



Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



Land Use Policy Framework

Public Draft | January 31, 2025



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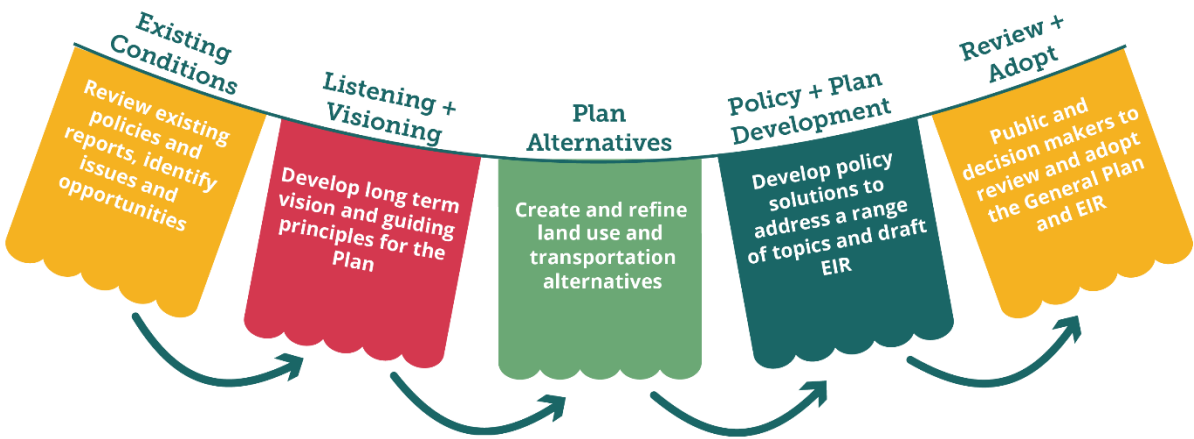
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Land Use Policy Framework

I. Introduction

The City of Santa Maria has embarked on its first comprehensive update to the General Plan, called “Imagine Santa Maria,” to create a forward-looking document that will serve as the blueprint for the city through the year 2045. A General Plan is a policy document required by State law that provides long-range guidance for land use, development and other issues such as economic growth, open space, conservation, affordable housing, and employment. The goals, policies, and implementation actions in the General Plan will serve as a compass for decision-makers and will shape future plans and actions of the City. This revised policy document will replace the existing General Plan.

The General Plan Update has five major phases, which are designed as step-by-step building blocks (see the image below). The project is currently in the “Policy and Plan Development” phase.



During the Existing Conditions phase, City staff worked closely with the consultant team to identify trends, issues, opportunities, and priorities, which are summarized in seven existing conditions reports that are available on the project website, www.ImagineSantaMaria.com. Throughout the Listening + Visioning Stage, community members shared their vision for the future, qualities of Santa Maria to preserve, and issues to address. This feedback was incorporated in the [Vision, Guiding Principles, and Areas of Change and Stability](#). From there, City staff and the consultant team developed [Plan Alternatives](#) to identify different land use, mobility, and urban design options the City has to achieve the community’s Vision and implement the Guiding Principles. City Council approved a [Preferred Land Use Alternative](#) in 2023.

This Land Use policy framework is a step in the General Plan Update process prior to drafting General Plan Elements. This framework highlights the key direction for the Land Use Element and includes goals, policies, and implementation activities to achieve that direction. This policy framework was developed by incorporating findings from previous project phases, including technical analysis, relevant content from the existing General Plan, current planning best practices and requirements from State law, and feedback from community members, Technical Advisory Committee members, Planning Commission, City Council, and

City staff. Nine policy frameworks have been prepared covering the following topics: Conservation and Open Space, Safety, Land Use and Community Design, Circulation and Mobility, Public Facilities and Services, Recreation and Parks, Economic Development, Noise, and Health and Environmental Justice. Community feedback on the frameworks will shape goals, policies, and implementation actions in the General Plan.

II. Statutory Requirements

General Plan Requirements

The Land Use Element has the broadest scope of all the required elements of a General Plan, regulating how land in a city is to be used in the future. California Government Code Section 65302(a) requires that a Land Use Element “designates the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, including agriculture, natural resources, recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty, education, public buildings and grounds, solid and liquid waste disposal facilities, greenways, as defined in Section 816.52 of the Civil Code, and other categories of public and private uses of land.” The location and designation of permissible land uses for public and private purposes shall consider the identification of land and natural resources. The Land Use Element shall include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the Plan.

Regulatory Setting

The General Plan Land Use Element is fundamental to the planning process, directly interacting with all other required elements of a General Plan. The California Office of Planning and Research provides guidance for General Plan preparation, covering the required content and its correlation to the Government Code. This Element will cover all relevant topics required in the OPR General Plan Guidelines, as detailed in the goals and policies found in this report.

In addition, the following regulations affect policy direction for the Land Use Element:

SB 330. SB 330, The Housing Crisis Act, requires that local jurisdictions maintain existing net zoned residential capacity. For example, if a city reduces the number of housing units that can be built by downzoning a property, it must upzone elsewhere within jurisdictional boundaries to add capacity for an equivalent number of units. The goal of SB 330 is to result in “no net loss” of potential or existing housing units through 2030.

Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (2023). General Plan Land Use Elements must also be consistent with the county’s airport land use compatibility plans, when applicable (Gov. Code § 65302.3). Santa Barbara County Association of Governments’ (SBCAG) Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan promotes compatibility of land uses between the airport and its surrounding areas. This Plan identifies Safety Zones and restrictions on land uses and building heights within the Airport Influence Area (AIA).¹

¹ Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (2023).

