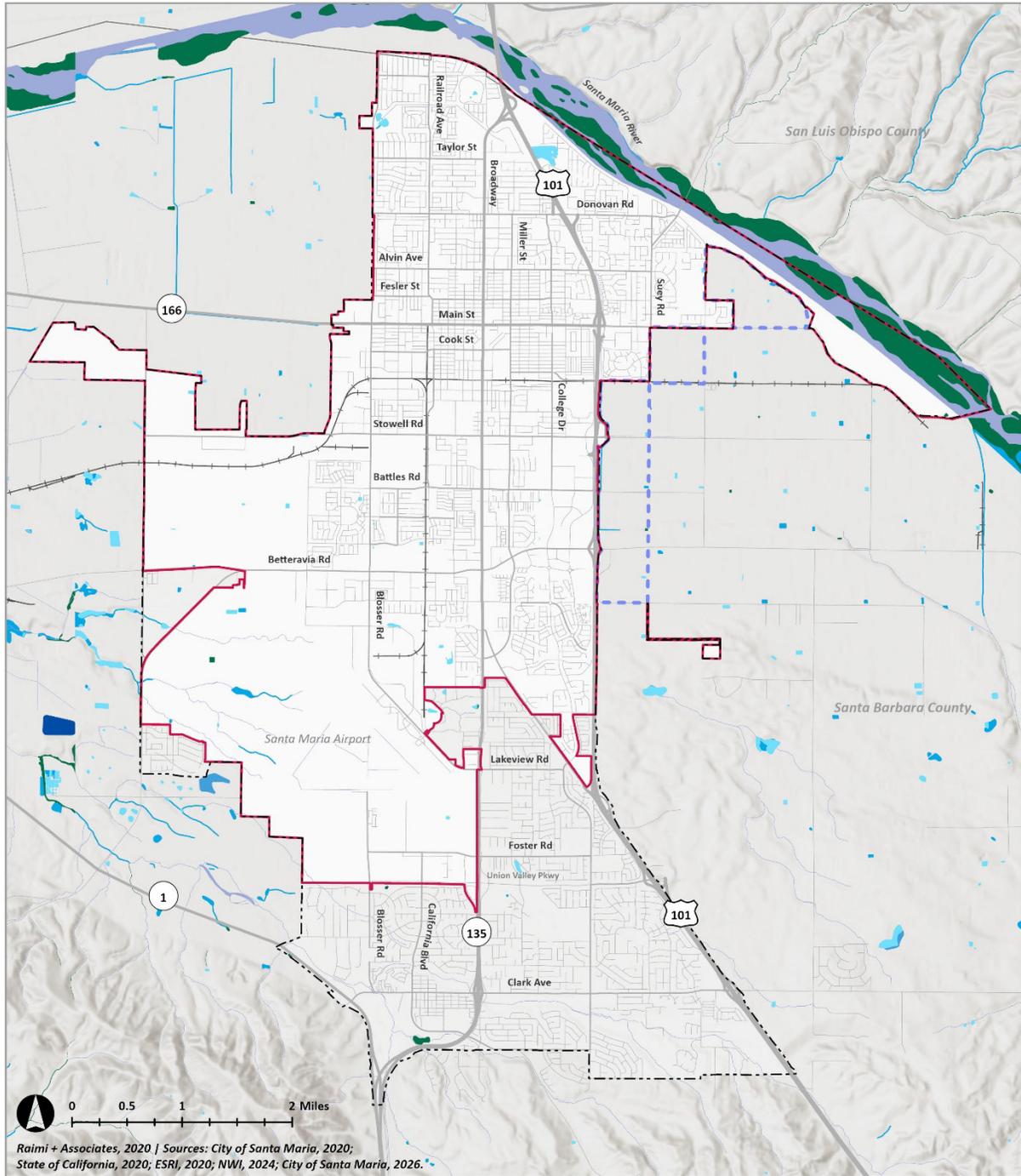
Figure COS-1: Existing Vegetation Types



Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; LANDFIRE, 2024; City of Santa Maria, 2026.

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| | Current Santa Maria City Limits | Agricultural-Field and Row Crop | Freshwater Marsh |
| | Current Sphere of Influence | Agricultural-Orchard | Grassland |
| | Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence | Agricultural-Vineyard and Bush Fruit | Water |
| | County Boundaries | California Mixed Evergreen Forest and Woodland | Western Oak Woodland and Savanna |
| | Railroads | Chaparral | Western Riparian Woodland and Shrubland |
| | Freeways and Highways | Coastal Scrub | |
| | Santa Maria River | Developed-Ruderal-Landscaped | |

Figure COS-2: Wetlands



Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; NWI, 2024; City of Santa Maria, 2026.



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

- Santa Maria River
- Surface Water**
 - Freshwater Emergent Wetland
 - Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
 - Freshwater Pond
 - Lake
 - Riverine

Protected Species

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

Wildlife Movement Corridors

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



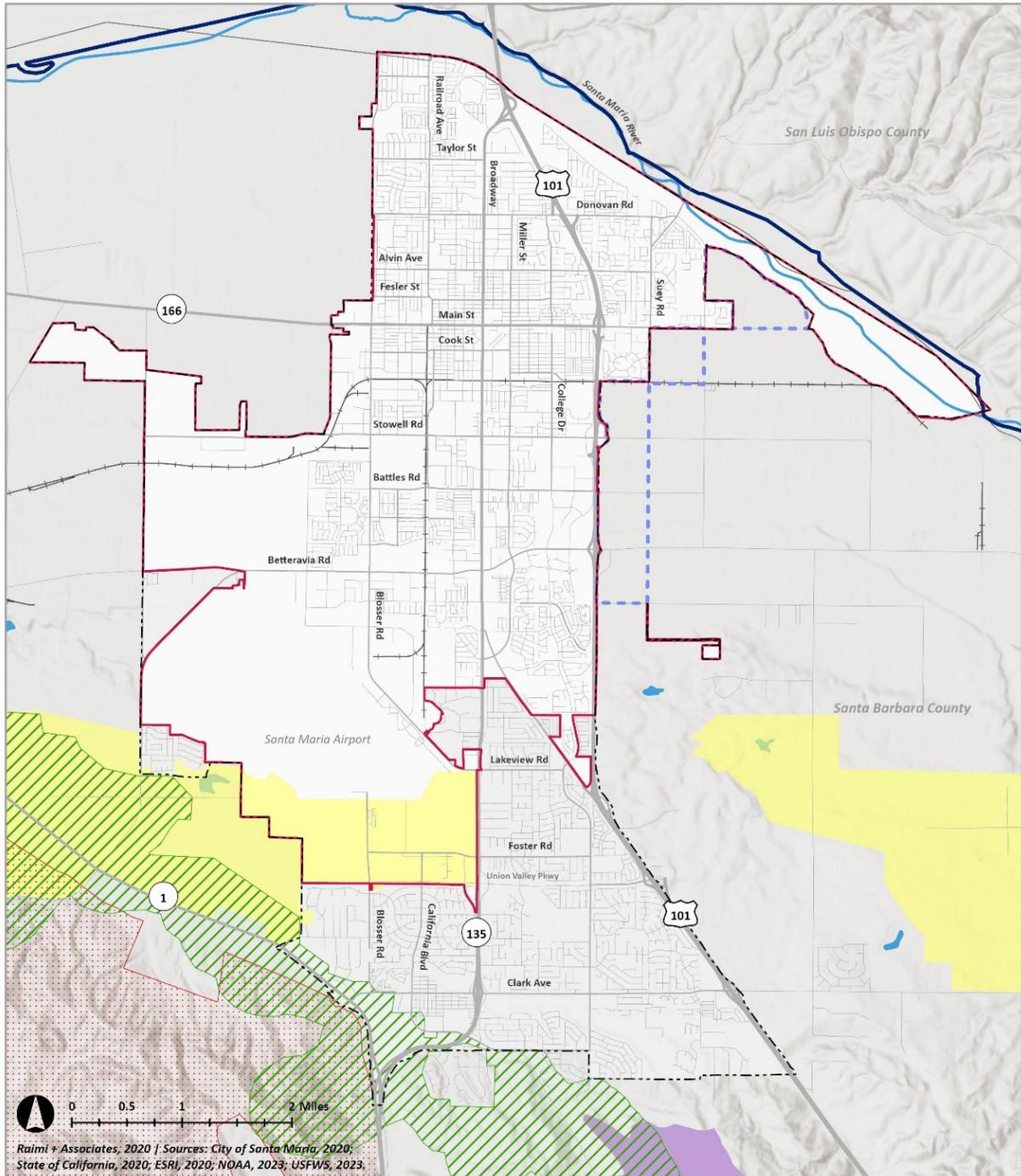
Los Padres National Forest

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



Santa Maria River

Figure COS-3: Critical Habitat

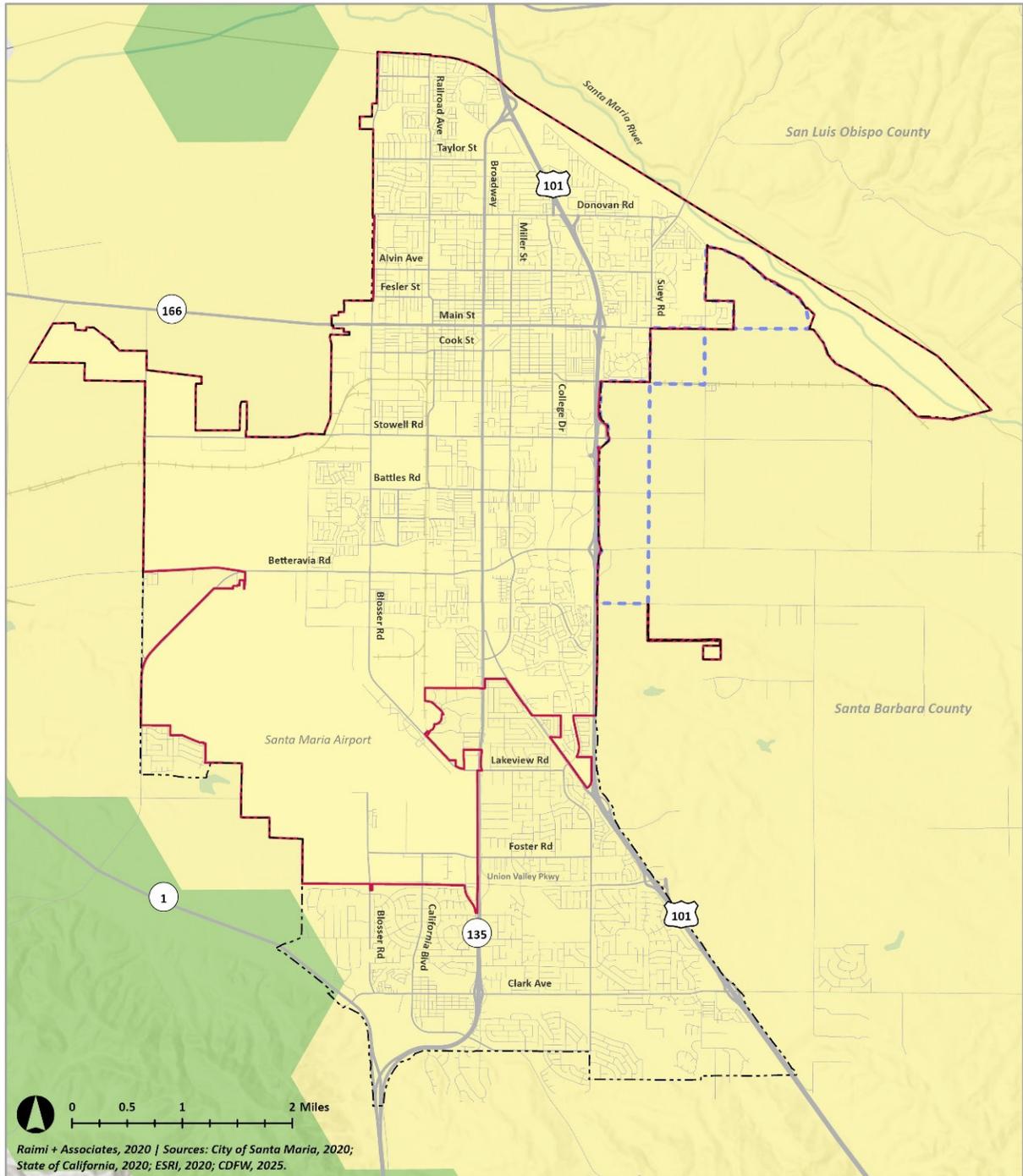


Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; NOAA, 2023; USFWS, 2023.



- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- County Boundaries
- Railroads
- Freeways and Highways
- Santa Maria River
- Critical Habitat**
- Steelhead
- California red-legged frog
- California tiger Salamander
- La Graciosa thistle
- Lompoc yerba santa

Figure COS-4: Wildlife Connectivity



Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; CDFW, 2025.



- 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
-
- Wildlife Connectivity**
 - Connections with Implementation Flexibility
 - Limited Connectivity Opportunity

Urban Forest

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



Residential neighborhood with mature Street Trees.



Credit: Rebecca Carey



Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) Veteran's Memorial Hall, Santa Maria, CA

Credit: Rebecca Carey

BENEFITS OF TREES IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH



CLEANER AIR

Trees absorb pollutants and filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and bark.



CONNECTING WITH NEIGHBORS

Trees can encourage civic pride while tree plantings provide opportunities for community involvement.



RAINWATER CAPTURE

Trees capture rainfall, recharging groundwater supplies and help prevent stormwater from carrying pollutants to the ocean.



SHADE

Trees cool cities by up to 10°F and shaded areas can be 20-40°F cooler than peak temperatures.



SAVING ENERGY

Shade trees can lower air-conditioning costs 56% annually, burning fewer fossil fuels.



BEAUTY

Trees add character to city streets and residential areas as they radiate with colors, flowers, textures, and shapes.



FRESH FOOD

Trees provide food in the form of fruits, nuts, leaves, bark, and roots.



WILDLIFE HABITAT

Trees support the lives of many wildlife and insect species and provide them with food, shelter, and nesting sites.

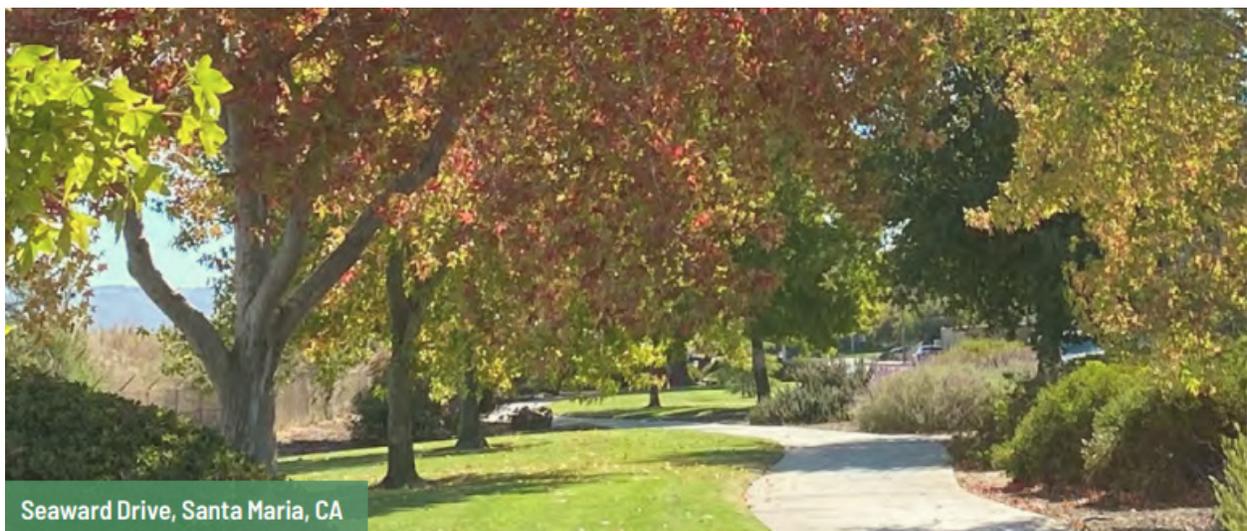


HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Trees improve mental health and public health by decreasing respiratory illnesses and encouraging outdoor recreation.



Source: Santa Maria Urban Forest Management Plan.



Seaward Drive, Santa Maria, CA

Credit: Rebecca Carey

Water Resources

Surface Water

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

Surface Water Quality

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

Groundwater Basin

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

Groundwater Quality

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

Air Quality and GHG Emissions

Air Quality

Santa Maria is located in the Santa Barbara portion of the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB), which is under the jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBCAPCD). While the SBCAPCD monitors criteria air pollutant levels in Santa Barbara County, the air quality monitoring station in Santa Maria is owned and operated by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Santa Maria has the highest exceedances of small particulate matter (less than 10 microns in diameter, or PM₁₀) in the county, and the second highest annual mean PM₁₀ concentrations. The main source of airborne particulate is local agricultural uses but may also include fugitive dust generated by the Oceano-Nipomo Dunes. The primary sources of toxic air contaminants (TACs) in Santa Maria include gas stations and industrial uses in the eastern portion of the city. While regional air quality has dramatically improved since the 1990s, long-term conditions may shift due to climate change, which could increase pollutants (e.g., smoke from a wildfire event).

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

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

Historic and Cultural Resources

Historic District and Landmarks

The City of Santa Maria adopted the Historic Overlay District to encourage the preservation of local landmarks and objects of historical merit through flexible development standards. The City's Municipal Code defines objects of historical merit as places, sites, buildings, structures, or works of art that have special historical, aesthetic, or cultural value, according to the Recreation and Parks Commission. Historical landmarks are places, sites, buildings, structures, or works of art with historical, cultural, aesthetic, or special character or interest for the general public, and are at least 50 years old, and are approved by the City Council. As of January 2019, four parcels on Broadway (SR-135) are within the Historic Overlay District, and 36 landmarks and objects of historical merit are located between Liberty Street and El Camino Colegio. Buildings in these areas generally consist of California mission architecture. Santa Maria's historic resources¹ illustrate the community's history and culture; redevelopment on sites with historic resources and the aging of these structures pose a risk of damage or loss of these resources.

Archaeological, Paleontological, and Tribal Cultural Resources

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

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



Santa Maria City Hall, City Historical Landmark Number 7



Buena Vista Park, City Historical Landmark Number 1



Santa Maria Inn, City Historical Landmark Number 6



Ruben Hart Residence, City Historical Landmark Number 4

Issues and Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Credit: Rebecca Carey

Conservation and Open Space Policies

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

Policy Summary

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

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

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

Policy Framework

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

² Please see the Circulation Element for additional active transportation policies and actions.

³ Please see the Safety Element for additional natural cooling policies and actions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



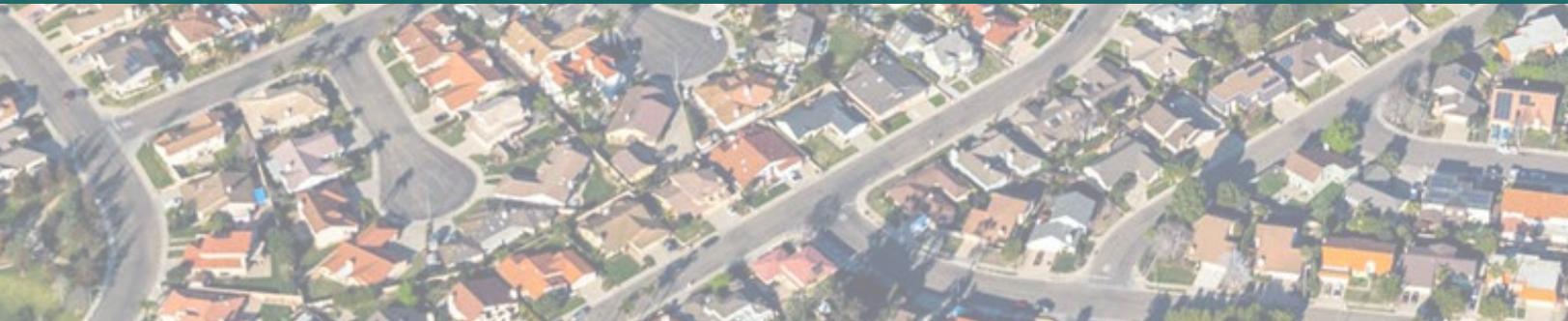
Santa Maria
General Plan

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Noise Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

The Noise Element is one of the required elements of the General Plan and aims to minimize community exposure to excessive noise, particularly for noise-sensitive land uses and during nighttime hours.

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

The Noise Policies guide land use planning to mitigate noise impacts in areas of higher noise exposure. Specifically, policies address current and anticipated noise impacts, with specific consideration for sensitive land uses such as residences, schools, and hospitals.



Examples of noise-sensitive uses in Santa Maria including a multi-family residential development (top left, top right), Liberty Elementary School (bottom left), and Marian Regional Medical Center (bottom right). Credits: Raimi & Associates, Homes.com, KSBY, respectively.



Automobile traffic on Broadway is a source of noise in the city.

Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Noise Policies.

Noise Ordinance

The Santa Maria Municipal Code contains requirements related to noise in Title 5 Chapter 5-5 and Title 12 Chapter 12. These regulations establish ambient noise level limits within residential, commercial, and industrial zones and provide a baseline framework for actions developers should take to mitigate anticipated noise concerns.

Measuring Noise Levels

Sound is commonly measured in decibels (dB). Noise levels referenced in the Noise Ordinance and this Element are measured in A-weighted decibels (dBA), which are frequency-adjusted to reflect the sensitivity of the human ear, unless otherwise noted. Additional noise level measurements commonly used and referred to in this Element include Community Noise Level Equivalent (CNEL) and equivalent energy level (Leq). CNEL measures the average sound level during a 24-hour period and incorporates adjustments for noise occurring during the evening and nighttime to account for increased sensitivity to noise during these times. CNEL is typically used to evaluate long-term noise exposure, such noise levels for airports, highways, and neighborhoods. Leq measurements consist of a single value used to represent varying noise levels over a specified period of time and is commonly used to measure traffic and construction noise.

Noise-Sensitive Land Uses

Certain land use types are especially sensitive to noise disturbance due to the nature of their use. The Noise Policies define noise-sensitive land uses as residential (single and multi-family dwellings, mobile home parks, dormitories, and similar uses); hospitals, nursing homes, convalescent hospitals and other facilities for long-term medical care; and public or private educational facilities, libraries, and churches.

The Santa Maria Municipal Code Section 5-5.09 requires that a permit be obtained from the Noise Control Officer to cover short-term construction activities within 500 feet of a residential zone that would exceed the City's noise standards, set in Santa Maria Municipal Code Section 5-5.05.

Noise Sources

Stationary Noise

Stationary noise sources contribute to the ambient noise environment only in their immediate vicinity. Examples include heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, loading docks, machinery, and commercial activity associated with restaurants, bars, outdoor dining, and parking garages and lots. Stationary noise can be generated by any land use, although industrial and commercial activities typically generate the highest noise levels.

Residences and schools typically generate lower noise levels, and the sources are often intermittent. Residential noise sources include landscaping, maintenance activities, and HVAC systems. Schools can generate enough noise through outdoor activities on both weekdays and weekends to elevate ambient noise levels. Commercial manufacturing, industrial plants, and agriculture operations generate stationary noise at their facilities. These operations are primarily located near the airport and in other concentrated areas away from noise-sensitive land uses to achieve acceptable noise levels and maintain land use compatibility.

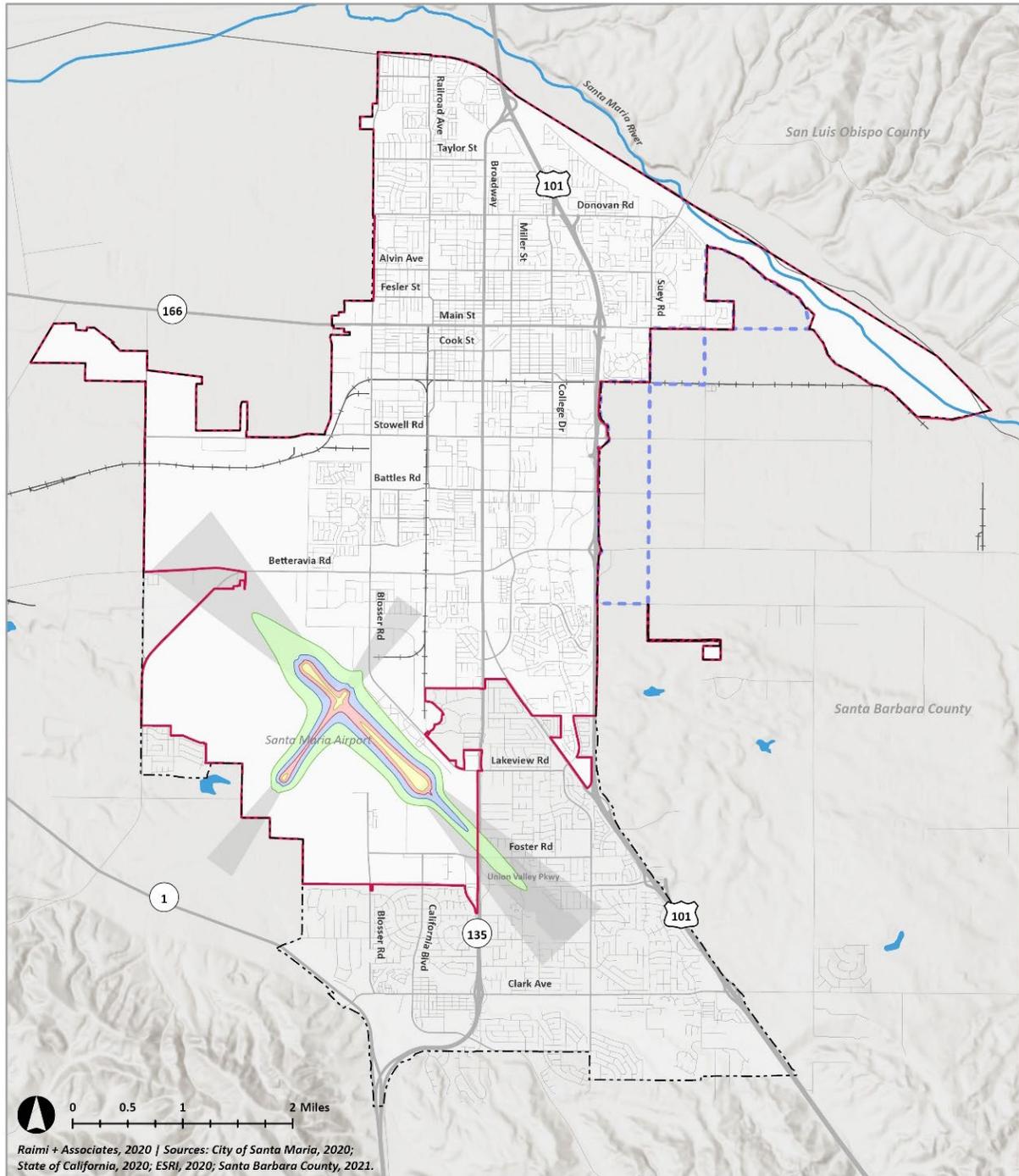
Vehicle Traffic Noise

Traffic noise from motor vehicles driving along roadways can be disruptive because it often creates a sustained noise level, even if the noise generated by a single vehicle does not seem significant. The level of noise can depend on the type of vehicle and its engine, speed of traffic, pavement type and texture, and distance from the roadway. In Santa Maria, roadway noise is a significant source of noise, particularly along major travel corridors such as U.S. 101, Broadway (SR-135), and Main Street (SR-166). Other major roadways that generate substantial noise in the city include Miller Street, Blosser Road, Skyway Drive, Donovan Road, Stowell Road, and Betteravia Road. Noise-sensitive residential uses are located along and near these major arterial roadways.

Air Traffic Noise

The Santa Maria Public Airport, located in the southern portion of the city, is a major source of noise in the area. The airport has two runways and provides facilities for commuter airlines, as well as flight instruction, aircraft rental and repair, and refueling services. The Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) has noise policies to address noise compatibility of land uses within the Airport's noise contour zones. Noise-sensitive uses, including residential development, schools, and hospitals, are generally prohibited in the 65 to 75+ dB CNEL (Community Noise Equivalent Level) contour zones. As shown in Figure N-1, the 65-75+ dB CNEL noise contour zones are located within airport property, but the 60-65 CNEL noise contour extends past the airport property and overlaps with residential uses southeast of the airport.

Figure N-1: Airport Noise Contours



Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; Santa Barbara County, 2021.



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Current Santa Maria City Limits |  | Flight Approach |
|  | Current Sphere of Influence |  | Airport Existing Noise Contours – |
|  | Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence |  | Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) |
|  | County Boundaries |  | 60-65 CNEL |
|  | Railroads |  | 65-70 CNEL (Hazard III Zone) |
|  | Freeways and Highways |  | 70-75 CNEL |
|  | Santa Maria River |  | 75+ CNEL |

Rail Traffic Noise

Railway operations generate a localized source of noise along the railway corridor. However, noise from rail operations, for both goods and passengers, is primarily regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which sets and enforces safety standards that include noise for cabs, bells, and horns. The privately owned Santa Maria Valley Railroad provides daily freight service and consists of 14 miles of mainline track from Guadalupe to Santa Maria. This includes two railways with one route through the city: one from east to west along Jones Street and Stowell Road, and one from north to south, parallel to Depot Street. These trains are restricted to a speed of 10 miles per hour through the city. Transload facilities are located at 1599 A Street and the Betteravia Industrial Park on Betteravia Road.

