



**CITY OF SANTA MARIA**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**  
MAY 6, 2026

**STOWELL ROAD PACKAGE DELIVERY WAREHOUSE PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**

**Property Location: 1680 WEST STOWELL ROAD**

Review of a Planned Development Permit (PD2024-0003) for Seefried Development Management, Inc. to construct a new 244,418-square-foot Package Delivery facility campus on a 32-acre site in a PD/CM-AG (Planned Development/Commercial Manufacturing and Agriculture Overlay) district of the West Stowell Specific Plan.

Environmental: Environmental review for this project was completed through the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (SCH# 2025080640) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. By resolution, certify the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the proposed project; and
2. By motion, approve Planned Development PD2024-0003 as conditioned.

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**BACKGROUND**

The applicant, Seefried Development Management, Inc., proposes to construct an approximately 169,000-square-foot package delivery warehouse and 75,314 square feet of ancillary support structures on the 32-acre site. The proposed delivery warehouse will serve as the final step in the e-commerce fulfillment process, operating 24/7 to deliver goods to customers within 125 square miles adjacent to the location.

The project site is located in a Planned Development/Commercial Manufacturing - Agriculture Overlay (PD/CM-AG) district of the West Stowell Specific Plan, at 1680 West Stowell Road (Attachment A – Vicinity Map). The site consists of two vacant parcels which have remained vacant under the interim use of row-crop production since the adoption of

the Specific Plan in 1994. The two parcels will be merged as a part of this project to have a combined ¼ mile long West Stowell Road frontage.

Agricultural production land within Santa Barbara County lies directly north of the site across Stowell Road. The Santa Barbara Humane Campus is located approximately 200 yards to the west at 1687 West Stowell Road. The Santa Maria Valley Railroad corridor forms the southern boundary of the site, with the industrial designated lands of the Area 9 Specific Plan beyond. To the west there are existing cooling facility and warehouse sites also located within the West Stowell Specific Plan's PD/CM-AG zone, including Driscoll's 155,000-square-foot fruit cooler, Bonipak Produce's 170,000-square-foot cooler, and Cal Giant's 87,000-square-foot facility. Immediately to the east of the project site at 1550 West Stowell Road is the recently approved (and under construction) 62,000-square-foot Maxco Packaging box assembly and outdoor storage facility. Besides this project site, approximately 26 acres of the Specific Plan remain vacant and/or under interim crop production use and available for future industrial development.

#### West Stowell Specific Plan

The City Council adopted the Heavy Commercial Manufacturing (HCM) General Plan Land Use designation for this area on September 15, 1992, in order to support the annexation of this area into the City. A Sphere of Influence Expansion and Annexation project Final Environmental Impact Report (E-88-10) was also certified by the City Council, which incorporated a statement of overriding considerations acknowledging the impacts the new land use designation would pose to agricultural uses. The overriding consideration made in 1992 specifically considered the loss of prime agricultural land to future industrial development but found that this and the other annexation projects being analyzed served an overriding need for the growth of the community.

On July 5, 1994, the Council adopted Resolution 94-123 and Ordinance 94-122 adopting the West Stowell Specific Plan and subsequently approved the annexation of the specific plan on August 16, 1994, through Resolution 94-161.

One of the goals identified for the West Stowell Specific Plan was "...to achieve a unique, identifiable agricultural and industrial area that provides functional unity with the area's agricultural character." (Goal 1, West Stowell Specific Plan). A further discussion of the project's compatibility with the West Stowell Specific Plan is provided later in this report.

#### Planning Commission Study Session

The Planning Commission held Study Sessions regarding the package delivery warehouse project on October 3, 2024, December 18, 2025, and January 22, 2026. During these meetings, the Planning Commission received presentations from City staff, heard from the applicant Seefried Development Management, Inc., inquired about the project's operations, traffic impacts and the environmental review process, and received comments from the public primarily consisting of concerns about potential traffic impacts.

