



Santa Maria
General Plan

imagine



Health and Environmental Justice Policy Framework

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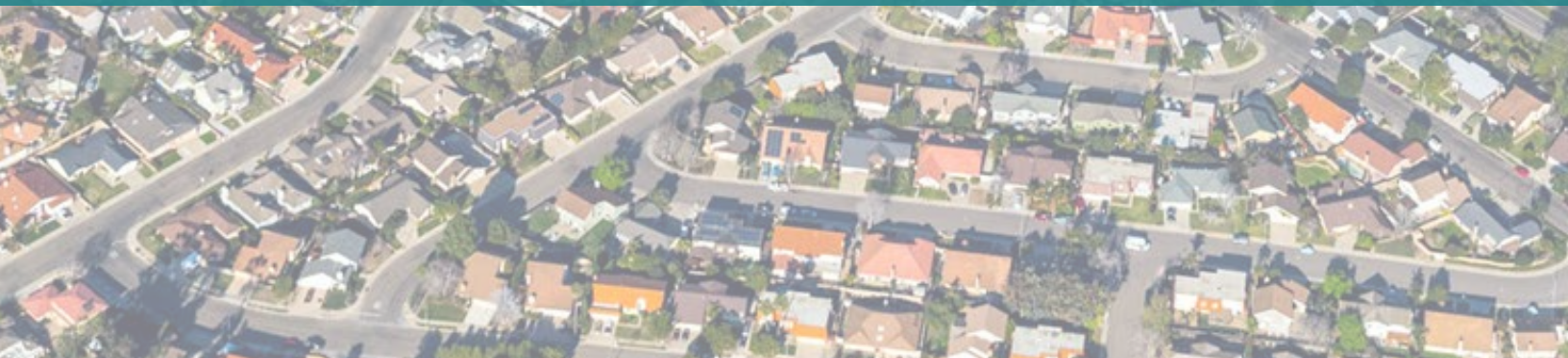


Table of Contents

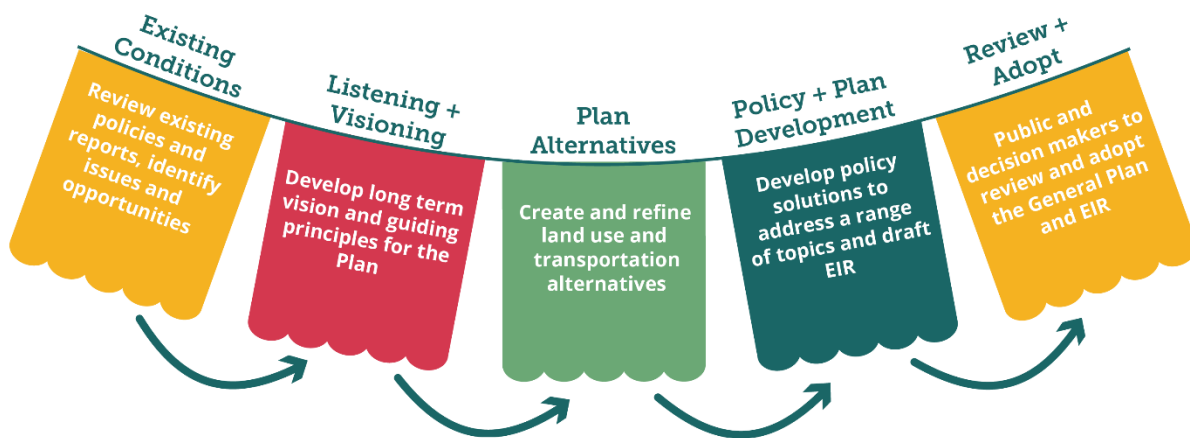
I. Introduction	1
II. Statutory Requirements.....	2
General Plan Requirements.....	2
Regulatory Requirements.....	2
III. Related Vision and Guiding Principles.....	3
IV. Setting the Scene: Issues and Opportunities.....	6
Santa Maria’s Disadvantaged Communities	6
V. Trends in Santa Maria’s Disadvantaged Communities.....	14
Opportunities and Strengths	14
Issues and Challenges	14
VI. Summary of Framework Approach.....	17
VII. Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions	18

Health and Environmental Justice Policy Framework

I. Introduction

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

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



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

This Health and Environmental Justice policy framework is a step in the General Plan Update process prior to drafting General Plan Elements. This framework highlights the key direction for the Health and Environmental Justice Element and includes goals, policies, and implementation activities to achieve that direction. This policy framework was developed by incorporating findings from previous project phases,

including technical analysis, relevant content from the existing General Plan, current planning best practices and requirements from State law, and feedback from community members, Technical Advisory Committee members, Planning Commission, City Council, and City staff. Nine policy frameworks have been prepared covering the following topics: Conservation and Open Space, Safety, Land Use and Community Design, Circulation and Mobility, Public Facilities and Services, Recreation and Parks, Economic Development, Noise, and Health and Environmental Justice. Community feedback on the frameworks will shape goals, policies, and implementation actions in the General Plan.

II. Statutory Requirements

General Plan Requirements

An environmental justice element aims to fulfill the requirements of **Senate Bill (SB) 1000 (Leyva, 2016)**. The bill requires cities that have “disadvantaged communities” (DACs) to incorporate environmental justice policies into their general plans. This can be achieved by writing a separate environmental justice element or by integrating related goals, policies, and objectives throughout the other elements of the general plan. The goal of SB 1000 is to help identify and reduce the risks faced by communities that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.¹ SB 1000 mandates that a general plan must minimally address the following six topic areas: 1) reduce pollution exposure, 2) promote public facilities, 3) promote food access, 4) promote safe and sanitary homes, 5) promote physical activity, and 6) promote civic engagement. Across all six topic areas, the City must prioritize improvements and programs that address the environmental justice needs and priorities of DACs.

Regulatory Requirements

SB 1137 (Gonzalez, 2022). Prohibits the issuance of well permits and the construction and operation of new production facilities within a health protection zone of 3,200 feet from a sensitive receptor. The bill requires operators of existing oil and gas wells or infrastructure within health protection zones to conduct specified monitoring, public notice, and nuisance requirements.

SB 1383 (Lara, 2016). Aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the diversion of 50% of organic waste from landfills below 2014 levels by 2020 and 75% by 2025 and recovery of no less than 20% of currently disposed edible food by 2025. Key to this bill is the development of a statewide composting and recycling program and the requirement of large food generators to donate edible surplus food to food recovery organizations.

¹ For detailed and up-to-date descriptions and considerations of each topic, please visit the OPR website: <https://opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/guidelines.html>.

III. Related Vision and Guiding Principles

The General Plan Vision Statement describes Santa Maria as the community would like to see it in 2045.² The Guiding Principles establish the direction the community should follow and the major ideas that the General Plan Update will put forward to achieve the community's shared Vision for 2045. The full [Vision, Guiding Principles, and Areas of Change and Stability](#), approved by the City Council in 2021, are available on the Imagine Santa Maria project website. The following full-sentence excerpts from the Vision and Guiding Principles informed the preparation of this policy framework:

Vision

Santa Maria in 2045 is a community where families can establish and maintain multi-generational roots. It is close-knit, culturally diverse, and economically inclusive.

This is possible, in part, because Santa Maria offers affordable, safe, attractive, and healthy homes and neighborhoods for all residents.

This is also possible because of the availability of high-quality education, jobs, and economic opportunity. Building from a strong foundation in the agricultural, retail, healthcare, and business services industries, Santa Maria has continued to diversify by expanding the training and skills of residents and by adapting to new technologies and broader economic trends.

People are proud of their history and heritage. This is reflected in the diverse, well-preserved historical resources and the attractive, inviting streets and public gathering places. Museums, art venues, a strong civic sector, and the many welcoming community events and celebrations are all evidence of a vibrant local culture.