Construction Noise

Construction activity can generate substantial short-term increases in noise levels within the vicinity. Each phase of demolition and construction has its own noise characteristics; some may generate substantial intermittent noise levels from high-impact activities like pile-driving, while others may generate high continuous noise levels, depending on the type and amount of equipment used. Noise levels from individual pieces of construction equipment range from 76 to 101 dBA Leq (Equivalent Energy Level) at 50 feet, and nearby noise-sensitive receivers may find this disruptive.



Noise generated from the construction of a housing development.

Other Noise Sources

Other sources of noise in the city may include amplified noise from events, such as those held at the fairgrounds. Amplified noise is sound magnified in volume by amplification devices such as radios, televisions, loudspeakers, stereos, megaphones, and public address systems. This type of noise is usually associated with social gatherings in residential areas and large events held in public spaces (schools, parks, restaurants, music/event venues). Although these events tend to occur more frequently in summer months, amplified noise from school speakers, drive-through restaurant speakers, and daily recreational activities can contribute to ambient noise levels throughout the year. Amplified noise levels can range from approximately 65 dBA Lmax (Maximum Sound Level) at 30 feet for drive-through restaurant speakers to approximately 90 to 100 dBA at outdoor festivals.

The Santa Barbara County fairgrounds are located near the center of the city and operate year-round to hold both public and private events beyond the fair itself. The amplified sound produced at these events can be a temporary source of amplified noise near noise-sensitive land uses (e.g., schools and residences). Other land uses like car washes or industrial areas that use loud equipment, such as air blowers, pumps and shredders, are also a localized source of noise in the city.

Additionally, noise from operations at the nearby Vandenberg Space Force Base continues to impact many communities on the Central Coast, including Santa Maria. Launch noise and subsequent sonic booms can be heard throughout the city and central coast region.

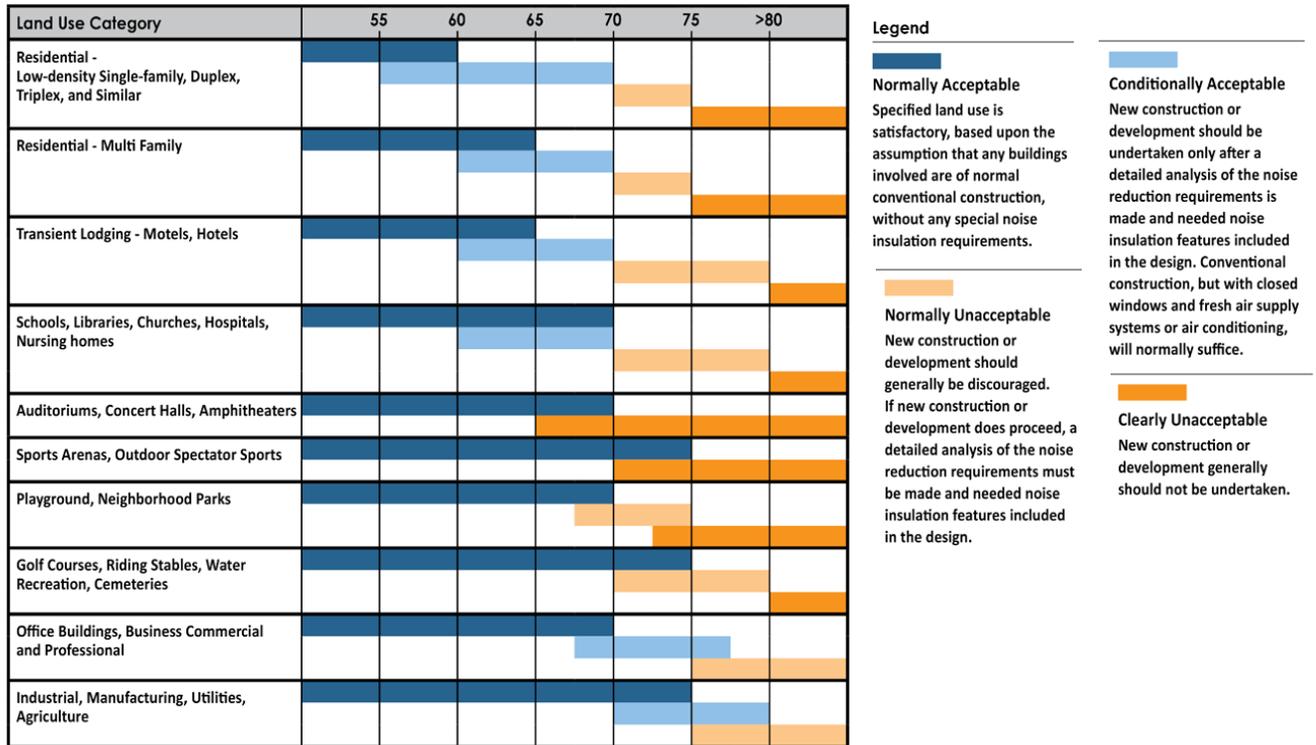


Santa Barbara County Fair at the Santa Maria Fairpark. Credit: Santa Maria Fairpark.

Community Noise and Land Use Compatibility

The California Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), previously the Office of Planning and Research, created guidelines specifying acceptable community noise levels for various land uses (see Figure N-2). Residential uses have the lowest acceptable noise levels, while uses such as sports areas and industrial, manufacturing, and agricultural uses have the highest acceptable noise levels.

Figure N-2: Community Noise and Land Use Compatibility Guidelines (shown in CNEL, dB)



Source: General Plan Guidelines, California Office of Planning and Research 2017

Vibration Sources

Typical vibration sources in Santa Maria include construction activities, railroad operations, and heavy manufacturing. Areas near the airport may also experience air and ground-borne vibration. The City of Santa Maria has not adopted standards to limit vibration in the city.

Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the policy direction of the Noise Policies.

Noise-sensitive land use planning. Noise-sensitive land uses, such as residential areas, require proactive protections to preserve the community's quality of life. The City establishes noise standards and addresses potential land use compatibility and noise mitigation through the Santa Maria Public ALUCP and the City's Noise Ordinance. Continued refinement of these regulations will ensure new development remains compatible with community expectations and environmental conditions.

Transportation noise. Major transportation corridors such as US-101, Broadway, and Main Street, along with rail and airport operations, generate noise that can affect adjacent neighborhoods. As these roadways, railroads, and the airport continue operating, enhancing existing noise regulation and mitigation efforts and planning for future transportation infrastructure will continue to help reduce noise impacts and preserve quality of life.

Construction noise. Ongoing development and infrastructure improvements have the potential to generate noise that may be disruptive to nearby sensitive land uses, especially during nighttime construction activities, which can be particularly obtrusive to residents. The City requires approvals for nighttime construction, and all construction is required to comply with noise regulations within the City's Noise Ordinance. Strengthening development standards and enforcement mechanisms can provide greater clarity on when the City should approve such nighttime construction noise and enhance mitigation efforts that would benefit nearby noise-sensitive land uses.

Vibration mitigation. Construction activities, along with railroad and airport operations, may generate ground-borne vibration that can damage buildings and disturb sensitive land uses. The California Environmental Quality Act requires both programmatic and project-level documents to evaluate whether proposed activities could result in ground-borne vibration impacts and their potential effects on noise-sensitive land uses. However, the City has not established local regulations to address vibration. Cumulative impacts from ongoing construction, rail freight, and airplanes could lead to vibration concerns. Therefore, identifying areas with higher exposure to vibration sources and implementing best practices to mitigate potential impacts will help maintain a healthy and livable environment.



Housing abutting main corridors is often impacted by transportation noise.

Noise Policies

The Noise Policies address the key issues and opportunities identified above and create a comprehensive roadmap for the management and mitigation of noise and vibration impacts.

The *Standards and Diagrams* section defines regulatory requirements. Standards establish levels of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied, while diagrams visually illustrate the intent or application of specific policies.

The *Policy Framework* section outlines Noise goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Noise Element are centered on preventing noise impacts on nearby sensitive land uses through the proper placement of new noise-generating activities (Goal N-1), mitigating noise disturbances from transportation sources (Goal N-2), enhancing City noise regulations to alleviate noise impacts from construction activities (Goal N-3), and minimizing disruptions from ground-borne vibration (Goal N-4).

Standards and Diagrams

Noise-Sensitive Land Uses

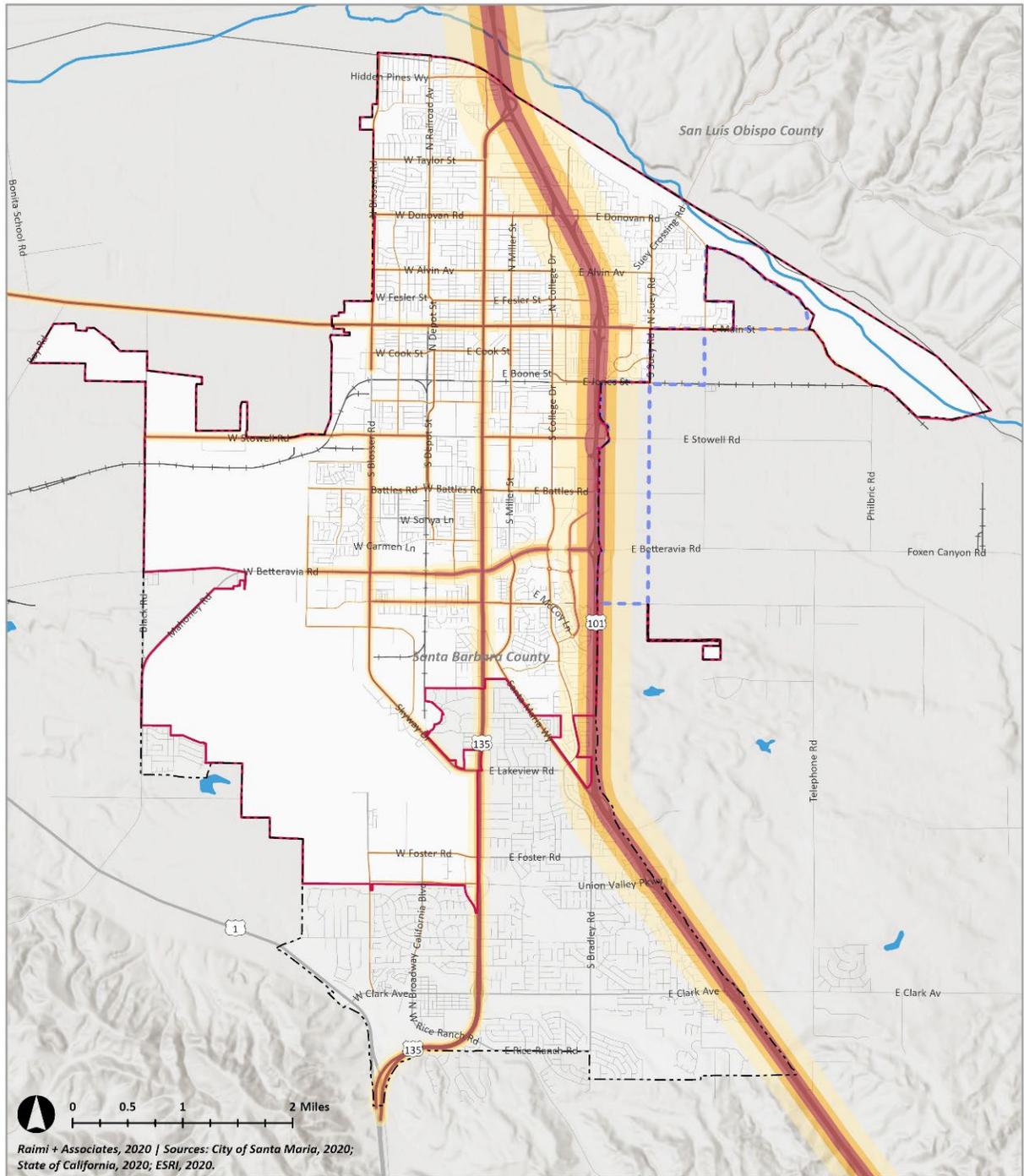
Noise-sensitive land uses include residential (single and multi-family dwellings, mobile home parks, dormitories, and similar uses); hospitals, nursing homes, convalescent hospitals, and other facilities for long-term medical care; and public or private educational facilities, libraries, and churches.

Noise Contours

The City's noise contour map identifies noise levels for different areas within the city, showcasing areas where noise impacts may affect land use compatibility. This map guides planning decisions that minimize noise exposure to residents (see Figure N-3).

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.

Figure N-3: Existing Noise Contour Map



Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



- 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

Policy Framework

Goal N-1: Compatible land uses. Land uses are planned to provide a harmonious environment by considering the compatibility of adjacent uses.

Policy N-1.1: Placement of noise-generating uses. Regulate the placement and construction of new noise-generating uses to avoid excessive noise impacts on adjacent noise-sensitive land uses, as defined in the Standards and Diagrams section above.¹

Action N-1.1.1: Incorporate into the Noise Ordinance the definition of noise-sensitive land uses and the noise contours map (see Figure N-3) to reference when reviewing development applications. If possible, do not locate known noise-generating sources adjacent to noise-sensitive uses, or require appropriate mitigation if adjacent location is unavoidable.

Action N-1.1.2: Establish land use compatibility guidelines for community noise to determine which types of land use categories are generally considered compatible with the ambient decibel levels by most communities. Reference or incorporate LCI's Community Noise and Land Use Compatibility table (see Figure N-2).

Policy N-1.2: Interior and exterior noise standards. Require development proposals to meet the interior and exterior noise standards specified in the Santa Maria Municipal Code.²

Action N-1.2.1: Require applicants to provide a noise study for projects requiring discretionary review to determine if they will generate noise that would exceed the allowable noise levels for adjacent noise-sensitive land uses. Require applicants to implement appropriate mitigation measures to meet acceptable noise levels established by the Noise Ordinance.

Action N-1.2.2: Promote federal, State, and regional financial incentives and funding programs for noise mitigation retrofits—such as soundproof windows, improved insulation, and acoustic barriers—of existing buildings that are located in areas of high traffic noise or incompatible adjacent land uses.

Policy N-1.3: Noise compatible land uses. Identify current and planned noise-generating commercial manufacturing and industrial businesses within the city and the Santa Maria Valley. Consider these plans when making land use planning decisions to prevent potential future noise conflicts.

Action N-1.3.1: Establish bi-annual meetings with the Santa Maria Public Airport and the Santa Maria Valley Railroad to collaboratively discuss upcoming planning, projects, and expansions that may impact overall operations or community wellbeing.

¹ Please see the Recreation and Parks, Circulation, Land Use, and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for policies and actions related to land use conflicts.

² Please see the Land Use and Safety Elements for additional policies and actions related to building design.

Action N-1.3.2: Consider potential noise conflicts in short- and long-term plans for the Santa Maria Public Airport and Santa Maria Valley Railroad, as well as when reviewing development applications involving noise-generating uses.

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.

Policy N-1.5: Ongoing evaluation and update of Noise Ordinance. Regularly evaluate and update the Noise Ordinance to ensure alignment with current best practices, compatibility with ongoing planning and development efforts, and community needs.

Action N-1.5.1: Conduct assessments of the Noise Ordinance at least once every five years to identify areas for improvement based on modern standards, emerging urban development trends, and stakeholder feedback, ensuring alignment with broader development goals.

Action N-1.5.2: Regularly update and post resources on the City's official website to inform residents about the City's noise regulations, including permissible noise levels and reporting mechanisms.

Goal N-2: Transportation noise. Noise impacts from traffic and other transportation-related activities are minimized or mitigated.

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 US-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 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.

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.

Policy N-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-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. Project-specific environmental documents may adjust recommended noise reduction measures as necessary to respond to site-specific conditions.

Action N-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 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.

Goal N-3: Temporary and construction noise. Noise from temporary sources and construction activities is minimized to the greatest extent possible.

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-3.1.1: 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-3.1.2: 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-3.1.3: Update the Noise Ordinance to require the use of mufflers on construction equipment and maintain physical separation of machinery maintenance areas from nearby residential uses.

Goal N-4: Vibration. The impacts of excessive ground-borne vibration from temporary and ongoing operations are limited.

Policy N-4.1: Vibration reduction for noise-sensitive land uses. Reduce vibration impacts to noise-sensitive land uses and prevent building damage.

Action 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.



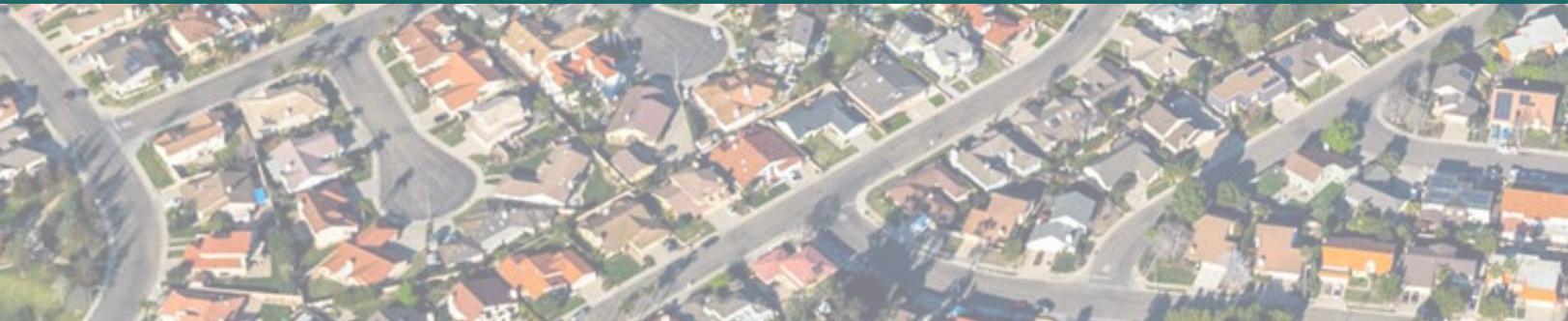
Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



Safety Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

The Safety Element is one of the required elements of the General Plan, focusing on identifying and mitigating hazards that may affect the city, with the goal of minimizing risk to people and property.

The Safety Element addresses risks associated with seismic and geologic hazards, wildland and urban fires, flood and dam inundation, hazardous materials and solid waste, airport hazards, and climate change. In addition, the Element highlights the City's emergency response and preparedness capabilities, and emergency access and evacuation capacity.

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

The Safety Element illustrates how Santa Maria will maintain and strengthen essential infrastructure and emergency services to protect the community. It supports the establishment of robust development standards to better protect people and buildings in hazard zones and retrofitting existing structures to withstand potential hazard events. The Element also encourages coordinated planning efforts among local and regional entities and promotes diverse community education programs to ensure the City can continue to mitigate hazard risks and provide efficient emergency response services.



Santa Maria Fire Department Station No. 5



Santa Maria Police Department



Santa Maria Police vehicle

Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Safety Policies.

Hazards

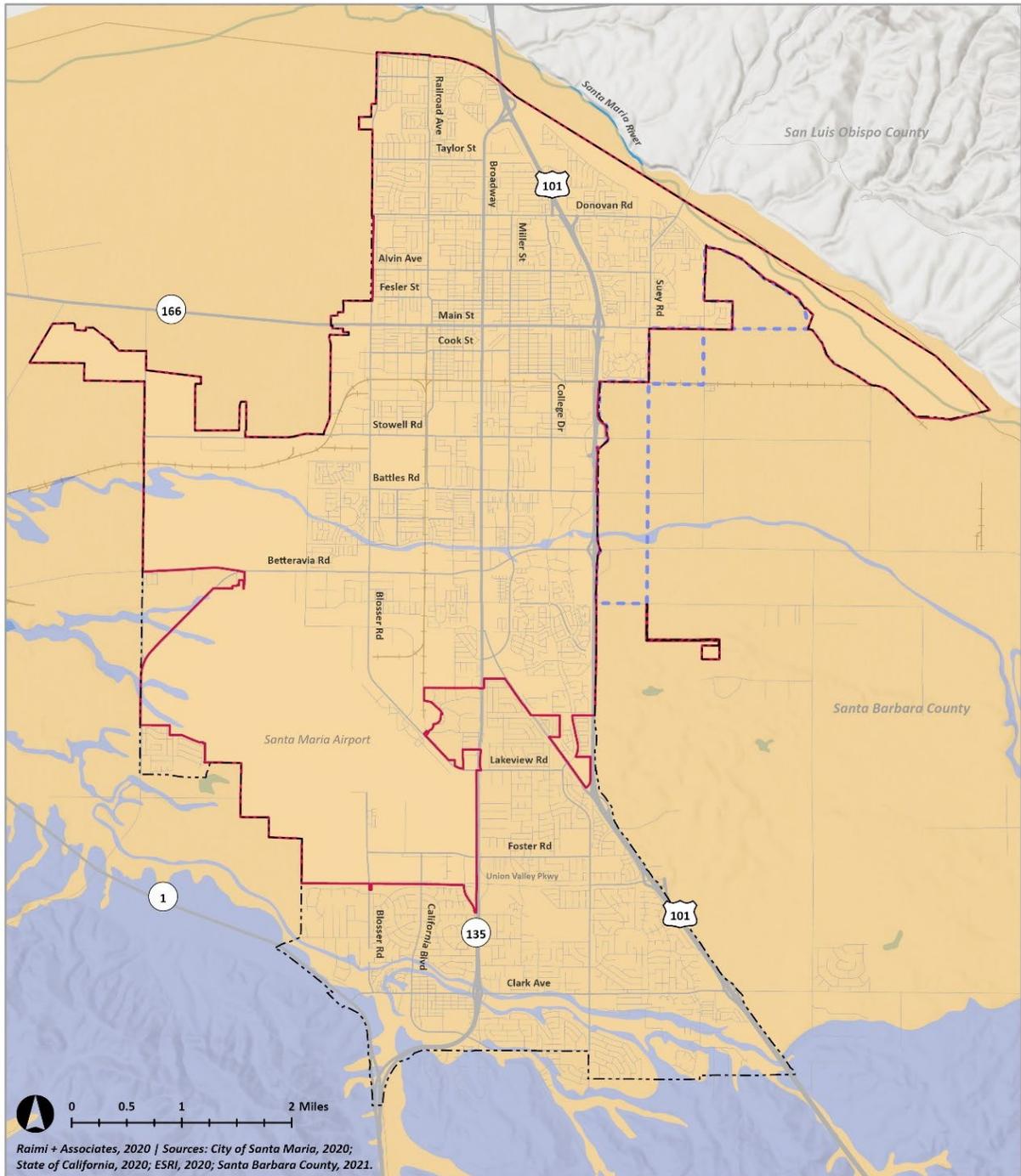
Seismic and Geologic Hazards

Although Santa Maria has a high risk for seismic hazards and a low risk of liquefaction, the complexity of the local geotechnical landscape and limited available historical data suggest that existing information may significantly underestimate the true level of risk. However, areas near the Santa Maria Public Airport do have potential for liquefaction due to perched groundwater in the area (see Figure S-1). There are several active faults in proximity to Santa Maria, including the Santa Maria Fault, the San Luis Range Fault (South Margin), the Bradley Canyon Fault, and the Casmalia Fault (see Figure S-2), although the risk of seismically induced ground rupture from these faults is expected to be minor. Significant ground shaking can occur from these and larger faults in the region due to the soil type in the Santa Maria Valley. Most areas within City limits are unlikely to have expansive soils; however, there are areas of the city that have the potential to be at risk to expansive soils, including areas near the northeastern and western city boundary and the Planned Annexation Area (see Figure S-3).



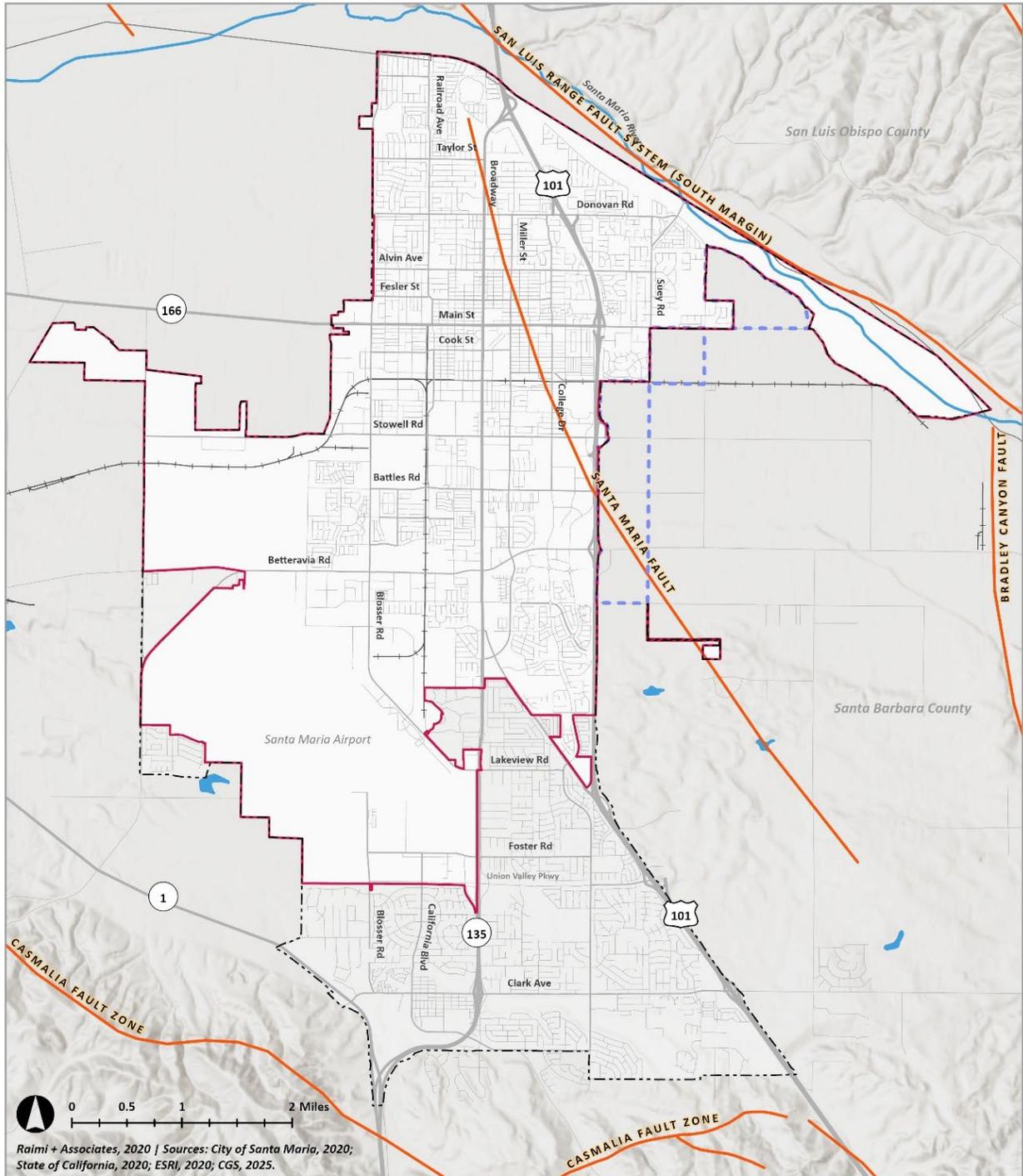
Earthquake causes major damage to roadway.

Figure S-1: Liquefaction Potential



- 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
- Groundwater Liquefaction**
- Low
- Moderate

Figure S-2: Earthquake Faults



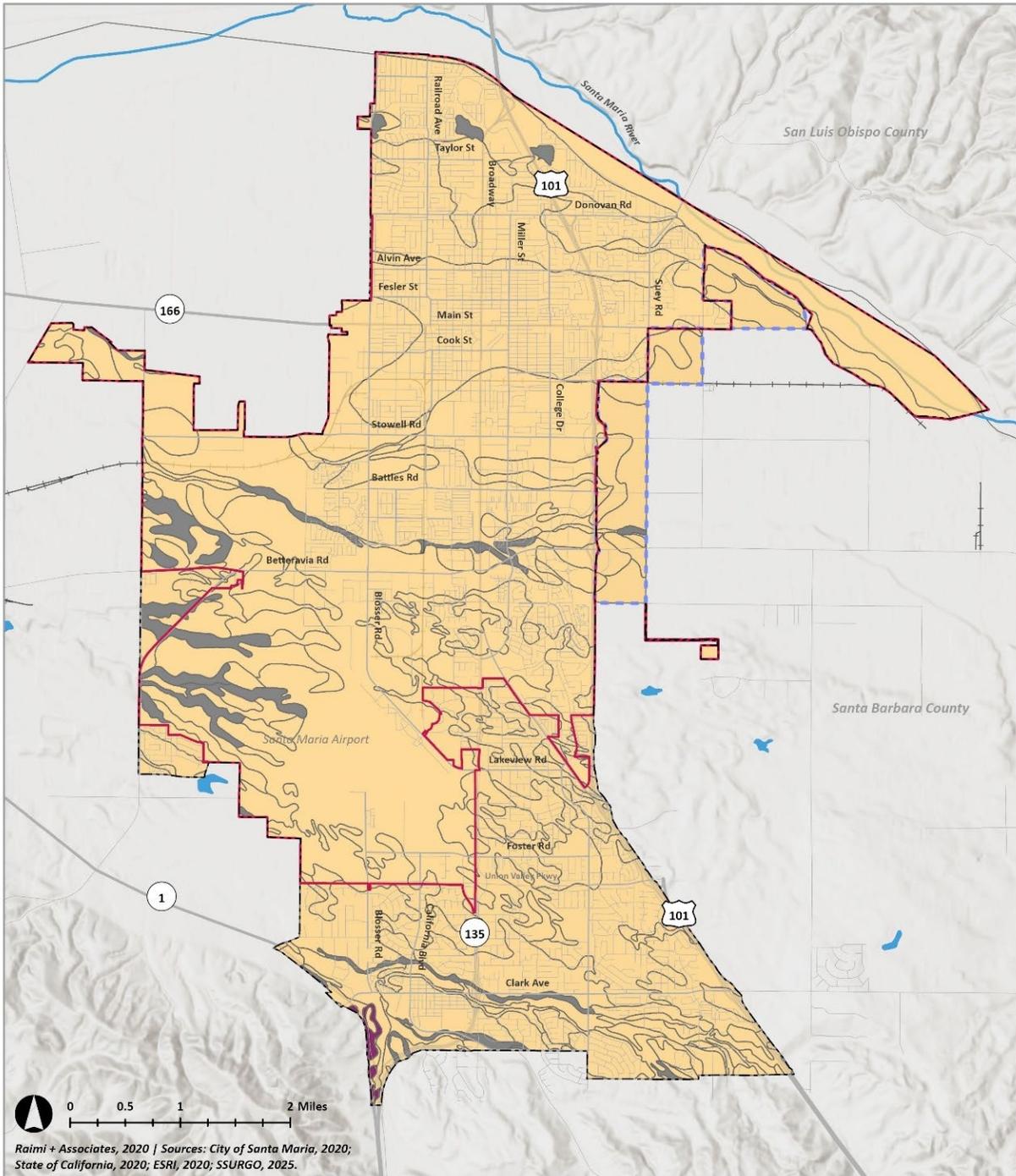
0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; CGS, 2025.



