

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Final EIR Contents

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

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

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

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

## 1.2 Draft EIR Public Review Process

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> Draft EIR for the project is available here: <https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/resources>

## 1.3 EIR Certification Process and Project Approval

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

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

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

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

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