Residents have convenient access on foot and by car, bus, and bicycle to jobs, schools, community amenities like parks and sports fields, and the region's natural environment.

Public services are reliable, inclusive, and efficient, and the community is well-served by equitable, modern, and sustainable infrastructure, facilities, and utilities.

Guiding Principles

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

Agricultural Identity

Continue to support the agricultural industry and its workforce. Balance the protection of prime agricultural land with the development necessary to support continued population growth and the diversification of the local economy.

² To read the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Areas of Change and Stability, please visit https://www.imaginesantamaria.com/files/ugd/e3bef4_fe4ee6fed17e4ec8851d50700206b9f9.pdf

Culture, History, and Art

Celebrate and share Santa Maria's multicultural heritage and contemporary diversity. Preserve historic resources, foster the arts, maintain a strong sense of community through cultural festivals, and invite visitors to enjoy the richness of local expression and resources.

Community Design

Create public spaces that reflect the community identity, foster civic pride, and invite community members to gather, both informally and for events. Design streets, buildings, and landscaping that reflect the community's history, culture, and natural environment. Use lighting, street trees, benches, and other amenities to make sidewalks and public spaces safe and welcoming, with a focus on the Downtown and along the Main and Broadway corridors.

Community Health

Grow and expand physical and mental healthcare services to meet the needs of all residents. Improve community health by addressing the environmental justice priorities of disadvantaged communities, including seniors, low-income households, linguistically isolated families, the homeless, and youth, who comprise 35% of residents. Minimize residents' potential for exposure to noise, pesticides, and industrial pollution. Foster healthy lifestyles by expanding safe and attractive options for physical activity and by expanding healthy food access.

Natural Environment and Resilience

Conserve water resources in the city and support efforts to maintain the Santa Maria River. Expand opportunities to enjoy the area's natural resources and the region's beauty. Safeguard the community from natural hazards, including those exacerbated by climate change.

Housing Quality and Choice

Develop a high-quality and diverse housing supply at all levels of affordability that preserves Santa Maria as a place where families can establish roots and today's youth can afford to stay. Balance the growth of housing and the economy so that people can live and work in Santa Maria. As new housing types are introduced, (e.g., accessory dwelling units, or ADUs), adapt parking, transportation, and other community features. Develop workforce housing solutions that provide safe, healthy, and comfortable homes for workers and their families.

Resilient Economy

Cultivate a diverse and resilient economy in which local businesses and families thrive, and job growth keeps pace with housing development. Grow the existing economic base in agriculture, retail, healthcare, and business services, and expand into new industries. Ensure access to high quality education that is aligned with local industries and entrepreneurship.

Connected Growth

To accommodate projected population, housing, and jobs growth, focus on improvements to existing neighborhoods along with infill and vacant site development. Expand beyond current City limits when needed, weighing the short and long term environmental, economic, infrastructure, public service, and fiscal trade-offs. Establish strong cultural, design, and physical connections between newly developed areas and the rest of Santa Maria.

Transportation Innovations

Develop a balanced, equitable, affordable, and reliable transportation network where pedestrians, cyclists, trucks, cars, rail, and transit can safely and efficiently navigate to destinations within Santa Maria. Focus on maintaining existing roadways, expanding walking and biking options, and reducing congestion and maintenance costs. Transform corridors and streets from points of conflict among people, cyclists, cars, and trucks into places that bring neighborhoods and families together. Prepare for and expand regional connections with enhanced bus, rail, and air service. Prepare for technological advances like autonomous vehicles and remote work and take advantage of opportunities and incentives to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Utilities, Facilities, and Services

Provide residents and businesses with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure and utilities, including water, wastewater, flood control, gas, phone, cable, and broadband internet. Deliver high-quality services and facilities for all community members, including expedient emergency response, accessible health care, high-quality education and career training, and convenient and equitable access to well-maintained parks and recreational facilities.

Governance and Engagement

Continue to conduct and increase meaningful and inclusive civic engagement that empowers a diversity of perspectives in public decision-making. Provide residents and businesses with high-quality, equitable, and accessible customer service, including City communications and events in multiple languages and interpretation services. Partner with community organizations and institutions to build trust and increase participation, including among youth, who will be the city leaders in 2045.

IV. Setting the Scene: Issues and Opportunities

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

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

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

Santa Maria's Disadvantaged Communities

In 2021, several assessments (including a Population Demographics and Vulnerabilities Assessment, a Historical Context Discussion, a Health Assessment, and a Physical Environment Assessment) were completed to understand the makeup and conditions of Santa Maria's disadvantaged communities. These analyses informed the [Health and Environmental Justice Existing Conditions Report](#). The HEJ Existing Conditions Report provided foundational data that informed the policy framework, with key findings summarized below. The report also identified DACs in Santa Maria.

In November 2024, the Physical Environment Assessment components of the Existing Conditions Report and the Santa Maria DAC designations were updated to reflect new physical environment data from CalEnviroScreen 4.0. These updates incorporate more current pollution burden data, integrate locally relevant information, and align DAC designations with state and federal funding requirements. Below is a description of the methodology used to identify the updated DACs.

