

## ATTACHMENT G

### CEQA FINDINGS CITY OF SANTA MARIA 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

**A. Findings that with regard to certain project and cumulative effects, changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which mitigate or avoid the significant effects on the environment.**

The following topics were discussed in detail within the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the 2045 Santa Maria General Plan Update (SCH # 2025020584) and were determined to result in less than significant impacts after implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the EIR.

**1. AIR QUALITY (AQ) AND GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS**

a. **Impact AQGHG-3.** Construction activities for projects lasting longer than two months or located within 1,000 feet of sensitive receptors could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. However, with implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-3, This impact would be less than significant. This measure requires that for individual discretionary and ministerial residential projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update that would develop three or more units; would involve demolition, mass grading, or excavation and trenching phases longer than two months; and would be located within 1,000 feet of existing sensitive receptors, the City shall enforce a project specific Condition of Approval requiring off-road heavy-duty diesel engines to meet CARB-certified Tier 3 or higher emission standards or employ CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters to the extent that this equipment is commercially available. "Commercially available" shall be defined as the availability of required equipment in geographic proximity to the project site and within a reasonable timeframe relative to critical path construction timing. If Tier 3 or higher emission standard equipment or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available, documentation shall be provided by the project applicant to the City stating that Tier 3 equipment or higher emission standard or Level 3 diesel particulate filters are not commercially available with supporting evidence from the contractor. If CARB-certified Level 3 diesel particulate filters are utilized, they shall be kept in working order and maintained in operable condition according to manufacturer's specifications, as applicable. Therefore, this impact will be Class II, less than significant with incorporation of mitigation.

**2. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES (BIO)**

a. **Impact BIO-1.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could have a substantial adverse effect on special-status species, either directly or as a result of habitat modification. Implementation of federal, State, and local regulations and policies, as well as Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k) would ensure that impacts from development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update on candidate, sensitive, or special-status species would be less than significant. Therefore, this impact will be Class II, less than significant with incorporation of mitigation.

- b. **Impact BIO-2.** Wetlands within the Plan Area may be affected by Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update. Development projects would be subject to adopted City regulations to minimize impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands. Compliance with the NPDES Construction General Permit, Santa Maria Municipal Code, proposed policies in the 2045 General Plan Update, and Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) would ensure potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands would be less than significant with mitigation.
- 3. CULTURAL AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES (CUL)**
- a. **Impact CUL-1.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan has the potential to adversely affect previously unidentified historic-period resources. Implementation of applicable 2045 General Plan policies, State and federal regulations, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code would minimize adverse impacts on historical resources. Additionally, Mitigation Measure CUL-1 requiring the submittal of a historical resources evaluation if determined necessary based on a preliminary review conducted by city staff for any structures that are 45 years of age or older and are proposed to be altered or demolished would reduce impacts to less than significant. If historical resources are identified through the survey and evaluation, the relocation, rehabilitation, or alteration of the resource shall be completed consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatments of Historic Properties (Standards). Therefore, this impact will be Class II, less than significant with incorporation of mitigation.
  - b. **Impact CUL-2.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update has the potential to disturb or damage archaeological resources. Implementation of applicable 2045 General Plan policies, State and federal regulations, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code would minimize adverse impacts to archaeological resources. Additionally, implementation of mitigation measures CUL-2(a), CUL-2(b), and CUL-2(c) requiring archeological resources assessments prepared by a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards in either prehistoric or historic archaeology, retaining a qualified cultural resource specialist to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource identified through a Phase I archaeological survey, and the completion by a City-approved archaeologist of a cultural resources awareness training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers for projects where a Phase I archaeological survey identifies archaeological resources that may be affected would reduce impacts to less than significant.
  - c. **Impact CUL-4.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update has the potential to disturb or damage tribal cultural resources. Implementation of applicable 2045 General Plan policies, State and federal regulations, and the Santa Maria Municipal Code would minimize adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources. Mitigation Measure CUL-4(a), requires that for any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation

and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to invite a City-approved archaeologist to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness training program (Worker Environmental Awareness Program [WEAP]) for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The City would also invite consulting Tribe(s) to provide a tribal cultural resources awareness training program for all personnel involved in project construction, including field consultants and construction workers. The WEAP training shall be conducted prior to any project-related ground disturbing activities in the project area. Mitigation Measure CUL-4(b) requires that for any project with the potential to encounter tribal cultural resources as determined through consultation and/or the preparation of archaeological assessments, the project applicant shall be required to retain a tribal monitor to monitor construction activities that involve ground-disturbing activities that will occur within 60 feet of a potentially significant cultural resource. Therefore, this impact will be Class II, less than significant with incorporation of mitigation.

