Stowell Road Package Delivery Warehouse

Draft Environmental Impact Report

SCH #2025080640

prepared by

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Executive Summary

This document is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed Stowell Road Package Delivery Warehouse Project (proposed project). This section summarizes the characteristics of the proposed project, alternatives to the proposed project, and the environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the proposed project.

Project Synopsis

Project Applicant

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Lead Agency Contact Person

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Project Location

The Stowell Road Package Delivery Warehouse Project (proposed project) site is located at 1680 West Stowell Road in the City of Santa Maria (City) in Santa Barbara County. The property is located in the western portion of the city within the West Stowell Specific Plan area. The project is in zone district PD/CM-AG (Planned Development/Commercial Manufacturing - Agriculture Overlay) of the Specific Plan.[1] The project is proposed on a 32-acre site consisting of two parcels (Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 117-820-012 and 117-820-013) [2] previously used for growing row crops.

Project Description

Project Characteristics

The applicant, Seefried Industrial Properties, Inc., is requesting a Planned Development Permit from the City to develop a package delivery warehouse at 1680 West Stowell Road. The total development area proposed is 244,418 square feet, which includes a 169,104-square-foot single story main distribution warehouse, oriented north to south in the center of the approximately 32-acre site. The main facility building (S-1 occupancy) would include a supporting office area (B occupancy), training

[1] Santa Maria, City of. 1994. West Stowell Specific Plan, Land Development Pattern, Zoning Map. Available: https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/6437/635530503431800000. (accessed March 2025).
[2] Santa Barbara, County of. County Clerk, Recorder and Assessor. Available: https://sbcassessor.com/Assessor/details.aspx?apn=117820012. (accessed June 2025).

room (A-2 occupancy), and break room (A-3 occupancy). The project would be processed through a Planned Development Permit. Per Santa Maria Municipal Code Section 12-25.02, the Planned Development Permit with requested building height modification will be presented to the Planning Commission for consideration. In addition to the main facility building, the project contains other small accessory structures as summarized in Table ES-1 below. This includes an on-site fleet service center to maintain and repair delivery vans.

Table ES-1 Project Characteristics

Structure Type	Structure Area (square feet)
Main Warehouse and Office	169,104
Loading Awning - East	33,545
Loading Awning - West	34,325
Remote Restrooms	906
Automated Vehicle Inspection Structures	1,545
Fleet Service Center	4,993
Total	**244,418**

The City of Santa Maria would provide essential utility services to the project site encompassing water, wastewater, and solid waste management. Electricity would be provided by Pacific Gas & Electric and no natural gas pipes would be installed. Frontier and Comcast would be the local internet/telecommunication provider. As identified in the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) Well Finder database, an oil and gas well is located in the southwestern corner of the project site and was abandoned in the 1950s (Hope Well# 1, API# 0408302417). As part of the project's development proposal, the well is planned to be re-abandoned in accordance with current CalGEM standards. Landscaping improvements would include the usage of drought-tolerant and climate-adapted plants, and installation of walk-on-bark mulch in all non-low impact development planting areas and slopes.

The proposed project includes several sustainable energy features. Fourteen electric vehicle chargers would be installed as part of the project, exceeding the minimum requirements. The project would not install any natural gas services to the facility. In addition, solar roof arrays would be installed to offset electrical energy demand with a design capacity of 750 kilowatts direct current. To manage energy supply and demand, the project would include an 'after the meter' Battery Energy Storage System to store energy for later use by the facility, with a design rating of 650 kilowatts direct current.

Delivery warehouses are the last mile connection between the tenant's customers and their fulfillment process. Delivery warehouses operate 24/7 to support delivery of packages to customer locations between 10:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. The main on-site facility would include delivery and distribution, office and processing uses, including shipping and receiving of packages. Approximately 34 line-haul trucks (semi-trailer trucks) would be expected to deliver packages to the warehouse each day. The customer packages would be sorted by address groupings, assigned to the delivery routes, placed onto movable racks, and staged for dispatch. Delivery drivers would arrive at the delivery warehouse around 9:20 a.m. and begin queuing for loading. Up to 345 delivery vans would depart from the delivery warehouse at a rate of up to 72 vans per 20 minutes to facilitate a regulated traffic flow into the surrounding area. Approximately 8–10 hours after dispatch, delivery routes would be completed, and the vans would return to the station intermittingly between 8:10 p.m. and 9:50 p.m. with all delivery vans staying onsite.

Access to the site would be provided via three unsignalized driveways. The westernmost driveway would provide access for all line-haul trucks with vans and employees entering the site via the central and easternmost driveways. Off-site circulation improvements would include installation of parking lot striping, two east bound travel lanes, a bike lane, sidewalk, pedestrian barricade, and streetlights. Construction of the proposed project is anticipated to occur over one year, from approximately March 2026 through July 2027. Construction would take place between 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekends, which is within the allowable construction hours set by the City. Construction of the structures and on-site facilities would be done in five phases: site preparation, grading, building construction, paving, and architectural coating. Overall grading depth for buildings would be up to 5 feet in depth and then backfilled approximately 1 to 3 feet above existing grade. Replacement of the sewer main would be at a depth up to 12 feet. Parking for up to 990 passenger cars and vans would be available on-site with 12 stalls at the loading dock to accommodate semi-trucks on the south side of the main facility. The truck loading docks would be along the southern side of the building with dock-high doors for tractor trailer access for unloading. Customers, delivery vans, and associate cars would enter and exit the site from the northeastern driveway, also on West Stowell Road.

Project Objectives

The objectives of the proposed Stowell Road Package Delivery Warehouse Project are to:

1. Develop a parcel delivery facility with nearby access to freeways to efficiently facilitate the movement of goods.
2. Develop a parcel delivery facility that incorporates sustainability features like EV, solar, and low-water usage.
3. Establish a productive use of underutilized industrial land to help meet unmet regional demand for goods delivery service.
4. Improve efficiency and timeliness of goods delivery to the City of Santa Maria and the surrounding areas.
5. Expand economic development, increase tax revenues, and facilitate job creation in the City of Santa Maria, including hundreds of direct operational jobs and indirect jobs.
6. Attract new businesses to the City of Santa Maria and thereby maintain a jobs-housing balance in the area that will reduce the need for members of the local workforce to commute outside the area for employment.

Alternatives

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 requires all EIRs include a comparative evaluation of the proposed project with alternatives to the project that can attain most of the project's basic objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. CEQA requires an evaluation of a "range of reasonable" alternatives, including a "no project" alternative. The following provides brief descriptions of the alternatives evaluated in this EIR. See Chapter 6, *Alternatives*, for full details.

- Alternative 1: No Project
- Alternative 2: Reduced Size Alternative

Alternative 1 No Project

Alternative 1 assumes that the proposed package delivery warehouse, parking, and other accessory facilities associated with the proposed project would not be constructed. The project site would remain in its current condition, which is vacant land used for interim row crop production, pending a future project application under the West Stowell Specific Plan. The No Project Alternative would not fulfill any of the project objectives.

Alternative 2 Reduced Size Alternative

Alternative 2 would involve the total building footprint to be reduced from approximately 244,418 square feet to 163,760 square feet, reflecting a 33 percent decrease in overall facility size. This reduction would reduce the throughput of packages processed at one time. This reduction would reduce the number of employees needed to process packages and delivery vans sent out during each shift. This reduction in facility size would not align with the projected package delivery demand for the region. To meet this demand with this smaller facility, additional shifts would be required to process the same volume of packages. A reduction greater than 33 percent would not allow sufficient package delivery throughput even with extra shifts. The reduced project building footprint and corresponding workforce would lower demand for parking and van delivery spaces. Assuming a 33 percent reduction, consistent with the decrease in building size, the facility would require approximately 663 parking spaces, compared to the original 990 spaces proposed. Ancillary facilities, such as loading docks and maintenance areas would remain unchanged as they are essential to maintaining operational functionality. The reduction would also decrease the total acreage required for development. The remaining undeveloped areas would remain unused and/or covered with additional landscaping. Site access would continue to follow the original project design to ensure safe ingress and egress meeting City standards. The building height would remain at 45 feet as this is necessary for efficient operation of the warehouse. Additionally, Alternative 2 may not fully meet the operational needs of the applicant and would still require discretionary approvals.

Areas of Known Controversy

The EIR scoping process did not identify any areas of known controversy for the proposed project. Responses to the Notice of Preparation of a Draft EIR are summarized in Chapter 1, *Introduction*.

Issues to be Resolved

The proposed project would require a development permit.

Issues Not Studied in Detail in the EIR

Table 1-2 in Section 1.4, *Introduction*, summarizes issues from the environmental checklist that were addressed in the Initial Study (Appendix A). As indicated in the Initial Study, there is no substantial evidence that significant impacts would occur to the following issue areas: Aesthetics, Agriculture and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology/Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population/Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire. Impacts related to Transportation were found in the Initial Study to be potentially significant and further analyzed in this EIR.

Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table ES-2 summarizes the environmental impacts of the proposed project, proposed mitigation measures, and residual impacts (the impact after application of mitigation, if required). Impacts are categorized as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the project is approved pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15093.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under CEQA Guidelines Section 15091.
- **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse but does not exceed the identified impact threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures.
- **No Impact.** The proposed project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

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Table ES-2 Summary of Environmental Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts

Impact	Mitigation Measure(s)	Residual Impact
Transportation		
Impact TRA-1. The project would conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	None required	Less than significant
Impact TRA-2. The project would generate approximately 55.08 VMT per employee per day, which exceeds the City of Santa Maria's significance threshold of 18.82 VMT per employee (two-way trip) by approximately 237 percent. Impacts would be considered significant under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b).	**TR-1. Travel Demand Management**: The project applicant shall implement at least one of the measures described below: ▪ Voluntary Employer Commute Program: The project applicant shall encourage alternative modes of transportation through a program that may include elements such as: a carpool or vanpool program, subsidized or discounted transit passes, bike amenities, commute trip-reduction marketing, and preferential parking permit program. ▪ Employer Carpool Program: The project applicant shall encourage carpooling by providing ride matching assistance to employees, providing priority parking for carshare vehicles, and providing incentives for carpooling. The applicant shall provide to the City documentation that at least one of the above measures is implemented within 1 year of certificate of occupancy. Documentation shall be provided annually. **TR-2. Project-Level Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategies** ▪ Carpool/Vanpool Incentives: Provide priority parking, subsidies, or guaranteed ride home programs. ▪ Transit Subsidies: Offer free or discounted transit passes to employees. ▪ Pedestrian Infrastructure: Complete sidewalk gap on Stowell Road to the east of the site or contribute to fair share cost for construction at appropriate time. ▪ Bike Infrastructure: Install secure bike parking, showers, and lockers to encourage cycling. ▪ Flexible Work Hours: Reduce peak-hour congestion and VMT by staggering shifts. ▪ On-Site Amenities: Cafeterias, childcare, and banking reduce off-site trips. ▪ Ride-Sharing Programs: Partner with services like Uber/Lyft for shared rides. ▪ Telematics and Routing Optimization: Use software to reduce delivery trip lengths and improve efficiency. The applicant shall provide to the City documentation that at least four of the above measures are implemented within 1 year of certificate of occupancy. Documentation shall be provided annually. **TR-3. Fleet and Operational Measures** ▪ Zero-Emission Delivery Vehicles: Transition to electric or hydrogen-powered trucks. ▪ Idle Reduction Policies: Enforce limits on truck idling. ▪ Off-Peak Delivery Scheduling: Reduce congestion and trip times. ▪ Local Sourcing and Distribution Hubs: Minimize long-haul trips by decentralizing distribution. The applicant shall provide to the City documentation that at least one of the above measures is implemented within 1 year of certificate of occupancy. Documentation shall be provided annually.	Significant and Unavoidable with mitigation incorporated
Impact TRA-3. The project would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible use. Impacts would be less than significant.	None required.	Less than significant
Impact TRA-4. The project would not result in inadequate emergency access. Impacts would be less than significant.	None required.	Less than significant

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1 Introduction

This document is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Stowell Road Package Delivery Warehouse Project (herein referred to as "proposed project"), which consists of the construction of a new 169,104 square-foot single story main distribution warehouse, oriented north to south in the center of an approximately 32-acre site.

This section discusses (1) the project and EIR background; (2) the legal basis for preparing an EIR; (3) the scope and content of the EIR; (4) issue areas found not to be significant by the Initial Study; (5) the lead, responsible, and trustee agencies; and (6) the environmental review process required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The proposed project is described in detail in Chapter 2, *Project Description*.

1.1 Project and Environmental Impact Report Background

The City of Santa Maria distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the EIR for a 30-day agency and public review period starting on August 14, 2025, and ending on September 15, 2025. The City received letters from five agencies in response to the NOP during the public review period. The NOP is presented in Appendix B of this EIR, along with the Initial Study that was prepared for the project and the NOP responses received. Table 1-1 on the following page summarizes the content of the letters and verbal comments and where the issues raised are addressed in the Initial Study or EIR.

1.2 Purpose and Legal Authority

The proposed project requires discretionary approval by the City of Santa Maria Planning Commission; therefore, the project is subject to the environmental review requirements of CEQA. In accordance with Section 15121 of the *CEQA Guidelines* (California Code of Regulations, Title 14), the purpose of this EIR is to serve as an informational document that:

> "...will inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project."

This EIR has been prepared as a project EIR pursuant to Section 15161 of the *CEQA Guidelines*. A Project EIR is appropriate for a specific development project. As stated in the *CEQA Guidelines*:

> "This type of EIR should focus primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from the development project. The EIR shall examine all phases of the project, including planning, construction, and operation."

This EIR, in combination with the Initial Study circulated with the NOP, is to serve as an informational document for the public and City of Santa Maria decision makers. The process will include public hearings before the Planning Commission to consider certification of a Final EIR and approval of the proposed project.

Table 1-1 NOP Comments and Initial Study and/or EIR Response

Commenter	Comment/Request	How and Where It Was Addressed
Agency Comments		
Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC)	The commenter recommends early consultation with California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area to avoid inadvertent discoveries of Native American human remains and to protect tribal cultural resources. The commenter requested the City conduct a Sacred Lands File search and obtain a Tribal Consultation List from the NAHC. The commenter recommended contacting the appropriate California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) center for an archaeological records search and, if needed, conducting a field survey and submitting a confidential report. The commenter stated that mitigation and monitoring plans must include provisions for the treatment of inadvertently discovered tribal cultural resources and Native American human remains, and emphasized that tribal consultation is required under AB 52 and SB 18.	Albion Environmental assisted with AB 52 consultation efforts for the proposed project. A Sacred Lands File search was conducted through the NAHC, which did not identify any tribal cultural resources within the project site. Additionally, five tribal representatives affiliated with the area were contacted, and no requests for formal consultation were received. An archaeological records search was also completed through the appropriate CHRIS center and found no recorded cultural resources on the project site. Mitigation measure GEO-1 would be implemented during construction to address any inadvertent discoveries of paleontological resources and would increase supervision during construction to ensure that discoveries of paleontological resources and potential impacts to the discovered resources are reported on and such discoveries are properly salvaged. This measure includes the immediate stop of work and notification of the appropriate authorities, in accordance with state law. Mitigation measure CR-1 would be implemented prior to construction to address the potential presence of archaeological resources and would involve an Extended Phase I assessment to determine whether such resources exist on site. This measure would increase supervision and coordination with qualified archaeologists and Native American monitors to ensure that any discoveries are properly evaluated, reported, and either preserved in place or mitigated through further archaeological investigation and data recovery, thereby reducing potential impacts to cultural resources. The potential impacts to tribal cultural resources were considered less than significant and are discussed in detail on page 81 of the Initial Study. Broader cultural resource impacts are addressed on pages 34 through 35 of the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project.

Commenter	Comment/Request	How and Where It Was Addressed
Department of Conservation (DOC)	The commenter recommends evaluating the type, amount, and location of farmland conversion resulting from the proposed project. The commenter requested analysis of impacts to surrounding agricultural operations, cumulative impacts, and consistency with local agricultural mitigation policies. The commenter recommended mitigation measures such as agricultural conservation easements and suggested considering regional or statewide mitigation options. The commenter requested notification of future hearing dates and access to staff reports related to the proposed project.	The project site is located within the West Stowell Specific Plan. The City of Santa Maria Sphere of Influence Boundary Amendment and Concurrent Annexation EIR, certified on September 15, 1992, assessed the potential environmental impacts associated with the adoption of the West Stowell Specific Plan. Alongside the EIR, the City Council adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations acknowledging significant and unavoidable impacts, including the loss of Prime Farmland. Potential impacts to agricultural resources were determined to be less than significant and are addressed in detail on pages 14 through 15 of the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project.
California Department of Fish and Wildfire (CDFW)	The commenter recommends conducting habitat assessments and focused surveys for special-status species, including western burrowing owl and northern California legless lizard, within and adjacent to the project site. The commenter requested the City evaluate direct, indirect, and cumulative biological impacts in the EIR, and include detailed mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures to support potential Incidental Take Permit issuance. The commenter recommended avoidance of sensitive natural communities, wetlands, and wildlife corridors, and advised using native plant species in landscaping. The commenter stated that environmental data generated during surveys must be submitted to the California Natural Diversity Database, and that the proposed project is subject to CDFW filing fees.	As discussed in the Biological Resources Assessment, page 49, the western borrowing owl has not been found in this region, with no burrows or prey base observed in the study area. Although there are a few historical records (CNDDB and eBird), they are over 15 years old. The project area lacks suitable grasslands and experiences frequent ground disturbance and human activity, making it unsuitable for foraging or wintering. The likelihood of the species occurring onsite is very low. As discussed in the Biological Resources Assessment, page 47, the northern California legless lizard has not been found in this region. Although suitable sandy soils are present, regular tilling and agricultural activities have removed suitable habitat. The study area lacks sufficient plant cover and has been consistently tilled, disked, and planted with strawberries. While the species has been recorded at several locations surrounding the site, the likelihood of its presence onsite is considered low. Following CDFW request, mitigation measures related to preconstruction surveys for borrowing owl has been added as Mitigation Measure BIO 7, refer to Table 1-2. Any data collected during preconstruction surveys shall be submitted to the CNDB. CDFW filing fees will be paid when the EIR is filed.

