



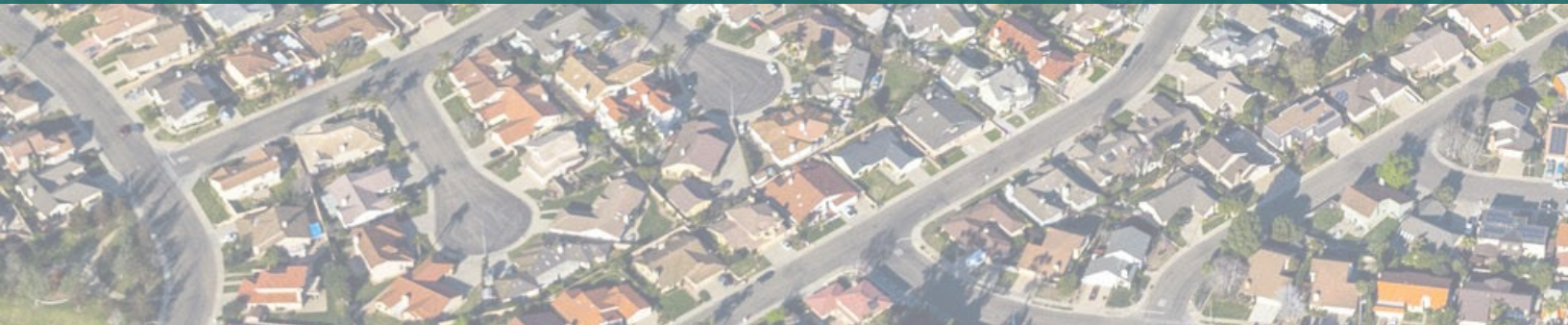
Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



SB 1000 Farmworker Community Café

Summary Report | February 2021



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Overview

This summary report presents themes identified during a Farmworker Community Café on February 17, 2021. The Café is one piece of an extensive community engagement effort for the City of Santa Maria's General Plan Update (GPU) process. Four total Cafés were held during February and March of 2021 on the following topics: Environmental Justice, Farmworker Community, Community Safety, and Housing.

Through existing conditions research in the first phase of the GPU process, several areas of Santa Maria were identified that do not fare as well as others. These areas, called “disadvantaged communities,” are lower-income and may face disproportionate exposures to health hazards. The City of Santa Maria houses 64% of the Santa Barbara County's farm-worker population and therefore it is essential to seek farmworker input through targeted activities and events such as this Café.

The Café was designed to broadly engage in identification of health issues and priorities as well as to refine existing conditions findings across the following topic areas, as required by Senate Bill 1000 (“The Planning for Healthy Communities Act”): Housing, Public Facilities, Contaminants, Food Access, Physical Activity and Health. The icons below represent each of these topics and are used throughout the report.



Participants and Format

There were 8 participants in the Café. Participants were community members and farmworkers that live in the City of Santa Maria. The companies they work for include strawberry, lettuce, and blackberry farms. Participants ranged from married couples with children to single mothers and single men.

