

4.9 Effects Found Not to be Significant

Section 15128 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) briefly describe any possible effects that were determined not to be significant. This section discusses why impacts to these environmental topics were determined to have a less than significant impact or no impact and therefore are not discussed in detail in the EIR as individual sections.

4.9.1 Aesthetics

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project would have a significant impact on aesthetics if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
3. In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality; or
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Impact Analysis

The Santa Maria General Plan does not identify scenic vistas or public viewing areas within city limits. However, the city contains views of natural aesthetic features including the Santa Maria River to the west of the city and rolling hills to the east. Title 12 of the City's Zoning Ordinance includes development standards which regulate the size, mass, and design of development projects to ensure the city maintains an overall cohesive character. Additional standards and guidelines exist for the treatment of historical structures and settings. Because development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be subject to Zoning Ordinance standards that regulate size, mass, and design, public views of significant visual resources would not be substantially blocked.

Pursuant to Section 15387 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City of Santa Maria is classified as an Urbanized Area. As stated above, the City's Zoning Ordinance standards protect the visual character of the city by regulating the size, mass, and design of development projects. New development facilitated by the plan would be subject to these standards. The City has implemented land uses in specific designated areas to provide visual compatibility with surrounding development.

The City has regulations for exterior lighting for commercial development, mixed-use development as well as specific standards for parking lots, signs, and for development within Airport Safety Zones (Chapters 12-33, 12-49, 12-32, 12-34, 12-21 and 12-24 of the Zoning Ordinance). Development facilitated by the plan would generate additional exterior lighting. Additional lighting generated by the development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with lighting standards as set forth in Chapters 12-33, 12-49, 12-32, 12-34, 12-21 and 12-24 of the Zoning Ordinance and as such,

lighting would be reduced to be consistent with existing lighting standards and impacts would be less than significant.

While the Santa Maria General Plan does not identify designated scenic vistas or public viewing areas within city limits, the city contains natural visual features such as the Santa Maria River and the rolling hills that offer aesthetic value to the city. The City would implement the following policies within the proposed Recreation Element to preserve scenic areas within the city:

Policy REC-8.1: Protection of open space. Preserve and expand open spaces in public parks that provide ecological and scenic benefits for residents.

Development facilitated by the plan would be subject to existing Zoning Ordinance standards that regulate size, mass, design, and lighting, thereby preserving the city's visual character and ensuring compatibility with surrounding development. Additional protections for Open Space Zones and historic settings would further ensure that scenic and aesthetic resources are not adversely affected. Therefore, potential impacts to aesthetic resources would be less than significant.

4.9.2 Energy

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on energy if it would:

1. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation; or
2. Conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Impact Analysis

Construction Impacts

Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would involve construction activities that would consume fuel (e.g., gasoline and diesel fuel) to operate heavy equipment, light-duty vehicles, machinery, and generators for lighting. In addition, temporary grid power would also be required to support construction trailers or electric construction equipment. Energy consumption during the construction of individual projects would be temporary in nature, and equipment used would be typical of construction projects in the region. In addition, construction contractors are required to demonstrate compliance with applicable California Air Resources Board regulations that restrict the idling of heavy-duty diesel motor vehicles and govern the accelerated retrofitting, repowering, or replacement of heavy-duty diesel on- and off-road equipment. Furthermore, in accordance with Executive Order N-79-20 it is anticipated construction trucks would transition most of their vehicle fleets to zero-emission vehicles by 2035. Construction activities would be required to utilize fuel-efficient equipment consistent with State and federal regulations and would comply with State measures to reduce inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy.

Operational Impacts

The City of Santa Maria is currently enrolled in the Central Coast Community Energy Program (3CE) which strives to source clean and renewable electricity at responsible rates for customers along the central coast of California. Since 2018, 3CE has enrolled 33 Central Coast communities and serves

more than 1.1 million customers, representing 95 percent of the households and businesses in the central coast region. Although they have a variety of sources, the majority of their energy is produced via solar and wind. 3CE's standard rate sources 30 percent of energy from renewable sources and 70 percent from unspecified power sources.¹ 3CE also offers a prime rate which sources 100 percent of energy from renewable sources.

Development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with Chapter 9 of the City's Code of Ordinances, which adopts the State's energy efficiency regulations, including the California Energy Code and the California Green Building Standards Code—Part 11, Title 24, California Code of Regulations, to ensure development in Santa Maria promotes the State's energy efficiency goals through project design. Development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with policies outlined in the Conservation and Open Space Element that aim to increase community awareness and participation in energy efficiency improvements, reduce household energy demand, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and advance regional sustainability goals. These include:

Policy COS-6.4: Energy conservation programs. Promote energy conservation through public awareness programs.

Action COS-6.4.1: Coordinate with 3C-REN to increase awareness of local incentives for improving energy efficiency for homeowners.

Action COS-6.4.2: Identify and pursue funding to create a program offering home energy audits to help property owners identify updates to increase energy efficiency and funding assistance for home retrofits.

Policy PFS-6.4: Energy efficiency. To reduce operating and maintenance costs, identify opportunities for environmental performance improvements (e.g., rooftop solar, equipment replacements, audits, retro-commissioning, and building retrofits) to City-owned buildings.

Implementation of these plan policies would further promote the State's energy efficiency goals by promoting alternative transportation, the use of energy efficient equipment, and energy retrofits. As development facilitated by the plan would receive electricity from 3CE, it would be powered by renewable energy mandated by Senate Bill 100. Implementation of the plan would not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. Furthermore, adherence to the State's energy efficiency regulations, including the California Energy Code and California Green Building Standards Code, as well as policies within the plan would ensure the plan would not result in the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Therefore, these impacts would be less than significant.

4.9.3 Geology and Soils

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on geology and soils if it would:

1. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

¹ Unspecified power is electricity that has been purchased through open market transactions and is not traceable to a specific generation source.

- i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault;
 - ii. Strong seismic ground shaking;
 - iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction;
 - iv. Landslides;
2. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil;
3. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potential result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse;
4. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property;
5. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water;
6. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature.

Impact Analysis

Earthquake Fault Rupture

According to the plan, several active faults exist within the region. These faults generally trend northwest. Active faults include the Santa Maria, San Luis Range (South Margin), Bradley Canyon, and Casmalia Faults. These faults are not delineated on California Department of Conservation Seismic Hazards Program information as being located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone (California Department of Conservation 2024).

Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could occur in areas with the potential for fault rupture and associated risk of loss, injury and death. Implementation of the proposed plan would facilitate residential development in Santa Maria. While additional residents, employees, and new structures would be exposed to the effects of existing seismic hazards, including fault rupture, seismic ground shaking, liquefaction, landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, and collapse from local and regional earthquakes, the plan itself would not exacerbate the risk of seismic hazards occurring. The plan would encourage new development and redevelopment of existing underutilized land uses, which could replace older buildings subject to seismic damage with newer structures built to current seismic standards that would better withstand the adverse effects of strong ground shaking. The California Building Code (CBC) regulates the design and construction of excavations, foundations, building frames, retaining walls, and other building elements to mitigate the effects of seismic shaking. Foundations and other structural support features would be required to be designed to resist or absorb damaging forces from strong ground shaking and liquefaction.

