

Appendix A

Notice of Preparation and Scoping Comments



**CITY OF SANTA MARIA
NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
AND SCOPING MEETING**

DATE: February 18, 2025

TO: Governor's Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and a Scoping Meeting for the Santa Maria General Plan Update

LEAD AGENCY:

Agency Name:	City of Santa Maria Community Development Department
Street Address:	110 South Pine Street, Room 101
City/State/Zip:	Santa Maria, CA 93458
Contact:	Dana Eady Planning Division Manager deady@cityofsantamaria.org (805) 925-0951 ext. 2444

CONSULTANT:

Firm Name:	Rincon Consultants, Inc.
Street Address:	1530 Monterey Street, Suite D
City/State/Zip:	San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Contact:	Chris Bersbach Senior Supervising Environmental Planner cbersbach@rinconconsultants.com

Project Title: City of Santa Maria General Plan Update

The City of Santa Maria (City), as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is preparing an update to the Santa Maria General Plan that will guide growth and development of the city through 2045, and has determined that preparation of a programmatic EIR is necessary to evaluate potential environmental impacts of the 2045 General Plan and associated Zoning Code amendments pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City is the CEQA Lead Agency and is requesting input on the scope of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies, interested public agencies and organizations, and the general public (pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082).

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) provides a summary of the plan, the City's preliminary identification of the potential environmental issues to be analyzed in the programmatic EIR; and information on how to comment on the scope of the EIR. This NOP and background documents associated with the 2045 General Plan are available for review on the Santa Maria 2045 General Plan webpage at: <https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/>.

EIR NOP Public Comment Period: February 18 to March 19, 2025

The City requests your review and consideration of this notice and invites input and comments from interested agencies, persons, and organizations regarding the preparation of the 2045 General Plan EIR.

NOP Written Comments: Comments must be submitted via mail or email with “NOP Comments: Santa Maria 2045 General Plan EIR” in the subject line and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the comment to the Lead Agency Contact at the following address or e-mail by **5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 19, 2025:**

Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager
Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, California 93458
deady@cityofsantamaria.org

All comments provided should identify specific topics of environmental concern and the reason for suggesting the study of these topics in the EIR. All comments will be considered in defining the scope of the EIR in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines. If applicable, please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization.

EIR Public Scoping Meeting: The City will hold a public EIR scoping meeting in-person to provide an opportunity for agency staff and interested members of the public to submit verbal comments on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on **Thursday, February 27th at 9:00 AM at Shephard Hall in the Santa Maria Library (421 S. McClelland Street, Santa Maria, California 93454)**. The scoping meeting will include a brief presentation of the project to be addressed in the EIR and will provide attendees with an opportunity to provide input on the scope of the EIR.

Plan Location: The Santa Maria 2045 General Plan encompasses the entirety of the City of Santa Maria and its Sphere of Influence. Figure 1 in the Plan Description (Attachment 1) below shows the regional location and Figure 2 shows the Santa Maria 2045 General Plan boundary.

Proposed Plan: The 2045 General Plan would serve as a long-term framework for future growth, reflect issues identified from community input and changes in State law, and update all elements of the General Plan including the Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Safety Element, Environmental Justice Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, Noise Element, Public Facilities and Services Element, Recreation and Parks Element, and Economic Development Element. The update to the General Plan would include, but is not limited to, revisions to policies, narratives, data, and figures to reflect the new buildout period. The Zoning Code would also be amended to ensure consistency with the General Plan.

EIR Environmental Impact Areas: The EIR will provide a programmatic evaluation of potential environmental impacts of the plan. The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the plan when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The City anticipates that the plan could result in potentially significant environmental impacts with regard to the following topic areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR.

- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

EIR Plan Alternatives: The EIR will also evaluate a reasonable range of plan alternatives that could reduce or avoid potential environmental effects identified in the EIR, including a required “No Plan” Alternative.

When the Draft EIR is completed, it will be available for review at the City's offices located 110 South Pine Street, Suite 101, Santa Maria, California 93458 and online at: <https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/>. The City will issue a Notice of Completion and Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR at that time to inform the public and interested agencies, groups, and individuals regarding how to access the Draft EIR and provide comments. Additional information about the proposed plan can be accessed at the <https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/> webpage and the City website at <https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/>.

If you have questions regarding this NOP or the EIR public scoping meeting, please contact Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager at (805) 925-0951 or via email at Deady@cityofsantamaria.org.



Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager

February 17, 2025

Date

Attachment 1 – Plan Description

Attachment 1 - Plan Description

The plan analyzed in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is the City of Santa Maria (City) 2045 General Plan Update, hereafter referred to as the “plan.” This section of the EIR describes the key characteristics of the plan, including the plan proponent/lead agency, the geographic extent of the plan, plan objectives, required approvals, and the development forecasted by the plan.

Plan Purpose

The plan is an update to the City’s current General Plan, which includes the following chapters: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Safety Element, Health and Environmental Justice Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, Noise Element, Public Facilities and Services Element, Recreation and Parks Element, and Economic Development Element. The plan establishes the City’s vision for future development through the horizon year of 2045. The plan will serve as the City’s primary guide for future land use and development decisions in a way that meets the community needs and priorities while serving as a key tool for influencing and improving the quality of life for residents and businesses. As such, it serves as the “blueprint” for future development and conservation of a community. The 2045 General Plan Update will help the City plan for important community issues, such as community growth; housing, mobility, and infrastructure needs; climate change; and environmental protection. It will also set the stage for future social, physical, and economic development of the city.

Plan Proponent/Lead Agency

The City of Santa Maria is both the plan proponent and the lead agency for the proposed plan. The City’s Community Development Department (located at 110 South Pine Street, Suite 101, Santa Maria, California 93458) prepared this EIR with the assistance of Rincon Consultants, Inc. and Raimi + Associates.

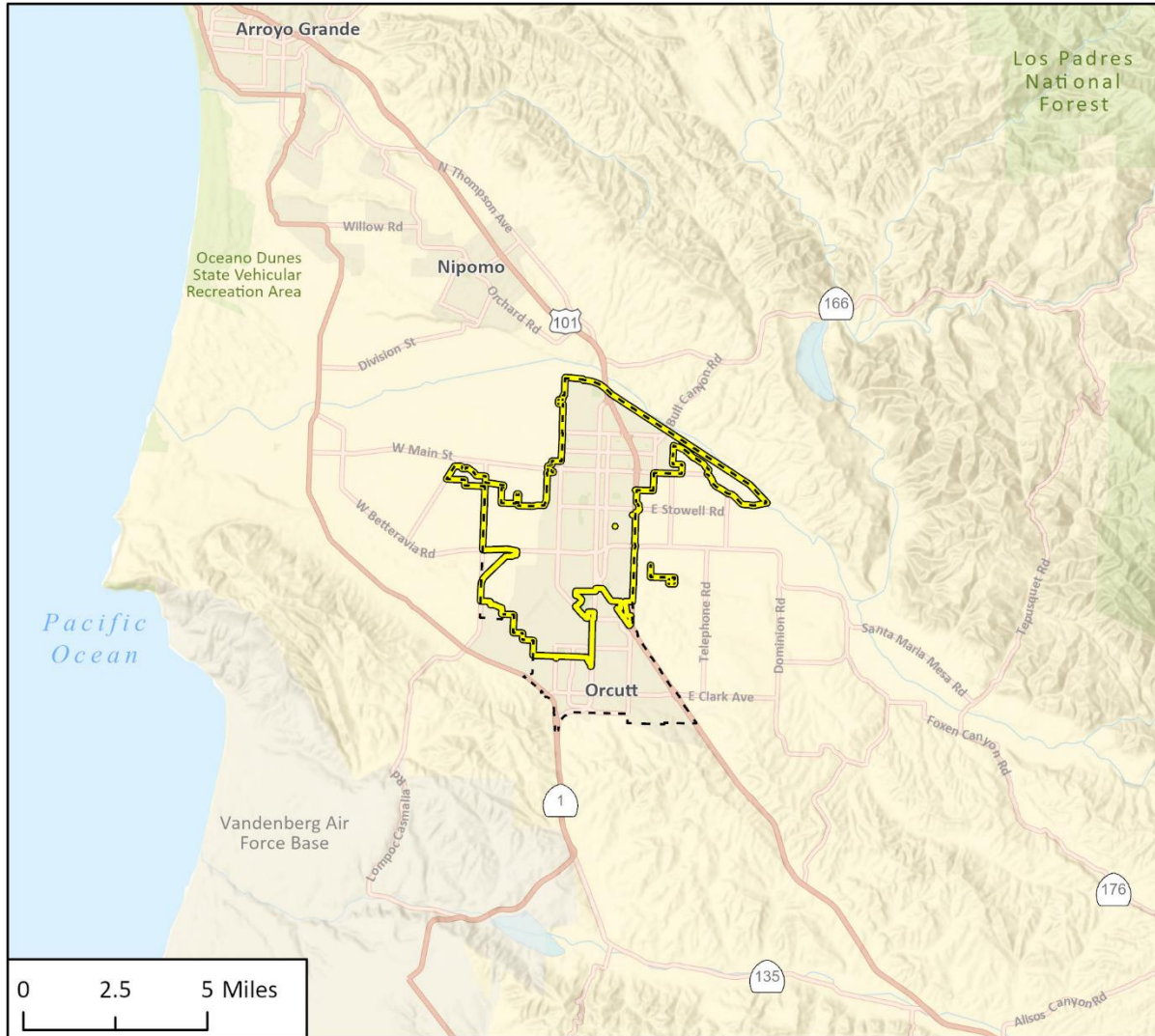
Plan Area Location and Environmental Setting

Regional Location

The City of Santa Maria is located in northern Santa Barbara County, surrounded by the hills of the Santa Maria River Valley (see Figure 1). The General Plan area involves all land within the Santa Maria Sphere of Influence¹ (SOI) and includes the annexation of areas east of the city limits (see Figure 2). The City of Santa Maria is generally bound by the Santa Maria River to the north, agricultural lands to the east and west, and the unincorporated town of Orcutt to the south.

¹ The term “sphere of influence” applies to the area designated by the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as the probable, future physical boundary or service area of the city. Overall, planning decisions made for the city are assumed to have a bearing on growth and development in these unincorporated adjacent areas. Areas not included as part of the annexation for the 2045 General Plan will continue to be deferred to the County land use designations and regulations in the SOI. Any development or change that happens in the SOI during the lifetime of the General Plan will occur under the jurisdiction of the County. Therefore, this EIR does not evaluate impacts resulting from future growth within the SOI, outside of the proposed annexation, as part of the proposed plan. However, where relevant, this EIR does evaluate potential impacts resulting from future growth within the city limits to lands within the SOI. The SOI is also included in the cumulative setting for this EIR.

Figure 1 Regional Location



- Santa Maria City Limits
- Sphere of Influence/
General Plan Area
- ★ Project Location

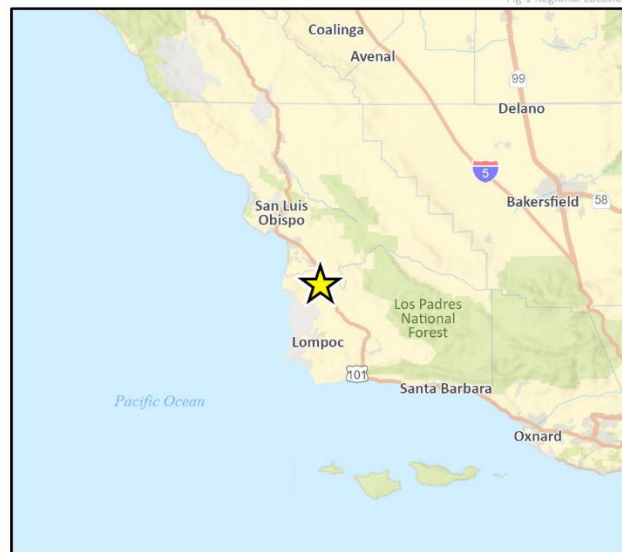
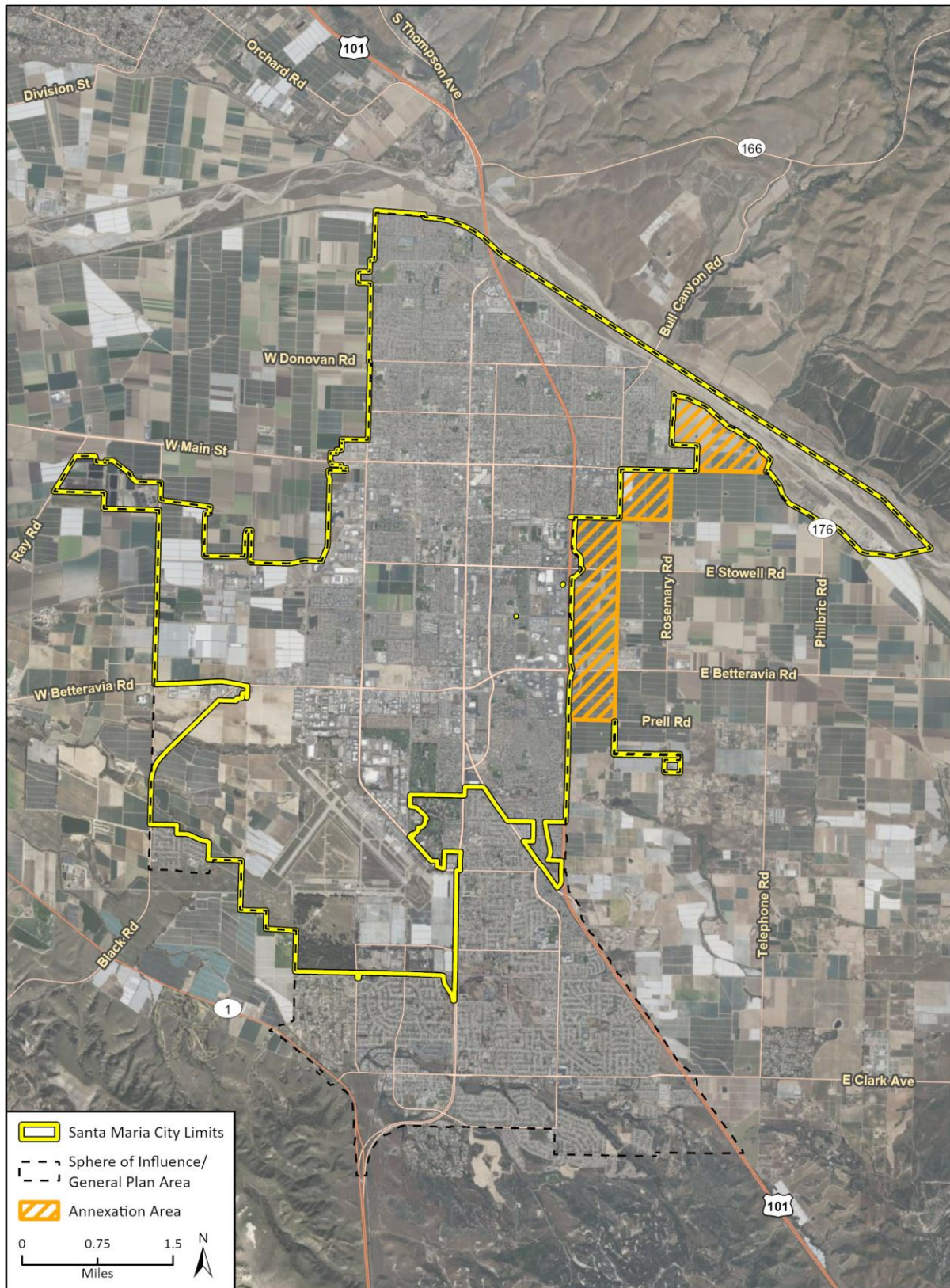