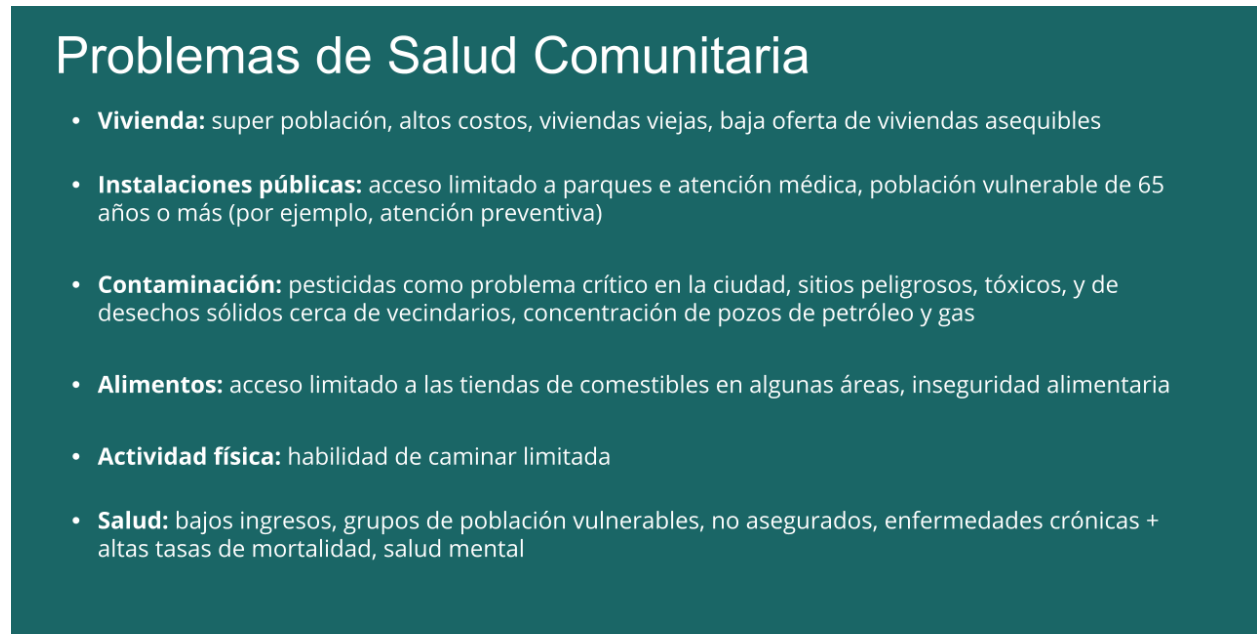
Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Café was held via Facebook Rooms in the format of an online focus group. The Café was led by the Community Organizer of the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), a community organization working with residents and stakeholders from disadvantaged communities, including farmworkers and their families. CAUSE is a partner of the City of Santa Maria in the General Plan Update, ensuring that traditionally underrepresented groups, such as farmworkers, are proactively sought for input in shaping the future of Santa Maria.

Participants were provided a list of key health risks in Santa Maria identified during the existing conditions research (Figure 1). The following questions were used as discussion prompts:

- What issue do you think is the most important health issue for farmworkers that the General Plan should address? What about the 2nd most important issue? Is there any issue missing?
- As a group, can you tell me why you identified these as the most important issues for farmworkers?

- Are there specific areas in the city that are most impacted by any of these issues?
- What challenges or barriers have you encountered in addressing farmworker health in Santa Maria?
- Are there other issues that impact the health of farmworkers that we have not discussed today? (e.g., jobs, mental health, etc.).
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Figure 1. Key Findings from Health Existing Conditions Research (Spanish)



Key Themes

The following key themes emerged from discussion (specific comments are included in the Appendix):



Pesticide Exposure

Awareness and support about the dangers of pesticides for farmworking families. Farmworkers express ongoing concern about carrying something back home that can affect their family. Even though they are advised to wash their clothes separately, many farmworkers rely on public laundromats and due to cost, they cannot wash clothes separately. More awareness of these potential exposures for family members is needed.

Stronger protections around use of pesticides near community spaces. Even though farmworkers are advised to not go into a recently sprayed field, many times the fields across homes or other fields with farmworkers present are sprayed, allowing for the wind to expose community members to pesticides. Additionally, there isn't much of a buffer zone between schools, homes, and other community areas and the fields being sprayed.



Public Facilities

Maintaining parks in low-income neighborhoods. Parks in low-income neighborhoods are often neglected in maintenance, which encourages littering and vandalism of the parks by other community members. Installing more trash cans and promoting clean parks will encourage community members to care for their parks and allow for families to fully enjoy facilities.

Improve safety for pedestrians. Many farmworkers noted Broadway as a key street with businesses and services of all kinds. Many noted that this street is also not safe when trying to cross and does not have enough crossing paths to protect pedestrians.



Safe and Sanitary Housing

Prioritizing affordable housing to retain the local workforce. Due to the rising cost of rent, many farmworkers end up moving away from Santa Maria. Developing more affordable housing would allow our local workforce to feel secure in their tenure in the city. Additionally, this issue exacerbates health issues when multiple farmworker families move in together in a housing unit intended for one family.

Ensuring accountability from landlords and property management companies in maintaining habitable housing. Concerns of pests, mold, and plumbing issues need to be addressed by the City in order to promote healthy living situations. This accountability also has to consider the importance of language justice so all community members are aware of their rights and process to report violations.