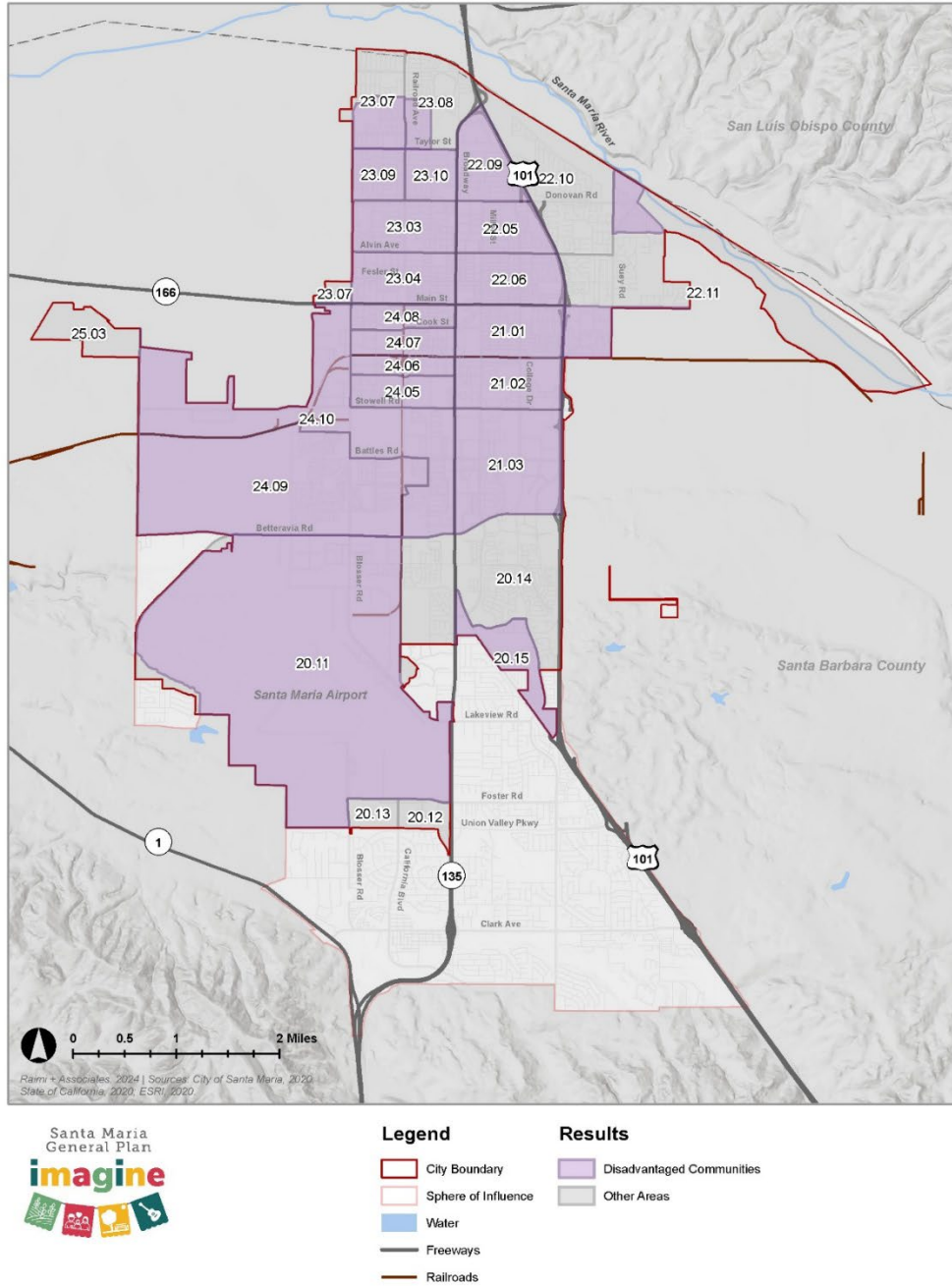
Methods of Analysis

An updated three-step process, corresponding with the three criteria that can be used to identify DACs, as determined by the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and Office of the Attorney General (OAG), was applied:

1. First, the State's SB 535 mapping tool was used to determine whether any census tracts in the city are recognized by the state as DACs. No tracts were identified as DACs through this process.
2. Next, low-income census tracts and census block groups in the city were identified. Each of those tracts and block groups were then analyzed to determine whether they contained individual "Pollution Exposures" and/or "Environmental Effects" indicators that are ranked in the 75th percentile or above when compared to all census tracts across the State of California using the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 cumulative impacts screening tool. This second method identified 13 census tracts and 8 block groups as DACs.
3. Lastly, any census tracts identified as DACs through the federal Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) are also classified as DACs for Santa Maria. Four additional census tracts were identified through this tool.

Using this multi-step methodology, Santa Maria’s map of disadvantaged communities includes 17 census tracts and an additional 5 block groups that are distributed across the city, see Figure 1.³ Each census tract identified as disadvantaged is introduced below in the Sub-areas Analyses section with a summary of the relevant contributing factors.

Figure HEJ-1: Santa Maria’s Disadvantaged Communities



³ Note: Census tract 25.03 is not included in this analysis, as it primarily lies outside Santa Maria and overlaps with the City of Guadalupe; the area within Santa Maria is unpopulated and includes facilities such as a wastewater treatment plant, a compost facility, and a food warehouse.

Citywide Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Research has found that the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of residents impact their potential health and life outcomes. This section summarizes the results of the Population Demographics and Vulnerabilities Assessment as well as the Health Assessment conducted as part of the HEJ Existing Conditions Report.

- **Low income.** Residents in low-income areas face higher rates of heart disease, cancer, lung disease (including asthma), diabetes, and obesity.
- **Youth and children.** Children and youth under 19 make up 35% of Santa Maria’s population, with 25% living in poverty. Areas with the highest concentration of youth are also more likely to have high rates of single-parent and low-income households.
- **Older adults.** The area with the largest share of older adults (65 and older) living alone is in the northeastern corner of the city in census tract 22.11, which also experiences high pollution exposure.
- **Chronic Disease.** Some specific population groups in Santa Maria are disproportionately impacted by chronic disease:
 - African Americans tend to have higher rates of heart, cancer, and lung diseases.
 - Men have higher rates of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes than women.
 - Women, Latinos, and African Americans are more impacted by Alzheimer’s Disease.
- **High Death Rates.** Zip code 93454 in Santa Maria, which includes various low-income census tracts east of Broadway Avenue and north of Betteravia Road, has the highest age-adjusted death rate in the county.
- **Health Insurance.** About 16% of adults aged 18-64 in Santa Maria are uninsured, higher than the county average of 12%.
- **Mental Health.** Poor mental health is reported more frequently in areas where people have reported limited physical activity.

Citywide Pollution Concerns

The pollution analysis detailed below summarizes Santa Maria’s elevated pollution indicators, based on data from CalEnviroScreen 4.0. The analysis highlights several specific pollution concerns affecting DACs in Santa Maria, where many areas score above the 75th percentile in multiple environmental hazards when compared to all census tracts across the State of California. These include high pesticide use, children’s risk of lead exposure, groundwater threats, hazardous and solid waste sites, and impaired water bodies. Each section delves into the health risks and environmental impacts posed by these pollutants, emphasizing the particular challenges for vulnerable populations, including agricultural and farmworker communities.

Pesticide Use

Multiple census tracts across Santa Maria score in the 90th percentile or above when it comes to statewide CalEnviroScreen 4.0 rankings for pesticide exposure. Pesticide use during agricultural production poses significant health risks since both short-term and long-term exposure are linked to serious illnesses such as cancers, pregnancy complications, and developmental issues—especially for children, pregnant women, and agricultural workers. DACs that are located near agricultural fields, including farmworker communities in and around Santa Maria, face heightened exposure risks.

Children’s Lead Risk from Housing

Lead, a toxic metal that is found in nature and heightened through human activities, poses significant health risks, particularly from older housing where lead-based paint remains a primary exposure source for children. Despite a reduction in environmental lead over the past fifty years, exposure continues to be a concern in older homes, which are common in cities like Santa Maria, where two-thirds of housing was built before the 1980s. Lead exposure is particularly harmful to young children, affecting brain and nervous system development and potentially leading to lower IQ scores, attention disorders, and reduced educational performance. Multiple DACs in Santa Maria have a heightened risk of children being exposed to lead, with some of the highest rates in census tracts 21.01, 24.07, and 24.08 in particular.

Groundwater Threats

Although select census tracts received relatively high groundwater threat scores according to the state’s CalEnviroScreen 4.0 tool, Santa Maria’s recent water quality reports show that the City met both State and Federal drinking water quality standards in 2023. According to the 2023 Water Quality Report, the city’s water resources are most vulnerable to impacts from fertilizer-related runoff and leaching, septic tanks, sewage, and natural deposits,⁴ all of which could pose serious health risks even at low levels.^{5,6,7} In addition, DAC neighborhoods may also be impacted by industrial sources that could compromise local groundwater, including leaking underground storage tanks, active or inactive oil and gas wells, and land disposal areas.

South of Stowell Road, abandoned oil and gas wells are concentrated within the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, impacting local farms and communities. Oil companies have engaged in some remediation efforts in southeast Santa Maria by using strategies such as soil replacement to manage contamination. The Department of Conservation and other State and regional agencies continue to make progress in plugging and permanently sealing the wells across the county.⁸ The City may consider monitoring and addressing the potential impacts of the idle and plugged wells, such as proper clean up and threats to groundwater sources.

⁴ City of Santa Maria 2023 Water Quality Report. Retrieved from:
www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/15039/638520810338830000

⁵ California Water Resources Board. (2018). Groundwater Basics. Retrieved from:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/groundwater/gw_basics.html

⁶ For additional information, see: <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/>

⁷ Ward, M., and et. al. (2018). “Drinking Water Nitrate and Human Health: An Updated Review.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15(7): 1557.