Williamson Act. The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, known as the Williamson Act, allows local governments to contract with private landowners to voluntarily restrict land for agriculture or open space, in exchange for lower property tax bases. The goal of the Williamson Act is to protect agricultural and open space lands across California.²

III. Related Vision and Guiding Principles

The General Plan Vision Statement describes Santa Maria as the community would like to see it in 2045. The Guiding Principles establish the direction the community should follow and the major ideas that the General Plan Update will put forward to achieve the community's shared Vision for 2045. The full [Vision, Guiding Principles, and Areas of Change and Stability](#), approved by the City Council in 2021, are available on the Imagine Santa Maria project website. The following full-sentence excerpts from the Vision and Guiding Principles informed the preparation of this policy framework:

Vision

Santa Maria in 2045 is a community where families can establish and maintain multi-generational roots.

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.

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.

² California Department of Conservation. Williamson Act Program Overview. Retrieved from: https://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/wa/Pages/wa_overview.aspx. November 6, 2024.

Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles establish the direction to follow to achieve the community's shared Vision for 2045.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

IV. Setting the Scene: Issues and Opportunities

The sections below outline opportunities, strengths, issues, and challenges that drove the direction of the Land Use policy framework. This policy framework builds on the opportunities and strengths and identifies strategies to remedy the issues and challenges.

Opportunities, strengths, issues, and challenges were identified based on existing conditions reports (ECR), the Vision and Guiding Principles, technical studies, community engagement results, and conversations with City staff. Links to past project work may be found on the project website:

<https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/resources>.

Opportunities and Strengths

Downtown Santa Maria. Downtown is the most walkable part of the city, it has a diverse mix of land uses and housing types, and it has many of Santa Maria's historic, civic, and cultural resources. This area has emerged as a focal point for potential transformation, serving as a primary gathering place for the community. Community feedback has indicated a strong interest in expanding downtown amenities, including more public art, multifunctional gathering spaces, and placemaking initiatives that celebrate Santa Maria's unique culture. The City's ongoing efforts to implement the Santa Maria Downtown Specific Plan and Downtown Multimodal Streetscape Plan will revitalize the area with new employment opportunities and enhanced local identity and public realm. The City is partnering with a developer with plans for the construction of new mixed-use residential and retail commercial projects on City surplus land located in the heart of Downtown, at the intersection of Broadway and Main Street. Multi-family housing, ground floor commercial uses, new plazas and gathering spaces are planned and are expected to be built within the next six years. Other private development is also being built, including Gateway Mixed Use on the northwest corner of Main and Broadway, conversion of the old Mervyn's building into loft apartments and Alvin Newton Apartments (construction in 2025). These developments will help fulfill the Downtown vision of a vibrant and pedestrian-friendly destination environment. *(Land Use & Community Design ECR, community engagement finding, and discussions with City Staff)*

Corridor Revitalization. Two of the city's primary corridors, Main Street and Broadway, consist of low intensity commercial and office projects and disconnected shopping centers. The updated General Plan Land Use Map redefines these corridors as the only mixed-use areas of the city. This provides the opportunity for lively mixed-use corridors with higher intensity development in both vertical and horizontal formats. Additional revisions to the Entrada Specific Plan will be required to further envision both corridors. *(Land Use & Community Design ECR, Regional Sustainable Communities Strategy Report, Meetings with City Staff)*

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

Character and Design. Commercial and industrial places and streets generally have the greatest potential for improved mobility, enhanced character, and placemaking due to low-slung development and large areas devoted to surface parking. Residential places and streets are generally more stable, although opportunities do exist for public realm, streetscape, and connectivity improvements. *(Land Use and Community Design ECR)*

Annexation. Annexation serves as an opportunity for Santa Maria to grow responsibly, expanding needed jobs, housing, entertainment, public facilities, and services beyond the City's current limits. The area identified for planned annexation would expand the City's jurisdiction east of the 101 freeway. The planned annexation area offers a large swath of land to further design and develop through Specific Plans or Master Plans that would further define an appropriate mix of land uses and intensities. *(Annexation Request Package, Meetings with City Staff)*

Issues and Challenges

Jobs-Housing Imbalance. Over the last 20 years, population growth has outpaced job growth, creating a jobs-housing imbalance. According to projections from the SBCAG, the trend will be exacerbated through 2050. *(Land Use & Community Design ECR)*

Land Use Planning. Nearly half of the land in Santa Maria has a Planned Development Overlay. This suggests the current base zones in the Zoning Ordinance are not flexible enough to create desired building and development types and that development and building form are regulated on an ad hoc basis during the City's approvals process. *(Land Use & Community Design ECR)*

Land Use Conflicts. Industrial uses are occasionally located next to residential uses (add other sensitive uses), creating abrupt transitions. Residents living next to industrial facilities may be exposed to emissions, odors, noise, and other factors detrimental to public health. These land use conflicts also highlight the lack of past citywide planning for distinct neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. *(Land Use & Community Design ECR)*

Disconnected Node. New development, including the Mahoney Ranch North and South Specific Plans, create an urbanized area disconnected from the rest of the city and many of its amenities. *(Land Use & Community Design ECR)*

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

Park and Recreational Facility Service and Access. The City’s existing park service ratio is 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents, short of its service goal of 5.0. The City is also short of its community pool and senior center per capita goals. The rate of residential growth will continue to put downward pressure on these ratios in the absence of considerable system expansion, increased access to parks and facilities through joint use agreements, and/or development of undeveloped portions of existing parks. (*Land Use & Community Design ECR*)

V. General Plan Land Use Designations and Map


General Plan Land use designations have been designed to reflect the range of uses necessary for the future development of the planning area. The designations provide for:

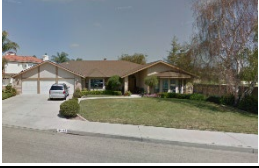


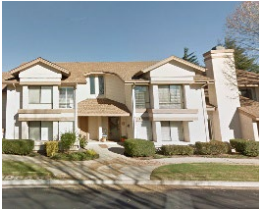
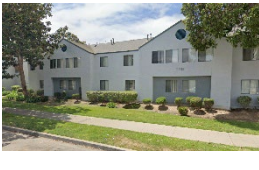

1. The distribution of varying uses throughout the Planning Area as indicated on the proposed General Plan Land Use Map (Figure LU-1).
2. Specific zoning which guides development and is used to implement the General Plan.