As such, development facilitated by the plan would not directly or indirectly cause or increase potential substantial adverse effects involving the rupture of a known earthquake fault. This impact would be less than significant.

Seismic Ground Shaking

The Santa Maria Fault, San Luis Range (South Margin), Bradley Canyon, and Casmalia Fault could potentially produce seismic ground shaking within the city in the event of an earthquake (Safety Element of the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan Figure SE-2). Development facilitated by the plan may be subject to ground shaking in the event of an earthquake originating along one of the faults designated as active in the vicinity of the city.

Development facilitated by the plan would not exacerbate a risk to public safety or destruction of property beyond what is already present in the region. Residential development would be required to adhere to the standards of the CBC which provides earthquake design requirements, including earthquake loading specifications for design and construction to resist effects of earthquake motions in accordance with the American Society of Civil Engineers Standard 7-05. The CBC also regulates the design and construction of excavations, foundations, building frames, retaining walls, and other building elements to mitigate the effects of seismic shaking. The impact to people, buildings, or structures from strong seismic ground shaking would be reduced by mandatory conformance with applicable building codes, and accepted engineering practices. In addition, the plan includes policies intended to reduce impacts by promoting safe design and construction practices for new development, encouraging enhanced safety standards in high-risk seismic and geologic areas, and supporting public outreach to raise awareness of local hazards and appropriate protective actions. These include:

Policy S-1.1: Mitigate seismic and geologic hazards. Ensure new development is designed and constructed to adequately mitigate seismic and geologic hazards through the City's safety and development regulations.

Action S-1.1.1: Update the Municipal Code as new versions of the California Building Code are published, and review and adopt seismic safety standards as needed to reflect current, updated information on seismic hazards in relation to the city.

Action S-1.1.2: Review and update seismic and geologic hazard assessments and policies within the Safety Element and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) as new data becomes available.

Action S-1.1.3: Utilize the land use review processes to identify seismic and geologic hazard risk associated with proposed development and condition projects to mitigate risk to an acceptable level (acceptable level shall be consistent with the current California Building Code).

Action S-1.1.4: Enforce the Unreinforced Masonry Ordinance to require the rehabilitation of identified unreinforced masonry buildings in accordance with the "adopted by" dates outlined in the ordinance.

Policy S-1.2: Seismic and geologic safety standards. Establish enhanced seismic and geologic safety standards to be applicable to development in high-risk seismic and geologic hazard zones.

Action S-1.2.1: Update the Municipal Code to require development projects in high seismic and geologic risk areas conduct a geotechnical investigation and analysis by a state-licensed engineering geologist or civil engineer, with the resulting report to be included as a part of the land use and/or subdivision permit application. The geotechnical investigation report shall assess hazard risk and identify appropriate mitigation measures to reduce identified risks to an acceptable level.

Action S-1.2.2: Update the Municipal Code to prohibit the redevelopment of sites where habitable structures are significantly damaged or destroyed by a geologic hazard event, unless findings can be made by a state-licensed geologist that the proposed redevelopment would adequately mitigate future geologic hazard risks.

Policy S-1.3: Public information on seismic hazards. Inform the public of existing seismic and geologic hazards through community engagement efforts, along with actions they can take to protect themselves and their property from these hazards.

Action S-1.3.1: Publish a guide that outlines the permitting process for retrofitting older structures that do not adhere to current seismic and geologic building standards.

Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Liquefaction

Liquefaction is a phenomenon in which loose, saturated, granular soils behave similarly to a fluid when subjected to high-intensity ground shaking. Liquefaction occurs when three general conditions exist: shallow groundwater; low density, fine, clean sandy soils; and strong ground motion. Liquefaction-related effects include loss of bearing strength, amplified ground oscillations, lateral spreading, and flow failures.

According to the Safety Element of the City's proposed General Plan, liquefaction potential from ground shaking is generally low in Santa Maria due to the relatively deep groundwater levels. However, several areas of perched groundwater are listed in the Safety Element of the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan (Figure SE-1), resulting in potential liquefaction during an earthquake. Development facilitated by the plan would be required to adhere to the standards of the CBC, which includes mandatory site-specific geotechnical investigations for an individual project. Compliance with applicable building codes would reduce seismic ground shaking impacts with current engineering practices, and the plan would not exacerbate liquefaction potential in the Planning Area. The following plan policies would minimize impacts from liquefaction:

Policy S-6.4: Resilient critical facilities. Create resilient critical facilities that minimize the exposure of people and property from disasters.

Action S-6.4.1: Update the Municipal Code to require the siting of new critical public facilities outside of high hazard risk areas, including the 100-year flood zone, wildland urban interface zone, and areas with high liquefaction potential, unless the facilities can be designed in such a way that the risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level.

Action S-6.4.2: Identify existing critical facilities in high-risk hazard zones that require relocation or retrofits. Create a ranked list of critical facilities requiring relocation and/or retrofits based on the degree of hazard risk and the magnitude of adverse impacts to the community in the event the functionality of the facility is reduced or interrupted.

Compliance with the CBC and the proposed policy and actions in the plan would ensure that impacts related to liquefaction would be less than significant.

Landslides

The geologic character of an area determines its potential for landslides. Steep slopes, the extent of erosion, and the rock composition of a hillside all contribute to the potential for slope failure and

landslide events. In order to fail, unstable slopes need to be disturbed; common triggering mechanisms of slope failure include undercutting slopes by erosion or grading, saturation of marginally stable slopes by rainfall or irrigation; and, shaking of marginally stable slopes during earthquakes. Landslides and mudslides could potentially occur in areas with steep slopes or in areas containing escarpments. The only potential area subject to landslide risk within the city limits is the escarpment that runs in an east-west direction in the southern portion of the city. There is no proposed development or land use changes that would occur within this area.

Development facilitated by the plan would be required to adhere to the standards of the CBC, which includes mandatory site-specific geotechnical investigations for individual projects. If development facilitated by the plan were to occur in a location subject to landslide risk, it would be subject to further study and approval. Compliance with the City of Santa Maria's Code of Ordinances and policies in the plan would ensure that impacts related to landslides would be less than significant.

Erosion

Soil erosion or the loss of topsoil may occur when soils are disturbed but not secured or restored, such that wind or rain events mobilize disturbed soils, resulting in their transport offsite. Ground disturbing activities associated with development facilitated by the plan would have the potential to result in the removal and erosion of topsoil during grading and excavation. Construction activities that disturb one or more acres of land are subject to a General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities, Order No. 2022-0057-DWQ, NPDES No. CAS000002 (Construction Stormwater General Permit), which would require the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that outlines project-specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants from construction into stormwater. Typical BMPs include, but are not limited to, installation of silt fences, erosion control blankets, and anti-tracking pads at site exits to prevent off-site transport of soil material. Chapter 9 of the City's Code of Ordinances includes methods of reducing flood loss as well as requirements for preventing, controlling and reducing storm water pollutants.