Commenter	Comment/Request	How and Where It Was Addressed
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)	The commenter recommended early coordination on transportation mitigation measures to offset impacts to the State Highway System (SHS), including fair share contributions, implementation responsibilities, and monitoring by the lead agency. The commenter requested the City of Santa Maria address the significant and unavoidable Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) impact identified in the Traffic Impact Study and explore innovative mitigation strategies such as Complete Streets and multimodal infrastructure. The commenter recommended the inclusion of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) analysis and a Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips, with strategies such as vanpooling, transit subsidies, bike amenities, and telework options. The commenter stated that the DEIR should evaluate transit connectivity, including the feasibility of a nearby transit stop and First/Last Mile solutions, and emphasized the importance of aligning the project with state planning priorities under SB 743 and SB 375.	NV5 assisted in conducting the Traffic Impact Study and VMT Analysis, they concluded that commute related mitigation strategies, such as Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, would have a minimal effect on overall VMT due to the nature of the operations and employee schedules. There is no applicable ITE Land Use Code (LUC) for the proposed delivery operation. Standard industrial LUCs (e.g., 150, 154, 155) significantly underestimate the trip generation associated with this use. Delivery routes are dynamically assigned based on daily customer destinations and traffic conditions, rather than fixed routes, and are constrained by local road regulations. The proposed project's operational characteristics limit the feasibility of alternatives such as walking, biking, or transit. Delivery personnel must use personal vehicles to collect and deliver packages, and most on-site employees arrive between 1:00 AM and 2:00 AM, making transit and active transportation options impractical. While improvements to multimodal infrastructure may benefit the broader community, they would have negligible impact on project-related traffic. Currently, there are no existing bus routes near the site that could be reconfigured to serve the proposed project. System-wide transit planning is beyond the scope of this project-level analysis.
The Santa Barabra County Air Pollution Control District (APCD)	The commenter recommends including an analysis of Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the Draft EIR, as the project's operational emissions exceed significance thresholds and may result in cumulatively considerable impacts. The commenter recommends evaluating health risks to sensitive receptors from the proposed diesel-powered emergency fire pump by conducting a screening-level Health Risk Assessment (HRA) during the EIR process. The commenter recommends ensuring that Tier 4 Final construction equipment assumptions used in modeling are implemented through enforceable conditions, and that dust and diesel exhaust mitigation measures are applied during construction. The commenter recommends verifying the accuracy and adequacy of the greenhouse gas emissions analysis in the technical report, ensuring it is supported by substantial evidence.	The applicant is preparing a HRA for the proposed diesel-powered emergency fire pump. A screen level HRA will be prepared for the permitting process. This HRA would be submitted to the air district as part of the permit application process to assess the potential health risks from use of the generators for the fire pumps. To reduce construction-related emissions, Mitigation Measure AQ-1 requires the use of Tier 4 Final engines for line-haul trucks and other heavy-duty off-road equipment. See pages 18 through 23 of the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project.

Commenter	Comment/Request	How and Where It Was Addressed
Organization Comments		
Grower Shipper Association (GSA)	The commenter recommends evaluating the project's consistency with the West Stowell Specific Plan, particularly regarding land use conflicts and preservation of agricultural-industrial character. The commenter requested the City analyze potentially significant impacts to agricultural resources and transportation, including seasonal traffic fluctuations, road safety for agricultural vehicles, and compatibility with bicycle infrastructure. The commenter recommended revising and expanding the Traffic Impact Study to include additional intersections and mitigation measures and requested notification of future opportunities to comment.	The proposed project has been evaluated for consistency with the West Stowell Specific Plan. The proposed project does not conflict with the land use designations or the agricultural-industrial character of the area. The site is located within an area planned for industrial development, and the proposed use is compatible with surrounding land uses. Potential impacts to agricultural resources were determined to be less than significant and are addressed in detail on pages 14 through 15 in the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project. The Traffic Impact Study focused on the most likely affected intersections, including Stowell Road, based on anticipated traffic volumes and patterns. These intersections were selected in coordination with the City of Santa Maria. Seasonal traffic fluctuations and road safety for agricultural vehicles were considered in the context of delivery operations and employee commute patterns. Most employee traffic occurs outside of peak commute hours (between 1:00 AM and 2:00 AM), and delivery routes are dynamically assigned based on real-time traffic conditions and customer locations. Non-local delivery vehicles are expected to use Highway 101, minimizing impacts on local agricultural routes. The Traffic Impact Study is discussed in detail in Section 4.1, *Transportation* of this EIR. Accordingly, traffic congestion is not a CEQA matter and traffic congestion analyses are not required by CEQA. This EIR analysis focuses on Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and other relevant metrics consistent with CEQA requirements. While the use of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is encouraged citywide, the proposed project is not expected to affect such facilities due to the nature of operations and employee schedules. Delivery personnel and warehouse staff typically arrive in personal vehicles and are not expected to use alternative commute modes. None of the comments warranted the inclusion of additional analysis in the EIR

Commenter	Comment/Request	How and Where It Was Addressed
Bonita Packing Co.	The commenter recommends revising the Traffic Impact Study to reflect peak agricultural traffic conditions. The commenter stated that the study's April traffic counts do not capture seasonal traffic patterns driven by agricultural labor and produce transport, which peak during summer and early fall. The commenter referenced the SBCAG Corridor Study, which found significant congestion in September, and requested the City conduct a new traffic study to accurately assess potentially significant impacts and identify feasible mitigation measures.	The Traffic Impact Study focused on time periods that best reflect the proposed project's operations and their potential impact on the surrounding road network. Employee traffic for the site begins early in the morning (between 1:00 and 2:00 AM) and ends by mid-afternoon, while deliveries occur later in the day and typically avoid peak agricultural traffic hours. Agricultural traffic may peak during summer and early fall however the proposed project's traffic does not significantly overlap with those peak periods. Therefore, revising the Traffic Impact Study to reflect seasonal agricultural traffic is unlikely to change the impact conclusions. Additionally, the Traffic Impact Study avoided school vacation periods to ensure traffic data reflected typical weekday conditions. Based on the timing and nature of the project's operations, the PM peak hour was determined to be the most relevant for assessing potential traffic impacts. The Traffic Impact Study is discussed in detail in Section 4.1, *Transportation* of this EIR. None of the comments warranted the inclusion of additional analysis in the EIR.
Supporters Alliance for Environmental Responsibility (SAFER)	The commenter requested that the City prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) analyzing all environmental impacts required under CEQA. The commenter also recommended that the DEIR evaluate whether the economic benefits of the proposed warehouse outweigh its environmental impacts.	The City prepared an Initial Study circulated on August 14, 2025. In that Initial Study, included herein as Appendix A, the City found that all environmental resource areas except Transportation, were less than significant or could be addressed with mitigation measures. Those mitigation measures are included herein in Table 1-2. Further, economic impacts are not subject to CEQA and therefore are not required to be evaluated in this EIR. The City will make a determination in the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations whether the project benefits outweigh the environmental impacts of the project. None of the comments warranted the inclusion of additional analysis in the EIR.

1.3 Scope and Content

This EIR addresses impacts identified by the Initial Study to be potentially significant. Transportation impacts to Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) was found to have a potentially significant impact and has been studied in this EIR. All other resource areas were either determined less than significant or impacts could be reduced to less than significant with the imposition of mitigation measures. Those mitigation measures have been identified in Table 1-2.

In preparing the EIR, use was made of pertinent City policies and guidelines, certified EIRs and adopted CEQA documents, and other background documents. A full reference list is contained in Chapter 7, *References and Preparers*.

The alternatives chapter of the EIR (Chapter 6) was prepared in accordance with Section 15126.6 of the *CEQA Guidelines* and focuses on alternatives that are capable of eliminating or reducing significant adverse effects associated with the project while feasibly attaining most of the basic project objectives. In addition, the alternatives chapter identifies the "environmentally superior" alternative among the alternatives assessed. The alternatives evaluated include the CEQA-required "No Project" alternative and one alternative development scenario for the project area.

The level of detail contained throughout this EIR is consistent with the requirements of CEQA and applicable court decisions. Section 15151 of the *CEQA Guidelines* provides the standard of adequacy on which this document is based. The *Guidelines* state:

> *"*An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of the proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection, but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure."

1.4 Issues Not Studied in Detail in the EIR

Table 1-2 summarizes issues from the environmental checklist that were addressed in the Initial Study (Appendix A). As indicated in the Initial Study, impacts associated with these issue areas would be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation. The mitigation measures that were included in the Initial Study are repeated here. In addition, new mitigation measure BIO-7 is included to respond to comments from CDFW regarding preconstruction surveys for borrowing owls.

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Table 1-2 Issues Not Studied in the EIR

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
Aesthetics	The project site would not substantially hinder views of the skyline from public areas, nor is it located on a State Scenic Highway. The south boundary of the project site abuts a railroad line; however, the project site is not zoned as COS, and therefore, does not need to preserve a scenic corridor along the railroad ROW.	None required.	No Impact
	The proposed project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, nor would it create significant impacts with respect to increased lighting.	None required.	Less than Significant
Agriculture and Forestry Resources	The project site is designated as Prime Farmland and would result in the conversion of approximately 32 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural use. However, the project site is located within the West Stowell Specific Plan, in which the CEQA compliance already mitigated for the loss of Prime Farmland. The City of Santa Maria Sphere of Influence Boundary Amendment and Concurrent Annexation Environmental Impact Report (EIR), certified on September 15, 1992, assessed the potential environmental impacts associated with the adoption of the West Stowell Specific Plan. Alongside the EIR, the City Council adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations acknowledging significant and unavoidable impacts, including the loss of Prime Farmland. This significant impact was mitigated by the identification of additional land now designated for agricultural use.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The project is not a use permitted by right under the West Stowell Specific Plan, however, similar uses which the Planning Commission finds meet the findings noted in Specific Plan Section 3.1.1.d are permitted in the Agricultural Overlay Zoning District (PD/CM-AG) subject to obtaining a conditional use permit according to the procedures set forth in Chapter 35 of the Santa Maria Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, the site is not under a Williamson Act contract.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The project is an industrial use, centered on the property, and not considered incompatible with adjacent agricultural uses that produce noise or dust. Therefore, it is compatible with continued use of adjacent and nearby lands for agricultural production thereby not leading to the conversion of adjacent and nearby Farmland, to a non-agricultural use. Additionally, there is no timberland on or adjacent to the project site.	None required.	Less than Significant
Air Quality	The proposed project would not conflict with control measures in the 2022 Ozone Plan for meeting the state ozone standard. Therefore, the proposed project would be considered consistent with the 2022 Ozone Plan.	None required.	Less than Significant
	SBCAPCD does not consider a proposed project to have a significant impact on air quality, either individually or cumulatively, if operation of the project meets the significance criteria listed in Section 3, then it would be considered to not have a cumulative impact.	**AQ-1 Line-Haul Trucks Requirement.** The proposed project owner or operators shall require the use of line-haul trucks with model years 2014 or newer that meet Tier 4 Standards for off-road diesel engines.	Less than Significant with Mitigation
	The project would generate a low volume of daily truck trips compared to the CARB study's 100 trucks per day. Additionally, sporadic use of the emergency fire pump, combined with CARB observations that pollutant concentrations decrease significantly with distance from a source, such as a 400-foot distance between the project site and sensitive receptors would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial concentrations of criteria pollutants during operations, nor would it expose sensitive receptors to DPM concentrations that would be expected to result in health risks exceeding SBCACPD's health risk thresholds for cancer risk and noncancer risk.	None required.	Less than Significant
	Emissions associated with the construction of the project would not affect a substantial number of people because construction would be temporary and intermittent, and construction-generated emissions dissipate rapidly with increasing distance from the source. The project would also not be associated with odor sources listed in the SCAQMD CEQA Air Quality Handbook during operation. Therefore, odors associated with construction would not create a significant level of objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people.	None required.	Less than Significant

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
Biological Resources	Individuals of several special-status animal species have potential to occur in the project impact area on a periodic basis; therefore, mitigation in the form of avoidance and protection measures are required. Mitigation measures BIO-1 through BIO-6, as defined in the Initial Study, aim to reduce such potentially significant impacts. The effects of construction activities on nesting birds would be limited to the seasonal time period that birds nest in this area; if the nesting season is avoided, no adverse effects are expected. In response to NOP comments from CDFW, mitigation measure BIO-7 Burrowing Owl Avoidance is included within the EIR to address potential impacts to borrowing owls.	**BIO-1 Initial Ground Disturbance Avoidance During Winter and Preconstruction Survey for Winter Months.** Initial site disturbance and grading for construction shall be planned to occur outside the winter rain season in which CRLF move through upland habitats. Initial site grading shall occur between May 1st and October 31st to avoid impacts to frogs using upland habitat during the rainy season. In addition, Mitigation Measures BIO-2 through BIO-4 shall be implemented to avoid or minimize project impacts on other wildlife species in addition to CRLF. If construction must occur during winter months (from November 1 through April 30), a qualified biologist shall survey all areas proposed for temporary and permanent disturbance within 48 hours prior to initial ground disturbance to ensure no CRLF are present. If any CRLF are found in the work area, the animal shall be allowed to leave the work area under its own volition. If the frog does not leave the work area, work shall be delayed or halted in that location plus a 50-foot buffer until the frog can be captured and relocated to suitable habitat away from project impacts pursuant to authorization required by the USFWS. A report describing the methods and results of the survey shall be prepared by the biologist and submitted to the City within two weeks of the start of ground disturbance. **BIO-2 Prepare and Present a Worker Environmental Awareness Program**. Prior to initiation of construction activities (including staging and mobilization), a qualified biologist shall conduct a Worker's Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) training for all construction personnel. The training shall aid workers in recognizing special-status species, native birds, protected trees, ESHA, or other biological resources that may occur in the construction area. The specifics of this program shall include identification and habitats of special-status species with potential to occur in the project site, description of the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, review of the limits of construction, and an explanation of measures required to protect biological resources, with a special focus on CRLF. A fact sheet conveying this information shall be prepared for distribution to all contractors, their employers, and other personnel involved with construction. All employees shall sign a form provided by the trainer indicating they have attended the WEAP training and understand the information presented to them. The crew foreman shall be responsible for ensuring crew members adhere to the guidelines and restrictions designed to avoid impacts to biological resources. If new construction personnel are added to the project, the crew foreman shall ensure the new personnel receive the WEAP training before starting work. **BIO-3 High Visibility Construction Fencing.** A high-visibility construction fence (i.e., orange protection fence) together with a silt fence, or an approved wildlife exclusion fence (i.e., ERTEC Triple-function Efence), shall be erected along the southern, eastern, and western perimeter of the site. To prevent animals from getting under the fence, the bottom edge of the fence shall be trenched into the ground to a depth of at least six (6) inches, and the soil recompacted along either side. The fence shall remain in place throughout all construction and checked weekly by construction personnel for needed maintenance. The fence shall be inspected by construction personnel prior to the start of work each day in which at least one quarter inch of precipitation has fallen within the prior 24 hours for CRLF that may have entered the work area or are disoriented on the outside of the fence. If any CRLF are found within the work area, the project biologist shall be contacted to inspect the site. If the animal(s) do not leave the site on their own volition, work shall be halted within 50 feet of the frog until the frog can be captured and relocated to suitable habitat away from project impacts pursuant to any authorization required by USFWS. **BIO-4 Prevent Entrapment of CRLF in Open Excavations and Trenches.** During the period in which there are open trenches or excavations more than six (6) inches deep, such as during the excavation for building foundations or utility lines, escape ramps shall be installed so that CRLF and other wildlife that may have become entrapped have the ability to escape. Escape ramps shall consist of a 2:1 sloped soil area leading from the bottom to ground level. Alternatively, as a second option, a qualified biologist shall inspect open trenches each day prior to the start of work for entrapped animals. Alternatively, as a third option, all trenches/excavations can be completely covered with plywood, steel plates or similar material during overnight periods. If a CRLF individual is located in a trench by construction personnel, the qualified biologist shall be contacted immediately to assist with relocation upon authorization from USFWS. For common wildlife, the biologist shall capture and relocate the individual out of harm's way. Work shall be halted until the entrapped animal has been relocated. **BIO-5 Vegetation Removal and Grading Avoidance During Nesting Season.** All initial site disturbance shall be limited to the time period between September 1 to October 31, if feasible, to avoid construction during the nesting season (February 1 to August 31) and to avoid the seasonal work restriction associated with the CRLF (November 1 to April 30, see Mitigation Measure BIO-1). Tree removal shall occur between September 1 and January 31 to avoid the nesting period. If vegetation removal and grading cannot feasibly be conducted during this time period, then Mitigation Measure BIO-6 shall be followed. **BIO-6 Nesting Bird Preconstruction Survey.** For any initial construction (vegetation removal and grading) scheduled to start between February 1 and August 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey for nesting birds within a 250-foot buffer of project impact areas. The survey shall be conducted within seven days before the initiation of construction activities occurring during this time period. During this survey, the qualified biologist shall search for birds exhibiting nesting behavior and inspect all potential nest substrates in the impact and buffer areas. Any nests identified shall be monitored to determine if they are active. If no active nests are found, construction may proceed. If an active nest is found within 50 feet of the construction area, the biologist, in consultation with the City and CDFW as appropriate, shall determine the extent of a buffer to be established around the nest. The buffer shall be delineated with flagging, and no work shall take place within the buffer area until the young have left the nest, as determined by the qualified biologist. The applicant shall submit to the City a report from the qualified biologist documenting the methods and results of the survey.	Less than Significant with Mitigation