Each designation in Table LU-1 below provides a detailed description of each type of land use found within the General Plan Land Use Map (Figure LU-1) including the purpose, allowed uses, maximum density or intensity (commercial FAR), and in some instances, maximum allowed height. More detailed regulations can be found in the Zoning Ordinance.

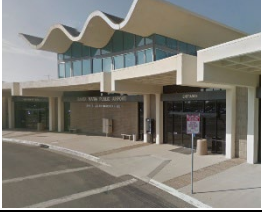


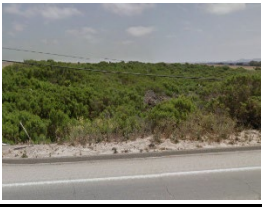
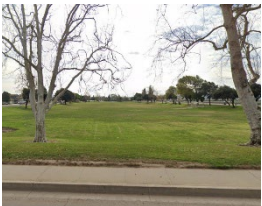

The General Plan Land Use Map depicts the location and extent of land use designations described in Table LU-1. The General Plan Land Use Map indicates the distribution of the land use designations geographically throughout the City, the City's Sphere of Influence, and potential annexation areas. These recommendations should not be considered as being tied to a specific time in the future. The specific recommendation in one area may relate to currently developed uses, while others are oriented to development at an indefinite date in the future. The City is concerned with next year as well as 10 and 20 years from now. Thus, if an area is slated for new uses, the City is as concerned about the period of transition as with establishing ultimate uses. Designations calling for new uses do not necessarily constitute an abandonment of existing uses.

Table LU-1 Land Use Designations

Designation	Description
Residential	
Residential Agricultural (RA) or Very Low Density (VLDR) 	To create a transition area between agricultural and strictly urban uses, as well as provide for a particular residential lifestyle. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Single-family homes; noncommercial agricultural activities, the keeping of horses and certain commercial agricultural activities on larger (suggested minimum of 5- to 10-acre) parcels. <u>Density:</u> Max 2.2 du/ac

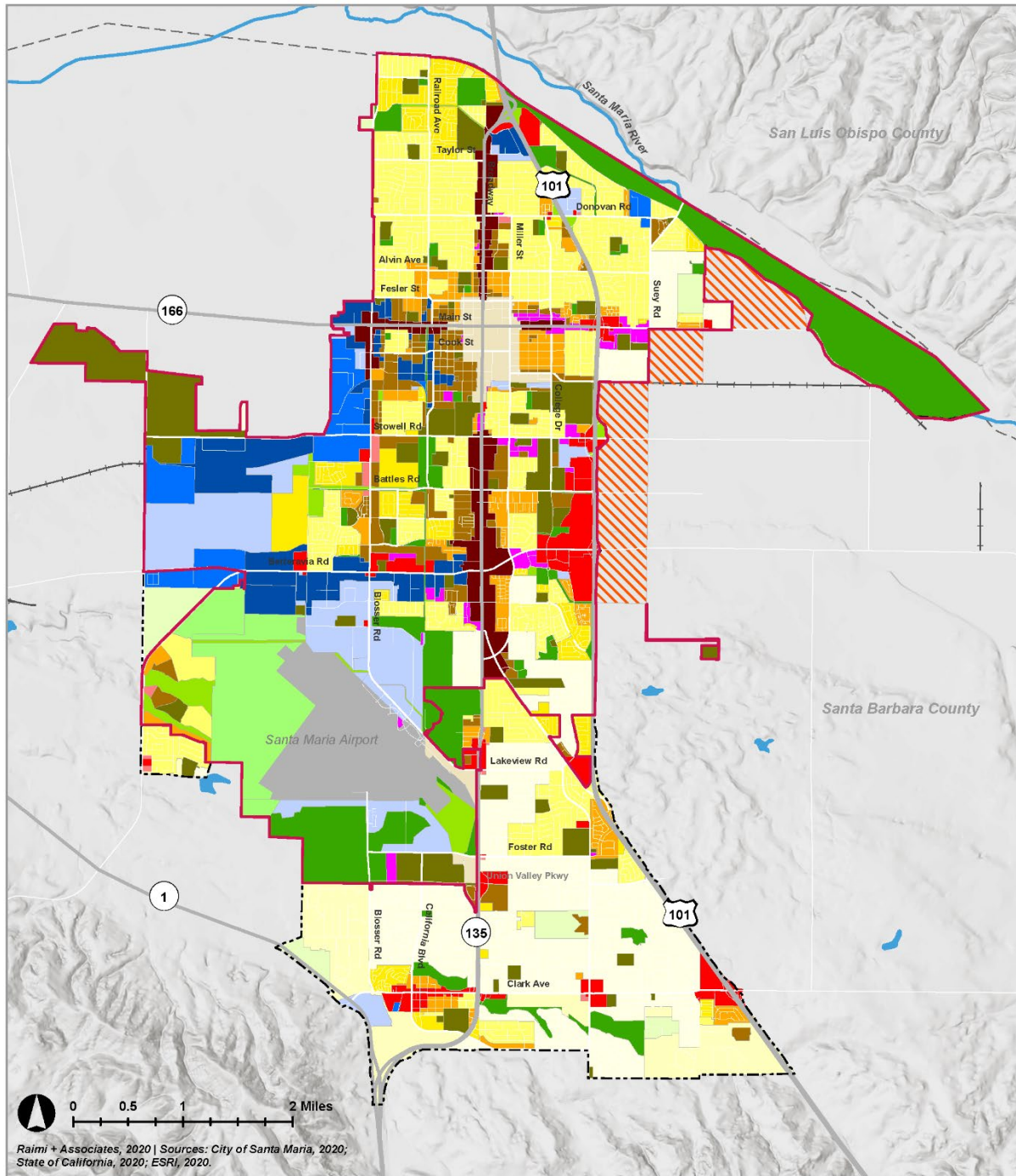
<p>Lower-Density Residential (LWDR)</p> 	<p>To encourage high quality single-family residential development on larger lots. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Single-family homes. <u>Density:</u> Max 5.5 du/ac</p>
<p>Low Density Residential (LDR)</p> 	<p>To encourage new areas with overall densities responsive to the economic considerations of providing new housing, on a wide range of standard-sized lots, providing the amenities and open spaces associated with traditional single-family areas. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Single-family homes. <u>Density:</u> Max 8 du/ac</p>
<p>Low Medium Density Residential (LMDR-8)</p> 	<p>To encourage densities that are responsive to the economic considerations of providing affordable single-family housing on small lots while at the same time maintaining adequate individual private open space, design flexibility, and the character of a single-family neighborhood. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Small lot single family, townhomes, rowhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes. <u>Density:</u> Max 10 du/ac</p>
<p>Medium Density Residential (MDR)</p> 	<p>To encourage new development while stabilizing existing development. Allows a mixture of unit types, while maintaining the feeling of a single-family neighborhood. To encourage reinvestment in older areas, and provide a land conservation measure by inducing development away from yet undeveloped areas. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Small lot single family, townhomes, rowhouses, and duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes; courtyard housing, and walk-up multi-family housing. <u>Density:</u> Max 12 du/ac</p>
<p>High Density Residential (HDR)</p> 	<p>To provide for an urban residential environment, preferably close to shopping facilities and existing activity centers, as well as provide an incentive for reinvestment in older established areas. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Townhomes, rowhouses, and duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes; and multifamily housing. <u>Density:</u> Max 30 du/ac</p>
<p>Mixed Use</p>	
<p>Corridor Mixed Use (CMU)</p> 	<p>This will allow for multi-story, multi-use development contextual with adjacent residential uses. The intent is to allow for the creation of commercial uses mixed with multi-family housing to create opportunities to live and encourage activity and vitality. Uses may be mixed horizontally or vertically, though active ground floor uses, such as restaurants and retail, are encouraged but not required. Design requirements, such as building stepbacks, may be employed to transition to residential uses on adjacent streets. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Standalone or mixed retail, restaurants, service commercial (such as banks or real estate offices), service establishments (such as medical clinics and beauty shops), office buildings, hotels, multi-family housing, townhomes, duplexes. <u>Density:</u> Max 35 du/ac <u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 2.0</p>