Construction activities would also be required to comply with CBC Chapter 70 standards, which are designed to ensure implementation of appropriate measures during grading and construction to control erosion and storm water pollution. Therefore, erosion from ground-disturbing activities associated with future development facilitated by the plan would be controlled through implementation of the requirements and BMPs in existing regulations, including the Construction Stormwater General Permit and Chapters 8, 9 and 11 of the City's Code of Ordinances. These Chapters include regulations for reducing and avoiding potential run-off and restricting certain uses that may prove hazardous to health, safety and property due erosion hazards. Compliance with the regulations discussed above would reduce the risk of soil erosion from construction activities to a less than significant level.

Geologic or Soil Instability and Expansive Soils

Impacts related to landslides and liquefaction are discussed above; therefore, this discussion focuses on impacts related to unstable or expansive soils because of lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse. Lateral spreading occurs because of liquefaction; accordingly, liquefaction-prone areas would also be susceptible to lateral spreading. Subsidence occurs at great depths below the surface when subsurface pressure is reduced by the withdrawal of fluids (e.g., groundwater, natural gas, or oil) resulting in sinking of the ground. Soils that volumetrically increase (swell) or expand when

exposed to water and contract when dry (shrink) are considered expansive soils. The soil's potential to shrink and swell depends on the amount and types of clay in the soil. Highly expansive soils can cause structural damage to foundations and roads without proper structural engineering and are generally less suitable or desirable for development than non-expansive soils.

Areas of expansive soils are known to exist within city limits (Safety Element of the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan Figure SE-3). Future development would be required to comply with the CBC's minimum standards for structural design and site development. The CBC provides standards for excavation, grading, and earthwork construction; fills and embankments; expansive soils; foundation investigations; and liquefaction potential and soils strength loss. Thus, CBC-required incorporation of soil treatment programs (replacement, grouting, compaction, drainage control, etc.) in the excavation and construction plans of future development facilitated by the plan could result in an acceptable degree of soil stability. Consistent with CBC requirements, development facilitated by the plan would require mandatory site-specific geotechnical investigations for individual development projects at the time they are proposed. Adherence to these requirements would achieve accepted safety standards for unstable geologic units or soils. In addition, although future development facilitated by the plan would potentially be subject to these hazards, the plan would not increase the potential for lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Septic Systems

The plan would generally emphasize development within the city where existing infrastructure exists, apart from the annexation area. New development within the city is not anticipated to include the use of septic systems. Chapter 8 of the Municipal Code requires owners connect to available city sewer and abandon septic systems per health department requirements. The annexation area would provide the potential for more rural development that may require the use alternative wastewater systems; however, future development within the annexation area will be subject to the development and approval of a specific plan, one component of which would be a public and private infrastructure plan. Any request to rely on septic systems would be reviewed on a project-by-project basis and would need to comply with local and state regulations and standards for onsite wastewater treatment systems. Therefore, impacts related to the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems would be less than significant.

Paleontological Resources

Fossils or assemblages of fossils that are unique, rare, diagnostically important, or are common but have the potential to provide valuable scientific information for evaluating evolutionary patterns and geologic processes may be significant paleontological resources. New or unique specimens can provide new insights into evolutionary history; however, additional specimens of even well represented lineages can be equally important for studying evolutionary pattern and process and evolutionary rates. As such, common fossils, especially vertebrates, may be scientifically important.

Future development facilitated by the plan would be subject to Public Resources Code Section 5097.5 which prohibits the removal or disturbance of paleontological resources without permission of the jurisdictional agency. Based on required compliance with the Public Resources Code, the plan would not disturb unique paleontological resources. As a result, potential impacts to paleontological resources would be less than significant.

4.9.4 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on hazards and hazardous materials if it would:

1. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials;
2. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment;
3. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school;
4. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment;
5. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area;
6. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan; or
7. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.

Impact Analysis

Hazardous Materials Transport, Use, and Disposal

Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would involve the use of potentially hazardous materials, such as vehicle fuels and fluids, which could be released, should a spill or leak occur. Contractors of individual development projects would be required to implement standard construction BMPs for the use or handling of such materials to avoid or reduce the potential for such conditions to occur. Storage and disposal of hazardous wastes is primarily regulated by the Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services which acts as the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA)² as certified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (County of Santa Barbara Public Health 2025). The transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials would be carried out in accordance with applicable local, State, and federal regulations regarding the handling of potentially hazardous materials. These include the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the California Hazardous Materials Management Act, and California Code of Regulations Title 22. Hazardous materials transported on State highways would be subject to California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requirements, as described in Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Additionally, Chapter 7-13 of the City's Code of Ordinances regulates the transport of hazardous materials within city limits. This chapter identifies specific roads and highways where vehicle transport of hazardous waste for which registration is required

² The CUPA regulates businesses that handle hazardous materials, generate or treat hazardous waste or operate aboveground or underground storage tanks. The primary goal of the CUPA Program is to protect public health and the environment by promoting compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

pursuant to Section 25163 of the Health and Safety Code is not permitted. Mandatory compliance with applicable local, State, and federal laws and regulations relating to the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials during construction and operation of future development facilitated by the plan would minimize the potential to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Upset and Accident Conditions

As described above in the *Hazardous Materials Transport, Use, and Disposal* subsection, the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous material would be conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including the City's Code of Ordinances Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the California Hazardous Materials Management Act, California Code of Regulations Title 22, and Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Future development facilitated by the plan that would require demolition or redevelopment of existing structures, particularly old structures, has the potential to expose workers and the public to asbestos. The California Health and Safety Code Section 19827.5 requires local agencies not issue a demolition or alteration permits until an applicant has assessed the potential for a structure to contain asbestos and demonstrated compliance with notification requirements under federal regulations involving hazardous air pollutants, including asbestos. California Code of Regulations Section 1532.1 requires testing, monitoring, containment, and disposal of lead-based materials, such that exposure levels do not exceed California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (CalOSHA) standards.

Future development facilitated by the plan could involve the use, storage, disposal, or transportation of hazardous materials. Hazardous material use and storage would primarily consist of common household hazardous materials such as solvents, paints, and chemicals used for cleaning and building maintenance, and landscaping supplies. These materials would not be different from household hazardous materials currently in use throughout the city. Residents and workers are anticipated to use limited quantities of products that could contain hazardous materials routinely for periodic cleaning, repair, and maintenance, or for landscaping and pest control. The disposal of hazardous household materials would be conducted in compliance with applicable regulations, pursuant to the Santa Barbara County CUPA. The Santa Maria Sanitary Landfill currently operates a household hazardous waste transfer and storage facility. This facility is open to the public two days per month. In addition to collecting household hazardous waste, the facility conducts random, solid waste load checks for hazardous materials.