## DISCUSSION

The main building will consist of a 169,104-square-foot package delivery warehouse with automotive canopies attached to the entire length of both the east and the west elevations, providing a 67,870-square-foot covered area for vehicle staging. Ancillary site structures include two remote restrooms (453 square feet each), one automated vehicle inspection building (1,545 square feet) and one fleet service building (4,993 square feet). The total square footage of development when considering the main warehouse, canopies, and ancillary structures is 244,418 square feet.

### Architecture

The proposed warehouse facility is concrete tilt-up style structure with metal canopies on the east and west elevations. Office areas will be located at the front (north) side of the building with pedestrian entry and windows facing Stowell Road. This office portion of the building will be approximately 26 feet in height, with the taller (45 feet) warehouse portion of the building behind. The exterior will incorporate grid patterns of heavy reveal lines combined with a paint scheme consisting of multiple tones of gray and a blue accent. This structure will incorporate a flat roof with a six-foot-tall parapet to ensure all rooftop mechanical is screened from view.

The ancillary structures will be constructed of metal siding and roofing with gray and blue exteriors to coordinate with the warehouse. The ancillary structures range in height from 14 feet to 30 feet. The proposed building and roof materials are compatible with the surrounding industrial development and conform with the exterior design requirements of the West Stowell Specific Plan.

Pole mounted site lighting and wall mounted lighting is proposed, which would each be compatible with the building. All exterior lighting shall be fully shielded and downward directed to prevent glare.

### Requested Modification to Development Standards

The West Stowell Specific Plan requires building height not be "... in excess of 35 feet in height *unless allowed with a use or planned development permit.*" As part of the Planned Development Permit, and due to the operational needs of the distribution facility, the applicant is requesting the Planning Commission approve a modification of the building height provision to allow the warehouse building to be 45 feet tall.

The project includes design elements that compensate for any potential impact of the proposed height increase. As noted earlier, six of the additional ten feet of requested height are to provide a building parapet sufficient to screen the rooftop equipment. The appearance of height of the warehouse building is diminished by the stepped height transition to the shorter, 26-foot-tall office component oriented toward the street. The placement of the building also is a compensating factor. The West Stowell Specific Plan permits a 35-foot-tall building with as little as a 40-foot setback required to the street and no side or rear setback required. In contrast, the proposed building is placed over 140 feet from the front property line (over 210 feet to the taller portion of the building), with

over 200 feet distance at the rear, and over 500 feet from either of the side property lines. For these reasons, the requested height increase is supported.

Other than this height modification request, the proposed project is consistent with the Municipal Code and the West Stowell Specific Plan development standards, meeting requirements for landscape area, setbacks, screening, and parking spaces provided.

### Parking

The West Stowell Specific Plan relies on the Santa Maria Municipal Code (SMMC) Chapter 12-32 standards for the minimum parking required, in this case for the warehouse and office space uses, and for the ancillary automotive repair and inspection uses; one parking space is required for every 1,040 square feet of gross warehouse floor area and one parking space for each 260 square feet of gross office floor area. Automotive repair is calculated at three spaces required per repair bay. Based on project design, 208 parking spaces are required for the project, with 272 spaces provided. These spaces are for the employees and visitors to the project, and do not include the additional 706 stalls provided for the fleet of delivery vans, loading areas, or truck bays.

The parking field for employees is located on the northern portion of the site, with the fleet parking areas to the sides and rear of the proposed building. The facility would be enclosed with an eight-foot-tall, decorative tubular steel fence with pedestrian and vehicular gates for security and traffic control. The driveway gates shall be setback 25 feet from back of sidewalk so vehicles can maneuver completely out of the street when waiting for the gates to open. The overall project design is in conformance with the West Stowell Specific Plan parking lot design standards, landscape screening measures and site planning requirements.