	<u>Height maximum:</u> 55 feet
Commercial	
<p>Neighborhood Commercial (NC)</p> 	<p>To provide areas that offer convenience goods and services to local residents without disrupting the residential character of an area. These areas are intended to be small in size and not geared to providing a multitude of more specialized goods and services serving a community-wide or regional market.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Supermarkets, convenience grocery stores, drug stores, laundromats, bakeries, and shoe repair shops.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 0.5</p> <p><u>Height maximum:</u> 30, 35, 40 feet</p>
<p>Community Commercial (CC)</p> 	<p>To include the majority of retail uses outside the central core, particularly along the lineal development corridors that have emerged. The majority of these uses would be geared to the area-wide market.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Retail uses, including regional retail, service commercial, small offices, auto sales, and services.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 0.5</p> <p><u>Height maximum:</u> 40, 70 feet</p>
<p>Commercial/ Professional Office (CPO)</p> 	<p>To provide areas for offices, which may be compatible with a range of other uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Standalone office or business park development for professional medical, non-profit, and public offices, as well as a certain complementary commercial uses.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 1.0</p> <p><u>Height maximum:</u> 35 feet</p>
Industrial/Airport	
<p>Light Industrial (LI)</p> 	<p>To accommodate industrial uses that contain the process primarily within the building, do not generate negative environmental impacts, and are most compatible with adjacent nonindustrial uses.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Research facilities, light assembly plants, non-public-oriented-offices and industrial support offices, and auto sales.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 1.0</p> <p><u>Height maximum:</u> 35 feet</p>
<p>General Industrial (GI)</p> 	<p>To provide areas for all types of heavy industrial uses, but particularly those that need to be separated from other land uses because of the impacts associated with these activities, such as heavy truck traffic, noise, odor, or dust.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Range of intensive industrial uses, including heavy manufacturing and heavy trucking operations.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 1.0</p> <p><u>Height maximum:</u> 40 feet</p>
<p>Heavy Commercial/ Manufacturing (HCM)</p> 	<p>To permit activities that manufacture and retail on the same site as well as other heavy commercial uses, which may be land extensive, require transport of materials by heavy truck, require large loading and docking areas, and where the possibilities of heavy noise generation exist.</p> <p><u>Allowed uses:</u> Lumberyards, boat works, warehouses, wholesale building supply dealers, mobile home sales, farm equipment sales, equipment repair.</p> <p><u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 1.0</p> <p><u>Height maximum:</u> 40 feet</p>