Future development facilitated by the plan could include industrial uses which could sell, use, store, transport, or release substantial quantities of hazardous materials. The Santa Barbara County CUPA establishes a Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP) Program which requires businesses handling, using, or storing reportable amounts of hazardous materials to submit inventories, site maps, and other documentation relating to those materials to the CUPA, and to develop appropriate employee training and emergency procedures. After the HMBP is submitted to the CUPA, it would be reviewed for completeness and accuracy and would then be available to emergency first response agencies (County of Santa Barbara Public Health 2025). The Santa Maria Sanitary landfill does not service hazardous waste generated by commercial and industrial uses. Businesses must hire a hazardous waste transporter to dispose of their hazardous waste. This waste

is either transported to the Chemical Waste Management/Kettleman Hills facility (north), or to a transfer station in southern California, where it is shipped out of state.

Overall, applicable federal, State, and local regulations would minimize the potential for future development facilitated by the plan to create a significant hazard to the public or environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Schools

There are 23 schools within city limits, including elementary, junior high and high schools. As described above in the *Hazardous Materials Transport, Use, and Disposal* subsection, the transport of hazardous materials is required to comply with applicable regulations for the use, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials. Future development facilitated by the plan, which would be reasonably anticipated to emit hazardous air emissions or would handle a hazardous substance within 0.25-mile of an existing school would be required to notify the affected school district, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21151.4. Compliance with existing regulations would reduce the potential for a school to be exposed to hazardous materials.

The plan would facilitate residential, commercial, open space and industrial development in the vicinity of some existing schools. However, the various land uses facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with applicable laws and regulations for the handling of hazardous materials. These land uses would not emit large quantities of hazardous materials or substances. Development of sites within the city may have pre-existing contamination and would be remediated through coordination with the appropriate regulatory agency pursuant to federal, State, and local regulations.

Regarding future schools that may be developed to accommodate forecasted population increases in Santa Maria, provisions of the California Education Code Section 17213 would apply. Section 17213 requires the City to ensure the chosen site for a proposed school is not on a current hazardous waste disposal site, is not on a hazardous substance release site identified by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and does not contain pipelines that carry hazardous substances. Therefore, the plan would not result in the handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials substances or waste within 0.25-mile of an existing or proposed school. This impact would be less than significant.

Hazardous Materials Sites

The DTSC's EnviroStor database and the State Water Resource Control Board's (SWRCB) GeoTracker database were reviewed to determine if hazardous materials sites exist within the Planning Area. Approximately 90 active hazardous material sites within city limits. These sites are primarily located in the southern half of the city with a slight concentration along Betteravia Road. Therefore, future development facilitated by the plan could occur on sites with underground storage tanks (USTs). Tank removal activities could pose both health and safety risks from tank contents or vapors to workers, tank handling personnel, and the public. Potential risks, if any, posed by USTs could be minimized by managing the tank according to existing standards contained in California Health and Safety Code Division 20, Chapters 6.7 and 6.75 (UST Program), as enforced and monitored by the City's Public Health Department. If contamination exceeds regulatory action levels, future developers would be required to undertake remediation procedures prior to grading and development under the supervision of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, depending on the nature of identified contamination. Furthermore, the plan would include the following policies

aimed to reduce environmental and public health risks by regulating oil-related land uses, promoting the safe handling and reduction of hazardous materials, and addressing potential exposures linked to solid waste site operations.:

Policy S-4.1: Crude oil extraction, production, and postproduction. Maintain and, as needed, update local land use regulations pertaining to crude oil extraction, production, and postproduction well site abandonment and closure.

Action S-4.1.1: Update the City's Petroleum Ordinance to maintain consistency with regulations and standards established by the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) and Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Division pertaining to petroleum extraction, processing, storage, and transport.

Action S-4.1.2: Update the minimum no-build easement buffer surrounding abandoned and existing oil wells to be consistent with current CalGEM policies for unimpeded access to well heads.

Action S-4.1.3: Require responsible parties to remediate abandoned oil sumps and contaminated soils, and to plug and abandon (or re-abandon) oil wells in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations upon termination of the associated contaminating use or facility. For abandoned sites, these requirements must be met prior to any new site development.

Action S-4.1.4: Refer development applications for oil extraction, production, storage, or transport uses and sites to the City Petroleum Engineer, or to the County Petroleum Engineer Energy, Minerals and Compliance Division, if authorized by the City Council for review and approval. This includes sites with existing or former operations related to oil extraction, production, storage, or transport.

Action S-4.1.5: Update the Municipal Code to require new development and redevelopment projects on sites with existing or abandoned oil wells, or a history of oil drilling operations to conduct a Phase I Environmental Assessment.

Action S-4.1.6: Conduct an environmental assessment prior to new annexations containing or in proximity to active and plugged oil and gas wells to identify potential public health concerns. Based on the findings of the environmental assessment, require site remediation or restrict development in areas near active, idle, and/or abandoned oil and gas wells that could expose people to contamination.

Policy S-4.2: Hazardous materials. Ensure the safe use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials.

Action S-4.2.1: Continue to enforce regulations of hazardous materials established by the Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services Division and State Health and Safety Code.

Action S-4.2.2: Enforce and periodically review hazardous materials transport routes designated by the City and the California Highway Patrol to ensure routes limit exposure to existing sensitive land uses and critical facilities to the greatest extent feasible.

Action S-4.2.3: Maintain local hazardous materials disposal programs for businesses and residents to ensure safe disposal of hazardous materials.

Action S-4.2.4: Coordinate with the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Health Division and the California Highway Patrol to update and enforce local hazardous materials plans, programs, and transport routes.

Action S-4.2.5: Prior to issuance of a ministerial permit related to proposed railway facilities and related operations, require applicants submit written documentation that the Railroad Operations and Safety Branch (ROSB) of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has conducted review and inspection of the project, and found the project in compliance with all state and federal laws, regulations, orders, and directives relating to the handling and transportation of hazardous commodities.

Policy S-4.3: City hazardous materials usage. Reduce the use of hazardous materials in City operations.

Action S-4.3.1: Evaluate the feasibility of adopting procurement policies that prioritize the purchase of non-toxic and environmentally friendly products for City operations.

Action S-4.3.2: Maintain a list of pesticides and herbicides restricted for use on publicly owned land and implement integrated pest management practices and use of organic pesticides where feasible.

Policy S-4.4: Solid waste sites. Monitor and mitigate hazardous material exposure associated with solid waste site operations.

Action S-4.4.1: Update the Municipal Code to establish buffer zones surrounding solid waste sites by restricting the placement of sensitive land uses adjacent to solid waste sites. Allowed uses in buffer zones may include green spaces and parks.

Action S-4.4.2: Ensure all active and closed solid waste sites maintain gas collection systems to capture, manage, and potentially reuse methane for on-site and off-site use.

