



Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



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.

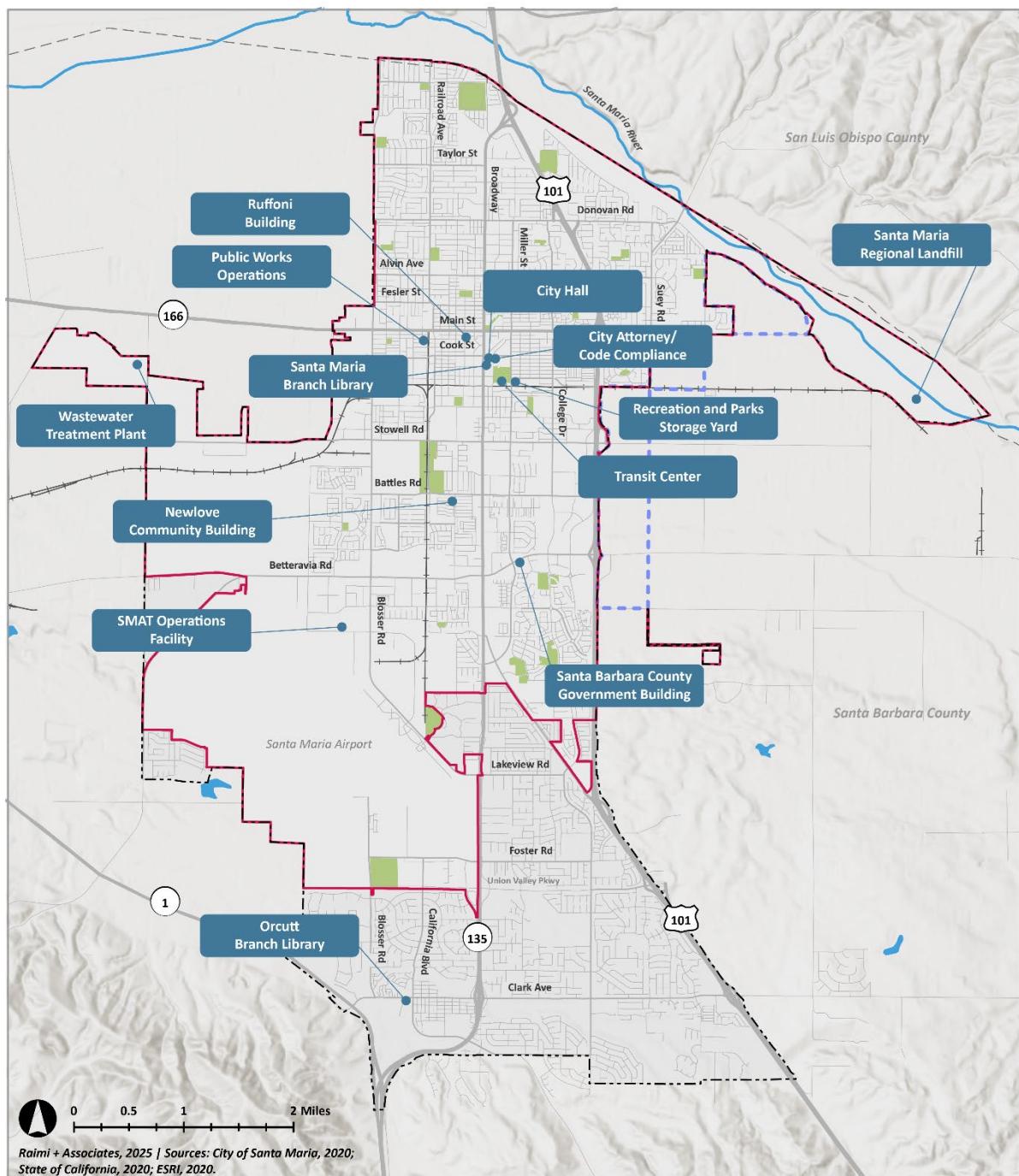
Libraries

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



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

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.