- 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
- Earthquake Faults

Figure S-3: Expansive Soils



Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; SSURGO, 2025.



- 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

- Expansive Soils ***
- Very Likely
 - Unlikely
 - Unknown

* Expansive soils were identified using representative clay content from SSURGO horizon data. Map units classified as "Very Likely" expansive have ≥40% clay, while those classified as "Unlikely" have <25% clay. This analysis is intended for planning and screening purposes only. Actual soil behavior may vary based on clay mineralogy, moisture conditions, and site-specific characteristics.

Wildland and Urban Fires

According to the City of Santa Maria Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, there is a low probability of wildland fires in the city (see Figure S-4). Santa Maria is surrounded by irrigated row crop farms and has not experienced a wildfire within or immediately adjacent to the city since the very early 20th Century. The most significant wildland fire hazards in Santa Maria are associated with the coastal sage scrub and grass-covered slopes in the Casmalia and Solomon Hills area, south of the City limits. While a large urban fire is rare, it has the potential to have greater adverse effects to property and life. Low humidity, high temperature and high wind events can cause an urban fire to spread rapidly, especially given the close proximity of buildings and the multiple ignition points commonly found in modern construction and landscaping.



Firefighters fighting a structure fire.

Flood and Dam Inundation

Santa Maria is exposed to a low risk of flood hazards related to Twitchell Dam, the Santa Maria River, levee breaches, and agricultural runoff; however, flat topography can result in localized incidents of flooding during rain events. The Santa Maria River Levee, originally constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1963 and heavily retrofitted in 2010, provides flood protection for the Santa Maria Valley and includes a system of levees along both sides of the river. Areas of the city within a 100-year flood zone are concentrated along the city's northern border, near the Santa Maria River. Areas within the 500-year flood zone are concentrated near Main Street (SR-166) and Orcutt Creek (see Figure S-5).



Credit: Noozhawk.com

The City's stormwater system has repeatedly been overwhelmed by winter storms, leading to flooding of roadways. Agricultural practices exacerbate local flood issues by causing pooling, reducing ground absorption, and blocking drainage systems. Furthermore, the increased frequency and intensity of storm events due to climate change will intensify existing flood issues throughout the city.

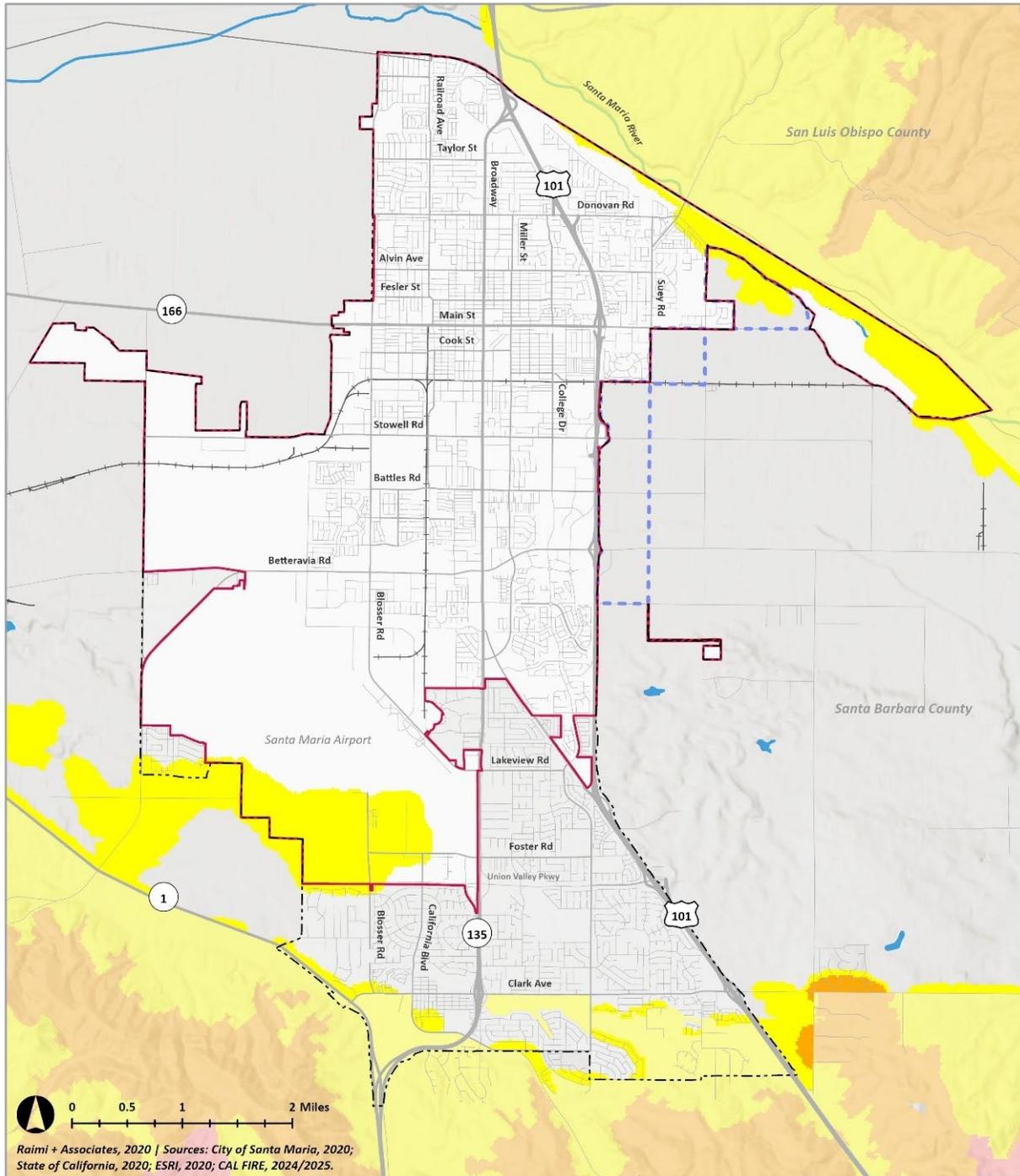


United States Geological Survey (USGS) technician measures streamflow in the Santa Maria River. Credit: USGS



Santa Maria River following the February 2024 rain events. Credit: KSBY

Figure S-4: Fire Hazard Severity Zones

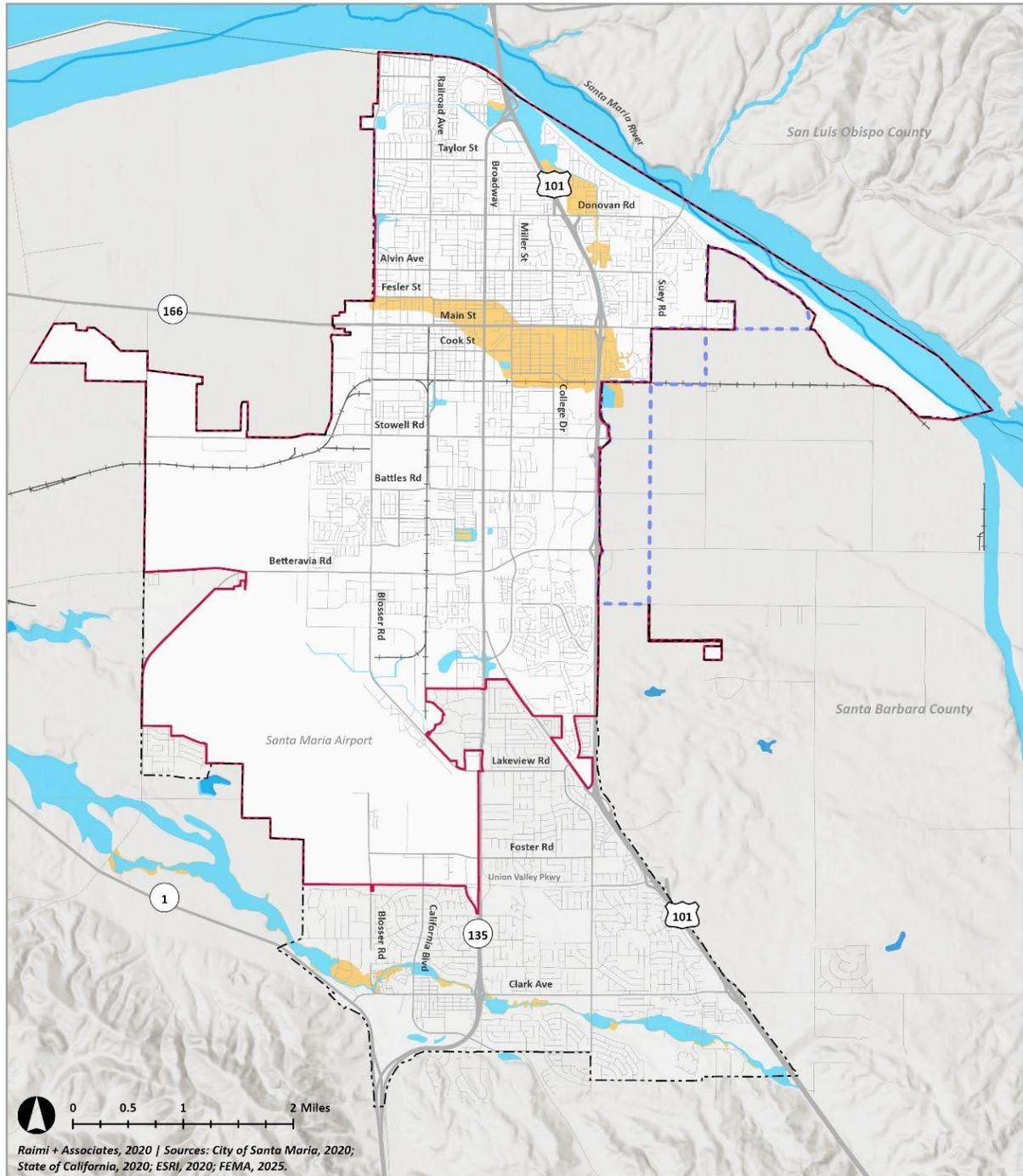


- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- County Boundaries
- Railroads
- Freeways and Highways
- Santa Maria River

- Fire Hazard Severity Zones by State Responsibility Areas (SRA)**
- Very High
 - High
 - Moderate

- Local Responsibility Areas (LRA)**
- High
 - Moderate

Figure S-5: 100-Year and 500-Year Flood Zones



- 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
- FEMA Floodplain**
- 100 Year Floodplain
- 500 Year Floodplain

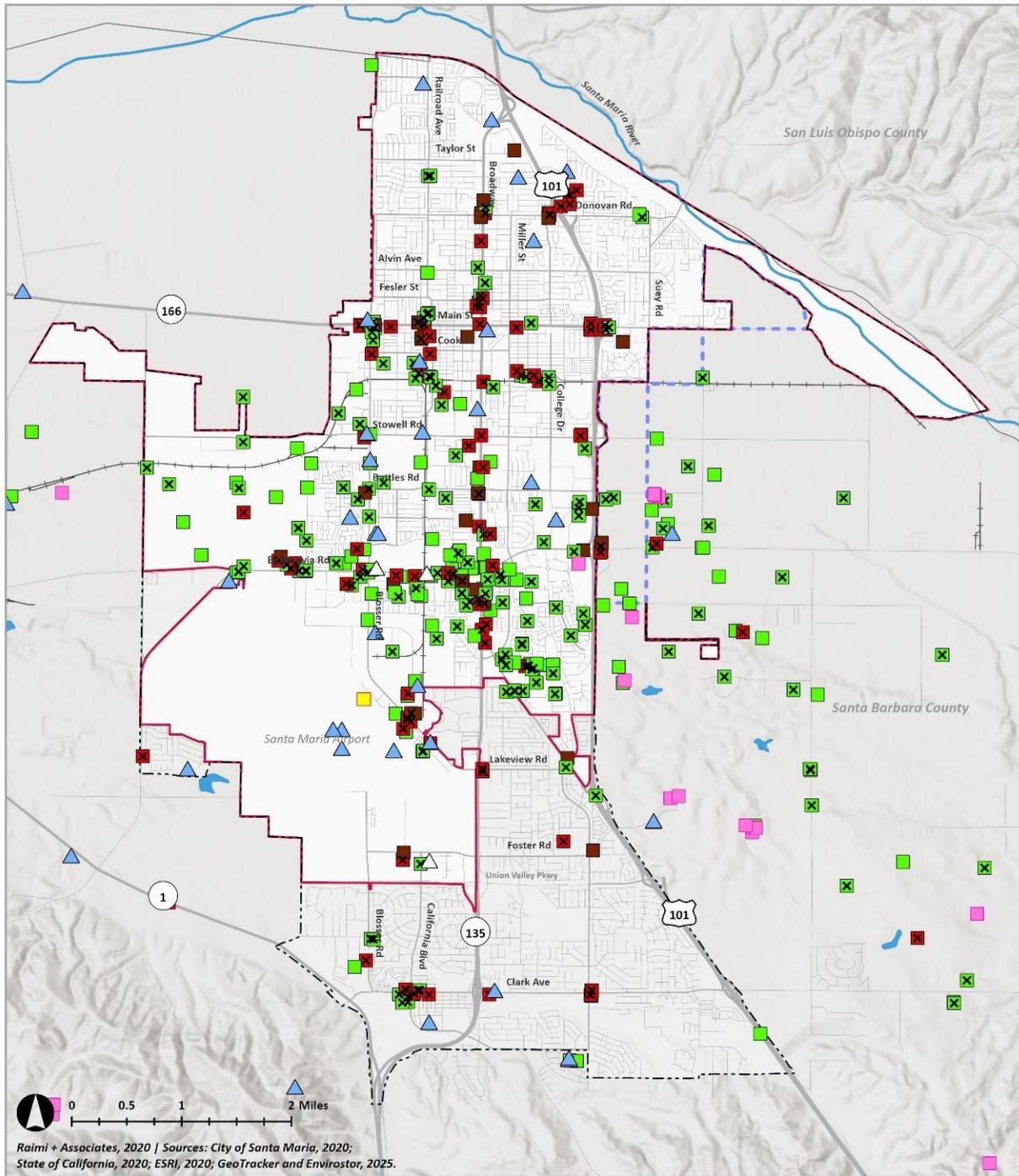
Hazardous Materials

Santa Maria has leaking underground storage tanks (LUST) sites and contaminated groundwater sites (see Figure S-6). Oil operations include an extensive network of oil and natural gas wells, primarily located near the city's southern edge and the Planned Annexation Area, presenting a potential risk for fire, explosion, and water supply contamination (see Figure S-7). Additional hazards are related to industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities that utilize or store hazardous and toxic chemicals; spills or mishandling of these materials can result in site contamination and illicit discharges to the stormwater drainage system, sewer system, and wastewater treatment plant. The transport of hazardous materials is also a potential hazard, as truck and railroad accidents along transportation routes could result in hazardous materials spills. Areas with the highest risk of hazardous materials accidents include major transportation routes (such as US-101 and SR-166), Betteravia Road, Blosser Road, railroads, and airport industrial zones.



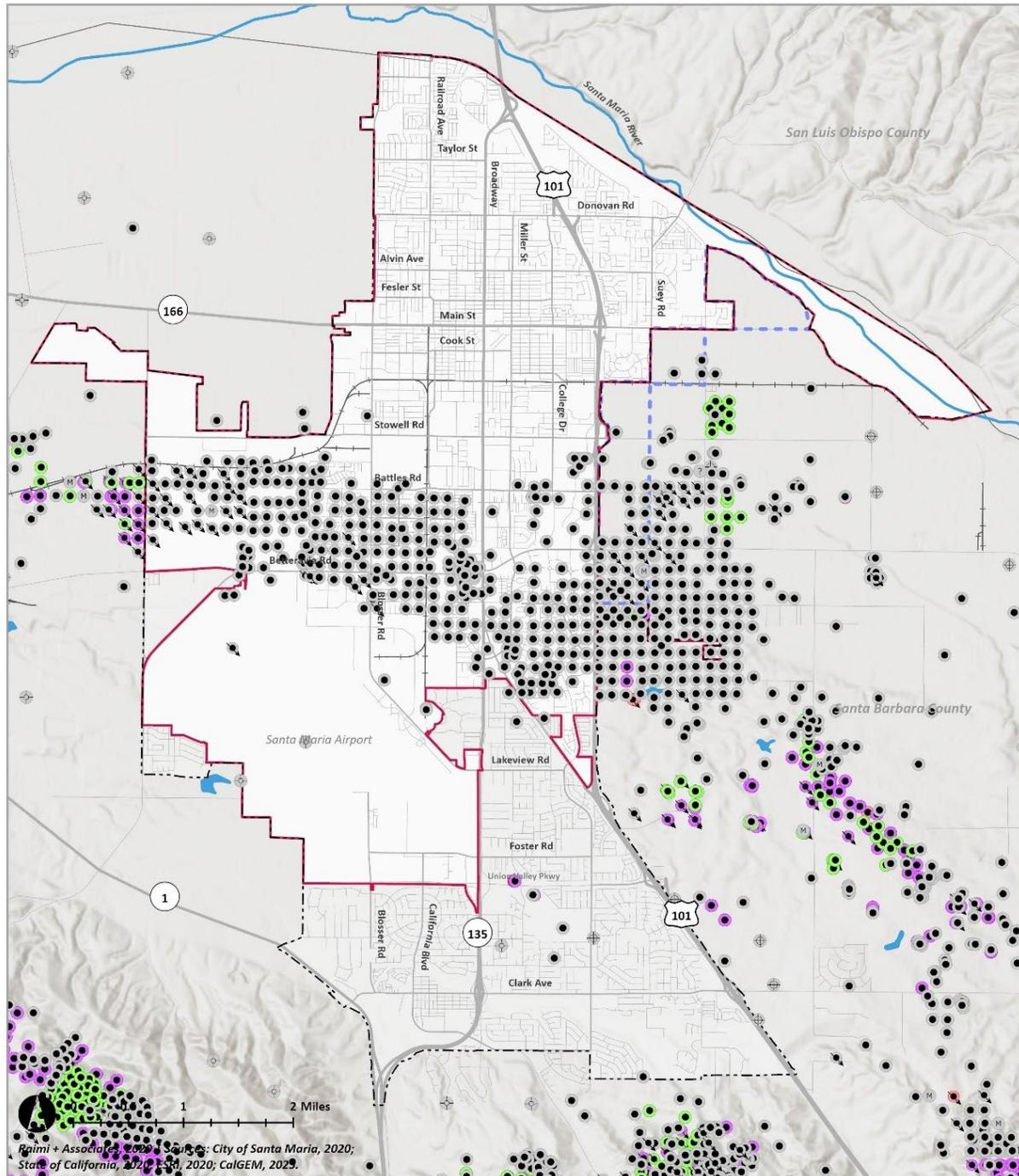
An abandoned underground storage tank is removed as part of the remediation process.

Figure S-6: Hazardous Materials Sites



- 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
- LUST Cleanup Site
- Cleanup Program Site
- Military Cleanup Site
- Permitted UST
- ▲ Envirostor Cleanup Site
- △ Envirostor Hazardous Waste Site
- Oil/Gas Sites
- × Signifies a Closed Site

Figure S-7: Oil and Natural Gas Network



Raimi + Associates, 2020; Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; CalGEM, 2023.



- 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
- Active Oil and Gas
- Active Injectors
- Canceled Oil and Gas
- Canceled Injectors
- Idle Oil and Gas
- Idle Injectors
- Active Oil and Gas
- Idle Water Source
- Plugged Oil and Gas
- Plugged Injectors
- Plugged well of Unknown type
- Plugged Multipurpose
- Plugged Dry Hole
- Plugged Core Hole

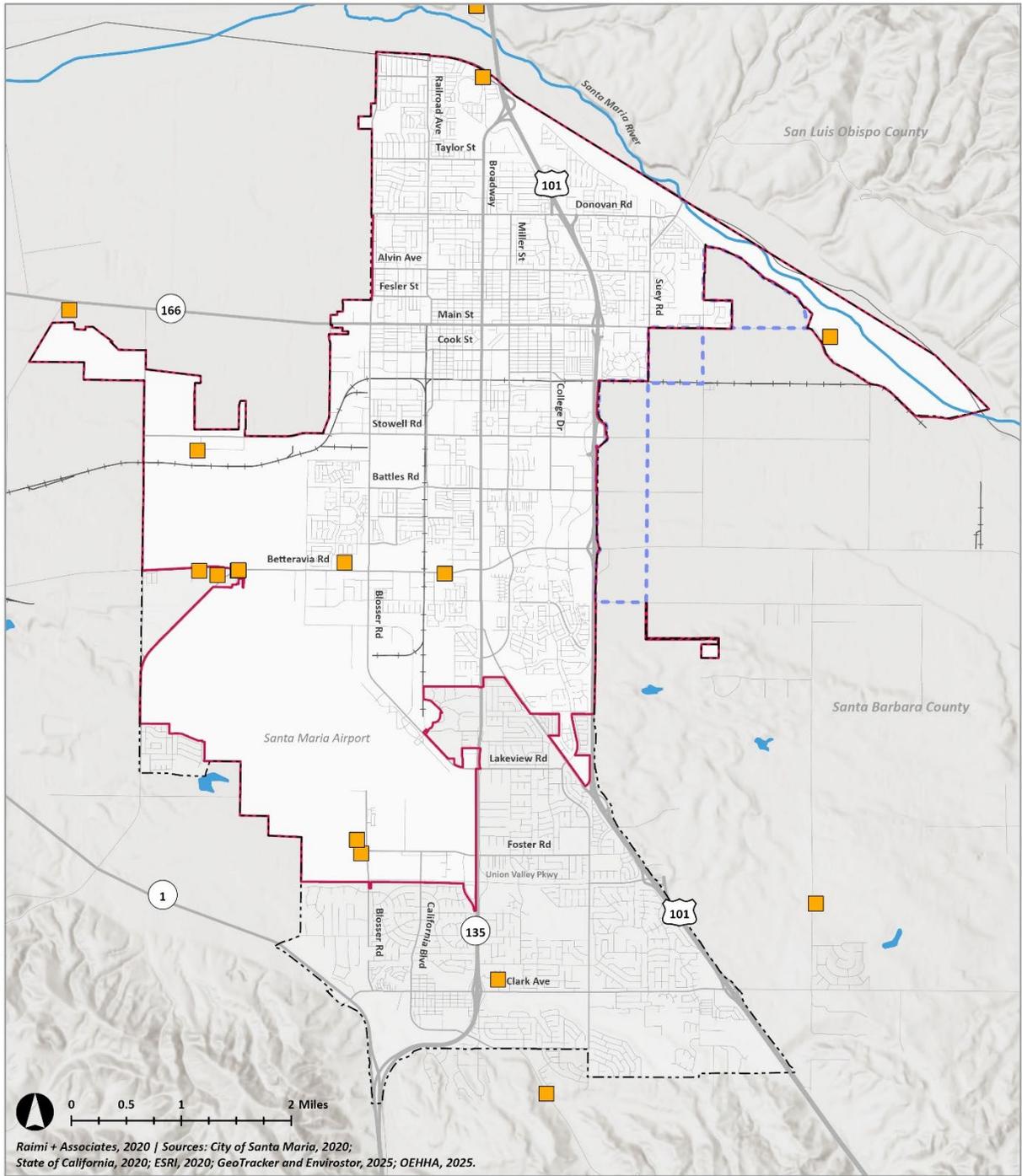
Solid Waste

Solid waste sites, including landfills, recycling facilities, transfer stations, and composting facilities, collect, process, and/or store household garbage and other types of waste from industry or commercial sources. There are three disadvantaged communities impacted by three regulated solid waste sites in the city: Santa Maria Regional landfill, Engel & Gray composting site, and the Santa Maria Recycle Facility (see Figure S-8). The City's former landfill is located at the site of Preisker Park. The landfill ceased operations in the 1950s and was converted to a 40-acre park which opened in 1968. In addition, other unidentified former waste sites may be located on former military sites outside City limits in areas. Potential odors, waste gases, and fires can all threaten the health and well-being of nearby residents.

Airport Hazards

The Santa Maria Public Airport is in the southwestern corner of Santa Maria. Airport hazards include those related to obstructing landing and approach zones, airplane accidents, and noise. Noise concerns related to the Santa Maria Airport are covered in the Noise Element. The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments' Airport Land Use Commission released an updated Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) for the Santa Maria Airport in 2023. The ALUCP provides land use compatibility policies and criteria to promote the orderly growth of the airport without significant impacts to the welfare of the community. The ALUCP includes airport safety zones, land use and development standards and policies, and overflight notification and real estate disclosure zones to mitigate safety hazards related to airport uses. The City's land use designations in the area of the Airport are consistent with the updated ALUCP; however, updates to the Airport area zoning designations may be necessary to maintain consistency between the ALUCP and the City's Zoning Ordinance.

Figure S-8: Solid Waste Sites



Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; GeoTracker and Envirostor, 2025; OEHHA, 2025.



- 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
- Solid Waste Facilities

Climate Change

Based on the findings in California’s Fourth Climate Change Assessment and the 5th National Climate Assessment, in the coming decades, Santa Maria will likely have increases in average maximum and minimum temperatures, increases in extreme heat events, changes in precipitation patterns, more severe storms, more urban flooding, more frequent and severe wildfires and associated poor air quality, and prolonged periods of drought.

Santa Maria is projected to experience more extreme heat conditions with an anticipated increase in the number of extreme days per year. This could result in increased public health risks, particularly to vulnerable populations like farm workers, through heat-related diseases, air quality degradation, more vector-borne illnesses, and an increase in harmful algal blooms.

Projections show that Santa Maria will likely experience fewer but more severe rainfall events, resulting in intense stormwater runoff that may overwhelm percolation ponds at the sewer and treatment facilities, and potentially adversely impact riverine and coastal water quality. Low-lying areas throughout the city may experience more frequent flooding and an increase in the extent of 100-year floods. The potential for flash flooding and debris flows, particularly after wildfires, will increase.

Climate change will also increase the likelihood of drought due to higher average temperatures and changes in precipitation. However, the specifics of projected drought conditions are not currently available for California or Santa Maria.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency Response

Emergency preparedness and response are primarily the responsibility of the Santa Maria Fire Department and Police Department. As of 2020, the City’s Police and Fire Departments have identified that staffing and equipment for these departments are currently at capacity. However, increased risk of various hazards due to climate change could result in increased service needs, which will result in insufficient service levels from emergency responders. In addition, the City has noted language and technology barriers that can make it challenging to disperse information equitably to the entire community.

In the event of an emergency, the City will need to rely on temporary shelters and coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions and private organizations to provide adequate shelter and resources for affected residents. Furthermore, Santa Maria is anticipated to experience the largest increase in population in the county, which will result in a substantial increase in demand for emergency response resources.

Emergency Access and Evacuation

Hazard events such as flooding, fire, dam failure, and hazardous materials incidents can necessitate the need for evacuation of individuals from a particular area or the entirety of the city. The Police Department is primarily responsible for coordinating evacuation efforts in the event an evacuation is needed, including the management and allocation of mutual aid resources per the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The main evacuation routes out of the city are US-101 and SR-1 (see Figure S-9). Without proper evacuation protocol and preparation, inadequate evacuation capacity could threaten the safety of residents. Recent State legislation encouraging the development of housing near transit and reduced parking requirements for housing is likely to result in more residents parking on the street and may reflect reduced dependence on personal vehicles, and in turn increase dependence on public transit. This shift will introduce additional evacuation challenges, including potential roadway obstructions and greater reliance on public or community transportation resources during an emergency evacuation.