### Landscape

The applicant is proposing 20 percent of the project site (approximately 279,000 square feet) be provided as landscape area, exceeding the 15 percent Municipal Code requirement. A significant portion of this landscape area is provided along the project frontage and incorporated into the employee parking area nearest to West Stowell Road to provide screening of the parking areas and an attractive setting for the facility. There is a mixture of trees, shrubs and groundcover proposed, with 33 street trees placed along West Stowell Road and an additional 200 trees throughout the site. The proposed landscape plan has been designed to be compliant with the requirements of the West Stowell Specific Plan and the City of Santa Maria Municipal Code. In conformance with new General Plan policy, the Planned Development Permit incorporates a prohibition of the use of any invasive plant species adjacent to the neighboring agricultural uses, and requires that the landscape plans include an acknowledgment of compliance with this prohibition by the landscape architect.

### Infrastructure

The proposed development will be served by existing and planned urban infrastructure, with appropriate urban services, and adjacent to the existing developed industrial uses. The proposed project addresses infrastructure by providing adequate sewer, water and

drainage facilities, and on-site stormwater retention requirements. This is accomplished through a combination of AB 1600 fee payments toward public infrastructure, and construction of private on-site improvements and public infrastructure improvements adjacent to the site, the accommodation of City trunk sewer line realignment across the property, as well as to underground existing and proposed utilities adjacent to the site.

A component of the project's conformance is providing improvements along West Stowell Road, including the widening of the south side of Stowell Road to the City's Secondary Arterial roadway standards with a paved shoulder and curb, gutter, and sidewalk facilities; installation of additional eastbound travel lanes; providing a center two-way left-turn lane to ensure adequate and safe ingress and egress is provided to and from the site; and a bicycle lane. Sidewalk improvements, pedestrian barricades, street lighting, and curb and gutter modifications adjacent to the site are also provided by the applicant. The pedestrian and bicycle improvements would enhance multimodal safety and are consistent with the City's recent investments in pedestrian safety and accessibility upgrades on the Stowell Road corridor.

The proposed infrastructure improvements have been analyzed to ensure the site is integrated into the systems serving the existing and future developments and to ensure infrastructure capacities are not exceeded or adversely impacted. The project has been found to conform to Specific Plan Section 2.2 Circulation Plan, Section 3.2 Circulation Design Standards, Section 3.3.1 Public Improvements, Section 2.4 Infrastructure Plan, and Section 3.4 Infrastructure Standards.

### Project Operations

The facility receives packages which are transported to the facility via line-haul (tractor trailer) trucks from regional fulfillment centers. Thirty-four line-haul trucks are expected to deliver packages to the warehouse each day between 10:00 PM and 8:00 AM.

The packages are then organized and sorted by delivery routes and loaded into vehicles (company vans and private carriers) for delivery between 10:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Delivery vans will depart from the warehouse at a regulated flow of up to 72 vans every 20 minutes, until up to 345 vans have departed the facility. These routes are completed within eight to ten hours after dispatch and the delivery vans are parked onsite until the next day. In addition to the vans, there will be up to 97 additional 'private carrier' deliveries from the center. These will be the private carrier's passenger vehicles, which will load and depart every 15 minutes between 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. The private carriers pick up only one set of packages a day, and unlike the vans, when those deliveries are completed, they do not return to the warehouse. These line-haul, van, and private carrier trip estimates assume the facility operating at full capacity during the busiest season, and therefore are the maximum expected trips for this facility.

The ancillary vehicle inspection and repair buildings will only service the fleet vehicles, and on an as-needed basis. Having these functions on-site is a convenience for the applicant, saving time but also avoiding trips to offsite locations for repairs and maintenance.

## Traffic

A traffic analysis was conducted for the project and reviewed by Public Works and the Fire Department. The analysis evaluated roadway safety, intersection operations, and potential conflicts with existing traffic patterns in proximity to the project site. The analysis included an assessment of vehicle speeds, lane configurations, sight distance, and roadway geometry in accordance with City standards and industry-standard methodology.

The project's traffic analysis evaluated a worst-case scenario by assigning all project traffic to Stowell Road and analyzing the intersections most likely to experience impacts. If traffic had been dispersed more broadly, the resulting volumes at other locations would have been too low to produce meaningful findings. The study followed City guidelines for impact time periods, study locations, and traffic distribution to ensure a conservative assessment. Additionally, the project analysis evaluated potential cumulative traffic effects of adding the project in combination with surrounding planned and pending project development to determine the cumulative transportation impacts.