Access to legal and mediation services for tenants. Ensuring access to information about tenants' rights for all community members creates a safer, stable community. Many non-English speaking community members don't know their rights and legal and mediation services would help them keep landlords and property management companies accountable.



Food Access

Increased regulation of prices and food quality in markets. Though having markets run by the community are beneficial for the local economy, price gouging is common and there aren't many other choices available. Additionally, it is common to find expired food being sold at these markets.

Support small businesses so community members can open mini markets around neighborhoods. Santa Maria has a few locally owned neighborhood markets that sell basic food and household supplies, as well as meat and dairy items. These are walkable,

neighborhood markets that support the local economy and the community is interested in having more.



Physical Activity

Physical activity outside of work is not a priority for farmworkers. Due to the survival needs—such as securing safe and affordable housing for themselves and their families—this community has to contend with, topics like a bike-friendly city and access to trails and open land use are not prioritized. Many farmworkers agreed it would be great to be able to learn and experience more open spaces if other survival needs were met.



Health Concerns

Undocumented and uninsured farmworkers only receive treatment, not preventative care. Farmworker adults are often denied preventative care and treatment when they are not insured. Due to the intensity of labor tasks they perform, health issues related to muscles and joints such as back pain and arthritis are common.

Build low-income clinics specifically for undocumented community members. Many health, eye, and dental care clinics ask for insurance and full payment before seeing patients, therefore farmworkers are often denied necessary treatment. Farmworkers pay taxes at the city, state, and federal level and deserve access to preventative care.

Embed preventative care within the agricultural industry in a more accessible manner. Many farmworkers pay into insurance with their agricultural employer but are denied services and threatened to be fired when they get injured at work and ask to see a doctor through the company. The City can ensure that if agricultural companies are charging for insurance, workers are educated on how to access preventative care.

Increase access to mental health resources for farmworkers. As people experiencing multiple dimensions of marginalization, including being low-income and Indigenous, farmworkers need mental health services. Farmworkers report verbal abuse and bullying due to race, skin color, income, and other characteristics from employers while at work and have no place to seek support.



Civic Engagement*

Ensure accessibility and inclusion for non-English speakers with decision-makers and local government. Prioritizing accessibility, from the City website to public meetings, is key to welcoming farmworkers into the City's key decisions. Collaborating with community organizations is a helpful step forward, but language justice from the city is important in a community made up of so many non-English speakers.

Build trust through effective outreach strategies. Santa Maria should collaborate with the established local organizations and trusted community members to learn from them and improve the City's communication and outreach methods to non-English speakers. This can include: Hiring multilingual community members to canvass their communities, gather input, or inform them of resources; sending multilingual informational brochures, postcards, and notices through the mail; or exploring other tactics that local organizations have found to be successful in reaching underrepresented communities.










Training public servants and City staff on cultural sensitivity to create a welcoming environment for all community members. Requiring training for all public servants would help make the diverse community of Santa Maria feel more comfortable in engaging with their elected representatives and other City leaders. Since Santa Maria has such a diverse population, training would help both public servants and community members feel more comfortable to communicate openly and effectively.

**Though this topic was not originally anticipated as a key theme, we have included this section to represent what farmworkers identified in their discussion.*





Appendix: Detailed Notes from Discussion

The following list provides detailed notes from the discussion and is organized by question and by themes within each question.

What issue do you think is the most important health issue for farmworkers that the General Plan should address? Is there any issue missing?

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-  • Difficult to prioritize because they're all affecting us in negative ways
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-  • Housing, Health, and Pollution are the most important
 -  ○ Two people disagree; think public facilities should be in top three because its health care
 -  ○ Health is health care, some confusion around the distinction because of the example given in public facilities
 -  • Housing is important because it affects us all, we are all renters and have no stable housing
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-  • Public facilities and physical activities are least important in terms of being less thought of by farmworkers
 -  ○ There's not a lot of free time to do fun things with the family or to be able to enjoy the city
 -  ○ It would be nice to have it but they only have evenings and Sundays off
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-  • Health care is top 3 because getting hurt at work or getting arthritis or back problems is common and they cannot do anything about it
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As a group, can you tell me why you identified these as the most important issues for farmworkers?