In addition, neighborhoods with only one evacuation route are likely to experience evacuation constraints. Thirteen neighborhoods within the City's Sphere of Influence have a single entry or exit point, of which seven are located within City limits and six are located outside City boundaries (see Figure S-10). These include neighborhoods at the following cross streets:

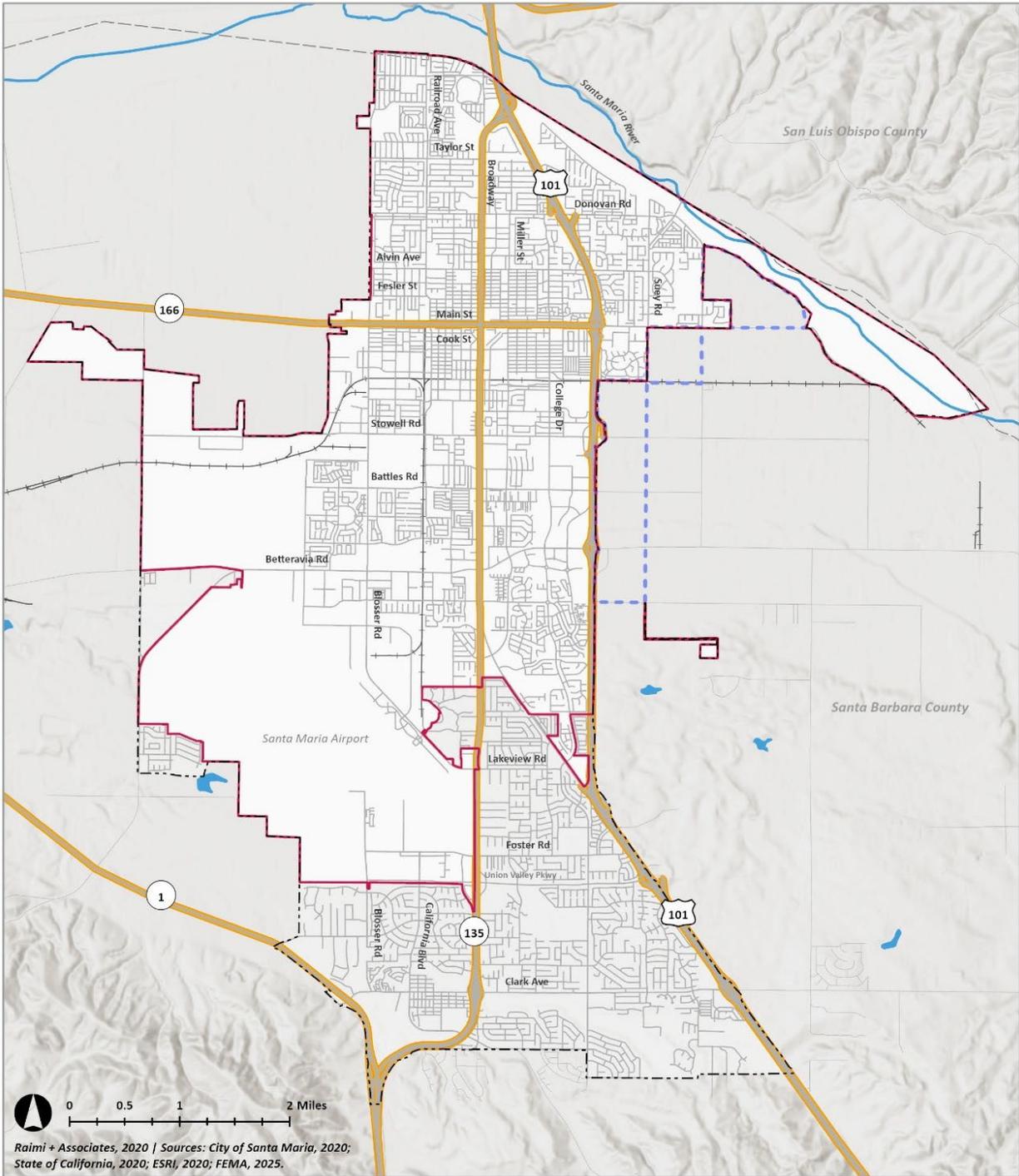
Within City limits:

- Santa Maria Way & College Drive
- Whippoorwill Drive & South College Drive
- Sunrise Drive, between Santa Maria Way and Santa Barbara Street
- Knightbridge Drive & San Ysidro Street
- East McCoy Lane, between South Broadway Street and South Miller Street
- East Riddering Street & South College Drive
- Stonebridge Drive & Concord Avenue

Within the City's Sphere of Influence:

- Del Cielo Estates Trail & Santa Maria Way
- Larch Avenue & South Bradley Road
- Oakridge Park Road & East Clark Avenue
- Ashbrook Lane & Stillwell Road
- Jensen Ranch Road & Stillwell Road
- Canyon Creek Road & Stillwell Road

Figure S-9: Evacuation Routes

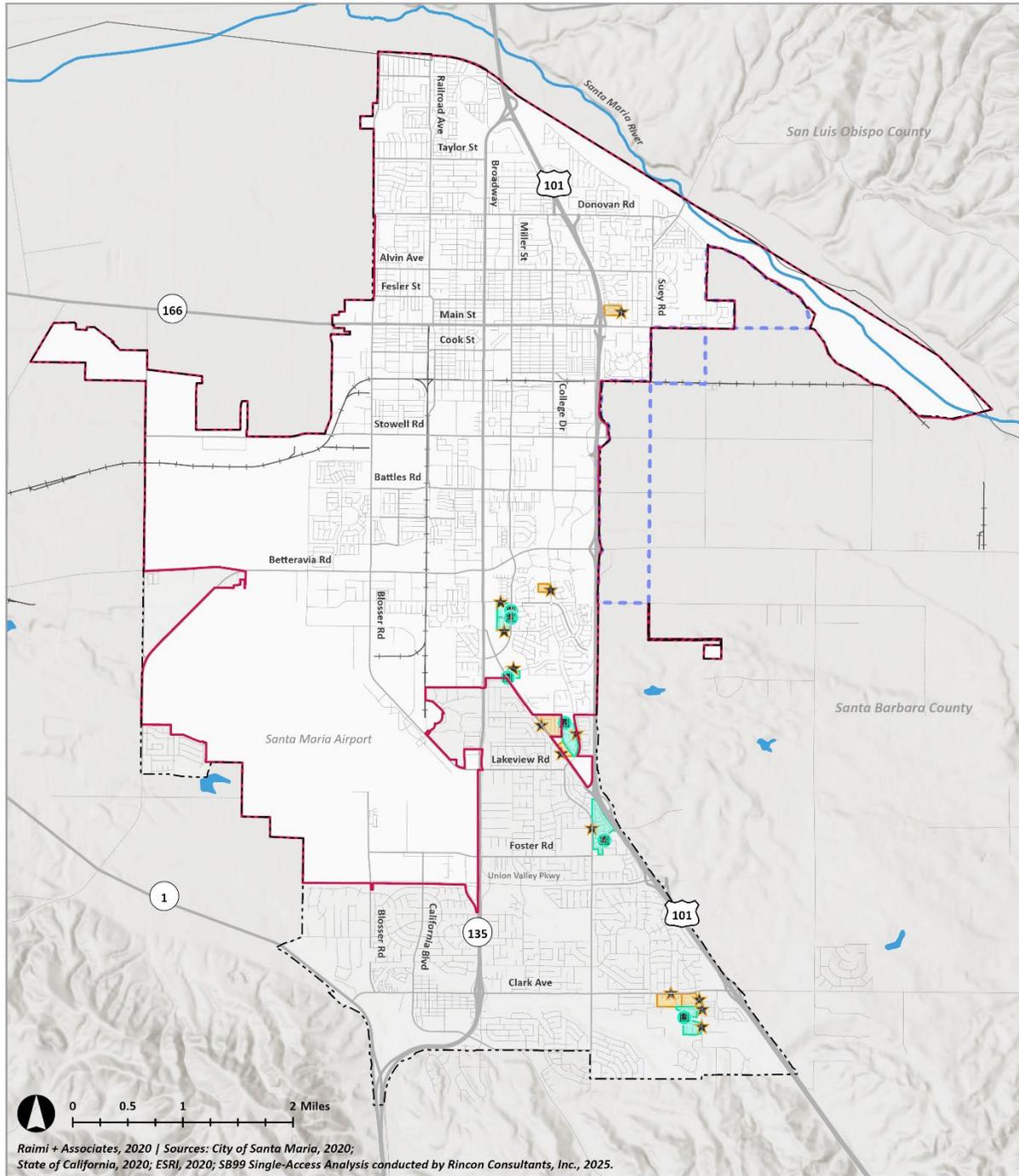


Raimi + Associates, 2020 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020; FEMA, 2025.



- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- County Boundaries
- Railroads
- Santa Maria River
- Major Evacuation Routes
- Freeways and Highways
- Road Centerlines

Figure S-10: Single-Access Point Neighborhoods



- 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
-
- SB99 Single-Access Analysis**
- ★ Single-Access Point
 - Emergency Access
 - Single-Access Neighborhood
 - Single-Access Neighborhood with Emergency Access

Local and Regional Hazard Plans

Santa Maria has several existing plans that evaluate existing risk and community capabilities, as well as identify resources and mitigation to reduce risk and better prepare the city for a potential disaster. The City of Santa Maria Annex to the Santa Barbara County Operational Area Hazard Mitigation Plan was developed in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) and follows FEMA’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan guidance.¹ The Hazard Mitigation Plan incorporates a process where hazards are identified and profiled, the population and facilities at risk are analyzed, and mitigation actions are developed to reduce or eliminate hazard risk. The implementation of these mitigation actions, which include both short and long-term strategies, involves planning, policy changes, and the implementation of programs, projects, and other activities.

The Integrated Regional Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Plan was adopted in 2016 and developed by the Santa Maria Fire Department. The goal of the plan is to clearly delineate the procedures and policies applicable to responding to a major emergency event, and the plan was designed to be applicable to all emergency incidents. The plan provides direction for the coordinated response efforts between the Santa Maria Police Department and Fire Department, including guidance for different types of emergency incidents. The City is in the process of updating the Emergency Response Plan.

The Fire Department also prepared the Community Risk Assessment: Standards of Cover, which is periodically updated every few years. This Report evaluates current conditions of the Fire Department and the city and identifies critical issues and future challenges associated with providing adequate emergency response services to the community.



Santa Maria Fire Department Station No.1. Credit: Randy De La Peña

¹ <https://www.countyofsb.org/510/2022-Hazard-Mitigation-Plan-Update>

Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the policy direction of the Safety Policies.

Risk assessment and infrastructure vulnerability. Proper construction and ongoing maintenance of existing structures can effectively mitigate impacts from seismic, wildland and urban fire, flood and dam inundation, hazardous materials, and airport hazards. Existing structures built prior to modern building codes and those in need of maintenance may be in need of retrofits and upgrades to enhance protection from hazards. By conducting risk assessments, vulnerabilities and appropriate improvements to structures and infrastructure can be identified.

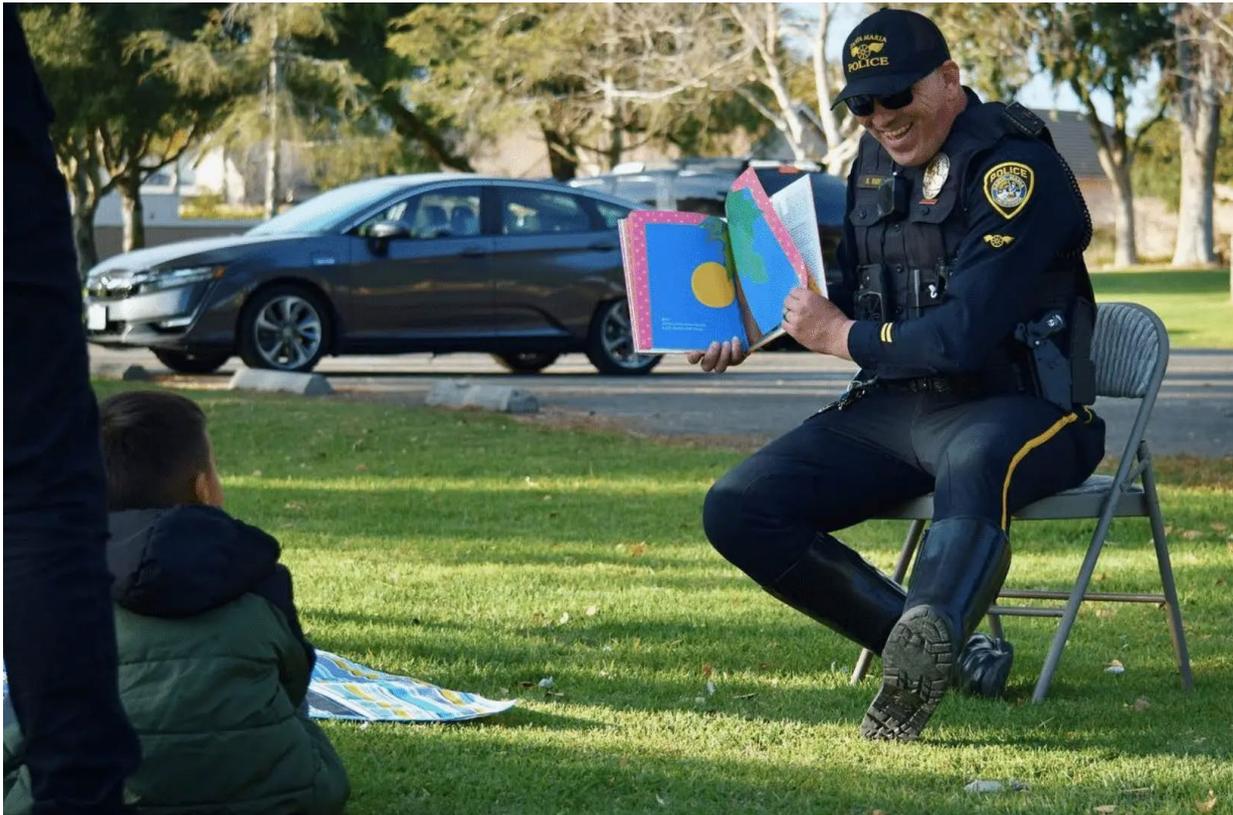
Development in hazard-prone areas. Existing and future development in hazard-prone areas, including within flood zones, very high wildfire hazard severity zones, and on and near fault lines, increases risk to people and property. Implementing hazard-specific development standards, such as restricting the siting of structures and requiring implementation of protective building and maintenance methods in these zones, can improve safety and reduce potential losses.

Emergency response and preparedness. Effective emergency response relies on the efficient allocation of resources, maintaining organized response systems, and coordinated planning and implementation efforts with internal City departments, neighboring jurisdictions, and regional, state, and federal agencies. Strengthening coordination among local, state, and federal agencies, improving resource allocation, and investing in training programs can enhance the overall response capacity. Public preparedness programs and drills also play a crucial role in increasing community resilience.

Emergency access and evacuation capacity. The ability for emergency responders to access affected areas and residents to evacuate during emergencies is critical for preserving lives and property. Access and evacuation constraints, such as poorly maintained roads, congestion, poor signage, and unclear communication, can result in delays that can increase the risk to life and property. The City can employ a variety of strategies to enhance emergency responder and public mobility in the event of a disaster or evacuation, such as updating roadway design standards, creating secondary access routes for neighborhoods with only one point of access, maintaining unobstructed roadways and clear signage, and educating residents on evacuation procedures.

Climate change adaptation. Climate change is anticipated to increase the frequency and severity of natural hazards, including flooding, wildfires, and extreme heat, increasing risks to people and property. Existing infrastructure and development are often unprepared for climate change impacts, having been built prior to the adoption of land use and zoning regulations that account for future climate scenarios. Proactively adopting climate adaptation measures, such as expanding green infrastructure, implementing climate-resilient development standards, and retrofitting vulnerable structures, can significantly reduce community vulnerability to climate change impacts. Critical facilities should be prioritized for the implementation of climate adaptation retrofits, due to their role in minimizing disruptions in essential services and providing shelter to affected residents. Certain populations are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, so targeted outreach and education, as well as ensuring equitable access to climate resilience resources, can improve resiliency.

Public education and preparedness. A lack of awareness and preparedness among the public can result in panic and confusion during an emergency event, potentially reducing the effectiveness of response efforts. Preemptive and effective public education efforts can strengthen the community's preparedness and resiliency to hazards of all types. Programs should include encouraging residents to create emergency kits and sign up for emergency notification systems, informing property owners and residents how to secure their homes from various hazards, distributing emergency evacuation routes, and publicizing resources for staying informed and connected in the event of an emergency.



Police officer reads to children in the park as part of Santa Maria Police Department's ongoing community engagement efforts.

Safety Policies

The *Policy Framework* addresses the key issues and opportunities identified above and outlines Safety goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

Four of the eight goal areas in the Policy Framework focus on the mitigation of specific hazards. The first two include strategies for refining and enforcing development standards to mitigate seismic, geologic (Goal S-1), and wildland and urban fire hazards (Goal S-2). To mitigate flood hazards, the third goal area advances resilient land use and site design, maintenance and upgrades to stormwater and flood control infrastructure (e.g., levee), and coordination with regional partners for dam inundation (Goal S-3). To reduce hazardous materials exposure, the fourth goal area identifies needed enhancements to regulations for crude oil operations, active and closed landfills, and hazardous materials and waste management (Goal S-4).

Two of the goal areas focus on preparedness. The Policy Framework highlights strengthening emergency response by growing emergency response capacity, ensuring the resilience of critical facilities, expanding emergency training and planning efforts, and intensifying community education and outreach (Goal S-6). Likewise, the Framework improves emergency access and evacuation capacity with a focus on infrastructure improvements, effective traffic management, community education, and providing evacuation assistance to vulnerable populations (Goal S-7).

The Policy Framework also addresses airport hazards by ensuring consistency with the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (Goal S-5) and aims to create a climate-resilient community, with a focus on vulnerable populations, natural cooling solutions, retrofits to existing structures and critical facilities, and water conservation measures (Goal S-8).

Standards

This section establishes standards and levels of service that determine the provision and improvement of public safety services in Santa Maria. These standards ensure equity, efficiency, and quality in service delivery while supporting the City's long-term goals.

Public Safety Standards

The City's Police Department service ratio is **1.3 officers per 1,000 people** (Policy S-6.3).

The Fire Department service standard is a **5-minute response capability** to all areas within the City limits (Policy S-2.1).

Policy Framework

Goal S-1: Seismic and geologic hazards. Impacts to people and property from geologic and seismic hazards are minimized.

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.

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.

Goal S-2: Wildland and urban fires. Impacts of wildland and urban fire hazards to people and property are minimized.²

Policy S-2.1: Fire and emergency response capacity. Maintain a five-minute response capability to all areas within the City limits and Planned Annexation Area by ensuring facilities are strategically located and properly resourced for timely intervention.

Action S-2.1.1: Require all development to maintain minimum fire flow requirements established by the California Fire Code.

Action S-2.1.2: Evaluate firefighting capacity and emergency response needs as new land is annexed and developed within the Santa Maria Fire Department jurisdiction.

Policy S-2.2: Weed abatement. Enforce the City's weed abatement program.

Action S-2.2.1: Coordinate with Santa Barbara County and local property owners to ensure proper implementation of the City's weed abatement program, including removing cut-down grass and other vegetation that could be a source of fuel for wildfires or urban fires.

Policy S-2.3: Development review. Require Fire Department review of development plans to ensure compliance with fire codes, safety standards, and best practices for emergency access, incorporating fire prevention and mitigation measures as necessary.

Goal S-3: Flood and dam inundation. Impacts from flood and dam inundation to people and property are minimized.³

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-3.2: Agricultural runoff reduction. Work with the County of Santa Barbara to reduce off-site and urban flooding caused by agricultural runoff.

Action S-3.2.1: Work with the County of Santa Barbara to educate agricultural operators on best management practices to address runoff and irrigation control and the implementation of efficient onsite drainage systems.

Action S-3.2.2: Collaborate with local agricultural operators and the Cachuma Resource Conservation District to implement and enforce agricultural runoff control measures.

² Please see the Public Facilities and Services Element for additional fire policies and actions.

³ Please see the Public Facilities and Services Element for additional stormwater management policies and actions as well as the Recreation and Parks Element for policies focused on flood resilience in parks.

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.

Action S-3.3.1: Update the Municipal Code to adopt stormwater site design standards as required by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, based on low-impact design principles and best practices. These standards should emphasize reducing impervious surfaces and maximizing open space and landscaped areas that support stormwater filtration and groundwater recharge.

Action S-3.3.2: Partner with State agencies and local conservation organizations, design professionals, and local nurseries to develop an outreach program to educate the public on low-impact design practices.

- Develop fact sheets and publicize resources and example projects that implement low-impact design practices for homeowners and property owners, such as rain gardens, rainwater storage, and permeable driveways.
- Create demonstration projects to showcase the successful implementation of low-impact design installations.

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.

Action S-3.4.1: Regularly evaluate the efficiency and capacity of the City's stormwater system for current and future projected increases to storm events and update the City's Stormwater Management Plan accordingly.

Action S-3.4.2: Identify and develop capital improvement projects to improve system deficiencies and capacity constraints.

Action S-3.4.3: Coordinate with the County of Santa Barbara on flood management activities outside the City limits and to mitigate peak flows from east of US-101, including the maintenance and management of the regional channel and basin system, storm pipes, and the Santa Maria River Levee.

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.

Action S-3.6.1: Support the SBCFCD in maintaining and monitoring dam and levee infrastructure. Encourage the District to conduct regular assessments to identify potential maintenance needs, monitor the conditions during significant storm events and evaluate infrastructure afterward to identify any damage.

Action S-3.6.2: Utilize current hazard information for the levee and dam received from SBCFCD and other local, state, and federal agencies to update and maintain the City's Emergency Response Plan and LHMP.

Action S-3.6.3: Incorporate emergency response protocol for potential flood inundation into the Integrated Regional Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Plan.

Goal S-4: Hazardous materials and waste. Public exposure to hazardous materials and waste is minimized.⁴

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.⁵

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: Update the Municipal Code to 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 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.

⁴ Please see the Public Facilities and Services Element for additional policies and actions related to solid waste and the Health and Environmental Justice Element for policies and actions related to brownfield site remediation and household hazardous waste.

⁵ Please see the Conservation and Open Space Element for policies related to groundwater contamination from oil extraction.

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.

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 the placement of sensitive land uses adjacent to solid waste sites. Allowed uses in buffer zones may include green spaces.

Goal S-5: Airport hazards. The risk of aircraft hazards from the Santa Maria Public Airport is minimized.⁶

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.

⁶ Please see the Land Use Element for policies and actions related to infill development and land use compatibility adjacent to the airport.

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.

Goal S-6: Emergency response and preparedness. The City is prepared for and responsive to emergencies.

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.

Action S-6.1.3: 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. 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.⁷

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.

⁷ Please see the Public Facilities and Services Element for policies related to police facilities and services.

Policy S-6.3: Police emergency response capability. Maintain 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: Police collaboration and engagement: Continue actively collaborating with other jurisdictions and with community members and organizations to advance community safety.

Action S-6.4.1: Recognizing that community safety is cross-jurisdictional, continue collaborating with the County Sheriff's Department.

Action S-6.4.2: Foster neighborhood safety and collaboration by promoting programs such as Neighborhood Watch, Community-Oriented Policing (COPS), and Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) to strengthen relationships between the Santa Maria Police Department and residents.

Action S-6.4.3: Focus on community policing strategies, trust-building activities, and partnerships to enhance public safety awareness and address local concerns together.

Policy S-6.5: Resilient critical facilities. Create resilient critical facilities that minimize the exposure of people and property from disasters.

Action S-6.5.1: 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-6.5.2: 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-6.5.3: 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.

Action S-6.5.4: Identify and pursue sources of funding to support critical facility improvement projects. 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-6.5.5: Conduct annual fire safety inspections for public buildings and recreational and utility infrastructure.

Policy S-6.6: Emergency response training. Prepare and train City staff to support emergency responders in the event of a disaster.

Action S-6.6.1: Update the Emergency Response Plan to designate roles and responsibilities for City staff by department, including non-leadership support roles.

Action S-6.6.2: 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-6.7: 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-6.7.1: 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-6.7.2: When updating a local safety or emergency plan, update hazard identification and mapping to include the most current state-approved data sources.

Policy S-6.8: Community emergency preparedness and response. Create opportunities for meaningful community involvement throughout all aspects of emergency preparedness and response planning.

Action S-6.8.1: 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-6.8.2: Integrate noticing for community outreach opportunities into a variety of City communications, including the City's website, social media pages, and utility bills.

Action S-6.8.3: Establish community partnerships to assist in engaging disadvantaged and underserved populations.

Action S-6.8.4: 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-6.8.5: 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-6.8.6: 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-6.8.7: 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-6.8.8: 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-6.9: 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.

Goal S-7: Emergency access and evacuation. Effective evacuation procedures ensure the safe and efficient evacuation of people during an emergency.

Policy S-7.1: Emergency access and evacuation capacity. Enhance the emergency access and evacuation capacity of the City's transportation network by mitigating identified evacuation constraints and increasing evacuation roadway capacity.

Action S-7.1.1: Develop a list of prioritized infrastructure improvements and capital improvement projects that address evacuation constraints identified in the Evacuation Capacity Analysis (Appendix E).

Action S-7.1.2: Continue to consider emergency access and evacuation needs in future updates to the Department of Public Works road design standards.

Action S-7.1.3: Continue to enforce a standardized street address and street signage system.

Action S-7.1.4: Regularly inspect and maintain major evacuation roadways to ensure safe road conditions.

Policy S-7.2: Multiple emergency access and evacuation routes. Increase emergency access and evacuation capacity for existing residential developments with fewer than two points of ingress/egress.

Action S-7.2.1: Identify opportunities to create secondary and alternative access/evacuation routes for single-access neighborhoods.

Action S-7.2.2: Provide targeted training and educational materials to residents of single-access neighborhoods to ensure these neighborhoods are informed of evacuation routes and protocol.

Policy S-7.3: Evacuation assistance. Provide evacuation assistance to vulnerable populations in the event of an emergency.

Action S-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.

Goal S-8: Climate resiliency and adaptation. Santa Maria is a climate-resilient community prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Policy S-8.1: City sustainability plan. Develop a comprehensive and consistent plan for adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Action S-8.1.1: Develop and adopt a sustainability plan that identifies Santa Maria's climate resiliency and adaptation efforts through a variety of methods, such as hosting interviews, focus group discussions, and reviewing draft plans and policies. Identify climate change impacts on vulnerable populations and include strategies to address disproportionate impacts.

Policy S-8.2: Climate resilient design. Require new development and redevelopment to incorporate climate-resilient design to mitigate the impacts of climate change.⁸

Action S-8.2.1: Adopt regulatory standards such as CALGreen Tier 1 and 2 to encourage energy efficiency and climate-smart design for new development and redevelopment.

Policy S-8.3: Natural cooling solutions. Support natural cooling methods to mitigate increased temperatures and extreme heat events caused by climate change.

Action S-8.3.1: Review and revise City standards to increase requirements for shade trees, canopies, and landscaping cover to promote natural cooling methods.

Action S-8.3.2: Implement natural cooling methods and increased landscaping cover on City-owned sites to demonstrate the effectiveness of alternative methods for mitigating heat. Prioritize implementation on City-owned properties in and near disadvantaged communities and communities with a concentration of vulnerable populations, as identified in the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment.

Action S-8.3.3: Partner with local organizations to pursue grant funding to support a community lending program to provide cooling devices to residents, prioritizing disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations.

Policy S-8.4: Climate resilient public facilities. Incorporate climate-resilient design for all new public facilities with the intent of illustrating successful implementation of green infrastructure.

Action S-8.4.1: Identify and apply for grant funding to support the implementation of climate-resilient and adaptation demonstration projects as part of public facility development and upgrades.

Action S-8.4.2: Prioritize funds for implementing climate adaptation projects in areas where vulnerable populations overlap with increased risk of hazards due to climate change, as identified in the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment.

Policy S-8.5: Community resilience centers. Establish community resilience centers that can provide shelter and distribute resources to residents to provide relief from extreme heat, extreme cold, poor air quality, and other hazards. Ensure disadvantaged communities have access to resiliency centers by locating resiliency centers near these communities and providing free transit options to and from these centers during hazard events.

Action S-8.5.1: Design new community serving public facilities to serve as dual-functioning community resilience centers. Prioritize new and upgraded facilities in disadvantaged communities and areas with a high number of populations vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Action S-8.5.2: Partner with local religious institutions, schools, and other operators of community gathering facilities to serve as community resilience centers during an emergency.

⁸ Please see the Land Use and Noise Elements for additional policies and actions related to building design.

Action S-8.5.3: Equip publicly owned community resilience centers with backup power and emergency water supplies to provide continuity of operation during an emergency.

Action S-8.5.4: Coordinate with the County, the schools, and community-based organizations to conduct outreach to residents of diverse backgrounds to connect them to local community resiliency centers, especially for vulnerable populations (such as people with disabilities, farm workers, older adults, unhoused community members, and people with chronic health conditions).

Policy S-8.6: Climate adaptation retrofits. Support retrofit programs for existing buildings to adapt to the impacts of climate change.⁹

Action S-8.6.1: Offer development incentives such as expedited building permit review, fee waivers or deferrals, and technical assistance to encourage building retrofits to support climate adaptation.

Action S-8.6.2: Identify and apply for grant opportunities to initiate a financial assistance program to support building retrofits for low-income households, vulnerable populations, and disadvantaged communities.

Action S-8.6.3: Assess critical and public facilities to evaluate climate resiliency. Identify, prioritize, and implement capital improvement projects that address identified climate vulnerabilities of these facilities. Prioritize projects to address climate change impacts in areas with a high number of vulnerable populations.

Policy S-8.7: Water efficiency and conservation. Continue water efficiency and water conservation efforts to support a stable water supply during periods of drought.¹⁰

Action S-8.7.1: Continue to update and enforce the various water management planning documents and tools like the Urban Water Management Plan.

⁹ Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for additional policies and actions focused on housing retrofits.

¹⁰ Please see the Public Facilities and Services and Conservation and Open Space Elements for additional water resources management policies and actions.



Santa Maria
General Plan

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Health and Environmental Justice Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

Pursuant to Government Code Section 65302, the Health and Environmental Justice Element is included in the General Plan to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities, promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process, and prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities. The law requires jurisdictions that contain disadvantaged communities to develop environmental justice policies on the following topic areas: pollution exposure, food access, physical activity, safe and sanitary homes, public facilities, civic engagement, and other issue areas that can address unique or compounded health risks impacting certain neighborhoods. Across all topic areas, the City must prioritize improvements and programs that address the environmental justice needs and priorities of disadvantaged communities.