<p>Airport Service (AS)</p> 	<p>To provide a broad category facilitating the airport and airport-related commercial and industrial uses not adversely affected by airport operations, to provide specific areas for aircraft operation and navigation aids, and to minimize hazards to the safe landing and take-off of aircraft. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Full range of uses, including airport operation and support activities. <u>Commercial FAR:</u> Max 1.0</p>
<p>Public and Open Space</p>	
<p>Primary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-1)</p> 	<p>To preserve certain areas for present and future agricultural production, protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Intensive crop agricultural uses. All land classified as prime agricultural (Class I and II soils).</p>
<p>Secondary Agricultural Open Space (AOS-2)</p> 	<p>To preserve certain areas for present and future agricultural production, protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Less intensive agricultural uses, including grazing. Includes some lands that are not prime agricultural, but are an agricultural buffer and are not now considered suitable for urban expansion.</p>
<p>Conservation Open Space (COS)</p> 	<p>To preserve certain areas for present and future agricultural production, protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Includes areas subject to flood hazard, significant groundwater recharge areas, areas adjacent to creekbeds, areas of surface and sub-surface mineral extraction, levee buffer, airport safety areas, and publicly owned landscaped areas.</p>
<p>Recreational Open Space (ROS)</p> 	<p>To preserve certain areas for present and future agricultural production, protect natural resources, provide for recreation and scenic protection, provide scenic areas along railroad rights-of-way, act as an urban agriculture buffer, allow mineral extraction, and act as a safety buffer between the urban land uses and the levee. It also provides for limited residential uses. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Includes existing and proposed recreational facilities, including parks; bikeways; equestrian trails; paths; and selected public utility and railroad right-of-ways and associated uses; and publicly owned and operated sanitary landfill operations that have the potential for reclamation and development into the aforementioned recreational facilities.</p>
<p>Community Facilities (CF)</p> 	<p>To provide for necessary facilities for use by the public. <u>Allowed uses:</u> Range of public facilities, including schools and government buildings. Open space facilities, such as parks, are classified under "Open Space."</p>
<p>Other</p>	

Downtown Specific Plan (SP)	The Downtown Specific Plan designation refers to the area within the Downtown Santa Maria Specific Plan. It includes 50 square blocks centered at Broadway/Main and establishes land uses and building form regulations, including parking. See the Specific Plan for further details and regulations.
Planned Annexation (PA)	To encourage comprehensive planning and urban design flexibility for large annexation land areas (over 60 acres) through the adoption of a specific plan or master plans following the General Plan Update process, as the City proceeds with annexation. Such flexibility allows the City to adopt a set of land use specifications and implementation programs tailored to the unique characteristics of each area.
<p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Single-family zones are subject to SB9, which was passed in 2021. This law allows for parcels in single-family zones to be subdivided and duplexes built on each lot. 2. The maximum residential density of any residential land use designation may be exceeded to complement General Plan Housing Element policy (in accordance with the City's inclusionary housing ordinance and density bonus provisions of Section 65915 of the California Government Code). 3. The City does not currently regulate intensity in its zoning or the General Plan. The final General Plan may regulate maximum intensity via floor area ratio. 	

Figure LU-1 Proposed General Plan Land Use Map



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



General Plan Land Use

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

VI. Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions

The Santa Maria Land Use goals and policies are organized into four primary sections, which include the following:

1. **Citywide Framework and Development Pattern** establishes visionary goals and policies for how Santa Maria's built environment should evolve and change into the desired pattern of development through intensification of the downtown, core neighborhoods, and mixed-use corridors (Broadway and Main), with gradual annexation east of the 101 Freeway to develop new complete neighborhoods as needed. The goals, policies, and actions in this section describe the intent behind the land use pattern established in the General Plan Land Use Designations and General Plan Land Use Map (Table LU-1 and Figure LU-1).
2. **Community Design and Public Realm** provides directional goals and policies that are tailored to the city's public realm and character. This includes providing greater emphasis on walkability, public art and culture, outdoor gathering spaces, and quality building design.
3. **Land Use Compatibility and Development** provides goals, policies, and actions to address the city's ongoing land use compatibility issues and the city's provision of utilities, services, and public facilities for new and existing development.
4. **Engagement and Regional Coordination** outlines the City's commitment to community engagement in the planning process and regional coordination.

Each goal, policy, and implementation action includes a source in parentheses. Sources include: the City's existing General Plan, State law, existing conditions reports, community input, guidance from City staff, industry or regional best practices, or related materials.

Citywide Framework and Development Pattern

Goal LU-1: Balanced mix of uses. A balanced mix of land uses meets the present and future housing, employment, and recreation needs of the community. (Retained - policy LU.1).

Policy LU-1.1: Land Use Pattern. Implement the General Plan Land Use Map and corresponding Land Use Designations as described in Figure LU-1 and in Table LU-1 to create a complete community. (New – best practice)

Action LU-1.1.1: Following adoption of the General Plan Update, prepare a comprehensive update of the City's zoning code with districts that mirror the General Plan designations and allow flexibility in uses without the need for Planned Development Overlay districts. (New – discussion with City staff)

Action LU-1.1.2: Implement the Santa Maria Objective Design Standards and recommended Design Review process that streamlines the existing process of reviewing applications for the development of vacant sites or site redevelopment. (New – discussion with City staff)

Action LU-1.1.3: Amend the Area 9 Specific Plan to allow low density residential uses along A Street, consistent with the LMDR designation. (New – discussion with City staff)

Action LU-1.1.4: Investigate opportunities to create a formal process for design review within the Specific Plan zoning district. (New – discussion with City staff)

Policy LU-1.2: Infill development. Infill existing residential, commercial, and industrial capacity prior to developing in outlying, undeveloped areas to revitalize downtown and deteriorating neighborhoods and preserve agricultural land and open space. (Revised – goal LU.5 and objective LU.5 #3)

Action LU-1.2.1: Implement the Blosser Southeast Area 5B Specific Plan and the Mahoney Ranch South Specific Plan, to the extent feasible. Require infrastructure, multimodal, and public realm connections between both development projects and the central core of Santa Maria. (New – discussion with City staff)

Policy LU-1.3: Areas of Change. Focus new development, infill, and higher density or intensity development along the city’s primary corridors (Main Street and Broadway), within the Downtown, in neighborhoods in the City Core, and within the Southwest neighborhoods. (New – visioning process)