**4. NOISE (NOI)**

- a. **Impact NOI-2.** Construction activity from buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update would generate groundborne vibration, potentially affecting nearby land uses. Implementation of required mitigation measure NOI-2 requiring the City of Santa Maria to review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, require construction contractors to implement feasible buffers for construction equipment as standard conditions of approval, as well as policies and actions in the plan, would ensure vibration levels would not exceed applicable thresholds for building damage. Therefore, this impact would be Class II, less than significant with incorporation of mitigation.

**B. Findings that with regard to certain project and cumulative effects, those changes or alterations which mitigate those effects, are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and have been, or can and should be, adopted by that other agency.**

No impacts were identified in the EIR for which mitigation measures were the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency.

**C. Findings that with regard to certain project and cumulative effects, specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including considerations for the provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the environmental impact report.**

The EIR identified significant, unavoidable adverse project-specific or cumulative related environmental impacts associated with the proposed project that cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels by the adoption of mitigation measures in the topic areas of Agricultural Resources, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise, and Transportation and Traffic.

The City Council finds that these impacts will be mitigated to the maximum extent

feasible, but will still remain significant and unavoidable, consistent with the following findings.

**1. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES (AG)**

- a. **Impact AG-1.** Land use changes in the annexation area have the potential to conflict with existing zoning for agriculture. There are no feasible mitigation measures that would avoid or fully mitigate for the conversion of Farmland or agriculturally zoned lands. As a result, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact. No feasible mitigation is available to reduce this impact to less than significant.

**2. AIR QUALITY (AQ) AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS**

- a. **Impact AQGHG-1.** The 2045 General Plan Update would result in new emissions that may exceed the 2022 Ozone Plan’s direct and indirect emissions inventory for the County. As a result, the plan would conflict with or obstruct implementation of the 2022 Ozone Plan. No feasible mitigation is available that would reduce this impact to less than significant. This impact would be significant and unavoidable.
- b. **Impact AQGHG-2.** The 2045 General Plan Update could result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of all criteria pollutants for which the plan region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or State ambient air quality standard. Even with implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2, impacts would be significant and unavoidable. The measures identified in Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2 will be implemented, including requiring applicants for future discretionary development projects facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update to prepare a project-specific air quality analysis in accordance with SBCAPCD Environmental Review Guidelines. The analysis shall quantify construction and operational emissions and compare estimated emissions to the SBCAPCD’s adopted thresholds of significance for criteria air pollutants. If the analysis determines that emissions would exceed any of the applicable thresholds, the project applicant shall implement all feasible mitigation measures to reduce emissions to below the thresholds. All mitigation measures shall be documented and verified by the lead agency prior to project approval or issuance of grading/building permits. As mentioned above, impacts from the 2045 General Plan Update would result in cumulatively considerable net increase in criteria pollutants. Impacts would remain significant and unavoidable after implementation of Mitigation Measure AQGHG-2.
- c. **Impact AQGHG-5.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would generate GHG emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment and conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. No feasible mitigation is available that would reduce this impact to less than significant. This impact would be significant and unavoidable.

### 3. NOISE

- a. **Impact NOI-1.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in construction noise that may impact nearby noise-sensitive land uses. The plan would introduce new noise sources and contribute to an increase in long-term operational noise levels within the city limit as well as the annexation area. Implementation of required noise-reduction mitigation, as well as policies and actions in the plan, would minimize disturbance to noise-sensitive land uses. Implementation of Mitigation Measure NOI-1 requiring the City of Santa Maria to review future developments within 500 feet of a sensitive receptor, and where applicable, requiring construction contractors to implement feasible noise reduction measures as standard conditions of approval would reduce these impacts but would not avoid or fully mitigate for the increase in construction and traffic noise in the plan area. As a result, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable after implementation of Mitigation Measure NOI-1.

### 4. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

- a. **Impact TRA-2.** The future (2045) citywide rates of VMT with the 2045 General Plan Update would not meet the 17% VMT reduction target required to be consistent with CEQA Guidelines 15064.3(b). There are no feasible General Plan policies or mitigation measures that could reduce citywide rates of VMT below the VMT reduction target. No feasible mitigation is available that would reduce this impact to less than significant. As a result, this would be a significant and unavoidable impact.