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

The goals, policies, and implementation actions provide a roadmap for elevating the quality of life in Santa Maria by reducing pollution; promoting safe and affordable housing; enhancing opportunities to lead healthy lives through access to healthy food, active transportation, public facilities, and healthcare facilities; and fostering greater civic engagement opportunities.



Painted mural located on South McClelland Street in Santa Maria.



Top and bottom: Access to parks and other greenspaces, like Machado Plaza in Santa Maria's Downtown on Chapel Street, is essential to community health.

Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Health and Environmental Justice Policies.

Citywide Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

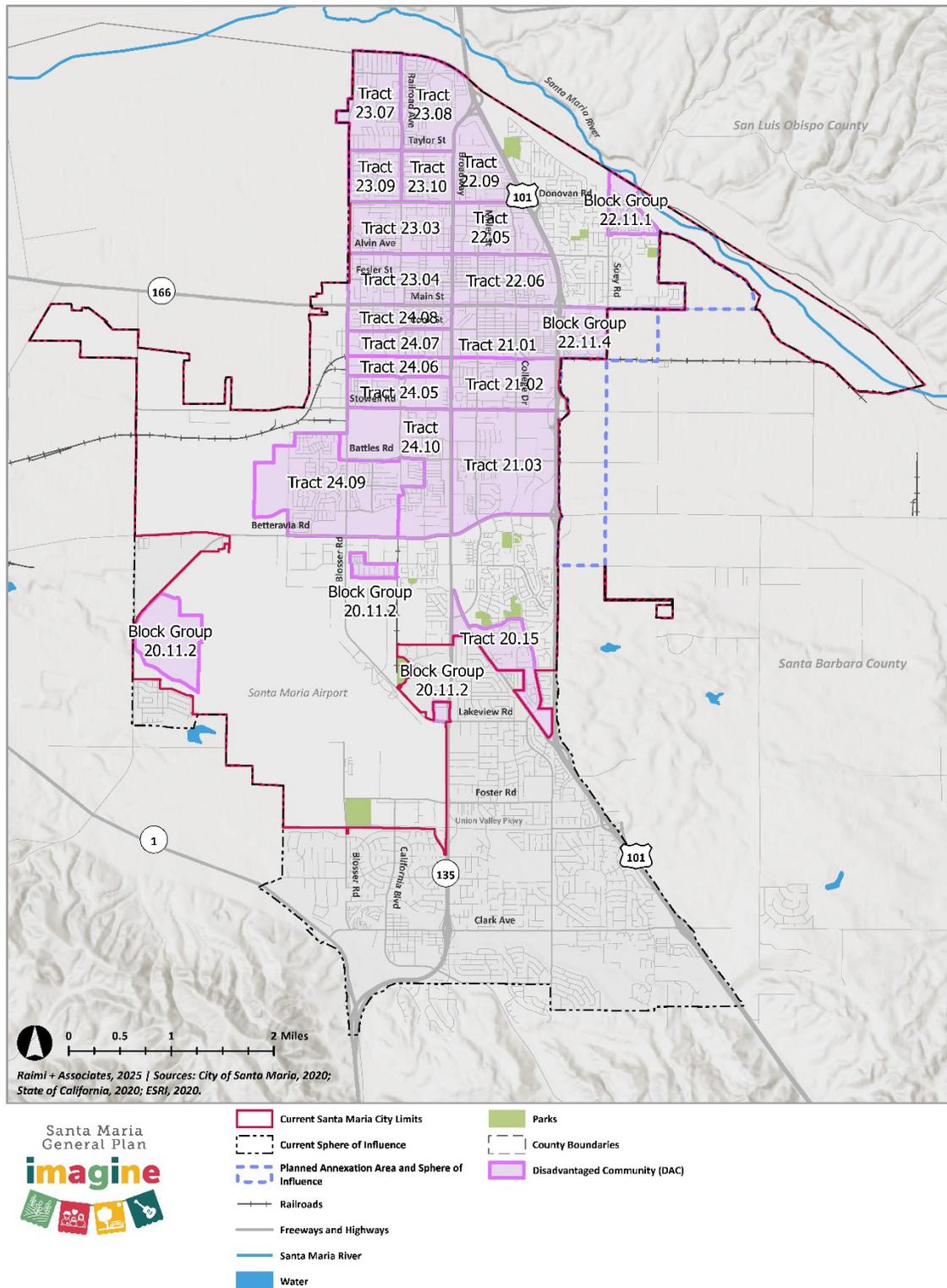
Research has found that the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of residents impact their potential health and life outcomes. This section summarizes the results of the Population Demographics and Vulnerabilities Assessment as well as the Health Assessment conducted as part of the HEJ Existing Conditions Report.

- **Low income.** Residents in low-income areas face higher rates of heart disease, cancer, lung disease (including asthma), diabetes, and obesity.
- **Youth and children.** Children and youth under 19 make up 35 percent of Santa Maria’s population, of which 25 percent live in poverty. Areas with the highest concentration of youth are also more likely to have high rates of single-parent and low-income households.
- **Older adults.** The area with the largest share of older adults (65 and older) living alone is in the northeastern corner of the city in census tract 22.11, which also experiences high pollution exposure.
- **Chronic disease.** Some population groups in Santa Maria are disproportionately impacted by a chronic disease:
 - African Americans tend to have higher rates of heart disease, cancer, and lung disease.
 - Men have higher rates of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes than women.
 - Women, Latinos, and African Americans are more impacted by Alzheimer’s Disease.
- **High death rates.** Zip code 93454 in Santa Maria, which includes various low-income census tracts east of Broadway and north of Betteravia Road, has the highest age-adjusted death rate in the county.
- **Health insurance.** About 16 percent of adults aged 18-64 in Santa Maria are uninsured, higher than the county average of 12 percent.
- **Mental health.** Poor mental health is reported more frequently in areas where people have reported limited physical activity.

Santa Maria’s Disadvantaged Communities

“Disadvantaged communities” (DACs) are areas identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency or low-income areas that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards identified in CalEnviroScreen 4.0 that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation. A multistep process, including extensive community engagement, was used to identify Santa Maria’s disadvantaged communities (see Appendix D). The methodology identified 19 census tracts and an additional 3 block groups that are distributed across the city (see Figure HEJ-1).

Figure HEJ-1: Santa Maria's Disadvantaged Communities¹



¹ Census tract 25.03 is not included in this analysis, as it primarily lies outside Santa Maria and overlaps with the City of Guadalupe; the area within Santa Maria is unpopulated and includes facilities such as a wastewater treatment plant, a compost facility, and a food warehouse.

Pollution

Below are summaries of environmental health factors that affect DACs in Santa Maria. Appendix D summarizes the factors that contributed to identifying each census tract or block group as a disadvantaged community.

Air Quality

Relative to other communities in California, Santa Maria residents face lower air quality impacts. For example, ozone and fine particulate matter (also known as “PM 2.5”) are not major issues of concern in Santa Maria. However, census tracts near US-101 and E. Main Street indicate greater potential for exposure to diesel particulate matter (also known as “Diesel PM”). Community members also shared concerns regarding proximity to specific land uses that impact air quality and the lack of buffers to limit air pollution exposure. Incompatible land uses and high traffic volumes may contribute to increased exposure and health risks.

Pesticide Use

Relative to other communities in California, Santa Maria experiences higher rates of pesticide exposure, as the majority of census tracts in the city are above the 80th percentile for pesticide use. Pesticide use during agricultural production poses significant public health risks since both short-term and long-term exposure are linked to serious illnesses such as cancers, pregnancy complications, and developmental issues—especially for children, pregnant women, older adults, and agricultural workers. DACs that are located near agricultural fields, including farmworker communities in and around Santa Maria, face heightened exposure risks.



Agricultural fields in Santa Maria. Credit: George Rose / Getty Images

Groundwater Threats

Santa Maria's 2023 Water Quality Report indicates the City met both State and federal drinking water standards. The Santa Maria Groundwater Basin is vulnerable to impacts from fertilizer-related runoff and leaching, sewage, and natural deposits,² all of which could pose health risks even at low levels.^{3,4,5} DAC neighborhoods may also be impacted by industrial sources that could compromise local groundwater, including leaking underground storage tanks, active or inactive oil and gas wells, and land disposal areas. These potential sources of contamination are subject to State and local regulatory requirements, monitoring, and mitigation measures intended to protect groundwater quality and reduce public health risks.

South of Stowell Road, abandoned oil and gas wells are concentrated within the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, potentially impacting local farms and communities. Oil companies have engaged in some remediation efforts in southeast Santa Maria through strategies such as soil replacement to manage contamination. The Department of Conservation and other State and regional agencies continue to make progress in plugging and permanently sealing the wells across Santa Barbara County.⁶

Hazardous and Solid Waste Sites

Hazardous waste facilities pose environmental and health risks if they lack proper oversight and timely mitigation measures. Solid waste sites (such as landfills, recycling centers, and composting facilities) are essential infrastructure for processing household and industrial waste and directing it away from our communities and ecosystems. They also hold the potential to negatively impact nearby communities through unpleasant odors, pests, and truck traffic, and, if improperly managed, can harm the surrounding ecosystems and community health through soil, water, and air contamination.⁷

Housing

Older Housing Stock

Over one half (53 percent) of Santa Maria's housing stock was built before 1979, with most of the older housing concentrated in DACs, especially near the downtown area. Older housing stock poses health risks due to the potential presence of harmful construction materials such as asbestos, synthetic chemicals, and lead, which can lead to a range of acute and chronic conditions, including asthma, lead poisoning, and respiratory infections.

² City of Santa Maria 2023 Water Quality Report. Retrieved from:

www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/15039/638520810338830000

³ California Water Resources Board. (2018). Groundwater Basics. Retrieved from:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/groundwater/gw_basics.html

⁴ For additional information, see: <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/>

⁵ Ward, M., and et. al. (2018). "Drinking Water Nitrate and Human Health: An Updated Review." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15(7): 1557.

⁶ California Department of Conservation. (2025). "Project Plug." Retrieved from:

<https://www.conservation.ca.gov/projectplug#cat-canyon>

⁷ Zeise, L. and J. Blumenfeld. (2021). CalEnviroScreen 4.0. California Environmental Protection Agency and OEHHA. Retrieved from: <https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen40reportf2021.pdf#page=139>

Crowding and Cost Burden

Santa Maria has a higher-than-average household size compared to the rest of Santa Barbara County. Overcrowded housing—defined by the US Census as units with more than 1.5 persons per room—can cause mental health challenges, increase the spread of infectious diseases, and exacerbate other health and well-being issues, particularly affecting those with social vulnerabilities. Many low-income households are housing-cost burdened, particularly in the northwest and central areas of the city, meaning that they spend over half (50 percent) of their income on housing.

Code Violations

Santa Maria's Fire and Community Development (Building and Code Enforcement) Departments have identified numerous housing code violations during their investigations of substandard housing that suggest potential issues with housing quality and safety in select housing units, though more data are needed to confirm these issues. When these types of issues are identified, the City's Code Enforcement Division coordinates with the Building and Planning Divisions of the Community Development Department and the Fire Department to ensure that the code violations are corrected in a timely manner.



Examples of building code violations and substandard housing conditions include unpermitted construction of a shed used as a dwelling unit and extensive mold in a bathroom.

H-2A Housing

The increasing number of H-2A Visa workers in agricultural jobs and the associated requirements for employers to supply worker housing have heightened the need for increasing the amount of safe and affordable housing in the city. Accessory Dwelling Units and new housing developments (particularly multi-family housing) will continue to assist in providing additional housing opportunities in the city.



Workers employed in agriculture in Santa Maria. Credit: Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc.

Mobility and Public Facilities

A vast majority (90 percent) of Santa Maria residents live within a 10-minute walk to transit stops, and nearly half (46 percent) are close to parks. However, communities in the northernmost and southernmost parts of the city face limited walk access to parks compared to other parts of the city. During engagement activities, community members highlighted the need for improved sidewalk and public facilities maintenance (e.g., parks), more equitable access to physical activity opportunities, beautification, dependable public transit, affordable childcare, and inclusive recreational programming.



SMRT Electric Bus

Health Care Access

Most of the city is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) despite the presence of locally available health care services, including those provided at Marian Regional Medical Center, a full-service acute care hospital offering emergency care, maternity services, cardiac care, cancer care, orthopedics, neurological care, imaging and laboratory services, and other specialty treatments that serve Santa Maria and the surrounding region. The HPSA designation reflects a lack of primary medical care for the Medicaid-eligible population and a lack of mental health care for the low-income migrant farmworker population, indicating a shortage of health providers in these fields. In Santa Maria, there are four census tracts (24.04, 24.03, 23.04, 23.05) where less than 20 percent of older adult men and women (65+ years) are up to date on a core set of clinical preventive services. During engagement activities, community members shared the barriers they face in accessing health and mental health care services.



Marian Regional Medical Center. Credit: Dignity Health

Access to Healthy Food

The rate of food insecurity among adults in Santa Maria (16 percent) is twice the rate for Santa Barbara County (8 percent). Food insecurity can lead to undernutrition, fatigue, stunted development, and related health issues. Access to food is most limited in the city's northeast and northwest areas, in addition to a large area southwest of Downtown. In some of these areas, 33 percent of the population lives more than one mile from a supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store. During engagement activities, community members identified the need for more equitable access to nutritious food (e.g., gardens, corner stores selling healthier food), a greater variety of healthy food choices, and more affordable food.



Farmers' Market in Santa Maria's Downtown

Civic Engagement

Throughout the engagement process, many community members shared that they faced barriers that limit their ability to participate in City activities and decision-making, such as a lack of awareness, inconvenient meeting times, and language access. These barriers often impact low-income residents, youth, people with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency. Specifically, youth members shared an interest in participating in the civic process but some lacked the knowledge or awareness of how and when they could participate.



Santa Maria Public Library



Santa Maria City Hall

Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the policy direction of the Health and Environmental Justice Policies.

Pollution concerns. Throughout the Health and Environmental Justice (HEJ) pollution burden analysis and engagement process, community members and organizational partners raised several issues of concern, including pesticide exposure, diesel emissions, and groundwater quality. Strengthening collaborations between the City and Santa Barbara County and other relevant decision-making agencies could help to address these community health concerns. In addition, encouraging stronger practices through the development of additional policies and implementation actions may also help to promote greater improvements in the city's environmental health.

Housing. Housing quality and affordability are foundational to an individual's quality of life and sense of well-being. As the city grows, it will have the opportunity to address housing costs, overcrowding, housing stock quality, and farmworker housing, especially for moderate to low-income residents. By implementing the established programs and actions in the City's Housing Element and addressing housing quality concerns, the City can expand access to housing, reduce the potential for displacement, and strengthen access to safe and affordable housing for all residents.

Healthcare access. Fair access to affordable and high-quality healthcare is crucial to a community's growth and prosperity. Santa Maria residents shared (and data further validates) that they face barriers to accessing healthcare due to location, income, and/or languages spoken. Coordination with the County, healthcare providers, and other community partners can aid in expanding access to critical services and information that can support healthy lifestyles in the community.

Mobility and public facilities. Santa Maria's active transportation networks and public facilities play a critical role in increasing community health and connectivity. Given the disparities in access to parks and public facilities, along with community feedback on sidewalk conditions, park maintenance, and recreational programming, there are clear opportunities for targeted improvements. Continued and strategic improvements to sidewalks, parks, and public transit infrastructure can improve public safety, community connectivity and access, and opportunities for physical activity.

Food access and insecurity. Access to high-quality, healthy, and affordable food is essential to supporting community well-being and the prevention of chronic diseases. Many residents in Santa Maria face food insecurity and barriers to accessing nutritious food, such as poor access to grocery stores, and rising costs. Addressing these challenges through targeted strategies can improve nutritional outcomes and long-term health of individuals and families.

Civic engagement. Expanding inclusive and equitable engagement practices and building leadership development opportunities for diverse members of the community can increase involvement in City decision-making and processes, especially for those not typically engaged.



Public meeting held in Shepard Hall in the Santa Maria Library.

Health and Environmental Justice Policies

The Health and Environmental Justice Policies address the key issues and opportunities identified above through an iterative process of analysis and community engagement, and create a comprehensive roadmap for safeguarding public health and uplifting communities, particularly DACs. The *Policy Framework* section outlines Health and Environmental Justice goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Health and Environmental Justice Element focus on building a foundation of community health and environmental justice to ensure that Santa Maria, especially those most vulnerable, can prosper. They are organized into four principal goals. First, reduce environmental health risks with strategic infrastructure and land use planning (Goal HEJ-1). Second, provide safe, sanitary, and affordable housing, with a focus on implementing the Housing Element (Goal HEJ-2). Third, enhance opportunities for residents to lead healthy lives through access to healthy food (Goal HEJ-7), active transportation (Goals HEJ-3 and 4), public facilities (Goal HEJ-5), and healthcare facilities (Goal HEJ-6). And finally, advance each of these goals with meaningful and equitable community engagement that enhances community participation and results in community-informed decisions (Goal HEJ-8).

Policy Framework

Goal HEJ-1: Healthy and pollution-free neighborhoods. All residents have access to clean air, water, and soil.⁸

Policy HEJ-1.1: Protect against industrial pollution. Prevent industrial and commercial facilities from exposing sensitive land uses (e.g., schools, playgrounds, housing, hospitals, senior centers, and daycare centers) 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 industrial and commercial uses.⁹

Action HEJ-1.1.1: When separation from pollution sources is not feasible, encourage and support indoor air quality improvements for sensitive land uses—particularly in DACs—through measures such as:

- Locating HVAC air intakes away from pollution sources
- Installing HEPA filters and ensuring regular maintenance
- Options to replace gas appliances with electric alternatives
- Limiting operable windows near pollution sources in non-residential buildings

⁸ Please see the Safety, Noise, Circulation, and Public Facilities Frameworks for additional policies and actions focused on oil and gas wells, water quality, noise, vehicle dependence, hazardous waste generators, and food waste diversion.

⁹ Please see the Recreation and Parks, Circulation, Noise, and Land Use Elements for policies and actions related to land use conflicts.

- Use green (e.g., drought-tolerant trees) and gray (e.g., sound walls) infrastructure buffers to reduce freeway-related air and noise pollution near homes and businesses
- Develop health-protective standards that also support local business continuity
- Collaborate with residents to identify and address odor sources that impact health and well-being

Policy HEJ-1.2: Enforce truck routes. Ensure local adherence to the City’s most recent truck routes map and regulations that aim to reduce significant traffic and pollution impacts on homes, schools, childcare centers, senior centers, and other sensitive land uses.¹⁰

Policy HEJ-1.3: Expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. Encourage the installation of additional EV charging infrastructure.

Action HEJ-1.3.1: Seek funding opportunities such as the California Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project (CALeVIP) to offset costs for businesses and property owners in DACs who install EV chargers, while also educating residents and businesses on EV battery safety.

Policy HEJ-1.4: Promote healthy farming techniques. Support sustainable agricultural practices in and around the City of Santa Maria.

Action HEJ-1.4.1: Support the Santa Barbara County Agriculture/Weights & Measures Department’s efforts to identify communities that should be prioritized for education and interventions to reduce farms’ pesticide use, limit pesticide drift onto communities, protect farm workers against pesticide exposure, ensure compliance with pesticide spraying time blocks, and support the use of Integrated Pest Management practices.

Action HEJ-1.4.2: Work collaboratively with Santa Barbara County’s Agricultural Commissioner’s Office and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to enforce the County’s agricultural buffer zones and the installation of vegetative barriers to minimize land use conflicts; determine buffers for proposed projects; limit pesticide drift; and protect farmers, workers, and residents from harms related to agricultural uses.¹¹

Policy HEJ-1.5: Facilitate oil and gas well remediation. Reduce potential pollution exposure from inactive oil and gas wells and associated infrastructure through proper abandonment and remediation.¹²

Policy HEJ-1.6: Ensure proper site remediation. Work with developers and the responsible State and federal agencies to ensure the use of established best practices for investigating and fully remediating contaminated sites.

¹⁰ Please see the Circulation Element for policies and actions to mitigate the impacts of heavy vehicle traffic.

¹¹ Please see the Land Use Framework for additional agricultural buffer policies.

¹² Please see the Safety Element for additional policies and actions related to oil wells and other hazardous materials.

Action HEJ-1.6.1: Direct developers to engage in standard brownfield cleanup practices, such as carrying out Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Analyses for assessing soil and groundwater contamination before any redevelopment can occur.

Action HEJ-1.6.2: Encourage developers to collaborate with State regulatory agencies (such as the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the State Water Resources Control Board, and/or the California Geologic Energy Management Division) to leverage their support and expertise towards cleanup efforts.

Action HEJ-1.6.3: Advise developers to conduct additional site testing and provide greater safeguards if new sensitive uses are being proposed in DACs or areas previously zoned as industrial or commercial.

Policy HEJ-1.7: Promote safe waste disposal. Raise awareness about the proper disposal of hazardous waste.

Action HEJ-1.7.1: Continue to educate residents on the City's programs and available resources for safely disposing of bulky items and hazardous household waste (such as chemicals, batteries, and expired medications), while continuing to enforce the City's illegal dumping and hazardous waste disposal laws.

Policy HEJ-1.8: Preserve water quality. Continue to ensure that Santa Maria residents have access to clean, safe, affordable, and accessible water for drinking, cooking, and sanitation¹³ by working with the County, State, and Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board to guard against potential contamination from fertilizer-related impacts and surface stormwater impacts.¹⁴

Goal HEJ-2: Safe and affordable housing. All residents have access to safe, sanitary, accessible, and affordable housing.¹⁵

Policy HEJ-2.1: Implement the Housing Element. Prioritize the implementation of the goals, policies, and programs in Santa Maria's Housing Element.

Action HEJ-2.1.1: Focus on City-led efforts to increase the diversity, quality, quantity, and affordability of housing in Santa Maria, including:

- Affordable housing production, protection, preservation, and options; especially for extremely low, very low, and low-income households
- Code enforcement, with a focus on neighborhoods with older and/or substandard housing stock (e.g., elimination of lead, asbestos, mold, and pests)
- Energy conservation and assistance programs, especially for low-income households
- Safe and healthy farmworker housing
- Anti-displacement protections (e.g., first right of refusal policy)
- Housing for older adults and seniors

¹³ For more information, please refer to the Human Right to Water Portal, State Water Resources Control Board. Retrieved from: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/hr2w/

¹⁴ Please see the Conservation and Open Space and Public Facilities and Services Elements for additional water quality policies and actions.

¹⁵ Please see the Housing and Land Use Elements for additional policies and actions focused on housing.

- Housing for people with disabilities
- Housing and support systems for homeless or unhoused families and individuals
- Fair housing program (e.g., legal services, tenant protections, rental assistance, anti-discrimination)
- Environmental issues identification and action (e.g., efficient permit system for oil well closures and hazardous waste cleanups, addressing environmental risks to farm workers at home)
- Environmental justice (e.g., avoiding the concentration of high-impact or hazardous uses and facilities in communities; and an equitable distribution of services, public facilities, and improvements).

Policy HEJ-2.2: Advance housing rehabilitation. Expand housing rehabilitation, hazard mitigation, and minor home repair programs, with a strong prioritization for low-income residents in disadvantaged communities and households with children.¹⁶

Action HEJ-2.2.1: Collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs) and housing advocates to support rehabilitation, repair, and hazard mitigation efforts for housing in low-income neighborhoods.

Action HEJ-2.2.2: Spread awareness of housing rehabilitation financial resources for low-income households, such as Community Development Block Grants, tax incentives, and other State and federal financial assistance programs.

Action HEJ-2.2.3: Identify long-term funding sources to continue the Minor Home Repair Programs.

Action HEJ-2.2.4: Seek funding to assist households living in units built before 1978 to identify and, if needed, remediate lead-based paint in their homes.

Policy HEJ-2.3: Bolster housing diversity. Promote a diversity of housing types in Santa Maria to support healthy, safe, and supportive living for people of all ages, abilities, incomes, stages of life, and circumstances, including options that allow residents to age in their homes.

Policy HEJ-2.4: Support multi-generational housing. Encourage the creation of new and rehabilitated multi-generational housing developments to support long-term livability.

Action HEJ-2.4.1: Continue to update the City's Zoning Code as necessary to accommodate a wider variety of housing types, densities, and layouts, including multi-generational housing (e.g., ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, built-in suites), that allow multiple families to live together in healthy and appropriate areas.

¹⁶ Please see the Safety Element for additional policies and actions related to hazard mitigation and housing resilience.

Goal HEJ-3: Mobility and safe streets. All residents have access to safe and affordable public transportation and active transportation infrastructure, focusing on equitable access and a Complete Streets approach to designing neighborhoods.¹⁷

Policy HEJ-3.1: Ensure safe active transportation. Improve public safety and increase healthy walking and biking Complete Streets networks for Santa Maria’s diverse community members (including young children, families, people with disabilities, and older adults) by ensuring safe and clean sidewalks and streets, spacious and distinct bike lanes, and accessible and affordable public transit systems for moving people around town.

Action HEJ-3.1.1: Prioritize street improvements and infrastructure investments (i.e., lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks) by working with Caltrans and other agencies for relevant projects, such as US-101 overcrossings, to increase citywide connectivity and facilitate residents’ safe walking, biking, local travel, and work commutes.

Action HEJ-3.1.2: Pursue funding for alternative transportation projects such as Complete Streets, accessible Universal Design systems, bicycle lanes and bike facilities, and accessible sidewalk improvements, with a particular focus on neighborhoods that are DACs.

Action HEJ-3.1.3: Incorporate climate-resilient infrastructure. Add drought-tolerant green and climate-related infrastructure (i.e., trees, native plants, shade structures, signage, and benches) at transit stops to enhance comfort while waiting and reduce severe weather impacts, especially in under-resourced DACs.

Policy HEJ-3.2: Encourage safe routes to schools. Continue to partner with the school district to strengthen existing routes and establish new local safe routes to school initiatives and programs, with a priority to serve families and schools located in DACs.

Policy HEJ-3.3: Ensure equity in transit systems. Expand bus routes, increase headway frequencies, extend hours of operation, and provide additional programs to serve low-income and DAC residents to increase their access to jobs, schools, public services, and healthy food retailers.¹⁸

Action HEJ-3.3.1: Conduct targeted outreach to families and students regarding reduced-fee transportation passes.

¹⁷ Please see the Circulation Element for additional policies and actions focused on mobility and safety.

¹⁸ Please see the Circulation Element for additional transit policies and actions.

Goal HEJ-4: Opportunities for physical activity. People of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds have equitable access to parks, open space, and other community spaces that promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles.¹⁹

Policy HEJ-4.1: Increase access to parks and open space. Preserve and improve park and open space access throughout the city, with a clear focus on expanding park investments and resources in DAC neighborhoods that have traditionally lacked high-quality park amenities and easy access to nature.²⁰

Policy HEJ-4.2: Expand tree canopy. Preserve existing trees, replace trees that are removed, and increase tree planting in new areas to improve Santa Maria’s air quality, create more attractive and walkable public spaces, and combat climate-related extreme heat and wind effects, especially for DACs.²¹

Policy HEJ-4.3: Preserve greenbelts. Promote and maintain greenbelts in Santa Maria to promote greater public access to nature and increase opportunities for outdoor recreation.²²

Action HEJ-4.3.1: Consider community needs and feedback, particularly from DACs, when identifying greenbelt areas to be maintained, expanded, or created.

Policy HEJ-4.4: Increase infrastructure for physical activity. Promote active and healthy lifestyles for the Santa Maria community by increasing the number of bike storage units, public water stations, accessible walkways, pedestrian crosswalks, and family-friendly staircases that feature gentle slopes and landings in public spaces to encourage walking and biking around the city.

Goal HEJ-5: Accessible public facilities. All residents benefit from City services, infrastructure, and other public resources, with targeted investments and improvements for historically under-resourced DAC neighborhoods.²³

Policy HEJ-5.1: Maintain public facilities. Prioritize equitable and timely maintenance of public facilities (e.g., sidewalks, parks and playgrounds, and City-maintained infrastructure) in DACs, recognizing the role of supportive services and a clean environment in promoting both positive mental and physical health.

¹⁹ Please see the Land Use Element for additional policies and actions focused on urban design and pedestrian-focused public spaces.

²⁰ Please see the Recreation and Parks Element for policies and actions focused on park access.

²¹ Please see the Conservation and Open Space Element for additional urban forestry policies and actions.

²² Please see the Conservation and Open Space Element for additional greenbelt actions.

²³ Please see the Public Facilities and Services and Recreation and Parks Elements for additional policies and actions related to public facilities and parks.

Policy HEJ-5.2: Collaborate to improve facilities. Collaborate with public and private entities, including community-based nonprofit organizations, to continue maintaining and creating new parks, promoting cleanup efforts and City beautification programs, installing public art and murals, promoting tree planting, increasing recreational facilities, and preserving and maintaining open space areas, especially for residents living in DACs that traditionally lack access to such amenities.

Policy HEJ-5.3: Increase childcare access. Collaborate with local nonprofit organizations, childcare providers, and residents from impacted communities to assess the availability, affordability, and quality of childcare and to develop implementable strategies that address gaps, improve services, and ensure equitable access to childcare resources for all community members.

Policy HEJ-5.4: Improve community-serving programming. Enhance and maintain City-run programming for community members, particularly those who are low-income, youth, and seniors, to enhance their quality of life and strengthen physical activity opportunities.

Action HEJ-5.4.1: Support and expand free or low-cost waivers for low-income groups, especially youth and seniors, to participate in City-run physical activity programs and activities through the Leisure Needs Assessment and Action Plan.