Figure 2 Plan Area Location



Imagery provided by Microsoft Bing and its licensors © 2024.

19-07303 EPS
Fig 2 Project Location

U.S. Highway 101 (U.S. 101) forms the eastern edge of the city. A linear portion of Santa Maria is also located to the west of U.S. 101. This portion of the city extends south from Vineyard Trail Road then extends east along an internal farm road. Santa Maria is located approximately 25 miles south of San Luis Obispo, 50 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, 250 miles south of San Francisco and 170 miles north of Los Angeles.

Principal regional transportation facilities serving Santa Maria are U.S. 101, State Route 135 (SR 135), State Route 166 (SR 166), and the Santa Maria Valley Airport. Regional transit is provided by Clean Air Express and the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority. Regional rail is provided by Amtrak.

Local Setting

The City of Santa Maria is characterized as a suburban residential community. The plan area covers approximately 17,200 acres within the city limits and approximately 4,500 acres within the SOI (City of Santa Maria 2020). Approximately 27 percent of land within Santa Maria is occupied with residential uses, primarily consisting of single-family residences (22 percent). Agricultural uses occupy 14 percent of the city, airport uses occupy 11 percent, public and institutional uses occupy 8 percent, and commercial uses occupy 7 percent. Approximately 19 percent of the city is comprised of vacant land. Residential land uses are distributed throughout the city. Non-residential land uses, including industrial and commercial, commonly line major corridors in Santa Maria, including Broadway, Main Street, and Betteravia Road. Agricultural and vacant uses are located at the periphery of the city. The city is underlain by the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Subbasin. The local climate in Santa Maria is identified as a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters.

Existing Plan Area Characteristics

The 2045 Santa Maria General Plan area covers approximately 17,200 acres, which includes 12,700 acres within the city limits and 4,500 acres within the Sphere of Influence (SOI). Approximately 110,608 people live within the General Plan area as of January 2024, resulting in population density of approximately 640 people per square mile. There are 34,412 residential units within the General Plan area as of 2024 (California Department of Finance 2024).

The annexation area evaluated in the plan (discussed in detail in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**) covers 985 acres east of the City of Santa Maria's limits.

Regulatory Setting

State law (Government Code Sections 65300 through 65303.4) requires each municipality to adopt and periodically update its General Plan, and requires that a General Plan include the following mandatory subject areas, or "elements": Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Safety, and Environmental Justice. Municipalities may also prepare optional elements that can be organized or combined at the municipality's discretion.

The 2045 General Plan has been organized into the following elements: Land Use; Circulation; Safety, Health and Environmental Justice; Conservation and Open Space; Noise; Public Facilities and Services; Recreation and Parks Element; and Economic Development.² Together, these elements

² General Plan element titles and organization of required content in the General Plan is currently in draft status and subject to change.

cover all topics required to be included in a General Plan under State law. The City of Santa Maria City Council adopted the 6th Cycle Housing Element on December 5, 2023. The 2045 General Plan may require additional updates to the adopted Housing Element, although such updates are anticipated to be for consistency with the 2045 General Plan.

Under State law a property's zoning is required to be consistent with its General Plan land use designation (Government Code Section 65860). Section 65860(c) of the Government Code requires that when a General Plan is amended or updated in a way that makes the Zoning Ordinance inconsistent with the General Plan, "the zoning ordinance shall be amended within a reasonable time so that it is consistent with the general plan as amended."

Plan Objectives

The 2045 General Plan will serve as a long-term framework for future growth and development, represents the community's view of its future, and contains the goals and policies upon which the City Council, Planning Commission, and the entire community will base land use and resource decisions. The 2045 General Plan will provide a contemporary plan that will guide Santa Maria through the next 20 years. The primary objective of this plan is to update the existing Santa Maria General Plan in order for it to be compliant with State law.

The 2045 General Plan would implement the following vision to guide development.

Vision. Santa Maria in 2045 is a community where families can establish and maintain multi-generational roots. It is close-knit, culturally diverse, and economically inclusive. This is possible, in part, because Santa Maria offers affordable, safe, attractive, and healthy homes and neighborhoods for all residents. This is also possible because of the availability of high-quality education, jobs, and economic opportunity. Building from a strong foundation in the agricultural, retail, healthcare, and business services industries, Santa Maria has continued to diversify by expanding the training and skills of residents and by adapting to new technologies and broader economic trends. People are proud of their history and heritage. This is reflected in the diverse, well-preserved historical resources and the attractive, inviting streets and public gathering places. Museums, art venues, a strong civic sector, and the many welcoming community events and celebrations are all evidence of a vibrant local culture. Residents have convenient access on foot and by car, bus, and bicycle to jobs, schools, community amenities like parks and sports fields, and the region's natural environment. Public services are reliable, inclusive, and efficient, and the community is well-served by equitable, modern, and sustainable infrastructure, facilities, and utilities.

The City identifies the following 11 guiding principles, which also serve as the proposed plan objectives for the purposes of complying with CEQA.

- **Agricultural Identity.** Continue to support the agricultural industry and its workforce. Balance the protection of prime agricultural land with the development necessary to support continued population growth and the diversification of the local economy.
- **Culture, History, and Art.** Celebrate and share Santa Maria's multicultural heritage and contemporary diversity. Preserve historic resources, foster the arts, maintain a strong sense of community through cultural festivals, and invite visitors to enjoy the richness of local expression and resources.
- **Community Design.** Create public spaces that reflect the community identity, foster civic pride, and invite community members to gather, both informally and for events. Design streets, buildings, and landscaping that reflect the community's history, culture, and natural

environment. Use lighting, street trees, benches, and other amenities to make sidewalks and public spaces safe and welcoming, with a focus on the Downtown and along the Main and Broadway corridors.

- **Community Health.** Grow and expand physical and mental healthcare services to meet the needs of all residents. Improve community health by addressing the environmental justice priorities of disadvantaged communities, including seniors, low-income households, linguistically isolated families, the homeless, and youth, who comprise 35 percent of residents. Minimize residents' potential for exposure to noise, pesticides, and industrial pollution. Foster healthy lifestyles by expanding safe and attractive options for physical activity and by expanding healthy food access.
- **Natural Environment and Resilience.** Conserve water resources in the city and support efforts to maintain the Santa Maria River. Expand opportunities to enjoy the area's natural resources and the region's beauty. Safeguard the community from natural hazards, including those exacerbated by climate change.
- **Housing Quality and Choice.** Develop a high-quality and diverse housing supply at all levels of affordability that preserves Santa Maria as a place where families can establish roots and today's youth can afford to stay. Balance the growth of housing and the economy so that people can live and work in Santa Maria. As new housing types are introduced, (e.g., accessory dwelling units (ADUs)), adapt parking, transportation, and other community features. Develop workforce housing solutions that provide safe, healthy, and comfortable homes for workers and their families.
- **Resilient Economy.** Cultivate a diverse and resilient economy in which local businesses and families thrive and job growth keeps 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.

Plan Characteristics

2045 General Plan Update Organization

The elements included in the 2045 General Plan are further described in this section.

- **Conservation and Open Space Element.** This element outlines the development, management, and preservation of natural, tribal, cultural, and historic resources within the plan area. Goals, policies, and actions within this element address climate change adaptation and resilience in relation to natural resources, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, urban forestry, and the use of open space for the conservation of natural, cultural, and other resources as well as for hazard mitigation.
- **Safety Element.** This element addresses natural and manmade safety hazards in Santa Maria, including geologic and seismic hazards, fire hazards, flooding, hazardous materials, and emergency response and establishes policies and actions to mitigate hazard impacts to people and property. The Safety Element also evaluates evacuation capacity under a range of hazard scenarios, identifies single-access neighborhoods, and establishes policies and actions to enhance evacuation capacity throughout the city, consistent with Assembly Bill (AB) 747 and Senate Bill (SB) 99. In accordance with SB 379, this element also includes a climate change vulnerability assessment and measures to address climate vulnerabilities and hazard mitigation and emergency response.
- **Land Use.** This element designates the placement and distribution of future development to facilitate orderly growth within the city. This element establishes future land use patterns and specifies appropriate residential density and development intensity. Goals and policies serve as a guide for decision makers to direct the development of the city. Additionally, this element provides an overall design framework for the city with the goal of preserving community character and highlighting community gateways and views.
- **Circulation.** This element provides a framework for the City's multimodal transportation network, addressing the movement of people and goods in and around Santa Maria, while ensuring the orderly improvement of the circulation system in response to the Land Use Element. This element also establishes policies related to the electrification of vehicles and commercial enterprises promoting Mobility as a Service (MaaS), complete streets (AB 1358) and VMT (SB 743).
- **Public Facilities and Services Element.** This element evaluates existing and future conditions related to the provision and maintenance of public buildings and services, including parks, schools, libraries, police, fire, and water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This element presents goals, policies, and actions related to public facilities and services in order to sustain existing households and businesses and accommodate future growth in population, employment, and development.

- **Recreation and Parks Element.** This element inventories existing park and recreational resources throughout the city and evaluates future conditions and needs related to parks and recreation. Goals, policies, and actions within this element aim to facilitate equitable distribution of resources and investments to meet the recreational needs of all community members.
- **Economic Development Element.** This element includes goals, policies, and actions related to the retention and expansion of existing business sectors, as well as diversifying the economy to develop new kinds of businesses in Santa Maria.
- **Noise Element.** This element identifies and evaluates sources of noise and groundborne vibration and aims to minimize excessive noise exposure and noise conflicts. This element would be consistent with the Santa Maria Public Airport Master Plan and include new noise contours.
- **Health and Environmental Justice Element.** This element identifies disadvantaged communities within the city and includes goals, policies, and actions to reduce pollution exposure, promote access to food, public facilities, and safe housing, and strengthen civic engagement in City planning and decision making.

The City recently updated its Housing Element, which was adopted on December 5, 2023. The Housing Element provides the City's action plan for meeting the City's 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 5,418 dwelling units for the 6th Cycle Housing Element (2023 to 2031). The Housing Element has undergone separate CEQA review and for that reason is not part of the plan being evaluated in this EIR. The Housing Element and Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration were adopted on December 5, 2023.

Land Use Designations

The current Santa Maria General Plan Land Use Element establishes 30 separate land use designations to provide a mixture of land uses for the City. The existing City of Santa Maria Land Use Designations Map is shown in Figure 3.

The plan would change some of the land use designations; including planned land use changes that resolve inconsistencies between existing uses and the General Plan land use designations. Land use conflicts primarily consist of industrial, heavy commercial, agricultural, and airport uses in proximity to residential uses. In addition, the plan includes the following land use designation changes:

- Revise the High Density Residential (HDR) land use designation to increase the maximum allowed density from 22 dwelling units/acre to 30 dwelling units/acre.
- Eliminate the Medium Density Residential-10 (MDR-10) land use designation and reassign all parcels currently designated MDR-10 to MDR-12, which would have an allowed density of 12 dwelling units/acre.
- Add two new land use designations, Downtown Specific Plan (SP) and Planned Annexation (PA).