The project's traffic analysis evaluated the distribution of project-generated trips throughout a typical day. The analysis concluded that the project-generated traffic from the line-haul trucks, delivery vans, and private carrier operations are timed to occur outside of the standard morning and evening peak traffic periods. Likewise, the arrival and departure times of the project's vehicles do not correspond to the peak traffic times generated by the adjacent agricultural facilities, nor does the project's traffic peaks coincide with the peak school traffic periods.

While the analysis also indicated that all study area unsignalized intersections, including driveways, are expected to operate at an acceptable Level of Service (LOS), the analysis did identify two signalized West Stowell Road intersections which are currently experiencing heavy LOS traffic, even without the project. The overall level of service at these and the other intersections along the West Stowell Road corridor will be addressed by the applicant through signal timing optimization of all signals, including the Bradley/Columbia intersection with the on- and off-ramps to US-101.

In addition, project van delivery drivers would use a routing application that incorporates real-time traffic data to avoid congested corridors and identify the most efficient travel paths for deliveries. Residential streets would be used only when making direct deliveries to homes in those neighborhoods.

The traffic analysis concluded that West Stowell Road has adequate capacity to accommodate projected vehicle volumes and would continue to operate safely with implementation of project improvements adjacent to the project site. In addition, the project will provide optimization of the signaled intersections on Stowell Road eastward to Highway 101 which will enhance the overall level of service, reducing the impact of any project generated traffic.



- Pay the Traffic Mitigation Fee at time of occupancy.

#### Land Use and Specific Plan Zoning Compatibility

This site has been an established area for future development in the early 1990s, since the pre-annexation establishment of the Heavy Commercial Manufacturing (HCM) General Plan Land Use designation, the certification of the Sphere of Influence Expansion and Annexation EIR and statement of overriding considerations, and the adoption of the West Stowell Specific Plan establishing the PD/CM-AG zone district.

The project does not involve a change to the General Plan land use designation. The General Plan Update maintains the existing HCM designation for this and the other sites within the Specific Plan. Likewise, the HCM land use definition remains consistent between the existing and updated Land Use Element versions. The new Land Use Element states that the intent of the HCM designation is:

*“To permit activities that combine manufacturing and retail on the same site, along with other heavy commercial uses that are land intensive, involve transport of materials by heavy trucks, require large loading and docking areas, and may generate significant noise. Allowed uses: Lumberyards, boat works, warehouses, wholesale building supply dealers, mobile home sales, farm equipment sales, equipment repair.”*

This definition is nearly word-for-word of the existing definition, apart from the addition of a maximum 1.0 floor area ratio, a standard to which this project complies. The Updated Land Use Element will also continue to designate the CM zoning district as the corresponding district for the HCM Land Use. The project does not propose any use or activity, such as retail or residential development, that would constrain or conflict with the adjacent industrial or agricultural uses. Therefore, this project has been determined to be consistent with the current as well as the updated Santa Maria General Plan.

This project does not require an amendment to the West Stowell Specific Plan. Section 2.1.1 of the Specific Plan states: *“Development under the West Stowell Specific Plan represents a continuation of the land use pattern that already exists in and around the planning area. It is designed to accommodate future industrial growth, while maintaining agricultural land uses and minimizing impacts to the environment.”*

The West Stowell Specific Plan designates this site as PD/CM (Planned Development/Commercial Manufacturing) zone with an Agriculture (AG) Overlay.

Specific Plan Section 3.1.1 identifies a purpose of the Commercial/Manufacturing (CM/AG) zone district as *“...a zone district that is diverse, yet also restrictive, in order to ensure compatibility with the protection of neighboring agricultural land uses from any negative impacts such as noise, odor, lighting, traffic, growth inducement or degradation of visual aesthetic values.”*

The West Stowell Specific Plan was adopted in 1994 with the goal of meeting the *“...increasing demand for large industrial and agricultural industrial space in the Santa*

*Maria Valley.*” While this proposed facility does not have an agricultural focus, the Specific Plan, like the Municipal Code, provides the Planning Commission with the discretion to consider similar uses for the site through the Planned Development Permit process. Specific Plan Section 3.1.1.d establishes a process whereby the Planning Commission may approve a similar use which is not a specifically listed conditional use by finding the proposed use falls within the intent and purpose of the zone, will not be obnoxious or detrimental to the public welfare, and is compatible with adjoining land uses.