Future development facilitated by the plan would be required to identify and remove such hazardous materials in accordance with applicable State and local regulations. As a result, the plan would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment due to being located on a hazardous materials site. This impact would be less than significant.

Airport Land Use Hazards

The Santa Maria Airport is located in the southwestern portion of the city. The Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) (Santa Barbara County Association of Governments 2023) applies to development within the Santa Maria Airport's influence area. Future development facilitated by the plan could occur within the noise contours and/or the developable airport safety zones as delineated in the ALUCP. In accordance with California Public Utilities Code 21676 as well as Section 1.4.1, *General Plan Consistency*, of the Santa Maria ALUCP, Airport Land Use Committees (ALUC) must review general plans for consistency with the ALUCP.

The ALUC would review the plan for consistency with the Noise Compatibility Guidelines provided in the ALUCP, as well as height restrictions, land uses, densities and other specific development standards within the applicable airport safety zones. Additionally, specific future development that may affect navigable airspace would be subject to Federal Aviation Administration review, pursuant to the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 77.5, 77.7, and 77.9.

In addition to review by the ALUC, the following plan policies would minimize loss of life, injury, and property damage resulting from aircraft operations. Specifically, plan policies include the following:

Policy S-5.1: Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. Maintain consistency between the City's General Plan and Municipal Code and the current Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Action S-5.1.1: Review and update the City's Land Use Element, Safety Element, and Zoning Code upon the adoption of an updated Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan to ensure consistency.

Policy S-5.2: Airport Commission and District project review. Ensure new development within the Santa Maria Airport Area of Influence is consistent with the standards, regulations, and processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code, as described in the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Action S-5.2.1: Refer all applications for General Plan Land Use amendments within the Santa Maria Airport Area of Influence to the Santa Barbara County Airport Land Use Commission and the Santa Maria Public Airport District for review, consistent with the processes of Article 3.5 of the California Public Utilities Code.

Compliance with the ALUCP, review by the ALUC, and implementation of plan policies would ensure the plan would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the plan area. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Impairment of Emergency Response Plans

Construction activities associated with future development facilitated by the plan could interfere with adopted emergency response or evacuation plans because of temporary construction activities within rights-of-way, temporary construction barricades, or other obstructions that could impede emergency access. Temporary construction barricades or other obstructions that could impede emergency access on State highway systems would be subject to the standards set forth in the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices requires the creation and approval of temporary traffic control plans to be used for facilitating road users through a work zone (Caltrans 2014, revised 2025). Adherence to these requirements for construction activities would minimize potential impacts associated with the impairment or physical interference of an adopted emergency response plan or evacuation procedures for State highways. Construction that would occur within a public easement or right-of-way would be required to obtain an encroachment permit, which are issued by the City's Public Works Department. Public Works would review encroachment permit applications for compliance with local regulations to ensure construction activities would not impair emergency evacuation or emergency response plans.

Increased future development could result in additional traffic with the potential to hinder emergency response or evacuation routes. However, plan policies would support safe evacuation routes in the event of an emergency. Plan policies include the following:

Policy S-6.1: Emergency preparedness and response coordination. Strengthen the City's emergency preparedness and response capabilities.

Action S-6.1.1: Maintain mutual aid agreements and establish shared resource networks within the Operational Area to provide additional emergency response capacity in the event of a large-scale disaster.

Action S-6.1.2: Participate in updates to the regional emergency, safety, and hazard plans, including the Santa Barbara County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan and Santa Barbara Operational Area Emergency Management Plan.

Engage Operational Area partners and the whole Community in the City's emergency planning efforts to ensure a cohesive and coordinated response in the event of a large-scale disaster consistent with Incident Command System (ICS)/SEMS/NIMS.

Action S-6.1.3: Continue to work with other jurisdictions and regional agencies to develop a multi-jurisdictional emergency preparedness and response team to oversee and advise emergency planning efforts.
Action S-6.1.4: Partner with local organizations and regional agencies to offer a broader range of training and educational opportunities for emergency response personnel, City staff, and residents with the goal of sharing best practices and encouraging cross-collaboration. This can be accomplished by organizing joint training and cross-training sessions and emergency drills with other agencies, organizations, or jurisdictions.

Policy S-6.2: Police response time. Identify minimum standards for police response time and ensure compliance with these standards for all areas within the City limits.

Action S-6.2.1: Continually monitor and report average law enforcement response time.

Action S-6.2.2: On an annual basis, evaluate police resource needs to achieve target response times, and include desired resources as needed.

Policy S-6.3: Police emergency response capacity. Maintain adequate law enforcement capabilities and emergency response capacity.

Action S-6.3.1: Evaluate law enforcement capacity and emergency response needs as new land is annexed and developed within the Santa Maria Police Department jurisdiction.

Policy S-6.4: Resilient critical facilities. Create resilient critical facilities that minimize the exposure of people and property from disasters.

Action S-6.4.1: Update the Municipal Code to require the siting of new critical public facilities outside of high hazard risk areas, including the 100-year flood zone, wildland urban interface zone, and areas with high liquefaction potential, unless the facilities can be designed in such a way that the risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level.

Action S-6.4.2: Identify existing critical facilities in high-risk hazard zones that require relocation or retrofits. Create a ranked list of critical facilities requiring relocation and/or retrofits based on the degree of hazard risk and the magnitude of adverse impacts to the community in the event the functionality of the facility is reduced or interrupted.

Action S-6.4.3: Develop, prioritize, and implement a list of capital improvement projects to mitigate hazard risk for critical facilities:

- Prioritize improvement projects based on feasibility and impact, with emphasis on improvements that benefit disadvantaged communities.
- Identify and pursue sources of funding to support critical facility improvement projects.

Action S-6.4.4: Install backup energy systems, such as generators, renewable energy, and battery storage systems, for existing and new critical facilities to ensure continuity of operation in the event of a disaster or hazard event.

Action S-6.4.5: Conduct annual fire safety inspections for public buildings and recreational and utility infrastructure.

Policy S-6.5: Emergency response training. Prepare and train City staff to support emergency responders in the event of a disaster.

Action S-6.5.1: Update the Emergency Response Plan to designate roles and responsibilities for City staff by department, including non-leadership support roles.

Action S-6.5.2: Designate alternative operating locations for critical City staff in the event that the primary location is inaccessible or unusable during and after an emergency.

Policy S-6.6: Emergency plans. Maintain and update local emergency preparedness and response plans to ensure consistency between state, regional, and local safety requirements and current best management practices.

Action S-6.6.1: Upon adoption of an updated City or Regional Safety Element, Hazard Mitigation Plan, emergency response plan, or airport land use plan, review and update all other relevant City safety and emergency plans and regulations for consistency.

Action S-6.6.2: When updating a local safety or emergency plan, update hazard identification and mapping to include the most current state-approved data sources.

Policy S-6.7: Community emergency preparedness and response. Create opportunities for meaningful community involvement throughout all aspects of emergency preparedness and response planning.