### D. Findings that with regard to certain project effects, those effects found to be less than significant and no mitigation measures are required.

The EIR identified the following potential impacts to be less than significant or no impact.

#### 1. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

- a. **Impact AG-2.** The 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with existing zoning for forest land, timberland, or timberland production, nor result in the loss of forest land or convert forest land to non-forest uses. There would be no impact.

#### 2. AIR QUALITY AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS (GHG)

- a. **Impact AQGHG-4.** Future development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would not create objectionable odors that could affect a substantial number of people or expose future residents to odors that would produce a public nuisance or hazard. This impact would be less than significant.

#### 3. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES (BIO)

- a. **Impact BIO-3.** Due to the existing level of development, there are no essential wildlife connectivity areas within the plan area. With adherence to the proposed policies of the 2045 General Plan Update and compliance with the Santa Maria Municipal Code, implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would have a less than significant impact on the movement of native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species within the plan area, or on established native resident or

migratory wildlife corridors.

- b. **Impact BIO-4.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to adhere to the proposed policies of the 2045 General Plan Update and Santa Maria Municipal Code requirements related to protection of trees and biological resources. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.
- c. **Impact BIO-5.** Implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with the provision of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan. No impact would occur.

#### 4. **CULTURAL (CUL) AND TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES**

- a. **Impact CUL-3.** Ground disturbing activities associated with development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update could result in disturbance of human remains. Compliance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and Public Resources Code Section 5097.8 would ensure this potential impact would be less than significant.

#### 5. **HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY**

- a. **Impact HYD-1.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would result in construction and operational activities which may contribute to soil erosion and degraded water quality. Development facilitated by the plan would be required to adhere to existing NPDES permits and Municipal Code requirements which would minimize the potential for development to degrade water quality. This impact would be less than significant.
- b. **Impact HYD-2.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would increase the amount of impervious surface area and increase groundwater demand in Santa Maria. Compliance with the Central Coast RWQCB, Municipal Code, and 2045 General Plan Update policies would ensure the proposed Plan would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge. This impact would be less than significant.
- c. **Impact HYD-3.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would potentially alter the existing drainage pattern on individual project sites throughout the city. Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be required to adhere to existing NPDES Permit and Municipal Code requirements which would ensure development would not substantially alter existing drainage patterns. This impact would be less than significant.
- d. **Impact HYD-4.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update may occur in flood hazard areas. Compliance with applicable municipal code requirements and proposed Safety Element policies would ensure development within areas subject to inundation would be sited, designed, and constructed as to not exacerbate risks from release of pollutants from inundation. This impact would be less than significant.
- e. **Impact HYD-5.** There is no sustainable groundwater management plans for the

Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin; however, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be subject to the Basin Plan. Future development facilitated by the plan would not conflict with the Basin Plan as it would be required to adhere to federal, State, and local regulations to minimize water quality impacts in compliance with the Basin Plan. This impact would be less than significant.

**6. NOISE (NOI)**

- a. **Impact NOI-3.** Buildout of the 2045 General Plan Update could expose people residing or working in the plan area to excessive noise levels from airport noise. Implementation of policies and actions in the plan would ensure this impact would be less than significant.

**7. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC**

- a. **Impact TRA-1.** The 2045 General Plan Update would not conflict with the Connected 2050 RTP/SCS, the Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan, or any other applicable program, plan, ordinance, or policy relevant to the transportation system. This impact would be less than significant.
- b. **Impact TRA-3.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would comply with State, Santa Maria Fire Department, and City requirements related to transportation design safety and emergency access. With adherence to these requirements, the 2045 General Plan Update would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or result in inadequate emergency access, and this impact would be less than significant.

**8. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS**

- a. **Impact UTIL-1.** Development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would increase demand for additional utility infrastructure which may require relocation or construction of utility facilities or services to serve plan buildout beyond existing conditions, specifically within the annexation area. However, development facilitated by the 2045 General Plan Update would be constructed consistent with applicable City code, buildings standards, and engineering standards. Therefore, these impacts would be less than significant.
- b. **Impact UTIL-2.** The overall growth anticipated by the 2045 General Plan Update would generate additional water demand in Santa Maria that could exceed projected water supplies during some Multiple Dry-Years. With the implementation of existing policies and programs, this impact would be less than significant.
- c. **Impact UTIL-3.** The 2045 General Plan Update would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure. New development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with applicable solid waste reduction statutes and regulations. This impact would be less than significant.