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
		BIO-7 Burrowing Owl Avoidance The following measures shall be implemented in order to avoid and minimize impacts to burrowing owl. 1. Ground-disturbance activities associated with construction of the project shall begin outside of the burrowing owl nesting season (nesting season is typically February 1 through September 15). 2. Not more than 30 days prior to initiation of ground-disturbing activities, and again within 24-hours of the initiation of ground-disturbing activities associated with construction, a County-approved biologist shall conduct a take avoidance survey of the project site and surrounding areas to a distance of 150 meters, in accordance with the methods outlined in the Mitigation Methods –Pre-construction and Appendix D Surveys for Take Avoidance of the CDFG Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFG 2012). The pre-construction survey will cover all areas within 150 meters of the portion of the site where construction is scheduled to start. Areas within 150 meters that are not accessible due to property access restrictions shall be surveyed using binoculars. Surveys will be phased, based on the grading and construction schedule, such that they are conducted not more than 30 days before the start of ground disturbing activities in new areas. If grading and/or construction activities in portions of the site cease for a period of 14 days, those portions of the site will be resurveyed for burrowing owls prior to the resumption of grading and/or construction activities. If no occupied (breeding or wintering) burrowing owl burrows are identified, no further mitigation would be required. If occupied burrows are identified on the site or within 150 meters of the Project disturbance area, one of the following actions shall be taken: 1) permanent avoidance of the burrow or 2) establishment of a temporary avoidance buffer followed by passive relocation and compensatory mitigation for loss of habitat in conjunction with the measures below: 3. Site-specific, no-disturbance buffer zones shall be established and maintained between Project activities and occupied burrows, using the distances recommended in the CDFW guidelines (CDFG 2012) or as otherwise determined appropriate by the County-approved biologist in consultation with CDFW. 4. During the non-breeding season, if an occupied burrow cannot be avoided, and the burrow is not actively in use as a nest, the burrowing owls can be excluded from burrows in accordance with an approved Burrowing Owl Exclusion Plan, which shall be prepared and submitted for approval by CDFW prior to passive relocation of any burrowing owls. The Burrowing Owl Exclusion Plan shall be based on the recommendations made in the CDFG Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFG 2012) and shall include the following information for each proposed passive relocation: 5. Confirmation by site surveillance that the burrow(s) is empty of burrowing owls and other species; 6. Identification of type of scope to be used and appropriate timing of scoping; 7. Occupancy factors to look for and what shall guide determination of vacancy and excavation timing; 8. Methods for burrow excavation; 9. Removal of other potential owl burrow surrogates or refugia on site; 10. Methods for photographic documentation of the excavation and closure of the burrow; 11. Monitoring of the site to evaluate success and, if needed, to implement remedial measures to prevent subsequent owl use to avoid take; 12. Methods for assuring the impacted site shall continually be made inhospitable to burrowing owls and fossorial mammals; and 13. Method(s) for compensatory mitigation for burrow loss.	
No riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities are present on the project site. No drainage features or wetland habitats are present onsite or in close proximity that could be indirectly affected by stormwater runoff. Best Management Practices (BMPs) to be developed as part of the project's anticipated Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would be adequate to ensure project activities do not adversely affect offsite resources. Incorporation of BMPs would avoid indirect effects to offsite biological resources during the construction period.		None required.	Less than Significant
No wetlands with hydrophytic vegetation or vernal pools are present onsite. The sandy soils in the study area lack an underlying impervious sandstone or clay layer characteristic of other vernal pools in the region. The project would not affect any naturally-occurring or potentially jurisdictional wetlands.		None required.	No Impact
The project site would be fenced and would be a barrier to the movement of medium- to large-sized mammals. The project would not substantially limit or fragment the geographic range of species, their movement, or dispersal corridors.		None required.	Less than Significant

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
	The Resources Management Element in the Santa Maria General Plan describes the vernal pool complex to the southwest of the Airport as a significant wildlife habitat area. This habitat is outside of the project site and there would be no direct effects on protected habitats or trees, and mitigation measures are provided herein to ensure no indirect effects occur. Therefore, the project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances related to biological resources.	None required.	Less than Significant
	No local, regional or state conservation plans have been prepared for the project site or immediate area. The project site is not located in any Natural Community Conservation Plan area.	None required.	No Impact
Cultural Resources	No human remains were discovered within the project site during the Phase 1. However, if human remains are found, the State of California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98.	**CR-1 Extended Phase I Assessment.** Prior to issuance of a grading permit and/or excavation activities an Extended Phase I (XPI) archaeological testing program shall be performed to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits at the project site. The XPI may include mechanical backhoe trenching; use of a backhoe will allow for an efficient examination of the soil profile and an assessment of the potential for buried archaeological deposits to be present. This study shall be conducted under the direction of a qualified archaeologist. XPI testing shall be observed by a Native American monitor. An XPI conducted prior to project construction could reduce potential delays caused by unanticipated finds during construction by informing the applicant of the types of resources that may exist on the property. Should a subsurface archaeological resource be found during the XPI, impacts to the resource shall be avoided and preserved in place through project redesign. Avoidance and preservation in place may include capping the resources with fill soil. If project redesign is not feasible and impacts to the resource cannot be avoided, a Phase II significance evaluation shall be performed to determine if the resource is eligible for the CRHR and/or the NRHP. A qualified archaeologist shall prepare a Phase II work plan for review and approval. The Phase II work plan shall address the archaeological excavation, analysis of recovered materials, and report preparation necessary to evaluate the significance of the resource. If the Phase II significance evaluation determines the resource is eligible for the CRHR and/or the NRHP and is considered a significant resource, and impacts to the resource cannot be avoided, then a Phase III data recovery excavation shall be conducted to mitigate impacts to the resource. A qualified archaeologist shall prepare a Phase III work plan/research design for review and approval. The Phase III work plan/research design shall address the archaeological excavation, analysis of recovered materials to answer specific research	Less than Significant with Mitigation
Energy	The proposed project would utilize construction equipment with Tier 3 or higher engines, which typically improve fuel efficiency and reduce energy consumption during construction.[1] There are no unique project characteristics that would require the use of less energy-efficient construction equipment or methods. During operation, the warehouse would be required to meet Title 24 of the California Building Standards Code. The project also proposes additional green building features such as EV chargers, solar panels, and a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).	None required.	Less than Significant
Geology and Soils	The project site is not located within an area that has been identified as having a known earthquake fault, and no known fault lines cut through the site. No impact would occur. Development in the City of Santa Maria is required to adhere to the California Building Code (CBC). The impact to people, buildings, or structures on the project site from strong seismic ground shaking would be reduced by the required conformance with applicable building codes and accepted engineering practices.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The soils underlying the site is Corralitos loamy sand, which is not considered hydric and are located in a flat area with deep groundwater levels. Therefore the site is not susceptible to liquefaction.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The CBC regulates the design and construction of excavations, foundations, building frames, retaining walls, and other building elements to mitigate the effects of adverse soil conditions.	None required.	Less than Significant
	Expansive soils are of concern since building foundations may rise during the rainy season and fall during dry periods in response to the clay's action. The site contains Corralitos loamy sand, which is not expansive. However, the project would be required to comply with CBC Section 1808.6.1 to mitigate any potential impacts from expansive soils.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The lack of elevation difference on the project site, the relatively flat surroundings, and the fact that the project site is not located within a landslide hazard zone result in no potential for landslides.	None required.	No Impact
	The project does not include a septic system; therefore, there is no potential for adverse effects due to soil incompatibility.	None required.	No Impact

[1] The Driller. 2007. What Tier 3 EPA Regulations Mean to Contractors. Available: https://www.thedriller.com/articles/87099-what-tier-3-epa-regulations-mean-to-contractors. (accessed April 2025).

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
	Although the project is not expected to uncover paleontological resources, excavation activities up to 12 feet in depth may impact fossiliferous deposits. Mitigation Measure GEO-1 would be implemented to ensure proper handling and reporting of any unanticipated paleontological discoveries.	**GEO-1 Unanticipated Discovery of Paleontological Resources Paleontological Worker Environmental Awareness Program.** Prior to the start of construction, a Qualified Professional Paleontologist, as defined by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP; 2010), or their designee shall conduct a paleontological WEAP training for construction personnel regarding the appearance of fossils and the procedures for notifying paleontological staff should fossils be discovered by construction personnel. The WEAP shall discuss the potential to discover paleontological resources in the project site, legal obligations to protect paleontological resources, examples of paleontological resources that may be found in the project site, procedures in case a paleontological resource is discovered, and contact information for the Qualified Professional Paleontologist. **Unanticipated Discovery of Paleontological Resources**. If a potential fossil is discovered during project construction, construction activity within 50 feet of the find shall cease until the discovery is examined by a Qualified Professional Paleontologist. If the find is determined to be significant, the Qualified Professional Paleontologist shall direct all mitigation measures related to paleontological resources consistent with the SVP (2010) standards, which may include, but would not be limited to: paleontological monitoring; fossil salvage, preparation, and curation; and reporting to summarize the paleontological mitigation efforts.	Less than Significant with Mitigation
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the proposed project were estimated using CalEEMod. Based on output results from CalEEMod, the proposed project would not generate GHG emissions that would exceed thresholds. The project would also not conflict with the 2022 Scoping Plan or SBCAG 2050 RTP/SCS policies for reducing GHG emissions.	None required.	Less than Significant
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Local, state, and federal regulations and standards are in place to regulate the transportation, use, and disposal of hazardous materials. In addition, there are several local departments and agencies that are able to respond to foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.	None required.	Less than Significant
	Any hazardous materials associated with the proposed project would be subject to regulation under federal, state, and local standards, including those enforced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA), and the Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Services. The project would not emit hazardous materials or handle acutely hazardous substances within one-quarter mile of a school.	None required.	Less than Significant
	An oil and gas well is located within one mile of the project site and was abandoned and plugged in the 1950s. In conjunction with the project, the applicant proposes to re-abandon the oil and gas well in coordination with CalGEM and in accordance with current CalGEM standards. If required by CalGEM (oil well abandonment work, including sealing off oil and gas bearing units, pressure grouting, etc.) actions must be performed by a State-licensed contractor under the regulatory oversight and approval of CalGEM. This re-abandonment work would be conducted prior to conducting subsurface activities.	None required.	Less than Significant
	Two known release sites are located within 1,000 feet of the project site. Based on the information available for the closed Unocal 37 Line case (localized soil impacts only) and distance to the project site (approximately 700 feet away), this known hazardous materials site is not anticipated to pose an environmental concern to the project site. With the potential presence of impacted soil at the project site, there is a potential for grading and construction workers to be exposed to contaminants (e.g., total petroleum hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, and metals) via impacted dust and/or soil. Therefore, construction activities could create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. This impact would be potentially significant and Mitigation Measures HAZ-1, as defined in the Initial Study, is required.	**HAZ-1 Soil Management Plan.** Prior to commencement of construction and grading activities at the project site, the project applicant shall retain a qualified environmental consultant (Professional Geologist or Professional Engineer) to prepare a Soil Management Plan (SMP) for the project site. The SMP shall address: 1. On-site handling and management of impacted soils or other impacted wastes (e.g., stained soil, and soil with solvent or chemical odors) if such soils or impacted wastes are encountered, and 2. Specific actions to reduce hazards to construction workers and off-site receptors during the construction phase. The plan must establish engineering controls and soil management practices to protect construction worker safety, protect the health of future workers and visitors, and prevent the off-site migration of contaminants from the project. These measures and practices shall include, but are not limited to: ▪ Stockpile management, including stormwater pollution prevention and the installation of best management practices. ▪ Proper disposal procedures of contaminated materials. ▪ Investigation procedures for encountering known and unexpected odorous or visually stained soils, other indications of hydrocarbon piping or equipment, and/or debris during ground-disturbing activities. ▪ Monitoring and reporting. ▪ An environmental health and safety plan for contractors working at the project site that addresses the safety and health hazards of each phase of site construction activities with the requirements and procedures for employee protection. ▪ The environmental health and safety plan shall outline proper soil handling procedures and health and safety requirements to minimize worker and public exposure to hazardous materials during construction.	Less than Significant with Mitigation

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
		The City shall review the SMP and have the authority to propose and include modifications prior to finalization of the SMP. The City shall review the final SMP prior to issuance of grading permits. The project applicant shall implement the SMP during demolition, grading, and construction at the project site.	
	The applicant would be required to comply with all applicable City codes and regulations pertaining to emergency response and evacuation plans maintained by the police and fire departments in the City of Santa Maria. Construction activities associated with the project do not include permanent or temporary street closures or changes in traffic flow. Impacts to emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans would not occur.	None required.	No Impact
	The applicant would be required to provide proof of compliance with all applicable building and fire code requirements. Therefore, significant impacts to people or structures as a result of wildland fires would not occur.	None required.	No Impact
Hydrology and Water Quality	Conformance with Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and the SMMC would ensure that the proposed project does not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements, substantially decrease groundwater, or interfere with groundwater recharge.	None required.	Less than Significant
	Development under the proposed project would not result in a lowering of the groundwater table. The project would not result in an exceedance of safe yield or a significant depletion of groundwater supplies.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The applicant would be required to comply with the SMMC Chapter 8-12A, which requires the implementation of BMPs. The BMPs applied during project construction include constructing bio-retention basins to convey and infiltrate stormwater and using permeable pavers to reduce site runoff. These construction and erosion control practices would reduce the potential for adverse effects caused by excavation and general construction. The project site is nearly level. Development of the proposed project would not introduce new surface water discharges as there are already structures on the project site, would not substantially increase runoff volumes, and would not result in flooding on- or off-site.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The Federal Emergency Management Agency does not classify the project site as a flood hazard area.	None required.	No Impact
	The project site is managed by the Basin Plan, published and managed by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The project would be required to comply with the Central Coast RWQCB's stormwater regulatory requirements and other water control plans intended to manage water quality and groundwater supply. The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the Basin Plan.	None required.	Less than Significant
Land Use and Planning	The proposed project would be compatible with surrounding development, including an existing Driscoll's packaging facility and a new warehouse currently under construction adjacent to the site. Additionally, the project would not obstruct access or bisect any established neighborhoods and therefore would not physically divide an established community.	None required.	No Impact
	The project site is zoned PD/CM-AG and has a land use designation of Heavy Commercial Manufacturing (HCM). A distribution warehouse would be allowed under the HCM land use designation of the West Stowell Specific Plan through meeting the findings of Section 3.1.1.d and with a conditional use permit. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation. If the Planning Commission determines a conditional use permit is appropriate and makes the findings discussed above, the project would not conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect and the impact would be less than significant.	None required.	Less than Significant
Mineral Resources	The project site is located on a site designated for industrial development where no mineral extraction activities currently take place. While the site is within a designated Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ-2), there are no known mineral resources of regional or state value, nor any locally important mineral resource recovery sites on or near the project site. Given these conditions, the project would not result in the loss of availability of any known mineral resources. Therefore, construction and operation of the project would have no impact related to mineral resources.	None required.	No Impact

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
Noise	Noise generated by project construction would be temporary and not exceed local thresholds. Project operation noise would be similar to or less than that of the railway traffic along the Santa Maria Valley Railroad. The project site is located approximately 1,400 feet northeast of the nearest sensitive receptor—a single-family residence situated across the Santa Maria Valley Railway. Predicted noise levels from construction activities are estimated to range between 44.7 dBA and 55.3 dBA. These levels are well below the FTA construction noise threshold of 80 dBA. Therefore, short-term construction-related noise impacts are anticipated to be less than significant. The project is not expected to result in a permanent increase in ambient noise levels or expose nearby residents to long-term noise levels exceeding applicable standards. Modeled operational noise levels at the nearest sensitive receptor—a single-family residence approximately 1,400 feet south of the project site are predicted to be 45.9 dBA CNEL at ground level and 45.8 dBA CNEL at the first floor, which are well below the City's residential exterior noise threshold of 60 dBA CNEL. Additionally, hourly Leq values during daytime, evening, and nighttime periods at this receptor range from 39.2 to 40.4 dBA, which are lower than the ambient noise levels recorded during field measurements (ranging from 54.2 to 65.8 dBA Leq).	None required.	Less than Significant
	Construction activity would be temporary, and the use of vibration-generating heavy equipment would be primarily limited to periodic loaded trucks. Vibration would be a temporary impact during construction and would not occur during normal sleep hours.	None required.	
	The project site is not within an area covered by an airport land use plan, nor is it located in the vicinity of a private air strip. At a distance of five miles northeast of the Santa Monica Municipal Airport, the proposed project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to significant aircraft-generated noise.	None required.	No Impact
	The project would not include significant stationary sources of vibration, such as heavy vibration-generating equipment operations. Ground borne vibration would not exceed the applicable vibration thresholds for human annoyance and structural damage at the nearest building. Therefore, construction-related vibration impacts would be less than significant. The project does not include any substantial operational sources of vibration, and no operational vibrational impact would occur.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The project site is within the subarea Review Area 2 of the airport influence area of the Santa Maria Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. Review Area 2 consists of the overflight and airspace protection layer for each airport while Review Area 1 consists of the compilation of the safety zones and noise contours for each airport. Therefore, users and workers in the project vicinity would not be exposed to excessive aviation-related noise impacts and no impacts would occur.	None required.	No Impact
Population and Housing	The proposed project would not directly induce substantial unplanned population growth, as it does not include residential development. The project also would not induce population growth through the creation of jobs during either construction or operation. The proposed project does not include the extension of roads to currently inaccessible areas, and utility connections would be limited to connections to existing infrastructure adjacent to the project site. As such, the project would not induce growth indirectly.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The project site is undeveloped. As such, project construction would not displace existing people or housing, nor necessitate the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. No impact would occur.	None required.	No Impact
Public Services	The project would not directly or indirectly induce population growth and, therefore, would not increase demand for public facilities such as fire and police protection, schools, parks, or other public facilities. Additionally, the project would not introduce features requiring additional or unusual fire or police protection that would necessitate the construction of new public facilities, which could result in environmental impacts.	None required.	Less than Significant

Issue Area	Initial Study Findings	Mitigation Measures	Impact Determination
Recreation	The City establishes its recreational facility needs based on its number of residents. The proposed project would not induce substantial population growth, directly or indirectly as the project would primarily employ local residents. Therefore, the project would not necessitate the development or expansion of recreational facilities.	None required.	Less than Significant
Tribal Cultural Resources	No recorded cultural resources have been identified on the project site; however, standard mitigation measures would be incorporated should potential inadvertent discoveries of archaeological resources or human remains be uncovered during construction.	None required.	Less than Significant
Utilities	The project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects. In addition, sufficient water supplies would be available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years. The project would also implement a Stormwater Management Plan to ensure the effective flow of water through the project site.	None required.	Less than Significant
	Wastewater generated by the project would be treated at the City-owned Wastewater Treatment Plant. The City's Public Works Department, consistent with the findings from the City's 2012 Utility Capacity Study, has determined that the existing wastewater treatment plant would continue to be adequate for future wastewater demands, including those of the project and future commitments through 2035. Therefore, the project would not require expansion of the City's existing treatment capacity due to the project, in addition to the provider's existing commitments.	None required.	Less than Significant
	The proposed project would not result in an increase in solid waste beyond the capacity of the three designated landfills. Continued compliance with solid waste diversion requirements and the implementation of standard building regulations would be sufficient to address impacts related to solid waste generation.	None required.	Less than Significant
Wildfire	The project site is not located within or near a Very High FHSZ or State Responsibility Area and therefore would not interfere with existing emergency evacuation plans or emergency response plans within a FHSZ or State Responsibility Area; exacerbate wildfire risks and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire; require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure within a FHSZ or state responsibility area; or expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslopes or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. No impact would occur.	None required.	No Impact

1.5 Lead, Responsible, and Trustee Agencies

The *CEQA Guidelines* define lead, responsible and trustee agencies. The City of Santa Maria is the lead agency for the project because it holds principal responsibility for approving the project.