⁸ California Department of Conservation. (2025). “Project Plug.” Retrieved from:
<https://www.conservation.ca.gov/projectplug#cat-canyon>

Hazardous Waste Sites

Hazardous waste generators produce various forms of waste that, if improperly managed, can contaminate air, water, and soil, especially in nearby communities. Santa Maria’s hazardous waste facilities are concentrated in DACs, particularly around census tract 20.11 near the airport. If these facilities experience accidental releases, they could pose significant health risks to residents ranging from irritation and headaches to serious health conditions like cancer and may lead to severe environmental damage.⁹

Solid Waste Sites

Solid waste sites (such as landfills, recycling centers, and composting facilities) process household and industrial waste but can negatively impact nearby communities, especially those that are located near out-of-compliance sites. There are multiple landfills and compost facilities located in and around Santa Maria. These facilities can release toxic gases, produce unpleasant odors, attract pests, increase truck traffic, and, if improperly managed, can harm the surrounding ecosystems and community health through soil, water, and air contamination.¹⁰

Impaired Waterbodies

Contaminated water bodies in Santa Maria (including Blosser Channel, Bradley Channel, Main Street Canal, and the Santa Maria River) carry pollutants that pose health and environmental risks. While most of these waterways are stormwater channels, the naturally occurring Santa Maria River contains pollutants such as ammonia, nitrates, E. coli, and other harmful chemicals that can affect those who encounter these waters or breathe the air near them. These impaired water bodies, oftentimes situated near DACs, can pose serious health threats to people who come in contact with the water or breathe in the air close to these waterways. Additionally, the combination of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution can pose serious environmental risks and can threaten entire ecosystems as it produces nutrient pollution in water and airborne nitrogen.¹¹

Sub-areas Analyses

Disadvantaged communities are located throughout the four quadrants of Santa Maria – Northwest (north of Main and west of Broadway), Northeast (north of Main and East of Broadway), Southwest (south of Main and west of Broadway), and Southeast (south of Main and east of Broadway). Each census tract that is a disadvantaged community in Santa Maria is briefly introduced below with a brief summary of factors that contributed to identifying it as a disadvantaged community.

⁹ United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2017). Health and Ecological Hazards Caused by Hazardous Substances. Retrieved from: <https://www.epa.gov/emergency-response/health-and-ecological-hazards-caused-hazardous-substances#:~:text=Health>

¹⁰ Zeise, L. and J. Blumenfeld. (2021). CalEnviroScreen 4.0. California Environmental Protection Agency and OEHHA. Retrieved from: <https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen40reportf2021.pdf#page=139>

¹¹ United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2015). “The Facts about Nutrient Pollution.” Retrieved from: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-03/documents/facts_about_nutrient_pollution_what_is_hypoxia.pdf

Northwest (north of Main and west of Broadway)

Census Tract 23.03 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and linguistically isolated population groups and the highest rate of solo grandparents who are caring for grandchildren in the county; poor health outcomes, including low rates of older adults who keep up with preventive care, and unhealthy rates of diabetes, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; elevated children’s lead risk from housing; and pollution exposure from impaired water bodies and high pesticide use.

Census Tract 23.04 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, linguistically isolated, population groups, and high concentration of H-2A housing units for agricultural workers; multiple poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, poor mental health, and lower rates of preventive care use in older adults (65+ years); federally recognized overburdened and underserved community and multiple heightened pollution exposures (e.g., diesel particulate matter, pesticide use, children’s risk of lead exposure from housing, and impaired water bodies).

Census Tracts 23.07 & 23.08 – High levels of pesticide exposure, groundwater threats, impaired water bodies, and proximity to solid waste sites.

Census Tract 23.09 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including low rates of older adults keeping up with preventive care and unhealthy rates of diabetes, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; impaired water bodies; and pollution exposure from high pesticide use.

Census Tract 23.10 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including low rates of older adults keeping up with preventive care and unhealthy rates of diabetes, asthma, and individuals reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and pollution exposure from high pesticide use.

Northeast (north of Main and East of Broadway)

Census Tract 22.05 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of COPD, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and pollution exposures from impaired water bodies and children’s lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 22.06 – Socially vulnerable, including a high rate of people with disabilities; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of asthma, COPD, and individuals reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and pollution exposure from impaired water bodies and children’s lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 22.09 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of linguistically isolated population groups; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and impaired water bodies.

Census Tract 22.11 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of older adults and older adults who live alone, one of the highest percentages of people with disabilities in the county, and relatively high percentage of Black or African American residents; poor health outcomes, such as the highest rates in the city for cancer and coronary heart disease; and multiple, heightened pollution exposures due to elevated rates of pesticide use (one of the highest rates in the entire state), solid waste sites, and impaired waterbodies; barriers in the built environment that can limit walkability and access to healthy food, and is an area with a shortage of health and mental health professionals.

Southwest (south of Main and west of Broadway)

Census Tracts 24.07 & 24.08 – Socially vulnerable, including the highest rates of single-parent households and youth percentage in the county, high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and renter population groups, and a high share of households without access to a vehicle; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of obesity, diabetes, COPD, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; physical environment that contributes to low walkability scores; federally recognized overburdened and underserved communities; and multiple heightened pollution exposures (e.g., children’s lead risk from housing (one of the highest in the entire state), impaired water bodies, and solid waste sites and facilities).

Census Tracts 24.05 & 24.06 – Socially and economically very similar to census tract 24.07 and 24.08, additionally are also federally recognized overburdened and underserved communities. While this census tract has the lowest concentration of seniors in the City of Santa Maria, it also maintains the highest percentage of linguistically isolated people in the county. Heightened pollution exposure due to children’s lead risk from housing.

Census Tracts 24.09 & 24.10 – Socially vulnerable, including a high concentration of linguistically isolated people; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of asthma and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved communities; and heightened pollution exposures from multiple indicators in CalEnviroScreen 4.0, including impaired water bodies, solid waste sites and facilities, and some of the highest pollution scores in the state for pesticide use, groundwater threats, and hazardous waste generators and facilities—making these tracts the highest overall cumulative pollution burden percentile scores in the city.

Census Tract 20.11 – While this census tract is considered socially vulnerable due to various reasons (such as its high percentage of older adults), the tract also has the highest percentage of White residents in the city. Additional impacts include poor health outcomes, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and COPD; and poor physical environment factors that inhibit access to healthy food. This tract also has the same heightened pollution exposures for the same indicators as tracts 24.09 and 24.10, resulting in this census tract maintaining the second-highest overall pollution burden percentile score in the city.

Southeast (south of Main and east of Broadway)

Census Tract 21.01 – Socially and economically vulnerable; experiences multiple poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of COPD and asthma; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; multiple heightened pollution exposures including high levels of pesticide use, impaired water bodies, and solid waste facilities; and elevated children’s lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 21.02 – Socially vulnerable, including the highest rates of linguistically isolated residents in the county; poor health outcomes including high rates of cancer and heart disease; and heightened exposures to pesticides and impaired water bodies, as well as high levels of children’s lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 21.03 – Socially vulnerable, including a high concentration of Asian and linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of diabetes, obesity, COPD, and asthma; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and heightened pollution exposures due to high levels of pesticide use, groundwater threats, and impaired water bodies.

Census Tract 20.15 – Socially vulnerable, including a high concentration of residents who are disabled; elevated pesticide use, groundwater threats, hazardous waste, and impaired waterbodies.

V. Trends in Santa Maria’s Disadvantaged Communities

The following section summarizes the opportunities and strengths as well as the issues and challenges that were identified through the HEJ Existing Conditions Analysis and the public engagement efforts conducted during the [Community Café events](#). These Cafés consisted of a series of workshops that involved various Santa Maria community stakeholders—such as environmental justice organizations and farmworkers—and covered a range of topics, including housing, community safety, and other environmental justice issues. The Community Cafés served as a space to ground truth and validate the findings from the HEJ analyses and to develop a comprehensive understanding of Santa Maria’s key environmental justice concerns.