Goal HEJ-6: Healthcare for all. All residents have access to excellent and affordable physical and mental health care resources.

Policy HEJ-6.1: Coordinate healthcare access. Partner with County Public Health and Behavioral Wellness Departments and local health care providers to improve equitable access to high-quality and culturally-relevant healthcare and mental health services, especially for communities that are more likely to face barriers such as residents that are uninsured, low-income or are on a limited or fixed income, live in a DAC, have disabilities, are farmworkers, have limited English proficiency, and/or are experiencing poor or chronic health issues.

Action HEJ-6.1.1: Work with healthcare providers, community-based organizations, and institutions to understand and address the current barriers to bringing in more healthcare services to Santa Maria, including potential land use issues.

Policy HEJ-6.2: Expand access to health information. Partner with the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, local healthcare institutions, and nonprofit organizations to provide accessible information on important health issues (e.g., chronic health conditions, nutrition, air pollution impacts, reproductive health, and mental health), especially for residents who face higher barriers to receiving information and education such as low-income residents in DACs, residents from Indigenous and Mixteco backgrounds, people with disabilities, farmworkers, students, and older adults.

Action HEJ-6.2.1: Collaborate with the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and other local organizations to develop and implement a targeted health, mental health, and substance abuse education and outreach campaign to reach underserved communities.

Policy HEJ-6.3: Integrate health in all policies. Promote a coordinated “Health in All Policies” approach by incorporating health equity and environmental sustainability in City programs, and by increasing cross-department collaborations and coordination to address health equity outcomes through joint initiatives and programming.²⁴

Policy HEJ-6.4: Promote emergency response alternatives. Coordinate with Mobile Crisis Teams to facilitate timely, non-law enforcement mental health emergency responses, especially in high-stress DACs, while also training the City’s Police force on how to identify appropriate support systems for individuals experiencing mental health episodes or substance abuse problems.

Policy HEJ-6.5: Prioritize violence-prevention. Support and expand City resources (such as the Mayor’s Task Force) to provide violence prevention services and education to youth and adults of all ages, while also prioritizing youth leadership programs that work to improve public safety and proactively prevent and reduce crime.

Goal HEJ-7: Access to healthy food. All residents have access to affordable, fresh, and nutritious foods, including cultural foods.

Policy HEJ-7.1: Support community food distribution. Continue to assist Santa Maria’s community-based organizations, schools, and other institutions that are working to provide free or low-cost food to low-income families and unhoused residents who experience food insecurity in high-need areas of the city.

Action HEJ-7.1.1: Work with large food generators (e.g., grocery stores, food distributors, and restaurants) to ensure edible surplus food is delivered to local food recovery organizations.

Policy HEJ-7.2: Improve grocery store access. Support the expansion of supermarkets in Santa Maria, especially in the northeast and northwest corners of the city, in food desert areas, and in other DAC neighborhoods.

Policy HEJ-7.3: Expand access to fresh, healthy, affordable food. Collaborate to ensure that residents have ready access to fresh, nutritious food at affordable prices.

Action HEJ-7.3.1: Encourage corner store owners to increase the availability of fresh, healthy foods by providing refrigerated shelving units, adjusting store layout, and prioritizing nutritious choices.

Action HEJ-7.3.2: Establish a “Healthy Corner Store” initiative in partnership with the County Public Health Department to promote access to nutritious food and beverages in corner stores, especially in DACs.

²⁴ “Health in All Policies (HiAP) is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas.” HiAP recognizes that health is influenced by a multitude of factors beyond healthcare and, in many cases, beyond the scope of traditional public health activities. For more information on the Health in All Policies approach, please visit: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-in-all-policies>

Action HEJ-7.3.3: Pursue funding and partnerships to enhance equitable access to nutritious food across the community through tailored incentives and resources.

Action HEJ-7.3.4: Partner with local businesses, farms, and community organizations operating farmers' markets to provide healthy, fresh, and affordable food to residents living in DACs, including cultural foods.

Action HEJ-7.3.5: Encourage farmers' market operators to shift or expand their hours of operation to be at more convenient times for working families.

Action HEJ-7.3.6: Support partnerships that encourage schools to provide student gardens on school grounds and seek funding to have local farmers and community gardeners teach students about farming and gardening practices.

Action HEJ-7.3.7: Support partnerships that educate Santa Maria grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other healthy food retailers on the importance of accepting benefit cards from low-income residents, including CalFresh Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits; and Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program benefits.

Action HEJ-7.3.8: Partner with property owners and the County Public Health Department to support innovative food microenterprises, such as home kitchen operations and mobile food facilities.

Goal HEJ-8: Meaningful and equitable public engagement. All residents have access to a variety of equitable and meaningful opportunities to participate in City activities and decision-making.²⁵

Policy HEJ-8.1: Ensure inclusive community engagement. Implement strategies to increase participation from community members who are typically not well represented in civic affairs due to various barriers.

Action HEJ-8.1.1: Employ best practices for engagement, such as:

- Scheduling meetings and public workshops at times that are convenient for residents and locating meetings in convenient and transit-accessible locations.
- Prioritizing outreach efforts to community members who are most impacted by racial and social inequities, including youth of color and immigrant families.
- Using outreach methods, such as flyers, schools, and social media, to engage community members and share important City information and resources.
- Offering simultaneous multilingual interpretation during public workshops and community meetings, and translating all meeting materials into Spanish and other commonly spoken local languages.
- Incorporating participatory facilitation techniques during public workshops to meaningfully engage residents in feedback conversations.
- Providing virtual attendance options for meetings.

²⁵ Please see the Conservation and Open Space Element for additional policies and actions focused on community engagement.

- Partnering with community-based organizations to offer training to residents who lack access to the internet and have limited knowledge of technology.
- Expanding partnerships with local community-based organizations and faith-based institutions to help facilitate community-based conversations and encourage active participation.

Action HEJ-8.1.2: Update the City’s Language Access Plan (LAP) on an as-needed basis to continue to provide meaningful access to City programs and activities by residents who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Policy HEJ-8.2: Integrate equity best practices. Prioritize resources, training, and programs to promote best practices for integrating inclusivity, fairness, social equity, and justice in all City departments to strengthen their functions and improve relationships with community members.

Action HEJ-8.2.1: Provide ongoing training and capacity building to City staff on topics such as racial equity and civil rights laws, environmental and climate justice in city planning, strategies for promoting cross-cultural awareness and cultural competence, how to use a trauma-informed approach for working with different communities, and how to lead equitable community engagement strategies.

Action HEJ-8.2.2: Continue to recruit new staff who are representative of Santa Maria’s diverse population and people who can speak multiple languages to enhance communication with City services.

Policy HEJ-8.3: Encourage diverse community leadership. Support residents from underrepresented communities and diverse backgrounds to take on leadership roles for the City, fostering leadership that reflects the full demographic diversity of Santa Maria.

Action HEJ-8.3.1: Recruit community members of diverse backgrounds, races/ethnicities, physical abilities, genders, sexual orientations, and ages of Santa Maria to serve on the City Boards and Commissions.

Policy HEJ-8.4: Promote youth leadership. Engage young people, particularly high school-aged and transition-aged youth (ages 18-24 years old), to participate in City decision-making processes and decision-making bodies.

Action HEJ-8.4.1: Consider activities including:

- Continue to implement a City-led Youth Commission that can increase youth voice and young people’s perspectives in City decision-making to improve community quality of life for all.
- Conduct targeted outreach to schools to involve students in the City’s land use and permitting decisions.
- Partner with community-based nonprofit organizations and schools to expand their civics-related programs, school clubs, and curriculum to include lessons on environmental justice, land use planning, air pollution, and how city governments work, among other topics.
- Co-host voter registration drives.
- Encourage high school-aged youth and transition-aged youth to volunteer as poll workers or become involved in City affairs.

Policy HEJ-8.5: Include residents in land use decisions. Proactively outreach to and solicit feedback from low-income residents, community-based organizations, individuals with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and DAC residents, among others, when making decisions on issues that impact their communities (e.g., zone changes, discretionary permit approvals, processes for brownfield cleanup, housing development, tenants' rights policies, transportation, community benefits agreements for large development).

Policy HEJ-8.6: Develop community benefits agreements. Facilitate the creation of community benefits agreements (CBAs) for major private development projects to provide resources and mitigate pollution impacts for the benefit of local communities, especially when located in a DAC.

Action HEJ-8.6.1: Identify potential community benefits, including:

- Lower levels of environmental pollution
- Reduced car and truck traffic
- More affordable housing units
- Workforce development opportunities
- Tree and native species planting
- Shade structures for extreme heat events
- Green (e.g., trees) or gray (e.g. sound walls) barriers for noise and pollution mitigation
- Community gardens and publicly accessible green space
- Other investments as suggested by Santa Maria community members.



Santa Maria
General Plan

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Public Facilities and Services Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

Though not a required Element, the Public Facilities and Services Element is included in the General Plan to reflect the City's dedication to providing reliable public infrastructure, facilities, and services that support the City's progress and overall quality of life. In the previous General Plan, these topics were addressed in the Resource Management Element.

The Public Facilities and Services Element focuses on Major Infrastructure (water, wastewater, and stormwater), Public Facilities (City-owned public buildings and libraries as well as schools), and Public Services (police, fire, and solid waste). The Recreation and Parks Element focuses on recreational facilities, community centers, and parks.

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

The Public Facilities and Services Element outlines how Santa Maria will maintain and enhance the infrastructure and services needed to support a growing community. It prioritizes reliable water, wastewater, and stormwater systems; responsive police and fire services; and accessible libraries and public buildings. The Element also ensures that newly annexed areas are well-served and that infrastructure keeps pace with development. Through strategic interdepartmental and regional coordination, Santa Maria can continue delivering high-quality infrastructure, facilities, and services that meet the needs of all residents.



Santa Maria City Hall, 2025.

Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Public Facilities and Services Policies.

Major Infrastructure

Water System

The City's water portfolio contains two primary sources including groundwater from the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin and imported water from the State Water Project (SWP). Santa Maria's projected water supply is expected to remain stable and consistently exceed projected water demands, ensuring long-term water reliability as the city grows. Additional information on the City's water system can be found in the Urban Water Management Plan and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Twitchell Dam and Reservoir

The Twitchell Dam and Reservoir, constructed in the late 1950s, provide essential flood protection and groundwater recharge that have supported the city's growth and long-term water reliability by capturing winter storm flows and increasing recharge to the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin. The Twitchell Management Authority (TMA), on which the City participates alongside regional partners, coordinates monitoring, operation, and planning for the reservoir, dam, and broader basin management to help ensure these critical infrastructure assets are maintained and operated for ongoing flood risk reduction and water resources sustainability.

Wastewater

The City's wastewater collection and treatment system, including the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) in western Santa Maria, serves most of the city. Some areas in southern Santa Maria are serviced by the Laguna County Sanitation District (LCSD). Additional information on the City's wastewater system can be found in the Sewer System Management Plan and CIP.



City of Santa Maria Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Stormwater

Both the City and Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (SBCFCWCD) own and operate stormwater infrastructure within the city, including groundwater recharge basins, detention and retention basins, and flood control channels. Key components of the system include groundwater recharge basins like the Getty, Hobbs, and Kovar Basins, and flood control channels like the Battles, Blosser, Bradley, and Main Street Channels, which serve both agricultural and more urbanized parts of the city. These play a critical role in limiting discharges to the Santa Maria River and mitigating pollution.



Upper and lower photos: Battles Channel in Santa Maria.

Public Facilities

Public Buildings

Public buildings are government-owned buildings and properties that house government offices and services. Most public buildings in Santa Maria are managed by the City's Department of Public Works, which is responsible for design, capital improvements, and custodial services. Many of Santa Maria's public facilities are located in or near the Downtown area, providing centralized access to City services for residents and businesses (See Figure PFS-1).



City Hall Annex building located on Cook Street.

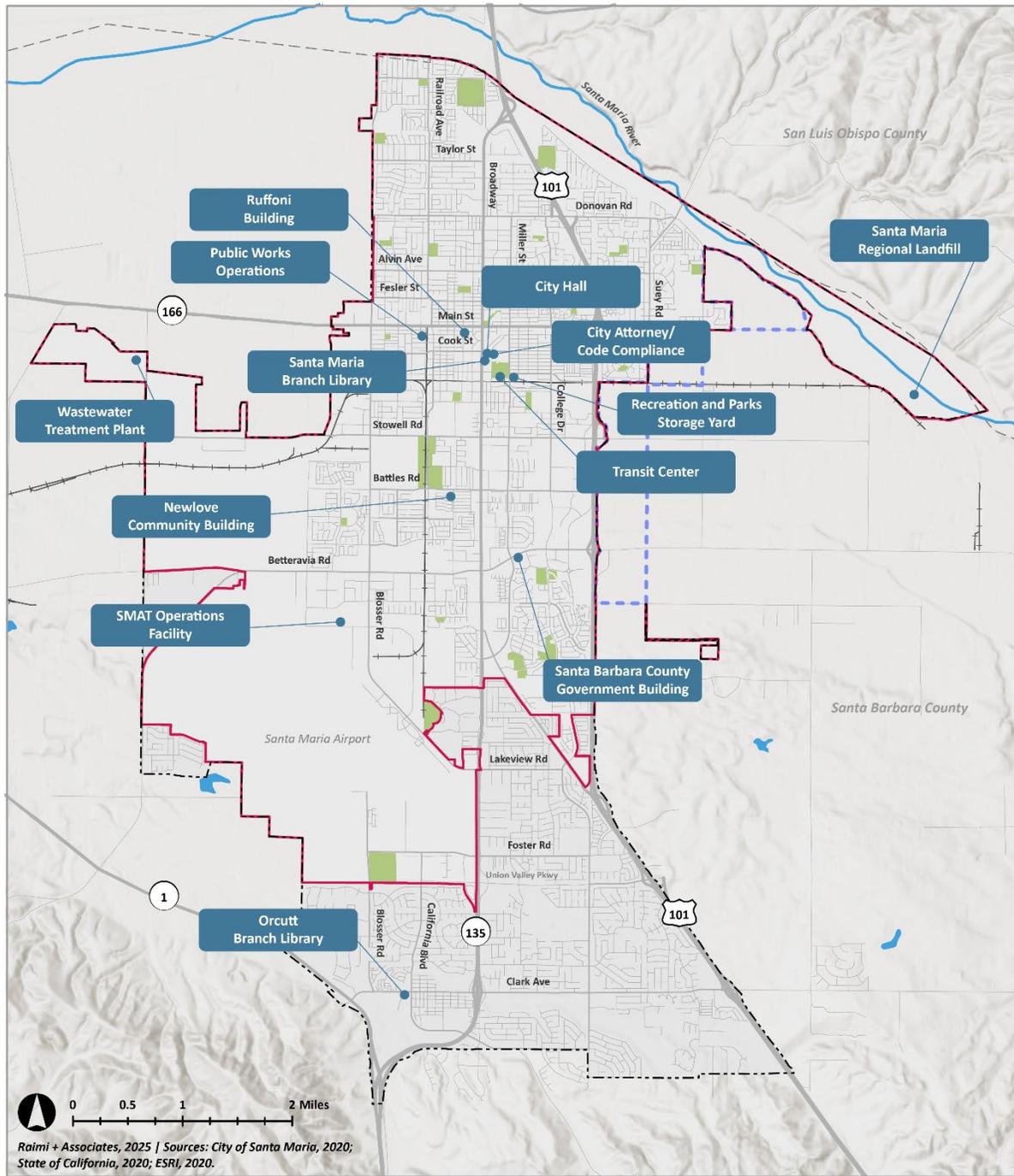
Libraries

The Santa Maria Public Library System provides library services and other vital educational resources to residents of Santa Maria and the nearby unincorporated County communities. The system includes five branches, with the main library located in Santa Maria and additional branches in Orcutt, Los Alamos, Cuyama, and Guadalupe (See Figure PFS-1).



Santa Maria Public Library. Credit: Jeanne Sparks

Figure PFS-1: Public Facilities



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- Railroads
- Freeways and Highways
- Santa Maria River
- Water
- Parks
- County Boundaries
- Libraries
- Public Facility

Schools

Santa Maria is served by multiple school districts and institutions that offer high-quality educational opportunities from elementary school through college. The Santa Maria-Bonita School District (SMBSD)—the largest district in Santa Barbara County—operates 17 elementary and four junior high schools, while the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District (SMJUHSD) operates five campuses.¹ Three of the district’s five schools are located in Santa Maria and also serve nearby unincorporated County communities (see Figure PFS-2). The Orcutt Union School District (OUSD) operates five elementary schools, one junior high school, and one high school. In addition, there are five private schools in Santa Maria: one elementary school, one high school, three K-8 schools, and one K-12 school.

Allan Hancock College, a public community college, provides accessible higher education opportunities to the region. Its main campus in Santa Maria is the largest of its four campuses and supports thousands of students across over 100 areas of study. These institutions form a foundation for lifelong learning and play a vital role in supporting workforce development, community enrichment, and individual advancement.

As educational services and facilities are not directly provided by the City of Santa Maria, the City’s role and responsibility are limited. However, the City recognizes that to grow properly, adequate school sites must be planned for. The continued coordination and input from the area’s school districts will be imperative to identify the appropriate location for new schools as a part of planning efforts. For more information on the location and distribution of existing and future school sites, please see the Community Facility land use designation in the General Plan Land Use Map in the Land Use Element.



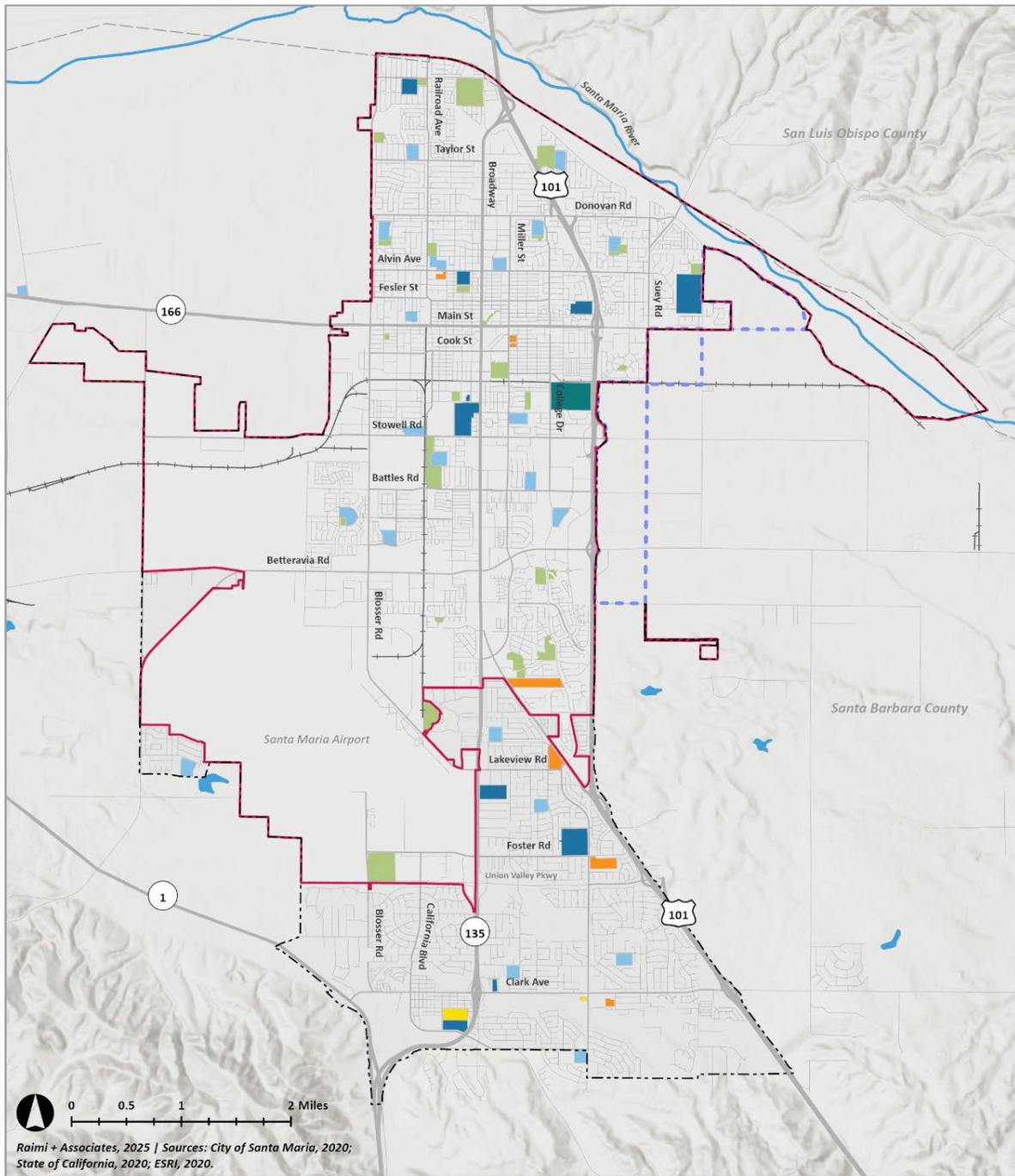
*Santa Maria High School monument sign.
Credit: Santa Maria High School*



Allan Hancock College. Credit: Allan Hancock College

¹ Additional information on existing schools and plans for the future development of schools in the Santa Maria Bonita School District and Santa Maria Joint Union High School District can be found at www.smbds.org and www.smjuhsd.org.

Figure PFS-2: K-12 Schools and Allan Hancock College



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- Railroads
- Freeways and Highways
- Santa Maria River
- Water
- Parks
- County Boundaries
- Public High School and Junior High School
- Public Elementary School
- Charter School
- Private School
- Community College

Public Services

Police

The Santa Maria Police Department, located at 1111 Betteravia Road (see Figure PFS-3), provides public safety and law enforcement services to the city's residents. Professional police services include maintaining civil order, preventive patrol, investigations, traffic control and enforcement, criminalistics, crime prevention, drug enforcement, and abuse prevention. In addition to day-to-day operations, the Department prepares an annual report that includes information on staffing and organizational structure, crime and traffic trends, training statistics, and other departmental programs. The department houses the public safety dispatch center for police, which receives all emergency 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls for services and ensures that appropriate resources are dispatched on a timely basis.



Santa Maria Police Department. Credit: Lompoc Record



Santa Maria Police Department vehicle.

Fire

The Santa Maria Fire Department provides “all-risk” emergency services, as well as public education programs, fire prevention, and life safety measures to the city's residents. The Department operates six fire stations in the city (see Figure PFS-3) as well as a Fire Prevention and Emergency Management Division. The Department also contracts with private firms to provide additional services if and where necessary.

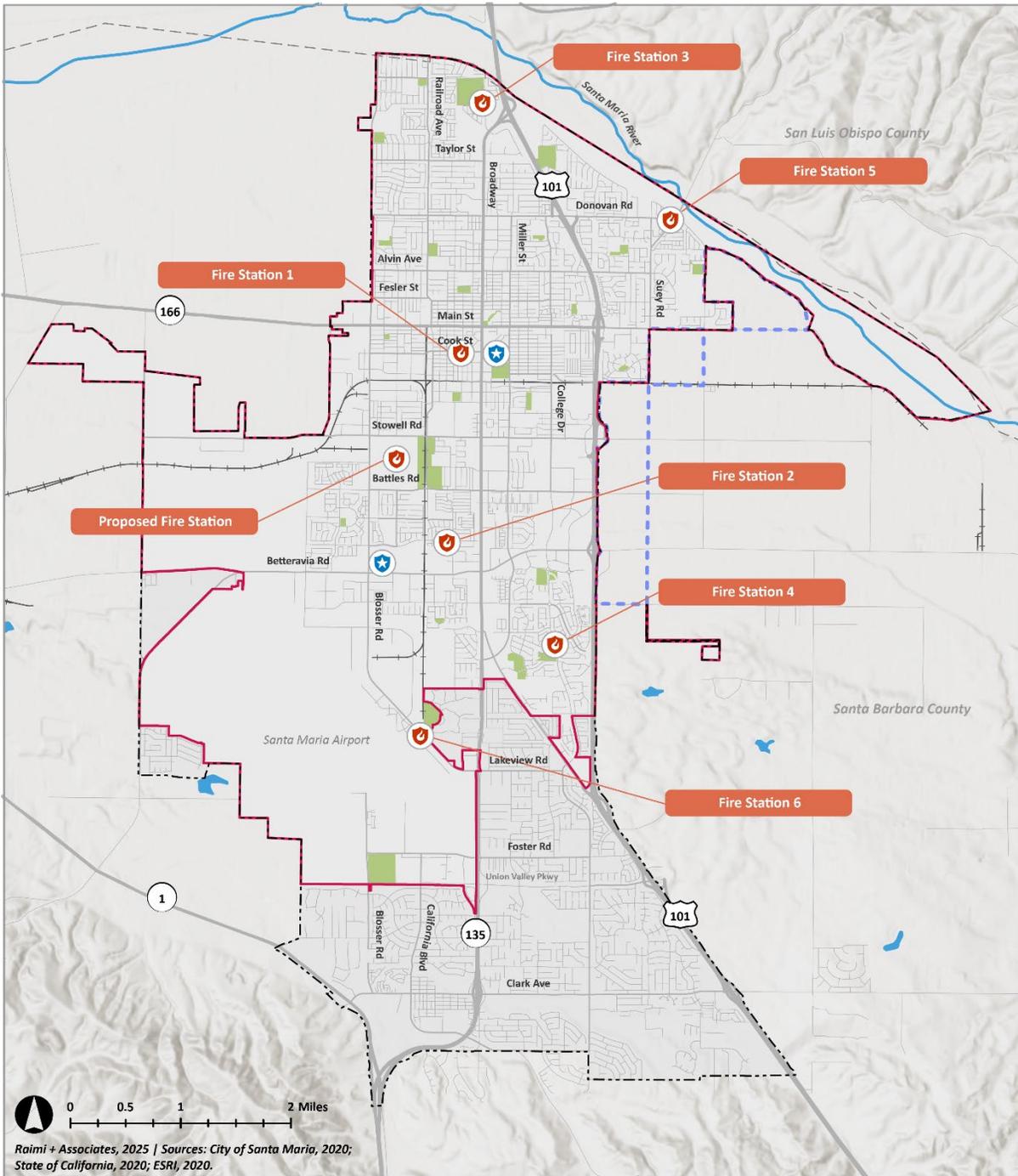
The Department provides emergency services, including pre-hospital emergency medical services, response to structural, and vegetation fires, vehicular accidents, hazardous materials response, water rescue, trench rescue, urban search and rescue, mass casualty, public assistance, fire and arson investigation, fire code enforcement, and disaster planning and preparedness education. The Department also administers a hazardous materials business plan program in cooperation with Santa Barbara County. Department staff lead and maintain the City’s Emergency Response Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan and provide technical assistance to other City Departments to ensure the continuity of operations plans and safety plans.

In addition to daily operations, the Department prepares an annual report that provides a summary of service levels, calls for service, response performance, training activities, and departmental initiatives. The Department also produces a Fire Department Long Range Master Plan to evaluate current resources and guide future staffing, facilities, apparatus, and service delivery needs to support continued growth and community safety.



Santa Maria Fire Station No. 1

Figure PFS-3: Police and Fire Stations



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



- Current Santa Maria City Limits
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- Police Facility
- Fire Station

Solid Waste

The City's Utilities Department oversees solid waste collection and disposal, prioritizing landfill diversion through recycling, composting, and various public education programs. The City currently operates the Santa Maria Regional Landfill (see Figure PFS-1). The City collection vehicles deliver recycling items to a transfer station where they are consolidated, loaded into larger vehicles, and transported to recycling centers located in San Luis Obispo County. As regulations evolve, the City continues to refine its waste management strategies to improve diversion rates, address infrastructure needs, expand key outreach opportunities, and ensure long-term compliance with State mandates.



Santa Maria Landfill



Photo of the recycling process.

Issues and Opportunities

The section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the policy direction of the Public Facilities and Services Policies.

Enhanced public services. The City provides high-quality public services to residents. As the population grows and diversifies, the City will need to meet evolving community needs, including improving emergency response capabilities, expanding inclusive programming and outreach, and ensuring equitable access to information and resources. By investing in responsive, community-centered services, Santa Maria can strengthen the quality of life and maintain trust in local government. Prioritizing accessibility and equity will ensure all residents benefit from the City's continued commitment to service excellence.

High-performing public facilities. Many of Santa Maria's public buildings and facilities are aging and in need of upgrades to meet modern standards. Likewise, improving facility efficiency can reduce operating costs, extend building life, and enhance service delivery for residents. Regular maintenance and targeted improvements also ensure public spaces remain safe, functional, and welcoming.

Public safety. Community members have expressed concerns about crime and the need for responsive public safety services. As Santa Maria grows, it is critical to ensure police, fire, and emergency services are well-staffed and equipped to meet demand. Continued collaboration with the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department, including the City's Mutual Aid Agreement with the County, can support regional coordination, improve emergency response, and expand resources for addressing complex safety challenges. Ongoing investment in community-oriented strategies will help protect residents, businesses, and visitors while strengthening public trust.

Annexation. As Santa Maria expands through annexation, the City faces the challenge of balancing infrastructure expansion with the maintenance of existing facilities and resources. For instance, while the current WWTP capacity is sufficient for present-day needs, projected flows at full build-out will exceed that capacity. Additionally, new regulatory discharge requirements will necessitate a reassessment of treatment processes and capacity. Expanding infrastructure and services to annexed areas can strain City resources and may impact the quality of upkeep in established parts of the city. It is critical for the City to prioritize phased development and cost-sharing to manage growth effectively while maintaining service quality across all neighborhoods.

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Public Facilities and Services Policies

The Public Facilities and Services Policies address the key issues and opportunities identified above and create a comprehensive roadmap for the provision and enhancement of public infrastructure, facilities, and services.