A responsible agency refers to a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval over the project. Responsible agencies include the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), which regulates water quality in the region, and the Santa Barbara County APCD, which regulates air quality in the region. The APCD submitted comments in the Initial Study, which is provided in Appendix B. The EIR will also be submitted to these agencies for review and comment.

A trustee agency refers to a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) that regulates natural resources in the State is a trustee agency for the proposed project.

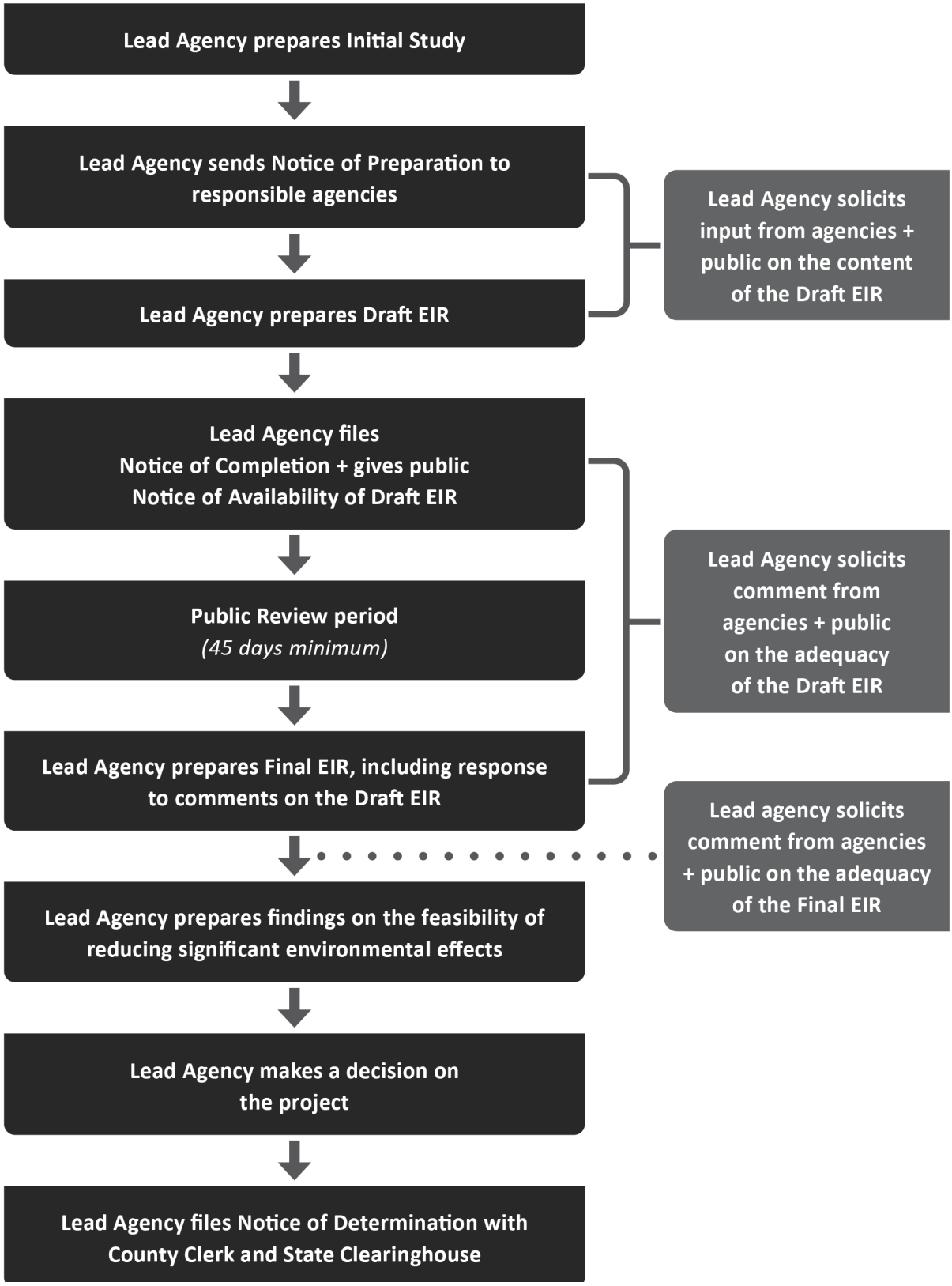
1.6 Environmental Review Process

The environmental impact review process, as required under CEQA, is summarized below and illustrated in Figure 1-1. The steps are presented in sequential order.

1. **Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study.** After deciding that an EIR is required, the lead agency (City of Santa Maria) must file a NOP soliciting input on the EIR scope to the State Clearinghouse, other concerned agencies, and parties previously requesting notice in writing (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15082; Public Resources Code Section 21092.2). The NOP must be posted in the County Clerk's office for 30 days. The NOP may be accompanied by an Initial Study that identifies the issue areas for which the project could create significant environmental impacts. An Initial Study was circulated with the NOP for this project.
2. **Draft EIR Prepared.** The Draft EIR must contain: a) table of contents or index; b) summary; c) project description; d) environmental setting; e) discussion of significant impacts (direct, indirect, cumulative, growth-inducing and unavoidable impacts); f) a discussion of alternatives; g) mitigation measures; and h) discussion of irreversible changes.
3. **Notice of Completion (NOC).** The lead agency must file a NOC with the State Clearinghouse when it completes a Draft EIR and prepare a Public Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR. The lead agency must place the NOC in the County Clerk's office for 30 days (Public Resources Code Section 21092) and send a copy of the NOC to anyone requesting it (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15087). Additionally, public notice of Draft EIR availability must be given through at least one of the following procedures: a) publication in a newspaper of general circulation; b) posting on and off the project site; and c) direct mailing to owners and occupants of contiguous properties. The lead agency must solicit input from other agencies and the public and respond in writing to all comments received (Public Resources Code Sections 21104 and 21253). The minimum public review period for a Draft EIR is 30 days. When a Draft EIR is sent to the State Clearinghouse for review, the public review period must be 45 days unless the State Clearinghouse approves a shorter period (Public Resources Code 21091).
4. **Final EIR.** A Final EIR must include: a) the Draft EIR; b) copies of comments received during public review; c) list of persons and entities commenting; and d) responses to comments.

5. **Certification of Final EIR.** Prior to making a decision on a proposed project, the lead agency must certify that: a) the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA; b) the Final EIR was presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency; and c) the decision making body reviewed and considered the information in the Final EIR prior to approving a project (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15090).
6. **Lead Agency Project Decision.** The lead agency may a) disapprove the project because of its significant environmental effects; b) require changes to the project to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects; or c) approve the project despite its significant environmental effects, if the proper findings and statement of overriding considerations are adopted (*CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15042 and 15043).
7. **Findings/Statement of Overriding Considerations.** For each significant impact of the project identified in the EIR, the lead agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that either: a) the project has been changed to avoid or substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact; b) changes to the project are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted; or c) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15091). If an agency approves a project with unavoidable significant environmental effects, it must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that sets forth the specific social, economic, or other reasons supporting the agency's decision.
8. **Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program.** When the lead agency makes findings on significant effects identified in the EIR, it must adopt a reporting or monitoring program for mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of project approval to mitigate significant effects.
9. **Notice of Determination (NOD).** The lead agency must file a NOD after deciding to approve a project for which an EIR is prepared (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15094). A local agency must file the NOD with the County Clerk. The NOD must be posted for 30 days and sent to anyone previously requesting notice. Posting of the NOD starts a 30-day statute of limitations on CEQA legal challenges (Public Resources Code Section 21167[c]).

Figure 1-1 Environmental Review Process



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2 Project Description

This section describes the proposed project, including the project applicant, the project site and surrounding land uses, major project characteristics, project objectives, and discretionary actions needed for approval.

2.1 Project Applicant

Scott Irwin
Seefried Industrial Properties, Inc.
2321 Rosecrans Avenue, Suite 2220
El Segundo, California 90245

2.2 Lead Agency Contact Person

City of Santa Maria
Cody Graybehl, Senior Planner
Planning Division, Community Development Department
110 South Pine Street, Suite 101
Santa Maria, California 93454
805-925-0951, x 2552
cgraybehl@cityofsantamaria.org

2.3 Project Location

The project site is located at 1680 West Stowell Road on the southeast corner at the intersection of West Stowell Road and South E Street in the City of Santa Maria. The project site is relatively flat and rectangular with an area of 1,449,993 square feet (32 acres). The project site is denoted by Assessor Parcel Numbers 117-820-012 and 117-820-013. The site was most recently used for growing row crops. Figure 2-1 shows the regional location of the project site and Figure 2-2 shows the location of the site in its neighborhood context. The site is in an industrial agriculture area and surrounded by roads, warehouse facilities, and agricultural fields.

Figure 2-1 Project Vicinity Map

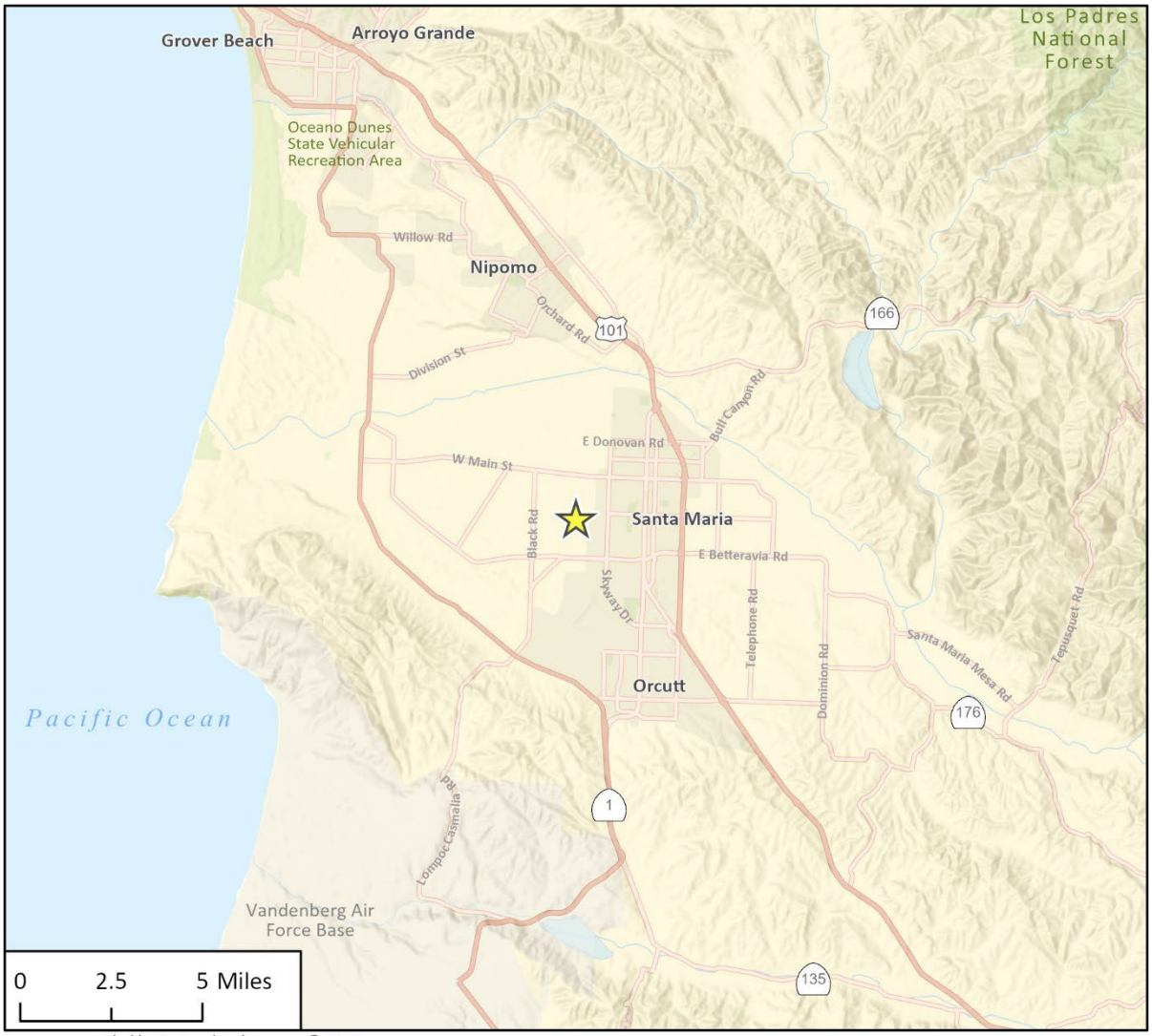
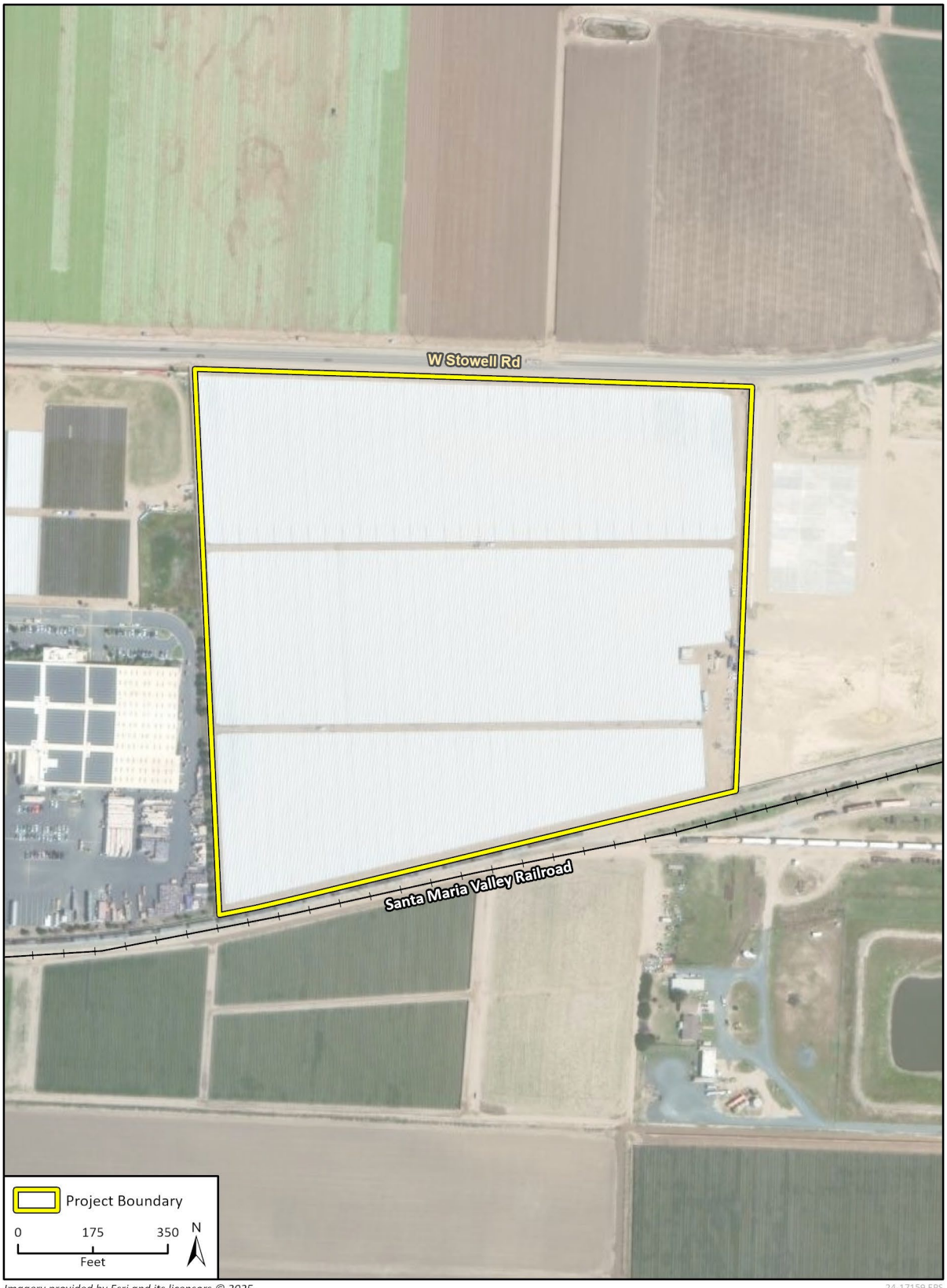


Figure 2-2 Project Site Location



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24-17159 EPS
Fig 2 Project Location

2.4 Existing Site Characteristics

2.4.1 Current Land Use Designation and Zoning

The project site is located at 1680 West Stowell Road, in the western portion of the city (Figure 2-1) within the West Stowell Specific Plan, which was adopted in 1994. The project is in zone district PD/CM-AG (Planned Development/Commercial Manufacturing - Agriculture Overlay) of the Specific Plan.[1] The project would be built on a 33-acre site consisting of two parcels (Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 117-820-012 and 117-820-013)[2]. As shown in Figure 2-2, the project site was previously used for row-crop production but is currently fallow. Uses permitted in the PD/CM-AG zone include manufacturing and processing facilities, warehousing and storage, utilities, and repair and equipment services. The project would not require amendments to the City's General Plan or the Santa Maria Municipal Code.