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-  • Housing is really important because prices go up and the apartments are badly kept, they never fix anything, there's so many roaches, even if you're clean they get in from the neighbors' units
 -  • Plumbing is really bad, they do send people but they just patch it and leave, my toilet and tub keep clogging, we woke up one day and the tub was filled with sewer water, they send people to fix it but it keeps happening
 -  • Looking for housing now and its really difficult. I live in a one bedroom with my 3 kids and I want them to have more space but can't find anywhere, might have to move to Guadalupe or Nipomo.
 -  • A lot of people leave Santa Maria because housing is really expensive, and living conditions are not bearable. You have to share a room with your whole family, and the house with other families.
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- When I first moved here, I had my daughter who was a toddler and we lived with 2 other families in a 2 bedroom, we lived in the living room, had no privacy, couldn't make dinner until 9 or 10pm sometimes, couldn't shower her daughter until midnight most days.
 - This is a common experience amongst farmworkers, especially when they are starting out
 - Lives in a garage, not the best situation because it's really cold or really hot depending on the weather. Also doesn't have access to kitchen and doesn't have access to bathroom, can only go to the one in the house a couple of times to shower (morning and evening)
 - Can't do anything about it because it's cheap and what he can pay



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- Payment is first when it comes to healthcare, a while back went to a dentist by Main/ Cook and was told that they couldn't provide him service or care because he couldn't afford it, went to one on McCoy but because it was full he couldn't ask any questions.
 - Possibly opening more health care offices that provide help with financial aspect of it
 - Everyone agrees healthcare for undocumented people is important
 - If you don't have kids, you don't get any help from the government even though you are paying taxes
 - General agreement that farmworkers do not get preventative care, only treatment
 - You keep working even if you got hurt
 - Several agreed that they have gotten hurt and kept working
 - They only have band aids at work, but you can hurt your foot, hands, head, and back
 - Even if you hurt your foot or hand, they try to find something for you to do where you only have to stand
 - Ag companies won't help you if you get hurt, you get threatened to lose your job if you try to get them to pay for your medical bills
 - Low wages
 - Sometimes you can make a good amount of money if you work where there's a lot of harvest
 - A lot of bills go to doctor or other health things, never can save money
 - Mental Health
 - Not a lot of conversation during this question
 - One person shared that sometimes at work they (mayordomos/ supervisors) can be verbally abusive and it's hard to stay positive
 - Sometimes they'll say anti-indigenous things at them while they work, very rude and vulgar, sometimes they go to far and claim it's a joke, even when you tell them you don't know them like that
 - A lot of colorism/anti-indigenous experiences at work, especially if you don't speak Spanish, they make fun of you
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- It's sad to see Latinos do this to each other, we were all there once

- One person thinks it would be a good idea to add healthcare in the community because it becomes accessible to more people



- There are a few markets in busier streets (S. Blosser, W. Main, N. Broadway, La Tijuanita (W Battles & S Thornburg)) where there's a lot of low income farmworking families, which is good because it's easy to walk and go to the stores to get meat and vegetables
 - Sometimes there's big streets to cross, you have to run across a busy street
- Some of those markets (La Favorita, La Princesa) hike up their prices all the time, especially now with the pandemic
 - Sell bad meat and expired food
- El Milagro (by Fesler/Alvin) is a good example, there should be more of those but they are also really expensive
- Sometimes the food is really bad at Foodmax, its expired



- Public bathrooms in parks are closed. I run by that area and I tried to go to the bathroom at the park by W Morrison and it was closed at 8am
 - Has heard that in wealthier areas public bathrooms are open all night, only in our neighborhoods they're closed
- One person doesn't have any parks nearby
- Somebody has 2 parks right by them, both parks are usually filled by people but are littered and dirty, beer bottles/ cartons and urine everywhere; the City isn't keeping them clean
- Certain parks are more well-kept, like Waller but that's in Orcutt, and richer people live there



- At work, the supervisors or managers tell them not to enter after fields have been sprayed but sometimes you don't know if the field got sprayed, the sign isn't on there (it fell or isn't visible), or sometimes they spray the field across from you and the wind carries the pesticides
 - Generally concerned about carrying something back home that can affect their family and kids
 - Told by others to wash their clothes separately
 - All rely on public laundromats/sharing laundromats
 - Can't afford to wash clothes every day, only once a week so if there's anything on the clothes, it stays inside the house and there's nowhere else to put it
 - Many nodded/agreed
 - Some say they put it in a bag if they know for sure
 - Worries about other people who work and deal with pesticides might contaminate clothes
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- Main and Donovan, there are a lot trucks that go through there and leave a lot of exhaust: maybe opening more roads or a road that connect to the highway to avoid them going into the main city streets
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Are there specific areas in the city that are most impacted by any of these issues?