Land use changes for the proposed annexation areas east of the city limits (the planned annexation areas are discussed in detail in the Annexation subsection that follows. Figure 4 shows the changes in land use designations compared to the current General Plan. Proposed changes from the existing General Plan land use pattern include the following:

- A parcel along North Broadway from Low Density Residential and Community Commercial to Community Facilities (CF);
- Parcels along Main Street from Community Commercial to Main Mixed Use (MMU);

Figure 3 Existing Land Use Designations within the City of Santa Maria

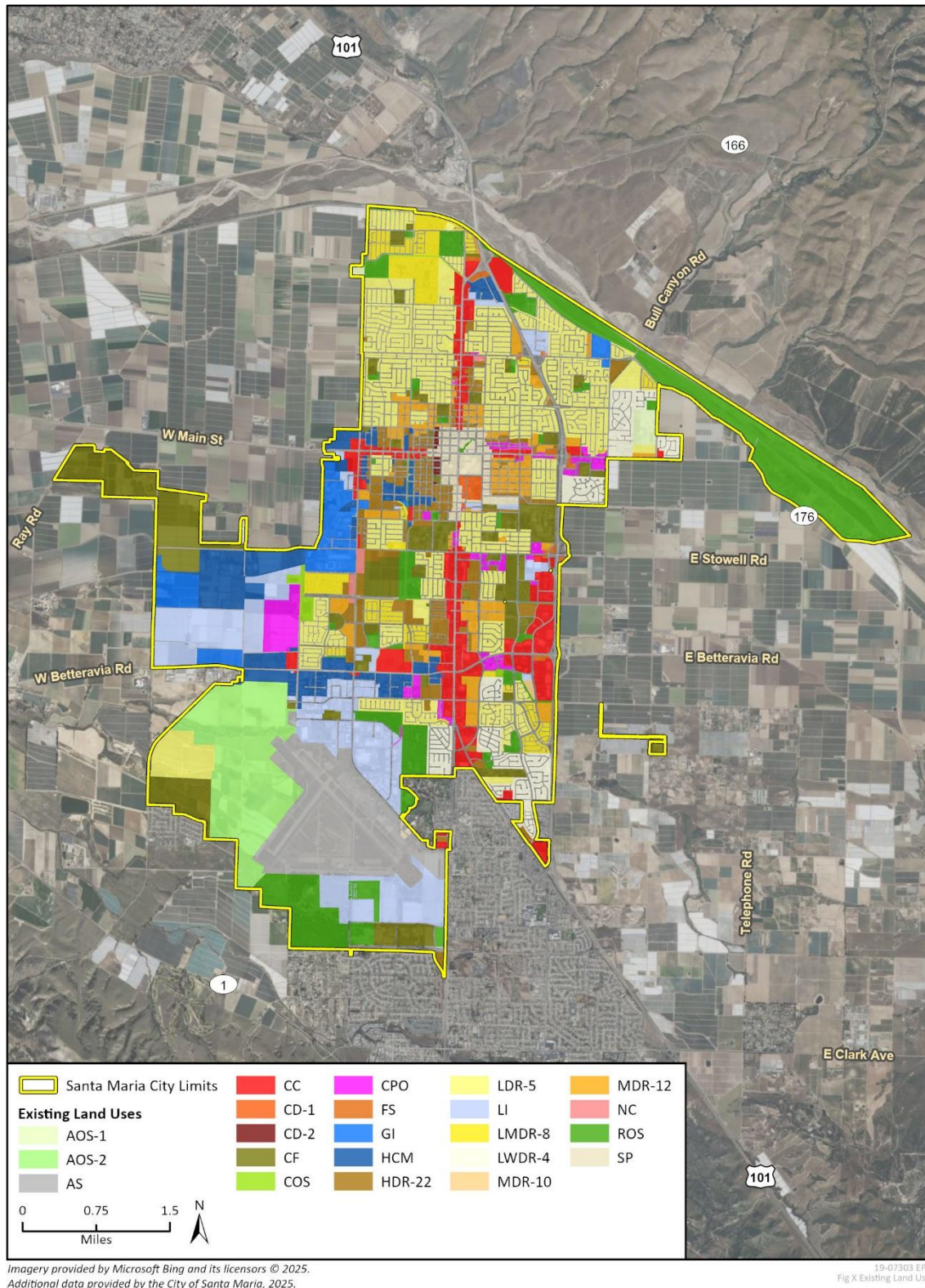
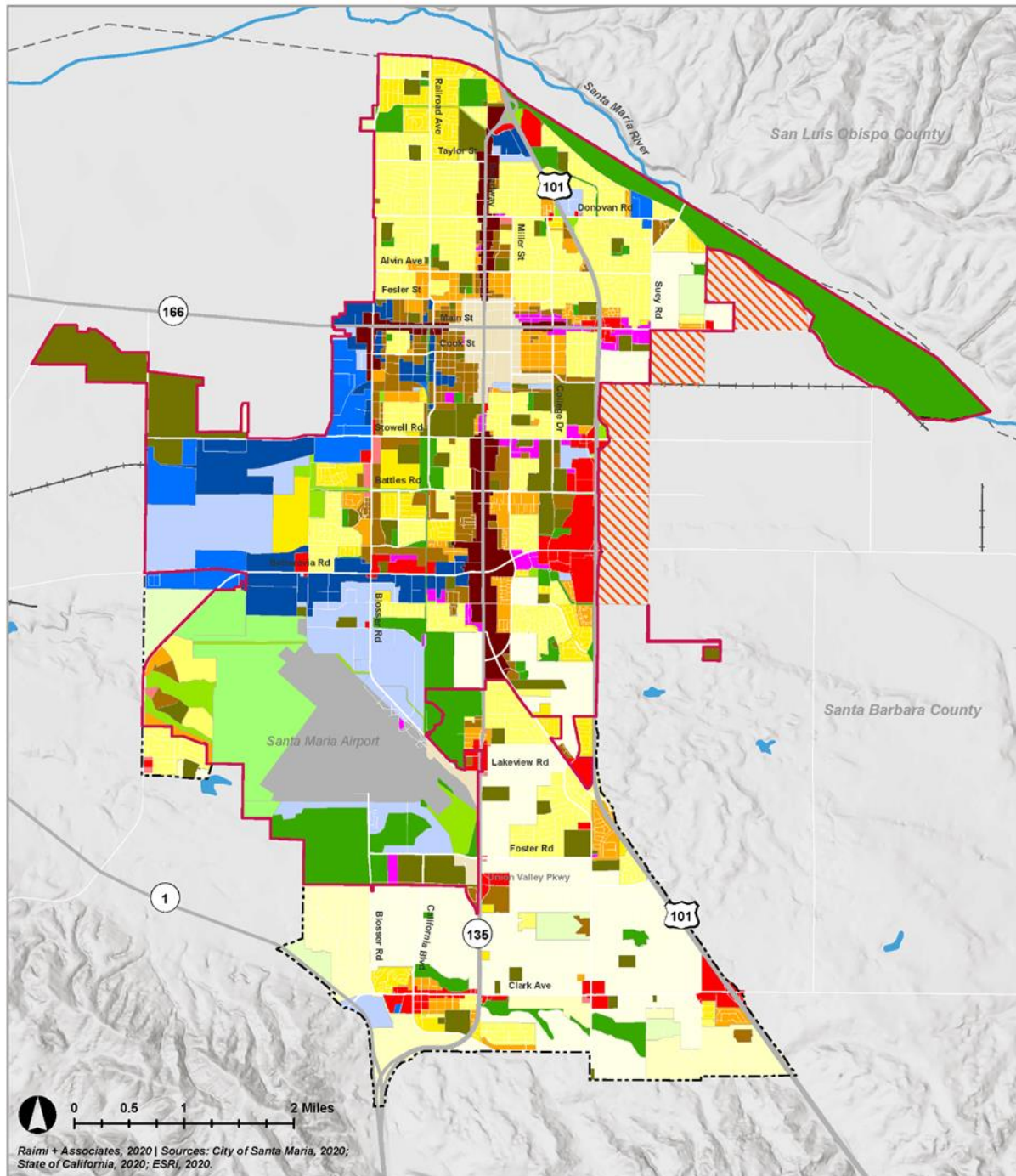


Figure 4 Proposed Land Use Changes



General Plan Land Use

Santa Maria City Limits	Low-Medium Density Residential (LMDR)	Heavy Commercial/Manufacturing (HCM)
Sphere of Influence	Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Airport Service (AS)
County Boundaries	High Density Residential (HDR)	Primary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-1)
Railroads	Corridor Mixed Use (CMU)	Secondary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-2)
Santa Maria River	Neighborhood Commercial (NC)	Conservation Open Space (COS)
Water	Community Commercial (CC)	Recreational Open Space (ROS)
Residential Agricultural (RA) or Very Low Density (VLDR)	Commercial/Professional Office (CPO)	Community Facilities (CF)
Lower-Density Residential (LWDR)	Light Industrial (LI)	Specific Plan (SP)
Low-Density Residential (LDR)	General Industrial (GI)	Planned Annexation (PA)

- Parcels along Broadway from Community Commercial to Broadway Mixed Use (BMU); and
- Allow Low Density Residential in Area 9 along A Street in the western portion of the city.

Changes in land use designations within the General Plan would also necessitate revisions to the following Specific Plans:

- Amend the Entrada Specific Plan to reflect the new Broadway and Main Mixed Use land use designations.
- Amend the Area 9 Specific Plan to allow low density residential uses along A Street, consistent with the LMDR-8 designation.

Annexation

The 2045 General Plan would include the annexation of areas east of the city limits and SOI. There are three separate areas (shown in Figure 5) that would be included as part of the proposed annexation (“annexation area”) that would total 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, U.S. 101 to the west, Vineyard Trail Road to the south, and Rosemary Road to the east. Much of the annexation area is vacant or agricultural land.

Existing zoning and land use designations within the annexation area are determined by the County of Santa Barbara and consist primarily of agricultural land use designations (Agriculture II with a minimum lot size of 100 acres [AG-II-100] and Agriculture II with a minimum lot size of 40 acres [AG-II-40]). Land use changes for the annexation area would include the establishment of a new land use designation, Planned Annexation, which would allow for a mix of commercial, residential, industrial, and public land uses in annexed land outside of current city limits.

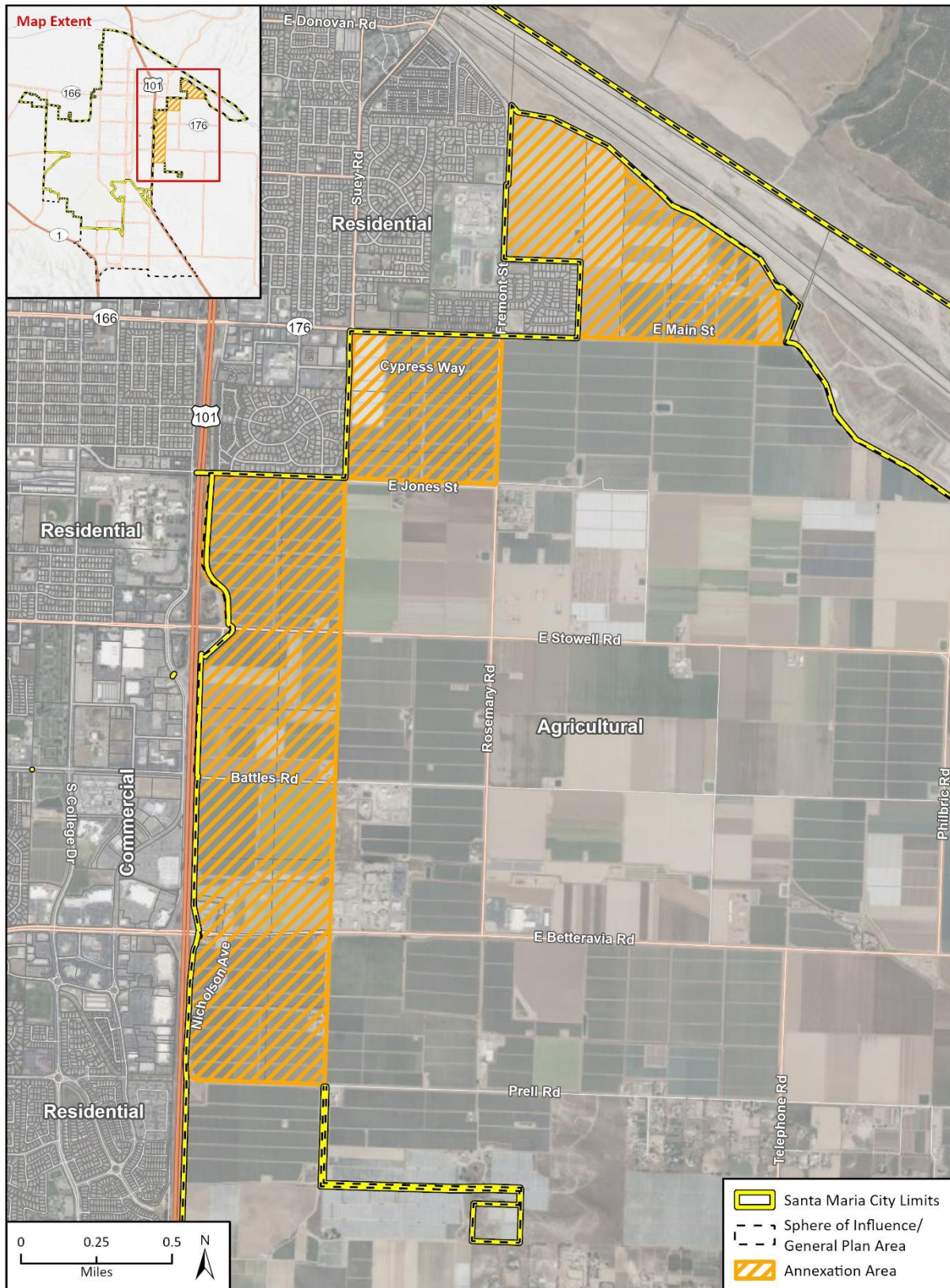
Noise Contour Revisions

The City of Santa Maria noise characteristics are described within the 2045 General Plan Noise Element including descriptions of common sources of noise as well as goals and policies to lessen noise for sensitive land uses (e.g., residences, schools, medical facilities). As required pursuant to the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Guidelines, the Noise Element also includes a map of noise contours as depicted via lines that represent equal levels of noise exposure across the city. Noise contours information informs planning decisions, including siting of potential future sensitive land uses.

Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout

For reasonable analysis purposes in this EIR, the City assumes maximum 2045 General Plan buildout (of both residential and non-residential uses) within the city would occur by 2045. Maximum buildout of the General Plan is assumed to be a locally appropriate projection of development within the plan area based on updated land use designations and the proposed annexation rather than development of every parcel within the city. While complete buildout is not likely to occur by 2045, the maximum buildout assumption represents the most conservative approach to evaluating the plans potential environmental effects and satisfying the requirements of the CEQA Guidelines.

Figure 5 Proposed 2045 General Plan Annexation Area



For the purposes of this EIR, “General Plan Area” would refer to the City of Santa Maria, the proposed annexation area, and the Sphere of Influence.

Table 1 indicates the net change from 2022 conditions in Santa Maria to maximum buildout of the plan by 2045.

Table 1 Existing and Proposed Plan Land Uses Components Summary

	Existing (2022)	Proposed (2045)	Net Change from Existing to Proposed
Acreage within City Limits	15,058 acres	985 acres	16,043 acres
Residential Units	28,200 units	44,340 units	16,140 units
Jobs	43,050 jobs	66,800 jobs	23,750 jobs

The 2045 General Plan would add 985 acres of land to the city limits and would provide the framework for development of up to 16,140 net new³ primary and accessory dwelling residential units, including the development of 1,300 accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

The 2045 General Plan would provide the framework for development of up to 1,504 net new non-residential acres, with the following composition (numbers in parentheses indicate a reduction in acreage):

- (463) acres of commercial uses
- 452 acres of mixed uses
- 7 acres of Industrial/airport uses
- 33 acres of public and open space
- 1,012 acres of planned future development (specific plan and planned annexation areas)

Approximately 32 percent of the city remains undeveloped. The undeveloped areas of the city are classified as vacant (19 percent) and agricultural (13 percent). The existing General Plan indicates that 43 percent of the land is classified Open Space, and the remaining 32 percent is classified as industrial. Many of the vacant parcels within the city, clustered between Battles Road, Betteravia Road, and U.S. 101 are either already slated for development or are located within a Specific Plan.

Specific land use designations proposed for the 2045 General Plan area are designed to ensure consistency with the updated Housing Element and existing land uses, such as industrial, heavy commercial, or agricultural. These land use changes would allow for increased residential density along Main Street and Broadway, as well as on opportunity sites with a high potential for redevelopment. Areas of the city with the most potential for change are concentrated in Downtown, neighborhoods in the City Core, Main Street and Broadway, Southwest Neighborhoods (northwest, west, and south of the airport), and areas proposed for annexation. The 2045 General Plan serves as the City’s long-term development blueprint through 2045, contains goals and policies guiding land use and infrastructure decisions through 2045, and brings the General Plan up to date in response to latest State and regional plans and regulations related to climate-related hazards,⁴ emergency evacuation routes and access, water supply, and mobility.

³ Net new means the change from City of Santa Maria existing (2024) development to full buildout of the proposed plan (i.e., 2045 General Plan) by 2045; this EIR analyzes the net change in terms of potential physical environmental impacts.

⁴ Pursuant to SB 379, which amended California Government Code Section 65302.

Intended Use of this EIR

This EIR provides a programmatic environmental review of implementing the City's 2045 General Plan Update. Subsequent activities falling under the City's 2045 General Plan Update will utilize this EIR to focus the environmental review of these consequent activities and to determine their effects. If a new project is proposed that is not anticipated by the 2045 General Plan Update, or that may result in project-level environmental effects not addressed in this program-level EIR, the future project would be evaluated as required under CEQA. This EIR is not intended to prohibit consideration of future projects or CEQA analysis of future projects.

Plan Implementation

Following adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update by the City Council, all subsequent activities and development within the City would be guided by the goals and policies in the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan provides specific policy guidance for implementation of plan concepts. The City would also need to coordinate with Santa Barbara County, the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and other public agencies to implement policies that affect their respective jurisdictions, or would affect the region. Implementing these policies in accordance with new development (residential, commercial, or industrial) would be subject to the City's established review and approval processes, with final review and approval by the appropriate departmental staff, as well as the appointed and elected officials. The principal responsibilities that City officials and staff have for plan implementation are briefly summarized below:

- Updating the City of Santa Maria Zoning Ordinance to achieve consistency with the adopted General Plan Update.
- Rezoning properties, as dictated by future development proposals.
- Approval of tentative maps, variances, planned development and conditional use permits, and other land use permits and entitlements.
- Approval of development agreements and issuance of related permits and approvals consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update.
- Analyzing and planning for public infrastructure such as roadway improvements, other capital improvements, and natural/capital resource preservation and/or restoration.
- Conducting or considering further focused planning studies, as appropriate to future development in the city.

Required Approvals

With recommendations from the City's Planning Commission, the Santa Maria City Council would need to take the following discretionary actions in conjunction with the plan:

- Certification of the Final EIR and adoption of required findings, including required findings under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15090, 15091, and 15093.
- Santa Barbara County LAFCO must approve the City's annexation application, which would include certification of this Environmental Impact Report.
- Approval and adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update.



**CITY OF SANTA MARIA
NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
AND SCOPING MEETING**

DATE: February 18, 2025

TO: Governor's Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and a Scoping Meeting for the Santa Maria General Plan Update

LEAD AGENCY:

Agency Name: City of Santa Maria
Community Development
Department

Street Address: 110 South Pine Street,
Room 101

City/State/Zip: Santa Maria, CA 93458

Contact: Dana Eady
Planning Division Manager
deady@cityofsantamaria.org
(805) 925-0951 ext. 2444

CONSULTANT:

Firm Name: Rincon Consultants, Inc.

Street Address: 1530 Monterey Street, Suite D

City/State/Zip: San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Contact: Chris Bersbach
Senior Supervising
Environmental Planner
cbersbach@rinconconsultants.com

Project Title: City of Santa Maria General Plan Update

The City of Santa Maria (City), as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is preparing an update to the Santa Maria General Plan that will guide growth and development of the city through 2045, and has determined that preparation of a programmatic EIR is necessary to evaluate potential environmental impacts of the 2045 General Plan and associated Zoning Code amendments pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City is the CEQA Lead Agency and is requesting input on the scope of the EIR from responsible and trustee agencies, interested public agencies and organizations, and the general public (pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082).

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) provides a summary of the plan, the City's preliminary identification of the potential environmental issues to be analyzed in the programmatic EIR; and information on how to comment on the scope of the EIR. This NOP and background documents associated with the 2045 General Plan are available for review on the Santa Maria 2045 General Plan webpage at: <https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/>.

EIR NOP Public Comment Period: February 18 to March 19, 2025

The City requests your review and consideration of this notice and invites input and comments from interested agencies, persons, and organizations regarding the preparation of the 2045 General Plan EIR.

NOP Written Comments: Comments must be submitted via mail or email with "NOP Comments: Santa Maria 2045 General Plan EIR" in the subject line and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the comment to the Lead Agency Contact at the following address or e-mail by **5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 19, 2025:**

Dana Eady, Planning Division Manager
Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, California 93458
deady@cityofsantamaria.org

All comments provided should identify specific topics of environmental concern and the reason for suggesting the study of these topics in the EIR. All comments will be considered in defining the scope of the EIR in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines. If applicable, please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization.

EIR Public Scoping Meeting: The City will hold a public EIR scoping meeting in-person to provide an opportunity for agency staff and interested members of the public to submit verbal comments on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on **Thursday, February 27th at 9:00 AM at Shephard Hall in the Santa Maria Library (421 S. McClelland Street, Santa Maria, California 93454)**. The scoping meeting will include a brief presentation of the project to be addressed in the EIR and will provide attendees with an opportunity to provide input on the scope of the EIR.

Plan Location: The Santa Maria 2045 General Plan encompasses the entirety of the City of Santa Maria and its Sphere of Influence. Figure 1 in the Plan Description (Attachment 1) below shows the regional location and Figure 2 shows the Santa Maria 2045 General Plan boundary.

Proposed Plan: The 2045 General Plan would serve as a long-term framework for future growth, reflect issues identified from community input and changes in State law, and update all elements of the General Plan including the Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Safety Element, Environmental Justice Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, Noise Element, Public Facilities and Services Element, Recreation and Parks Element, and Economic Development Element. The update to the General Plan would include, but is not limited to, revisions to policies, narratives, data, and figures to reflect the new buildout period. The Zoning Code would also be amended to ensure consistency with the General Plan.

EIR Environmental Impact Areas: The EIR will provide a programmatic evaluation of potential environmental impacts of the plan. The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the plan when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The City anticipates that the plan could result in potentially significant environmental impacts with regard to the following topic areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR.

- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

EIR Plan Alternatives: The EIR will also evaluate a reasonable range of plan alternatives that could reduce or avoid potential environmental effects identified in the EIR, including a required "No Plan" Alternative.

Attachment 1 - Plan Description

The plan analyzed in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is the City of Santa Maria (City) 2045 General Plan Update, hereafter referred to as the "plan." This section of the EIR describes the key characteristics of the plan, including the plan proponent/lead agency, the geographic extent of the plan, plan objectives, required approvals, and the development forecasted by the plan.

Plan Purpose

The plan is an update to the City's current General Plan, which includes the following chapters: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Safety Element, Health and Environmental Justice Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, Noise Element, Public Facilities and Services Element, Recreation and Parks Element, and Economic Development Element. The plan establishes the City's vision for future development through the horizon year of 2045. The plan will serve as the City's primary guide for future land use and development decisions in a way that meets the community needs and priorities while serving as a key tool for influencing and improving the quality of life for residents and businesses. As such, it serves as the "blueprint" for future development and conservation of a community. The 2045 General Plan Update will help the City plan for important community issues, such as community growth; housing, mobility, and infrastructure needs; climate change; and environmental protection. It will also set the stage for future social, physical, and economic development of the city.

Plan Proponent/Lead Agency

The City of Santa Maria is both the plan proponent and the lead agency for the proposed plan. The City's Community Development Department (located at 110 South Pine Street, Suite 101, Santa Maria, California 93458) prepared this EIR with the assistance of Rincon Consultants, Inc. and Raimi + Associates.