2.4.2 Surrounding Land Uses

The project site is bordered on the north by West Stowell Road. The land north of West Stowell Road is in unincorporated Santa Barbara County, with the areas south of West Stowell Road located within the City boundaries and planned for industrial uses. The area surrounding the project site includes agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. There is an operating freight rail track abutting the south boundary of the site operated by Santa Maria Valley Railroad. The industrial designated parcel immediately south of the rail track corridor is owned by the SMV railroad and is within the Area-9 of the Specific Plan. The proposed project would not be using the rail tracks for the project. Neighboring land uses include a Driscoll's packaging facility, an animal shelter, trucking facility, and various farms. The project site is located approximately 0.25 mile west of small-lot single family residential housing. To the east of the project site is a vacant parcel currently being developed as an agriculture box warehouse.

2.4.3 Project Characteristics

The applicant, Seefried Industrial Properties, Inc., is requesting a Planned Development (PD) Permit from the City to develop a package delivery warehouse at 1680 West Stowell Road. The total development area proposed is 244,418 square feet, which includes a 169,104-square-foot single story main distribution warehouse, oriented north to south in the center of the approximately 33-acre site. The main facility building (S-1 occupancy) would include a supporting office area (B occupancy), training room (A-2 occupancy), and break room (A-3 occupancy). In addition to the main facility building, the project contains other small accessory structures including an office, loading awnings, remote restrooms, and an on-site fleet service center to maintain and repair delivery vans.

2.4.4 Proposed Site Plan

Figure 2-3 shows the proposed site plan. Figure 2-4 through Figure 2-8 show the proposed site photographs and Figure 2-9 shows a rendering of the main facility building. Table 2-1 shows the characteristics of the proposed package delivery warehouse.

[1] Santa Maria, City of. 1994. West Stowell Specific Plan, Land Development Pattern, Zoning Map. Available: https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/6437/635530503431800000. (accessed March 2025).
[2] Santa Barbara, County of. County Clerk, Recorder and Assessor. Available: https://sbcassessor.com/Assessor/details.aspx?apn=117820012. (accessed June 2025).

Figure 2-3 Project Site Plan

Figure 2-4 Site Photograph- Central Road through Project Site Looking West

Figure 2-5 Site Photograph- Eastern Boundary Road Looking South from West Stowell Road

Figure 2-6 Site Photogragh- Northern Boundary (West Stowel Road) Road Looking West

Figure 2-7 Site Photogragh- Western Boundary Road Looking South

Figure 2-8 Site Photogragh- Southern Boundary Road Looking West

Figure 2-9 Project Rendering of Main Facility Building

Table 2-1 Project Characteristics

Address	1680 West Stowell Road
APN	117-820-012 and 117-820-013
Height/Stories	45 feet
Lot Area	1,449,993 square feet (sq ft)
Building Footprint	169,104 sf[1]
Total Floor Area	244,418 sq ft
Industrial Warehouse	157,507 sq ft
Office	11,597 sq ft

[1] The total floor area is calculated pursuant to Santa Maria Municipal Code Section 12-2.68 and only includes the sum of the gross horizontal areas of all floors, mezzanines, and lofts of the building.

The 169,104 square-foot building footprint would occupy approximately 11.3 percent of the 1,499,993 square-foot lot. The proposed building would have a total floor area of 244,418 square feet of industrial warehouse and office space (not including parking areas, elevator and stair shafts, or mechanical rooms housing operating equipment or machinery). The proposed main facility building would have up to a height of 45 feet to the top of the roof. Because the project site was most recently used for agricultural practices, the project would increase the building footprint by 100 percent.

Drought-tolerant landscaping would be integrated throughout the project site and would comply with Model Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance standards. Trees including the paperbark tree, Mexican sycamore, coast live oak, tipu tree, and the Japanese zelkova would line the border of the project site and are scattered throughout the parking area. The project site totals approximately 32 acres (1,393,920 square feet), requiring a minimum of 209,088 square feet of landscaped area per Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapter 12-44, which mandates 15 percent of the site be landscaped. The proposed project would provide approximately 279,113 square feet of landscaped area, exceeding the minimum requirement.

2.4.5 Parking and Site Access

Access to the site would be exclusively from parking for up to 990 passenger cars and vans would be available on-site. There would be 12 stalls at the loading dock to accommodate semi-trucks on the south side of the main facility. Parking for overnight fleet vehicles and drivers' personal vehicles totaling 272 spaces would be available north of the building. Two delivery van parking lots would be located to the east and west of the main distribution building. The main entrance to the building would be to the north facing West Stowell Road with parking spots reserved in the north parking lot for associates, guests, or package pick-up customers. The truck loading docks would be along the southern side of the building with dock-high doors for tractor trailer access for unloading. Trucks would enter the site using the westernmost driveway on West Stowell Road and drive south to the loading docks. Trucks would leave the site through that same western driveway. Customers, delivery vans, and associate cars would enter and exit the site from the central and eastern West Stowell Road driveways.

2.4.6 Utilities

The City of Santa Maria Public Works Department provides the following utility services: water, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste management. Pacific Gas & Electric supplies electricity and the Southern California Gas Company provides gas to the City of Santa Maria.

2.4.7 Abandoned Oil Well

As identified in the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) Well Finder database, an oil and gas well is located in the southwestern corner of the project site and was abandoned in the 1950s (Hope Well# 1, API# 0408302417). The use of this portion of the site would be set aside for parking where access and clearance parameters can be maintained. The applicant would, in coordination with CalGEM, move forward with a plan to re-abandon the oil and gas well to current CalGEM standards. The anticipated work would be noted on project plans submitted to the City, and California Environmental Quality Act clearance is addressed within Appendix A Initial Study.

2.4.8 Lighting

Lighting would be installed across the project site to ensure visibility and safety, including in the east, north, and west parking lots, loading dock, open truck yard, beneath the east and west canopy, in the west and east van queuing areas, and on vehicular roads.

2.4.9 Green Building Features

The proposed project includes several sustainable energy features. Fourteen electric vehicle chargers would be installed as part of the project, exceeding the minimum requirements. The proposed project would also include 202 EV-capable delivery van stalls. The proposed project would not install any natural gas service to the facility. In addition, solar roof arrays would be installed to offset electrical energy demand with a design capacity of 750 kilowatts direct current. To manage energy supply and demand, the project would include an 'after the meter' Battery Energy Storage System to store energy for later use by the facility, with a design rating of 650 kilowatts direct current.

2.4.10 Construction and Grading

Construction of the proposed project is expected to occur from approximately March 2026 through July 2027. Construction would take place between 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekends, which is within the allowable construction hours set by the City of Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapter 5-5, Section 5-5.06(e). Construction of the structures and on-site facilities would be done in five phases: site preparation, grading, building construction, paving, and architectural coating. The warehouse would be constructed with concrete tilt-up construction. The project would use typical construction equipment, including air compressors, welders, excavators, cranes, forklifts, generators, rubber-tired dozers, tractors, loaders, backhoes, and graders. Construction equipment would feature Tier 4 or higher engines as required by Mitigation Measure AQ-1.

Construction activities for the project site and frontage would include installation of curb and gutter improvements, such as accessible curb ramps, curb cuts with rock riprap energy dissipater, deepened curb, concrete cross gutter, fire hydrant and fire service backflow prevention assembly, domestic backflow prevention assembly, domestic water meter, and sewer manhole and sewer cleanout.

The project site would undergo grading and excavation. Grading depth for the warehouse would be up to 5 feet and then backfilled to approximately 1 to 3 feet above existing grade. Replacement of an existing City sewer main which traverses the site north to south would be at a depth up to 12 feet and increase the pipe size from 30 inches to 48 inches. This would be implemented during project construction to accommodate this future planned upgrade to avoid disruption to operations in the future. This upgrade is not to serve the project.

2.5 Project Objectives

1. Develop a parcel delivery facility with nearby access to freeways to efficiently facilitate the movement of goods.
2. Develop a parcel delivery facility that incorporates sustainability features like EV, solar, and low-water usage.
3. Establish a productive use of underutilized industrial land to help meet unmet regional demand for goods delivery service.
4. Improve efficiency and timeliness of goods delivery to the City of Santa Maria and the surrounding areas.
5. Expand economic development, increase tax revenues, and facilitate job creation in the City of Santa Maria, including hundreds of direct operational jobs and indirect jobs.
6. Attract new businesses to the City of Santa Maria and thereby maintain a jobs-housing balance in the area that will reduce the need for members of the local workforce to commute outside the area for employment.

2.6 Required Approvals

Table 2-2 Public Agencies Whose Approval Is Required

Agency	Permits/Other Approvals
City of Santa Maria	Planned Development Permit (PD2024-0003) and Lot Merger
Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District	Stationary source Authority to Construct (ATC), Permit to Operate (PTO) for point sources in development
California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM)	CalGEM-Construction Site Well Review Program (to re-abandon on-site oil and gas well)

3 Environmental Setting

This section provides a general overview of the environmental setting as well as the currently planned and pending projects list for the cumulative impact analysis for the proposed project. A more detailed description of the environmental setting for Transportation can be found in Section 4.1, *Transportation*.

3.1 Regional Setting

The project site is located in the City of Santa Maria, approximately 56 miles northwest of the City of Santa Barbara and 32 miles southeast of downtown San Luis Obispo. It is situated on the southern side of West Stowell Road, within the western portion of the city, and lies adjacent to the Santa Maria Valley Railroad. The approximately 33-acre site is currently vacant and was previously used for interim row crop production. The location of the project site is described below in both a regional and neighborhood context. The surrounding area includes a mix of agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses, such as a Driscoll's packaging facility, an animal shelter, and various farms.

Vehicular access throughout the City of Santa Maria is provided by a grid system of east-west and north-south roadways, including arterials, collectors, and local streets. Major roadways in the vicinity include West Stowell Road, South Blosser Road, and Betteravia Road. The closest freeways are U.S. Route 101 (US 101), located approximately 2.8 miles east of the project site, State Route 1 (SR 1), located approximately 5.6 miles west of the project site, SR 135 located approximately 1.7 miles north of the project site, and SR 166 located approximately 1 mile north of the project site.

The region experiences a Mediterranean climate with mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers. Average annual precipitation is approximately 13 inches, with most rainfall occurring between November and March. Although air quality in the Santa Maria Valley has improved over time, the region remains in nonattainment for ozone (urban smog) and particulate matter (PM10) under state standards. The City of Santa Maria is located approximately 10 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, and coastal influences help moderate temperatures year-round.

3.2 Project Site Setting

The project site is bordered on the north by West Stowell Road. The land north of West Stowell Road is in unincorporated Santa Barbara County, with the areas south of West Stowell Road located within the City boundaries and planned for industrial uses. The area surrounding the project site includes agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. There is an operating freight rail track abutting the south boundary of the site operated by Santa Maria Valley Railroad. The industrial designated parcel immediately south of the rail track corridor is owned by the SMV railroad and is within the Area-9 of the Specific Plan. The proposed project would not be using the rail tracks for the project. Neighboring land uses include a Driscoll's packaging facility, an animal shelter, trucking facility, and various farms. The project site is located approximately 0.25 mile west of small-lot single family residential housing. To the east of the project site is a vacant parcel currently being developed as an agriculture box warehouse.

It has a General Plan land use designation of Heavy Commercial/Manufacturing (HCM) and is zoned PD/CM-AG (Planned Development/Commercial Manufacturing – Agricultural Overlay), as defined and established by the West Stowell Specific Plan. Uses permitted in this designation include a range of commercial and industrial activities, including warehousing, packaging, and agriculturally related manufacturing operations, refer to Section 4.1, *Transportation*.

3.3 Cumulative Development

In addition to the specific impacts of individual projects, CEQA requires EIRs to consider potential cumulative impacts of the proposed project. CEQA defines "cumulative impacts" as two or more individual impacts that, when considered together, are substantial or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the combined changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be less than significant when analyzed separately but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. Cumulative impact analysis allows the EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

CEQA requires cumulative impact analysis in EIRs to consider either a list of planned and pending projects that may contribute to cumulative effects or a forecast of future development potential. This EIR uses a list approach. Currently planned and pending projects as of September 2025 in Santa Maria are listed in Table 3-1. These projects are considered in the cumulative analyses in Section 4.1, *Transportation*.

Table 3-1 Cumulative Projects List

Project No.	Project Location[1]	Land Use	Description	Status
City of Santa Maria				
1	2415 North Railroad Avenue	Mixed Use/Other	14 residential units & 21,041 sq ft commercial space	Planning permit under review.
2	North Broadway at Preisker Lane	Commercial	108 room hotel and two drive-thru fast food restaurants totaling 8,300 sqft	Planning permits for Chick-Fil-A approved (PD2023-0005). Under Construction.
3	Roemer Court	Mixed Use/Other	Four story hotel	Planning permits approved. Building permits submitted.
4	Preisker Lane	Industrial	Rental facility, truck sales and service	Planning permits approved. Planning permit expiration on 4/17/2027.
5	Northeast corner of Donovan & Via Rubio	Residential	19 townhome units with underground parking	Planning permit under review
6	899 North Broadway	Commercial	3,588 sqft. drive-through carwash, point-of-sale canopy & vacuum enclosure	Planning permit under review.
7	300 block of West Main Street	Commercial	Phased Expansion (Phase 1 outdoor storage and property improvements, Phase 2 a new 6,7000 sqft truck repair facility)	Planning permits approved. Planning permit expiration on 9/18/2027.
8	123 West Fesler	Residential	Three-story, 24-unit apartment building. for senior occupancy	Planning permit approved. Planning permit expiration 8/07/2027. Grading permits submitted
9	200 West Mill Street	Residential	20-unit, three-story building	Planning permits under review
10	120 West Chapel Street	Residential	32-unit, three-story apartment building	Planning permit approved. Building permits submitted
11	309 East Mill Street	Residential	24-unit, 7,815 sq. ft. apartment building	Planning permits approved
12	108 West Main Street	Mixed Use/Other	Five story mixed-use building (1 floor commercial & 4 floors residential)	Planning permit under review
13	100 North Broadway	Residential	Six-story building. with 150 affordable apartments	Planning permit under review. Scheduled for City Council determination on 8/5/2025.
14	201 Town Center West	Residential	Re-purpose structure for 102 residential units	Planning permit approved. Under Construction
15	SEC Main Street and Broadway	Mixed-Use/Other	Five story mixed-use (1 floor commercial & 4 floors residential)	Planning permit approved. Building permits submitted

Project No.	Project Location[1]	Land Use	Description	Status
16	226 East Main Street	Commercial	Lower-level grocery store & multiple commercial tenants on upper level	Planning permit approved. Demo permit was issued. Building permits submitted
17	124 South College Drive	Residential	SB 35 project including 40 senior units and 79 family units	Planning permit approved
18	571 East Main Street	Residential	142 single-family senior residential homes	Planning permits approved. Grading permits issued. Building permits submitted
19	507 South Oakley Street	Mixed-Use/Other	Mixed-use project 22 apartments & 3 commercial spaces	Planning permit under review.
20	621 South Smith Street	Mixed-Use/Other	Mixed-use market and warehouse	Planning permit under review
21	North of Cook & East of McClelland Street	Mixed-Use/Other	Six story mixed-use bldg. to accommodate up to 114 residential apartment building	Planning permit approved
22	501 East Boone Street	Mixed-Use/Other	2,280 sq. ft. addition to market, and 2 new units	Under construction
23	1850 West Stowell Road	Industrial	173,270 sq. ft. cooler addition in 4 phases	Phase 1 (45,935 sq. ft.) is completed
24	1550 West Stowell Road	Industrial	60,000 sq. ft. box facility and outdoor storage yard	Under construction.
25	La Brea Ave	Industrial	40, 854 square-foot packaging warehouse	U2021-0002 completed. A2024-0001 under review
26	Northeast/c Blosser Rd & W Battles Road	Residential	338 "for rent" single-family residences with 329 ADUs as well as 832 apartments totaling 1,499 units	Planning permits approved. Building permits submitted
27	450-460 West Stowell Road	Residential	52 apartments in two three-story buildings (8 units are restricted affordable)	Planning permit under review
28	1314 South Broadway	Residential	52-unit senior apartment addition	Planning permit (A2023-0004) under review
29	502 East Barcellus Avenue	Residential	80-unit senior apartments	Planning permits approved. Planning permit expiration on 2/1/2026.
30	1767 and 1795 A Street	Industrial	Multi-phased 130,000 sq. featuring and AG cooler and box facility	Planning permit under review
31	South Blosser Road & West Battles Road	Mixed-Use/Other	126 multifamily units and 16,000 sqft. retail (including gas station)	Planning permits under review
32	1423 South Bradley Road	Commercial	Drive-thru coffee shop and carwash	Under construction.

Project No.	Project Location[1]	Land Use	Description	Status
33	957 East Battles Road	Commercial	New Hyundai dealership with a 14-bay service shop	Planning permit under review
34	1004 East Battles Road	Commercial	52,000 sq. ft. auto dealership	Under construction.
35	1650 Black Road	Industrial	4.3 mil sqft. greenhouse and 93,000 sqft. building	Planning permit under review
36	Southwest/c of Carmen Lane & South Blosser Road	Residential	86-unit apartment complex	Planning permits approved. Building permits submitted
37	Northeast/c of Walker Lane & Dan Blough Drive & Southeast/c of Blosser Road & Carmen Lane	Residential	443 apartment units	Planning permits approved. Building permits issued.
38	West Betteravia Rd at SMVRR	Commercial	291,278 sqft. of retail/office	Development Agreement and Master Tract Map recorded
39	805 West Betteravia Rd	Commercial	Fueling & EV charging station, carwash, & drive-through restaurant	Planning permits approved. Building permits issued
40	1925 South Broadway	Commercial	Drive-thru carwash with on-site office and storage	Under construction.
41	Lot 8 Enos Ranch	Commercial	16,300 sqft carwash with café/wait room & drive through café	Planning Permits Approved. Planning Permit expiration 6/4/2028
42	1500 West Betteravia Road	Commercial	4,420 sqft. market/deli	Planning permit under review
43	South of Betteravia & West of A Street	Industrial	Divide 1 lot into 18 lots & build 16 building pads and 1 basin	Planning permit under review
44	1291 West McCoy Lane	Industrial	36,400 sq. ft. manufacturing, warehouse and office building	Planning permit approved. Planning permit expiration 6/21/2026
45	1202 West Betteravia	Commercial	1,300 sqft. drive-thru only	Under construction
46	2811 Airpark Drive	Industrial	51,200 sqft. of office in 2 buildings	One 25,600 sq. ft. building constructed. Second building pending.
47	2770 Industrial Parkway	Industrial	Industrial Complex with 3 buildings and outdoor storage (Five phases)	Planning permit under review
48	2660 Santa Maria Way	Residential	358 senior, affordable & market rate units	Phase 1 is completed. Planning permit (PD2023-0004) under review for Phase 2
49	Southeast /c Santa Maria Way & South Miller Street	Mixed-Use/Other	140 apt units, clubhouse and 5,435 sq. ft. multi-tenant commercia	Planning permits approved. Building permits submitted

Project No.	Project Location[1]	Land Use	Description	Status
50	3170 Santa Maria Way	Residential	49 single family homes in 50 parcels	Planning permits expiration 1/17/2026. Grading permits 52 submitted.
51	3335 Corsair Circle	Commercial	Air Museum with two aircraft hangars (56,635 sq.ft. & 12,801 sq.ft.)	Planning permit approved. Building Permits submitted
52	Northwest of Union Valley Parkway & Hwy 135	Commercial	Specific Plan for future Light Industrial and Commercial Land Use	Planning permit under review
53	3335 Corsair Circle	Industrial	Mini warehouse facility	Planning permits approved. Planning permit expiration 1/17/2027.
54	Orcutt Expressway & Union Valley Parkway	Mixed-Use/Other	Annexation of 43.75 acres	LAFCO application under review

Sqft = square feet

Source: City of Santa Maria. 2025. Current Development Activity. Available: https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/32720/638905988763770000. Accessed September 2025.