Opportunities and Strengths

Walk Access. A vast majority (90%) of Santa Maria residents live within a 10-minute walk to transit stops, and nearly half (46%) are close to parks. However, for the northern areas of the city, Highway 101 creates a significant barrier for pedestrians to access Jim May Park. In the southern part of the city, particularly west of Broadway, park access is limited due to both distance and the low number of facilities. (HEJ ECR)

Downtown Santa Maria. The diverse mix of land uses, housing, and civic and cultural resources in the downtown area present an opportunity for job and population growth, as well as public space improvements. (HEJ ECR)

Issues and Challenges

Pesticide Exposure. Exposure to pesticides is a critical issue in Santa Maria. Census Tracts 22.11, 23.08, 23.09, 24.09, and 24.10 are among the communities with the most elevated concentrations of active pesticides in the entire state. (HEJ ECR & 2024 DAC Analysis)

Hazardous Sites. The siting of hazardous, cleanup, and solid waste facilities near residential neighborhoods, particularly low-income communities, poses safety concerns when there are emergencies due to hazardous releases. Census tracts 20.11, 20.14, 20.15, 24.09, and 24.10 are found to have a high concentration of hazardous waste sites when compared to other tracts in the state. (HEJ ECR & 2024 DAC Analysis)

Groundwater Threats. Oil and gas wells, particularly in the southern region of the city, present potential contamination risks, although remediation efforts are ongoing. The City will need to consider how to address the impacts of idle and plugged oil well sites, including cleanup processes and the threat of potential leaks. (HEJ ECR & 2024 DAC Analysis)

Older Housing Stock. Almost two thirds (65%) of Santa Maria’s housing stock was built before 1979, with most of the older housing concentrated in DACs, especially near the downtown area. Older housing stock poses health risks due to the potential presence of harmful construction materials such as lead, which can lead to a range of acute and chronic conditions, including asthma, lead poisoning, and respiratory infections. Census tracts 21.01, 24.07, and 24.08 have some of the highest percentile scores in Santa Maria. (HEJ ECR & 2024 DACs)

Hazardous Waste Sites. Hazardous waste facilities, concentrated in DACs like census tract 20.11 near the airport, pose potential risks to the safety of air, soil, and water with resulting potential health impacts from accidental releases. (HEJ ECR & 2024 DACs)

Solid Waste Sites. Landfills and composting facilities have the potential to release toxic gases and unpleasant odors and attract pests. Improper management increases risks of soil, water, and air contamination and threatens community health and nearby ecosystems. (HEJ ECR & 2024 DACs)

Impaired Waterbodies. Polluted waterways, like the Santa Maria River, contain harmful chemicals such as ammonia and nitrates which can endanger public health and ecosystems due to the potential risks from direct exposure and airborne pollution. (HEJ ECR & 2024 DACs)

Crowding. Santa Maria has a higher-than-average household size compared to the rest of Santa Barbara County. Crowding can cause mental health challenges, increase the spread of infectious diseases, and exacerbate other health and well-being issues, particularly affecting those with social vulnerabilities. (HEJ ECR)

Cost Burden. Many low-income households are housing-cost burdened, particularly in northwest and central areas of the city, often spending over half of their income on housing. (HEJ ECR)

Code Violations. Santa Maria's Fire, Building, and Code Enforcement Departments, in their investigations of substandard housing conditions, have identified numerous housing code violations suggesting potential widespread issues with housing quality and safety, though more data is needed. (HEJ ECR)

H-2A Housing. The increasing number of H-2A Visa workers in agricultural jobs and associated requirements for employers to supply worker housing has heightened the need for more safe and affordable housing in the city. The City has supported efforts to build farmworker housing; however, some housing projects have faced opposition stemming from concerns that may not have been thoroughly addressed in the projects proposals.¹² Some data gaps remain regarding farmworker housing conditions, the related health impacts of lodging provided, and how the demand for farmworker housing impacts low-income households. (HEJ ECR)

Health Care Access. Most of the city is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) due to a lack of primary medical care for the Medicaid-eligible population and lack of mental health care for the low-income migrant farmworker population, indicating a shortage of health providers in these fields. (HEJ ECR)

Preventive Health. In Santa Maria, there are four census tracts (24.04, 24.03, 23.04, 23.05) where less than 20% of older adult men and women (65+ years) are up to date on a core set of clinical preventive services. Ensuring affordable and accessible preventative care is critical to supporting healthy lifestyles in the community. (HEJ ECR)

¹² Santa Maria Times (Sept. 2021). Retrieved from: https://santamariatimes.com/business/agriculture/santa-maria-large-scale-h-2a-housing-project-tabled-by-overwhelming-community-concerns/article_ad41b77e-fac6-5620-a6d8-6beb0d8b700f.html

Food Insecurity. The rate of food insecurity among adults in Santa Maria (16%) is twice the rate for Santa Barbara County (8%) which can lead to undernutrition, fatigue, stunted development, and related health issues. (HEJ ECR)

Food Access. Access to food is most limited in the city's northeast and northwest areas, in addition to a large area southwest of Downtown. In some of these areas, 33% of the population lives more than one mile from a supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store. (HEJ ECR)

Walkability. While the downtown area is highly walkable, many other neighborhoods lack well-designed and convenient pedestrian infrastructure to get to essential services, underscoring a need for improved walkability and connectivity. Improving walkability via improved pedestrian connections and public realm design could improve public health, reduce dependency on vehicles thus lowering air pollution, and improve the visual appearance of the city's streets. (HEJ ECR)

VI. Summary of Framework Approach

Both the Existing Conditions Report and the Community Cafes' feedback have shown that some of the most prominent environmental justice issues impacting the City are:

1. High pesticide exposure due to proximity to large agricultural areas;
2. Housing challenges (including affordability, housing stock quality, displacement pressures, and overcrowding);
3. Pollution exposure due to oil and gas operations;
4. Limited resources for Santa Maria's diverse immigrant and farmworker communities; and
5. High vehicle traffic and a lack of well-designed active transportation (walking, bicycling) infrastructure.

Over 20 census tracts and block groups have been identified as disadvantaged communities, with census tracts 24.09, 24.10, and 20.11 receiving the highest percentile pollution burden scores when compared to the rest of the city. To fulfill the SB 1000 law's intent to integrate social equity and environmental justice values into city planning, the City could work to prioritize improvements, investments, and programs for Santa Maria's most disadvantaged communities to ensure their needs are addressed during the implementation of the Health and Environmental Justice Element.

This Health and Environmental Justice Policy Framework highlights the various goals, policies, and actions that the City can prioritize to promote environmental justice and achieve a higher quality of life for all Santa Maria residents. It also aims to provide strategies for taking an equitable and more justice-focused approach to providing greater improvements, protections, and programs for the City's disadvantaged communities that have historically experienced socioeconomic vulnerabilities and disproportionate health burdens.

For a full picture of Santa Maria's environmental justice strategies, please also refer to the other policy frameworks that contain additional goals and policies that intersect with and address health equity and environmental justice, including in the Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Conservation, Safety, Noise, and Public Facilities frameworks.

VII. Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions

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

Goal HEJ-1: Healthy and Pollution-Free Neighborhoods. All residents have access to clean air, water, and soil, with benefits and protections prioritized for historically overburdened communities.¹³

Policy HEJ-1.1: Protect against industrial pollution. Protect industrial and commercial facilities from exposing sensitive land uses (e.g., schools, playgrounds, housing, hospitals, senior centers, and daycare centers) to harmful air pollution and toxic chemicals, especially for DACs that have experienced disproportionate pollution burdens and impacts, by careful analysis of proposed development and expansion of industrial and commercial uses. *Please see Figure EJ-1.1 for more information on strategies to protect sensitive land uses and other developments from exposure to harmful air pollution.*

Action HEJ-1.1.1: Update the City's municipal code to protect sensitive land uses by, for example, requiring at minimum a 500 feet buffer distance between sensitive uses and local sources of air pollution such as industrial and commercial facilities (e.g., warehouses, processing plants, factories, landfills, and hazardous waste facilities). For sensitive land uses that cannot be sited at least 500 feet away from polluting sources, developments should incorporate appropriate mitigation measures that reduce potential pollution exposure. (Community Cafes).