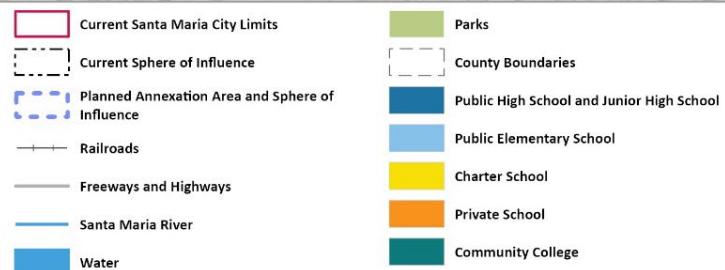
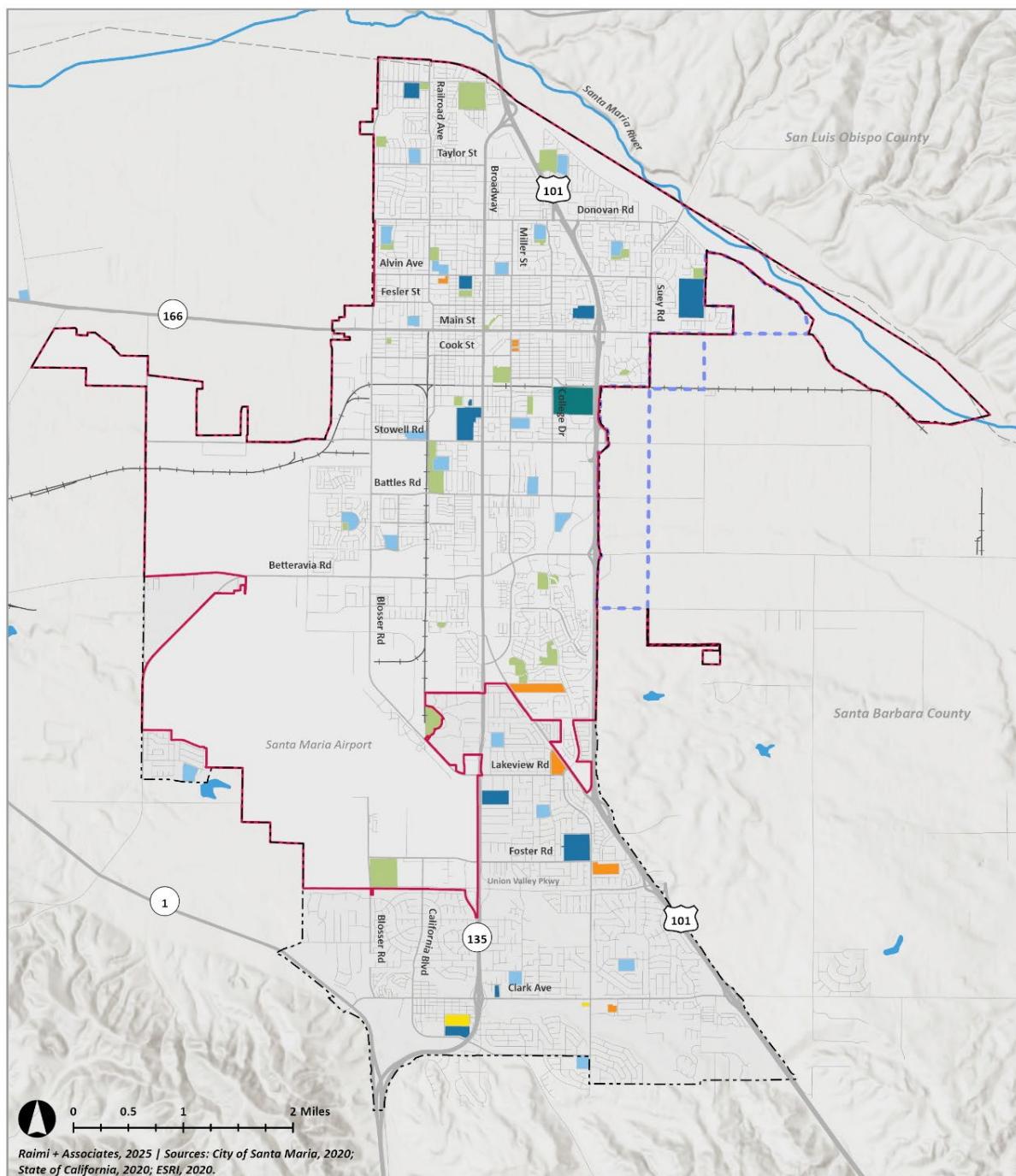
Credit: Santa Maria High School



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.smbsd.org and www.smjuhsd.org.