4 Environmental Impact Analysis

This section discusses the possible environmental effects of the Stowell Road Package Delivery Warehouse Project for Transportation as this topic was identified through the Initial Study and scoping process as having the potential to experience significant effects. A "significant effect" as defined by the *CEQA Guidelines* §15382:

> means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.

The assessment of Transportation begins with a discussion of the environmental setting (existing conditions) and regulatory setting, which is followed by the impact analysis. In the impact analysis, the first subsection identifies the methodologies used and the "significance thresholds," which are those criteria adopted by the City and other agencies, universally recognized, or developed specifically for this analysis to determine whether potential effects are significant. The next subsection describes each impact of the proposed project, mitigation measures for significant impacts, and the level of significance after mitigation. Each effect under consideration for an issue area is separately listed in bold text with the discussion of the effect and its significance. Each bolded impact statement also contains a statement of the significance determination for the environmental impact as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the project is approved per §15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible mitigation measures. Such an impact requires findings under §15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require mitigation measures. However, mitigation measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.
- **No Impact.** The proposed project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

Following each environmental impact discussion is a list of mitigation measures (if required) and the residual effects or level of significance remaining after implementation of the measure(s). In cases where the mitigation measure for an impact could have a significant environmental impact in another issue area, this impact is discussed and evaluated as a secondary impact. The impact analysis concludes with a discussion of cumulative effects, which evaluates the impacts associated with the proposed project in conjunction with other planned and pending developments in the area listed in Chapter 3, *Environmental Setting*.

The Introduction of this EIR summarizes all impacts and mitigation measures that apply to the proposed project.

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4.1 Transportation

This section analyzes impacts related to transportation. The analysis is based on the Transportation Impact Study prepared by NV5 Engineers & Consultants and dated May 28, 2025. The Transportation Impact Study, contained in its entirety in Appendix C to this EIR, evaluates traffic conditions under existing, existing plus project, future (Year 2040), and future plus project scenarios. It incorporates projected traffic volumes generated by the proposed project and includes a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis (Appendix D). Impacts associated with CEQA checklist items 3 and 4 were determined to be less than significant or have no impact in the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project (Appendix A). No further analysis is warranted, and these topics will not be discussed further in this section.

4.1.1 Setting

This section describes the existing roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian components of the Santa Maria transportation system.

4.1.1.1 Roadway and Transit System

The network of roadways in and around Santa Maria consists of highways, arterials, collectors and local streets. Figure 4.1-1 presents the current General Plan Circulation Diagram and the roadway classifications in the city. Public transit in Santa Maria is provided by the Santa Maria Regional Transit (SMRT). SMRT operates local bus services to Santa Maria, the unincorporated communities of Orcutt and Tanglewood, and regional services to New Cuyama, Lompoc, Vandenberg Space Force Base, Los Alamos, Buellton, Solvang, Santa Ynez, Guadalupe, and the Chumash Reservation. In addition, SMRT offers curb-to-curb transportation services for people with disabilities who are unable to use the fixed-route buses. The nearest bus stop to the project site is Morrison at Thornburg, approximately 2.2 miles east. Bus Route 4, which runs through Morrison at Thornburg, does not travel toward the project site.

Highways

U.S. 101 is a divided six-lane freeway running north to south through the city. It provides a connection to the neighboring cities of Orcutt and Nipomo. The nearest U.S. 101 interchange to the project site is with East Stowell Road approximately 2.8 miles east from the project site. The speed limit is generally set at 65 miles per hour (mph) within the city.

SR 135 functions as a western bypass of U.S. 101 and travels through the heart of Santa Maria. Within the city, SR 135 is signed as Broadway and serves as the Business Route for U.S. 101. SR 135 intersects with SR 166 at Main Street and rejoins U.S. 101 near the Santa Maria River. SR 135 provides local access through commercial and residential areas and is part of the National Highway System. The nearest SR 135 interchange to the project site is with West Stowell Road approximately 1.7 miles west from the project site. The speed limit is generally set at 35-40 miles per hour (mph) within the city.

SR 166 is an east-west highway that begins at SR 1 in Guadalupe and travels through Santa Maria before continuing eastward toward the southern San Joaquin Valley. Within Santa Maria, SR 166 is known as Main Street and intersects both SR 135 and U.S. 101. SR 166 briefly overlaps with U.S. 101 before crossing the Santa Maria River. SR 166 is a vital corridor for agricultural goods movement and rural connectivity. The nearest SR 166 interchange to the project site is with Hanson Way

approximately 1.1 miles northeast from the project site. The speed limit is generally set at 35 miles per hour (mph) within the city, but does increase to 45 mph east of Suey Road.

Local Roadway Network

The proposed project would be located within a developed area of Santa Maria served by a network of roadways that facilitate regional and local access. West Stowell Road is a key east-west roadway adjacent to the northern boundary of the project site, providing direct access to U.S. 101 approximately 2.8 miles west via the East Stowell Road interchange. This connection supports regional mobility to and from the site. South Blosser Road, located just west of the project site, is a north-south roadway that connects to other major corridors such as Betteravia Road and SR 166 (Main Street), facilitating access to central Santa Maria and surrounding areas.

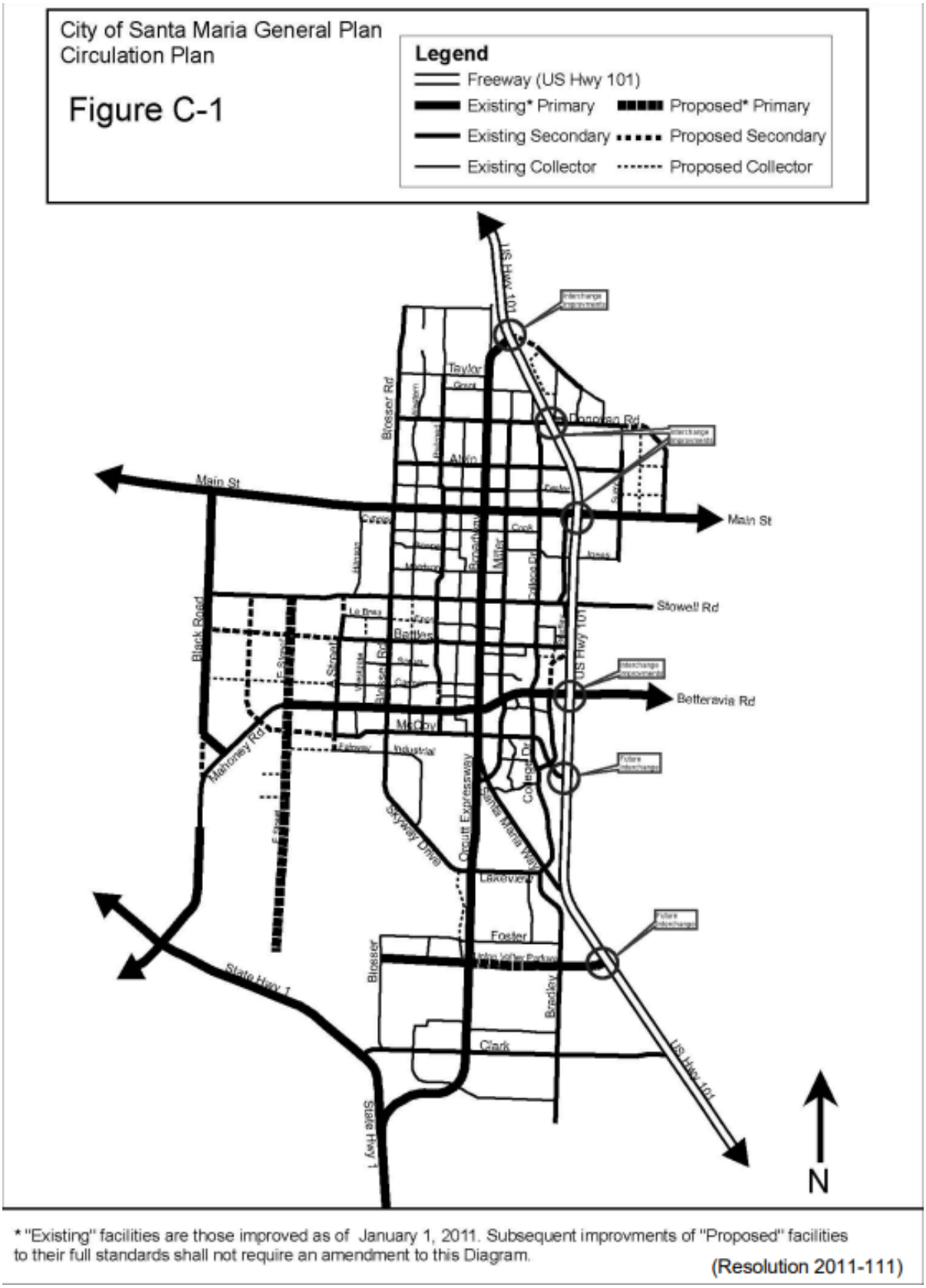
In the broader vicinity, SR 135 (Broadway) and SR 166 (Main Street) are significant regional routes. SR 135 runs north-south through the city and intersects with SR 166 near downtown Santa Maria, offering additional connectivity to U.S. 101 and adjacent communities. SR 166 provides an east-west corridor through Santa Maria and is a key route for regional goods movement and access to rural areas to the east. Local streets surrounding the project site primarily serve residential and commercial properties and support short-distance travel and site access. Broadway and Main Streets also serve as the dividing lines for the directional designations of the city's local streets.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The City of Santa Maria maintains a growing network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities designed to support safe, accessible, and sustainable transportation. The bikeway system includes Class I off-street paths, Class II on-street bike lanes, and Class III bike routes, many of which connect residential neighborhoods to schools, parks, shopping centers, and employment hubs. Recent improvements feature separated bike paths painted green or lined with reflective beads to enhance visibility and safety. Sidewalks are present along most roadways, and pedestrian crossings are generally provided at intersections. Between 2024 and 2025, the City of Santa Maria has implemented pedestrian safety and accessibility upgrades including along Stowell Road adding high-visibility crosswalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, new sidewalks, and improved bus stop infrastructure.[1] The City continues to expand its Active Transportation Plan and Bikeway Master Plan to improve connectivity, reduce automobile dependence, and promote healthier, carbon-neutral travel options.

[1] Santa Maria Times. 2025. Santa Maria pedestrian safety, accessibility improvements nearing completion. Available: https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/santa-maria-pedestrian-safety-accessibility-improvements-nearing-completion/article_970a7a3a-cee9-11ef-a4ee-b30363bf5fc5.html. Accessed September 2025.

Figure 4.1-1 Circulation Plan



* "Existing" facilities are those improved as of January 1, 2011. Subsequent improvments of "Proposed" facilities to their full standards shall not require an amendment to this Diagram.

(Resolution 2011-111)

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal Regulations

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) administers various grant programs that support the development and improvement of transportation infrastructure, including highways and public transit systems. These grants are typically managed through state and regional agencies. Projects in Santa Maria that receive federal funding may be subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) through delegation to Caltrans. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), a division of USDOT, establishes design and safety standards for federally funded roadways, including those that connect Santa Maria to the regional highway network. Additionally, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulates rail safety standards, such as train speed limits and highway-rail crossing protocols, which may apply to freight rail operations in the region.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides comprehensive civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities, ensuring equal access to public programs, services, and facilities. Under Title II of the ADA, the City of Santa Maria is required to make its programs and services accessible to individuals with disabilities, except where doing so would result in undue financial or administrative burdens.

State Regulations

State Senate Bill 743

SB 743 (2013) changed the way that public agencies evaluate the transportation impacts of projects under CEQA, recognizing that roadway congestion, while an inconvenience to drivers, is not itself an environmental impact. As specified in PRC Section 21099(b)(2), automobile delay, as described solely by level of service or similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion, shall not be considered a significant impact on the environment pursuant to CEQA.

Under SB 743, the Governor's Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI; formerly known as the Office of Planning and Research) established VMT as the preferred metric for measuring transportation impacts of most projects in place of vehicle level of service (LOS) or related measures of congestion as the primary metric. The use of VMT for determining significance of transportation impacts has become commonplace since the certification of this provision and the release of OPR's Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA in December 2018 and, beginning July 1, 2020, is the required metric statewide.

For land use projects, SB 743 provides opportunities to streamline transportation analysis under CEQA for qualifying urban infill development near major transit stops in metropolitan regions statewide, as described in more detail in Section 1.6.1. Additionally, the legislation establishes that aesthetic and parking impacts of these projects are not considered significant impacts on the environment.

California Department of Transportation

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) oversees the planning, design, and construction of improvements to the state highway system, including SR 135 and SR 166, and its interchanges within the City of Santa Maria. Caltrans also supports the California Transportation

Commission (CTC) in administering state transportation funding programs, such as the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which prioritizes long-range capital projects.

Caltrans reviews traffic impacts on state facilities using its *Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies* (2001), which outlines expectations for evaluating level of service (LOS) and other performance measures. While Caltrans aims to maintain LOS at the transition between LOS C and D, it recognizes that this may not always be feasible and encourages consultation with lead agencies to determine appropriate thresholds.

In addition, Caltrans prepares long-range planning documents such as Transportation Concept Reports (TCRs) and Corridor System Management Plans (CSMPs), which establish target LOS and identify deficiencies along state routes. For SR 166, the most recent TCR identifies LOS B as the concept LOS for the corridor through the City of Santa Maria.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3

Originating from SB 743, Section 15064.3 of the State CEQA Guidelines establishes vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts, shifting away from the level of service analysis that evaluated a project's impacts on traffic conditions on nearby roadways and intersections. The primary components of new section 15064.3 include:

- Identifies VMT (amount and distance of automobile traffic attributable to a project) as the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts;
- Declares that a project's effect on automobile delay shall not constitute a significant environmental impact except for projects increasing roadway capacity;
- Creates a rebuttable presumption of no significant transportation impacts for (a) land use projects within one-half mile of either an existing major transit stop or a stop along an existing high quality transit corridor, (b) land use projects that reduce VMT below existing conditions, and (c) transportation projects that reduce or have no impact on VMT;
- Allows a lead agency to qualitatively evaluate VMT if existing models are not available; and
- Gives lead agencies discretion to select a methodology to evaluate a project's VMT but requires lead agencies to document that methodology in the environmental document prepared for the project.

In December 2018, OPR issued a *Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA* (OPR 2018). The technical advisory contains technical recommendations regarding assessment of VMT, thresholds of significance, and mitigation measures. The technical advisory suggests a significance threshold for VMT that is based on state mandated GHG emission reduction targets. The technical advisory recommends a quantitative per capita or per employee VMT that is 15 percent below that of existing development as a possible threshold of significance that would comply with the state's long-term climate goals.

Regional and Local Regulations

Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG)

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Santa Barbara County, including the City of Santa Maria. SBCAG is responsible for developing and maintaining the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which outlines long-term investments in transit, highways, roadways, rail,

bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure across the region. The RTP includes a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), as required by SB 375, which integrates land use and transportation planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from passenger vehicles.

SBCAG also allocates federal, state, and local transportation funds. SBCAG administers programs that promote ridesharing, public transit, biking, walking, and telecommuting, and works directly with employers to support alternative commuting options.

Local Regulations

Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan

The Santa Maria Active Transportation Plan (ATP) is a citywide initiative adopted in January 2021 to improve walking and biking infrastructure and promote safer, more sustainable travel options. Developed with support from the California Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program, the plan outlines strategies to create a connected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that serve residents of all ages and abilities.

The ATP focuses on enhancing safety, accessibility, and equity, particularly in underserved neighborhoods and around schools. It identifies priority corridors and intersections for improvements, such as new sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and traffic calming measures. The plan also includes design toolkits and implementation guidelines to help the city integrate active transportation into future development and infrastructure projects.

Local Design Standards

The City of Santa Maria's Public Works Department has publicly accessible specifications and design standards for drainage, roadway construction, street lighting, and sewer/sanitation. The Roads section contains details most relevant to the development of the Active Transportation Plan, including construction details for roadways, curb ramps, detectable warning surfaces, and sidewalk details.

2009 Bikeway Master Plan

The 2009 Santa Maria Bikeway Master Plan has served as a blueprint for bicycle transportation and recreation in the City of Santa Maria. When it was developed, the plan provided an updated system of bike lanes, bike routes, and bike paths. It also identified necessary support facilities such as bicycle parking and recommended a variety of programs to allow for safe, efficient, and convenient bicycle travel within Santa Maria and to regional destinations. The recommended bikeway network for Santa Maria included several Class III neighborhood bike routes that school-bound children may use. Furthermore, the recommendation to develop a Safe Routes to School Program was included to gain support from parents, administrators, and teachers.