The *Standards* section establishes regulatory standards. A standard is a rule or measure establishing a level of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied.

The *Policy Framework* section outlines Public Facilities and Services goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Public Facilities and Services Element emphasize the continued provision of well-maintained infrastructure and reliable, inclusive services as the city grows.

The Element prioritizes the expansion and maintenance of essential systems such as water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure (Goals PFS-1, 2, and 3) while underscoring the need for a sustainable future through innovative approaches to waste management (Goal PFS-9) and water conservation. Strategies are centered on delivering responsive and accessible public services, maintaining infrastructure to meet the needs of both current and future residents, and ensuring that newly annexed areas receive adequate municipal services (Goal PFS-4).

Through continued investments in police and fire facilities (Goals PFS-7 and 8), expanded library services (Goal PFS-5), and modernized public buildings (Goals PFS-6), the Element promotes community safety, learning, and civic engagement. It also encourages regional coordination on issues such as groundwater management, solid waste, and school planning (Goal PFS-10). The Element builds on the principles of community health and natural resilience to ensure that Santa Maria remains a vibrant and well-served city where all residents can thrive.

Standards

This section establishes standards and levels of service that determine the development, maintenance, and improvement of public facilities and services in Santa Maria. These standards ensure equity, efficiency, and quality in service delivery while supporting the City's long-term goals.

Library Standards

The City's library service ratio is **0.5 square feet of library space per capita** and **1.5 to 2 books per capita** (*Policy PFS-5.1*). For more on library services, see Libraries.

Policy Framework

Major Infrastructure

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.

Action PFS-1.1.1: Conduct an analysis of the impacts of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and increased density on public services and infrastructure, identifying areas where these changes may require system upgrades to maintain service levels.

Action PFS-1.1.2: Review and update the City's Growth Mitigation Program (Assembly Bill 1600 fees) to ensure it effectively addresses the impacts of a growing population and infrastructure demands.

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 residents and businesses.

Goal PFS-2: Water resources. High-quality drinking water supply meets existing and future water demands.²

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-2.4: Regional coordination. Participate in regional coordination targeting aquifer recharge and sustainable groundwater supply.

² Please see the Safety and Conservation and Open Space Elements for additional policies and actions focused on water resources, groundwater, and water quality.

Policy PFS-2.5: Water quality. Ensure the potable water supply meets all federal and State water quality standards.

Action PFS-2.5.1: Monitor and treat, if necessary, public drinking water to meet safe drinking water standards.

Policy PFS-2.6: Efficient water use. Participate in and implement programs and measures that promote the efficient use of water.

Goal PFS-3: Stormwater management. The stormwater management system mitigates flood risks, enhances water quality, and promotes environmental health.³

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.

Action PFS-3.1.1: Continue to update relevant City plans to address stormwater management, improve flood resilience, and reduce the impact of surface runoff.

Action PFS-3.1.2: Study a potential assessment district for funding regional stormwater programs.

Action PFS-3.1.3: Review and update the City's Grading and Drainage Standards.

Action PFS-3.1.4: Implement capital improvement projects to prevent impacts from localized flooding events.

Goal PFS-4: Annexation. Infrastructure, parks, and recreational facilities meet the needs of newly annexed parts of the city.

Policy PFS-4.1: Recreational and park facilities. Develop recreational and park facilities in annexed areas to meet the needs of new residents, following standards for equitable access to parks and integrating recreational amenities into neighborhood planning.

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.

Policy PFS-4.3: Schools. Collaborate with local school districts to identify and reserve appropriate sites for new schools in annexed areas.

³ Please see the Safety and Conservation and Open Space Elements for additional stormwater management policies and actions.

Libraries

Goal PFS-5: High-quality libraries. An accessible, modern library system fosters lifelong learning, facilitates community engagement, and supports youth development through innovative services and resources.⁴

Policy PFS-5.1: Library service. Maintain a ratio of 0.5 square feet of library space per capita and 1.5 to 2 books per capita to keep library services apace with community growth.

Policy PFS-5.2: Accessible libraries. Promote equitable access to library services through ADA compliance, branch locations, mobile libraries, online resources for existing and future residents, and collaborations with school districts.

Policy PFS-5.3: Youth and after-school programming. Expand library programming that supports youth education, literacy, and enrichment through after-school and summer programs.

Public Buildings

Goal PFS-6: Publicly owned buildings. City-owned buildings effectively serve public needs, honor historic assets, and provide adaptable, multi-use spaces that evolve alongside the community.⁵

Policy PFS-6.1: City Hall and area governmental services. Maintain and enhance City Hall as a central hub for government services and community engagement by ensuring accessibility, modernizing facilities, and creating a welcoming environment for residents.

Policy PFS-6.2: Attractive and water-efficient landscaping. Design new and renovated landscaping at all City buildings to efficiently use water.

Policy PFS-6.3: Historic City-owned buildings. Preserve and rehabilitate historic City-owned buildings to maintain their cultural and architectural significance.

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.

Policy PFS-6.5: Strategic siting. Promote the co-location of public parks and City facilities to enhance access to services and green space.

⁴ Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for additional policies and actions focused on public facilities.

⁵ Please see the Safety Element for policies and actions focused on critical facilities and related resilience/adaptation improvements as well as the Health and Environmental Justice Element for additional policies and actions focused on public facilities.

Policy PFS-6.6: Multi-use facilities. Design new City-owned buildings to be adaptable for multiple uses by integrating flexible floor plans and multi-functional spaces that support diverse community needs, gatherings, and events.

Policy PFS-6.7: Civic Arts Center. Support the development of a Civic Arts Center to showcase Santa Maria's diverse cultural talent. Collaborate with community partners to identify a suitable site, secure funding, and ensure the facility serves as both a cultural hub and an economic driver for the city.

Police

Goal PFS-7: Police facilities. Well-planned police facilities ensure public safety and ensure effective, responsive policing.⁶

Policy PFS-7.1: Strategic facilities siting. Locate police facilities to provide efficient coverage and improve response times throughout the city, strategically situating services to ensure broad access and address areas with higher emergency needs.

Fire

Goal PFS-8: Fire protection facilities and services. A highly effective fire protection system with well-planned facilities safeguards lives, property, and environmental resources.⁷

Policy PFS-8.1: Fire protection facilities. Continue monitoring the City's existing and projected fire protection service levels to inform facilities siting and resource allocation.

Solid Waste

Goal PFS-9: Solid waste systems. An efficient, sustainable solid waste system minimizes landfill use, advances recycling efforts, and fosters regional cooperation to reduce environmental impact.⁸

Policy PFS-9.1: Waste diversion. Divert waste to meet State and federal mandates, focusing on community education, recycling programs, and incentives that reduce landfill dependency.

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.

⁶ Please see the Safety Element for policies and actions related to police response times.

⁷ Please see the Safety Element for additional fire policies and actions.

⁸ Please see the Safety and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for hazardous waste policies and actions.

Policy PFS-9.3: Regional cooperation. Collaborate with other agencies to develop coordinated waste management solutions, supporting a unified approach to recycling, waste diversion, and sustainable practices.

Schools

Goal PFS-10: Public and private schools. A collaborative relationship with educational institutions delivers high-quality education, provides safe and supportive environments, and enriches the lives of students and community members alike.⁹

Policy PFS-10.1: School enrollment. Continue to work with the Santa Maria-Bonita School District, Orcutt Union School District, private schools, and charter schools to monitor local K-12 enrollment and plan for impacts related to growth or decline.

Policy PFS-10.2: School siting. Work with public school districts, private schools, and charter schools to identify potential school sites to meet future growth, while being sensitive to adjacent uses. *For more on land use conflicts, see Land Use Goal LU-13.*

Policy PFS-10.3: Educational programming and afterschool care. Partner with schools to expand access to educational and afterschool programming that is affordable, inclusive, and supportive of working families.

Policy PFS-10.4: Hancock College. Support the expansion of Hancock College's facilities and services outlined in their Facilities Master Plan in a manner that is compatible with the existing campus and surrounding neighborhoods.

⁹ Please see the Economic Development Element for policies and actions related to educational opportunities and the Health and Environmental Justice Element for additional policies and actions focused on public facilities and childcare.



Santa Maria
General Plan

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Recreation and Parks Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

Though not a required Element, the Recreation and Parks Element is included in the General Plan to reflect the City's dedication to providing high-quality recreational and park facilities and programming for all residents. In the previous General Plan, these topics were addressed in the Resource Management Element.

The Recreation and Parks Element focuses on recreational facilities, trails, recreational programming, arts and culture programming, and parks.

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

The Recreation and Parks Element guides the development of a high-quality recreation and parks system that serves all Santa Maria residents. It prioritizes equitable access to modern recreational facilities, a comprehensive trails system, well-maintained parks, and inclusive programming for all ages and backgrounds. The Element also ensures that new neighborhoods and historically underserved areas receive adequate park and recreational facilities. Through strategic investments, partnerships, and sustainable design, Santa Maria can provide a connected and vibrant system of parks and recreation amenities.



Recreation and Parks Administrative Office

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Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Recreation and Parks Policies.

Recreation

Facilities and Programming

The City of Santa Maria owns and operates a youth center, senior center, aquatics center, public green, and seven community centers (see Table REC-1, Figure REC-1) that support aquatics, youth and teen services, senior programs, arts, sports, and special events. As of 2026, the City is constructing a new Sports Complex in the Blosser Southeast Area 5B Specific Plan area to expand athletic facilities and programming opportunities for residents. The roughly 21-acre complex is intended to provide additional multipurpose playing fields and supporting amenities to address ongoing demand for youth and adult sports, while also creating flexible space for community events. This investment supports the City’s broader recreation system by increasing capacity and enhancing opportunities for organized and informal sports programming.

The City also supplements its facilities through joint use of school gyms and fields and private providers such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club. Additional private recreational amenities that the City does not own or maintain benefit residents who have access to these amenities.



Paddleboard Yoga Class at the Paul Nelson Aquatics Center.

Table REC-1: Recreational Facilities

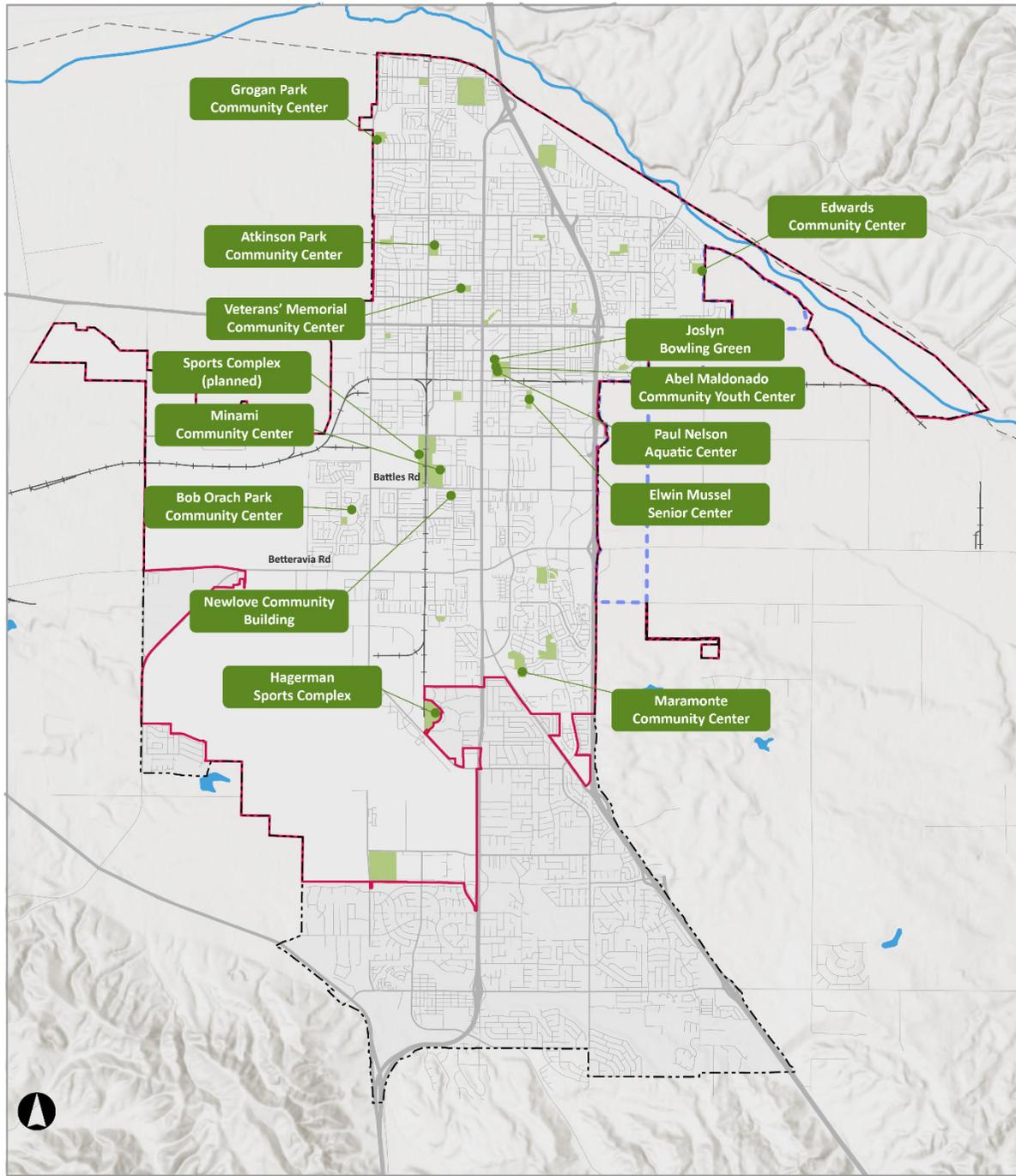
Facility	Type	Address
Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center	Youth community center	600 S. McClelland Street
Atkinson Park Community Center	Community center	1000 N. Railroad Avenue
Blosser Ranch Sports Complex	Recreation (Sports fields, playgrounds)	Southwest corner of Stowell Road and Depot Street
Bob Orach Park Neighborhood Community Center	Community center	1800 Westgate Road
Edwards Community Center (at Sierra Vista Park)	Community center	809 Panther Drive
Elwin Mussell Senior Center (at Alice Trefts Park)	Senior center	510 E. Park Avenue
Grogan Park Community Center	Community center	1155 W. Rancho Verde
Hagerman Sports Complex	Recreation (sports fields)	3300 Skyway Drive
Joslyn Bowling Green	Public green	420 S. McClelland Street
Maramonte Community Center	Community center	620 E. Sunrise Drive
Minami Community Center (at Adam Park)	Community center	600 W. Enos Drive
Newlove Community Building	Community building	1619 S. Thornburg Street
Paul Nelson Aquatic Center (at Simas Park)	Aquatic center	516 S. McClelland Street
Veterans' Memorial Community Center	Community center	313 W. Tunnel Street

Source: City of Santa Maria, 2020

Trail System

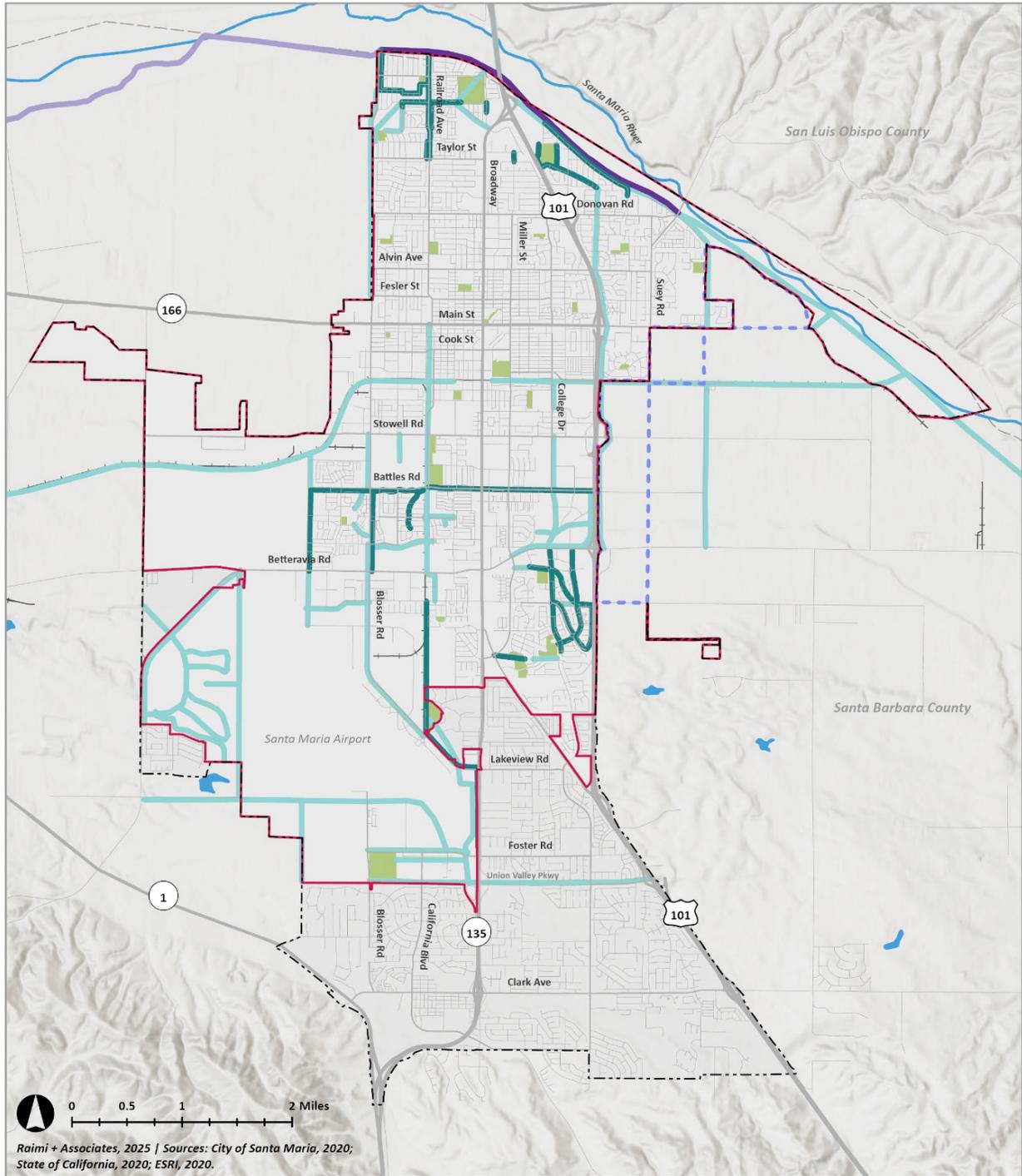
Santa Maria’s trail system includes 4.7 miles of Class 1 shared-use paths, 7.1 miles of trails within City limits, and an additional 14 miles of trails at Los Flores Ranch Park (see Figure REC-2). The City’s Active Transportation Plan (ATP) covers the planning, maintenance, and enhancement of the trails system. The most recently adopted ATP (2020) proposes improvements to existing trail amenities, including wayfinding, seating, lighting, and a planned increase to 26.3 miles of Class 1 shared-use paths.

Figure REC-1: Recreational Facilities



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

Figure REC-2: Trail System



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



- Current Santa Maria City Limits
- Current Sphere of Influence
- Planned Annexation Area and Sphere of Influence
- Railroads
- Freeways and Highways
- Santa Maria River
- Water
- Parks
- County Boundaries
- Existing Levee Trail*
- Existing Class I Paths
- Proposed Levee Trail*
- Proposed Class I Paths

*While the Levee Trail is owned by the Santa Barbara County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, the City maintains a use agreement and provides maintenance and litter clean-up.

Parks

The City of Santa Maria owns and maintains 30 parks (see Figure REC-3, Table REC-2). Additional park facilities include Los Flores Ranch Park and County-managed parks such as Waller and Orcutt Community Parks.



Multiple children playing at Russell Park located on the west side of the City.



Children playing at Acquistapace Park.

Leisure Needs Assessment and Action Plan

The Leisure Needs Assessment and Action Plan is updated every five years to reflect recreational trends and demographic shifts in the planning of recreation and park services improvements. The Plan is developed by the Recreation and Parks Department and the Recreation and Parks Commission, with input from Santa Maria community members. The Plan assesses community priorities, evaluates progress, and establishes goals for recreation and park programs and facilities. The Leisure Needs Assessment and Action Plan will be one of the primary means of implementing the Recreation and Parks Element.



Top left: Adult playing pickleball at the Hagerman Sports Complex.

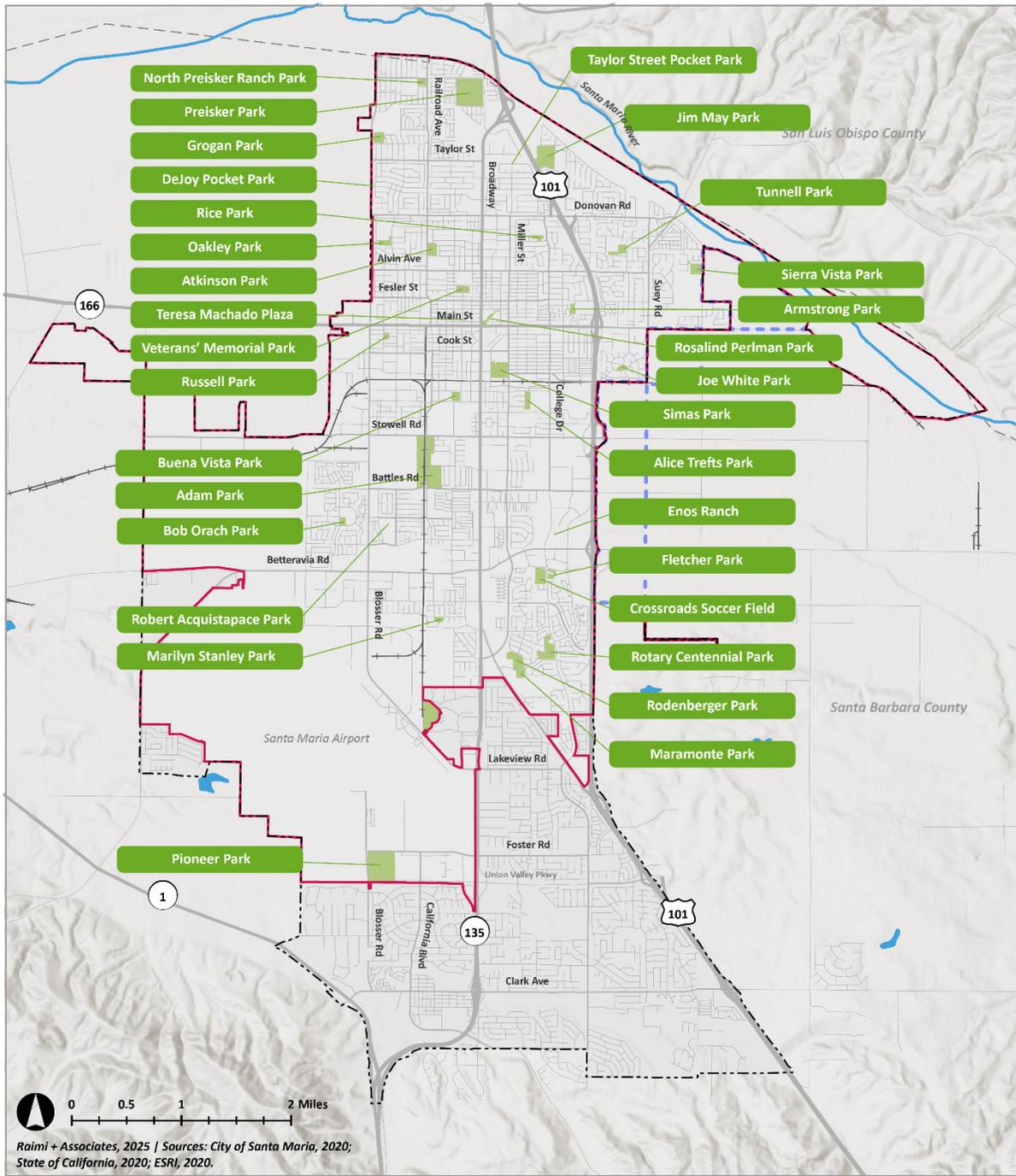


Top right: Teens gather for a basketball tournament at the Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center.

Bottom: Children play with an inflatable soccer goal at a community event hosted by the Recreation and Parks Department.



Figure REC-3: Existing Parks



Raimi + Associates, 2025 | Sources: City of Santa Maria, 2020; State of California, 2020; ESRI, 2020.



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

Table REC-2: Park Facilities

Park	Total Acreage
Adam Park	32.47
Alice Trefts Park	5.05
Armstrong Park	2.71
Atkinson Park	7.55
Buena Vista Park	4.03
DeJoy Pocket Park	0.16
Enos Ranch Park	6.22
Fletcher Park	2.83
Grogan Park	6.15
Jim May Park	15.59
Joe White Park	2.5
Maramonte Park (South)	3.56
Maramonte Park (North)	5.31
Marilyn Stanley Park	1.98
Memorial Park	4.42
North Preisker Ranch Park	3.03
Oakley Park	6.36
Simas Park	12.53*
Pioneer Park	15
Preisker Park	38.93
Rice Park	2.5
Robert Aquistapace Park	1.8
Rodenberger Park	5.13
Rosalind Perlman Park	2.87
Rotary Centennial Park	16.9
Russell Park	1.36
Sierra Vista (Edwards) Park	6.5
Taylor Pocket Park	0.15
Teresa Machado Plaza	0.67

Park	Total Acreage
Tunnell Park	6.68
Westgate Ranch (Bob Orach Park)	2.35

**Acreage includes Paul Nelson Aquatic Center, Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center, and Elk's Field*

Source: Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Leisure Needs Assessment and Action Plan, 2025.



Children's playground at North Preisker Ranch Park.

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Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the Recreation and Parks Policies.

Equitable access to parks and recreation facilities. As of 2020, Santa Maria’s park service ratio of 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents fell short of the City’s goal of 5 acres per 1,000 residents. Notable underserved areas include:

- The northwest, between Blosser Road, Taylor Street, Broadway (SR-135), and Donovan Road;
- Portions of the area north of Main Street, between Broadway and US-101 and east of US-101;
- The area north of Stowell Road, east of Broadway, south of Main Street (SR-166), and west of US-101; and,
- The residential area north of Betteravia Road, east of Blosser Road, south of Battles Road, and west of Broadway

Access to recreational facilities is limited in some areas of the city, but most residential areas are planned with parks that are accessible, many within walking distance. As the city grows, it will be critical to close these service gaps by prioritizing park development in underserved areas, improving access through joint-use agreements, and investing in mobile facilities. For instance, the development of the planned Sports Complex represents an opportunity to expand access to athletic facilities and relieve pressure on existing facilities by providing additional capacity for youth and adult sports programming.

Park quality and capacity. Population growth over the last 25 to 30 years has contributed to overcrowding at many parks, and this trend is expected to continue unless new parkland is added or existing facilities are expanded. To meet the City’s park service goal today would require over 270 acres of new parkland, and over 440 acres by 2050. In addition to park expansion, it will be important to optimize underutilized portions of existing parks and to incorporate new parks into future Specific Plans.

Safety and accessibility in park design. Park access is limited for some residents due to safety concerns related to lighting, visibility, and street crossings. Improving safety with lighting, marked crosswalks, and clear sightlines can increase comfort and encourage use, particularly for children, seniors, and individuals with limited mobility. Ensuring that parks incorporate universal design principles and prioritize pedestrian and bicycle access will also help create safer, more welcoming facilities.

Arts, culture, and community identity. Santa Maria can strengthen its cultural identity through an expanded arts and culture program. Integrating performances and culturally diverse events can build community pride, celebrate diversity, and activate underutilized spaces. By implementing the Public Art Master Plan, the City has the opportunity to beautify its public spaces while showcasing Santa Maria’s rich history, ethnic diversity, and appreciation for the arts. Partnerships with local artists and cultural organizations can help expand programming, attract broader participation, and reinforce parks as vital community centers.

Annexation and growth. As Santa Maria continues to grow through annexation, the City must ensure that new neighborhoods receive adequate parks and recreation services. Phased development, sustainable design, and innovative funding strategies can help the City maintain high-quality park and recreation services while accommodating future growth.



Top left: Musicians playing at a community event; Top right: Community members painting a utility box; Bottom left: Public Art on utility boxes; Bottom right Image: Performers at a local cultural event.



Mural painted at Machado Plaza in Santa Maria's Downtown.

Recreation and Parks Policies

The Recreation and Parks policies are organized into two sections that, together, create a comprehensive roadmap for the maintenance and enhancement of recreational and parks facilities and programming.

The *Standards and Diagrams* section defines regulatory requirements. Standards establish levels of quality or quantity that must be complied with or satisfied, while diagrams visually illustrate the intent or application of specific policies.

The *Policy Framework* section outlines Recreation and Parks goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Recreation and Parks Element respond to Santa Maria's evolving needs by promoting a modern, well-maintained, and accessible parks and recreation system.

The Element emphasizes expanding and upgrading parks and recreational facilities to meet service standards and accommodate a growing population, while improving connectivity through a comprehensive trails system and shared use of public lands (Goals REC-1 and REC-2).

The Element advances diverse and inclusive recreational programming, including mobile programs, cultural activities, and targeted outreach in multiple languages to foster diversity and ensure all residents can participate (Goal REC-3). The Element also establishes a process for monitoring community needs so that the City can respond proactively (Goal REC-4), while emphasizing equity and targeted investment in underserved neighborhoods (Goal REC-5).