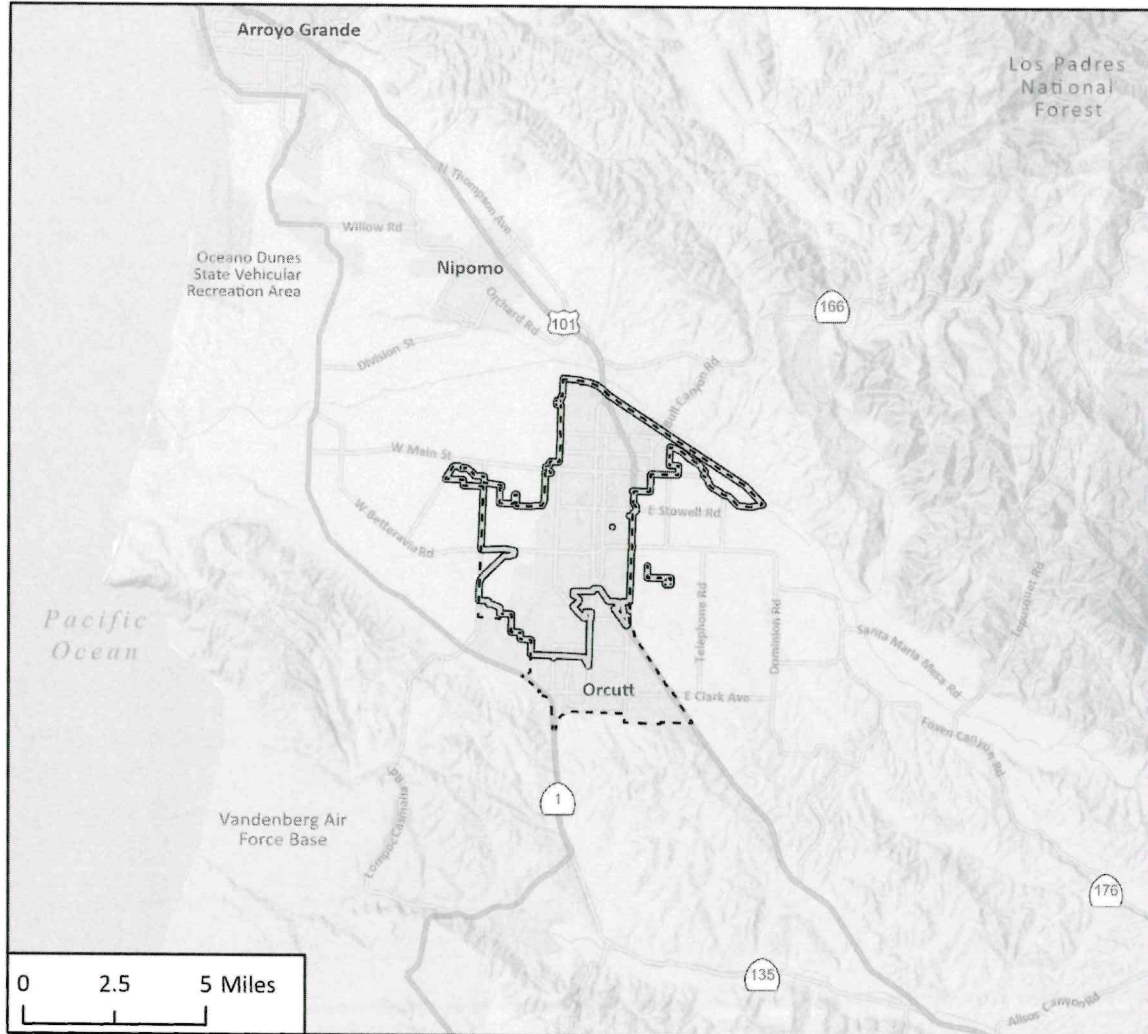
Plan Area Location and Environmental Setting

Regional Location

The City of Santa Maria is located in northern Santa Barbara County, surrounded by the hills of the Santa Maria River Valley (see Figure 1). The General Plan area involves all land within the Santa Maria Sphere of Influence¹ (SOI) and includes the annexation of areas east of the city limits (see Figure 2). The City of Santa Maria is generally bound by the Santa Maria River to the north, agricultural lands to the east and west, and the unincorporated town of Orcutt to the south.

¹ The term "sphere of influence" applies to the area designated by the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as the probable, future physical boundary or service area of the city. Overall, planning decisions made for the city are assumed to have a bearing on growth and development in these unincorporated adjacent areas. Areas not included as part of the annexation for the 2045 General Plan will continue to be deferred to the County land use designations and regulations in the SOI. Any development or change that happens in the SOI during the lifetime of the General Plan will occur under the jurisdiction of the County. Therefore, this EIR does not evaluate impacts resulting from future growth within the SOI, outside of the proposed annexation, as part of the proposed plan. However, where relevant, this EIR does evaluate potential impacts resulting from future growth within the city limits to lands within the SOI. The SOI is also included in the cumulative setting for this EIR.

Figure 1 Regional Location



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-  Santa Maria City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence/
General Plan Area
-  Project Location



Figure 2 Plan Area Location



Existing

Need to have
proposed
SOI
beyond the annexation area or just annexation
areas?

U.S. Highway 101 (U.S. 101) forms the eastern edge of the city. A linear portion of Santa Maria is also located to the west of U.S. 101. This portion of the city extends south from Vineyard Trail Road then extends east along an internal farm road. Santa Maria is located approximately 25 miles south of San Luis Obispo, 50 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, 250 miles south of San Francisco and 170 miles north of Los Angeles.

Principal regional transportation facilities serving Santa Maria are U.S. 101, State Route 135 (SR 135), State Route 166 (SR 166), and the Santa Maria Valley Airport. Regional transit is provided by Clean Air Express and the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority. Regional rail is provided by Amtrak.

Local Setting

The City of Santa Maria is characterized as a ~~suburban residential community~~. The plan area covers approximately 17,200 acres within the city limits and approximately 4,500 acres within the SOI (City of Santa Maria 2020). Approximately 27 percent of land within Santa Maria is occupied with residential uses, primarily consisting of single-family residences (22 percent). Agricultural uses occupy 14 percent of the city, airport uses occupy 11 percent, public and institutional uses occupy 8 percent, and commercial uses occupy 7 percent. Approximately 19 percent of the city is comprised of vacant land. Residential land uses are distributed throughout the city. Non-residential land uses, including industrial and commercial, commonly line major corridors in Santa Maria, including Broadway, Main Street, and Betteravia Road. Agricultural and vacant uses are located at the periphery of the city. The city is underlain by the Santa Maria River Valley Groundwater Subbasin. The local climate in Santa Maria is identified as a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters.

Existing Plan Area Characteristics

The 2045 Santa Maria General Plan area covers approximately 17,200 acres, which includes 12,700 acres within the city limits and 4,500 acres within the Sphere of Influence (SOI). Approximately 110,608 people live within the General Plan area as of January 2024, resulting in population density of approximately 640 people per square mile. There are 34,412 residential units within the General Plan area as of 2024 (California Department of Finance 2024).

The annexation area evaluated in the plan (discussed in detail in ~~Section Error! Reference source not found.~~) covers 985 acres east of the City of Santa Maria's limits.

Regulatory Setting

State law (Government Code Sections 65300 through 65303.4) requires each municipality to adopt and periodically update its General Plan, and requires that a General Plan include the following mandatory subject areas, or "elements": Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Safety, and Environmental Justice. Municipalities may also prepare optional elements that can be organized or combined at the municipality's discretion.

The 2045 General Plan has been organized into the following elements: Land Use; Circulation; Safety, Health and Environmental Justice; Conservation and Open Space; Noise; Public Facilities and Services; Recreation and Parks Element; and Economic Development.² Together, these elements

² General Plan element titles and organization of required content in the General Plan is currently in draft status and subject to change.

cover all topics required to be included in a General Plan under State law. The City of Santa Maria City Council adopted the 6th Cycle Housing Element on December 5, 2023. The 2045 General Plan may require additional updates to the adopted Housing Element, although such updates are anticipated to be for consistency with the 2045 General Plan. *good*

Under State law a property's zoning *designations* is required to be consistent with its General Plan land use designation (Government Code Section 65860). Section 65860(c) of the Government Code requires that when a General Plan is amended or updated in a way that makes the Zoning Ordinance inconsistent with the General Plan, "the zoning ordinance shall be amended within a reasonable time so that it is consistent with the general plan as amended." *me*

Plan Objectives

The 2045 General Plan will serve as a long-term framework for future growth and development, represents the community's view of its future, and contains the goals and policies upon which the City Council, Planning Commission, and the entire community will base land use and resource decisions. The 2045 General Plan will provide a contemporary plan that will guide Santa Maria through the next 20 years. The primary objective of this plan is to update the existing Santa Maria General Plan in order for it to be compliant with State law. *which*

The 2045 General Plan would implement the following vision to guide development.

Vision. Santa Maria in 2045 is a community where families can establish and maintain multi-generational roots. It is close-knit, culturally diverse, and economically inclusive. This is possible, in part, because Santa Maria offers affordable, safe, attractive, and healthy homes and neighborhoods for all residents. This is also possible because of the availability of high-quality education, jobs, and economic opportunity. Building from a strong foundation in the agricultural, retail, healthcare, and business services industries, Santa Maria has continued to diversify by expanding the training and skills of residents and by adapting to new technologies and broader economic trends. People are proud of their history and heritage. This is reflected in the diverse, well-preserved historical resources and the attractive, inviting streets and public gathering places. Museums, art venues, a strong civic sector, and the many welcoming community events and celebrations are all evidence of a vibrant local culture. Residents have convenient access on foot and by car, bus, and bicycle to jobs, schools, community amenities like parks and sports fields, and the region's natural environment. Public services are reliable, inclusive, and efficient, and the community is well-served by equitable, modern, and sustainable infrastructure, facilities, and utilities.

The City identifies the following 11 guiding principles, which also serve as the proposed plan objectives for the purposes of complying with CEQA.

- **Agricultural Identity.** Continue to support the agricultural industry and its workforce. Balance the protection of prime agricultural land with the development necessary to support continued population growth and the diversification of the local economy.
- **Culture, History, and Art.** Celebrate and share Santa Maria's multicultural heritage and contemporary diversity. Preserve historic resources, foster the arts, maintain a strong sense of community through cultural festivals, and invite visitors to enjoy the richness of local expression and resources.
- **Community Design.** Create public spaces that reflect the community identity, foster civic pride, and invite community members to gather, both informally and for events. Design streets, buildings, and landscaping that reflect the community's history, culture, and natural

environment. Use lighting, street trees, benches, and other amenities to make sidewalks and public spaces safe and welcoming, with a focus on the Downtown and along the Main and Broadway corridors.

- **Community Health.** Grow and expand physical and mental healthcare services to meet the needs of all residents. Improve community health by addressing the environmental justice priorities of disadvantaged communities, including seniors, low-income households, linguistically isolated families, the homeless, and youth, who comprise 35 percent of residents. Minimize residents' potential for exposure to noise, pesticides, and industrial pollution. Foster healthy lifestyles by expanding safe and attractive options for physical activity and by expanding healthy food access.
- **Natural Environment and Resilience.** Conserve water resources in the city and support efforts to maintain the Santa Maria River. Expand opportunities to enjoy the area's natural resources and the region's beauty. Safeguard the community from natural hazards, including those exacerbated by climate change.
- **Housing Quality and Choice.** Develop a high-quality and diverse housing supply at all levels of affordability that preserves Santa Maria as a place where families can establish roots and today's youth can afford to stay. Balance the growth of housing and the economy so that people can live and work in Santa Maria. As new housing types are introduced, (e.g., accessory dwelling units (ADUs)), adapt parking, transportation, and other community features. Develop workforce housing solutions that provide safe, healthy, and comfortable homes for workers and their families.
- **Resilient Economy.** Cultivate a diverse and resilient economy in which local businesses and families thrive and job growth keeps 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.

Plan Characteristics

2045 General Plan Update Organization

The elements included in the 2045 General Plan are further described in this section.

- **Conservation and Open Space Element.** This element outlines the development, management, and preservation of natural, tribal, cultural, and historic resources within the plan area. Goals, policies, and actions within this element address climate change adaptation and resilience in relation to natural resources, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, urban forestry, and the use of open space for the conservation of natural, cultural, and other resources as well as for hazard mitigation.
- **Safety Element.** This element addresses natural and manmade safety hazards in Santa Maria, including geologic and seismic hazards, fire hazards, flooding, hazardous materials, and emergency response and establishes policies and actions to mitigate hazard impacts to people and property. The Safety Element also evaluates evacuation capacity under a range of hazard scenarios, identifies single-access neighborhoods, and establishes policies and actions to enhance evacuation capacity throughout the city, consistent with Assembly Bill (AB) 747 and Senate Bill (SB) 99. In accordance with SB 379, this element also includes a climate change vulnerability assessment and measures to address climate vulnerabilities and hazard mitigation and emergency response.
- **Land Use.** This element designates the placement and distribution of future development to facilitate orderly growth within the city. This element establishes future land use patterns and specifies appropriate residential density and development intensity. Goals and policies serve as a guide for decision makers to direct the development of the city. Additionally, this element provides an overall design framework for the city with the goal of preserving community character and highlighting community gateways and views.
- **Circulation.** This element provides a framework for the City's multimodal transportation network, addressing the movement of people and goods in and around Santa Maria, while ensuring the orderly improvement of the circulation system in response to the Land Use Element. This element also establishes policies related to the electrification of vehicles and commercial enterprises promoting Mobility as a Service (MaaS), complete streets (AB 1358) and VMT (SB 743).
- **Public Facilities and Services Element.** This element evaluates existing and future conditions related to the provision and maintenance of public buildings and services, including parks, schools, libraries, police, fire, and water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This element presents goals, policies, and actions related to public facilities and services in order to sustain existing households and businesses and accommodate future growth in population, employment, and development.

8) Air Quality/GHG?

- Supplemental*
- **Recreation and Parks Element.** This element inventories existing park and recreational resources throughout the city and evaluates future conditions and needs related to parks and recreation. Goals, policies, and actions within this element aim to facilitate equitable distribution of resources and investments to meet the recreational needs of all community members.
 - **Economic Development Element.** This element includes goals, policies, and actions related to the retention and expansion of existing business sectors, as well as diversifying the economy to develop new kinds of businesses in Santa Maria.
 - 5) ▪ **Noise Element.** This element identifies and evaluates sources of noise and groundborne vibration and aims to minimize excessive noise exposure and noise conflicts. This element would be consistent with the Santa Maria Public Airport Master Plan and include new noise contours.
 - 7) ▪ **Health and Environmental Justice Element.** This element identifies disadvantaged communities within the city and includes goals, policies, and actions to reduce pollution exposure, promote access to food, public facilities, and safe housing, and strengthen civic engagement in City planning and decision making.

3 Housing Element

The City recently updated its Housing Element, which was adopted on December 5, 2023. The Housing Element provides the City's action plan for meeting the City's 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 5,418 dwelling units for the 6th Cycle Housing Element (2023 to 2031). The Housing Element has undergone separate CEQA review and for that reason is not part of the plan being evaluated in this EIR. The Housing Element and Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration were adopted on December 5, 2023.