Santa Maria General Plan Update

The Santa Maria General Plan Update includes an update to the Circulation Element. The Circulation Element outlines the city's long-term transportation strategy as part of its General Plan. It addresses current infrastructure, regulatory requirements, and future mobility goals. The general plan update identifies challenges such as congestion, pavement deterioration, limited walkability, and declining airport use, while highlighting opportunities through existing plans like the Active Transportation Plan and Safer Streets initiative. It sets forth eight policy goals, including designing complete streets for all users, aligning transportation with land use, securing equitable funding, ensuring land use

compatibility, improving safety, enhancing public transit, reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and managing parking efficiently. These goals aim to create a safer, more sustainable, and inclusive transportation network that supports Santa Maria's growth and environmental objectives. The City of Santa Maria is expected to adopt this General Plan Update in early 2026.

City of Santa Maria VMT Thresholds of Significance

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) indicates that land use projects would have a significant impact if the project resulted in VMT exceeding an applicable threshold of significance. In accordance with guidance from the California Office of Planning and Research (OPR), the City of Santa Maria has adopted the following thresholds of significance for VMT analysis:

- Residential: 15 percent below existing average VMT per capita for the city
- Employment – Office: 15 percent below existing regional average VMT per employee
- Retail: Net increase in total regional VMT

In addition, the City of Santa Maria has developed screening criteria to help applicants determine whether a detailed VMT analysis is required. Projects that meet these criteria may be exempt from full VMT assessment.

4.1.3 Impact Analysis

Methodology and Significance Thresholds

Methodology

The transportation analysis supporting this EIR is derived from two technical studies prepared by NV5 Engineers & Consultants, a Traffic Impact Study dated May 2025, and a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Analysis dated July 2025. These documents assess the project's potential impacts on intersection operations, roadway segments, and regional VMT, and are provided as Appendices C and D, respectively.

Significance Thresholds

According to the adopted Appendix G of the State *CEQA Guidelines*, impacts related to transportation and circulation from the proposed project would be significant if the project would:

1. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities;
2. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b);

Impacts associated with CEQA checklist items 3, and 4 were determined to be less than significant or no impact in the Initial Study prepared for the proposed project, included with this EIR as Appendix A. Therefore, no further analysis is warranted, and these topics will not be discussed further in this section.

Section 15064.3 of State CEQA Guidelines, referenced in significance threshold 3 above, pertains to VMT. The City of Santa Maria adopted VMT thresholds for specific land use types. The adopted VMT thresholds for each land use are presented in Table 4.1-1.

Table 4.1-1 City of Santa Maria VMT Thresholds of Significance

Land Use	VMT Threshold	Precedent
Residential	15% below existing average VMT per capita for Santa Barbara Countywide Baseline Average	Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR)
Employment - Office	15 % below existing countywide baseline average employee per employee	OPR
Retail	Net increase in total regional VMT	OPR

Source: City of Santa Maria

Threshold 1: Would the project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Impact TRA-1 THE PROJECT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CONFLICT WITH A PROGRAM, PLAN, ORDINANCE, OR POLICY ADDRESSING THE CIRCULATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING TRANSIT, ROADWAY, BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES. IMPACTS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

The proposed project has been reviewed by the City of Santa Maria and is consistent with the applicable zoning and land use designations under the West Stowell Specific Plan. The proposed project would include internal pedestrian access, ADA-compliant features, and bicycle racks, which support multimodal access. While the project site is not directly adjacent to existing transit stops or bicycle lanes, it is located near transit corridors and does not propose any changes that would interfere with existing or planned infrastructure.

The proposed project would align with several goals of the Santa Maria General Plan Draft Circulation Element, including improving safety, supporting complete streets, and aligning transportation with land use. The inclusion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and internal circulation design also supports sustainability and operational efficiency. Additionally, the proposed project does not propose changes to the public roadway network that would conflict with adopted plans. The Traffic Impact Study confirms that the project's access and circulation design has been reviewed by the city and is consistent with applicable standards. Therefore, the proposed project does not conflict with the City's Draft Circulation Element or other relevant transportation-related plans and policies.

The nearest bus stop to the project site is Morrison at Thornburg, approximately 2.2 miles east. Although the proposed project does not include transit-oriented design features or direct access to transit stops, the proposed project would not interfere with existing transit routes or infrastructure. Similarly, no bicycle facilities currently exist along West Stowell Road or adjacent side streets, and the proposed project would not remove or obstruct any existing or planned bicycle infrastructure. Street improvements on Stowell Road in front of the project site would include pedestrian access from the public right-of-way and paved shoulders to provide safer bicycle access to the site. To strengthen connections to transit, it is essential to complete the missing sidewalk segments along Stowell Road east of the project site. The project's inclusion of on-site bike racks and pedestrian access would also contribute positively to local bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

The proposed project would include internal pedestrian circulation features such as striped walkways, accessible parking stalls, and safety barriers. Although sidewalks are not currently present immediately adjacent to the project site, the nearest pedestrian infrastructure is located approximately 0.25 miles east at the Santa Maria Truck Center. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with pedestrian circulation policies. Notably, between 2024 and 2025, the City of Santa Maria implemented pedestrian safety and accessibility upgrades along Stowell Road, including

high-visibility crosswalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, new sidewalks, and improved bus stop infrastructure. These improvements enhance connectivity and safety in the area, and the proposed project would not interfere with them. Overall, while the proposed project would offer limited support for active transportation and would not actively advance multimodal goals, the proposed project would remain consistent with applicable circulation-related programs, plans, ordinances, and policies. Therefore, impacts would be considered less than significant.

Threshold 2:	Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Impact TRA-2 THE PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD GENERATE APPROXIMATELY 55.08 VMT PER EMPLOYEE PER DAY, WHICH EXCEEDS THE CITY OF SANTA MARIA'S SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLD OF 18.82 VMT PER EMPLOYEE (TWO-WAY TRIP) BY APPROXIMATELY 237%. AS A RESULT, THE IMPACT WOULD BE CONSIDERED SIGNIFICANT UNDER CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15064.3(B). EVEN WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF IDENTIFIED MITIGATION MEASURES, IMPACTS ARE SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE.

While the proposed project is generally consistent with local circulation-related plans and policies, the project would generate approximately 55.08 VMT per employee per day, which exceeds the City of Santa Maria's adopted threshold of 18.82 VMT per employee (two-way trip) by approximately 237 percent.

VMT associated with the proposed project can be divided into two components: employee commute trips and delivery operations. Employee commute VMT is relatively low at an estimated 13.20 miles per person per day due to the anticipated proximity of the workforce. However, delivery operations, which include dispatches by vans and Flex vehicles, account for the majority of the project's VMT and are essential to the facility's function. The proposed project would include several TDM measures to reduce employee commuting VMT. These include implementation of a voluntary employer commute program (TR-1), carpool and vanpool incentives, transit subsidies, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, flexible work hours, and on-site amenities (TR-2). While these measures would help reduce VMT, their effectiveness is limited due to operational constraints such as shift timing, workforce distribution, and the nature of delivery logistics. For example, even if 20 percent of employees carpooled, the overall VMT reduction would be only 0.46 miles per capita. These measures are largely dependent on a regional planning context and existing infrastructure availability and may not be fully controllable or implementable at the individual project level. Fleet and operational measures (TR-3), such as transitioning to zero-emission delivery vehicles, implementing idle reduction policies, and optimizing delivery routing, may offer long-term VMT and emissions benefits. However, these strategies are dependent on tenant operations and fleet procurement timelines and are not feasible for immediate implementation at the project level.

Although the VMT Analysis (Appendix D) concluded that no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce VMT without affecting the delivery station's operational functionality, Caltrans reviewed the proposed project and recommended that innovative mitigation strategies be considered. These include implementing a Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program, employer-sponsored vanpools, transit subsidies, bike amenities, and coordination with SBCAG's SmartRide program. Caltrans also suggested evaluating the feasibility of a transit stop near the site, improving first/last mile connectivity, contributing to multimodal improvements identified in the SR 166 Corridor Study, and exploring participation in a VMT mitigation impact fee program. The proposed project will incorporate Caltrans recommended strategies to reduce VMT where possible, particularly those targeting employee commute trips.

Mitigation Measures

TR-1 Travel Demand Management

The project applicant shall implement at least one of the measures described below:

- **Voluntary Employer Commute Program**: The project applicant shall encourage alternative modes of transportation through a program that may include elements such as: a carpool or vanpool program, subsidized or discounted transit passes, bike amenities, commute trip-reduction marketing, and preferential parking permit program.
- **Employer Carpool Program:** The project applicant shall encourage carpooling by providing ride matching assistance to employees, providing priority parking for carshare vehicles, and providing incentives for carpooling.

The applicant shall provide to the City documentation that at least one of the above measures is implemented within 1 year of certificate of occupancy. Documentation shall be provided annually.

TR-2 Project-Level Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategies

- **Carpool/Vanpool Incentives:** Provide priority parking, subsidies, or guaranteed ride home programs.
- **Transit Subsidies:** Offer free or discounted transit passes to employees.
- **Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Complete sidewalk gap on Stowell Road to the east of the site or contribute to fair share cost for construction at appropriate time.
- **Bike Infrastructure**: Install secure bike parking, showers, and lockers to encourage cycling.
- **Flexible Work Hours:** Reduce peak-hour congestion and VMT by staggering shifts.
- **On-Site Amenities:** Cafeterias, childcare, and banking reduce off-site trips.
- **Ride-Sharing Programs:** Partner with services like Uber/Lyft for shared rides.
- **Telematics and Routing Optimization:** Use software to reduce delivery trip lengths and improve efficiency.

The applicant shall provide to the City documentation that at least four of the above measures are implemented within 1 year of certificate of occupancy. Documentation shall be provided annually.

TR-3 Fleet and Operational Measures

- **Zero-Emission Delivery Vehicles:** Transition to electric or hydrogen-powered trucks.
- **Idle Reduction Policies:** Enforce limits on truck idling.
- **Off-Peak Delivery Scheduling:** Reduce congestion and trip times.
- **Local Sourcing and Distribution Hubs:** Minimize long-haul trips by decentralizing distribution.

The applicant shall provide to the City documentation that at least one of the above measures is implemented within 1 year of certificate of occupancy. Documentation shall be provided annually.

Significance After Mitigation

While the proposed project would include mitigation measures TR-1 through TR-3 which are aimed at reducing VMT including employer commute programs, transit subsidies, bike infrastructure, and fleet electrification, these measures would not fully reduce the project's VMT impacts below the

applicable threshold. Therefore, the impact would remain significant and unavoidable after mitigation.

4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts assessment area for transportation is the region of Santa Barbara County, with a focus on the City of Santa Maria, since the proposed project is regional in nature and could potentially affect much of the City. In addition, VMT is evaluated within this EIR using countywide thresholds, making the City the appropriate geographic extent for cumulative VMT analysis. Increased vehicle use associated with the proposed project could result in increased VMT in the City, depending on the origin and destination of trips. Because reasonably foreseeable future projects would also increase VMT, cumulative impacts would be potentially significant. Even with implementation of the proposed mitigation, VMT from the proposed project would remain above existing regional averages. Therefore, the proposed project would continue to have a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative VMT impacts.

The proposed project would be located within an urbanized area served by SMRT and other regional transit providers. While the proposed project would generate new employment and associated travel demand, it is not expected to result in a cumulatively considerable impact on transit services. The Initial Study determined that the proposed project would not conflict with any adopted transit plans or policies. Therefore, cumulative impacts to transit would be less than significant. The proposed project would generate VMT through employee commutes, delivery van dispatches, and private carrier trips. The proposed project includes infrastructure to support alternative transportation modes, such as bike lanes, bike racks, and sidewalks, which would help to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. Based on the VMT analysis included in the EIR, the proposed project would exceed SBCAG's countywide VMT thresholds for employment uses. Although mitigation measures are proposed, the project's VMT would remain above existing regional averages. Because reasonably foreseeable future projects in the City and County would also increase VMT, the cumulative VMT impact would be significant and unavoidable.

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5 Other CEQA Required Discussions

This section discusses growth-inducing impacts, irreversible environmental impacts, and energy impacts that would be caused by the proposed project.

5.1 Growth Inducement

Section 15126(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of a proposed project's potential to foster economic or population growth, including ways in which a project could remove an obstacle to growth. Growth does not necessarily create significant physical changes to the environment. However, depending upon the type, magnitude, and location of growth, it can result in significant adverse environmental effects. The proposed project's growth inducing potential is therefore considered significant if project-induced growth could result in significant physical effects in one or more environmental issue areas.

5.1.1 Population Growth

As discussed in Section 14, *Population and Housing*, of the Initial Study (Appendix A), the proposed project would not directly generate population growth because it does not include residential uses and the jobs created during construction and operation are likely to be filled by the existing local workforce. The operational phase would add about 588 jobs, a 1.41 percent increase in Santa Maria's employment base, which is not considered substantial. As of August 2025, the unemployment rate in the Santa Maria–Santa Barbara Metropolitan Statistical Area stands at 4.7 percent, reflecting a relatively healthy and stable employment environment.[1] Given this low unemployment rate and the modest increase in jobs, the proposed project is not anticipated to significantly alter the overall employment dynamics of the region. The proposed project also does not involve extending infrastructure into undeveloped areas, so the proposed project would not indirectly induce growth. Additionally, since the project site is currently undeveloped, no people or housing would be displaced.

Moreover, as discussed in Section 3, *Air Quality*, and Section 8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, of the Initial Study, development and operation of the project would not generate air quality or GHG emissions that would result in a significant impact. Additionally, the proposed project involves development within an urbanized area that lacks significant scenic resources (Section 1, Aesthetics), native biological habitats (Section 4, Biological Resources), known cultural resource remains (Section 5, Cultural Resources), surface water (Section 10, Hydrology and Water Quality), or other environmental resources. Therefore, population growth potentially associated with the project is not likely to result in significant long-term physical environmental effects.

5.1.2 Economic Growth

The proposed project would generate temporary employment opportunities during construction. Because construction workers would be expected to be drawn from the existing regional work force, construction of the project would not be growth-inducing from a temporary employment standpoint. However, the proposed project would also add long-term employment opportunities associated with operation of the package delivery warehouse

[1] Employment Development Department. 2025. LMI for Santa Maria-Santa Barbara MSA, California. Available: https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/geography/msa/santa-maria-santa-barbara.html. Accessed September 2025.

The City of Santa Maria currently has the largest population of the incorporated jurisdictions within Santa Barbara County and is forecast over the 2017-2050 period to have the largest population increase in the county with 34,600 persons, or a total increase in population of 32 percent. SBCAG forecasts that 10,930 jobs will be added in Santa Maria between 2017 and 2050.[2] The 588 jobs anticipated by the proposed project would be approximately 5.4 percent of job growth between 2017 and 2050 and, therefore, would be well within employment forecasts.

The proposed project would serve as a hub for regional distribution activities that already occurs within and throughout the City of Santa Maria. The proposed project has the potential to reduce distributed impacts on local roads and highways, however, it is not expected to induce substantial new economic expansion that would result in direct physical environmental effects. Moreover, the environmental effects associated with any future development in or around Santa Maria would be addressed as part of the CEQA environmental review for such development projects.

5.1.3 Removal of Obstacles to Growth

The proposed project is located within an urbanized area of the City of Santa Maria that is served by existing infrastructure and surrounded by agricultural, industrial, and commercial uses. As discussed in Section 19, *Utilities and Service Systems*, of the Initial Study, existing infrastructure including water, wastewater, and stormwater systems would be adequate to serve the project. Minor upgrades, such as the planned upsizing of a sewer main from 30 inches to 48 inches not serving the project but running through the project site, would be implemented during project construction to accommodate future city-wide sewer demand and avoid disruption to future operations. Other minor improvements would be sized specifically for the proposed facility and would not require the extension of infrastructure into undeveloped areas. The project is consistent with the General Plan's land use designation for the site and would not generate growth beyond that anticipated in the General Plan and for which wastewater facilities have been planned.

The proposed project would not require the construction of new public roads. Site access would be provided via three unsignalized driveways along West Stowell Road, and internal improvements would include parking lot striping, travel lanes, sidewalks, and street lighting. These improvements are designed to accommodate expected traffic volumes and site access needs without significantly altering existing circulation patterns.

The project is consistent with the City's General Plan. Specifically, the West Stowell Specific Plan designates the project site and surrounding area for Heavy Commercial Manufacturing (HCM) uses. The proposed project would include approximately 244,418 square feet of industrial space, consisting of a 169,104 square-foot main distribution warehouse, supporting office and training areas, and accessory structures such as a fleet service center and loading awnings. Future uses at the project site would include package delivery, distribution, vehicle maintenance, and associated office operations, consistent with the intended land use designation. The proposed project constitutes infill development of a vacant but previously cultivated site within a designated industrial zone and does not require the extension of infrastructure into previously undeveloped areas; therefore, its implementation is consistent with City of Santa Maria planning. The project is consistent with the West Stowell Specific Plan and the City's General Plan and would not induce substantial unplanned growth or conflict with adopted land use policies.

[2] Santa Barabra County Association of Governments. 2019. Regional Growth Forecast 2050 Santa Barabara County. Available: https://www.sbcag.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/regional_growth_forecast_2050.pdf. Accessed September 2025.

5.2 Irreversible Environmental Effects

The CEQA Guidelines require that EIRs contain a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes. This section addresses non-renewable resources, the commitment of future generations to the proposed uses, and irreversible impacts associated with the proposed project.

The proposed project involves infill development on a currently vacant but previously cultivated site within the urbanized limits of the City of Santa Maria. Construction and operation of the proposed project would involve an irreversible commitment of construction materials and non-renewable energy resources. The project would utilize building materials and energy including concrete, steel, and petroleum-based products to construct approximately 244,418 square feet of total building area, including a main distribution warehouse, loading awnings, fleet service center, and accessory structures. Consumption of these resources is typical of industrial development and is not unique to the proposed project.