Figure EJ-1.1: Protecting the Santa Maria community from harmful air pollution and related impacts

Clean air and limiting exposure to harmful pollution are central to creating healthy and resilient neighborhoods. **Goal HEJ-1** emphasizes the protection of sensitive land uses (such as schools, housing, and daycare centers) from industrial pollution, with a clear emphasis on DACs that have historically faced disproportionate environmental burdens.

If the City is unable to separate harmful and polluting land uses from sensitive receptors such as homes and schools, improvements should be implemented in and around buildings to mitigate the effects of outdoor air pollution.

¹³ For other goals, policies, and actions related to oil and gas well regulations, water quality, noise, vehicle dependence, and hazardous waste generators, please see the Safety, Noise, and Circulation Frameworks.

The City can encourage developers and landlords to improve indoor air quality for sensitive uses and promote healthier land use planning at the neighborhood scale through the following measures and steps:

- Install air intake systems for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in all buildings as far away from existing air pollution sources (ECR & Community Cafes)
- Use high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters in the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems that meet or surpass current standards for filtration and develop a maintenance plan to ensure the filtering system is properly maintained (ECR & Community Cafes)
- Replace gas appliances with electrical appliance upgrades (new action)
- For non-residential buildings, consider utilizing only fixed windows next to existing sources of pollution.
- Minimize noise impacts and air pollution from freeways on nearby residential and commercial areas by adding green (e.g., trees) and gray (e.g., tall walls) infrastructure buffers. (Community Cafes)
- Establish clear standards and guidance to protect human health while also prioritizing the continuity of local businesses. (Community Cafes)
- Partner with residents to investigate irritating odors from unknown sources that affect residents' mental health and produce negative health impacts. (Department meeting)

Policy HEJ-1.2: Minimize mobile source pollution. Take actions which facilitate the reduction of pollution exposure from freeways, roadways, and other land uses that produce significant levels of pollution from mobile sources.

Policy HEJ-1.3: Enforce truck routes. Seek data and input from impacted community residents to ensure local adherence to the City's most recent truck routes map and regulations that aim to reduce significant traffic and pollution impacts on homes, schools, childcare centers, senior centers, and other sensitive land uses. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-1.4: Expand Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure. Seek funding opportunities such as the California Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project (CALeVIP) to offset costs for businesses and property owners in DACs who install EV chargers. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-1.5: Promote healthy farming techniques. Support sustainable agricultural practices in and around the City of Santa Maria by encouraging farms to reduce pesticide usage and employ healthier, more sustainable alternatives to pesticides. (Community Cafes & ECR)

Action HEJ-1.5.1: Support the Santa Barbara County Agriculture/Weights & Measures Department's efforts to identify communities that should be prioritized for education and interventions to reduce farms' pesticide use, limit pesticide drift onto communities, protect farm workers against pesticide exposure, ensure compliance with pesticide spraying time blocks, and support the use of Integrated Pest Management practices. (Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-1.5.2: Work collaboratively with Santa Barbara County's Agricultural Commissioner's Office and the California Department of Pesticide Reform to enforce the County's agricultural buffer zones and the installation of vegetative barriers to minimize land use conflicts; determine buffers for proposed projects; limit pesticide drift; and protect farmers, workers, and residents from harms related to agricultural uses.
¹⁴(Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-1.6: Facilitate oil and gas well remediation. Reduce pollution exposure from both active and inactive oil and gas wells by working with the responsible state and regional agencies and departments to reduce the negative impacts of oil and gas drilling on the Santa Maria community. Strategies to reduce pollution can include:

- Timely and appropriate oil and gas well cleanup
- Enhanced monitoring efforts
- Establishment of sensitive land use buffers of at least 3,200 feet to protect public health and address environmental justice concerns. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-1.7: Ensure proper site remediation. Work with developers and the responsible state and federal agencies to ensure the use of established best practices for investigating and fully remediating contaminated sites. (Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-1.7.1: Direct developers to engage in standard brownfield cleanup practices such as carrying out Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Analyses for assessing soil and groundwater contamination before any redevelopment can occur.

Action HEJ-1.7.2: Encourage developers to collaborate with state regulatory agencies (such as the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the State Water Resources Control Board, and/or Cal Recycle) to leverage their support and expertise towards cleanup efforts.

Action HEJ-1.7.3: Advise developers to conduct additional site testing and provide greater safeguards if new sensitive uses are being proposed in DACs or areas previously zoned as industrial or commercial.

Policy HEJ-1.8: Promote safe waste disposal. Continue to educate residents on the City's strategies and available resources for safely disposing of bulky items and hazardous household waste (such as chemicals, batteries, and expired medications), while continuing to enforce the City's illegal dumping and hazardous waste disposal laws. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-1.9: Preserve water quality. Continue to ensure that Santa Maria residents have access to clean, safe, affordable, and accessible water for drinking, cooking, and sanitation,¹⁵ guarding against potential contamination from fertilizer-related impacts, sewage, septic tanks, and eroding natural deposits. (Community Cafes and ECR)

¹⁴ For more information on agricultural buffers, please see the Land Use Element.

¹⁵ For more information, please refer to the Human Right to Water Portal, State Water Resources Control Board. Retrieved from: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/hr2w/

Goal HEJ-2: Safe and affordable housing. All residents have access to safe, sanitary, accessible, and affordable housing.

Policy HEJ-2.1: Implement the Housing Element. Prioritize the implementation of the goals, policies, and programs in Santa Maria’s Housing Element, with an emphasis on City-led efforts to increase the diversity, quality, quantity, and affordability of housing in Santa Maria, including:

- Affordable housing production, protection, preservation, and options; especially for extremely low, very low, and low-income households (Housing Element Goals 1, 2, and 5)
- Code enforcement, with a focus on neighborhoods with older and/or substandard housing stock (e.g., elimination of lead, asbestos, mold, and pests) (Housing Element Goal 2)
- Energy conservation and assistance programs, especially for low-income households (Housing Element Goal 2)
- Safe and healthy farmworker housing with water and sewer infrastructure (Housing Element Goal 4)
- Anti-displacement protections (e.g., first right of refusal policy) (Housing Element Goal 5)
- Housing for older adults and seniors (Housing Element Goal 4)
- Housing for people with disabilities (Housing Element Goal 4)
- Housing and support systems for homeless or unhoused families and individuals (Housing Element Goal 4)
- Fair housing program (e.g., legal services, tenant protections, rental assistance, anti-discrimination) (Housing Element Goal 5)
- Environmental issues identification and action (e.g., efficient permit system for oil well closures and hazardous waste cleanups, addressing environmental risks to farm workers at home) (Housing Element Goal 5)
- Environmental justice (e.g., avoiding the concentration of high-impact or hazardous uses and facilities in communities; and an equitable distribution of services, public facilities, and improvements. (Housing Element Goal 5) (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-2.2: Advance housing rehabilitation. Grow housing rehabilitation, hazard mitigation, and minor home repair programs, with a strong prioritization for low-income residents in disadvantaged communities and households with children.