Land Use Designations

The current Santa Maria General Plan Land Use Element establishes 30 separate land use designations to provide a mixture of land uses for the City. The existing City of Santa Maria Land Use Designations Map is shown in Figure 3.

The plan would change some of the land use designations; including planned land use changes that resolve inconsistencies between existing uses and the General Plan land use designations. Land use conflicts primarily consist of industrial, heavy commercial, agricultural, and airport uses in proximity to residential uses. In addition, the plan includes the following land use designation changes:

- Revise the High Density Residential (HDR) land use designation to increase the maximum allowed density from 22 dwelling units/acre to 30 dwelling units/acre.
- Eliminate the Medium Density Residential-10 (MDR-10) land use designation and reassign all parcels currently designated MDR-10 to MDR-12, which would have an allowed density of 12 dwelling units/acre.
- Add two new land use designations, Downtown Specific Plan (SP) and **Planned Annexation (PA).**

Land use changes for the proposed annexation areas east of the city limits (the planned annexation areas are discussed in detail in the Annexation subsection that follows. Figure 4 shows the changes in land use designations compared to the current General Plan. Proposed changes from the existing General Plan land use pattern include the following:

- A parcel along North Broadway from Low Density Residential and Community Commercial to Community Facilities (CF);
- Parcels along Main Street from Community Commercial to Main Mixed Use (MMU);

Figure 3 Existing Land Use Designations within the City of Santa Maria

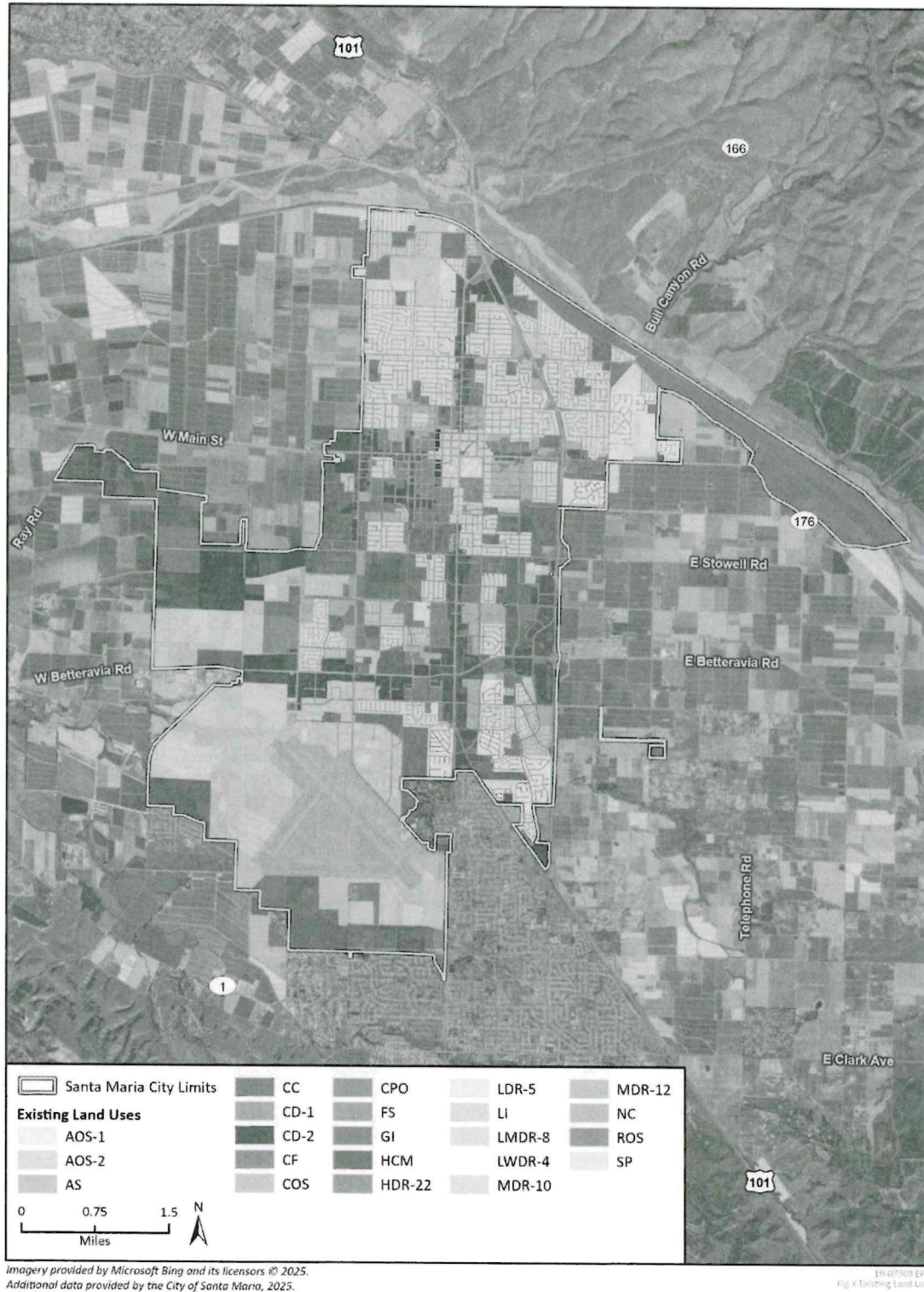
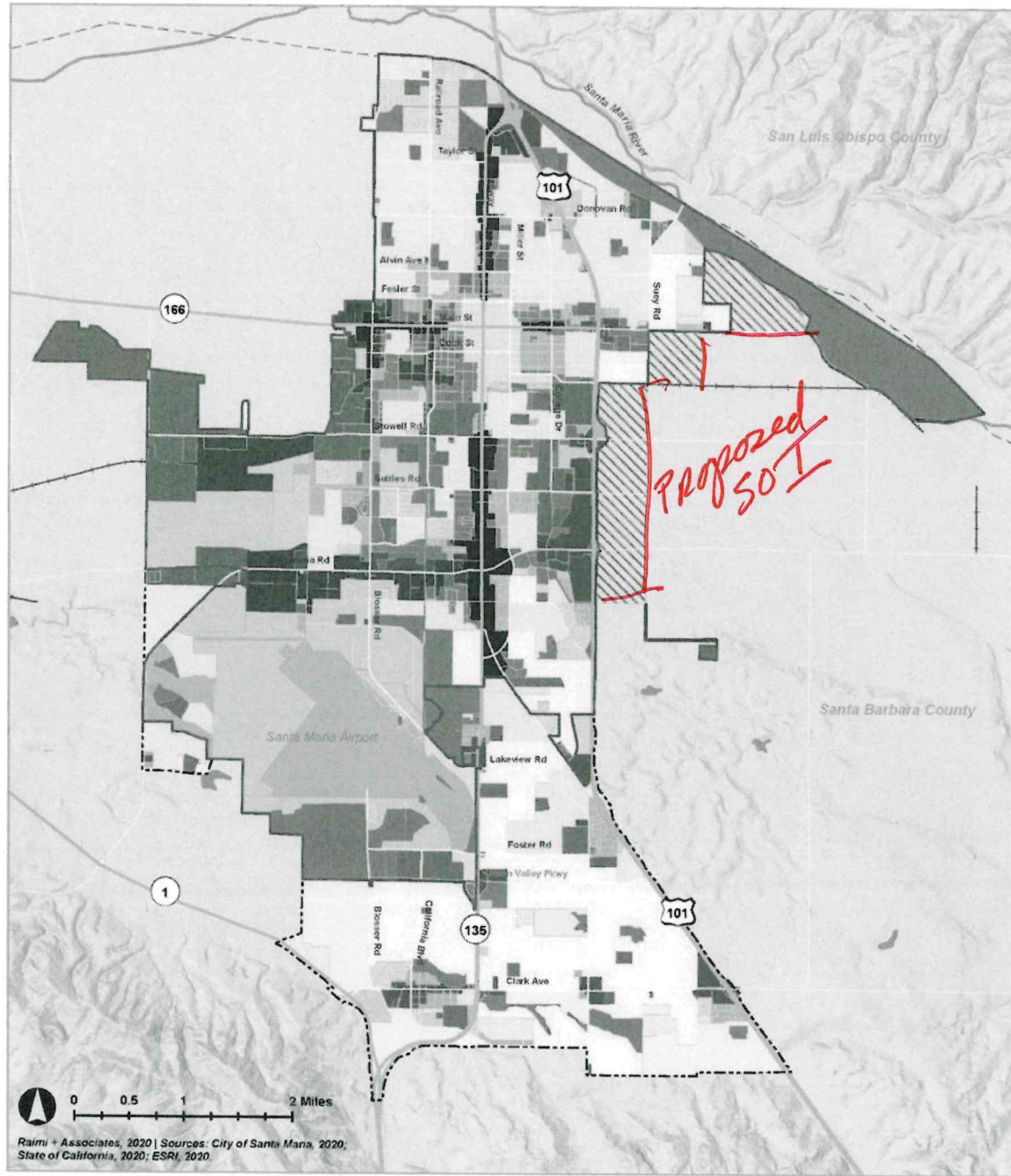


Figure 4 Proposed Land Use Changes



General Plan Land Use

— Santa Maria City Limits	Low-Medium Density Residential (LMDR)	Heavy Commercial/Manufacturing (HCM)
- - - Sphere of Influence	Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Airport Service (AS)
- - - County Boundaries	High Density Residential (HDR)	Primary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-1)
— Railroads	Corridor Mixed Use (CMU)	Secondary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-2)
— Santa Maria River	Neighborhood Commercial (NC)	Conservation Open Space (COS)
Water	Community Commercial (CC)	Recreational Open Space (ROS)
Residential Agricultural (RA) or Very Low Density (VLDR)	Commercial/Professional Office (CPO)	Community Facilities (CF)
Lower-Density Residential (LWDR)	Light Industrial (LI)	Specific Plan (SP)
Low-Density Residential (LDR)	General Industrial (GI)	Planned Annexation (PA)

Proposed SOI

- change land use on small infill parcels to HDR-30*
- Parcels along Broadway from Community Commercial to Broadway Mixed Use (BMU); and
 - Allow Low Density Residential in Area 9 along A Street in the western portion of the city.

Changes in land use designations within the General Plan would also necessitate revisions to the following Specific Plans:

- Amend the *Retire* Entrada Specific Plan to reflect the new Broadway and Main Mixed Use land use designations.
- Amend the Area 9 Specific Plan to allow low density residential uses along A Street, consistent with the LMDR-8 designation *PF/Commercial*.

Annexation

The 2045 General Plan would include the annexation of areas east of the city limits and SOI. There are three separate areas (shown in Figure 5) that would be included as part of the proposed annexation ("annexation area") that would total 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, U.S. 101 to the west, Vineyard Trail Road to the south, and Rosemary Road to the east. Much of the annexation area is vacant or agricultural land.

Existing zoning and land use designations within the annexation area are determined by the County of Santa Barbara and consist primarily of agricultural land use designations (Agriculture II with a minimum lot size of 100 acres [AG-II-100] and Agriculture II with a minimum lot size of 40 acres [AG-II-40]). Land use changes for the annexation area would include the establishment of a new land use designation, Planned Annexation, which would allow for a mix of commercial, residential, industrial, and public land uses in annexed land outside of current city limits.