The proposed project would also irreversibly increase local demand for non-renewable energy resources such as electricity and petroleum products. However, the proposed project incorporates several sustainability features that would offset this demand, including solar roof arrays with a design capacity of 750 kilowatts (DC), a battery energy storage system rated at 650 kilowatts (DC), and the installation of 14 electric vehicle chargers, exceeding minimum requirements. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the proposed project would be designed to meet or exceed California Green Building Standards (CALGreen) and Title 24 Energy Code requirements, which promote energy efficiency, water conservation, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The facility would be all-electric, with no natural gas infrastructure, and would include drought-tolerant landscaping and water-efficient irrigation systems. Consequently, the proposed project would not use unusual amounts of energy or construction materials.

Additional vehicle trips associated with the proposed project including delivery vans, line-haul trucks, and employee vehicles would increase local traffic and regional air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. However, as discussed in Section 3, *Air Quality*, and Section 8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, of the Initial Study (Appendix A), development and operation of the proposed project would not generate emissions that would result in a significant impact. The proposed project would also conform to law enforcement, fire protection, water supply, wastewater treatment, and solid waste disposal services. However, as discussed in Section 15, *Public Services*, and Section 19, *Utilities and Service Systems*, of the Initial Study, impacts to these service systems would be less than significant.

CEQA requires decision makers to balance the benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks in determining whether to approve a project. The analysis contained in this EIR concludes that the proposed project would result in a significant and unavoidable impact on transportation and traffic (Section 4.1 *Transportation)*. The VMT Analysis concludes that no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce VMT without compromising the operational functionality of the proposed project. Although the proposed project would implement mitigation, as discussed in Section 4.1 *Transportation*, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

5.3 Energy Effects

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2) and Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines require that EIRs include a discussion of the potential energy consumption and/or conservation impacts of proposed projects, with particular emphasis on avoiding or reducing inefficient, wasteful or unnecessary consumption of energy.

The proposed project would involve the use of energy during both the construction and operational phases. Energy use during construction would primarily consist of fuel consumption (e.g., diesel and gasoline) to operate heavy equipment, haul trucks, light-duty vehicles, and other machinery. Temporary electricity may also be supplied to construction trailers or electric-powered equipment as needed. Construction equipment would utilize Tier 4 or higher engines, which would improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions per mitigation measure AQ-1.

Long-term operation of the proposed project would require permanent grid connections for electricity to power internal and external lighting, HVAC systems, electric vehicle chargers, and other building systems. The facility would be all-electric and would not include natural gas infrastructure. Electricity services would be provided by Pacific Gas & Electric and telecommunications would be provided by Frontier and Comcast. No natural gas service would be installed.

California used approximately 303,907 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity in 2024.[3] While the proposed project would contribute incrementally to regional energy demand, it would incorporate several design features to reduce energy consumption and improve efficiency. These include solar roof arrays with a design capacity of 750 kilowatts (DC), a battery energy storage system rated at 650 kilowatts (DC), and the installation of 15 electric vehicle chargers, exceeding minimum requirements. The proposed project would also include 202 EV-capable delivery van stalls.

The proposed project would comply with the California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6 of the California Code of Regulations) and the California Green Building Standards Code (Title 24, Part 11), which require energy-efficient building design, solar readiness, and water conservation measures. These standards, commonly referred to as *Title 24*, promote reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in new nonresidential buildings. As a result, the proposed project would not use unusual amounts of energy or construction materials. Energy use associated with the proposed project is typical of industrial development and is not unique to the proposed project.

CalEEMod is a statewide land use emissions computer model designed to provide a uniform platform for government agencies, land use planners, and environmental professionals to quantify potential criteria pollutant and GHG emissions associated with both construction and operations from a variety of land use projects. The model quantifies direct emissions from construction and operation activities (including vehicle use), as well as indirect emissions, such as GHG emissions from energy use, solid waste disposal, vegetation planting and/or removal, and water use. Further, the model identifies mitigation measures to reduce criteria pollutant and GHG emissions along with calculating the benefits achieved from measures chosen by the user. Complete CalEEMod results and assumptions can be viewed in Attachment 2 of the Initial Study (Appendix A of this EIR). As discussed previously, the proposed project would also be subject to the energy conservation requirements of the California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations, *California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings)* and the California Green Building Standards Code (Title 24, Part 11 of the California Code of Regulations). The California Energy Code provides

[3] California Energy Commission. 2024. 2024 Total System Electric Generation. Available: https://www.energy.ca.gov/data-reports/energy-almanac/california-electricity-data/2024-total-system-electric-generation. Accessed September 2025.

energy conservation standards for all new and renovated commercial and residential buildings constructed in California. The Code applies to the building envelope, space-conditioning systems, and water-heating and lighting systems of buildings and appliances. The Code provides guidance on construction techniques to maximize energy conservation. Minimum efficiency standards are given for a variety of building elements, including: appliances; water and space heating and cooling equipment; and insulation for doors, pipes, walls and ceilings. The Code emphasizes saving energy at peak periods and seasons and improving the quality of installation of energy efficiency measures. In addition, the California Green Building Standards Code sets targets for: energy efficiency; water consumption; dual plumbing systems for potable and recyclable water; diversion of construction waste from landfills; and use of environmentally sensitive materials in construction and design, including ecofriendly flooring, carpeting, paint, coatings, thermal insulation, and acoustical wall and ceiling panels.

In response to Title 24 requirements, the project includes sustainability features, including:

- An all-electric facility
- A solar-ready roof and panels to a design capacity of 750 kilowatts
- Level 2 and Level 3 electric vehicle charging stations
- A Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

Specific sustainability features to be incorporated into the project are fully described in Section 3, *Air Quality*, and Section 8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, of the Initial Study (Appendix A).

Meeting Title 24 energy conservation requirements in combination with the project's sustainability components would ensure that energy is not used in an inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary manner per Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2).

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6 Alternatives

As required by Section 15126.6 of the *CEQA Guidelines*, this EIR examines a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that would attain most of the basic project objectives (stated in the Executive Summary of this EIR) but would avoid or substantially lessen the significant adverse impacts.

As discussed in Section 2, *Project Description*, the objectives for the proposed project, are as follows:

- Develop a parcel delivery facility with nearby access to freeways to efficiently facilitate the movement of goods.
- Develop a parcel delivery facility that incorporates sustainability features like EV, solar, and low-water usage.
- Establish a productive use of underutilized industrial land to help meet unmet regional demand for goods delivery service.
- Improve efficiency and timeliness of goods delivery to the City of Santa Maria and the surrounding areas.
- Expand economic development, increase tax revenues, and facilitate job creation in the City of Santa Maria, including hundreds of direct operational jobs and indirect jobs.
- Attract new businesses to the City of Santa Maria and thereby maintain a jobs-housing balance in the area that will reduce the need for members of the local workforce to commute outside the area for employment.

Included in this analysis are two alternatives, including the CEQA-required "no project" alternative, that involve changes to the project that may reduce the project-related environmental impacts as identified in this EIR. Alternatives have been developed to provide a reasonable range of options to consider that would help decision makers and the public understand the general implications of revising or eliminating certain components of the proposed project.

The following alternatives are evaluated in this EIR:

- Alternative 1: No Project
- Alternative 2: Reduced Size Alternative

Table 6-1 provides a summary comparison of the development characteristics of the proposed project and each of the alternatives considered. Detailed descriptions of the alternatives are included in the impact analysis for each alternative. The potential environmental impacts of each alternative are analyzed in Sections 6.1 and 6.2.

Table 6-1 Comparison of Project Alternatives' Buildout Characteristics

Feature	Proposed Project	Alternative 1: No Project Alternative	Alternative 2: Reduced Size Alternative
Building Footprint	244,418 sf	Lot would remain vacant	163,760
Height	45 feet	Lot would remain vacant	45 feet
Required/Provided Parking	990	Lot would remain vacant	663

6.1 Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

6.1.1 Description

Alternative 1 assumes that the proposed package delivery warehouse, parking, and other accessories associated with the proposed project would not be constructed. The project site would remain in its current condition, which is vacant land used for interim row crop production. The No Project Alternative would not fulfill any of the project objectives. Because none of the project objectives for providing a package delivery warehouse would occur under this alternative, it can be reasonably assumed that a similar project would still be constructed in the region to meet the project objectives to meet the unmet regional demand for goods delivery service. So impacts similar to the project would likely occur elsewhere in the region.

6.1.2 Impact Analysis

Under the No Project alternative, transportation and traffic at this location and other potential impacts would remain at current conditions. Temporary traffic delays associated with construction activities under the proposed project would be eliminated at this location. There would be no change in weekday vehicle trips associated with this alternative at this location. Therefore, overall traffic impacts under the No Project Alternative would be less than impacts under the proposed project. But it is a reasonable assumption that the site would be developed in the future with a similar warehouse or other industrial development consistent with the Specific Plan land use and zoning on the site with transportation impacts. Depending on the type of facility, this could result in less or greater impacts than the project. As this is speculative, it is assumed conservatively that the No Project Alternative would have a lesser impact than the project.

6.2 Alternative 2: Reduced Size Alternative

6.2.1 Description

Under this alternative, the total building footprint would be reduced from approximately 244,418 square feet to 163,760 square feet, reflecting a 33 percent decrease in overall facility size. This reduction would reduce the throughput of packages processed at one time. This reduction would reduce the number of employees needed to process packages and delivery vans sent out during each shift. This reduction in facility size would not align with the projected package delivery demand for the region. To meet this demand with this smaller facility, additional shifts would be required to process the same volume of packages. A reduction greater than 33 percent would not allow sufficient package delivery throughput even with extra shifts. The reduced project building footprint and corresponding workforce would lower demand for parking and van delivery spaces. Assuming a 33 percent reduction, consistent with the decrease in building size, the facility would require approximately 663 parking spaces, compared to the original 990 spaces proposed. Ancillary facilities, such as loading docks and maintenance areas would remain unchanged as they are essential to maintaining operational functionality. The reduction would also decrease the total acreage required for development. The remaining undeveloped areas would remain unused and/or covered with additional landscaping. Site access would continue to follow the original project design to ensure safe ingress and egress meeting City standards. The building height would remain at 45 feet as this is necessary for efficient operation of the warehouse.

6.2.2 Impact Analysis

Alternative 2 would generate the same overall trip generation in comparison to the proposed project, not resulting in reduced VMT. The added delivery shift to meet demand would result in the same VMT generation but spread over the day. Due to the reduced facility size and associated operational changes, this alternative would alter the distribution and timing of trips. Specifically, the reduced processing capacity would require an additional shift to meet regional package delivery demand.

A smaller footprint building that handles the same volume of packages and deliveries (33 percent reduction) would require an additional sortation shift, split approximately four hours apart. Delivery operations would need to start sooner with fewer vehicles per wave. Some of the onsite management would be spread out among the two shifts. The result would be a similar overall daily traffic volume and therefore the same VMT but the impacts on the AM and PM peak hours would be greater. The AM peak, which is typically about 15 vehicles, would have over 145 vehicle trips. Delivery vehicles would return to the facility earlier in the evening – near the end of the typical PM peak hours. The impact at intersections would be higher because of the added volume during the peak hours[1].

As a result, employee trips would be spread more evenly throughout the day and night, however, this shift could result in increased ingress and egress activity during identified peak travel times in morning and evening at and around the site compared to the proposed project.

While the overall trip generation remains unchanged, the redistribution of trips may result in localized increases in traffic during certain times of day or in different areas. Construction-related traffic impacts under Alternative 2 would be slightly reduced compared to the proposed project due to the smaller building footprint, which would require fewer construction materials and labor trips. Additionally, the construction schedule is expected to be shorter, but with a small reduction in daily construction traffic volumes. Therefore, while Alternative 2 would not reduce total VMT, it would result in minor reductions in construction traffic impacts and potentially shift operational traffic impacts to different times or locations. These changes could have both beneficial and adverse effects on local circulation patterns, depending on the timing and geographic distribution of trips.

6.3 Alternatives Considered but Rejected

An alternatives chapter plays a critical role in identifying and evaluating project alternatives that could feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening one or more significant environmental impacts. In this case the primary impact of concern is Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). Other typical alternatives which may be considered include alternative locations, or an alternative which would focus on reducing a project's significant impact, in this case a VMT reduction alternative. These latter two alternatives were considered but rejected as not being feasible, practicable, and not achieving the goal of reducing VMT. The reasons for rejection are explained below.

Alternative Location

Other alternatives considered include relocation of the proposed package delivery warehouse to a different site within the City of Santa Maria to avoid potential transportation impacts at the site and other site-specific impacts. Two sites identified within the City of Santa Maria that would be potentially feasible as an alternative site were identified.

[1] Theoretical Alternative Schedule for Smaller Facility, NV5 10/2025

- APN 117-200-018 – a 34.4-acre site on south side of Main Street between Blosser Road and Hanson Way. This site has 4 different zone designations PD/C-2 (Planned Development / General Commercial on the east side (Main and Blosser frontage) PD/CM (Commercial/Manufacturing) in the middle area of the site, PD M-2 (General Manufacturing) at the southwest corner of the site, and a small area of PD/M-1. (Light Manufacturing).
- A site within the Santa Maria Airport Business Park Specific Plan. Planned land uses include light industrial, research, manufacturing, and commercial land uses on lands south of the Santa Maria airport and at the east end of the runway.

The first site includes existing buildings that would potentially be demolished to allow for project construction and would increase traffic on W. Main Street that provides access to SR 101 two miles to the east. The second site could have potential safety issues being located adjacent to the airport and does not provide direct access to SR 101 having to utilize Lakeview Road lined with single family residences as the most direct route to SR 101. While relocating the project could theoretically reduce VMT if the sites were closer to employee residences, transit hubs, or delivery destinations, both sites do not offer a significant advantage in proximity to those features. Additionally, because the majority of VMT associated with the project is generated by package delivery trips rather than employee commutes, shifting the location may result in some deliveries being closer but others farther, ultimately resulting in no net reduction in VMT. Therefore, neither site would result in a reduction of VMT, just the transfer of trips to and from those locations compared to at the Stowell Road location.

Suitable alternative sites with comparable size, zoning compatibility, and access to regional transportation infrastructure are limited in Santa Maria. Relocation outside of Santa Maria could result in increased VMT due to reduced proximity to delivery routes and workforce housing. Therefore, this scenario was rejected from further consideration as it did not result in any change to VMT impacts.

Locating a site or additional site outside of Santa Maria to accommodate demand would not result in a net reduction of VMT for the region, just shifting it to other communities or areas within Santa Maria. It would also redistribute portions of the tax base and employment opportunities away from Santa Maria if located outside Santa Maria, thereby not meeting project objectives related to local economic development and job creation.

Reduced VMT Alternative

A Reduced VMT Alternative would be focused on using transportation demand management options such as van- and car-pooling, enhanced transit service, and bike/pedestrian improvements to reduce employee commute trips to the project site. The EIR identifies mitigation to take as much advantage as practicable on transportation demand management options. The project purpose to provide package delivery services to the region (Delivery vans + FLEX) is the main creator of VMT estimated at 38,177 daily VMT compared to 7,762 VMT for personal vehicles[2]. Less than 25 percent of total VMT comes from commute trips, so a 50 percent reduction in personal vehicle VMT would only reduce overall project VMT by 3,881, equaling a 10 percent reduction in overall VMT. This 50 percent reduction is not feasible plus would not reduce the project's VMT close to the City's VMT significant threshold of 18.82 with the projected project VMT at 44.6, or 237 percent higher than the City's threshold.

[2] VMT Analysis for Santa Maria Delivery Station, 12/5/2024, prepared by NV5

This alternative was rejected mainly because it would result in a negligible reduction in VMT as most VMT generated from the project is from the van deliveries and not commute VMT to the site. The two work shifts to be utilized for the site would also be during off-peak travel periods and outside typical transit service time periods. In addition, the project site is not currently served by transit and planned expansions have not been identified in this area.

6.4 Environmentally Superior Alternative

Based on the alternatives analysis provided above, Alternative 1 would be the environmentally superior alternative.

Alternative 1 (*No Project Alternative)* assumes that the proposed package delivery warehouse, parking, and other accessories associated with the proposed project would not be constructed. The project site would remain in its current condition, which is vacant land currently used for interim row crop production, and intended for development under the West Stowell Specific Plan. Alternative 1 would not fulfill the project objectives because the existing vacant condition would not improve goods movement, utilize industrial land, support sustainability, comply with zoning standards, or contribute to economic development, job creation, and the local jobs. Although Alternative 1 would be the environmentally superior project, as required by CEQA, Guidelines Section 15126.6(e)(2), if the No Project Alternative is identified as the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other action alternatives.

Alternative 2 (*Reduced Size Alternative)* would involve development of a modified package delivery warehouse at 1680 West Stowell Road that incorporates design and operational changes intended to reduce VMT. Under this alternative, the overall building footprint would be reduced from approximately 244,418 square feet to 163,760 square feet, reflecting a 33 percent decrease in overall facility size, and the number of daily employee commute trips would be minimized through transportation demand management strategies, similar to the project. This alternative would retain the same site location and general land use designation but at a reduced size.

Implementation of Alternative 2 would not reduce total VMT as it would still require the same number of employees across the 24-hour workday. So VMT would not change, but it would result in minor reductions in construction traffic impacts and potentially shift operational traffic impacts to different times. However, the reduced building size and modified operations may result in decreased logistical capacity and could affect the project's ability to meet its original objectives. In addition, Alternative 2 would not fully achieve the project objectives because the reduced building size and scaled-back operations may limit the facility's ability to efficiently facilitate goods movement and meet regional delivery demand. While this alternative would support transportation and climate goals, it may fall short in taking full advantage of the economic development and job creation potential, and optimal utilization of the industrial site. As a result, it would only partially realize the intended benefits of the proposed project. Overall, Alternative 2 would result in minor reductions in construction traffic impacts and potentially shift operational traffic impacts to different times or locations compared to the proposed project to be considered environmentally superior, but the project would not fully meet the operational needs of the project and would just shift VMT to other times to meet regional package delivery needs.

Overall, while Alternative 2 would not reduce local VMT but slightly improve environmental performance locally, it may not fully meet the operational needs of the applicant and would not reduce regional VMT. Therefore, Alternative 2 would be considered environmentally superior as it would offer a potential option for reducing transportation impacts compared to the project.

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7 Preparers

7.1 List of Preparers

This EIR was prepared by the City of Santa Maria, with the assistance of Rincon Consultants, Inc. Consultant staff involved in the preparation of the EIR are listed below.

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