To ensure long-term effectiveness of the system, the Element focuses on maintenance, safety, and cost-effective management strategies (Goal REC-6) as well as partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and the private sector to expand access and resources (Goal REC-7). Finally, the Element prioritizes environmental resilience and biodiversity through green infrastructure, sustainable landscaping, and the dual use of infrastructure for recreation and flood protection (Goal REC-8).

Standards

This section establishes standards and levels of service that determine the development, maintenance, and improvement of recreational and park facilities in Santa Maria. These standards ensure accessible, high-quality facilities while supporting the City's long-term goals.

Recreational Facilities Standards

The City's recreational facilities standards are outlined in Table REC-3 (*Policy REC-1.1*).

Table REC-3: Recreational Facilities Standards

Classification	Standard: Unit / People
Youth Baseball/Softball Field	1 unit/6,000
Adult Softball Field	1 unit/10,000
Regulation Baseball (lighted) Field	1 unit/30,000
Soccer Field	1 unit/5,000
Football Field	1 unit/50,000
Tennis Court (lighted)	1 unit/2,000
Handball/Racquetball Court	1 unit/3,000
Community Center Building (4,000-8,000 sq ft)	1 unit/25,000
Social-Cultural Center (15,000-20,000 sq ft)	1 unit/75,000
Performing Arts Center (20,000-30,000 sq ft)	1 unit/75,000
Senior Center (10,000-15,000 sq ft)	1 unit/50,000
Visual Arts Workshop Studio	1 unit/50,000
Gymnasium (12,000-14,000 sq ft)	1 unit/25,000
Community Swimming Pool	1 unit/20,000
Aquatic Center (extended season; handicapped)	1 unit/50,000

Park Standard

The City's park standard is 5 acres of park space per 1,000 residents (*Policy REC-2.1*).¹

Playground at a public park

¹ For the purposes of this standard, the total acreage includes both parks and recreational facilities.

Policy Framework

Goal REC-1: Modern recreational facilities. A comprehensive and well-integrated system of modern recreational facilities is accessible to all Santa Maria residents.

Policy REC-1.1: Facilities standards. Maintain the standards outlined in Table REC-3 as recreational facilities are renovated and expanded.

Policy REC-1.2: Temporary facilities. Construct and maintain temporary recreational facilities to address short-term needs or serve areas awaiting permanent facility development. Temporary amenities should meet basic recreational needs and be removed or upgraded once permanent facilities are available.

Policy REC-1.3: Multi-use public lands. Promote the shared use of public lands where feasible for recreational purposes.

Policy REC-1.4: Existing facilities. Ensure existing recreational facilities and infrastructure are equally maintained in light of planned facilities in newly annexed parts of the city.

Policy REC-1.5: Trail system. Develop a system of accessible, well-maintained trails² that connects neighborhoods, parks, and open spaces and supports multiple uses, such as walking, biking, and running.

Action REC-1.5.1: Expand the scope of the City's Active Transportation Plan to create a new, more robust Trail System Master Plan.

Action REC-1.5.2: Implement and regularly update the Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan to enable safe pedestrian and cyclist connections to recreational facilities.

Goal REC-2: High-quality parks. A robust network of high-quality parks meets the diverse needs of all Santa Maria residents.³

Policy REC-2.1: Park standard. Maintain the City's standard of 5 acres of park space per 1,000 residents, primarily in areas directly adjacent to residential and commercial developments.

Action REC-2.1.1: Adopt a park classification system to support strategic growth and management of park facilities.

² Please see the City's Active Transportation Plan for a map of all trails.

³ Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for policies and actions focused on parks and facilities improvements in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Policy REC-2.2: Mitigation fees. Require developers to pay park mitigation fees to ensure that new developments contribute to the expansion and rehabilitation of parks facilities.⁴

Action REC-2.2.1: Regularly review and update park mitigation fees to reflect current needs and construction costs.

Policy REC-2.3: Park grants. Pursue federal, state, and regional grant opportunities to support the development, improvement, and maintenance of parks and facilities.

Goal REC-3: Inclusive programming. A diverse array of programming is inclusive, engaging, and responsive to the community, strengthening resident wellness, social connection, and cultural engagement.

Policy REC-3.1: Inclusive programming. Offer inclusive and diverse recreational programming that meets the varied needs of all residents, including programs in Spanish, Mixteco, and Tagalog.

Policy REC-3.2: Mobile programming. Implement mobile recreational activities to reach underserved areas, bringing programs directly to neighborhoods to ensure equitable access to recreation across the city.

Policy REC-3.3: Arts and culture. Incorporate public art, cultural activities, and musical and theater performances into park spaces to foster community identity. When possible, partner with Santa Maria-based artists and organizations.⁵

Action REC-3.3.1: Implement the City's Public Art Master Plan by collaborating with stakeholders, artists, and arts organizations to enhance public spaces and celebrate the city's rich arts heritage.

Policy REC-3.4: Community events. Continue to promote local community events that celebrate the city's cultural diversity, foster neighborhood pride, and strengthen community bonds. Facilitate events in public spaces, parks, and community centers, prioritizing activities that are inclusive, accessible, and reflective of residents' interests.

Policy REC-3.5: Youth and senior programming. Expand programs for youth and seniors, as necessary, to support healthy lifestyles and social connections, fostering physical activity, creative expression, and intergenerational community-building.

Policy REC-3.6: Aquatics. Continue to develop and expand aquatic programs and facilities to promote water safety, swimming skills, and recreational enjoyment for residents of all ages and abilities.

⁴ Please see the Land Use and Circulation Elements for additional policies and actions related to development impact and mitigation fees.

⁵ Please see the Conservation and Open Space Element for additional cultural resource policies and actions.

Policy REC-3.7: Marketing and outreach. Use social media, community events, and partnerships with local organizations to increase awareness and participation in the City’s recreation and parks programs.

Goal REC-4: Conditions and demand monitoring. Recreational and park facilities are safe, functional, accessible, and meet City standards.

Policy REC-4.1: Facilities monitoring. Monitor growth and demographics to anticipate demand for recreational and park facilities to ensure adequate amenities are available to serve both existing and future residents.

Action REC-4.1.1: Implement and regularly update the Leisure Needs Assessment and Action Plan to guide investment in community facilities, ensuring balanced support for both structured and unstructured recreation spaces.

Action REC-4.1.2: Update the Leisure Needs Assessment and Action Plan every 5 years to support the planning, development, operation, and funding of recreational and park facilities and programs in the planning area. The Assessment will also evaluate the conditions of these facilities and programs to ensure City standards are being met.

Action REC-4.1.3: Designate opportunity areas where future investments should be prioritized, with a specific focus on disadvantaged communities and historically underinvested neighborhoods.

Goal REC-5: Park access. Equitable and barrier-free parks and recreational spaces are accessible for all Santa Maria residents, with facilities that are well distributed and inclusive to residents of all ages and abilities.⁶

Policy REC-5.1: Park distribution. Strive to provide an equitable distribution of park facilities across all neighborhoods, with a focus on addressing gaps in underserved areas by prioritizing park development in areas with limited access.

Action REC-5.1.1: Create a citywide map indicating parks, open spaces, and walking distances to each to identify gaps in access and address equitable distribution of facilities.

Policy REC-5.2: Universal design. Incorporate universal design principles in the development and renovation of parks to ensure that recreational spaces are usable by people of all ages and abilities. Design parks to include accessible paths, inclusive playgrounds, and other amenities that accommodate individuals with disabilities, ensuring full participation and enjoyment for all.

Policy REC-5.3: Senate Bill 1000 neighborhoods. Target new park improvements in Senate Bill (SB) 1000 disadvantaged communities (DACs) to improve public health outcomes, reduce heat island effects, and address long-standing inequities in access to park space.

⁶ Please see the Health and Environmental Justice Element for policies and actions focused on park access.

Policy REC-5.4: Nuisance mitigation. Avoid locating parks near high-volume roads, highways, or other sources of pollution to minimize exposure to noise, air pollution, and safety hazards. When proximity to such infrastructure is unavoidable, incorporate design features such as sound barriers, vegetation buffers, and safe crossings to mitigate potential health impacts.⁷

Goal REC-6: Amenities and maintenance. Recreational and park facilities are well maintained.

Policy REC-6.1: Facilities maintenance. Conduct routine maintenance of recreational and park facilities, including upkeep, repairs, and enhancements to ensure long-term usability and safety.

Policy REC-6.2: Maintenance districts. Require that residential and commercial developments that require a conditional use or planned development permit be annexed into a Landscape Maintenance District (LMD) and, depending upon the amount of proposed public easement landscaping, a Special Benefit Zone (SBZ).

Policy REC-6.3: Cost-efficient maintenance. Implement cost-effective maintenance strategies for parks facilities to ensure long-term sustainability, such as drought-tolerant landscaping and the use of smart irrigation technologies to reduce operational costs.

Action REC-6.3.1: Study potential maintenance funding mechanisms and develop strategies to seek sustained funding, which may include the following: funding from public and private partners; bonds and tax measures; assessment districts; and expanding fee-based recreational programming and leasing agreements.

Policy REC-6.4: Safety. Promote safety in parks by implementing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) features—such as adequate lighting, clear sightlines, surveillance, and strategic landscaping—and supporting Park Rangers tasked with patrols of park facilities.

Policy REC-6.5: Vandalism. Reduce vandalism through proactive strategies such as regular maintenance and the use of vandal-resistant materials.

Policy REC-6.6: Community support. Create a network of volunteers to assist in maintaining park and recreational areas. Consider mobilizing after-school programs, local businesses, and non-profit organizations to assist with small maintenance, landscaping, and clean-up projects.

⁷ Please see the Land Use, Circulation, Noise, and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for policies and actions related to land use conflicts.

Goal REC-7: Partnerships. Partnerships with public and private entities expand access to recreational and park facilities and services to maximize the availability of resources for the community.

Policy REC-7.1: Joint use agreements. Increase recreational resources through continued coordination with the Santa Maria school districts, Allan Hancock Community College, and Santa Barbara County.

Policy REC-7.2: County facilities. Facilitate access to County-owned recreational facilities for city residents through cooperative agreements, ensuring that City and County assets complement one another to provide seamless service.

Policy REC-7.3: Public-private partnerships. Encourage public-private partnerships to enhance recreational amenities and programming where public amenities are not available.

Policy REC-7.4: Programming partnerships. Partner with local organizations to develop a multipurpose recreational facility for outdoor events.

Goal REC-8: Resilient parks. Parks and recreational spaces are resilient to environmental challenges and enhance local biodiversity.⁸

Policy REC-8.1: Protection of open space. Preserve and expand open spaces in public parks that provide ecological and scenic benefits for residents.

Policy REC-8.2: Flood protection. Incorporate flood management strategies into park areas, utilizing green spaces for stormwater detention to reduce flood risk and enhance public safety.

Policy REC-8.3: Dual-use infrastructure. New and existing retardation basins, drainage easements, utility easements, and open space corridors may be improved for recreational purposes as conditions to development – but only when the infrastructure is deemed to serve a public benefit, such as a regional recreation space for use by the general public (e.g. sports field). In such cases, the design, configuration, size, and public access must meet the requirements of the Recreation and Parks Department and the Public Works Department.

Policy REC-8.4: Sustainable landscaping. Promote the use of native plants and drought-tolerant landscaping to enhance ecological value, reduce water consumption, and support local wildlife.

⁸ Please see the Conservation and Open Space Element for additional policies and actions focused on open space, natural habitat, stormwater management, and biodiversity.

Policy REC-8.5: Tree canopy and shade. Expand tree canopy coverage in parks to provide shade, reduce urban heat island effects, and enhance visitor comfort.⁹

Policy REC-8.6: Biodiversity. Support biodiversity in parks and open spaces by integrating ecological design elements and educational signage to enhance public awareness of urban conservation.

Policy REC-8.7: Green infrastructure. Incorporate green infrastructure elements, such as bioswales and permeable surfaces, into parks to manage stormwater and improve water quality.

⁹ See the Conservation and Open Space Element for additional urban forestry policies and actions.



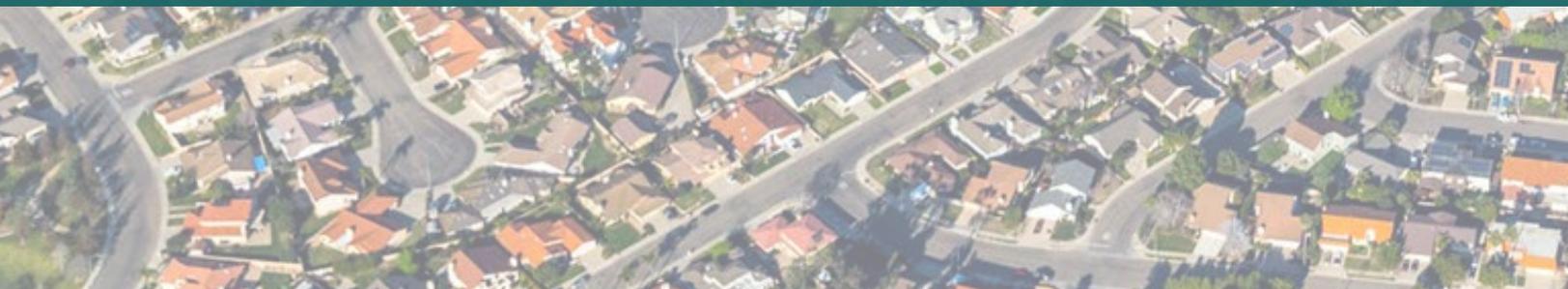
Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



Economic Development Element

Final Draft | February 12, 2026



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Introduction

Though not a required Element, the Economic Development Element is included in the General Plan to reflect the City's dedication to providing economic opportunities for all residents, supporting local businesses, and improving the City's overall fiscal health. The Economic Development Element focuses on workforce development, local industry, education partnerships, regional partnerships, and tourism.

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

The Economic Development Element provides a framework for fostering a diverse and resilient economy in Santa Maria. It supports high-quality jobs, educational and workforce development opportunities, and a business-friendly environment that encourages innovation and investment. The Element emphasizes the revitalization of commercial corridors and the Downtown area, support for key industries, and the enhancement of infrastructure and housing diversity to meet the needs of a growing community. Through regional collaboration, targeted industry support, and an expanded tourism sector, Santa Maria can bolster economic opportunities, strengthen its identity, and advance long-term prosperity for residents and businesses.



Enos Ranchos Shopping Center on Betteravia Road.



Santa Maria Town Center in Downtown Santa Maria. Credit: Spinoso Real Estate Group

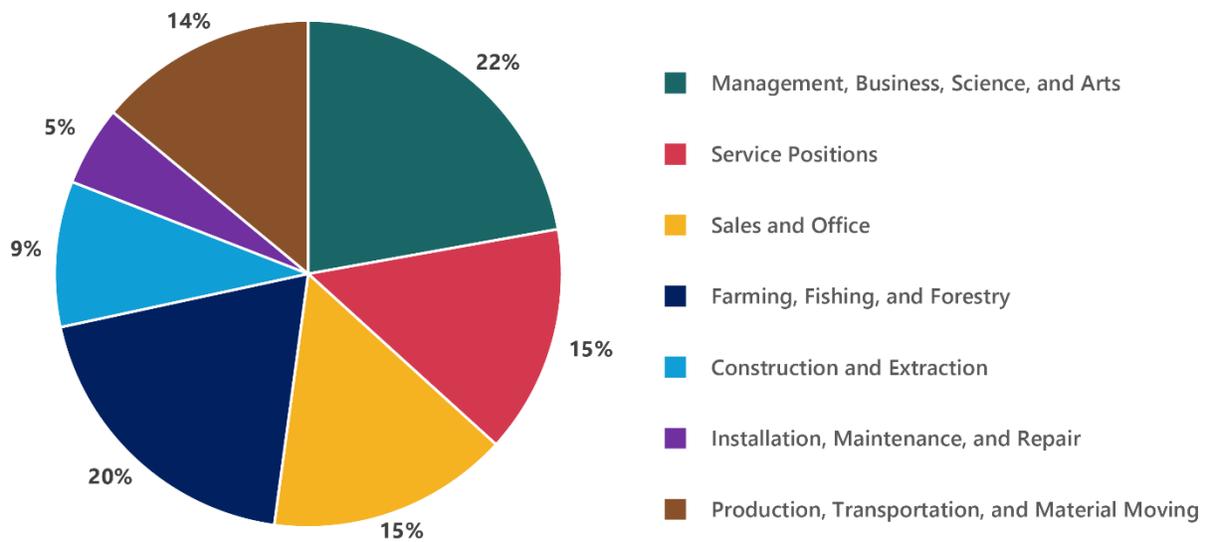
Background

This section introduces existing conditions and trends related to priorities addressed in the Economic Development Policies. Additional background information can be found in Appendix A: Existing Conditions Reports.

Local Industry

Santa Maria’s agriculture and manufacturing sectors contribute significantly to local employment and economic activity (see occupationsFigure ECON-1). The city’s location near Vandenberg Space Force Base has also strengthened local aerospace and defense-related industries. Roughly 40 percent of employed Santa Maria residents work within the city, while the remainder commute to surrounding areas such as Orcutt, Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Vandenberg Space Force Base, highlighting Santa Maria’s role within the broader regional labor market.

occupationsFigure ECON-1: Primary Industries and Occupations in Santa Maria



Source: American Communities Survey, 5-Year Estimate (2023)

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 (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.

Partnerships and Regional Collaboration

The City works closely with several local and regional economic development organizations, including the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce, REACH Central Coast, and EconAlliance. These organizations support various initiatives related to business development, workforce alignment, and regional planning. Santa Maria also partners with local educational institutions, namely Allan Hancock College and the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District, to support job training and workforce development.



Credit: Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce



Ideas + Action for a Thriving Central Coast

Credit: Reach Central Coast



Credit: EconAlliance



Credit: Allan Hancock College

Tourism

Santa Maria is known for its Santa Maria-style barbecue, agricultural heritage, and proximity to natural attractions like the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes. Farmers' markets, farm-to-table restaurants, annual festivals such as the Strawberry Festival and Santa Barbara County Fair, the Elks Rodeo, and vintners' events support agricultural tourism. The city also benefits from its location near Vandenberg Space Force Base, where aerospace launches have the potential to attract visitors from across the state.



Credit: Santa Barbara County Fair.



Santa Maria Elks Rodeo Parade. Credit: Elks Lodge #1538.



Agricultural fields in the Santa Maria Valley.



Santa Maria Strawberry Festival. Credit: KSBY News

Issues and Opportunities

This section describes the issues and opportunities that informed the Economic Development Policies.

Workforce development and educational alignment. Santa Maria has a strong foundation in education and workforce services, supported by institutions such as Allan Hancock College and Santa Maria Joint Union High School District’s Mark Richardson Career Technical Education Center, as well as programs like Build Your Workforce and the America’s Job Center of California. Santa Maria Joint Union High School District and Allan Hancock College also offer college and career readiness programs for students, such as the College Readiness and Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathway, to strengthen the connection between education and workforce development. While the City has expanded opportunities for higher-paying jobs in manufacturing, the medical field, and agriculture, the limited availability of higher-wage jobs and more advanced training remains a challenge. Strengthening local partnerships can help Santa Maria grow a more skilled, locally employed workforce.

Support for target industries. Agriculture and manufacturing remain the backbone of Santa Maria’s economy, and the city is well-positioned to attract high-growth sectors like aerospace, health care, renewable energy, and agricultural technology (ag-tech). The city’s relatively affordable cost of living, development-friendly environment, and proximity to Vandenberg Space Force Base enhance its competitiveness in these sectors. However, limited land availability may limit the city’s economic potential.



Credit: EconAlliance



Marian Regional Medical Center. Credit: Dignity Health

Downtown and corridor revitalization. Renewed investment can help transform Santa Maria’s commercial corridors and Downtown area into vibrant economic hubs. Revitalizing these areas through mixed-use development, infill housing, and coworking-office space supports local businesses and creates lively destinations for residents and visitors.

Tourism and visitor economy. Santa Maria is uniquely positioned to grow its tourism sector by celebrating its regional identity and natural surroundings. The area’s renowned barbecue, arts and cultural events, and proximity to destinations like the Santa Maria Valley Wine Country and Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes offer a foundation for expanding tourism. Partnerships between the City, local businesses, and tourism organizations can promote events, improve visitor-serving infrastructure, and amplify agricultural tourism.

Regional collaboration. The City participates in several collaborative economic efforts that offer important opportunities to support business development, workforce alignment, and regional competitiveness. Continued coordination with Vandenberg Space Force Base, the Santa Maria Airport District, and educational institutions can advance the growth of target sectors.



Gateway Mixed-Use Project located on the northwest corner of Main Street and Broadway. This building was constructed in 2024 and is an example of recent revitalization efforts in the Downtown area.

Economic Development Policies

The Economic Development Policies address the key issues and opportunities identified above and establish a comprehensive roadmap for expanding economic and educational opportunities, strengthening local industry, and bolstering partnerships in the greater Santa Maria area.

The *Policy Framework* section outlines Economic Development goals, policies, and implementation actions. A goal describes the community's desired future. A policy is a specific statement of intent that guides decision-making. An action is an activity, procedure, program, or project that carries out a policy.

Policy Summary

The goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Economic Development Element foster a dynamic and resilient local economy by advancing educational and workforce opportunities, supporting existing businesses, and attracting new investment. The Framework is organized under four goal areas.

The first goal area aligns workforce development and educational opportunities with target industries through local partnerships, post-secondary program expansion, and career-readiness initiatives (Goal ECON-1). Through coordination with higher education institutions and regional programs, the aim is to ensure that residents are equipped with the skills needed for technically advanced jobs.

The second goal area fosters a supportive environment for business retention, expansion, and attraction by streamlining regulations, investing in infrastructure, and creating opportunities for infill and mixed-use development in key areas, especially Downtown (Goal ECON-2). Infrastructure investments and land use strategies are designed to support a diverse economy while maintaining affordability for both residents and employers.

Recognizing that economic success depends on collaboration, the third goal area focuses on public-private partnerships and regional cooperation to support innovation and entrepreneurship (Goal ECON-3).

The fourth goal area advances a targeted approach to tourism, placemaking, and branding that leverages Santa Maria's unique cultural identity, agricultural roots, and natural attractions to position the city as a vibrant destination for visitors and businesses (Goal ECON-4).

Policy Framework

Goal ECON-1: High-quality educational and economic opportunities. Santa Maria enjoys a growing economy that provides high-quality educational and expanded workforce opportunities for all residents.¹

Policy ECON-1.1: Workforce development. Continue to support local workforce development programs (e.g., Build Your Workforce Program) and career services (e.g., America’s Job Center of California) to connect businesses and individuals with funding, job training, and work experience, ensuring that residents are prepared for high-quality jobs.

Policy ECON-1.2: Coordinate support for job training. Coordinate with local higher education institutions and other partners in the regional workforce system to support job training and workforce development programs.

Action ECON-1.2.1: Lead or partner to prepare a local economic development strategic plan (EDSP). An EDSP would identify key target industries, detailed strategies, and an action matrix outlining roles and responsibilities, potential partnerships, funding sources, and near-term implementation timeframes (typically over a five-year period). The EDSP should align with and support existing regional plans.

Policy ECON-1.3: Post-secondary program expansion. Encourage expanding post-secondary education and training programs that support the workforce needs of Santa Maria’s target industries, including expanded offerings through Allan Hancock College.

Policy ECON-1.4: Local job connections. Support local events and programs that connect job seekers with high-growth and target industries.

Goal ECON-2: Business growth support. Santa Maria supports the growth and prosperity of existing businesses and attracts new business and investment.²

Policy ECON-2.1: Business-friendly regulation. Maintain a regulatory environment that is business-friendly and appropriately aligned with attracting and/or supporting target industries.

Action ECON-2.1.1: Regularly review and update City permit procedures and fee schedules to improve efficiency and enhance clarity, thereby streamlining the permitting process. Identify opportunities to engage stakeholders in the review and recommendation process.

¹ Please see the Public Facilities and Services Element for policies focused on collaboration with educational institutions.

² Please see the Land Use Element for policies and actions related to downtown, infill, housing stock, corridors, and annexation.

Action ECON-2.1.2: Evaluate establishing regulatory or other incentives for target businesses that may provide significant household supportive employment, reinvestment in desired areas, and/or revenues to the City (e.g., retail, health care, aerospace, precision manufacturing, education, agricultural technology, clean technology, and renewable energy, etc.).

Policy ECON-2.2: Downtown and corridors vitality. Strengthen the vitality and development of Downtown, as well as mixed-use and commercial corridors and centers throughout Santa Maria, by allowing a range of uses, amenities, and spaces to accommodate retail, housing, coworking spaces, and offices.

Policy ECON-2.3: Infill development. Prioritize infill development opportunities to revitalize Downtown and bolster the unique identities of other neighborhoods throughout Santa Maria.

Policy ECON-2.4: Diverse housing products. Encourage the development of a full spectrum of housing products at all affordability levels to ensure a diverse and talented workforce can remain and grow locally.

Policy ECON-2.5: Sustainable infrastructure investment. Invest in resilient and sustainable infrastructure systems that serve the existing and future businesses and residents in Santa Maria.

Policy ECON-2.6: Business assistance efforts. Support efforts and organizations that assist with business planning and modernization assistance (e.g., scaling, technology adoption, site selection and development, continuity planning, etc.), especially support for marginalized entrepreneurs.

Policy ECON-2.7: Santa Maria Airport Business Park development and partnership. Support and promote the development of the Santa Maria Public Airport by working closely with the Airport District on updating the Airport Business Park Specific Plan, with a renewed focus on attracting light industrial, high-tech, and other target businesses.

Action ECON-2.7.1: Support the Airport District in the implementation of a targeted plan to attract and grow commercial air service, providing opportunities for local businesses and residents to initiate and complete travel locally.

Policy ECON-2.8: Annexation lands. Support efforts for the annexation of land into the city to promote business expansion and residential growth. Leverage annexation as a tool to accommodate economic development, enhance infrastructure, and create opportunities for sustainable urban growth.

Policy ECON-2.9: Local strategic planning. Plan for and participate in local strategic economic development efforts.

Goal ECON-3: Partnership-driven economic development. Economic development goals are advanced through collaboration and partnerships.

Policy ECON-3.1: Public-private partnerships. Develop public-private partnerships with high-growth and target industry partners to support existing businesses, educational and workforce training opportunities, and to expand into emerging industries.

Action ECON-3.1.1: Participate in regularly convening local leaders in the private sector, philanthropic organizations, and higher education institutions to ensure there is support for the development of new industries in the city and region.

Action ECON-3.1.2: Coordinate with partners to identify companies in target industries and engage target industry representatives to identify actions the City could take to support them in establishing or expanding their presence.

Policy ECON-3.2: Startup partnerships. Explore partnerships with higher education institutions and organizations to support the creation of incubators and business accelerator programs.

Policy ECON-3.3: Regional efforts. Actively participate in a coordinated, joint regional economic development program (with partners such as the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce, Regional Economic Action Coalition (REACH) Central Coast, EconAlliance, etc.).

Action ECON-3.3.1: Support strengthening of the regional workforce development system through partnerships aiming to align workforce training initiatives with industry needs, ensuring a well-prepared and competitive workforce.

Policy ECON-3.4: Aerospace and aviation regional collaboration. Develop strategic public-private partnerships with Vandenberg Space Force Base, the Santa Maria Airport District, private aerospace companies, and regional partners to advance economic development and to support educational and workforce initiatives in high-tech, aerospace, and defense industries.

Goal ECON-4: Strengthening tourism. Santa Maria is a unique destination that celebrates location, history, and community.

Policy ECON-4.1: Santa Maria as a destination. Support efforts to promote Santa Maria as a destination for tourism. Celebrate Santa Maria's unique, authentic identity, including attributes such as being the birthplace of Santa Maria-style barbeque as well as over 150 years of agricultural history. Leverage Santa Maria's distinctive location as the epicenter of the Central Coast, with access to a wide range of experiences including natural amenities (e.g., the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes), aerospace launches (Vandenberg Space Force Base), revitalization of the Downtown, agricultural tourism, wineries, and farm-to-table restaurants.

Action ECON-4.1.1: Continue and expand the offering of community events and opportunities that enable community members, businesses, and visitors to engage with local businesses.

Action ECON-4.1.2: Amplify Santa Maria's agricultural tourism industry through continued support of community events (e.g., farmers' markets, barbeque festivals, vintners' events, etc.) and partnerships.

Action ECON-4.1.3: Support public and private efforts to develop and/or enhance visitor-serving infrastructure in and around Santa Maria to help attract visitors, such as relocation of the fairgrounds, expansion/establishment of the performing arts and/or conference center, utilization of sports facilities for tournaments, and similar initiatives.

Policy ECON-4.2: High-quality amenities. Encourage the development of quality lodging, restaurants, and meeting facilities to meet the needs of businesses, residents, and their guests, and to bring visitors to the community.

Action ECON-4.2.1: Amend the Zoning Code to ensure that lodging and similar uses that serve short-term visitors (e.g., hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts) are appropriately allowed.

Policy ECON-4.3: Placemaking. Support a variety of revitalization and improvement programs focused on placemaking and beautification, such as façade improvements, public gathering places, public art, enhanced streetscapes and redesign of streets into pedestrian-friendly environments, and community events.³

Action ECON-4.3.1: Continue to pursue and secure grants and other funding to develop, improve, and invest in cultural amenities and public spaces.

Action ECON-4.3.2: Continue to implement and update, as needed, the City's Public Art Master Plan, Recreation and Parks Plan, Urban Forest Management Plan, and similar investment programs designed to enhance the attractiveness of Santa Maria as a place to live, work, play, and visit.

Policy ECON-4.4: Tourism-economic partnerships. Support and enhance the synergy between tourism promotion and economic development.

³ Please see the Land Use and Health and Environmental Justice Elements for additional policies and actions focused on public and pedestrian-friendly community spaces.