Policy LU-1.4: Job/housing balance. Achieve a job to housing ratio of 1.2 that balances new housing development and jobs production in Santa Maria over the General Plan horizon. (Revised – Objective LU.6 g, Policy LU.11)

Goal LU-2: Annexation as outward growth. Land is gradually annexed, as needed, to accommodate future growth. (Revised – Goal LU.6a)

Policy LU-2.1: Planned annexation area. Pursue annexation of the Planned Annexation areas identified on the General Plan Land Use Map as needed to meet housing and jobs development goals. (New – Annexation Study)

Action LU-2.1.1: In collaboration with the County of Santa Barbara, submit a LAFCO application to modify the City’s Sphere of Influence to include the Planned Annexation area. (New – discussion with City staff)

Action LU-2.1.2: In collaboration with landowners, developers, and the County of Santa Barbara, submit LAFCO applications to annex subareas of the Planned Annexation area as development need arises. (New – discussion with City staff)

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

Policy LU-2.3: Future Specific Plans. Require Specific Plans or Master Plans for annexed areas that achieve the following objectives, at a minimum (New – Preferred Land Use Alternative Memo):

- Site new employment uses near existing institutions, such as educational or research and development (R&D) near Marian Regional Medical Center and Allen Hancock College, and industrial or commercial uses adjacent to US-101 and along East Main to provide convenient access to regional transportation.
- Provide a diversity of higher density housing types for rental and ownership at a range of price points, to minimize land area expansion and conversion of agricultural lands.
- Design complete neighborhoods where residents have convenient walking and biking access to public facilities, services, and retail.
- Buffer schools, parks, and homes from infrastructure, major roadways, the Santa Maria regional landfill, industrial land uses, and other land uses that may produce odor or noise or negatively impact air quality.
- Support expansion of the Marian Regional Medical Center and other supportive medical offices.
- Support higher education, including expansions of Allen Hancock College and other trade schools.
- Provide 5 parks per 1,000 residents, per the City’s park service standard, and plan for new public and recreational facilities.
- Develop a safe, connected network of sidewalks and trails that provides ample connections to destinations.

Goal LU-3: Vibrant downtown. An iconic and vibrant downtown core serves as the heart of Santa Maria. (New – community engagement)

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

Policy LU-3.2: Revitalization of shopping centers. Prioritize revitalization and infill efforts at the Santa Maria Town Center and Town Center West areas consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan. (New – meetings with City staff)

Policy LU-3.3: Downtown outdoor gathering. Prioritize new public and quasi-public multifunctional outdoor gathering spaces in Downtown redevelopment. (New – vision statement)

Policy LU-3.4: Downtown arts and culture. Infuse arts and culture in the Downtown through public art installations and placemaking initiatives. (New – vision statement)

Policy LU-3.5: Reduce surface parking in downtown. Support parking solutions that reduce surface parking lots within the Downtown to better utilize land and promote pedestrian walkability. (New – best practice)

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

Policy LU-3.6: Prioritize pedestrians. Promote pedestrian walkways, sidewalks, paseos, plazas, and courtyards away from vehicular traffic to enhance walkability and pedestrian comfort within Downtown. (Revise Objective LU.7g)

Goal LU-4: Mixed-use corridors. Lively corridors enhance the quality of life through mixed-use development. (New – Meetings with City)

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

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

Action LU-4.1.2: Work with Caltrans to improve the pedestrian amenities, access, and safety along Main and to investigate truck route alternatives that do not interfere with the pedestrian-focused environment along Main and Broadway. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-4.2: Industrial on Major Corridors. Prohibit new industrial, manufacturing, and heavy polluting uses on the Main Street and Broadway corridors, as they detract from creating a walkable mixed-use environment. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-4.3: Mixed-use development. Support vertical and horizontal mixed-use development, integrating residential uses along Broadway and Main to promote a pedestrian-focused environment in the core of the city and reduce vehicle trips. (Revised – Goal LU.7 Implementation program #9)

Policy LU-4.4: Shared parking. Promote shared, flexible parking within the Corridor Mixed-Use land use designation to encourage alternative modes of transportation and maximize land utility in the urban center of the city. (Revised – Goal 7 implementation 9)

Goal LU-5: Housing Stock. High-quality local housing stock is available to residents of all ages and abilities. (Revise – Goal LU.9)

Policy LU-5.1: Housing variety. Support a variety of housing types, unit sizes, and building densities in Santa Maria to support residents at differing life stages and socio-economic statuses. (Revised – policy LU.9)

Policy LU-5.2: Siting of infill development. Promote new infill housing in areas that are underutilized and in proximity to parks, recreation, public amenities, and local goods and services. (Revised – Objective LU.9a and Objective LU.10i)

Policy LU-5.3: Location of new housing. Discourage single family housing production directly adjacent to high-density residential, high-intensity commercial, and industrial uses, in favor of land use transitions and buffers of higher intensity multifamily residential, mixed-use development, and lower intensity commercial. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-5.4: Mobile homes as affordable housing. Maintain existing mobile home parks as a means of affordable housing. (Revised – Goal 9 implementation #2)

Policy LU-5.5: High density near transit. Work with developers to provide higher density residential near existing and planned transit as a means of reducing vehicle trips and improving connectivity. (Revised – Objective LU.10)

Goal LU-6: Commercial areas. High-quality commercial areas provide jobs, goods and services, hospitality, and office spaces while contributing to Santa Maria’s local tax base. (Revised – Objective LU.1c)

Policy LU-6.1: Community character. Maintain and improve the existing character of Santa Maria as a thriving community and the industrial and commercial center for northern Santa Barbara County and southern San Luis Obispo County. (Revised – Goal LU.1)

Policy LU-6.2: Visitor-serving uses. Foster hospitality and tourism through new hotels, restaurants, wineries, taprooms, and entertainment – including museums, amphitheaters, and events spaces – within the Downtown area, and across Broadway and Main. (Revised – Objective LU.10a)

Policy LU-6.3: Freeway-oriented commercial. Consolidate large chain shopping retailers, known as “big box”, and auto sales along the 101-freeway corridor for easy access by the regional population. (Revise – Goal LU4 implementation 2).