Action HEJ-2.2.1: Collaborate with CBOs and housing advocates to support rehabilitation, repair, and hazard mitigation efforts for housing in low-income neighborhoods. (City meeting and Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-2.2.2: Spread awareness of housing rehabilitation financial resources for low-income households, such as Community Development Block Grants, tax incentives, and other state and federal financial assistance programs. (Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-2.2.3: Identify long-term funding sources to continue the Minor Home Repair Programs. (Department meeting)

Action HEJ-2.2.4: Increase inspections for lead-based paint in housing built before 1978 to ensure timely remediation. (Community Cafes and HEJ DAC analysis)

Policy HEJ-2.3: Bolster housing diversity. Promote a diversity of housing types in Santa Maria to support healthy, safe, and supportive living for people of all ages, abilities, incomes, stages of life, and circumstances, including options that allow residents to age in their homes. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-2.4: Support multi-generational housing. Encourage the creation of new and rehabilitated multi-generational housing developments to support long-term livability. (Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-2.4.1: Update the City's zoning code and land use map to accommodate a wider variety and density of housing types and layouts, including multigenerational housing (e.g. ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, built-in suites), that allow multiple families to live together in healthy and appropriate areas.

Goal HEJ-3: Mobility and safe streets. All residents have access to safe and affordable public transportation and active transportation infrastructure, focusing on equitable access and a Complete Streets approach to designing neighborhoods.¹⁶

Policy HEJ-3.1: Ensure safe active transportation. Improve public safety and increase healthy walking and biking Complete Streets networks for Santa Maria's diverse community members (including young children, families, people with disabilities, and older adults) by ensuring safe and clean sidewalks and streets, spacious and distinct bike lanes, and accessible and affordable public transit systems for moving people around town.¹⁷

Action HEJ-3.1.1: Integrate a Safe System Approach by providing marked crosswalks, traffic calming, and separated bicycle lanes, among other systems for increased safety. (TAC, Community Cafes, and Department Meeting)

Action HEJ-3.1.2: Prioritize street improvements and infrastructure investments (i.e. lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks) by working with Caltrans and other agencies for relevant projects, such as the Highway 101 overcrossing, to increase citywide connectivity and facilitate residents' safe walking, biking, local travel, and work commutes. (Community Cafes and Department Meeting)

Action HEJ-3.1.3: Pursue funding for alternative transportation projects such as Complete Streets, accessible Universal Design systems, bicycle lanes and bike facilities, and accessible sidewalk improvements, with a particular focus on neighborhoods that are DACs. (Department Meeting)

Policy HEJ-3.2: Encourage safe routes to schools. Continue to partner with the school district to strengthen existing routes and establish new local safe routes to school initiatives and programs, with a priority to serve families and schools located in DACs. (Community Cafes and Department Meeting)

¹⁶ For other goals, policies, and actions related to mobility and safe streets, please see the Circulation Element.

¹⁷ Please refer to the Circulation Element for additional information on this policy.

Policy HEJ-3.3: Incorporate climate-resilient infrastructure. Add green and climate-related infrastructure (i.e. trees, native plants, shade structures, signage, and benches) at transit stops to enhance comfort while waiting and reduce heat exposure, especially in under-resourced DACs. (Environmental Justice Café)

Policy HEJ-3.4: Ensure equity in transit systems. Expand bus routes, increase headway frequencies, extend hours of operation, and provide additional programs to serve low-income and DAC residents to increase their access to jobs, schools, public services, and healthy food retailers.¹⁸ (Community Cafes)

Goal HEJ-4: Opportunities for physical activity. All residents have equitable access to parks, open space, and other community spaces that promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Policy HEJ-4.1: Increase access to parks and open space. Preserve and expand park and open space access throughout the city, with a clear focus on expanding park investments and resources in DAC neighborhoods that have traditionally lacked updated infrastructure and easy access to nature. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-4.2: Expand tree canopy. Preserve existing trees, replace trees that are removed, and increase tree planting in new areas to improve Santa Maria’s air quality, create more attractive and walkable public spaces, and combat climate-related extreme heat and wind effects, especially for DACs. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-4.3: Preserve greenbelts. Promote and maintain greenbelts in the Santa Maria Planning Area to promote greater public access to nature, increase opportunities for outdoor recreation, and preserve contiguous farmland and natural areas.¹⁹ (Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-4.3.1: Identify greenbelt areas to be maintained, expanded, or created based on community needs and feedback, particularly from DACs. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-4.4: Increase infrastructure for physical activity. Promote active and healthy lifestyles for the Santa Maria community by increasing the amount of bike storage units, public water stations, accessible walkways, and family-friendly staircases in public spaces to encourage walking and biking around the city. (Community Cafes and ECR)

Goal HEJ-5: Accessible public facilities. All residents benefit from City services, infrastructure, and other public resources, with targeted investments and improvements for historically under-resourced DAC neighborhoods.²⁰

¹⁸ Please refer to the Circulation Element for further information on this policy.

¹⁹ Please refer to the Conservation Element for further information on related greenbelt policy and actions.

²⁰ Note: For other goals, policies, and actions related to public facilities and services, please visit the Public Facilities Element.

Policy HEJ-5.1: Maintain public facilities. Prioritize equitable and timely maintenance of public facilities in DACs, recognizing the role of supportive services and a clean environment in promoting both positive mental and physical health. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-5.2: Collaborate to improve facilities. Collaborate with public and private entities, including community-based nonprofit organizations, to maintain and create new parks, promote cleanup efforts and City beautification programs, install public art and murals, promote tree planting, increase recreational facilities, and preserve and maintain open space areas, especially for residents living in DACs that traditionally lack access to such amenities. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-5.3: Increase childcare access. Collaborate with local nonprofit organizations, childcare providers, and residents from impacted communities to assess the availability, affordability, and quality of childcare and to develop implementable strategies that address gaps, improve services, and ensure equitable access to childcare resources for all community members. (Original GP – Resources Management Element)

Policy HEJ-5.4: Ensure accessible emergency resources. Provide emergency preparedness education, resources, and notification systems to residents in multiple languages to ensure equitable access to public safety services when disasters strike, exploring options to partner with Santa Maria’s Community Emergency Response Team and the Police Citizens Academy for such efforts. (Department meeting)

Action HEJ-5.4.1: Implement a recorded phone call system delivering emergency information in relevant languages to reach residents who do not use text-based notifications or are limited in technological capabilities. (City meeting)

Policy HEJ-5.5: Outreach for resilience centers. Coordinate with the County, the schools, and community-based organizations to conduct outreach to residents of diverse backgrounds to connect them to local community resiliency centers, especially for vulnerable populations (such as people with disabilities, farm workers, older adults, and unhoused community members, and people with chronic health conditions). (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-5.6: Improve community-serving programming. Enhance and maintain extended learning opportunities for youth (especially youth from low-income and immigrant backgrounds who have traditionally faced barriers to involvement) by ensuring equitable access to after-school sports, arts, and learning and enrichment programs; summer boost programs; day camps and programs that serve families during school vacation breaks; and educational literacy programs for all children. (Community Cafes)

Goal HEJ-6: Healthcare for all. All residents have access to excellent and affordable physical and mental health care resources.