Action S-6.7.1: Implement a community outreach program with diverse engagement methodologies to educate and prepare residents for potential hazards and emergency events that include multiple forms of media, including social media and print media, as well as in-person and virtual events.

Action S-6.7.2: Integrate noticing for community outreach opportunities into a variety of City communications, including the City's website, social media pages, and utility and property tax bills.

Action S-6.7.3: Establish community partnerships to assist in engaging disadvantaged and underserved populations.

Action S-6.7.4: Ensure all emergency preparedness and response materials and plans are provided in all languages spoken by at least five percent of the city's population.

Action S-6.7.5: Work with the community and experts to identify and incorporate accessible communications technologies and processes to ensure protective actions are rapidly disseminated to and understood by affected populations.

Action S-6.7.6: Develop an interactive online map of publicly accessible hazards information relevant to Santa Maria that allows residents and property owners to view the location of hazards relative to their own property or location of residence. Integrate links to emergency

preparedness and resiliency resources for residents, including assistance programs for home retrofits for reducing hazard risk.

Action S-6.7.7: Create a dedicated webpage on the City's website that provides current information on hazard events, proactive measures residents can make to protect themselves and their property, and resources that can be utilized in the event of a disaster. Use translation software to provide this information in all languages spoken by at least five percent of the population.

Action S-6.7.8: Incorporate clear feedback loops that demonstrate to the community how their input has influenced local planning and programs related to hazards and emergency preparedness, and response.

Policy S-6.8: Emergency response communication. Develop clear, accessible, and reliable communication methods for the entire community to be used in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Action S-6.8.1: Upon the next update of the Emergency Response Plan, include a strategy that outlines communication protocols during and after disasters. This plan should include methods for information sharing among emergency service providers and the public and identify plans for communicating with individuals who speak languages other than English and individuals with visual and auditory impairments.

Policy S-7.3: Evacuation Assistance. Provide evacuation assistance to vulnerable populations in the event of an emergency.

Action S-7.3.1: Develop a plan for providing evacuation assistance for vulnerable individuals. The plan should include strategies for evacuation assistance, including the following:

- Opportunities for utilizing public transit to support individuals who may not be able to self-evacuate, including those without vehicles, with disabilities, commuters, etc.
- Early evacuation warnings for individuals who may require longer to evacuate, including individuals with large animals, medical needs, etc.
- Communication plan for informing non-English speaking and auditory and visually impaired individuals during an evacuation order

Action S-7.3.2: Promote a neighborhood buddy system, including through the City Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, that organizes groups of three to five households to check in, share information, and assist one another with emergency response and evacuation.

Action S-7.3.3: Identify public facilities that can be retrofitted to be used as emergency shelters/centers that comply with FEMA, DOJ, and/or ARC requirements. Partner with community organizations to formalize agreements to establish additional facilities that serve as emergency shelters/centers. Identify and plan for Temporary Evacuation Points (TEPs).

Policy S-7.4: Community evacuation education. Ensure the community is informed of evacuation routes and procedures.

Action S-7.4.1: Develop a City webpage that provides a consolidated source of information related to evacuation, including evacuation routes, evacuation assistance, location of evacuation centers, and evacuation orders and updates.

Action S-7.4.2: Develop targeted outreach programs that provide evacuation information and training to residents in high-risk hazard areas.

Action S-7.4.3: Collaborate with local service providers and community leaders to educate vulnerable populations on evacuation preparedness, including individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals who speak a language other than English, individuals with a disability, and those in disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore, development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the road standards within Appendix D of the 2022 California Fire Code, Title 24, Part 9, and be reviewed by the Santa Maria Fire Department to ensure development would not interfere with evacuation routes or impede the effectiveness of evacuation plans. Implementation of the plan would not introduce new features or policies that would preclude implementation of or alter these plans or procedures. Therefore, the plan would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. This impact would be less than significant.

4.9.5 Land Use and Planning

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on land use and planning if it would:

1. Physically divide an established community; or
2. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Impact Analysis

Approximately 32 percent of the city remains undeveloped. The undeveloped areas of the city are classified as vacant (19 percent) and agricultural (13 percent). As described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the 2045 General Plan Update would add 985 acres of land to the city limits and would provide the framework for development of up to 16,140 net new primary and accessory dwelling residential units, including the development of 1,300 accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

The plan would implement policies and land use designations that identify the type and intensity of uses permissible in the city. Intensity and density standards are established for each land use classification. The intent of the land use designations is to adequately classify and distinguish the various land uses needed within the city. The Land Use Element of the plan contains policies which are designed to guide growth toward infill and revitalization areas while requiring context-sensitive transitions and buffers between incompatible uses. By focusing new development away from established neighborhoods and ensuring compatibility through thoughtful land use planning, the policies help prevent community division and reduce the potential for significant environmental impacts. These include:

Policy LU-1.1: Land use pattern. Implement the General Plan Land Use Map and corresponding Land Use Designations as described in Figure LU-4 and in Table LU-3 to create a complete community.

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.

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.

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.

Policy LU-1.2: Infill development. Prioritize infill of existing residential, commercial, and industrial capacity to revitalize Downtown and deteriorating neighborhoods, to the extent feasible. Accommodate growth while making every effort to preserve agricultural lands and open space.

Action LU-1.2.1: Implement the City's adopted Specific Plans to the extent feasible.

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, and in surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy LU-1.4: Neighborhood preservation. Support the revitalization and enhancement of older neighborhoods in the Downtown and surrounding areas by continuing to invest in infrastructure and streetscape upgrades.

Policy LU-1.5: Job/housing balance. Achieve a job-to-housing ratio of 1.2 that balances new housing development and job production in Santa Maria over the General Plan horizon.

Policy LU-13.1: Land use buffers. Require the use of buffers between incompatible land uses by using context-appropriate buffers such as berms, walls, landscaping, bike paths, and arterial streets, where appropriate and depending on neighboring use, to avoid adverse impacts to either use.

Action LU-13.1.1: Update the City's municipal code to protect sensitive land uses by, for example, requiring a buffer between sensitive uses and local sources of air pollution such as industrial and commercial facilities (e.g., warehouses, processing plants, factories, landfills, hazardous waste facilities). Developments should incorporate appropriate mitigation measures that reduce potential pollution exposure.

Policy LU-13.2: Residential encroachment. Protect residential neighborhoods and schools from encroachment by incompatible nonresidential uses such as light industrial, general industrial, and heavy commercial/manufacturing, and the impacts associated with adjacent nonresidential activities.

Policy LU-13.3: Land use transitions. Require land use transitions of lower intensity commercial or mixed-use on the perimeter of heavy uses when adjacent to residential uses.

Policy LU-13.4: Incompatible neighborhood uses. Prohibit the development of industrial or manufacturing uses within neighborhoods or directly adjacent to established residential neighborhoods or schools.