Policy LU-6.4: Revitalize commercial shopping centers. Support public and private revitalization of old shopping centers into pedestrian-oriented hubs that promote community and local businesses. (Revise – Objective LU.1c and Objective LU.4 implementation 5)

Policy LU-6.5: Expand medical offices. Work with property owners to provide a variety of office types, especially medical offices, in Commercial/Professional Office designated areas west of Broadway in an effort to expand healthcare outside of the Regional Medical Center. (New – community engagement)

Action LU-6.5.1: Revise the Zoning Code to allow up to 45 feet in height for the Commercial/Professional Office designation to accommodate 3 floors of office use. (New – discussions with City)

Policy LU-6.6: Neighborhood Commercial. Design neighborhood commercial centers to serve the needs of the surrounding residents. (Retain – Policy 10b)

Action LU-6.6.1: Revise the Zoning Code to decrease the Neighborhood Commercial designation height maximum to 25 feet to reflect the appropriate neighborhood scale. (New – discussions with City)

Action LU-6.6.2: Consider decreasing the Community Commercial height limit through a Zoning Code revision. (New – discussions with City)

Action LU-6.6.3: Revise the Zoning Code to emphasize and facilitate the ability of neighborhood commercial to serve the population using alternative transportation (walking, biking). (New – discussions with City)

Goal LU-7: Industrial districts. A strong industrial sector contributes to the local economy and job base, in a manner that does not conflict with residential areas. (Revised – Goal LU.4)

Policy LU-7.1: Employment diversity. Support a diverse mix of industrial, manufacturing, food processing, viticulture, research and development, laboratories, and other job and tax-producing uses within the General Industrial and Heavy Commercial/Manufacturing land use designations. (Revise – Objective LU.1d)

Policy LU-7.2: Non-polluting industries. Encourage new, clean industries within the General Industrial and Light Industrial land use designations that do not produce significant air, water, or noise pollution. (Revised – Goal LU.6)

Policy LU-7.3: Industrial infill. Promote infill of industrial, manufacturing, and warehousing development between Hanson Way and Blosser Rd, and surrounding the Santa Maria Airport consistent with the Airport Master Plan. (New – Discussions with City)

Goal LU-8: Santa Maria Public Airport. A thriving airport supports local tourism, public and private air travel, and business opportunities. (New – discussions with city)

Policy LU-8.1: Airport related infill. Allow airport related industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, and logistics infill in areas surrounding the Santa Maria Public Airport, consistent with the Santa Maria Airport Business Park Specific Plan, the Santa Maria Public Airport Master Plan, and the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. (Revised – Objective LU.6a)

Action LU-8.1.1: Should the Santa Maria Airport revise the Airport Master Plan, work closely with Airport officials to ensure the proposed Master Plan maintains land use compatibility with the new General Plan Land Use Map, and ensure that any intensification of the airport does not impact established residential neighborhoods in the periphery. (New – Discussions with City)

Goal LU-9: Agricultural areas. Thriving agricultural lands generate fresh produce for the State and preserve Santa Maria’s history as a farming community. (New – Existing Conditions Reports and Community engagement)

Policy LU-9.1: Preserve agricultural resources. Accommodate growth while making every effort to preserve prime agricultural resources in Santa Maria and its sphere of influence. (Revise – Goal LU.6 b).

Policy LU-9.2: Agricultural land use conflicts. Support ongoing agricultural activities by discouraging land uses that conflict with adjacent farming activities. (Retain – Objective LU.6.d)

Policy LU-9.3: Agricultural buffers. Buffer active agricultural land and adjacent uses to discourage land use conflicts that would disrupt farming operations. (Revised – Objective LU2.e)

Community Design and Public Realm

Goal LU-10: Architecture and Building Design. Building design and architecture enhances Santa Maria’s character. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-10.1: Design Guidelines. Prepare development design guidelines that are intended to produce visually interesting residential and mixed-use building designs that reflect the character of the Santa Maria Valley. (New – best practice)

Action LU-10.1.1: Implement the Santa Maria Objective Design Standards to provide clear and object standards for residential and residential mixed-use development. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-10.2: Rehabilitate older structures. Incentivize rehabilitation of older structures, especially within Downtown, to maintain quality neighborhoods, corridors, and centers. (Revised – policy LU.3)

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

Action LU-10.2.2: Continue to administer Federal and State grant programs that support affordable housing, public services, public and non-profit facilities, and housing revitalization. (Retained - Goal 9 implementation #3)

Goal LU-11: Urban Design. High quality urban design enhances Santa Maria's character. (Revised – Goal LU.3)

Policy LU-11.1: Infuse arts and culture into the public realm. Integrate arts and cultural experiences into public spaces through temporary installations, permanent facilities such as museums and exhibits, and cultural events and programming throughout Santa Maria. (New – vision statement)

Action LU-11.1.1: Work with property owners and developers to activate public-facing alleyways through temporary or permanent public art. (New – alternatives technical memo)

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

1. Broadway and Highway 101
2. West Main Street and Blosser Road
3. Betteravia and Highway 101
4. East Main Street and Panther Drive
5. North Bound Santa Maria Way at Highway 101

Goal LU-12: Pedestrian-focused public spaces. High quality pedestrian-oriented public and quasi-public spaces that enhance daily life in Santa Maria. (New – visioning process)