Policy HEJ-6.1: Increase healthcare access. Partner with County Public Health and Behavioral Wellness Departments to improve equitable access to high-quality and culturally-relevant healthcare and mental health services, especially for communities that are more likely to face barriers such as residents that are uninsured, are low-income or are on a limited or fixed income, live in a DAC, have disabilities, are farmworkers, have limited English proficiency, and/or are experiencing poor or chronic health issues. (*Community Cafes*)

Action HEJ-6.1.1: Work with healthcare providers, community-based organizations, and institutions to understand and address the current barriers to bringing in more healthcare services to Santa Maria, including potential land use issues. (Community Cafes, TAC, and Department Meeting)

Policy HEJ-6.2: Expand access to health information. Partner with the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, local institutions, and nonprofit organizations to provide accessible information on important health issues (e.g., chronic health conditions, nutrition, air pollution impacts, reproductive health, and mental health), especially for residents who face higher barriers to receiving information and education such as low-income residents in DACs, residents from Indigenous and Mixteco backgrounds, people with disabilities, farmworkers, students, and older adults. (Community Cafes, TACs, and Department Meeting)

Policy HEJ-6.3: Integrate health in all policies. Promote a coordinated “Health in All Policies” approach by incorporating health equity and environmental sustainability in City strategies, and by increasing cross-department collaborations and coordination to address health equity outcomes through joint initiatives and programming.²¹

Policy HEJ-6.4: Promote emergency response alternatives. Coordinate with Mobile Crisis Teams to facilitate timely, non-law enforcement mental health emergency responses, especially in high-stress DACs, while also training the City’s Police force on how to identify appropriate support systems for individuals experiencing mental health episodes or substance abuse problems. (Community Safety and Environmental Justice Cafés)

Policy HEJ-6.5: Prioritize violence-prevention. Support and expand City resources (such as the Mayor’s Task Force) to provide violence prevention services and education to youth and adults of all ages, while also prioritizing youth leadership programs that work to improve public safety and proactively prevent and reduce crime. (Community Cafes)

Goal HEJ-7: Access to healthy food. All residents have access to affordable, fresh, and nutritious foods, including cultural foods.

²¹ “Health in All Policies (HiAP) is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas.” HiAP recognizes that health is influenced by a multitude of factors beyond healthcare and, in many cases, beyond the scope of traditional public health activities. For more information on the Health in All Policies approach, please visit: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-in-all-policies>

Policy HEJ-7.1: Support community food distribution. Continue to assist Santa Maria's community-based organizations, schools, and other institutions that are working to provide free or low-cost food to low-income families and unhoused residents who experience food insecurity in high-need areas of the city. (City meeting)

Policy HEJ-7.2: Improve grocery store access. Support the expansion of supermarkets in Santa Maria, especially in the northeast and northwest corners of the city, in food desert areas, and in other DAC neighborhoods. (ECR)

Policy HEJ-7.3: Encourage healthy corner stores. Partner with corner store owners to increase the availability of fresh, healthy foods by providing refrigerated shelving units, adjusting store layout, and prioritizing nutritious choices.

Action HEJ-7.3.1: Establish a "Healthy Corner Store" initiative in partnership with the County Public Health Department to promote access to nutritious food and beverages in corner stores, especially in DACs.

Action HEJ-7.3.2: Pursue funding and partnerships to enhance equitable access to nutritious food across the community through tailored incentives and resources. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-7.4: Promote farmers' markets. Partner with local businesses, farms, and community organizations operating or expanding new farmers' markets to provide healthy, fresh, and affordable food to residents living in DACs, including cultural foods. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-7.5: Increase school garden programs. Support partnerships that encourage schools to provide student gardens on school grounds and seek funding to have local farmers and community gardeners teach students about farming and gardening practices. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-7.6: Support food recovery programs. Work with large food generators (e.g., grocery stores, food distributors, and restaurants) to ensure edible surplus food is delivered to local food recovery organizations. (New policy)

Policy HEJ-7.7: Encourage acceptance of food benefits. Educate Santa Maria grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other healthy food retailers on the importance of accepting benefit cards from low-income residents, including CalFresh Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits; and Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program benefits. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-7.8: Support food microenterprises. Partner with property owners and the County Public Health Department to support innovative food microenterprises, such as home kitchen operations and mobile food facilities.

Goal HEJ-8: Meaningful and equitable public engagement. All residents have access to a variety of equitable and meaningful opportunities to participate in City activities and decision-making.

Policy HEJ-8.1: Ensure inclusive community engagement. Implement strategies to increase participation from community members that are typically not well represented in civic affairs due to various barriers, using best practices for engagement such as:

- Scheduling meetings and public workshops at times that are convenient for residents, locating meetings in convenient and transit-accessible locations, and providing childcare and food at meetings. (Community Cafes)
- Prioritizing outreach efforts to community members who are most impacted by racial and social inequities, including youth of color and immigrant families. (Community Cafes)
- Offering simultaneous multilingual interpretation during public workshops and community meetings and translating all meeting materials into Spanish and other commonly spoken local languages. (Community Cafes)
- Incorporating participatory facilitation techniques during public workshops to meaningfully engage residents in feedback conversations. (Community Cafes)
- Providing virtual attendance options for public hearings and meetings. (Community Cafes)
- Integrating accessibility strategies to support people with different disabilities, such as closed captioning for videos, American Sign Language interpretation during meetings, and designing meeting spaces to accommodate wheelchairs and different seating and table options.
- Partnering with community-based organizations to offer training to residents who lack access to the internet and have limited knowledge of technology. (Community Cafes)
- Expanding partnerships with local community-based organizations and faith-based institutions to help facilitate community-based conversations and encourage active participation. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-8.2: Integrate equity best practices. Prioritize resources, training, and programs to promote best practices for integrating inclusivity, fairness, social equity, and justice in all City departments to strengthen their functions and improve relationships with community members. (Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-8.2.1: Provide ongoing training and capacity building to City staff on topics such as racial equity and civil rights laws, environmental and climate justice in city planning, strategies for promoting cross-cultural awareness and cultural competence, how to use a trauma-informed approach for working with different communities, and how to lead equitable community engagement strategies. (Community Cafes)

Action HEJ-8.2.2: Recruit new staff who are representative of Santa Maria’s diverse population and people who can speak multiple languages to enhance communication and cultural responsiveness in City services. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-8.3: Encourage diverse community leadership. Support residents from underrepresented communities and diverse backgrounds to take on leadership roles for the City, fostering leadership that reflects the full demographic diversity of Santa Maria.

Action HEJ-8.3.1: Recruit community members of diverse backgrounds, races/ethnicities, physical abilities, genders, sexual orientations, and ages of Santa Maria to serve on the City Boards and Commissions. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-8.4: Promote youth leadership. Engage young people, particularly high school-aged and transition-aged youth (ages 18-24 years old), in City decision-making processes and decision-making bodies. Activities can include:

- Creating and implementing a Santa Maria Youth Commission and/or a Youth Safety Commission.
- Conducting targeted outreach to schools to involve students in the City's land use and permitting decisions.
- Partnering with community-based nonprofit organizations and schools to expand their civics-related programs, school clubs, and curriculum to include lessons on environmental justice, land use planning, air pollution, and how city governments work, among other topics.
- Co-hosting voter registration drives.
- Encouraging students to volunteer as poll workers or become involved in City affairs. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-8.5: Include residents in land use decisions. Proactively outreach to and solicit feedback from low-income residents, community-based organizations, individuals with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and DAC residents, among others, when making decisions on City land use issues. Examples of land use decisions include:

- Zoning changes
- Discretionary permit approvals
- Processes for brownfield cleanup
- Housing development
- Tenants' rights policies
- Plans and designs for active transportation and alternative transportation systems
- Community benefits agreements for large development
- Solutions for addressing the jobs-housing imbalance. (Community Cafes)

Policy HEJ-8.6: Develop community benefits agreements. Facilitate the creation of community benefits agreements (CBAs) for major private development projects that can provide resources and pollution mitigation to local community members, especially if the new development is located in a DAC. Sample community benefits could include:

- Lower levels of environmental pollution
- Reduced car and truck traffic
- More affordable housing units
- Workforce development opportunities
- Tree and native plants planting
- Shade structures for extreme heat events
- Green or gray barriers for pollution mitigation
- Community gardens and publicly accessible green space
- Other investments as suggested by Santa Maria community members (Community Cafes)