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

Policy LU-13.6: Incompatible uses. Prohibit new residential development, and those retail, commercial, office, and/or consumer-oriented businesses in close proximity to the Airport which the City determines would conflict with the Airport Master Plan and Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), including through utilizing processes set forth by Article 3.5 of the Public Utilities Code.

Policy LU-13.7: Airport and residential buffers. Require transition zones and buffers between the Airport and new residential development in close proximity to the Airport, as defined by the ALUCP, to mitigate impacts of ongoing airport operations.

Policy LU-13.8: Development compatibility. Ensure that 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.

Action LU-13.8.1: 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.

The plan would facilitate future development as envisioned by the City. The plan is an update to the City's General Plan and is intended to set forth guidance for orderly development in Santa Maria through the year 2045, in part, by establishing land uses throughout the city. As such, the plan itself is a land use plan, and therefore would not conflict with local land use plans, policies, or regulations. These include but are not limited to, the City's 16 Specific Plans and the Zoning Ordinance. The update would set forth goals and policies intended to reduce potential effects from individual development projects on the environment. There would be no impact.

4.9.6 Mineral Resources

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on mineral resources if it would:

1. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; or
2. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

Impact Analysis

The city is identified as a production-consumption region by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act(California Department of Conservation 2025). A production-consumption region is defined as a

region with naturally occurring concentrations of useful minerals in the Earth's crust that have the potential to be economically extracted. However, there are currently no mines or mineral extraction operations within the city and none are proposed. Based off the existing land uses within the city, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would not be conducive to resources extraction, only contemplating such activities within Open Space designated lands. Therefore, potential impacts to mineral resources would be less than significant.

4.9.7 Population and Housing

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on population and housing if it would:

1. Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure; or
2. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

Impact Analysis

For reasonable analysis purposes in this EIR, the City assumes the 2045 General Plan Update's buildout (of both residential and non-residential uses) within the city would occur by 2045. In the context of this EIR, "buildout" of the 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 buildout assumption used for this EIR represents the most conservative approach to evaluating the plan's potential environmental effects and satisfying the requirements of the CEQA Guidelines. Buildout of the city would be dependent on multiple factors, including local economic conditions, market demand, and other financing considerations. The buildout scenario for this EIR is estimated to be approximately 16,140 net new residential units by the year 2045 (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*). Additional development could take place in the annexed land to the east of the city's current limits. This area is currently used for agricultural activities but would be redesignated as Planned Annexation Area, which would allow a mix of industrial, residential, and commercial land uses (Santa Maria General Plan 2023). According to the California Department of Finance's population estimates, the average persons per household in Santa Maria was 3.61 in 2024 (DOF 2024). Assuming 3.61 persons per household, the 16,140 additional residential units could generate approximately 58,265 new residents.

However, the population growth associated with the plan would not be considered substantial unplanned growth. As a planning document, the plan would be a key tool to help the City plan and conduct growth. The plan includes goals and policies to accommodate the population growth anticipated by the plan would be supported by necessary public facilities and services, including:

Policy PFS-1.1: Resource and infrastructure capacities. Maintain resource and infrastructure standards and capacities to meet the city's existing and future needs.

Policy PFS-1.2: Wastewater System. Maintain a wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal system capable of meeting the daily and peak demand of existing and future city residents and businesses.

Policy PFS-2.1: Water system. Maintain and expand the existing water system to meet the daily and peak demands of existing and future city residents and businesses.

Policy PFS-2.2: Supply portfolio. Improve the reliability of the water supply for current and projected demand by diversifying the City's water supply portfolio, including maintaining and increasing the City's groundwater wells, exploring additional sources of water supply, and supporting the State Water project.

Policy PFS-2.3: Groundwater. Improve the long-term recharge of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin by retaining natural watershed areas, developing regional recharge basins, and minimizing impervious surfaces in new development.

Policy PFS-2.4: Regional coordination. Participate in regional coordination targeting aquifer recharge and sustainable groundwater supply.

Policy PFS-4.2: Infrastructure and municipal services. Ensure that annexed areas receive adequate infrastructure and municipal services, aligning with the City's overall growth plan.

Additionally, the State requires that all local governments adequately plan to meet the housing needs of their communities. Given that the State is currently in an ongoing housing crisis due to an insufficient housing supply, the additional residential units under the plan would further assist in addressing the existing crisis and meeting the housing needs of the City's communities. The City's Sixth Cycle Housing Element indicates 5,418 residential units must be built by 2031 to satisfy the state required Regional Housing Needs Allocation. The plan would facilitate development that could help the City reach its housing needs goal.

The plan would strive to accommodate projected population, residential, and jobs growth and focuses on improvements to existing neighborhoods along with infill and vacant site development. The plan would not include the displacement of individuals. The plan would include infill development and renovations to existing residential units to increase housing opportunities. Therefore, because the plan would be designed to accommodate for planned and orderly growth, as mandated by the State, development in accordance with the plan would not indirectly induce growth in the city. Impacts would be less than significant.

4.9.8 Public Services and Recreation

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on public services and recreation if it would:

1. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other objectives for any of the public services:
 - a. Fire protection
 - b. Police protection
 - c. Schools
 - d. Parks
 - e. Other public facilities

2. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
3. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Impact Analysis

Future development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase in the city's population, which would result in an incremental increase in demand for fire protection, police protection, and other public services such as parks, recreational facilities, and libraries.

Fire Protection

Development facilitated by the plan would be served by the Santa Maria Fire Department, which provides fire protection and emergency medical services throughout the city. As future buildout occurs, the City would evaluate fire service operations and deployment to ensure adequate coverage. New development would be required to comply with fire safety and access standards set by the California Building Code and administered by the City's Building Division. In accordance with standard procedures, Santa Maria Fire Department would review project plans before permit issuance to confirm code compliance and adequate emergency access. Development would also be subject to fire mitigation fees under Santa Maria Municipal Code (SMMC) Chapter 8-15. The plan includes Policies PFS-8.1 and PFS-8.2 which focus on ensuring fast and effective emergency response by maintaining a five-minute response time citywide, guiding facility siting based on service needs, and requiring thorough fire department review of development plans to uphold safety standards and emergency access. Given the anticipated growth, increased demand may necessitate additional fire staffing and potentially new facilities. Any future facilities would be located in compliance with building and zoning regulations and undergo CEQA review to assess site-specific environmental impacts. While the exact size and location of any future fire department facilities are not yet known, and some may be located within existing structures, all future projects would be subject to applicable building codes and CEQA review. Consequently, impacts related to fire services are anticipated to be less than significant.

Police Protection

Development facilitated by the plan would increase population and activity levels in Santa Maria, potentially leading to higher demand for police protection services. The Santa Maria Police Department would provide law enforcement citywide, with development required to undergo security review during the plan check process and to pay police mitigation fees under SMMC Chapter 8-15. The plan also includes policies to maintain effective law enforcement coverage, such as Policy PFS 7-1, which targets a service ratio of 1.3 sworn officers per 1,000 residents, and Policy PFS 7-2, which guides the siting of facilities to optimize response times. To meet future demands, additional police staffing or new facilities may be needed. While the exact nature and location of any new facilities are not yet known, and some may occupy existing structures, all future projects would be subject to applicable building codes and CEQA review. Consequently, impacts related to police services are anticipated to be less than significant.