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

Policy LU-12.2: Prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists. Work with private developers to provide pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity within neighborhoods and public spaces through sidewalks, designated bicycle lanes, sufficient secure bicycle parking for customers and tenants, and bus shelters, among other techniques. (New – best practice)

Action LU-12.2.1: Implement the ongoing Safe Routes to Schools program and provide regular updates as needed. (New – best practice)

Action LU-12.2.2: Continue to support and sponsor Downtown Friday and similar regular events in Downtown Santa Maria. (New – best practice)

Action LU-12.2.3: Investigate the possibility of a new Slow Streets Program to reduce vehicle speed on neighborhood streets and prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety within neighborhoods. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-12.3: Pedestrian amenities. Require pedestrian amenities and enhancements, such as street trees, lighting, street furniture (including benches and trash receptacles), widened sidewalks, curb extensions, and landscaped strips in all new commercial, mixed-use, and residential development and redevelopment projects. (New – vision statement and alternatives technical memo)

Action LU-12.3.1: In public and private development, investigate design techniques that can reduce outdoor pedestrian discomfort from extreme wind events. (New – community engagement)

Policy LU-12.4: Connections to Points of Interest. Urge new development to connect walking and biking paths and linear parks to the developed core of Santa Maria (Main Street and Broadway) and major points of interest such as the Civic Center and Downtown, Marian Regional Medical Center, Allen Hancock College, and the Santa Maria Airport. (New – community engagement and City meetings)

Policy LU-12.5: Walking paths as buffers. Utilize walking paths and linear parks as a transition and/or buffer between non-compatible uses or noticeable changes in building scale or density. (Revised – Objective LU.6e)

Land Use Compatibility and Development

Goal LU-13: Land use conflicts. Conflicts between residential and incompatible non-residential land uses are mitigated. (Revise – Goal LU.7)

Policy LU-13.1: Land use buffers. Require the use of buffers between incompatible land uses by using berms, walls, open space, landscaping, bike paths, and arterial streets where appropriate to avoid adverse impacts to either use. (Retained – Objective LU.7 a)

Policy LU-13.2: Residential encroachment. Protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment by incompatible nonresidential uses and the impacts associated with adjacent nonresidential activities. (Retained – Objective LU.7b)

Policy LU-13.3: Land use transitions. Require land use transitions of lower intensity commercial on the perimeter of heavy uses when adjacent to residential uses. (Revise – Objective LU.7c)

Policy LU-13.4: Incompatible neighborhood uses. Prohibit the development of industrial or manufacturing uses within neighborhoods or directly adjacent to established residential neighborhoods. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-13.5: Industrial and residential buffers. Mitigate the impacts of industrial land which exists adjacent to residential uses by permitting only light industrial uses in those areas, along with requiring the industrial development provide appropriate buffers so that the use does not negatively impact the residential development. (Revised – Objective LU.7c)

Policy LU-13.6: Relocation of industrial near residential. Work with business-owners and property owners to relocate existing industrial, manufacturing, and heavy polluting uses adjacent to established neighborhoods to areas on the outer edges of the city that will not conflict with ongoing industrial operations. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-13.7: Incompatible uses. Prohibit new residential development, and those retail, commercial, office, and/or consumer-oriented businesses which the City determines would conflict with the Airport Master Plan and Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, including through utilizing processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code. (Revised - Objective LU.10g)

Policy LU-13.8: Airport and residential buffers. Require transition zones and buffers between the Airport and new development to mitigate impacts of ongoing airport operations. (New – discussions with city)

Action LU-13.8.1: Work with property owners to invest in buffers between surrounding incompatible land uses, such as existing residential development. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-13.9: Development compatibility. Ensure new development within the Santa Maria Airport Area of Influence is consistent with standards and regulations set forth by local and regional Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (Revised – Safety Element Objective 8.1.a)

Action LU-13.9.1: Review new development for consistency with the Santa Maria Airport Safety Zone Compatibility Criteria, Table 3-2, of the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan, and with the regulations and processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code. (New - Best practice)

Goal LU-14: New Development. New and existing development within Santa Maria is sustained by high quality utilities, facilities, and services. (Revised – Goal 2)

Policy LU-14.1: Privately funded utilities. Require developers to “pay their fair share” for utilities and services in new development. (Revised – Objective LU. 2 g)

Policy LU-14.2: Public facilities and services. Ensure AB 1600 fees and requirements placed on new development projects are sufficient to provide public facilities and services which maintain pace with housing production and all other development to maintain adequate levels of service across Santa Maria as the city grows. (Revise – Goal 7 implementation program #8)

Engagement and Regional Coordination

Goal LU-15: Planning coordination. Santa Maria’s growth and land use planning are well coordinated within the region. (Revised – Goal LU. 8)

Policy LU-15.1: Common goal coordination. Work closely with neighboring agencies to coordinate planning efforts and support planning topics of mutual concern, such as balancing agricultural areas with urbanized areas and development growth, circulation, sustainability, parks and open space, and environmental justice and health. (Revised – Policy LU.6b)

Action LU-15.1.1: Coordinate with Santa Barbara County Council of Governments, Santa Babara County, LAFCO, and other regional agencies on an ongoing basis. (Revised – Objective LU.8a)

Policy LU-15.2: Internal and external coordination. Continue to coordinate planning efforts internally among all City departments, and externally with property owners, residents, and special districts. (Retain – Policy LU.8)

Goal LU-16: Community engagement. Members of the Santa Maria community are engaged and empowered to participate in the planning decision-making processes. (New – best practice)

Policy LU-16.1: Transparent process. Continue to provide an open and transparent civic process that allows community members opportunities to provide meaningful input in the planning process. (Revise – Objective LU.8b)

Policy LU-16.2: Diverse engagement. Hold diverse community engagement opportunities (such as workshops, focus groups, pop-ups, and online surveys), both online and in-person, to discuss and gather community input on important planning topics. (New – best practice)