Some similar uses listed in the Specific Plan include “*agriculture packaging and processing plants, produce distribution warehouse, wholesale supply, storage and distribution center*” (as permitted uses) and “*large truck and tractor sales and services facilities*” (as a conditional use), all of which can have similar building size and site design needs, dependance on vehicles and trucks, and other operational functions similar to this proposed package delivery warehouse. Likewise, the potential noise, odors, lighting and traffic generated by this facility would be similar to an agriculture packing and processing plant, a produce distribution warehouse, or a wholesale supply, storage and distribution center, which are uses *permitted* by right by the Specific Plan. In this way, the project will be consistent with the character and intensity of the existing developed West Stowell uses, with the primary difference being that this facility will not be handling agricultural products.

Lastly, the project has been thoroughly evaluated for any potential environmental impacts, with input from other agencies and the public, resulting in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The resulting EIR mitigations reduce this project’s potential to pose any negative impacts to the community, and the neighboring agricultural land uses in terms of noise, air quality, odor, lighting, traffic, growth inducement or degradation of visual aesthetics, hazards, and public health beyond that of the Specific Plan’s permitted uses. Therefore, the use is compatible with adjacent industrial and agricultural activities and does not threaten their viability.

The Planned Development Permit, the conditions and the EIR mitigations combine to provide for “*...future industrial growth, while maintaining agricultural land uses and minimizing impacts to the environment*” and will “*...ensure compatibility with the protection of neighboring agricultural land uses from any negative impacts such as noise, odor, lighting, traffic, growth inducement or degradation of visual aesthetic values*” in conformance with the West Stowell Specific Plan.

The West Stowell Specific Plan Section 3.1.1.d finding for the similar, compatible use determination, as well as the Conditional Use Permit and Planned Development Permit findings (Sections 12-35.105 and 12-35.203 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code) are incorporated in the draft Planned Development Permit provided as Attachment B.

### Environmental

Section 2.1.1 of the West Stowell Specific Plan describes the land use of the specific plan as “... designed to accommodate future industrial growth, while maintaining agricultural land uses and minimizing impacts to the environment.” The environmental analysis and

review for this project was completed through the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (SCH# 2025080640) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines. The EIR was circulated for public review from November 12, 2025, to January 16, 2026. The comments received and responses to those comments are provided in the final EIR, provided as Attachment C to this report. The EIR found the project would have potentially significant environmental impacts in the topic areas of air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, and has incorporated mitigation measures (Attachment F) to reduce these project impacts to less than significant.

The EIR also identified the project would generate significant Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) transportation impacts and has incorporated three mitigation measures aimed at reducing these impacts: requiring the applicant to develop and implement a Travel Demand Management Plan (Mitigation TR-1), Project-Level Travel Demand Management Plan (Mitigation TR-2) and Fleet and Operational Measures (Mitigation TR-3). Employer commute programs, transit subsidies, bike infrastructure, and fleet electrification are measures that the applicant could employ to satisfy these mitigations. However, there is no feasible way to reduce the miles associated with the delivery operations, as these delivery miles result from the primary intended function of this facility. Reducing the size of the proposed project was also analyzed but was also found to not reduce VMT impacts to insignificance.

Even with the VMT mitigations applied to the project, the mitigations will not reduce the project's transportation impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, the EIR identifies VMT as a significant and unavoidable (Class I) impact. The Statement of Overriding Considerations addressing this Class 1 impact is provided as Attachment E.

#### Attachments

- A – Vicinity Map
- B – Permit
- C – Environmental Impact Report
- D – CEQA Findings
- E – Statement of Overriding Consideration
- F – Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
- G – Plan Set