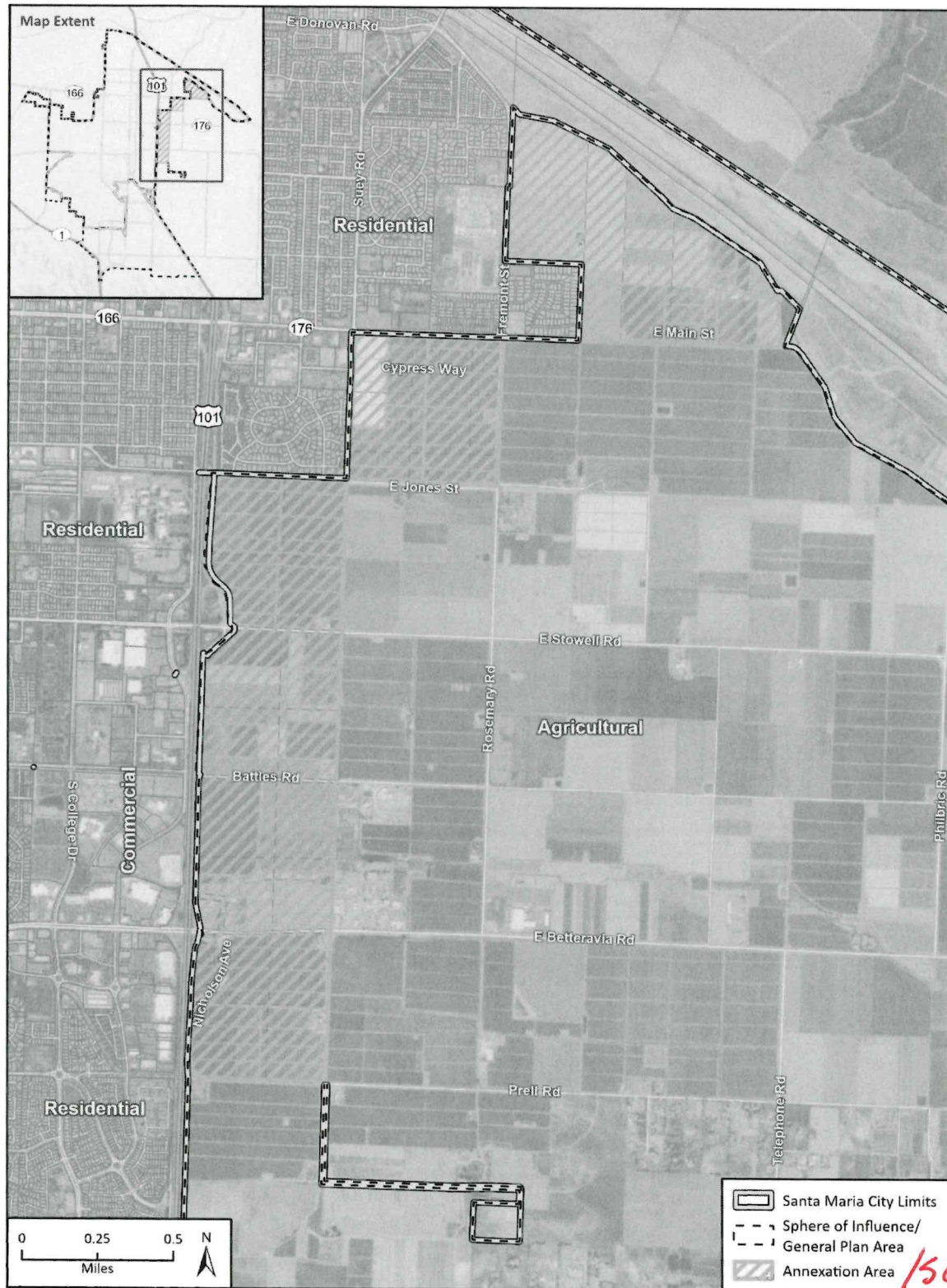
Noise Contour Revisions

The City of Santa Maria noise characteristics are described within the 2045 General Plan Noise Element including descriptions of common sources of noise as well as goals and policies to lessen noise for sensitive land uses (e.g., residences, schools, medical facilities). As required pursuant to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) Guidelines, the Noise Element also includes a map of noise contours as depicted via lines that represent equal levels of noise exposure across the city. Noise contours information informs planning decisions, including siting of potential future sensitive land uses.

Proposed 2045 General Plan Buildout

For reasonable analysis purposes in this EIR, the City assumes maximum 2045 General Plan buildout (of both residential and non-residential uses) within the city would occur by 2045. Maximum buildout of the General Plan is assumed to be a locally appropriate projection of development within the plan area based on updated land use designations and the proposed annexation rather than development of every parcel within the city. While complete buildout is not likely to occur by 2045, the maximum buildout assumption represents the most conservative approach to evaluating the plans potential environmental effects and satisfying the requirements of the CEQA Guidelines.

Figure 5 Proposed 2045 General Plan Annexation Area



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U-07303 EPS
Fig. X Annexation Area

For the purposes of this EIR, "General Plan Area" would refer to the City of Santa Maria, the proposed annexation area, and the Sphere of Influence.

Table 1 indicates the net change from 2022 conditions in Santa Maria to maximum buildout of the plan by 2045.

Table 1 Existing and Proposed Plan Land Uses Components Summary

	Existing (2022)	Proposed (2045)	Net Change from Existing to Proposed
Acreage within City Limits	15,058 acres	985 acres	16,043 acres
Residential Units	28,200 units	44,340 units	16,140 units
Jobs	43,050 jobs	66,800 jobs	23,750 jobs

The 2045 General Plan would add 985 acres of land to the city limits and would provide the framework for development of up to 16,140 net new³ primary and accessory dwelling residential units, including the development of 1,300 accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

The 2045 General Plan would provide the framework for development of up to 1,504 net new non-residential acres, with the following composition (numbers in parentheses indicate a reduction in acreage):

- (463) acres of commercial uses
- 452 acres of mixed uses
- 7 acres of Industrial/airport uses
- 33 acres of public and open space
- 1,012 acres of planned future development (specific plan and planned annexation areas)

Approximately 32 percent of the city remains undeveloped. The undeveloped areas of the city are classified as vacant (19 percent) and agricultural (13 percent). The existing General Plan indicates that 43 percent of the land is classified Open Space, and the remaining 32 percent is classified as industrial. Many of the vacant parcels within the city, clustered between Battles Road, Betteravia Road, and U.S. 101 are either already slated for development or are located within a Specific Plan.

Specific land use designations proposed for the 2045 General Plan area are designed to ensure consistency with the updated Housing Element and existing land uses, such as industrial, heavy commercial, or agricultural. These land use changes would allow for increased residential density along Main Street and Broadway, as well as on opportunity sites with a high potential for redevelopment. Areas of the city with the most potential for change are concentrated in Downtown, neighborhoods in the City Core, Main Street and Broadway, Southwest Neighborhoods (northwest, west, and south of the airport), and areas proposed for annexation. The 2045 General Plan serves as the City's long-term development blueprint through 2045, contains goals and policies guiding land use and infrastructure decisions through 2045, and brings the General Plan up to date in response to latest State and regional plans and regulations related to climate-related hazards,⁴ emergency evacuation routes and access, water supply, and mobility.

³ Net new means the change from City of Santa Maria existing (2024) development to full buildout of the proposed plan (i.e., 2045 General Plan) by 2045; this EIR analyzes the net change in terms of potential physical environmental impacts.

⁴ Pursuant to SB 379, which amended California Government Code Section 65302.

Intended Use of this EIR

This EIR provides a programmatic environmental review of implementing the City's 2045 General Plan Update. Subsequent activities falling under the City's 2045 General Plan Update will utilize this EIR to focus the environmental review of these consequent activities and to determine their effects. If a new project is proposed that is not anticipated by the 2045 General Plan Update, or that may result in project-level environmental effects not addressed in this program-level EIR, the future project would be evaluated as required under CEQA. This EIR is not intended to prohibit consideration of future projects or CEQA analysis of future projects.

Plan Implementation

Land uses and
Following adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update by the City Council, all subsequent activities and development within the City would be guided by the goals and policies in the 2045 General Plan Update. Therefore, the 2045 General Plan provides specific policy guidance for implementation of plan concepts. The City would also need to coordinate with Santa Barbara County, the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and other public agencies to implement policies that affect their respective jurisdictions, or would affect the region. Implementing these policies in accordance with new development (residential, commercial, or industrial) would be subject to the City's established review and approval processes, with final review and approval by the appropriate departmental staff, as well as the appointed and elected officials. The principal responsibilities that City officials and staff have for plan implementation are briefly summarized below:

- Updating the City of Santa Maria Zoning Ordinance to achieve consistency with the adopted General Plan Update.
- Rezoning properties, as dictated by future development proposals.
- Approval of tentative maps, *variances*, planned development and conditional use permits, and other land use permits and entitlements.
- Approval of development agreements and issuance of related permits and approvals consistent with the 2045 General Plan Update.
- Analyzing and planning for public infrastructure such as roadway improvements, other capital improvements, and natural/capital resource preservation and/or restoration. *water, waste water, drainage*
- Conducting or considering further focused planning studies, as appropriate to future development in the city.

Required Approvals

With recommendations from the City's Planning Commission, the Santa Maria City Council would need to take the following discretionary actions in conjunction with the plan:

- Certification of the Final EIR and adoption of required findings, including required findings under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15090, 15091, and 15093. *So I and*
- Santa Barbara County LAFCO must approve the City's annexation application, which would include certification of this Environmental Impact Report.
- Approval and adoption of the 2045 General Plan Update.

Need to have/include the alternatives in the Scoping document



NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

February 20, 2025

Dana Eady
City of Santa María
110 S. Pine Street
Room 101
Santa María CA 93455

CHAIRPERSON
Reginald Pagaling
Chumash

VICE-CHAIRPERSON
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Bennae Calac
Pauma-Yuima Band of
Luiseño Indians

COMMISSIONER
Vacant

ACTING EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY
Steven Quinn

NAHC HEADQUARTERS
1550 Harbor Boulevard
Suite 100
West Sacramento,
California 95691
(916) 373-3710
nahc@nahc.ca.gov

Re: 2025020584 City of Santa María General Plan Update Project, Santa Barbara County

Dear Ms. Eady:

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) has received the Notice of Preparation (NOP), Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) or Early Consultation for the project referenced above. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code §21000 et seq.), specifically Public Resources Code §21084.1, states that a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. (Pub. Resources Code § 21084.1; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15064.5 (b) (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5 (b)). If there is substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before a lead agency, that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) shall be prepared. (Pub. Resources Code §21080 (d); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 5064 subd.(a)(1) (CEQA Guidelines § 15064 (a)(1)). In order to determine whether a project will cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, a lead agency will need to determine whether there are historical resources within the area of potential effect (APE).

CEQA was amended significantly in 2014. Assembly Bill 52 (Gatto, Chapter 532, Statutes of 2014) (AB 52) amended CEQA to create a separate category of cultural resources, "tribal cultural resources" (Pub. Resources Code §21074) and provides that a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. (Pub. Resources Code §21084.2). Public agencies shall, when feasible, avoid damaging effects to any tribal cultural resource. (Pub. Resources Code §21084.3 (a)). **AB 52 applies to any project for which a notice of preparation, a notice of negative declaration, or a mitigated negative declaration is filed on or after July 1, 2015.** If your project involves the adoption of or amendment to a general plan or a specific plan, or the designation or proposed designation of open space, on or after March 1, 2005, it may also be subject to Senate Bill 18 (Burton, Chapter 905, Statutes of 2004) (SB 18). **Both SB 18 and AB 52 have tribal consultation requirements.** If your project is also subject to the federal National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) (NEPA), the tribal consultation requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (154 U.S.C. 300101, 36 C.F.R. §800 et seq.) may also apply.

The NAHC recommends consultation with California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of your proposed project as early as possible in order to avoid inadvertent discoveries of Native American human remains and best protect tribal cultural resources. Below is a brief summary of portions of AB 52 and SB 18 as well as the NAHC's recommendations for conducting cultural resources assessments.

Consult your legal counsel about compliance with AB 52 and SB 18 as well as compliance with any other applicable laws.

AB 52 has added to CEQA the additional requirements listed below, along with many other requirements:

- 1. Fourteen Day Period to Provide Notice of Completion of an Application/Decision to Undertake a Project:** Within fourteen (14) days of determining that an application for a project is complete or of a decision by a public agency to undertake a project, a lead agency shall provide formal notification to a designated contact of, or tribal representative of, traditionally and culturally affiliated California Native American tribes that have requested notice, to be accomplished by at least one written notice that includes:

 - a. A brief description of the project.
 - b. The lead agency contact information.
 - c. Notification that the California Native American tribe has 30 days to request consultation. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1 (d)).
 - d. A "California Native American tribe" is defined as a Native American tribe located in California that is on the contact list maintained by the NAHC for the purposes of Chapter 905 of Statutes of 2004 (SB 18). (Pub. Resources Code §21073).
- 2. Begin Consultation Within 30 Days of Receiving a Tribe's Request for Consultation and Before Releasing a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report:** A lead agency shall begin the consultation process within 30 days of receiving a request for consultation from a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1, subds. (d) and (e)) and prior to the release of a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration or Environmental Impact Report. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1(b)).

 - a. For purposes of AB 52, "consultation shall have the same meaning as provided in Gov. Code §65352.4 (SB 18). (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1 (b)).
- 3. Mandatory Topics of Consultation If Requested by a Tribe:** The following topics of consultation, if a tribe requests to discuss them, are mandatory topics of consultation:

 - a. Alternatives to the project.
 - b. Recommended mitigation measures.
 - c. Significant effects. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.2 (a)).
- 4. Discretionary Topics of Consultation:** The following topics are discretionary topics of consultation:

 - a. Type of environmental review necessary.
 - b. Significance of the tribal cultural resources.
 - c. Significance of the project's impacts on tribal cultural resources.
 - d. If necessary, project alternatives or appropriate measures for preservation or mitigation that the tribe may recommend to the lead agency. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.2 (a)).
- 5. Confidentiality of Information Submitted by a Tribe During the Environmental Review Process:** With some exceptions, any information, including but not limited to, the location, description, and use of tribal cultural resources submitted by a California Native American tribe during the environmental review process shall not be included in the environmental document or otherwise disclosed by the lead agency or any other public agency to the public, consistent with Government Code §6254 (r) and §6254.10. Any information submitted by a California Native American tribe during the consultation or environmental review process shall be published in a confidential appendix to the environmental document unless the tribe that provided the information consents, in writing, to the disclosure of some or all of the information to the public. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (c)(1)).
- 6. Discussion of Impacts to Tribal Cultural Resources in the Environmental Document:** If a project may have a significant impact on a tribal cultural resource, the lead agency's environmental document shall discuss both of the following:

 - a. Whether the proposed project has a significant impact on an identified tribal cultural resource.
 - b. Whether feasible alternatives or mitigation measures, including those measures that may be agreed to pursuant to Public Resources Code §21082.3, subdivision (a), avoid or substantially lessen the impact on the identified tribal cultural resource. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (b)).