Figure PFS-2: K-12 Schools and Allan Hancock 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.

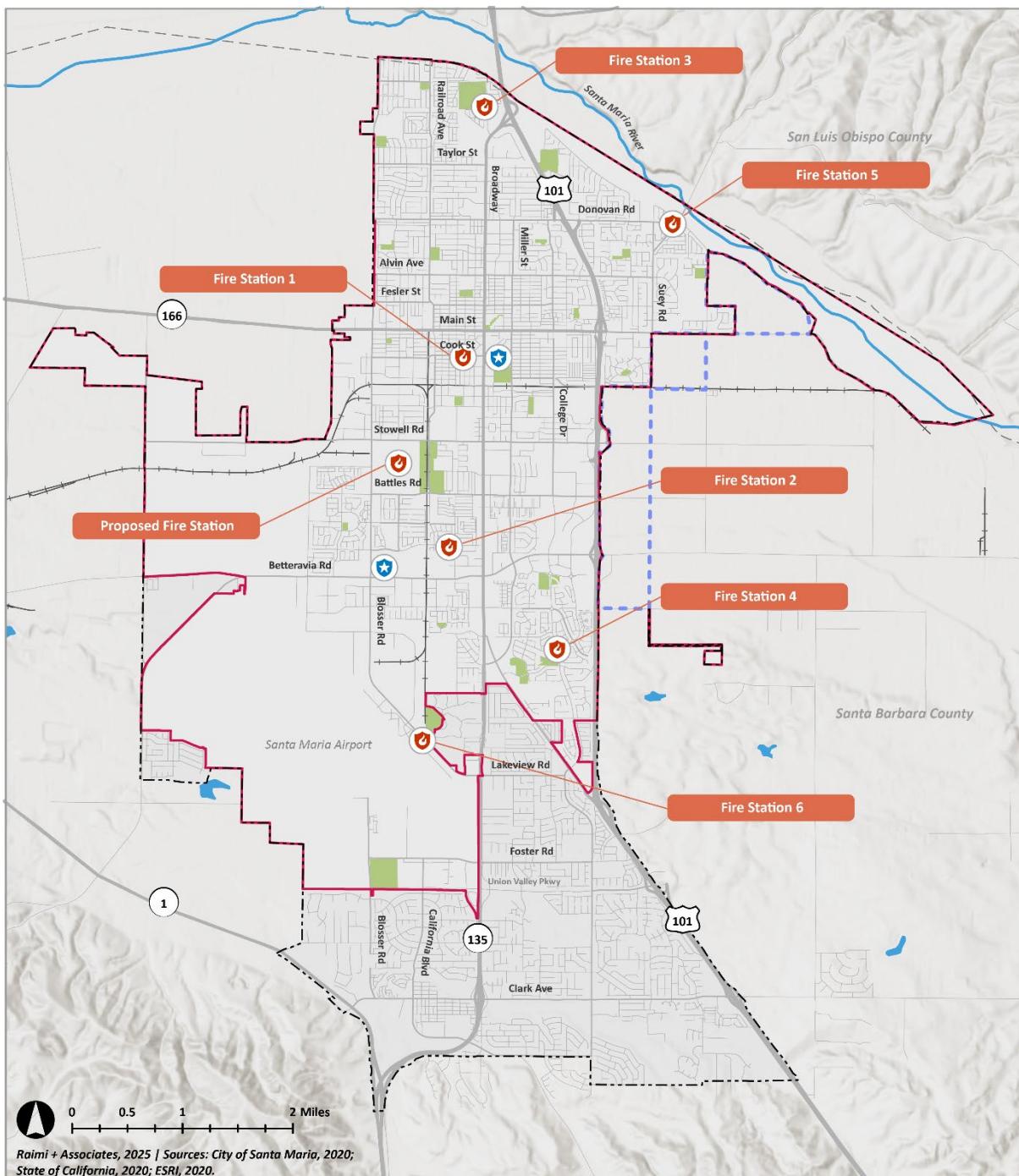
The Department provides emergency services, including pre-hospital emergency medical services, response to structural, and vegetation fires, vehicular accidents, hazardous materials response, water rescue, trench rescue, urban search and rescue, mass casualty, public assistance, fire and arson investigation, 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



- 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
- 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.⁹

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.