Schools

Future development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase in population in the city, which would contribute to an increase in students who would be served by either Santa Maria-

Bonita School District, Santa Maria Joint Union High School District, or the Orcutt Union School District. Future residential, commercial, and industrial development in Santa Maria would be required to pay state-mandated impact mitigation fees to provide funding for additional schools to serve the area, pursuant to Senate Bill 50. Pursuant to Section 65995(h) of the California Government Code the payment of statutory fees "...is deemed to be full and complete mitigation of the impacts of any legislative or adjudicative act, or both, involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property, or any change in governmental organization or reorganization." The mandatory payment of impact mitigation fees would serve as full and complete mitigation for future development. Additionally, the plan includes Policies PFS-10.1, PFS-10.2, PSF-10.3 and PFS-10.4 which aim to ensure that educational infrastructure and programming keep pace with community growth. They focus on monitoring enrollment trends, coordinating school siting in a way that respects nearby land uses, expanding access to inclusive and affordable educational programs, and supporting planned improvements at Hancock College in harmony with surrounding neighborhoods. As such, impacts to school facilities would be less than significant.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

Future development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase to the city's population, which would result in an incremental increase in demand on existing public parks and recreation facilities including playfields, performing arts centers, gymnasiums, community pools and aquatic centers. The City includes 25 percent of Waller Park, a Santa Barbara County facility, in its park service analysis as it is frequently used by residents which would increase the acreage of parkland from 234 acres to 271 acres (City of Santa Maria 2020a). The City's existing service ratio is approximately 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents for the existing 2024 population as reported by the California Department of Finance of 110,608 (California Department of Finance 2024).³ With the implementation of the plan, the addition of a maximum of 58,265 residents would decrease the service ratio to 1.6 acres per 1,000 residents.⁴ The City's park service ratio with the plan would be below its service goal of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. As such, the population growth associated with the plan would require the need for new parks.

Construction or expansion of future parks would require separate environmental review that could determine and require future project-specific construction-related mitigation measures. Pursuant to the Quimby Act park dedication ordinance, future development projects would be required to pay parkland dedication fees which, pursuant to Section 65995 (3) (h) of the California Government Code (SB 50, chaptered August 27, 1998), are "deemed to be full and complete mitigation of the impacts of any legislative or adjudicative act, or both, involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property, or any change in governmental organization or reorganization." In addition, pursuant to Chapter 8-15 of the SMMC, future development facilitated by the plan would be required to pay impact fees, which would promote the maintenance and expansion of public parks.

The plan includes Policies REC-1.2, REC-1.3, REC-1.4 and REC-1.5 which aim to enhance equitable and connected recreation opportunities across the city, and Policies REC-2.1, REC-2.2 and REC-2.3 which aim to ensure equitable access to open space and recreational opportunities by maintaining a citywide parkland standard, securing funding through mitigation fees and grants, and protecting existing park resources. The plan policies promote the use of temporary facilities to address short-term needs, encourage shared use of public lands, ensure consistent maintenance of existing

³ 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents = (271 acres of parks / 110,608 persons) * 1,000 persons

⁴ 1.6 acres per 1,000 residents = (271 acres of parks / 168,873 persons) * 1,000 persons

infrastructure, and prioritize the development of a multi-use trail network that links neighborhoods, parks, and open spaces for a variety of users. With the existing and new policies and programs, in addition to existing Recreation and Parks mitigation fee regulations within Section 8-15 of the SMMC which requires impact fees be paid for new dwelling units, impacts to parks and recreational facilities would be less than significant.

Other Public Facilities

Development facilitated by the plan would result in an increase in population which could result in an increased demand for library services. Pursuant to the SMMC Chapter 8-15, future development would be required to pay library mitigation fees. Given the demand for library services in the city, library staffing needs in Santa Maria are likely to increase, which could require the construction of new facilities. The plan includes Policies PFS-5.1, PFS-5.2, and PFS-5.3 which aim to ensure that library services grow with the community by maintaining adequate space and book collections, improving access through inclusive facilities and outreach methods, and expanding educational programming for youth through after-school and seasonal initiatives. Future facilities could be located within the city but would require adherence to all applicable building and zoning codes and additional CEQA review to analyze project and location specific impacts. It is not possible to identify the specific nature, extent, and significance of physical impacts on the environment that could result from the construction and operation of future facilities without knowing the size and nature of the facility, or its location. For example, future facilities could feasibly be housed in an existing building, which would have a reduced physical impact on the environment than the construction of a new facility. As such, impacts related to library services would be less than significant.

4.9.9 Wildfire

Thresholds of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines a project may have a significant impact on wildfire if located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones and would:

1. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan;
2. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, or thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire;
3. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuelbreak, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risks or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?
4. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding, landslides, mud flows, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes

Impact Analysis

The potential for wildfire risks in Santa Maria is characterized by limited grassland and brush fires due to the absence of extensive tracts of mountainous and brush covered terrain. The most significant wildfire hazards in the city are associated with the coastal sage scrub and grass covered slopes in the Casmalia and Solomon Hills area, south of the city limits (Santa Maria 2025).

A Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) is a mapped area that designates zones (based on factors such as fuel, slope, and fire weather) with varying degrees of fire hazard (i.e., moderate, high, and very high). While FHSZs do not predict when or where a wildfire will occur, they do identify areas where wildfire hazards could be more severe and therefore are of greater concern. FHSZs are meant to help limit wildfire damage to structures through planning, prevention, and mitigation activities/requirements that reduce risk. The FHSZs serve several purposes: they are used to designate areas where California's wildland urban interface building codes apply to new buildings, they can be a factor in real estate disclosure, and they can help local governments consider fire hazard severity in the safety elements of their general plans.

As identified on the most recent FHSZ maps provided by CalFire, a portion of the annexation area is located within a moderate FHSZ. However, no portion of the city or annexation area is located within a high or very high FHSZ. (CalFire 2025). The nearest Very High FHSZ is to the east of the Santa Maria River. The implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not interfere with emergency evacuation plans or emergency response plans within a FHSZ or state responsibility area; exacerbate wildfire risks and thereby expose the public to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure within a FHSZ or state responsibility area; or expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslopes or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. Additionally, the plan includes Policies S-2.1 and S-2.2 which are intended to strengthen fire prevention and emergency preparedness by ensuring the City maintains adequate firefighting capacity and response times as development occurs, and by enforcing vegetation management through coordinated weed abatement efforts to reduce wildfire and urban fire risk. Due to the lack of fire hazard severity zones within the city and the new policies, impacts on wildfire would be less than significant.