**E. CEQA findings of Infeasibility of Alternatives pursuant to PRC Section 21081 and CCR Section 15091**

As a Programmatic analysis of a citywide general plan update for a twenty-year planning period, the EIR provides a comparative impact analysis for a range of growth scenarios and policy options under community consideration and concludes that some of the alternatives could potentially lessen some environmental impacts. The City Council finds that specific economic, legal, social, technological and other considerations make the alternatives identified in the EIR infeasible, based on the EIR analysis, public comment, and Council deliberations as follows:

1. No Project Alternative. Under the No Project Alternative, the City of Santa Maria would not adopt the 2045 General Plan Update. Instead, development would continue in accordance with the existing General Plan. This alternative assumes that current land use designations, policies, and growth projections would remain in effect, guiding future development and infrastructure decisions. For the purpose of this analysis, the No Project Alternative is assumed to result in reduced overall buildout potential compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, as it reflects continuation of existing land use designations and policies without the proposed changes that would facilitate additional growth. As discussed in detail in Section 6.2.2 of the EIR, this alternative would avoid the potential environmental impacts associated with the increased development intensity and expanded planning strategies in the plan.

While some development would still occur under existing entitlements and zoning regulations, the City would not implement the new land use strategies, environmental protections, or housing and mobility policies in the plan. As a result, the No Project Alternative would not fulfill the objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update because it would not fully address evolving community needs, state housing requirements (future RHNA cycles), or infrastructure demands anticipated through 2045. Therefore, the city rejects this Alternative. The findings for the proposed plan set forth in this document and the overriding social, economic and other considerations set forth in the Statement of Overriding Considerations provide support for the proposed project and the elimination of this alternative from future consideration.

2. Infill Only Alternative. Under the Infill Only Alternative, the City of Santa Maria would adopt the 2045 General Plan Update, including all goals and policies. However, the Infill Only Alternative would exclude the annexation of areas located east of the current City limits and direct development to areas within existing urban or suburban areas such as infill, redevelopment, or increased densities. For the purpose of this analysis, the Infill Only Alternative is assumed to result in a similar overall level of buildout and population growth compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, despite the exclusion of future development in the Eastern Annexation area. As discussed in detail in Section 6.3.2 of the EIR, this alternative would avoid environmental impacts in the annexation area, such as conversion of agricultural land, fragmentation of

open space, or potential effects on biological resources, while potentially exacerbating environmental impacts associated with the increased development density in existing neighborhoods.

While this alternative would reduce the geographic footprint of development, it would result in increased development pressure on existing neighborhoods and infrastructure. As a result, the Infill Only Alternative would not fulfill the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update because it would not fully address evolving community health needs, state housing requirements, or opportunities for connected growth anticipated through 2045. The City therefore rejects this Alternative. The findings for the proposed plan set forth in this document and the overriding social, economic and other considerations set forth in the Statement of Overriding Considerations provide support for the proposed project and the elimination of this alternative from future consideration.

3. Greater Annexation Alternative. Under the Greater Annexation Alternative, the City of Santa Maria would adopt the 2045 General Plan Update, including all goals, policies, and land use changes. However, the Greater Annexation Alternative would include a larger annexation area east of the current City limits. This alternative assumes a similar level of development density would occur in the larger annexation area, resulting in increased total development and an increased population compared to the 2045 General Plan Update. For the purpose of this analysis, the Greater Annexation Alternative is assumed to result in increased overall buildout potential and population growth compared to the 2045 General Plan Update, due to the inclusion of a larger annexation area and expanded Sphere of Influence.

The expanded geographic footprint of the Greater Annexation Alternative would fulfill many of the primary objectives of the 2045 General Plan Update because it would have the capacity to meet state housing requirements and address some community needs; however, the distributed development that may occur under this alternative would not fully address evolving community health needs or opportunities for connected growth anticipated through 2045. As discussed in detail in Section 6.4.2, of the EIR, this alternative would result in greater environmental impacts across many resource areas as the increased footprint would reduce available agricultural land and increase VMT and associated criteria pollutant and GHG emissions. Therefore, the city rejects this Alternative. The findings for the proposed plan set forth in this document and the overriding social, economic and other considerations set forth in the Statement of Overriding Considerations provide support for the proposed project and the elimination of this alternative from future consideration.