- 7. Conclusion of Consultation:** Consultation with a tribe shall be considered concluded when either of the following occurs:
- The parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect, if a significant effect exists, on a tribal cultural resource; or
 - A party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.2 (b)).
- 8. Recommending Mitigation Measures Agreed Upon in Consultation in the Environmental Document:** Any mitigation measures agreed upon in the consultation conducted pursuant to Public Resources Code §21080.3.2 shall be recommended for inclusion in the environmental document and in an adopted mitigation monitoring and reporting program, if determined to avoid or lessen the impact pursuant to Public Resources Code §21082.3, subdivision (b), paragraph 2, and shall be fully enforceable. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (a)).
- 9. Required Consideration of Feasible Mitigation:** If mitigation measures recommended by the staff of the lead agency as a result of the consultation process are not included in the environmental document or if there are no agreed upon mitigation measures at the conclusion of consultation, or if consultation does not occur, and if substantial evidence demonstrates that a project will cause a significant effect to a tribal cultural resource, the lead agency shall consider feasible mitigation pursuant to Public Resources Code §21084.3 (b). (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (e)).
- 10. Examples of Mitigation Measures That, If Feasible, May Be Considered to Avoid or Minimize Significant Adverse Impacts to Tribal Cultural Resources:**
- Avoidance and preservation of the resources in place, including, but not limited to:
 - Planning and construction to avoid the resources and protect the cultural and natural context.
 - Planning greenspace, parks, or other open space, to incorporate the resources with culturally appropriate protection and management criteria.
 - Treating the resource with culturally appropriate dignity, taking into account the tribal cultural values and meaning of the resource, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resource.
 - Protecting the traditional use of the resource.
 - Protecting the confidentiality of the resource.
 - Permanent conservation easements or other interests in real property, with culturally appropriate management criteria for the purposes of preserving or utilizing the resources or places.
 - Protecting the resource. (Pub. Resource Code §21084.3 (b)).
 - Please note that a federally recognized California Native American tribe or a non-federally recognized California Native American tribe that is on the contact list maintained by the NAHC to protect a California prehistoric, archaeological, cultural, spiritual, or ceremonial place may acquire and hold conservation easements if the conservation easement is voluntarily conveyed. (Civ. Code §815.3 (c)).
 - Please note that it is the policy of the state that Native American remains and associated grave artifacts shall be repatriated. (Pub. Resources Code §5097.991).
- 11. Prerequisites for Certifying an Environmental Impact Report or Adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration or Negative Declaration with a Significant Impact on an Identified Tribal Cultural Resource:** An Environmental Impact Report may not be certified, nor may a mitigated negative declaration or a negative declaration be adopted unless one of the following occurs:
- The consultation process between the tribes and the lead agency has occurred as provided in Public Resources Code §21080.3.1 and §21080.3.2 and concluded pursuant to Public Resources Code §21080.3.2.
 - The tribe that requested consultation failed to provide comments to the lead agency or otherwise failed to engage in the consultation process.
 - The lead agency provided notice of the project to the tribe in compliance with Public Resources Code §21080.3.1 (d) and the tribe failed to request consultation within 30 days. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (d)).

The NAHC's PowerPoint presentation titled, "Tribal Consultation Under AB 52: Requirements and Best Practices" may be found online at: http://nahc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/AB52TribalConsultation_CalEPAPDF.pdf

SB 18

SB 18 applies to local governments and requires local governments to contact, provide notice to, refer plans to, and consult with tribes prior to the adoption or amendment of a general plan or a specific plan, or the designation of open space. (Gov. Code §65352.3). Local governments should consult the Governor's Office of Planning and Research's "Tribal Consultation Guidelines," which can be found online at: https://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/09_14_05_Updated_Guidelines_922.pdf.

Some of SB 18's provisions include:

1. **Tribal Consultation:** If a local government considers a proposal to adopt or amend a general plan or a specific plan, or to designate open space it is required to contact the appropriate tribes identified by the NAHC by requesting a "Tribal Consultation List." If a tribe, once contacted, requests consultation the local government must consult with the tribe on the plan proposal. **A tribe has 90 days from the date of receipt of notification to request consultation unless a shorter timeframe has been agreed to by the tribe.** (Gov. Code §65352.3 (a)(2)).
2. **No Statutory Time Limit on SB 18 Tribal Consultation.** There is no statutory time limit on SB 18 tribal consultation.
3. **Confidentiality:** Consistent with the guidelines developed and adopted by the Office of Planning and Research pursuant to Gov. Code §65040.2, the city or county shall protect the confidentiality of the information concerning the specific identity, location, character, and use of places, features and objects described in Public Resources Code §5097.9 and §5097.993 that are within the city's or county's jurisdiction. (Gov. Code §65352.3 (b)).
4. **Conclusion of SB 18 Tribal Consultation:** Consultation should be concluded at the point in which:
 - a. The parties to the consultation come to a mutual agreement concerning the appropriate measures for preservation or mitigation; or
 - b. Either the local government or the tribe, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached concerning the appropriate measures of preservation or mitigation. (Tribal Consultation Guidelines, Governor's Office of Planning and Research (2005) at p. 18).

Agencies should be aware that neither AB 52 nor SB 18 precludes agencies from initiating tribal consultation with tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with their jurisdictions before the timeframes provided in AB 52 and SB 18. For that reason, we urge you to continue to request Native American Tribal Contact Lists and "Sacred Lands File" searches from the NAHC. The request forms can be found online at: <http://nahc.ca.gov/resources/forms/>.

NAHC Recommendations for Cultural Resources Assessments

To adequately assess the existence and significance of tribal cultural resources and plan for avoidance, preservation in place, or barring both, mitigation of project-related impacts to tribal cultural resources, the NAHC recommends the following actions:

1. Contact the appropriate regional California Historical Research Information System (CHRIS) Center (https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30331) for an archaeological records search. The records search will determine:
 - a. If part or all of the APE has been previously surveyed for cultural resources.
 - b. If any known cultural resources have already been recorded on or adjacent to the APE.
 - c. If the probability is low, moderate, or high that cultural resources are located in the APE.
 - d. If a survey is required to determine whether previously unrecorded cultural resources are present.
2. If an archaeological inventory survey is required, the final stage is the preparation of a professional report detailing the findings and recommendations of the records search and field survey.
 - a. The final report containing site forms, site significance, and mitigation measures should be submitted immediately to the planning department. All information regarding site locations, Native American human remains, and associated funerary objects should be in a separate confidential addendum and not be made available for public disclosure.

- b.** The final written report should be submitted within 3 months after work has been completed to the appropriate regional CHRIS center.
- 3.** Contact the NAHC for:
- a.** A Sacred Lands File search. Remember that tribes do not always record their sacred sites in the Sacred Lands File, nor are they required to do so. A Sacred Lands File search is not a substitute for consultation with tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the project's APE.
 - b.** A Native American Tribal Consultation List of appropriate tribes for consultation concerning the project site and to assist in planning for avoidance, preservation in place, or, failing both, mitigation measures.
- 4.** Remember that the lack of surface evidence of archaeological resources (including tribal cultural resources) does not preclude their subsurface existence.
- a.** Lead agencies should include in their mitigation and monitoring reporting program plan provisions for the identification and evaluation of inadvertently discovered archaeological resources per Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15064.5(f) (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5(f)). In areas of identified archaeological sensitivity, a certified archaeologist and a culturally affiliated Native American with knowledge of cultural resources should monitor all ground-disturbing activities.
 - b.** Lead agencies should include in their mitigation and monitoring reporting program plans provisions for the disposition of recovered cultural items that are not burial associated in consultation with culturally affiliated Native Americans.
 - c.** Lead agencies should include in their mitigation and monitoring reporting program plans provisions for the treatment and disposition of inadvertently discovered Native American human remains. Health and Safety Code § 7050.5, Public Resources Code § 5097.98, and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15064.5, subdivisions (d) and (e) (CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5, subds. (d) and (e)) address the processes to be followed in the event of an inadvertent discovery of any Native American human remains and associated grave goods in a location other than a dedicated cemetery.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at my email address:
Mathew.Lin@NAHC.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Mathew Lin

Mathew Lin
Cultural Resources Analyst

cc: State Clearinghouse



MARCH 13, 2025

VIA EMAIL: DEADY@CITYOFSANTAMARIA.ORG
DANA EADY, PLANNING AND DIVISION MANGER
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
110 SOUTH PINE STREET, SUITE 101
SANTA MARIA, CA 93458

Dear Dana Eady:

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE SANTA MARIA GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROJECT, SCH# 2025020584

The Department of Conservation's (Department) Division of Land Resource Protection (Division) has reviewed the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Santa Maria General Plan Update Project (Project).

The Division monitors and maps farmland conversion on a statewide basis, provides technical assistance regarding the Williamson Act, and administers various agricultural land conservation programs. Public Resources Code, section 614, subdivision (b) authorizes the Department to provide soil conservation advisory services to local governments, including review of CEQA documents.

Protection of the state's agricultural land resources is part of the Department's mission and central to many of its programs. The CEQA process gives the Department an opportunity to acknowledge the value of the resource, identify areas of Department interest, and offer information on how to assess potential impacts or mitigation opportunities.

The Department respects local decision-making by informing the CEQA process, and is not taking a position or providing legal or policy interpretation.

We offer the following comments for consideration with respect to the project's potential impacts on agricultural land and resources within the Department's purview.

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES

The Project proposes to update the City's current General Plan, which includes the following chapters: Land Use Element, Circulation Element, Safety Element, Health and Environmental Justice Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, Noise Element, Public Facilities and Services Element, Recreation and Parks Element, and Economic Development Element. The plan establishes the City's vision for future development through the horizon year of 2045. The plan will serve as the City's primary guide for

future land use and development decisions in a way that meets the community needs and priorities while serving as a key tool for influencing and improving the quality of life for residents and businesses. The Project site contains Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland as designated by DOC's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, and a portion of the project site is subject to a Williamson Act contract.

PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

The conversion of agricultural land represents a permanent reduction and impact to California's agricultural land resources. The Department generally advises discussion of the following in any environmental review for the loss or conversion of agricultural land:

- Type, amount, and location of farmland conversion resulting directly and indirectly from implementation of the proposed project.
- Impacts on any current and future agricultural operations in the vicinity; e.g., land-use conflicts, increases in land values and taxes, loss of agricultural support infrastructure such as processing facilities, etc.
- Incremental impacts leading to cumulative impacts on agricultural land. This would include impacts from the proposed project, as well as impacts from past, current, and likely future projects.
- Implementation of any City or County Agricultural Mitigation Plans, Programs, or Policies.
- Proposed mitigation measures for impacted agricultural lands within the proposed project area.
- The project's compatibility with lands within an agricultural preserve and/or enrolled in a Williamson Act contract.

WILLIAMSON ACT

Where, as here, the project site is located on land subject to a Williamson Act contract, the Department advises that the environmental review discuss the compatibility of the project with the contract and local Williamson Act program requirements.

MITIGATING AGRICULTURAL LAND LOSS OR CONVERSION

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines, the Department advises that the environmental review address mitigation for the loss or conversion of agricultural land. An agricultural conservation easement is one potential method for mitigating loss or conversion of agricultural land. (See Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15370 [mitigation includes "compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments, including through permanent protection of such resources in the form of conservation easements."]; see also *King and Gardiner Farms, LLC v. County of Kern* (2020) 45 Cal.App.5th 814.)

Mitigation through agricultural conservation easements can take at least two forms: the outright purchase of easements or the donation of mitigation fees to a local, regional, or statewide organization or agency whose purpose includes the acquisition and stewardship of agricultural easements. The conversion of agricultural land may be viewed as an impact of at least regional significance. Hence, the search for replacement lands may not need to be limited strictly to lands within the project's surrounding area. A helpful source for regional and statewide agricultural mitigation banks is the California Council of Land Trusts. They provide helpful insight into farmland mitigation policies and implementation strategies, including a guidebook with model policies and a model local ordinance. The guidebook can be found at:

[California Council of Land Trusts](#)

Of course, the use of conservation easements is only one form of mitigation, and the Department urges consideration of any other feasible measures necessary to mitigate project impacts.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Santa Maria General Plan Update. Please provide the Department with notices of any future hearing dates as well as any staff reports pertaining to this project. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Farl Grundy, Associate Environmental Planner via email at Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Monique Wilber

Monique Wilber

Conservation Program Support Supervisor

Santa Maria General Plan Update Scoping Meeting

Three attendees joined us in the room for the presentation and subsequent discussion (at the Santa Maria Public Library).

Speakers:

1. Question from one speaker about what is going to happen with Mahoney Ranch.
 - a. **Dana Eady response:** The GP Update isn't proposing to change the land use for this property. Notes question about potential future development due to current concerns about CTS/sensitive species on the property.
 - b. **Commenter follow up:** Discussion of potential mitigation banking/land swap for addressing impacts and allowing potential development of the property.
2. A second speaker notes the 900+ acres proposed for annexation, and asks if there a phasing plan for development of these annexation areas (e.g, would it be from north to south?).
 - a. **Dana Eady response:** Dana said there is not a current plan for the order of future development – likely landowner/developer driven. Discussed the high-level planning process for potential future development of annexation areas, including potential need for future project-specific environmental review. Commenter follow up: question about whether it would be helpful for the City to have information from landowners about what they may consider bringing forward. Dana Eady/Rincon response: Assumptions for these areas in the EIR will be based on current direction from City Council (CC identified annexation areas being considered, and has expressed a desire for a mix of uses, which informs the EIR PD/projections, and assumptions that will guide the EIR analysis).