- Northwest SM
 - Remembers CAUSE saying low insurance rates there
 - Generally a lot of farmworker families
 - La Tijuanita
 - Newer migrant families
 - A lot of roaches and mice
 - Neighborhoods between W Main and W Battles
 - A lot of housing issues there
 - Parks but not well kept
 - Between N. Broadway and N. Miller
 - A lot of homeless people there now
 - A lot of apartments and housing issues
 - A lot of people
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What challenges or barriers have you encountered in addressing farmworker health in Santa Maria?



- Not knowing where to go
 - Asked group where to go for different things and got these responses
 - Housing issues: CAUSA, Legal Aid Foundation
 - Buy a bike: Big name stores
 - Closed bathrooms at park: not sure
 - Mental health support: probably ask CAUSE, CHC (clinics)
 - Knowing nothing will get done
 - Even if they do go, if they can't speak English well, they won't get any help
 - No one takes their complaints seriously
 - No consideration/not welcoming of their input
 - City meetings didn't have interpretation
 - Agendas aren't in Spanish online, wanted to attend a meeting with CAUSE and remembers CAUSE staff had to translate the portion they were interested in speaking on
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- You need to tell them ahead of time if someone who speaks Spanish will be there
 - Isn't always possible when it's a last-minute thing like it happens
 - Interpreters and translation aren't very good, it's obvious/transparent they don't spend a lot of money/funding on non-English speaking community members
 - We don't feel welcomed even though they are making decisions for us
 - It feels like everything is kept from us; we only find out because of CAUSE but they make decisions that affect us every day
 - City website translated to Spanish but most of the time it doesn't work (clarified translation doesn't work)
 - Many shared they don't own a computer or know how to use one, phone is also not always easy to use when everything is automatically in English
 - One shared that websites that are all in English and you have to press a button to have it in Spanish is not helpful because sometimes you can't find the button on the phone version or can't read where it says it'll be translated
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What recommendations do you have for the city for addressing health issues specific to farmworkers in the community?



- Have more people like the organizers at CAUSE, where they can tell people where to go to address their issues
 - CAUSE organizers can't help everyone and many people need help
 - Tell us about the opportunities and resources we have
 - Like how CAUSE went door-to-door before the pandemic; Could the city do that to talk about new resources or when they want public input?
 - Pay people who speak Spanish and Mixteco and have them go door to door during different times of the year
 - Work with organizations like CAUSE to give this information out
 - A lot of youths do outreach with CAUSE, hire youth that way they have money and get experience and help the community
 - Hire community members so they can have an extra income
 - Do big events with food and donations so people come
 - Really liked how CAUSE will do mailers; can the city mail us information on resources, events, assistance like food?
 - Language and reading barrier there but could be helpful to many
 - It's harder now to do all of this but maybe after this can be done to collect our input and ideas because we all have had these problems
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- Open more clinics and dentists for uninsured people who are undocumented, low cost preventative care
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Are there other issues that impact the health of farmworkers that we have not discussed today?

- Access to technology
 - Access to formal education
 - Celebration of Mixteco community
 - Young people should be able to learn Mixteco in schools
 - People shouldn't be racist towards Oaxacans/Indigenous people, they need more training
 - Ag industry
 - Companies need to be monitored more
 - The City should get involved and make sure they are doing things right
 - Too many accidents at work
 - Stolen wages and abuse at work, can the City step in?
 - We pay taxes we should have more resources
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Demographics

8 total attendees

1. What is your age range?
 1. 25-34 (2 participants)
 2. 35-44 (5 participants)
 3. 45-54 (1 participant)
2. What language do you primarily speak at home?
 1. Spanish (8 participants)
3. What best describes your background?
 1. Hispanic or Latino (8 participants)
 2. Mixteco (3 participants)
4. With which gender do you identify?
 1. Male (2 participants)
 2. Female (6 participants)